

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Newspacket

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September-October 2010



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

**P.O. Box 473
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Website www.nonc.ca

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* Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Plan

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Newspacket

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Next deadline is Saturday, October 23rd.

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

OUR COVER THIS ISSUE

NONC members participated in several hummingbird banding sessions this summer. See page 4. Cover photo by Robyn Thornton.

In The News

Recent items of interest from our local newspapers:

- ❖ N.O.R.D. Council approved the development of a 140 acre park surrounding Rose's Pond on Commonage Road. Walking trails and interpretive signage will be added.
- ❖ New walking paths are being added on Middleton Mountain. A newly constructed trail up to the summit of Middleton Mountain, from the south end of Mt Ida Drive, is in place. Another is being built from the east end of Creed Loop up to Middleton Way, just below the new Middleton neighbourhood park. The Ribbons of Green Trail Society has taken the lead in advocating for and building these trails.
- ❖ The larvae planus weevil has been introduced to the North Okanagan in an attempt to control the spread of Canada Thistle, an invasive species from Europe.
- ❖ The City of Vernon is attempting to sell 3.7 hectares (9.0 acres) of Davison Rock (3097 Davison Road) for agricultural purposes, while continuing the process to designate the other portion as a nature reserve.
- ❖ The District of Sicamous is keen to turn the CP Rail line between Grindrod and Sicamous into a recreation corridor, allowing walkers, hikers and cyclists to enjoy it as a nature trail. A decision on the future of the line was expected soon, at press time. Sicamous supports keeping the Armstrong-Grindrod portion as an active rail line for local businesses.

Calendar

NONC meets on the first Wednesday of the month from September (exception: Sept 8 this year) through May inclusive, starting at 7:30 pm, at The Best Western Vernon Lodge, 3914 32nd Street, Vernon. Remember to "lug a mug"!

Wednesday, September 8 - NONC meeting, 7:30 pm at the Best Western, Vernon Lodge.

Saturday, September 25 - Heritage Tree Walk - Meet at 9:30 am by Galaxy Cinema parking at Polson Mall. Bring a lunch. Contact Pat McAllister 558-1440.

Bird Watching Outings:

Meet at Performing Arts Centre at 9:00 am. Peter Mayfield 549-8478 for details.

Sunday October 3rd
Saturday October 9th
Sunday October 17th
Saturday October 23rd

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

Thursday, October 7 - Gellatly Nut Farm - The nut harvest & a heritage trail in the West Kelowna area. Lunch at the Comfort Inn after our visit. Call Robyn Thornton 549-2714 by Sept.29. Meet 9:30 am at Priest Valley Gym parking lot.

October 22-24 - Nakusp Hot Springs. Stay at the chalets, soak in the pools, explore the nature trails & visit the quaint town of Nakusp. Perhaps Halcyon hot springs too. Please call by October 1st. Contact Lyn Smith 542-6520.

Receive the latest NONC news

Subscribe to our weekly e-mail messages. Don't miss an event and find out about recent additions or changes. Send Harold Sellers, hikerharold@gmail.com, your e-mail address to subscribe.

Swan Lake Nature Reserve

by Lyall Webster

Since the last update the work at Swan Lake has been mostly maintenance. In June, Ray Arlt and myself were on hand to supervise the mowing of the long grass around the plantings. Vernon Services very kindly gets in a large tractor-mower to do this work once or twice every year. This makes watering much easier as dragging hoses through the long grass isn't much fun. In July we had a work party for weeding and clearing around the plants; many thanks to Denis Seymour, Fred Wisse, Ray Arlt and Adam Moss.

The large part of summer maintenance was the watering and very special thanks are due to the watering parties who went faithfully each week in the hot weather - they were Adam Moss and Peter Blokker, Ray Arlt and Kay Bartholomew, Ev and Barbara Miyasaki.

Work coming up for the fall is to cage the plants put in this spring and remove the dead ones.

Greater Vernon Services has finalized purchase of land from the Andersons for the main access off Old Kamloops Road. Some funds were available and a rail fence has been put in at the property line. I understand some work will be done on the access, which will be a gravel road. In the near future an information meeting will be held to present the concept for the nature reserve to the public.

The pond put in next to BX Creek was completed and planted up in the spring. I was down there August 29th to mow the trail along the creek and had a look at the pond - the rushes are growing well at the edge and many of the trees and shrubs planted seem to be growing in spite of being engulfed by the tall grass.

Swan Lake Committee members - Lyall Webster, Ray Arlt, Kay Bartholomew ❖

Hummingbirds 2010

by Barbara Harris

The 2010 banding season began with a great deal of interest. Gail Loughridge wrote an article about keeping hummingbird feeders clean and placed it in our local newspaper, asking for banding volunteers. Next, Gail hosted a potluck dinner for all banders, and twelve new recruits came to join the team. The first hummingbirds began to appear in the Vernon area April 16 and 17, and we began banding May 1 and 2. Generally, banding took place from 6 AM to 11 AM, Saturday and Sunday mornings of the same weekend, for two weekends a month. We also banded at various places on several evenings, and a few times during the day at Gail's house. Our last banding trip was August 11, when only 3 birds were banded, but as of August 19 we have usually seen one bird a day. These birds are possibly migrants on their way south.

We banded hummingbirds at two locations within 50 kilometres of Vernon: one on Okanagan Lake, and one at Lumby. The Pauls own a house on Okanagan Lake and they graciously welcomed us to their house at 6 AM, with fresh coffee and scones, many times over the summer. On a good morning, their deck overlooking the lake is crowded with hummers, both Rufous (RUHU in bander talk) and Calliope (CAHU). Calliopes are smaller, and are often more agitated or excited than are Rufous, who can sometimes seem quite calm. As a result, Calliopes are more difficult to measure and to band. We also find juvenile Calliopes the most difficult to identify as male or female. We caught one Rufous whose right eye was mainly closed. We only banded him and let him go, without doing all the detailed measurements. Within an hour we had caught him again, and this time his eye was barely shut. Needless to say we completed his measurements before letting him go again.

The second location was at the Latimer's house near Lumby. Again we were plied with coffee
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and goodies, and we banded Blackchin (BCHU) hummers, as well as Calliope and Rufous. Our most successful day was at Lumby on May 30, when we caught 102 birds and banded 61 of them.



Barbara Harris, Gail Loughridge, and Judy Stockdale went to Dunster BC in May for a workshop with Alison Moran to refine our banding technique. As a result, we made a big effort to ensure that appropriately-sized bands went on all birds, and the bands were well-formed and completely closed. This helps the birds' legs to keep healthy and not collect spider webs or other matter. In total we banded 385 birds this year and we feel sure that the hummingbirds will have far fewer problems with the leg bands than they may have had in the past.

I would personally like to thank all the host sites and the many volunteers that contributed to the success of this citizen science program. Without every single one of you we could not have pulled it off. Good on you!

I would also like to thank Susan Hammerl (Latimer) and Mark Hammerl for coming on board this year and enabling the program to continue in the Lumby area. Thank You.

We look forward to seeing everyone returning next year and also all the returning hummingbirds. Maybe we will even have a foreign capture, you just never know.

Gail Loughridge, Hummingbird Vernon Project

Annual Field Day

Saturday, May 8, 2010

by Kay Bartholomew

It was a bright May spring morning when over fifty of us met at the Twin Bays parking lot at Kalamalka Lake Park. Members were divided into three groups. Ray Arlt took the hikers, Peter Blokker the birders and Margaret Hubble the botanists, each to a different area of the Park. BC Parks now charges \$3.00 a morning for parking!

At noon we gathered at the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary for lunch, where chairs were laid out on the lawn, overlooking the lake. Wonderful setting. Aaron, the new caretaker, had set out a large table set with 'treats' of four various drinks and a huge platter of raw veggies. Truly a great feast for healthy living. We could have sat there all day!



above: some of the Field Day attendees at the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary (photo by Kay Batholomew)

1:30 pm. Aaron called everyone to attention, to explain what we were going to do for the after-

noon. First was to plant a tree (a sycamore) in honour of Jim Grant, one of our founders and who was a member of the Bishop Sanctuary when it was formed. Peter Mayfield said a few words re Jim; followed by shoveling dirt round the base, starting with Kay Bart, then Denis Seymour, Carol Ruth, Simone Runyan, and Norbert Maertens, each giving a few words of remembrance about Jim.



above: tree dedication (photo by Harold Sellers)

Then came the "piece de resistance" when Aaron explained his Bio-Blitz! There were ten teams of three that participated. Each team to tally as **continued on page 7**

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.

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much of the flora and fauna and number of bird nests spotted on the Sanctuary grounds as possible in an hour and fifteen minutes. In the end three teams tied for the most species accounted for, each with 101 species. Since only three prizes were available (for one anticipated winning team) a member of each of the winning three teams was randomly drawn to receive a prize. The winners were: Ann Langer, Norbert Maertens and Hylda Mayfield. Honourable mention goes to guest Russell Cannings (of Penticton) who was on a winning team with Ann Langer and John McDougall, and managed to find five birds nests and tallied a high of 32 species of birds.

At 5:00 pm several of us were at the College Cafeteria setting up for our dinner. Joyce Hebbert was to be the hostess, Bob Hebbert the emcee, Ann Langer the ticket master and Kay the extra jobs. George and Jennine looked after the Bar. Euan and Mark from "Eat Well Catering" were in the kitchen...great chaps.

5:30 pm Bob gave a special grace, then lots were drawn for who was to start the dinner line-up first. The head table actually landed up first!

7:30 pm The Emcee called up the morning groups to give a three-minute report of what they had seen on their morning walks in the Park. Aaron presented the Bio-blitz winners with their prizes. We must commend Bob for his continuous recitation of good jokes, but did wonder if he might 'run out'.

7:30 Bob introduced our guest speaker, Genevieve Dunbar, who is the administrator of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. She gave an excellent talk about the general workings of the Board and many questions were answered. She was thanked by Harold Sellers.

9: 30 pm. We were out to home. We agreed it had been a great day. ❖

Cools Pond Work Bee

by Ann Langer

The Cools Pond Work Bee held on May 19th went very well. We were very lucky with the weather as it had rained a lot the day before, so it was a relief to have dry weather with some blue patches of sky.



We replaced sixteen rails that were rotten, mainly medial rails. The amount of garbage seemed less than most years but there were an amazing number of lovely brown eggs in the grass adjacent to the adjoining farm - feast for a coyote. One clutch of eggs had a brown hen sitting on them. She was very surprised to be disturbed.

The Hounds-tongue is still surviving. It was attacked yet again.

It was pretty heavy work this morning, made possible by the participants bringing equipment such as drills and hammers. Thank you.

We ended the morning at Peter and Hylidas' with coffee and good cinnamon buns – always very much appreciated.

Thank you to everybody. They were Ray Arlt, Peter Blokker, Jim Bodkin, Melanie Christien, Ann Davis, Bob Hebbert, Malcolm Martin, Peter Mayfield, Adam Moss, Kathy and David Smith, Denis Seymour and myself. ❖

Young Naturalists' Club

by Kathy Smith & Joan Cooke

In June, Linda Kennedy of NONC kindly offered to lead the Young Naturalists on an exploration of noxious weeds in Kal Park. The event was informative, interesting and fun. It was gratifying to see a five year-old, on the following month's outing, bend down beside the trail and correctly identify a cinquefoil plant!

In July, we hiked BX Trail from top to bottom, with a generous amount of time for balancing on fallen logs and swimming in a deep pool along the way. The day was very hot, so the trail was a good place to be. Several of the kids correctly identified all twenty items on their scavenger hunt lists, remembering plants like the wild ginger from the same hike last summer!

In August, Aaron Dean, the new biologist at the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary, suggested a hike at Spectrum Lake to show the kids a different type of eco-system and an old-growth forest. It was well worth the drive and Aaron was great at educating us on various types of new flora and fauna not found closer to Vernon. The weather cooperated, except for a brief hailshower, which was fun for the kids! We also viewed Rainbow Falls which was very impressive. All in all, a lovely day.

We have a full fall roster planned and are definitely having fun with the program! ❖

Environmental Leader

by V.E. (Vivian) Merchant
Bishop Wild Bird Foundation

I attended the RDNO Environmental Leadership Awards ceremony at the Environmental Week Kick-Off at the Powerhouse theatre, and discovered that a Bishop Wild Bird Foundation director [and NONC's secretary] is an award winner.

Kay Bartholomew was a winner of an RDNO Environmental Leadership Award. In particular, she was a co-winner (with Margaret Martin) of an award for Water Stewardship. The award is for "Activities and/or policies maintained by a business, organization, or individual that work to protect or restore waterways (lakes, creeks, streams, wetlands), or assist in water uses efficiency, and show an strong commitment to water conservation and sustainability in the North Okanagan."

NONC congratulates Kay! ❖

Thank You to Chris Siddle

Chris Siddle was recently presented with a copy of *Birds of Ecuador* for helping with the new bird checklist. Photo submitted by Pat McAllister.



BIG! Trees

At the north end of the jungle covering the property between Swan Lake Trailer Park and the Kaminski property there are a few Aspens. The largest of these I estimated (no tapemeasure) to have a circumference of about 120 inches which would make it of around 3 ft diameter dbi, the largest I've ever seen. At a point the trunks divide into 2 equal parts each about 80 inches around.
- Malcolm Martin

2010 Summer Camp Report

by Joyce Hebbert

photos by Bob & Joyce Hebbert
and Robyn Thornton

The 2010 NONC summer camp at Radium Hot Springs was a 3 D week – full of diverting (of plans), diversity, and diversions. The six days of activities had been carefully researched and planned by leader Bob Hebbert. BUT. . . a smoke filled Columbia River Valley greeted the nine campers as we arrived on Tuesday August 17th. So as we gathered from our various “camping” sites that first evening (Pam Jenkins, Robyn Thornton, Rod and Ruth Drennan from the Canyon Resort campground and Susan Spiller, Sara Hooyisma, Betty Kerr, Bob and Joyce Hebbert at the Mountain Springs Motel), we decided to divert from the first day’s original plan and drive into Kootenay National Park on Wednesday to hike Floe Lake Trail, in hopes the air quality would be better. It was, and the well-used trail provided us good leg stretching as it ascended gradually up through forest that was fire swept in 2003. This resulted in a brilliant display of fireweed and good views of the high peaks to the east of the Vermillion River. The 10 km hike with bright sun and blue skies was a very good first day. It worked up an appetite for our first shared meal which should have been at the campground but wasn’t, due to an “invasion” of mosquitoes. Again, change of plans ... and we ate in comfort on the deck of the motel and planned our next day.

Day two took us back to KNP and another 10 km hike up to Stanley Glacier. This trail switch backed up a hillside that followed a rushing creek; further on it climbed through trees and over rocks to the edge of a moraine basin with views of peaks, a waterfall and glaciers. That day we added stops at Marble Canyon where a narrow canyon is worn by water and also to the Paint Pots and ochre beds.

Day three we drove to Panorama Ski Resort,
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took a long lift ride up the mountain, and then hiked the Cox Creek trail which proved steep and difficult through the forest. Our lunch stop did provide us with mountain views which were stunning but a bit muted by lingering smoke.

A free afternoon gave everyone a breather and helped prepare the five strongest hikers for their challenging hike to Jumbo Pass on day four. This required two hours of driving to the trailhead and then a steep trail up through forest and a rock slide area, then more forest until reaching an open meadow full of an impressive display of alpine flowers. After more climbing through trees and meadows came the lunch stop, looking down into the valley of the proposed Jumbo Pass development. Many groups of hikers, young and old, were on the trail that day, including a group from the Save Jumbo Pass Society whose petition now bears five NONCers’ signatures. The high spirits of the returning hikers was temporarily damped by the need to change a flat tire!!! The rest of the group spent an interesting tourist day visiting the impressive “Stations of the Cross” in Radium, plus the towns of Windimere and Invermere.

Sunday was a relaxing day; for many soaking in the Radium Hot Springs was a welcome diversion. Then the last day of hiking included a lovely walk on the Spirit Trail in the grasslands south of Fairmont along the Columbia River and after lunch hiking the Hoodoo Trail west of Fairmont, with its awesome spires and a view of the river far below the mesa.

Being good naturalists, we began a list of wildflowers on day one and both the number count and diversity were impressive – over 65 for the week. Monkey flowers, single delights and rain orchids were of particular interest. We kept a bird and animal count as well. At least a dozen different birds were spotted, with a dipper and wild turkeys being unusual to our area. The most entertaining bird activity we observed was a

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competition between turkey vultures and ravens over a skunk carcass (at the Columbia River Ecological Reserve). A dozen or more animals were counted with two “wild” varieties appearing right in the town of Radium. A mother bear and her two cubs ambled across the highway one morning and a Big Horned Sheep paraded onto the motel lawn one evening! The Jumbo Pass hikers also fleetingly saw a moose.

Another interesting “count” was asking other hikers that we met where they were from. We talked with people from several Canadian provinces and US states as well as five other countries. Our camping group itself had a diversity of homelands, representing six countries: Canada (Bob, Rod, and Betty), England (Pam and Susan), Australia (Robyn), Holland (Sara), Germany (Ruth), and USA (Joyce).

This report would not be complete without another “D-mention” – DINING. We were responsible for our own breakfasts but we enjoyed our many packed lunches together, perched on hillsides and delighting in beautiful scenery. Four evenings we gathered at the motel for delicious meals, hosted by four groups; we had the deck, the gazebo, and the picnic tables to choose from and grills for our use. One evening a rainstorm hit just at supper and we cozily crowded into motel room 9. Two evenings we went out for “ethnic” food: Austrian and Chinese, both outstanding cuisine.

On Tuesday August 24th our 3 D camp week together came to an end, but we all have many memories, many stories, and, of course, many photos. In fact there was still another “D” to the week . . . DIGITAL photography. Just ask any of us, and we will gladly email a dozen or more pictures! ❖

Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary

Aaron Deans and Laisha Rosnau,
Resident Caretakers

It was an eventful spring and summer at the sanctuary this year. We were happy to have so many club members out for a picnic lunch during the annual field day on May 8th. The sycamore tree dedication to James Grant that afternoon inspired a wonderful discussion of memories, shared by those attending that were fortunate to have known Jim during his time with the club. It was also World Migratory Bird Day that weekend and in honour of the International Year of Biodiversity members participated in a friendly team “bioblitz” challenge to document some of the flora and fauna of the bird sanctuary. The three winning teams each managed to list 101 species!

As some of you may know, particularly those with a grandchild in grade school, the sanctuary once again hosted schools throughout the Vernon school district (in conjunction with Mackie Lake House and the Joan Heriot Nature Centre) during May and early June this year. It was a lot of fun exploring the grounds and encountering some of the rich diversity of plants and animals that occur at the sanctuary, from the eyes of eight-year-olds. There were 21 tours in all. Involvement of naturalist club members as volunteer tour guides was tremendous and many thanks go out to Ann Davis, Adam Moss, Melanie Piorecky, Chris Siddle, Sue Steinke, Wally Steinke, Judy Stockdale, Robyn Thornton, and Fran Wagner for all your interest, time, and enthusiasm.

The sanctuary also hosted three open houses this summer that were well attended.

We look forward to hosting N.O.N.C. at Christmas time for the annual bird count and hope to see you here. ❖