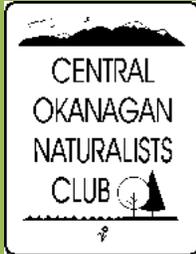


May 2020

The Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

www.okanagannature.org



**Know Nature and
Keep it Worth
Knowing**



Index

Club Information.	2
The Birding Report	3
Okanagan Big Day Challenge	4
The Black Mountain Elementary School Project.	4
Reintroduction of Fishers in Washington State	5

Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club Monthly Meetings, second Tuesday of the month,

7:00 pm., Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna

May Meeting Cancelled

The situation regarding COVID-19 continues to evolve here in B.C. The order by the Provincial Health Office prohibiting gatherings of more than 50 people is still in place so the CONC meeting cannot take place in May.

Out of an abundance of caution, the cancellation of Executive meetings; Conservation Committee meetings; hikes, snowshoe trips and bicycle trips; Monday, Thursday, and Saturday birding trips; and all early-season botany trips is still in effect.



Arrowleaf Balsamroot. Photo: courtesy of Harvey Abraham

Nature doesn't know there is a pandemic; spring flowers are blooming and birds are busy courting and building nests. We are so fortunate to live in the Okanagan because we can still practice social distancing while out walking and observing nature around us.

And when you are home, Nature Canada recommends these nature podcasts:

<https://naturecanada.ca/news/blog/8-nature-podcasts-as-recommended-by-nature-canada-staff/>

**Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club. www.okanagannature.org
P.O. Box 21128, RPO Orchard Park, Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N8**

EXECUTIVE FOR 2020-21

President	Rick Gee	250-763-0124	rdgee@shaw.ca
Vice-president	Douglas Graham		douglasgraham@me.com
Secretary	Robbie Bowers		arbowers@telus.net
Treasurer	Margaret Ramsay		Ramsay6466@live.ca
Past president	Craig Lewis	250-765-2511	coppercliff59@gmail.com

Directors for 2020-2021

BC Nature	Francisca Fisher	778-478-7478	franfisher@shaw.ca
Birding	Dave Palsat	778-478-4224	fpalsat@shaw.ca
Botany	Peter Green	250-765-1737	N/A
Conservation	vacant		
Hiking	Sherrell Davidson	778-478-1956	sherrellconc@shaw.ca
Membership	Karen Pedersen	250-869-4932	kepedersen@telus.net
Programs	Ian Walker	250-807-9559	ian.walker@ubc.ca
Special Projects	Peter Courtney	250-860-9765	pcourtney59@gmail.com

Committee Contact Persons

Avocet program	Les Gyug	250-769-5907	les_gyug@shaw.ca
Ecological Reserves	Don Guild	250-768-3334	guilds@telus.net
Hosts	Bev Thomas Liz Daley	250-762-7610 250-764-2310	cymru@telus.net adaley200@gmail.com
Library	Jen Matthews		jematthews@yahoo.ca
Newsletter	Teresa Smith	250-860-9133	tmsmith.rio@shaw.ca
Ornithology	Gwynneth Wilson Howard Braun	250-762-6876 205-768-4339	gwynnethwilson67@gmail.com hbraun331@gmail.com
Publicity	Rick Dewar	250-769-9494	dewarr@ucalgary.ca
Website: www.okanagannature.org	Rick Gee	250-763-0124	rdgee@shaw.ca
NatureKids Kelowna	Kate Kutzner	250-859-9877	kelowna@naturekidsbc.ca

MONTHLY MEETINGS: Held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, September to June at 7 p.m. in Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna. **Visitors are welcome.** **Hosts:** Bev Thomas 250-762-7610, Liz Daley 250-801-1286.

Please bring your own cup.

MEMBERSHIP: Karen Pedersen, kepedersen@telus.net. 250-869-4932. **Annual dues:** single \$35, family \$47, students \$14, includes Newsletter (except January, July & August). There is a \$10 charge for newsletters to be sent by mail. Membership form and waiver form can be found on CONC website www.okanagannature.org. Send your name, address, telephone number, email address, waiver form and dues to: CONC Membership, Box 21128, Orchard Park P.O., Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N8.

Honorary Life Members: Hugh Westheuser, Pat Westheuser, Eileen Dillabough, Cec Dillabough, Arthur Hughes-Games (deceased), Brenda Thomson (deceased), Muriel Westwood (deceased), and Harry Almond (deceased).

NEWSLETTER: Editor: Teresa Smith. Deadline date for submissions is the fourth Tuesday of each month. Send submissions to Teresa Smith, tmsmith.rio@shaw.ca, 250-860-9133. Mailing address is, 292 Rio Drive South, Kelowna, B.C. V1V 2B1.

Email distribution: Karen Pedersen kepedersen@telus.net

REGULAR ACTIVITIES: All activities are seasonal. If in doubt, check with the contact person. Or phone any of the executive.

BIRDING: Howard Braun 250-768-4339 and Gwynneth Wilson 250-762-6876. **TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

Monday Birding meet at 8:00 a.m. April-June, September and October at the Apple Bowl*

Thursday birding meet 8 am (April-Sept.) or 9 am (Oct-March) at St. Charles Garnier Church, 3645 Benvoulin Rd.

Saturday Birding: 2nd Saturday of the month 7:30 am (April-Sept). 8:30 am (Oct – March). Meet at the Apple Bowl*

BOTANY: Peter Green 250-765-1737. Friday Botany trips: Meet 9:15 am (departure 9:30 am) at the Apple Bowl* Spring to Fall.

HIKES. (Bring a lunch). General information Sherrell Davidson 778-478-1956 or sherrellconc@shaw.ca.

All Hikers meet at the Apple Bowl*

- "Sole Survivors" **Wednesday and Saturday Hikes:** Times as per schedule, see www.okanagannature.org

- **Wednesday Ramblers:** Contact Merle Auty, 250-861-4500 or

auty1781@gmail.com.

*1555 Burtch Road, the Apple Bowl parking lot, corner of Burtch and Bernard



Pygmy Nuthatch



California Gull



Steller's Jay

Photos: Wikipedia

As the human world is in turmoil because of the COVID-19 virus, it is reassuring to see the cycles of the natural world keep turning. Swans and Bohemian Waxwings head north to raise their families. The first Spring birds appear - the Bluebirds and the golden flash of the cheerful Western Meadowlark. Red-tailed Hawks indulge in courtship flights and the California Quail fill the air with their *Chi-ca-go* call to attract a mate. It is all very reassuring.

On March 12 we headed south on Lakeshore Road. At Rotary Park we saw **California Gull**, **Pintail** and a **Bald Eagle**. Cedar Creek gave us a **Red-tailed Hawk**. As we drove south, we spotted a **Townsend's Solitaire**. At Bertram Creek we walked from the upper parking lot. We saw **Pygmy Nuthatch**, **Brown Creeper** and **Say's Phoebe**. Along the trail we saw early Sage Buttercups. A run up Rimrock added **Steller's Jay**. As we returned by way of Swamp Road, we spotted **Trumpeter Swan**.

Sadly because of COVID-19 this was our last group outing for a while taking the closeness of carpooling and the average age of the group into consideration.

THE WESTERN MEADOWLARK. A good example of a cheerful Spring bird is the Western Meadowlark. We have all heard its cheerful, bubbling song on the grasslands and spotted its bright yellow breast as it calls from a shrub, fencepost or tree.



Western Meadowlark

Photo: ©Pam Laing, 24 May 2020

This bird is about the size of an American Robin. It has a yellow breast with a black V on the chest as well as black spots and streaks on the sides and flanks. There is a yellow patch between the bill and eye and a dark brown stripe behind the eye. The back is brown.

It raises three to seven young in a domed grass cup hidden in tall grasses. Both parents care for the young that fledge at about twelve days. These birds eat insects such as beetles, grubs and grasshoppers. They also eat grains and grass seeds.



Sunday, May 17th is the day of the Okanagan Big Day Challenge. **Usually** your team of the Wilson's Warblers led by Gwynneth Wilson, is happy to go birding from 5am to 1pm to tally the maximum number of species they can find within the Kelowna Christmas Bird Count Circle and **usually** your financial support for us is generous and much appreciated.

As you know, this event is a vital fundraiser for *Birds Canada*. Some of the funds generated here are returned to support the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory and this is the only fundraiser for it each year. Because of the COVID-19 crisis, this year Gwynneth has proposed we try a new approach. We cannot carpool. Instead every birder on the CONC email list has been invited to contribute their own solo list by biking, walking or watching birds from a stationary position, and send their list in to her after 1pm. She will compile a master list we can submit as a 'snapshot' total of the birds here at this time of year.

More importantly, we are asking the participants and you, our stalwart supporters of CONC, to contribute generously towards our efforts. Funds will be desperately needed this year. The conservation or ornithology fieldwork cannot proceed without our help. We are asking that you give what you would usually give and mail, drop off or send it by e-transfer to me, Pam Laing. My address is 1378, Nelson Place, Kelowna, BC, V1Y 9H4 and my email is pamlaing2309@gmail.com If you want a tax receipt from Birds Canada (\$10 or more) you must include your name, full address, telephone number and email address. I will add up the total and send one cheque and a list of donors on our behalf to Birds Canada in Ontario. **Please send your donation no later than May 31st.**

You may also contribute on-line if you prefer. It is very easy and directions are clear. Maybe this year is the year to try it for the first time! Go to the Birds Canada website at www.bsc-eoc.org Click on **Give** then on **Participate in the Great Canadian Birdathon**. You will be redirected to the Canada Helps website where you then click on **Find a Team or Person** and type **Wilson's Warblers** in the search field. The names of team participants currently registered will come up, and you can scroll down and click on **Donate Now** to donate. Whatever method you choose and whatever the level of your support we thank you all most sincerely.

Pam Laing on behalf of Team Wilson's Warblers

The Black Mountain Elementary School project

by Pam Laing



In 2018 and 2019 Carol Millar and I led a bird-watching nature unit with the Grade Three classes at Black Mountain Elementary School. This involved a one-hour classroom presentation showing bird photos and playing their sounds, as well as some general information. We then took each class for a one-hour birding walk.

Because all the schools are currently closed, the project takes a different form this year. The teachers are planning a 'birding treasure hunt' to send out on-line to their students. I am contributing a list of the species names of ten common birds we have seen in previous years, such as American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Rufous Hummingbird and so on. The list is illustrated by photographs, and some notes about any differences between male and female birds. I am also including a short checklist; "What to listen for; What to look for; Where to look; What do you notice about each bird?"

I think the teachers plan to use the birdwatching worksheet we devised over the last two years too, so that the children have specific goals to focus on. I am also going to provide a link to my website, which might be of interest to some of the families with older children. It will be very interesting to hear how the project goes.

Fishers Return to Washington State.



Leaders from the Sauk-Suiattle and Stillaguamish tribes release a fisher on the Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

Photo: Chase Gunnell, Conservation Northwest

In October 2019 US Federal and partner biologists released eight fishers in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest as part of an effort to restore the species to Washington State.

The four female and four male fishers were captured in Alberta, as part of a multi-year project to reintroduce approximately 80 fishers to the North Cascades. They underwent veterinary checkups at The Calgary Zoo and were equipped with radio transmitters to track their movements and population recovery over time. Their release was part of a programme that has released 18 fishers in the Fall of 2019 and 26 that were released in during the fall and winter of 2018-2019.

This latest fisher release is part of an ongoing partnership led by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the National Park Service and Conservation Northwest to restore these elusive carnivores to Washington's Cascade Mountains and the Olympic Peninsula.¹

Fishers were eliminated from Washington by the mid-1900s because of both over-trapping and habitat loss and are listed as Endangered by the state of Washington. Fishers are related to wolverines and otters and are native to the forests of Washington, including the Cascade mountain range.

FISHERS IN CANADA.

The Fisher (*Martes pennanti*) is a house cat sized member of the weasel family, with a typically pointed face and rounded ears. In Canada, fishers live in the boreal and temperate forests north to latitude 60° of almost all the provinces and territories, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island. It prefers landscapes of mature and old coniferous and mixed-coniferous-deciduous forests interspersed with younger stands.

The long and slender body of the fisher has a dense, dark brown to black fur coat with grizzled brown patterns around the shoulders and back, and a bushy tail. Females have finer, more lustrous fur than males. Legs are strong and short; paws have five digits. Body length ranges from 51 to 63 cm; tail, 33-38 cm. The male (2.7-5.4 kg) is almost twice as large as the female (1.4-3.2 kg). Fishers usually meander through the forest or run in a typical two-by-two pattern where two sets of tracks, one slightly ahead of the other, is followed by another set of two, and so on.

Fishers feed mainly on snowshoe hares, squirrels and small mammals. They are known for their ability to prey on porcupines. Fisher populations are vulnerable to habitat loss through logging, fire, oil and natural gas exploration, and urban encroachment.²



A Fisher. photo by Emily Brouwer (Wikipedia)

For more information:

The Canadian Geographic animal facts: <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/animal-facts-fisher>

BC Ministry of Environment: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frpa/iwms/documents/Mammals/m_fisher.pdf

BC Fisher Habitat: <https://www.bcfisherhabitat.ca/>

¹ www.conservationnw.org/news-updates/eight-more-fishers-released-into-north-cascades/

² <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/fisher>