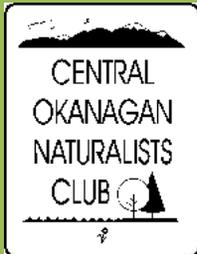


June 2021

The Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

www.okanagannature.org



*Know Nature and Keep it
Worth Knowing*



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The next
newsletter will be
September 2021

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

Unfortunately, this is not a normal year. In-person regular second Tuesday meetings remain suspended.

CONC MEMBERS ARE NOW MEETING VIA ZOOM.

The next general meeting is scheduled for Tuesday
14 September 2021 at 7:00 pm.

At the moment, we are not sure whether it will be in-
person or via Zoom



Osprey (male) with fish at Rotary Marsh

Photo: ©Pam Laing

Enjoy your summer

Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club. www.okanagannature.org
P.O. Box 21128, RPO Orchard Park, Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N8
Email info@okanagannature.org to reach any person below

EXECUTIVE FOR 2021-22

President	Douglas Graham	president@okanagannature.org
Vice-president		
Secretary	Robbie Bowers	secretary@okanagannature.org
Treasurer	Margaret Ramsay	treasurer@okanagannature.org
Past president	Rick Gee	pastpresident@okanagannature.org

Directors for 2021-2022

BC Nature	Francisca Fisher	bcnature@okanagannature.org
Birding	Dave Palsat	birding@okanagannature.org
Botany	Peter Courtney	botany@okanagannature.org
Conservation	vacant	conservation@okanagannature.org
Outdoor Excursions	vacant	outings@okanagannature.org
Membership	Karen Pedersen	membership@okanagannature.org
Outreach and Communications	Vacant	president@okanagannature.org
Programs	Ian Walker	programs@okanagannature.org

Resource Persons

Ecological Reserves and Okanagan Highlands Trail	Don Guild	
Hosts	Bev Thomas and Liz Daley	
Library	Jen Matthews	
Newsletter	Teresa Smith	editor@okanagannature.org
Ornithology	Gwynneth Wilson and Howard Braun	
Publicity	Rick Dewar	
Website: www.okanagannature.org	Rick Gee	pastpresident@okanagannature.org
BC Nature 2022 AGM	Francisca Fisher	bcnatureagm2022@okanagannature.org

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 and, Liz Daley. **Please bring your own cup.**

MEMBERSHIP: Karen Pedersen, membership@okanagannature.org. **Annual dues:** single \$35, family \$47, students \$14, includes Newsletter (except January, July & August). There is a \$10 for 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, editor@okanagannature.org.

Email distribution: Karen Pedersen membership@okanagannature.org.

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

All activities are currently suspended; please check the CONC website for updates.

BIRDING: Howard Braun and Gwynneth Wilson. **TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

Monday Birding meet at 8:00 am 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 Courtney botany@okanagannature.org. 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. **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,

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

Dear CONC Members:

I hope you are enjoying this beautiful weather. We recently had a Zoom meeting of the hard-working Executive Committee and so I have a few things to report.

START-UP OF ACTIVITIES IN SEPTEMBER

Step four of BC's reopening plan, with an earliest possible date of 7 September (but could be delayed depending on vaccination and COVID case rates), will pretty well be a return to normal. Yeah! We will restart CONC's in-person activities when Step four kicks in. We recognize that earlier steps in the government plan do allow for increasing capacity at outdoor gatherings, but our concern primarily lies with carpooling. It is not clear that carpooling can take place in complete safety over the next months and we don't want excursions with reduced carpooling because of problems that would cause with parking, not to mention our carbon footprint.

That also means that we will not plan our annual June picnic for this year. Other than the picnic, the summer period is in any event a slow period for CONC with limited outdoor activities taking place in the best of years.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The Conservation Committee has been in a hiatus for a

while but will start up again to allow more focus on the many important conservation issues that are coming to our attention. A first meeting took place on 7 June followed by a break for the summer. Please let me know if you would like to join.

UNFILLED DIRECTORSHIPS

If you are interested in a bit more hands-on involvement, please note we still have openings for three Director positions: Conservation, Outdoor Excursions, and Outreach & Communications.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

The next general meeting is scheduled for 14 September. We are not sure yet if it will be in-person or by Zoom. We will get there when we get there and I will keep you informed.

Enjoy the new freedoms and stay safe! Any comments or queries, you can always write to me at president@okanagannature.org.

Douglas Graham, President, CONC

GOOD NEWS FROM NORTHWEST CONSERVATION:

Fisher F105 "Luna" was recently photographed with FOUR kits (baby fishers), the first confirmed reproduction in the North Cascades since Conservation Northwest began reintroducing fishers three years ago. These are perhaps the first wild fishers to be born in Washington's North Cascades in more than half a century.

About the size of a house cat, Fishers (*Pekania pennanti*), related to the smaller pine marten and larger wolverine, are the second-largest North American terrestrial member of the mustelid, or weasel, family. With thick, luxurious fur, fishers were heavily trapped, shot and poisoned. Extensive logging of the Northwest's old-growth forests depleted much of the fishers' favourite habitat.



Fisher Photo: Wikipedia

Remnant fisher populations remained in northern California and southern Oregon, as well as in Canada, the Great Lakes region and northernmost New England.¹ The Fisher is a rare but widespread species in BC but neither E-Fauna BC nor iNaturalist have any record from the RDCO. If anybody knows of a local record, please let us know.

For more information see www.conservationnw.org/our-work/wildlife/fisher/ or watch YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9TrLEAvvhboEUtYpJ0sLZhbPGPhcoO8>

¹ www.conservationnw.org

There are several Blackbirds seen in our area. The best known is the **Red-winged Blackbird**. It lives on the edges of ponds, marshes and damp fields. The male is 22 cm long. He is glossy black with red epaulets that have a yellow border stripe. The female is smaller and coloured dark brown with white stripes. She has the dubious honour of being our most misidentified bird often described as "some sort of sparrow." Their distinct call is an early sign of Spring.

They raise three to four young in a cup shaped nest over or near water. The altricial young hatch at 10 to 12 days and fledge in 11 to 14 days. The adults feed on spiders, grass, forb seeds and some fruit. The young are fed entirely on insects.

Also, common here is the **Brewer's Blackbird**. They are 23 cm long. The male is glossy black with a purplish head and a bright yellow eye. The female is a drab blackish grey with a dark eye. They are seen in pastures, feed lots and parking lots. They raise one or two broods of three to four young in a cup shaped nest in a deciduous tree or marsh vegetation. The nest is built of twigs and grass with mud or cow dung and lined with fine materials. The altricial young hatch in 12 to 14 days. The adult diet is insects, spiders, crustations, grass and forb seeds with some fruit. The young birds' diet is 90% insects.

The most conspicuous Blackbird here is the **Yellow-headed Blackbird**. They are 24 cm long. The male is black with a bright yellow head and breast. He has a white upper wing patch. The smaller female is brownish black with a dull yellow breast. The call of unmusical buzzes, nasal wails and rattles is often what draws your attention to the bird. They raise a brood of three to five altricial young in a cup shaped nest woven of wet vegetation lined with dry grass and built over water. The nest shrinks as it dries making the support tight. The young are incubated for 11 to 13 days and fledge at 9 to 12 days. They feed on grass, forb seeds and a few spiders

The least common Blackbird seen in this area is the **Rusty Blackbird**, an inhabitant of coniferous woodland that is found at higher elevations. They are 23 cm long. The male is a dull black with a pale eye. The female is dark brownish grey. Their song includes a gurgle and rising rusty hinge like sound. They build a bulky nest of moss, twigs, lichens, grass and duff built near water. They raise a brood of four to five altricial young that hatch in 14 days and fledge in 11 to 13 days. They feed on spiders, crustations, snails, salamanders and fish with a little fruit. These birds are uncommon in the valley.

A good news conservation story.

In early May a house near San Francisco had some unusual guests - 15 to 20 California Condors. To the dismay of the owners, they trashed the deck ruining a spa cover, flags and lawn ornaments. Plants were knocked over, railings scratched and droppings were everywhere. Although frustrated by the mess the owner was in awe of this unusual experience. The house is in historic condor habitat. The owner was advised to shout, clap and spray water to discourage the uninvited guests. The condors almost vanished in the 1980s but captive breeding has led to a few hundred birds surviving in the wild.



Red-winged Blackbird (male)
Photo: Wikipedia



Red-winged Blackbird (female)
Photo: Wikipedia



Brewer's Blackbird (male) at Thomson Brook Park 27 April 2021. ©Pam Laing



Yellow-headed Blackbird (male)
Photo: Wikipedia

News from Peachland

Bat Education & Ecological Protection Society (BEEPS)

Bats: Out of the Darkness² A travelling Bat Exhibition, the works of a collaboration of 15 partners, June 2021 to October 2021 in Peachland, BC.

Bats are often misunderstood, but they are fascinating creatures. This is your chance to see them in a new light! The exhibition celebrates bats and serves as a reminder of how essential they are to the environment. Discover fascinating facts and uncover common myths while participating in a community Batty Passport throughout various locations within Peachland. Some

² funded by the South Okanagan Conservation Fund.

highlights of the Batty Passport include the Beeps in the Vineyard Trail at Hainle Vineyard Estate Winery, The Bat House Interpretive Trail along Trepanier Creek, the live feed of life in the attic at Peachland Historic School, and the provincial Travelling Bat Exhibit, featuring 4 Walls and accompanying information panels telling the story about, Bats:

Out of the Darkness:

June 30, 2021, Summer Exhibit opening, Peachland Community Centre, 4450 6th Street, Peachland

September 1, 2021, Fall Exhibit opening, The Little Schoolhouse, 1908 Brandon Lane and Hainle Vineyard Estate Winery, 5355 Trepanier Bench Road, Peachland

For more information: www.beepspeachland.com/index.php/events/bats-out-of-the-darkness

Birding with Black Mountain Elementary Grade Threes, 2021

by Pam Laing

For the fourth year running, the Grade Three classes of Black Mountain Elementary School were introduced to birding. This year, since our schools are open, I was able to give my Zoom presentation to all three classes simultaneously. With one vaccine shot already taken, a mask on and an outdoor project, I was allowed to lead them on their birding walks for an hour each on three consecutive days.



In between the presentation and the walks, the teachers taught the children how to use the school board binoculars and discussed habitat and what we might see. Consequently, when we did go walking, they were well prepared, and I was impressed how much they had remembered.

The school backs onto a gully area in which there is a creek, marsh and pond, and there is a public path along beside all three, bordered with a mix of

deciduous and conifer trees. As a result, we tallied a list of about 20 species each walk. Each class saw and identified Red-winged Blackbirds and Eurasian Collared Doves, as well as Mallard and California Quail – and they used the correct names.

But it was the Rufous Hummingbirds that elicited the gasps of surprise and excitement. “He’s so tiny!” “He’s orange!” I think most of them picked them as their favourite birds seen. One class saw an adult Bald Eagle, the next saw a Turkey Vulture and the third saw a Cooper’s Hawk, so raptors were well represented too.



Next the children will follow up with a birdwatching worksheet and be taught how to take photographs using the school’s iPads. Fun for them, fun for me and perfect weather this year for our walks too!



From Gwynneth Wilson.

Thank you so much to everyone who participated in doing a great count on May 23rd. This year the weather was perfect. To comply with Covid-19 restrictions we birded alone or in bubble pairs and to be environmentally friendly we walked, cycled or used electric vehicles.

19 people took part:

10 solo walkers; 4 teams of two; 2 cyclists; 1 electric car and 1 hybrid car! 2 other counters stayed in home space.

TEAM of Rick Gee and Jen Matthews cycling had 42 species.

SOLO walking Pam Laing had 46 species plus added by electric car 10 species, TOTAL 56 species.

BEST BIRDS: Jen and Rick found Forster's Tern at the mouth of Mission Creek while Pam found Black-necked Stilt at Robert Lake.

MOST COMMON species seen by everyone was American Robin.

SURPRISE - only one Rock Pigeon was seen!

TOTAL number of Species = 95 of which 30 were seen by only one party.

From Pam Laing,**DONATIONS**

Thank you to everyone who sponsored us so generously in our efforts.

Summary of donations to date, May 31st, 2021:-

On-line donations to Wilson's Warblers = \$730

Cash, cheques, e-transfers to Pam = \$905

TOTAL to date = \$1635

(I will be sending one cheque for this amount to Birds Canada.)

If you would like to contribute, you can still do so until December 31st using the following link to donate on-line (instant tax receipt).

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/bird-studies-canada/p2p/birdathon21/team/wilsons-warblers/member/pam-laing/>

OR if you prefer to mail a cheque direct to Birds Canada, the address is:-

Birds Canada
115 Front Rd.,
Port Rowan, ON
N0E 1M0

Mark your envelope: Birdathon 2021, attention Kris Dobney. Be sure to include your email address and your full mailing address so that your tax receipt can be emailed or mailed to you when ready. Thank you again.



Black-necked Stilt.
Photo: Frank Schulenburg,
Wikimedia Commons.

Rare bird records from the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) are reported through various sources such as eBird and by Chris Charlesworth on the BC Rare Bird Alert. This note covers the spring period from 28 April to 8 June 2021.

A Gadwall x Mallard hybrid was reported from Robert Lake by Emily Bercier. Mike Howard reported a Rough-legged Hawk on 30 April at Munson Pond; they are rarely seen in the district after April.

A possible Western Gull was reported on 29 April at mouth of Mission Creek (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S86679158>). The gull certainly looks dark enough on the mantle to be tending toward Western Gull; see notes by David Bell with his record. However, no Western Gull record for the RDCO appears in eBird; only records of Western Gull x Glaucous-winged Gull ("Olympic Gull") have been accepted for the district.

Forster's Terns seen 22-23 May at mouth of Mission Creek (Chris Charlesworth) were cooperative and seen by many observers (including me!); a number of other records were later noted in May/June of this normally infrequent transient.

A **White-faced Ibis** was seen at Thompson Marsh on 1 June (David Bell) and (presumably the same bird) seen at a few other locations in following days by other observers. In the last 10 years in eBird there have been no June records from the district. Large flocks were reported in May from the southern Okanagan and elsewhere in southern BC so it seems to be a good year for this species?

David Bell recorded a **Bohemian Waxwing** on 4 May; typically, they have left the Central Okanagan by mid-April. The Harris's Sparrow at Munson Pond feeder (first seen 29 November 2020), assumed to be the same individual, continued through to the beginning of this report period, to 30 April.

Lesser Goldfinch seem to be continuing their inexorable march northward to our area. A singing male first noted at the mouth of Mission Creek on 18 May (David Bell) was seen by many observers.



Swainson's Thrush. Photo: Wikipedia Commons

A few other notable early records include:

- 2 May: Franklin's Gull (Michelle Hamilton)
- 6 May: Swainson's Thrush (Chris Charlesworth)
- 8 May: Sanderling (David Bell)
- 14 May: Veery (Chris Charlesworth)

By the end of this period, some species would normally already have finished migrating through. Notable late records include:

- 9 May: Dunlin (David Bell) (a late record, they normally migrate through in April)