

NEWSPACKET



M A R C H - A P R I L 2 0 1 6

Cover Photo

Ray Arlt snapped this closeup shot of a rattlesnake which had emerged from its den in late March.

Hummingbirds

Hummingbird season is almost here. Karen Siemens helps us get our homes and gardens ready for our tiny avian friends. — page 2

NONC Natural Series

Malcolm Martin continues his series of short articles on natural history topics from the North Okanagan. Parts 5 to 8 appear in this issue on pages 6 to 8.

Birding 90 Years Ago

What birds were seen in the North Okanagan in 1926? We have part of a journal written at that time. Fascinating reading! Page 10.

The Hummingbirds are Hovering

by Karen Siemens

This article was published in The Morning Star newspaper in March.

Spring and the hummers have arrived! Time to unearth your feeders, give them a clean and fill them with nectar to give life support to our fine feathered friends after their long journey north. They rely on the nectar to give them energy to feed on insects which are not plentiful at the moment. If you cannot commit to maintaining a feeder for the whole season then consider planting a hummingbird garden in containers or hanging baskets. Here are some tips to responsibly and successfully feed the hummingbirds.

Clean Feeders

Clean with hot water (no soap).

Feeder should be completely dismantled and feeding ports taken apart.

Use a bottle brush for inverted feeders and pipe cleaners for the small holes.

Every time you refill your feeder take it apart and rinse with hot water.

Twice a week use the brush and pipe cleaners to ensure it's clean.

Black mould is a death sentence to hummingbirds. If there is any sign of it soak your feeder for one hour in a mixture of 1/4 cup bleach to one gallon of water. Rinse the parts several times in hot water to remove all traces of the bleach.

Feeders

Glass feeders are the best. If you buy plastic make sure that it is "Food Grade Plastic" or "UV Stabilized." This ensures there is no chemical leakage into the food they eat. Cheap plastic disintegrates and will contaminate the food.

Whether you use upside down feeders or the basin style make sure that the feeder can be completely dismantled for cleaning.

Food

The best food for the hummingbirds is made by you! One part white sugar to four parts water. Boil water then add sugar, stir till it dissolves. Cool to room temperature before filling feeder. You can store this in the fridge for seven days.

Never use brown sugar, honey or sugar substitutes as these contain components that will harm the birds.

Do not use red dye (the red on the feeder is all that is needed to attract them). Do not add scent.

If the food is cloudy it is bad; clean feeder and refill.

Even though it may not look like it, the food can go bad quickly in hot weather.

To avoid mould change your food frequently, err on the side of caution.

Temperature 25 degrees or less, change every four days; 25 to 30 degrees, every two days; over 30, every day.

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The Hummingbirds are Hovering cont'd:

Plants

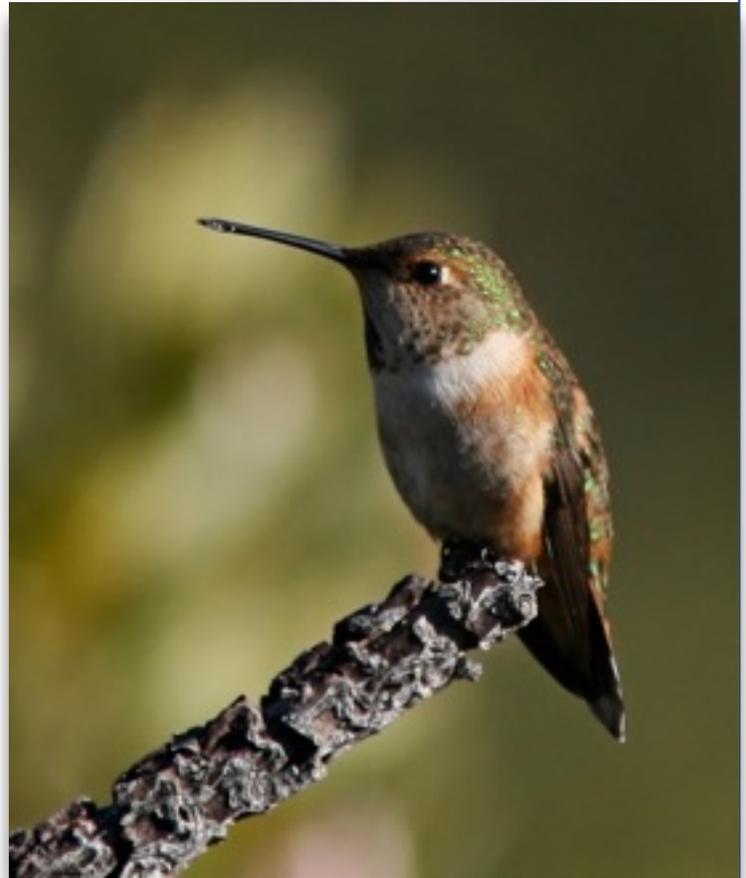
You may already have perennial hummingbird plants in your garden like bee balm, bleeding hearts, columbine, foxglove, honeysuckle, joe pye plant and Russian sage to name a few, but you can accent those plants with annuals in containers or hanging baskets. These can be salvia, fuschia, snapdragons, verbena, zinnia and the old favourite, petunias.

Keep your hanging baskets beyond the reach of predators.

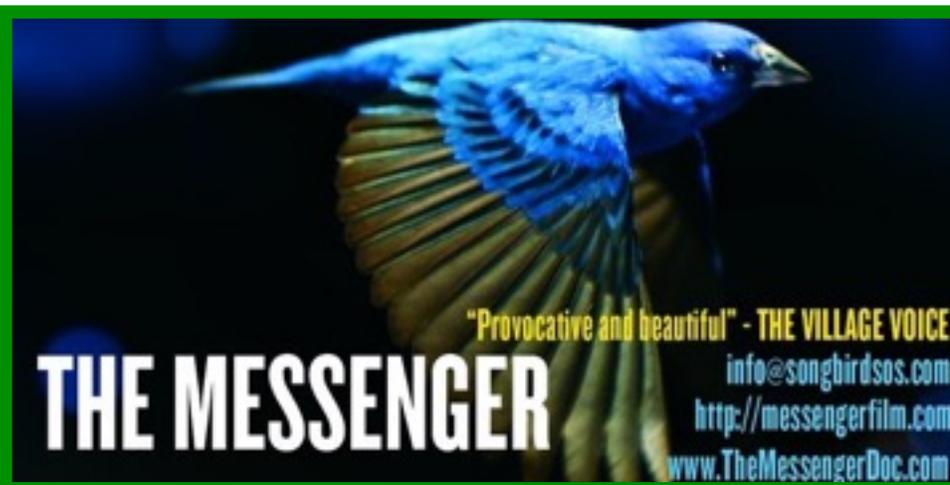
Enjoy another season of watching hummingbirds' antics in your garden or around your feeders.

For more information, see rpbo.org/hummingbirds.php (Rocky Point Bird Observatory in Victoria.) 🌐

Karen Siemens is a member of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club. To inquire about our hummingbird banding program, contact Gail Loughridge 250-545-7455 or kalliope@shaw.ca.



Female Rufous Hummingbird, courtesy of Wikipedia



NONC has made inquiries about having this important film about the perils faced by our songbirds shown in Vernon. We'll keep you posted.

Information and trailers are available at the websites shown.

NONC

Bat with white-nose syndrome confirmed in Washington state

NEWS RELEASE
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
via Ann Davis

OLYMPIA – White-nose syndrome (WNS) has been confirmed in a little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) found near North Bend – the first recorded occurrence of this devastating bat disease in western North America. The presence of this disease was verified by the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center.

WNS has spread quickly among bats in other affected areas, killing more than six million beneficial insect-eating bats in North America since it was first documented nearly a decade ago.

WNS is not known to pose a threat to humans, pets, livestock or other wildlife.

On March 11, hikers found the sick bat about 30 miles east of Seattle near North Bend, and took it to Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) for care. The bat died two days later, and had visible symptoms of a skin infection common in bats with WNS.

PAWS then submitted the bat for testing to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, which confirmed through fungal culture, molecular and pathology analyses that it had WNS.

“We are extremely concerned about the confirmation of WNS in Washington state, about 1,300 miles from the previous westernmost detection of the fungus that

causes the disease,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “Bats are a crucial part of our ecology and provide essential pest control for our farmers, foresters and city residents, so it is important that we stay focused on stopping the spread of this fungus. People can help by following decontamination guidance to reduce the risk of accidentally transporting the fungus.”

First seen in North America in the winter of 2006/2007 in eastern New York, WNS has now spread to 28 states and five Canadian provinces. USGS microbiologist David Blehert first identified the unknown fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, which causes the disease. WNS is named for the fuzzy white fungal growth that is sometimes observed on the muzzles of infected bats. The fungus invades hibernating bats' skin and causes damage, especially to delicate wing tissue, and physiologic imbalances that can lead to disturbed hibernation, depleted fat reserves, dehydration and death.

“This finding in a far-western location is unfortunately indicative of the challenges we face with the unpredictability of WNS,” said Suzette Kimball, director of the USGS. “This underscores the critical importance of our work to develop tools for early detection and rapid response to potentially devastating wildlife diseases.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leads the national WNS response effort, working with state and federal partners to respond to the disease. The Service's National White-nose Syndrome Coordinator Jeremy Coleman said the first step will be to conduct surveillance near where the bat was found to determine the extent of WNS in the area. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for bat management and

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White Nose Syndrome continued from page 4

conservation in Washington and will coordinate surveillance and response efforts.

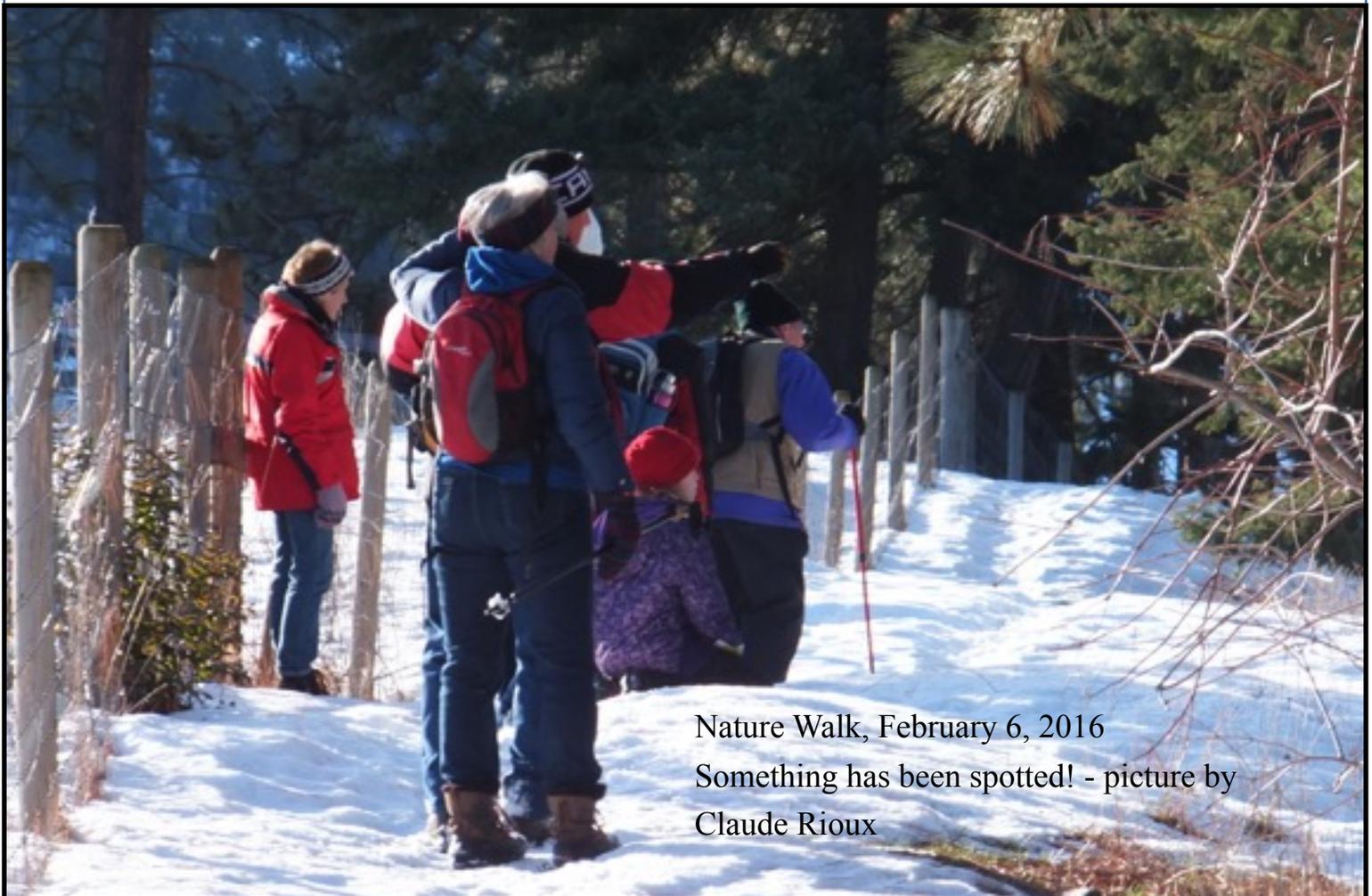
WDFW veterinarian Katie Haman said the disease is transmitted primarily from bat to bat, although people can carry fungal spores on their clothing, shoes or caving gear.

“The bat found near North Bend most likely had been roused from hibernation and was attempting to feed at a time of very low insect availability,” Haman said. “At this point we don’t know where the infected bat may have spent the winter, but it seems

likely that it was somewhere in the central Cascades.”

Haman said Washington state has 15 species of bats that benefit humans by consuming large quantities of insects that can impact forest health and commercial crops.

WDFW advises against handling animals that appear sick or are found dead. If you find dead bats or notice bats exhibiting unusual behavior such as flying outside during freezing weather, please contact the WDFW Wildlife Health Hotline at (800) 606-8768 or send an email to wildthing@dfw.wa.gov. 🌍



Nature Walk, February 6, 2016
Something has been spotted! - picture by
Claude Rioux

NONC Natural History

Parts 5 to 8 in a series by Malcolm Martin

#5 (or The Secret of Rose's Pond)

In the Inter-war years long ago, medical doctors used to make house-calls. Dr. E.R. Buckell of Salmon Arm also made pond-calls, having arranged before coming to Canada, to collect specimens of algae called Charaphytes, living in saline lakes to send to a colleague who had an interest in these obscure organisms. This is why in the mid-1930s a specimen collected at Sweet's Pond, the original name for Rose's Pond, was deemed to be new to science and named after its discoverers, father and son, as Buckell's Chara (*Chara buckellii*). Admittedly, determination of these advanced algae is not child's play, however it appears that no other finds have ever been made of Buckell's Chara and Vernon remains the only known location in Canada or in the world for that matter.

What makes these algae so fascinating to people with too much spare time is the fact that some students have proposed they may be an evolutionary link between the simple one celled algae and green plants. Size varies from small to as much as a metre in length with what passes for a stem with nodes and other structures (? proto-leaves) and spore-bearing bodies. Between nodes the stem is made up of amazingly long cells that may be as much as 10 or more centimetres long, which must make them among the longest in any living organism in the world.

Being unknown and unrecognized by normal folk is one cross to bear, yet Charaphytes live under another cloud - they stink. Skunk-like is sometimes used in descriptions along with garlicy. Living in alkaline waters leads to accumulation of unwanted chemicals which end up as a rough and hard surface layer giving rise to the kinder name of stonewort.

In the past Buckell's Chara could be seen from the pond edge until Vernon's treated sewage was cleared for spraying on surrounding grassland thus raising the water table and pond surface. Commonage Road has twice been relocated above the higher water level, the small island at the north end of the pond now lies beneath the waves and who knows what chemical changes have affected the water composition. Perhaps it is best to leave history to itself until another specialist comes along.

#6 (or Are you Now, or Have You Ever Been, A Tarantula?)

Broadly, spiders are divided into two major groups. First come the bigger chaps, mostly tropical and sub-tropical, though extending across the southern USA and up the west coast. These are spiders generally having sturdy bodies and stout legs classified as True Trap-door Spiders, Folding Trap-door Spiders, Purse Web Weavers, 'Ordinary' Tarantulas, Funnel Web Tarantulas and their extended family. All have mouth parts projecting forward horizontally.

The other group includes everyone else in the world of spiders or 'true' spiders, all of which have mouth parts projecting vertically downwards.

And the short answer to our title is yes, we do have one of the tarantula group in Vernon.

Admittedly it is no bigger than most other ground dwelling spiders. It excavates a vertical burrow, generously silk lined and culminating at the surface in two 'curtains' which can be drawn together to create a protective door against weather and roving parasitic spider wasps, as well as being an essential part in the capture of passing prey.

If our local trap-door spider had a common name it could be called Hagen's Folding Trap-door Spider (*Antrodiaetus hageni*). Vernon is the presently known northern limit which extends in Canada up from the US border.

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Although not really common, these spiders can be expected every year in some gardens, mostly the amorous males who have been cruising, hopeful for females, at night and sometimes found sitting bemused and lost the next morning on black plastic spread in the garden over new plantings of seeds. Their colour provides a useful quick identification hint being a rather effeminate pinkish-brown, seriously belying their nature.

#7 (or It's Not Easy Being Green)

Despite its reputation among this province's ecological reserves, Mara Meadows (mentioned in article #1) falls short of being a crowd pleaser. For most people a memorable botanical adventure needs colour, the more the better, putting late summer mountain meadows high on their agenda even though the colour there may be provided by only half a dozen dominant species. Mara Meadows, on the other hand, is largely green with a heavy weighting towards sedges and their ilk. For this reason it was not until recent years that several rather cryptic species came to light.

Walking through drier parts of the fen in late summer it is hard not to be accidentally tripped up by a tough member of the community. This is Beaked Spike-rush (*Eleocharis rostellata*). For most of the summer it grows in a moderate way in clumps perhaps up to half a metre tall, then in a late burst to achieve notoriety a few of the stems lengthen enthusiastically to a full metre. These then arch over until they can root firmly at the tips, quickly creating a new daughter plant. So dedicated to rooting are the arched stems that a casual walker can well catch a foot and be up-ended.

Beaked Spike-rush had been noted near the coast but its presence in the Interior was a new find adding to the list of rarities known at Mara Meadows. Since

then it has been found in a number of similarly alkaline sites.

It seems naming of sedge family members leaves their discoverers wanting in inspiration. When Brown Beak-rush (*Rhynchospora capillacea*) became a new record for BC it, too, was in late summer after the orchid viewers at Mara had gone home. This slender species of eastern North America has lightly scattered itself in damper parts of the fen, occasionally forming small, bright green patches of lawn. Since this first record for western Canada it also has been found in one other alkaline wetland. An intriguing question comes to mind on the presence of eastern wetland plants (this beak-rush as well as the *Liparis* orchid of article #1) in western Canada where all habitat would have been thickly ice-covered several times in past Ice Ages. Were they pushed south ahead of the ice (not easy in arid terrain) or introduced following deglaciation? If so, how?

#8 (or Grounded)

Readers may have noticed a distinct lack of birdlife in NNH 101, not due to malice aforethought, but largely because birds, being so highly mobile, their presence in any one area could just as well have been somewhere else. This is not to say notable records of accidental appearances in this area have not occurred or interesting summer resident records made. For instance, there was a time when Black Terns nested at the north end of Swan Lake and Western Grebe at the south end, as well as on Okanagan Lake; a time when late evening visits in summer to Kalamalka Park, Cosens Bay gate, would produce calls of Poor Will in the twilight, and for several consecutive years Prairie Falcon nesting on the cliffs overlooking Kalamalka Lake. There is, however, one bird story with a connection to the North Okanagan Naturalists Club.

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Natural History continued from page 7

Several decades ago Central Okanagan planners and engineers in their wisdom came to the conclusion that a fine example of a wetland situated in arid landscape (periodically visited by Avocets) near Glenmore Road, would make an excellent garbage dump. This duly transpired. The attraction of gulls to land fill dumps and their content brings in gulls from great distances so the birdlife of Kelowna was enhanced.

Not too far away and a short distance off the shore of Okanagan Lake near Carr's Landing is a small rocky island formerly known as Whiskey Island for reasons unknown, and now under the name James Grant

Island. At that time the nesting records for Herring Gulls in BC were all maritime but who in the avian world would willingly miss out on an attractive new food resource just because of habitually nesting hundred of kilometres away at the coast? Eventually savvy Herring Gulls with initiative took over the island, despite its heavy crop of Fragile Cactus, and established what was said to be the first inland nesting site in BC.

NONC had some management over the island, yet seldom if ever seemed to monitor or visit its shores. Transference of ownership to Nature Trust of BC, experienced in land management, is a better alternative. 🌐

Global Big Day—14 May 2016

from e-Bird

The second Global Big Day. We need your help to make it the biggest day of birding the world has ever seen. In 2015, more than 14,000 people in 135 countries entered almost 45,000 checklists, featuring 6,085 species of birds. All in a single day. In 2016, can we surpass those numbers? With your help, we can.

<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/savethedategbd2016/>



The Cornell Lab  
GLOBAL BIG DAY

NONC

NONC SING ALONG

by Joyce Hebbert

On a cold and snowy January evening (Friday the 29th), 22 singers gathered at Kay's Place to chase the winter blues away.

After a time of greeting and filling glasses with punch or wine, guest pianist Doug Salmon opened the first half of the sing along with a rousing rendition of "The Happy Wanderer." That song set the theme of "wandering" through music, and the first set took us around the world . . . to Canada, France, Ireland, USA, Scotland, Australia and Austria.

Favourites included "Four Strong Winds," "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," "Home on the Range," and "Waltzing Matilda." Two bird songs, three protest songs, and five spirituals followed.

More favourites were Blackbird," "If I Had a and a lively version of Soul."



"Bye, Bye, Hammer," "Rocka Ma

After a short break glasses and chat NONCers and and his wife Valerie, the songs included many "oldies." Several of these were traditional love songs, since Valentine's Day would be coming soon. Favourites were "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "I See the Moon," "Moonlight Bay," "Side by Side," and "Shine on Harvest Moon."

"Now is the Hour" was the appropriate closing song, followed by another refilling of glasses, enjoying the many goodies at the table, and more visiting . . . until it was literally "the hour to say goodbye." 🌐

Upcoming Nature Walks

The NONC Nature Walks, held every Saturday morning at 9:00 am and lasting up to 2 hours, continue to be popular. Here are some upcoming walks that you are invited to join.

Sat., April 9, 9:00 am, to Coldstream's "Erratic Rock". Meet on the shoulder of Grey Road, just north of Hwy 6.

Sat., April 16, 9:00 am, around Birdie Lake at Predator Ridge. Meet in the first parking lot after turning right off Predator Ridge Drive onto Village Centre Place.

Sat., April 30, 9:00 am, at the Swan Lake Nature Reserve. From Vernon, take Old Kamloops Road, turning into Stawns Honey. Go through gate and follow a gravel road 0.7 km to a parking area at the trail head. This walk is also part of the Unplug and Play Week.

Sun., May 1, 2:00 pm, **NOTE DAY & TIME**, on the BX Creek North Trail. Trail follows BX Creek from 48th Ave to Hwy 97. Meet at end of 20th Street, behind Rona. Info 250-503-2388, Harold. This walk is also part of the Unplug and Play Week.

We usually go for coffee after the walk. There is no fee for guests. Everyone is welcome.

Information from Harold Sellers
250-503-2388 or 250-307-3543.

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RECORD OF NORTH OKANAGAN BIRDS 1926

By Charles Haines, Coldstream BC

This journal of observations was written in 1926 — 90 years ago! Some of the birds are seldom, if ever, seen in the North Okanagan today. Some of the place names will be unfamiliar today; in a future issue we may explain the locations. Enjoy this journey into the past. Thanks to John Stelfox for sharing it. - Harold Sellers, Editor

January

- 1 Grosbeaks feeding with redpolls in Kirkpatrick Orchard
- 4 Robin, Giles' bush. About 40 pheasants, large flock of Waxwings
- 15 15 Mallards in Dennison swamp
- 17 Junco birds feeding around house; several Chickadees feeding in bush around stream; one Song Sparrow
- 147 Pheasants in Parks' orchard
- 22 Redwing Blackbirds, large flock at Coldstream Ranch

February

- 7 largest flock of Mallards I have seen in Dennison Swamp, majority drakes, one pair Teal
- 10 two Downy Woodpeckers in Giles' bush; several Chickadees
- 18 4 Meadowlarks on Middleton haystack
- 26 about 100 Redpolls feeding on birches
- 27 pair of partridges in Spicer orchard apparently mating, very mild weather

March

- 15 pair of Golden Eagles on Indian Reserve. Spent quite an hour watching these birds. They

appeared to be after the Coots which were huddled together on end of the lake, very scared; Downy Woodpecker in Long Lake trees

- 23 first swallow on telephone wires at Brayshaw's
- 24 first towhee close to home
- 28 Robins everywhere

April

- 8 8 Evening Grosbeaks about the side of the road close to home; first pair of American Goldfinches at Long Lake
- 11 Audubon Warbler male, at home
- 12 Pileated Woodpecker in Rome's bush
- 15 pair of Flycatchers, could not tell species
- 17 pair of Purple Finches — Cunliff's bush by the creek; first Lewis Woodpecker — Giles' orchard; one pair American Mountain Hawk at Long Lake
- 21 small flock White-crowned Chipping Sparrows; Golden Eagle; pair Bufflehead Duck — Long Lake; Rose-crowned Sparrows in Hunter orchard
- 25 Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Hunter orchard
- 28 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Dennison swamp
- 29 9 eggs in Pheasant's nest in Dennison swamp

May

- 2 Kansas Kingbird — Long Lake
- 3 Swallows and Martins everywhere
- 5 one pair of Train's Flycatchers
- 7 Lewis Woodpecker — several in poplars at Giles' and Homer-Dixon's
- 10 Audubon Warblers, Bullock's Warblers
- 23 Walk with Mr. Mackie, saw Lazuli Bunting, one pair; pair Mourning Doves; Sharp-shinned Hawk; One Hawk, believed Red-tailed
- 28 (evening) Spent about an hour watching a Mallard Duck with 12 young in the old skating rink.

To be continued in the next issue.

NONC

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC)
P.O. Box 473
Vernon, B.C. V1T 6M4

Website www.nonc.ca

EXECUTIVE

| | |
|----------------|--|
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| Trips | Pam Jenkins 545-0490 |
| Website | Harold Sellers 503-2388 |
| NatureKids | Marnie Williamson 545-4743 |

* Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program

PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Contact the following if you have questions.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| BC Nature | Pam Jenkins 545-0490 (sub) Peter Blokker 545-8297 |
| Birding | Peter Blokker 545-8297 |
| Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary | Aaron Deans 542-5122 |

LIFE MEMBERS

Ray Arlt
 Kay Bartholomew
 Joan Heriot*
 Phil Jones*
 Malcolm Martin
 Frank* & Mary Paul

* deceased

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Newspacket is published five times per year, in January-February, March-April, May-June, September-October and November-December.

Copy for publication should be sent to Harold Sellers, Editor, by e-mail to hikerharold@gmail.com or through the club postal address.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

On the first Wednesday of the month (September through May), we hold a meeting for members and visitors at the Village Green Hotel, Sierra Room II. Start time, 7:00 pm. Guest speakers, club news, refreshments.



NONC MEMBERSHIP

Clip or copy this form to begin or renew a membership with the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club. Annual dues are \$35 for an individual and \$50 for a couple or family.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____