

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS
APRIL + MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER





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, Sue Hemphill and Fred McMechan

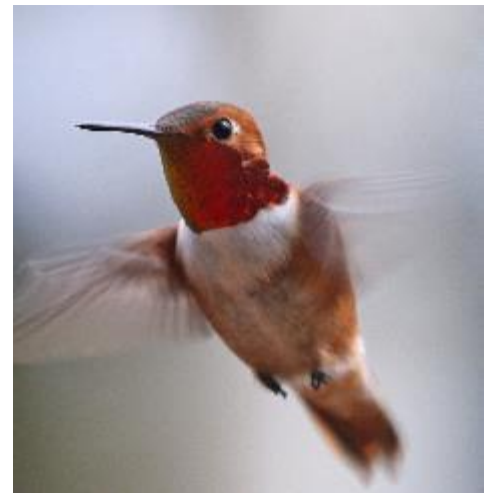


Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter in June. If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the next Muskrat Express please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (778 764-2752) or e-mail us at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



From Jim at Tern Inn: With each morning walk we find new returning bird species. Today it was a winnowing Wilson's Snipe and when we arrived back at the Inn the first Hummingbird buzzed the post where the feeder hung last fall. The feeder was quickly brought out of storage, filled with syrup and hung back in place. It was not long before the Hummer was back to fill its tank after a long flight. It was not much longer before a female did the same thing.

The highlight for the spring season was a Say's Phoebe that was found on Sunday's morning walk. This was a first sighting for me at Eagle Lake and for the eBird Eagle Lake hotspot [Eagle Lake, Chilcotin, Cariboo District, BC, CA - eBird Hotspot](#). It was a milestone for Eagle Lake as it is the 200th bird species recorded here. It will not be long before the lake is clear of ice and the Arctic Terns return.



Field Trips for Williams Lake Field Naturalists 2023

If you did not attend Sunday's annual first field trip of the year you missed a great outing. Thanks to Ray Hornby for leading the trip. To participate on any of the club trips you must be a member of the club. If you are not a member and do not want to join the club but wish to participate there is a one-day membership available for \$5.00 and you will be required to sign a waiver form. If you have had recent contact with covid or have cold symptoms please do not attend the trip.

Birding at Scout Island

Sunday May 14th. (Leader: Betty Donahue 250-267-3353)

Come explore the various habitats around Scout Island as we identify a large variety of birds and water fowl in their bright breeding plumage. Meet at the Nature House parking lot at 8 AM and join your fellow birders for a casual two-hour walk. Please bring binoculars.

The remainder of the field trip list can be found at the end of the newsletter. Thanks to all of the club members who have volunteered to lead trips this year. Those of us who are unable to attend your trip look forward to a report and pictures from the trip.

Spring Plant and Yard Sale

Saturday May 13th

The Spring Plant and Yard and Garage Sale will take place at Scout Island on **Saturday May 13th from 9:30 AM until 1:00 PM. Your help is needed to make this event a success.**

The sale is popular and involves many of our members and the community. The purposes are to raise funds for a \$1500. student bursary for the graduating class from Lake City Secondary and to help with recirculating items no longer used or needed. Please help with advertising and invite your friends. Plan for a shopping visit. Please donate items for us to sell.

Plants are best sellers. If you are able, please share some seedlings you have grown. When you do yard work remember the plants that you divide can be purchased by others. Maybe you have a plant you want to move or do not like. Dig it out and we will find a new home for it. House plants are sold too.

Contributions are essential to make the sale successful. Our book collection brings in browsers. We have gardeners, antique searchers, bargain hunters, people wanting sporting and camping and craft items and tools etc. We have garage sale visitors coming to look.

If you have a bit of time **please consider helping** for an hour or two. I need a crew to set up on May 12th Friday afternoon and a crew is needed for clean up at 1PM on Saturday afternoon May 13th and I need some sellers during the sale.

Please drop off sale items at the Nature House on the afternoon / early evening of Friday May the 12th. You can also drop off items on Saturday morning before 9AM.

Please contact me by phone or email if you are able to help or if you have any questions.

My contact information is: mewaring@hotmail.com or home phone 250 398 7724 or cell 604 813 1043.

Thanks in advance.

Margaret Waring

Annual General Meeting (AGM)



By Margaret Waring

Friday night, March 31st the AGM for the Williams Lake Field Naturalists took place at the Nature House. We had a delicious potluck supper to start the evening. The meeting began with a presentation by Sean Donahue to Phil Ranson who has organized the

Christmas Bird Count for 27 years. Directors elected for next year are the

same as last year with the addition of Sue Hemphill. The positions of President and Vice President remain vacant. At the Directors meeting on April 5th the previous 3 co-president model was re-established. After the AGM Wilbur presented pictures and videos of life on Scout Island.



Wilbur's Coot



Thanks, Phil, for Many Merry Christmas Bird Counts

Wilbur Saunders and his wife Thelma were guests at our Annual General Meeting. You might see Wilbur at Scout Island as he often visits, taking pictures and videos of animals and birds. With support from Cathie Hamm

a presentation was created and presented at the Annual General Meeting. I especially liked the picture of the Coot as it is not often that you get to see Coot feet!

Thank you, Wilbur, for sharing your photography.

Williams Lake Field Naturalist 2022 President Report

This was a year with as always, projects occurring and changes happening. It was a year with COVID 19 restrictions decreasing and some in person events.

There were 7 Director Meetings. These have been a combination of Zoom and in person. A wide variety of items and issues and events are presented.

We had some great programs and presentations that also were a mix of zoom and in person. The programs included A Visit to Ethiopia February 8th, Fire History of Flat Rock in Williams Lake March 9th, learning about the Big Bar Slide into the Fraser on March 22nd, Western Rattle Snakes on March 30th and a presentation of Chilcotin Birds along with the AGM on March 25th. These programs have been recorded and can be viewed at any time with the links found on our web site. We are trying to schedule at minimum one event per month. In November we had a presentation about water use in Williams Lake.

2022 included 14 Field trips where members visited local areas such as Fox Mountain Trails, Russet Bluff, Williams Lake, Bird Watching at Scout Island and in the Creek Valley. Some trips were further away going to Farewell Canyon, Beaver Valley and Churn Creek. The traditional first trip of the year was to Alkali Lake in April and the last trip to the Junction Sheep Range in October. Thank you to the planners and presenters and leaders. The contributions are significant and enjoyed by members of the club.

The Williams Lake Field Naturalists have a contract to manage Scout Island with the City. This year fund raising and permits and materials and volunteer labour were collected to build the beautiful boardwalk on the willow trail where flood damage had destroyed the old board walk. This was a phenomenal effort by many contributors and we thank and appreciate all of them.

The committee putting together The Nature Centre Strategic Plan completed their work and the document can be found on the web site. We thank them for their time and effort and useful guidelines.

We won the city's Accessibility Award for the new front entrance. This was presented at a public city council meeting. The Nature Centre Kindergarten program was changed from the district wide program to the two kindergarten classes from Marie Sharpe sharing the classroom space for two days a week each. Meetings occurred trying to establish better communication and collaboration.

We had a successful Yard and Garden Sale to fund raise for the bursary the Williams Lake Field Naturalists present to a Lake City Secondary School graduating student.

From early spring to late fall the "Weed Warriors" are hard at work continuing to battle invasive weeds at the Nature Centre.

A presentation was made to City Council by Ordell Steen and Sue Hemphill for an increase in our grant for operating Scout Island.

We have a new Blue Bird Route Coordinator (Lloyd Csizmadia) and he has gathered route information and created articles for the newsletter.

A new Web Site for the Williams Lake Field Naturalists was launched and we hope you have all taken a look at it. Communication also occurs by email and the Newsletter called the Muskrat Express. Six editions were circulated in 2022.

2022 concluded with our 55th annual Christmas Bird Count.

Many volunteers make many contributions in this organization. We thank them and enjoy working with them.

Respectfully submitted

Co-presidents of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists

Don Lawrence, Ordell Steen and Margaret Waring.



Spring Cleaning!

Loyd Csizmadia, Bluebird Program Coordinator for WLFN
lmccsiz@gmail.com

April 14th was a lovely day to clean and repair bird boxes. I saw Pat on his route and Christine on hers. Further along Highway 20, Fred, Rodger, and I removed old nests from 32 houses between Race Track Road and the old Big B tire store. Each box contained a story about the occupants (or lack thereof), which Fred recorded for the benefit of future project managers. One story in particular dominated Fred's route in 2022: a lot of new birds successfully fledged! How do boxes cleaned in April of 2023 tell us about the breeding success of 2022?



Rodger and Fred discuss the location of nest boxes along Fred's route.



Rodger removes a successful Bluebird nest from its box.

Each old nest reveals a lot of information which, when used in conjunction with the data collected during breeding season, can tell us whether our efforts to maintain a route have been worthwhile.

A Mountain Bluebird nest has probably been successful if it is flattened to some degree and empty. In my experience, Bluebirds are quite tidy, regularly removing fecal packets from the nest as the brood matures. Tree Swallows, on the other hand, appear to clean nothing. The fluffy feathers that once protected the eggs will be caked with dry feces. This is the hallmark of a successful Swallow nest. If my interpretations are accurate, it appears that Fred had 12 successful Bluebird nests and 13 successful Swallow nests. Five boxes were mostly empty (contained bits of grass, a few feathers), one contained a partial nest, and two boxes had been cleaned by a Good Samaritan, so unfortunately, we don't know what happened!

Although most of Fred's boxes indicated a happy ending to the breeding season of 2022, there was some mortality: three unhatched Bluebird eggs in one box, one in a second, and one dead Tree Swallow that was ready to fledge in a third. Rather minimal, really. It is also worth noting that three boxes contained two nests, one on top of the other. So, it is possible that those boxes produced more successful broods than Fred has recorded. Fortunately, these nests were easily identified as last year's. Some years, the newly arrived birds beat us to the boxes. If you see birds in, on, or near a specific box, please look closely at the nest before removing it. Freshly woven grass indicates a female Mountain Bluebird is at work, and the presence of clean, fluffy feathers suggests a Tree Swallow is ready to lay her first egg. Rodger and I found one Tree Swallow nest under construction, so we made a note and closed the door. Egg-laying does not normally commence until May, so it is probably safe to clean boxes until late April. If your route is in a warmer valley--for example, Mission Road, Dog Creek Road, and the like--you may want to stop cleaning boxes a little earlier.

Michaela and I maintained our Becher's Prairie route on Friday, April 21st. Even though the snow had just recently melted, dust rose from the track and the vegetation crunched dryly beneath our boots. Flocks of Sandhill Cranes flew over our heads for most of the day, and large rafts of waterfowl filled the ice-free segments of open water on the nearby ponds.

At first, Mountain Bluebirds were noticeably absent. As the temperature rose over the day, however, more and more appeared: seven pairs exploring boxes, five unattached males in a flock, and one that we heard near a newly constructed nest. Tree Swallows were nowhere to be seen or heard, but Mountain Chickadees had established what appeared to be two active nests where we usually record one.

After four and a half hours of walking and working, we were back at our truck. I am so fortunate to have such a capable and devoted partner. Using her I-Pad, Michaela records the story of each box as well as what she hears and observes nearby. I too clean boxes and gather information. And I do all of the repairs. This year, our route required a lot of handiwork! Loose boxes needed tightening, lids reattaching, and downed boxes reconnecting to their posts. Imagine how much more time this route would take if I worked alone? With two of us, I can relax and observe. There is always something delightful to enjoy. Or something unusual! On this occasion, I witnessed what seemed like a Bluebird version of musical chairs. I had just completed several repairs along a single fence line. While working, I observed four pairs of Mountain Bluebirds. Each female appeared to have a mate, a territory, and a house. The repair of just two houses destabilized this situation. Females traded partners; some males gave chase; new males moved in. No doubt some poor fellow lost his seat by the end of it all!



Michaela Captures an Unknown Plant

Back at the truck, I dismantled two old boxes which I had exchanged for new ones. It is best not to leave broken boxes on the range, especially if livestock are present. One nail or screw can mean a costly vet bill. If I can't carry a box back to the truck, I will dismantle it and pocket the hardware, keeping the re-usable pieces (plywood has become quite costly) and disposing of the rest where it won't be a bother.



Another Kind of Home on Becher's Prairie. Can Anyone Tell Me Who Lives Here?

So how successful was our Becher's Prairie route in 2022? The answer is complicated. In 2022 we monitored 59 boxes. Fortunately, we recorded breeding data on June 3 and July 12. As a result, we saw not only which of the May/June broods succeeded but also noted how many boxes were being used for second broods in June/July. While cleaning the boxes on April 21, 2023, we concluded that our route produced 43 successful nests and 9 failed ones. Notice how I said "our route." Some boxes were used twice. This was the case on 6 occasions. By species, Mountain Bluebirds had 19 successful nests and 6 that failed; Tree Swallows had 23 successful nests and 2 that failed; and Mountain Chickadees had one success and one failure. Mortalities over the entire breeding season included 16 Mountain Bluebird eggs and one young, 2 Tree Swallow eggs and 5 young, and one adult Mountain Chickadee. It appears that the successes outweigh the failures, but given that some boxes remain unproductive, there is still room for improvement.

I wish you all a safe and happy season. Please tread gently on the land.

Fir beetle Anti-aggregation pheromones

Peter Opie has again purchased bulk pheromones of MCH double bubble capsules for Douglas-fir trees. Fir beetles will very soon be emerging as adults and looking for nice old fir trees to raise a family. If they are successful with a mass attack, those trees are doomed. These capsules slowly emit a scent through the peak flight season that tells adventuring beetles to move along as the treated trees and their neighbours are already full of beetles. Generally, beetle populations

are at a lower, endemic level. However, populations can build up locally where fir trees have been stressed or damaged. The preferred host trees are old, have intrinsic value as habitat and beauty and are irreplaceable. Phone Peter 392-1440 or text 250 267-4104 for pheromones or more information.



Scout Island Nature Centre

By Sue Hemphill

Note: The Scout Island Nature Centre Annual Report is available now on scoutisland.ca

We have three great university students hired to be summer staff-Madi Riplinger, Cleary Manning and returning Adrien Zimmerman. They start on May 1 and will be jumping in to assist Martin with the grade 7 Ecosystem program for Earth Challenge and then the Salmon Fry release.

Sandra Campbell just finished doing a three-part program about **Climate Change, Watershed Health and Salmon** program to all grade 7 classes. She was in their classrooms twice covering:

- What is climate change?
- How greenhouse gases work within the atmosphere.
- What sources add carbon to the atmosphere?
- How can we reduce greenhouse gases?
- What happens when nature can no longer keep an energy balance between the sources and sinks on the planet?
- Climate change and weather
- Surface albedo and sinks

Then the classes came to Scout Island for the day and learned how climate change is affecting ecosystems and wildlife within ecosystems – with a focus on salmon. This program is funded in part by Fisheries and Oceans and in part by donations



One of the favorite activities was acting out (using puppets) effects of climate change on different life stages of salmon. Yes, grade 7's love puppets

If you want to see more youth creating related to climate change watch and listen to an amazing video made locally by youth and adult musicians.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VddZgwBhVNs>

You can hear them interviewed on CBC "What on Earth" April 16 at

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/whatearth/across-canada-climate-champions-are-taking-action-in-their-own-communities-1.6819157>

Enjoy

SINC Activities

By Martin Kruus

March 18 report:

"On a spring Saturday a dozen amateur birders gathered at the Nature House. We tried a *Battle of the Beaks* experiment, based on Darwin's Finches, and examined the details of many stuffed species from Anna's collection - still in the suitcase ;) There were questions about distinguishing tree swallows from violet-green ones, as well as the various sparrows. We

didn't get to play Wingspan, but some went for a stroll to the Nekw7usem bridge to check on the newly arrived migratory waterfowl, while a few lingered to inspect frozen specimens. Thanks to Annie Ellison, from BC Parks, for helping out."

March 25 report:

"Seven birdhouses were painted jauntily at Big Brother and Big Sisters over March Break. Martin from Scout Island was on hand to show some bird specimens, bird boxes, and discuss which species might do what with a bird box. The consensus wish was for a downy woodpecker to move in... We hope to collaborate more often with this local community organization."

March 25 report:

"Twenty-Five newly-arrived-to-Williams-Lake individuals, from newborn to seniors, spent a couple of hours on a March morning at Scout Island. We roamed the Nature House, where some youngsters caught a telescopic glance at a bald eagle lurking over the marsh, and others held snails in their hand for the first time. Then we walked on the lake ice, testing its depth (well over 12") and talking about hypothermia and ice safety and rescues. After an introduction to salmon and their lifecycle, some of us played a salmon survival game, while others went in to browse the displays of the Nature House. We hope the Cariboo-Chilcotin Partners for Literacy group visits again soon."



Flowering Plants of Scout Island Nature Centre Catkin-bearing Plants

By Ordell Steen

Elongating catkins of aspen, willow, alder and birch announce of the arrival of spring on Scout Island often before the snow is gone and before the ice gives up its hold to the shores of the lake. They are some of the earliest flowers to see. The catkin-bearing plants are all trees or shrubs in two plant families, the birch family (*Betulaceae*) and the willow family (*Salicaceae*). The birch family is represented by the birches (*Betula*) and the alders (*Alnus*) while the willow family includes the poplars (*Populus*) and the willows (*Salix*). Willows, birches, and alders and poplars characterize most of the riparian zone along the lake shore on Scout Island.



Catkins of mountain alder. The pollen catkins are pendulous and herbaceous while the seed catkins are short and woody.

Catkins are clusters of very reduced flowers, without any petals and often only one or two stamens, attached directly to an elongated central stem. Catkins may be pendulous, such as in the poplars, birches, and alders or erect such as in most willows. All the catkin-bearing plants produce flowers of two kinds: staminate (or pollen producing) flowers, and pistillate (or seed producing) flowers. Only one type of flower occurs in each catkin. Staminate and pistillate flowers are found on the same plant in the alders and birches, but on separate "male and female" plants, in the poplars and willows.

The birches can be recognized among the catkin bearing plants by their prominent lenticels, which are slightly raised, elongate pores which look like partially healed slits in the bark. Air moves through them into the inner bark tissue. In addition, small twigs of birches are either pubescent or have slightly raised, wart-like glands on the



Lenticels in black birch bark

bark surface, unlike the alders. Also, the pith of birch twigs is flattened rather than round or star-shaped. Birch branch growth gives the plant a delicate, wispy look at its tops and outer edges.

The two most common birches on Scout Island are black birch (*Betula occidentalis*) and white or paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), both of which are tall shrubs or trees. Black birch occurs primarily near the lake edge while white birch occurs on moist sites throughout Scout Island. Black birch has dark reddish brown to black bark which does not naturally peel. Mature white birch has white or yellowish bark which is often peeling. However, the bark of young white birch stems is often reddish brown. The third birch species on Scout Island is scrub birch, a low shrub seldom more than 1.5 m tall. It occurs infrequently near the marsh edge.

The alders on Scout Island are all of one species known as mountain alder (*Alnus incana*). Unlike the birches, alders do not have lenticels in the bark nor hairs or glands on small twigs. Twig growth is dominantly from the tip of the stem so growth appears led by a central dominant stem. The sure way to identify an alder is to find the “female” or seed producing catkins which are woody and look like a cone. Only the alders have woody catkins. Mountain alder is a tall shrub, often more than 5 m tall. It nearly always has multiple stems arising together as a clump. Alder catkins emerge before the leaves, which are quite similar to birch leaves, although they tend to be thicker and have more prominent veins.



Red anthers mark these aspen catkins as pollen catkins, one of the first flowers to appear on SINC in the spring.

The poplars on Scout Island include trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*). Aspen is one of the first plants to flower on Scout Island, often before the snow is gone.

Individual aspen trees produce either pollen- or seed-producing flowers, but not both (except very rarely). The pollen catkins emerge about two weeks before the seed catkins. Although abundant seed is usually produced, aspen seedlings are very infrequent and most new stems are root sprouts, resulting in clones of connected stems which are genetically identical. A single aspen plant may have hundreds of stems (trees).



Aspen leaves have a flat stem, which is why they "tremble".

Aspen can be readily distinguished from cottonwood by its flattened, rather than round leaf stem (petiole). The leaf also has a less elongated shape. The flattened stems allow the leaves to flutter in the wind, which increases air exchange. The buds of aspen are also much smaller and less resinous than those of cottonwood.



Resin drop on cottonwood bud

Cottonwoods occur primarily on moist riparian sites and grow much larger than aspen trees. They do not occur in clones like aspen but do sprout from the base of the stem. Cottonwood catkins appear later than aspen and they are much larger (8-10 vs 4-7 cm long). The leaves are also more elongate (lanceolate), tapering more gradually to the tip. Each tree produces either pollen or seed producing catkins. The tree establishes readily from seed on moist soil, especially on flooded sites.

The white poplar (*Populus alba*) near the beach on Scout Island is not native to BC.



Cottonwood leaves and pistillate catkins

The willows on Scout Island are medium or tall shrubs, which occur most commonly near the water's edge but also on the mid-slopes. They are 2 m to more than 7 m tall. Unlike the tree growth form (single stem from ground) of poplars, the willows have multiple stems arising together. A distinguishing feature of all willows is that the buds on the twigs have only one scale enclosing the growing point, unlike the three to four overlapping scales enclosing the poplar and birch buds. Also the pith is round, rather than starlike as in the poplars. Like the poplars, a single willow plant has either pollen- or seed-producing catkins, not both, except rarely. However, the catkins of willows are usually erect rather than hanging or pendulous as in the poplars.



There are several species of willows on Scout Island. The earliest ones emerge before the leaves appear. Except for a few very distinctive species, the willow species are not easy to identify. They will be described in a later article.

Staminate (pollen) willow catkins are often visited by bees.



Pistillate (seed) willow catkins. Note single bud scale which enclosed the catkin prior to its growth but is now lifted up.

Here is your 2023 Field Trip List

There are still times available for additional field trips. Please contact Jim if you wish to offer another trip. Thanks to all of the trip leaders who are providing their service to the club. We hope to see many of you join us on some of these interesting outings.

Annual Chilanko Marsh Field Trip

May 20th to 22nd (Leader Jim Sims 296-3638 or smedleysims@gmail.com)

On Saturday we will conduct an annual bird species count at Chilanko Marsh. Please allow for a 2-hour drive and follow the wildlife viewing signs on the next right after the Puntzi Lake turnoff (approx. 200km from Williams Lake). Please arrive at the tanker base by 9:00 am. After the walk around the marsh you are welcome to join the party for a pot-luck-supper and spend the night at Jim's new home (Tern Inn) at Eagle Lake. Sunday morning you will be treated to Jim's famous Tern Inn Pancakes. There is limited room in the home and cabin so you might be more comfortable in a camper or tent. On Sunday there will be another walk and day of birding at one of many interesting nearby locations. Before you head back to town on Monday we will offer a shorter morning walk at another site.

Flowering Plants of Scout Island Nature Centre #1

Thursday evening May 25 (leader: Ordell Steen, 250-398-5017)

Meet at Scout Island Nature House parking lot at 6:00 p.m. for an evening walk on Nature Centre trails to discover and identify plant species that are flowering or fruiting. Please bring a hand lens, magnifying glass and any plant guides you wish to use. This will be the first of three evening walks to record changes in plant species that are in flower.

Birding in the Upper Williams Lake River Valley

Sunday May 28th (*Trip Leader Phil Ranson 398-7110*)

Meet on Sunday, May 29 at 08:00 at the trail parking lot across Mackenzie Avenue from the Cemetery. We will take a short walk of about 2 hours duration around the settlement ponds and along the river trail, looking and listening for the many birds that breed in the varied habitats that the valley offers, paying particular attention to the warbler and flycatcher species. Please bring binoculars and leave pets at home.

Birding in Walker Valley

Sunday June 4th (*Leader: Betty Donahue 250-267-3353*)

This trip explores the bucolic Walker Valley near 108 Mile. The walk is approximately a 5 km loop that encompasses ponds, marshes, treed areas and open meadows. There are no steep climbs. We can expect to see a wide variety of birds and water fowl. Decent waterproof boots are recommended. Please bring water, lunch and binoculars. Meet at the Scout Island Nature Center parking lot at 8 AM.

Blue Bird Route Monitoring

Tuesday evening June 6th (*Leaders Don Lawrence and Loyd Csizmadia*)

Meet at Scout Island at 5:30 PM. It will take about 2 to 3 hrs to cover the route. We will be checking the boxes and recording the usual (species, life stage, numbers etc.). Folks should bring their binoculars because there are also lots of other cool birds to see on this route.

Clyde Mountain, Churn Creek

Sunday, 18th June (*leader Peter Opie 392-1440*)

This a joint excursion with Friends of Churn Creek. A moderate hike will take us from the calving barns around to the east side of Clyde Mountain with views of the Fraser River. We will explore the site where the 2021 wildfire started. Bring good boots, a hat, water and lunch. For car pooling we will convene at the wye parking lot west of the A&W at 7:00 am. Otherwise meet at the kiosk on Empire Valley Road at 9:00 am. Expect to return to Williams Lake by 5:00.

Asbestos Pits

Wednesday evening, 21st June (*Peter Opie 392-1440*)

This will be a moderate hike up towards Russet Bluff. Bypassing the Bluff, we will arrive at the top of the "Asbestos" Pits. There is no evidence of asbestos; however, the underlying bedrock is serpentinite, sometimes associated with asbestos and ultra-mafic soils. It is a lovely spot on top in a juniper forest with a fabulous view of the San Jose valley. Bring good boots, camera and perhaps hiking poles. We will meet at the western end of South Lakeside Drive at 6:30.

Fox Mountain Walk

Wednesday Jun 28nd (*Leader Ray Hornby 392-2271*)

A field trip walk on Fox Mtn for approximately 1-2 h. Meet at the junction of Teal Place and Fox Mtn Rd at 6 pm for an enjoyable walk along the trails. Panoramic views of the lake along with good opportunities to see wildlife and selection of wildflowers. Parking along Teal Place.

Flowering Plants of Scout Island Nature Centre #2

Tuesday evening July 4 (*leader: Ordell Steen, 250-398-5017*)

Meet at Scout Island Nature House parking lot at 6:00 p.m. for an evening walk on Nature Centre trails to discover and identify plant species that are flowering or fruiting. Please bring a hand lens, magnifying glass and any plant guides you wish to use. This will be the second of three evening walks to record changes in plant species that are in flower.

Grasslands and Wetlands of Bechers Prairie

Sunday, July 9 (*led by Ordell Steen 250-398-5017*)

Becher's Prairie is a provincially significant landscape which supports a large variety of wetlands and grasslands, some unique to the Cariboo-Chilcotin. The wetlands are very important waterfowl habitat although this trip will miss the spring migration peak. Depending on road conditions, we will drive west from the Meldrum Creek Road to the road from Riske Creek, stopping for short hikes to explore plants and wildlife of Becher's Prairie wetlands, lightly grazed grasslands, and small stands of aspen. Bring a lunch, water, and appropriate clothing. Meet at Nature House parking lot

at 7:30 a.m.

Flowering Plants of Scout Island Nature Centre #3

Tuesday evening August 1 (*leader: Ordell Steen, 250-398-5017*)

Meet at Scout Island Nature House parking lot at 6:00 p.m. for an evening walk on Nature Centre trails to discover and identify plant species that are flowering or fruiting. Please bring a hand lens, magnifying glass and any plant guides you wish to use. This will be the third of three evening walks to record changes in plant species that are in flower.

Koster (China) Lake, Churn Creek

Sunday, 10 September (*Peter Opie 392-1440*)

With the Friends of Churn, we will hike from Blackdome Road. A moderate hike will take us through forest and grassland to Koster lake, a reservoir created by the damming of Little Churn Creek and diverting the water into Koster Creek by Chinese in the 19th century. Bring good boots, a hat, water and lunch. For carpooling we will convene at the wye parking lot west of the A&W at 7:00 am. Otherwise meet at the kiosk on Empire Valley Road at 9:00 am. Expect to return to Williams Lake by 5:00.

Junction Sheep Range

Saturday October 28th (*Leaders Loyd Csizmadia & Michaela Waterhouse 250-398-5754*)

Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am. Bring a lunch, a thermos of warm liquid or a water bottle, and your binoculars for this annual day-long drive and hike into the park. Dress warmly and wear sturdy hikers. This will be at 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.