

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Newspacket

www.nonc.ca

March-April 2011



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

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* Federation of B.C. Natuarlists (BC Nature)
** Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Plan

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Newspacket

**March-April 2011 Issue
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OUR COVER THIS ISSUE : A pair of Bald Eagles calling an Osprey nest home. 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, April 23rd. Copy should be delivered to Harold Sellers, Editor, e-mail hikerharold@gmail.com

NONC Notes by Kay Bart.

The love of birding! February 6th it rained. Then it snowed. We got cold. By 10:30 a.m. we were ready for the indoors. Off to Alexanders Pub for an early lunch. We had to wait for them to open! Someone (guess who) said "Isn't this why birders go out – to eat?"

So, the next week, February 12th, we set off on a lovely sunny morning to follow the Shuswap River, north of Enderby, to check out the swans. Luck was with us! Somewhere around thirty Trumpeter Swans. Twenty species of birds, including two Downy Woodpeckers, a Merlin, Canada Geese flying in formation close to our heads, 4 Red-tailed Hawks AND a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers in an old tree stump right alongside the road; not often one can get that close to them. BUT the 'piece de resistance' was a pair of Bald Eagles sitting on a snow-covered Osprey's nest (our cover, this issue). What a sight that was! Many photos taken.

Daphne Manning sent in a list of the birds tallied from the Swan & Eagle Count that Rick Howie, the compiler, had sent in to the Kelowna Courier. This is the count for the region, North Okanagan. 929 Trumpeter Swans, 19 Tundra Swans, 365 Bald Eagles and 9 Golden Eagles. I wonder why he can't send that in to the local Morning Star??

At the May monthly meeting, May 4th, we would like to have a Spring Sale, something for everyone. Please save up any items you think someone else might like to buy. Books, gifts, baking (lots), garden plants, etc., etc. Phone Peter Mayfield for contact.

As a 'late' reader I have become attached to non-fiction. There are two books I think any of you might like, and listed in the National Geographic magazine. First is "Murder in the High Himalayas" by Jonathan Green...an insight into the feelings between China and Tibet. The other is "The Tiger" by John Vailant, the chap who won awards for the book "The Golden Spruce". This is a terrific story about the Siberian Tiger and the area it roams. Marvelous!

A sad note to announce that Don Adamson died on February 11th, 2011. Don was one of our most faithful members who volunteered to build most of our bird houses. He procured the wood, etc. I don't remember us ever having to buy any materials. The funeral was held at the Anglican church, February 22nd. ❖

Calendar

Wednesday, March 2 : NONC meets at The Best Western Vernon Lodge, 3914 32nd Street, Vernon at 7:30 pm.

Bird Watching Outings:

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

Sun. Mar 6th	Sun. April 3rd
Sat. Mar 12th	Sat. April 9th
Sun. Mar 20th	Sun. April 17th
Sat. Mar 26th	Sat. April 23rd

Wed., March 16 - Sleigh ride and lunch at Silver Star. Contact Gail Loughridge 545-7455.

Wednesday, April 6 : NONC meeting.

April 27-30 - South Okanagan, Vaseau Lake. Contact Lyn Smith 542-6520 or Pamela Jenkins 545-0490.

April 28 - May 1 - Spring Fraser Canyon Field Camp. Details at www.bcnature.ca

May 6-8 - Skagit Bird Blitz. Co-sponsored by BC Nature and Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning. Details at www.bcnature.ca

Saturday, May 7 - NONC Field Day

May 12-15 - BC Nature AGM in Williams Lake

Saturday, May 14 - The Friends of Fintry invite everyone to the Fintry Spring Plant Festival, 10am to 4pm, on the grounds of the Manor House. Plants and seeds will be on sale together with arts and crafts by the residents of the Westside. Local musicians will play from the veranda, and children of all ages will be invited to play games on the Front Lawn. Lunch will be available from 12 noon to 1:30pm. Admission: By donation. Tour of Manor House and Barns: Adults \$5, children under 12 free.

Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary

What's happening these days at the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary - by Aaron Deans

As the days have been getting a bit warmer, the bird activity at the sanctuary has been picking up. One day, as I peered through my bins to determine that the woodpecker I was seeing was a female downy, a Steller's jay, goldfinch, flicker, black-capped and a Red-winged Blackbird all flew through my sighting. While two pheasants foraged among the juncos, finches, doves and song sparrows at the base of the main feeder, Mountain Chickadees flitted in for a mouthful with their pygmy and red-breasted cohorts not far behind. The male blackbird wings are noticeably redder these days and the occasional *conk-ka-reeeee* can be heard. From the water, the mallards sound out their guffaws, while eagles, perched above in their nest, take stock of the dabblers, coots and geese. A sudden sharp-shinned flush of birds from the feeder reveals an accipiter's unsuccessful attempt to secure its meal.

These sightings are a reminder of the rewards that paying attention to birds can bring at any time of year. During the migration in May we are planning an expanded celebration of the spring return in collaboration with Allan Brooks Nature Centre. We will host a few events including World Migratory Bird Day (May 9 & 10). This year is also Year of Forests and we will be doing our part to raise public awareness of the value of forests. Educational materials will explore the value of trees, forests and the environment, as well as the environmental services that these resources give us. I hope that you will consider coming out to an upcoming event or simply visiting the sanctuary this spring or summer. There is a great diversity of trees and native plants to enjoy around the grounds and, if you time it right, the birds can be particularly delightful. Please call 250.542.5122 to plan a visit! ❖

Annual Swan & Eagle Count

Sunday, January 9, 2011

by Jim Bodkin, Coordinator

Overview

Once again our reliable regulars reported they enjoyed participating and socializing as citizen scientists in this year's outing. We had more newbie's than usual taking part, including one full family carload, so that bodes well for the ongoing viability of this club project. Please consider joining us next year; no need to be an expert birder and, if nothing else, it is a pleasant or an adventurous Sunday drive or maybe both...regardless, you get bragging rights for being intrepid enough to venture forth in the midst of winter to collect avian data very much needed to help us better understand and cope with our ever-changing environment.

Some routes are urban, some are suburban, some are more boonies-oriented. Some are done by just a couple of people, others by a couple of carloads...lots of choice, so why not choose to make a lasting contribution to the ongoing well-being of our swans and eagles and take part?

This year's count experienced quite good winter weather. No fog, snow squalls or other serious visibility or driving problems were reported; most areas reported a few sunny breaks appearing about noon or thereabouts, and easy road access on their routes. As usual, ponds and shallow lakes were frozen, but temperatures were mild enough that most streams were at least partially open and shoreline icing on the larger lakes was not a problem.

Norm and Carole McKinlay were away so the Head of the Lake count at the northernmost part of Okanagan Lake did not happen this year. It is reserve land and club members who are not reserve dwellers have been asked (by whom I'm

not sure) to refrain from accessing band lands to count birds. Perhaps sufficient time has passed since this excellent birding site was declared off limits, that the NONC executive might wish to approach the band council to see if this most unfortunate situation remains irreconcilable.

Count Details

No Tundra Swans or Golden Eagles were spotted this year.

Area H, Vernon to Sicamous: Four participants in one vehicle...regulars Peter Blokker, Phil Jones and Kay Bartholomew, along with first timer Aaron Deans.

Trumpeter Swans 95 adult, 22 immature
Bald Eagles 65 adult, 16 immature



photo by Ronda Furlan

Area J, Coldstream to Lumby via Lavington to the south end of Mabel Lake: Ten participants in 3 vehicles...regulars Gail Loughridge and Jim Bodkin with newcomer Bob Hebbert in one vehicle; a second vehicle with regular Daphne Manning and her family first timers, daughters Eleanor Summers, Rhonda Furlan and son-ex-law Bruce Isobe; a third vehicle with regulars Ann Langer, Wendy Stevens and Terry Lodge. Two residents living at the south end of Mabel Lake, Bob Cook and Bob Pickering, also keep
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count which is much appreciated because much of the lakeshore is obscured from the road viewpoints by trees and shrubbery.

Trumpeter Swans 13 adults, 2 immature

Bald Eagles 8 adults, 3 immature

Note: usually the access gate to the Coldstream cemetery is open but it was closed this year so we were unable to get closer than half a kilometer. The area is behind a feedlot and it is not unusual to spot a Bald Eagle around the cemetery.

Area K, Enderby to Kingfisher to Mabel Lake: One vehicle with 3 regulars, Peter Stockdale, his 10 year-old grandson Tom Corbett and Geoff Spedding. Peter reported that mooring buoys where the Shushwap River leaves Mabel Lake have become so numerous that swans appear to have difficulty landing and do not frequent the river opening as much as they once did.

Trumpeter Swans probably 12 adults, no immature (species not positively identified due to distance and haze)

Bald Eagles 15 adult, 2 immature



photos by Harold Sellers

Area N, Vernon and area:

a) Predator Ridge to Carr's Landing via Commonage Road, Predator Ridge to Outback Estates via Commonage, Bench Row and East

Side Roads: One vehicle with 2 regulars, Paul and Glenys Schorn.

Bald Eagles 2 adults, 2 immature

b) Northern section of Kalamalka Lake and Coldstream: Sharon Lawrence is the regular.

Bald Eagles 4 adults, 2 immature

c) Kin Beach to Adventure Bay via Tronson Road, Otter Lake Road to Armstrong and back to Vernon via Pleasant Valley Road: One vehicle with regulars Peter and Hylde Mayfield.

Bald Eagles 2 adults, 1 immature

Note: route not done last year due to an oversight on my part when the Mayfield's were away and I neglected to find a replacement for them.

d) Head of Okanagan Lake: no replacement possible for absent regulars. Usually both Bald Eagles and Trumpeter Swans are observed. Last year's tally was 5 adult, 2 immature Bald Eagles and 11 adult Trumpeter Swans.

Total Count 2011:

Trumpeter Swans 144; 120 adults, 24 immature

Bald Eagles 122; 96 adults, 26 immature



Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program Proposes Expansion to North Okanagan

by Lisa Scott

Cavity nesting birds have lots to tweet about in the Okanagan-Similkameen. The loss of suitable habitat for nesting and foraging, including the lack of wildlife trees, presents a serious threat to many species. Fortunately, the Wildlife Tree Stewardship (WiTS) Program for the Okanagan-Similkameen has been able to continue for a fourth season thanks to the dedication of many volunteer monitors and also due to financial support from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk.

The WiTS Program in the Okanagan-Similkameen focuses on cavity nesting species at risk. Trained volunteers monitor breeding areas and record nesting activity. To date, most of the monitors are affiliated with one of four naturalists' clubs: South Okanagan Naturalist Club, Oliver-Osoyoos Naturalists, Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists and the Central Okanagan Naturalist Club. However in 2011, the WiTS Program proposes an expansion to the North Okanagan and is seeking the involvement of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club.

Although biologists and informed citizens recognize the value of wildlife trees and the vital contribution they make to biodiversity, in settled areas, the management of wildlife trees poses a number of challenges. In many areas, the management of natural habitats continues to be a low priority for rural, municipal and urban planners. In addition, wildlife trees are commonly targeted for removal because of the perception by untrained persons that all standing dead trees are a liability and therefore must be felled. This is particularly the case on local government lands that are frequented by the public for recreational purposes. Furthermore, many arborists and

firewood cutters are unaware of wildlife habitat needs; so many trees that could be retained are needlessly removed. One of the most effective solutions to the loss of wildlife habitat in developed areas is to stimulate public interest and involvement at a local level.



Lewis's Woodpecker, photo by Bob McKay

In 2010, the WiTS Program focused on Lewis's Woodpeckers, with the team surveying 113 nest trees throughout the South and Central Okanagan, and the Similkameen valley. Forty-one percent of the trees were re-occupied, while 27 percent had visual sightings of birds in the area but entrance into a cavity was not observed. Four of the nests were re-occupied by nest competitors such as American Kestrels and European Starlings. Approximately 51% of the nest trees were ponderosa pine, while 28% were black cottonwood. Douglas fir, waterbirch and utility poles also provided nest sites. One nesting tree had blown over and three had been cut down.

Additional cavity nesters surveyed during 2010
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included Western Screech-Owl, Williamson's Sapsucker and White-headed Woodpecker.

In addition to field monitoring, WiTS conducts school and community outreach programs that highlight the importance of wildlife trees. These events provide an opportunity to educate people about the role of wildlife trees and the various species that depend on these habitat features, as well as the importance of wildlife tree conservation.

To join this exciting team or to learn more about the WiTS, check out our website: www.wildlifetree.org or contact Lisa Scott, WiTS Regional Coordinator, at witsos@shaw.ca or 250.404.0115. ❖



Aspen Scarring

by P.A. Jones

Have you wondered about the scarring on aspen bark?

I did, until my questions were answered in an article by Dr. Rosamund Pojar in the Dec/Jan '11 issue of *Northword* magazine, pp. 12-13.

Now you are asking: What is *Northword*? It is published bimonthly in Smithers, with distribution of 10,000 copies free in 33 communities across northern B.C. Subscriptions are available at www.northword.ca.

The article in question is "Plants and Animals in Winter: They're not dead, dear - they're just sleeping" by Rosamund Pojar. This is with reference to aspen after they have lost their leaves in the Fall. Dr. Pojar states: "Trembling aspen have another coping mechanism for northern survival. Their bark contains chlorophyll and contributes up to 15 percent of the total photosynthetic sur-

face area. They are thus able to produce their own food (sugars) in their bark after leaf fall and well before the new leaves appear in the spring -- a fact well known to moose who can smell the sugars in the bark and strip it off with great relish in late winter/early spring."

This image was taken by Phil Jones at Narnia Farms near Smithers, June 27, 2010. It illustrates aspen tree bark that had been scraped by moose, then scarred as a result of organisms preventing normal wound healing. Fresh scrapings were evident in June. I have seen similar scarring caused by elk on aspen in Banff National Park.



Note: Dr. Pojar is author of "Trees and Shrubs in Winter" with illustrations by Evi Coulson (ISBN: 978-0-9783195-3-3) and published by Creekstone Press. It was very favorably reviewed by Dick Cannings and others. ❖

Bird Count - Nunavut

via Hylda Mayfield

from the "Up Here" magazine

A Christmas Bird Count

For the past four years, Clare Kines has been counting birds in the dark.

A Mountie-turned writer, Kines lives in Arctic Bay, Nunavut, and every January 5th he snowmobiles around counting ravens, ptarmigan and any other birds he spots.

Arctic Bay has no sunlight during the counting season. "That's why I hold it on the last day, to maximize the amount of twilight I have."

His count this year : 156 birds, all ravens.

Joan Heriot



Several years ago I was invited to a birthday celebration for Joan or Charles Darwin or some other important figure. There were, I believe, five people. Look at the crowd today. We were served sherry then, but I'm not expecting any this afternoon.

Before coming I did Google January 7th to see who else enjoyed this date for their birthday and up came the likes of Ava Gardiner, Marlene Dietrich and, for Heaven's sake, Elvis. But the only person born on 7th January 1911 was Butterfly McQueen. Butterfly McQueen anyone? That's right, one of the actresses in *Gone With the Wind*.

With a cohort of performers such as these, it is no wonder Joan can be a bit of a ham when asked to perform in public.

It seemed inappropriate on such a momentous occasion to offer nothing more than a silly piece of doggerel as I often do - but what instead?

It should certainly be something with a scientific flavour to match a lifetime so deeply steeped

in the creative juices of that field, as well as reflecting the passage of time.

By chance last fall I noticed an article by a researcher in the rarified field of General Relativity and Space/Time Continuum. It was entitled "Is Time an Illusion?" For goodness sake, what sort of talk is that, especially mentioned before someone who has just traced a path through 100 eventful years of Very Real Time?

Who, among the rest of us, can truly imagine what this valley must have been like at the start of that journey in 1911, a world barely dirtied, hardly dented, full of living delights and distant views, days of unending sunshine and adventure, even the sounds of WW I scarcely audible among the meadowlarks? How on earth could a young mind full of curiosity not have heeded the call?

Later, far away, growing acuity of eye and mastery of hand allowed these pleasures and treasures of nature to be portrayed with precision, giving enjoyment to others and leading in time to a life of inviting young, enquiring, minds to share the same enjoyment and understanding of that natural world.

It should not be over-looked, either, that only through Joan's studies did the world come to learn it was possible for a rabbit to have an anomalous left azygos vein along with its hemizygos veins, or that abnormal development of a rabbit's systemic arches occasionally occurred — heady stuff for a girl who used to count salamanders on the shore of Kalamalka Lake.

But worlds change.

Could it be that, in age, eyes that have seen such wondrous things over these decades, can shield their owner from a no-longer-caring

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world, one now soiled and raucous, by purposefully withdrawing from it? Perhaps it is one of life's little kindnesses to care for past memories in that way.

Now, having returned from the land where in the 1930s when she arrived, Len Hutton and Australian captain Don Bradman strove mightily to score centuries, Joan, too, has achieved that record. May the memories of better days and of all those precious things young eyes discovered, live with her for ever?

Congratulations Joan.

Malcolm Martin

=====

Messages to Joan, on her 100th birthday:

How do we love her, Let me count the ways

A teacher, a mentor, and a statesman indeed
Always encouraging others to lead

To lead over hills noting minute details
To gather all children with dip-nets and pails

Joan was happiest when inspecting such
creatures
As Hemiptera, Zygotera with all their weird
features

She hiked up the hills and waded in ponds
Discovering new orchids and quillwort fronds

And how could we forget those sardine cans
Holding pastels to paint with her dexterous
hands

The most beautiful pictures you ever did see
Of grasslands, of mountains, of rivulets and
tree

And now with a wee drap o the very best
sherry
We wish you a birthday that's Happy and
Merry

- Hylda Mayfield

There is a great lady named Joan
Who erupted from a really clever clone;
Her long busy life
Seems empty of strife
She's more like Queen bee than a drone!

- Kay Bart

It's a great thing to reach a hundred;
It's a great thing to do.
It's a great thing to be a hundred,
And to have your marbles too.

Still the sharpest tack on the corkboard,
Still the brightest bulb, it's true.
Happy Hundredth to Joan Heriot,
Happy Birthday to you!

- Tune: Tipperary

- Words: Christian Sjonnesen

below: Joan during an earlier time in Kal Park

