

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS
JUNE 2022 NEWSLETTER



ENJOY YOUR SUMMER





The newsletter for the:
Williams Lake Field Naturalists
1305A Borland Road, Williams Lake BC, V2G 5K5

Membership fees: Family (\$35), single (\$30) or student (\$10) memberships can be mailed to the above address. Please complete the membership and waiver forms available at the Nature Centre (250) 398-8532, muskratexpress@shaw.ca or the web site below. For more information about the club please contact Fred McMechan at 392-7680 or e-mail Fred_McMechan@telus.net

Williams Lake Field Naturalists Website <http://www.williamslakefieldnaturalists.ca>
Scout Island Nature Centre Website <http://www.scoutislandnaturecentre.ca>

Executive of The Williams Lake Field Naturalists: presidential Team Margaret Waring (Chairperson), Don Lawrence (Scout Island affairs) and Ordell Steen (Communications/liaison), secretary Nola Daintith, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Jean Oke, Cathie Hamm, Sean Donahue, Lara Roorda and Fred McMechan



Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter in September. If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the next Muskrat Express please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (778 764-2752) or e-mail us at muskratexpress@shaw.ca



From Jim at Tern Inn: The Norther Flickers that nested in the Aspen 15 ft. from my front deck all fledged a week ago. It has been fun watching the adults come and go as they prepared the cavity and then later when they were feeding the young. It was most interesting to watch at adult feed the young birds once they came up to the opening to accept the food. The adult stuck its bill way down inside the juvenile's bill and then it appeared that the juvenile grabbed hold of adult's bill as the adult hammered as though it was digging a new hole in the tree. Here is a link to a feeding video; <https://youtu.be/hKKIRxOWjSE>



A family of Tree Swallows left a neighbour's nestbox yesterday resulting in panicked parents flying around trying to keep track of all of them. The adult Chickadees and Purple Finches are at the feeder steady as they take seeds to their fledged young that are squawking and fluttering their wings begging to be fed. I have been watching a Dusky Flycatcher's nest waiting for the young to arrive and the feeding to begin. I am hoping for some good pictures and with some luck maybe a bit of video.

I have good news on the Artic Tern nesting. I have now confirmed that all 3 pairs of Terns have nests on 3 different islands. A week ago, I found 2 Bald Eagles and a Raven on Goose Island where one of the pair are nesting. The parents were aggressively attacking the invaders and I was certain the nest had fallen prey to the invasion. Today I returned to the island for a closer look. The adults had returned to the nesting site. While photographing one of the adults I noticed some



movement behind the bird and figured it was a sandpiper. When I looked closer, I was very pleased to discover it was 2 young Arctic Tern Chicks. I had time to stop by Aldo Island where another pair are nesting. My many pictures did not produce pictures of young but I am certain the young have hatched and were hiding.

Just a quick note on the Tatlayoko Bird Banding Station. The station will be operating again this summer from August 1st until at least the end of September. They open at sunrise and usually stay until the number of birds being caught drops off, usually around 11:00am. If the weather is not appropriate, they will not be operating. It is well worth visiting the station as they welcome visitors. Unfortunately, I cannot get you a link to their website or the blog but I am certain a Google search of "Tatlayoko Lake Bird Banding Station" will get you started.

Notes from the Director's Meetings.

By Margaret Waring



We had three recent board meetings, since our AGM. These meetings were on April 13th, May 18th and June 21st. We continue to meet with a combination of zoom and in person meetings. This is our last Muskrat Newsletter until Fall.

As always, we encourage involvement from membership in all areas. Please contact any one of us if you have any questions or information to share.

I feel I can never give enough thanks for all the many hard working dedicated volunteers and people involved with the many activities such as the board members, Jim doing the newsletter, the crew of planners and leaders for field trips, the team working on the trail repairs and the grounds and buildings, and Sue and Martin for all they do for the operation of the Nature Centre.

From the Board meetings;

We made the 3 co-president model official again for the next year.

Sean has been waiting for signed authorization from permits he applied for that are needed for the next actions for the board walk repairs.

Ordell has organized obtaining and planting native trees and shrubs on Scout Island.

Don has sent out an updated list of projects needing to be done for Scout Island.

The Strategic plan for the Scout Island Nature Centre was officially accepted. Nola and her team, hired and volunteers, have done an excellent job working on this for the last few years.

Plans are advancing for a new modern interactive web site for the Williams Lake Field Naturalists.

Nature Kindergarten

We have had meetings and sent letters regarding the ending of the Nature Kindergarten program. The School District is no longer having a Nature Kindergarten but plans to have the 2 kindergarten classes from Marie Sharpe sharing the use of the classroom in the Nature House. This was done without consultation or collaboration with the Field Naturalists. We are advising the School District that we support community nature education and we are attempting to work with them to establish a positive working relationship with communication and collaboration. We hope to establish communication and a program acceptable to all involved.

City of Williams Lake Public Survey on Water Front Enhancement project

The City is asking for input on its water front enhancement project. They are encouraging resident feedback and community engagement. This is early planning stages and they have a survey of 15 questions. The survey is available online at www.williamslake.ca/waterfrontsurvey or www.surveymonkey.com/r/P886W8L or paper copies are available from City Hall or the Cariboo Memorial Recreation Complex. We encourage you to check out and complete the survey. The Williams Lake Field Naturalist Board of Directors are sending a letter in response to the survey.

Field Trip Reports

Birding at Scout Island May 8th

By Betty Donahue

After a two year hiatus due to Covid, we are happy to be offering field trips again. Eleven eager birders gathered at Scout Island on Mother's Day. Lubna Khan and Betty Donahue led a leisurely walk around the various trails to identify a multitude of birds and waterfowl. Some of the highlights included watching an osprey fishing in the marsh, getting close views of the skittish wood duck and viewing some painted turtles sunning on logs in the bay near the Willow Trail. The weather was perfect for viewing the birds and ducks in their colorful spring plumage.

Hiking/birding Spokey Hollow May 15th

By Betty Donahue

Five intrepid birders explored the forested area of Spokey Hollow Trail on the Westsyde on May 15th. The forecast showers did not materialize and the blustery winds were barely felt in the forest. The highlight of the trip was a sighting of a Pacific Wren in a gully near a small stream. We all stopped in our tracks as we heard its complex song. The Merlin app (free and highly recommended) on our phone helped identify that we were listening to a Pacific Wren. Thus began the search for this elusive bird and Lubna was successful in getting some great photos. It was a great way to spend a day with friends.



Lubna pointing out the Pacific Wren. Photo by Sue Correia.

Wednesday Evening Paddle on Williams Lake

By Peter Opie

Five kayakers came out for this trip under the threat of inclement weather. All went well as we encountered only a brief, light shower. We enjoyed a close encounter with a loon that repeatedly bobbed up next to our kayaks in still water in the southeast bay. We managed to paddle a short distance up the fast-flowing San Jose without disturbing the pelicans loafing on the sandbar at the river mouth. The bird song was generally less than we expected for that time of day and year in such a usually birdy location.

Russet Bluff Hike

By Peter Opie

All nine hikers thoroughly enjoyed this hike to the summit. We discussed the forest condition and noted the fuel mitigation projects along the way. The false Soloman's-seal was in bloom with its sweet-smelling, white plumes. We also encountered yellow coralroot, a saprophytic orchid along the trail. The view from the top was fabulous. There we were impressed by a display of an apparently perturbed falcon, likely a peregrine, that seemed to believe that we had intruded into its personal space, perhaps a nesting site.

More on the trip from Maria and Sue Strawberry Blossoms, Fake Solomon Seal, Sarsaparilla, Douglas Maple, Wild Cranberry, and an asparagus looking orchid...to name just a few, took us all to the top of Russet Bluff on the evening of June 15, 2022. What a view!

Not only did a sudden change of weather tell us it was time to start our descent, but the furious kakking of a peregrine falcon would not let up until we were out of sight!

Thank you, Peter for taking us on spectacular and perfectly timed hike!



Churn Creek Wildfire Hike

By Peter Opie

Although it had rained the night before, the road was decent and the weather for the hike very pleasant. Eight of us enjoyed viewing the landscape and lush green regrowth of the vegetation. However, it was impressive to note how many trees had been killed and how hot the fire had been in forested patches. In the grassland, it appeared that the fire had passed through very quickly, burning bunchgrasses, sagebrush and juniper. We viewed some small wetlands where Friends of Churn Creek are conducting monitoring research with the aim to understand the dynamics of these critical features in an arid landscape. At one site by a burned aspen copse, we were scolded by a nesting downy woodpecker. It was well worth stopping en route at the kiosk and interpretative trail to view the display of prickly pear cactus in full bloom.



Williams Lake Field Naturalists

Links to Zoom Presentations Available for Viewing on YouTube

Leo Rankin and Connie Heussler January 20, 2021: Birding Tour of Eastern Australia. Great photos and discussions of lots of birds of eastern Australia. Also landscapes.

<https://youtu.be/3C1045tLLCc>

Don Lawrence. April 14, 2021 Scout Island Nature House Entrance Construction 2020; Photos with included text of the Nature House Entrance Construction project. Covers all phases of the project and acknowledges contributors.

<https://youtu.be/vHxHCOUIE4g>

Dr. Rob Higgins, Thompson Rivers University, May 6 2021 “The social insects of BC: Order thriving in a world of chaos” A fascinating slide show on the nature of social behaviour in insects and the species of BC which are social: ants, some bees, some wasps, and termites.

<https://youtu.be/sVdPpkEmGp8>

Tim Philpott, Research Soil Scientist, Min of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Williams Lake. March 31, 2021 Fungal Ecology and Soil Geochemistry. A very interesting and somewhat technical presentation on the interrelations of soil fungi, soil chemistry (especially Manganese), and storage of carbon in soils. Considers treatments that may increase Carbon storage and thus reduce CO2 release.

<https://youtu.be/liu0dDIPumY>

Norm Zirnhelt, BC Lake Stewardship Society, and Lucie Thomson, BC Ministry of Environment on present and historic water quality and ecology of Williams Lake, presented on November 23, 2021. An excellent summary of water quality and ecology data, present and historic, from Williams Lake, BC. Summarizes chemical and physical attributes of the lake, especially phosphorous content and temperature, and compares to other selected lakes in BC.

https://youtu.be/IYuYvhD_Rpg

Rick and Moya Stokes, “Ethiopia Culture and Wildlife” February 8, 2022 presentation. A fascinating description of cultural features and birds and other wildlife during a month-long tour of Ethiopia in 2020.

https://youtu.be/LJ_2HsBWSZU

Dr. Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz, “A collaborative fire history of Flat Rock (Ne Sextsine) in the Williams Lake Community Forest”. March 9, 2022. Kelsey’s presentation to the WL Field Naturalists describes the historical frequency and severity of fires as a guide to management of these Douglas-fir forests. Information about fires, its use and effects on forest composition was provided by tree ring studies, oral history, and archaeology. An excellent summary

from the Williams Lake area.

<https://youtu.be/SJsHIHHC6s>

Michael Crowe, “Big Bar Slide: Effects on salmon and actions to mitigate effects”. March 22, 2022. A very comprehensive description of the October 2018 slope failure which deposited tons of material in the Fraser River in the Big Bar Creek area and massive efforts by DFO and others to mitigate effects on migrating salmon. A very informative presentation by a key manager of the response team.

<https://youtu.be/rCbQg4uI3AQ>

Jim Sims, “Birds of Eagle Lake (2021-2022)” March 25, 2022. Outstanding photographs and tales about common and uncommon birds of Eagle Lake in the Chilcotin Region of BC, by Jim Sims from "Tern Inn". This was a presentation to the WL Field Naturalists AGM. Jim has been recording and photographing the many bird species which occur near his home for several years, with a special focus on Arctic Terns. This presentation includes his many striking photos from 2021/22 and an update on the terns.

<https://youtu.be/gaxPTfhG0dY>

Chloe Howarth, “Western rattlesnakes in BC: Ecology and threats to survival”. March 30, 2022. Chloe summarized her research and that of others working in Dr Karl Larsen’s lab at Thompson Rivers University, on ecology of Western Rattlesnakes in BC and efforts to reduce threats to their survival.

<https://youtu.be/-OOFxibodPs>

A Motus Tower on the Roof

A Motus Wildlife Tracking Station has been installed on the roof of the Scout Island Nature House. It is part of a global network of collaborative tracking stations located in North America (mostly in the United States) and Europe but also in South America and Australia. Stations in the network receive radio signals from tiny nano-transmitters attached to birds and other animals passing within a few kilometers of the station. The collaborative network tracks the animals’ migration (“motus” is Latin for movement). Transmitters have been attached mostly to birds but also to bats, butterflies, and even dragonflies. The Motus system is a collaborative project of researchers and others led by Birds Canada, a non-profit society, with many partners and supporters including several universities and the Government of Canada.

Tiny nano-transmitters are attached by individual research projects to the bodies of flying animals. On birds the transmitters are attached by tiny wires so that the transmitter lies over the tail of the bird and does not restrict changes in the bird’s body size. Each tiny transmitter sends a few signals each minute and as the bird passes within a few kilometers (up to 8 km under good conditions) of a Motus station the receiver picks up the signal which includes a code identifying the specific transmitter. The collaborative network of stations documents the migration of the bird.



An advantage of the Motus system is that it is a collaborative project which benefits many projects studying migration patterns, including those which are documenting effects of a changing climate. In addition, transmitters can be lighter, smaller and relatively less expensive than satellite transmitters. In contrast to banding and recapturing, the Motus system allows continuous monitoring of wildlife locations and movements, as long as there are sufficient receiving stations. In BC, Motus stations have been established along a corridor from Kamloops to Vancouver, in the South Okanagan, on Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii, in Prince George, at Tatlayoko Lake, and in the Peace River region. The Williams Lake Field Naturalists will help to maintain and download the data from the tracking station located on the roof of the Nature House. For more information on

the Motus network check <https://motus.org>.

The station at Scout Island was established on May 12 by Birds Canada as one of their vast networks of tracking stations in North America.

SPRING YARD AND GARDEN SALE

By Margaret Waring

Our annual yard and garden sale took place on Saturday May 14th, a bit later than usual this year. I felt it was a successful event because we had so many members involved, helping, donating, shopping, selling and cleaning up too. The proceeds from the sale go toward the Williams Lake Field Naturalist annual bursary for a student graduating from Grade 12 at Lake City Secondary. This year we raised our bursary to \$1500 and we earned \$1552.06! Leftovers from our sale were donated to local thrift stores and the Rotary Club for their book sale.

The yard sale was set up a bit differently than previous years. We wanted to avoid the big indoor crowd. We used outdoor tents and had the plants in the school yard and books in the Nature House. The weather cooperated! The sale was less crowded. This style required more volunteers than usual and they were there and did a wonderful job.

I thank everyone very much for their contributions.



Scout Island Nature Centre

By Sue Hemphill

Scout Island is a great place for learning and exploring. Sam Howett and Kristy Truell, two UBC Teacher Candidates each spent three weeks at Scout Island.

Their time at the Nature Centre was spent learning about nature education and how they can implement it in their own classrooms. They really got immersed in the Scout Island experience, enjoying birdwatching, dipping for invertebrates, and leading programs. Sam Howett, upon reflecting on her short time at Scout Island said, “I have just learned so much, there’s so many different aspects of outdoor education that I’ve never had the chance to experience before”. It just goes to show that sometimes, the ones learning at Scout Island are not only the children, but the adults as well.

Weed Warriors are needed

This summer and fall there is a need to have volunteers help with the removal of invasive plants at the Scout Island Nature Centre. Unfortunately, there may not be any paid crews available to help us. Fred McMechan will act as the volunteer coordinator to set up schedules for volunteers to assist with this endeavour.

We will focus mainly on removing the following plants: thistle, burdock, stickweed and later in the summer,



Weed Warriors battling the weeds at SINC

nightshade. If there is a need other plants may be considered for removal.

Schedules in July will be forthcoming. If you cannot participate during these times, feel free to come at any time to the Nature Centre to help us remove invasives.

For more information, please contact Fred at 250 392 7680 or at fred_mcmeehan@telus.net “

Remaining Williams Lake Field Naturalist Field Trips

It is not too late to add more trips to this list please contact Jim at muskratexpress@shaw.ca or (778)764-2752

Beaver Valley Paddle

Sunday, 17 July (**Please note the date change**)

Led by Peter Opie

We will paddle 15 km of Beaver Creek from Chambers Lake to Beaver Valley Provincial Park and back. This lovely valley trip will pass through three lakes in the chain, through old-growth forest and a mile along a slow and lush meandering creek. We should expect to see wildlife feathered and otherwise. By mid-July, reduced current should provide for easy return upstream. This would be a leisurely, three-hour trip one way. Richard Case will be our guide. We will put in at David and Susan Zirnhelt's, 5679 Jacobson Road. Meet there at 9:00 am or at Scout Island at 8:00 am to carpool. Call Peter 250 392-1440 if you need more information.

Churn Creek Goose Lakes Hike

Sunday, 11 September

Led by Peter Opie and Jim Young

This is a joint excursion with the Friends of Churn Creek. We will access the Goose Lakes from Gang Ranch. A moderate hike will view a variety of ecosystems including the wetlands with lunch spot at Cougar Point for the view of Churn Creek and grassland benches on both sides. Bring good boots, a hat, water and a lunch. We will travel the 2000 Road via Farwell Canyon. For car-pooling, meet at the wye parking lot west of A&W at 7:00 am. Expect return to Williams Lake by 5:00 pm. Call Peter 250 392-1440 if you need more information.

Junction Sheep Range

Sunday October 23rd (Leader: Fred McMechan 392 7680)

Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am. Bring a lunch and your binoculars for this annual day long drive and hike into the park. This will be the peak of the California Big-Horned Sheep rut so look forward to seeing the sheep and perhaps you will be lucky and see or hear some head-butting.

Thanks to all of the field trip Leaders for volunteering your time and expertise. It is unfortunate that Covid is still present in our community and we request that you stay at home if you have any covid symptoms. If restrictions are re-implemented it may be necessary to cancel field trips. Please watch for email announcements or check with the trip leaders if you need clarification.

We have a very good selections of trips for you, however there is still room for more and we would welcome new offerings especially for the Summer or the Fall.

We hope to see you on some of these outings.



Nature Fun & Art in Nature

Summer programs for ages 4-13

Programs run weekly from July 11th - August 19th

Nature Fun: Ages 4 - 8

4-year-olds must be entering kindergarten of fall 2022

\$15 per session

Morning sessions from 9:30am - 12:00 pm or

afternoon sessions from 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Monday (morning and afternoon), Tuesday (morning and afternoon), Thursday (morning and afternoon), and Friday (morning only)

Art in Nature Adventures: Ages 8 - 13

\$25 per session

Wednesdays from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Art activities, exploring, observations and games

Themes of the week

July 11th - 15th Magnificent mammals

July 18th - 22nd Plants and pollinators

July 25th - 29th Beautifully bizarre bugs

August 1st - 5th The wonderful world of water

August 8th - 12th Eggs-sighting birds

August 15th - 19th Don't take rocks for granite

with the support of the
Cariboo Regional District
& City of Williams Lake
via the

central cariboo
arts
and culture society

To register please email us at scoutisland@shaw.ca
or call at (250) 398-8532

Registration starts June 6th, 2022

Funding also provided
by Canadian Summer
Jobs Program