

Summer, 2022

# The Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

www.okanagannature.org



Know Nature and Keep it  
Worth Knowing

## Index

Upcoming Meeting	1
Welcome New Members	1
President's Report	1
Club Information	2
<b>Upcoming Activities</b>	
General Meeting Speaker	3
CONC Hosts Committee	3
Membership Dues	3
Kikinee Salmon Festival	4
<b>Activities Reports</b>	
• BC Nature AGM	4
• BC Nature Award	5
• Annual Picnic & 60th	6
• Outing Activities Update	7
• Birding Report	7
• Rare Bird Report	9
• Botany Report	10
• Okanagan Mountain Park Critter Count	11
<b>Funga, Flora and Fauna</b>	
• CONC Bluebird Trails	12
• Wild Mushrooms – Safe to Eat?	14
• Canada's Emblematic Birds	16



## Monthly Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month.

The next general meeting takes place on September 13, 7:00 p.m., **\*\*in person\*\*** at Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna. Please see our [Speaker details](#) on page 3.

## WELCOME NEW CONC MEMBERS!

Our club has been growing and thriving. We want to welcome our recent new members. Now that activities are back on and in-person meetings are commencing as of September, we look forward to meeting you in the natural world.

- Brenda Wemp
- Bill Image
- Helen Omelchuk
- Sharon Taylor
- Pat Freistatter
- Steffany Walker
- Alice, Peter and Jennifer Bednar

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY DOUGLAS GRAHAM

Now that we are seeing the end of summer and hopefully the end of the brutally hot days, CONC is gearing back up to full-throttle functioning for the fall. Not that the Club has been completely asleep in the last three months! We successfully hosted in early May BC Nature's Annual General Meeting with participants from all over the province and a full program of talks and excursions. We also held our Annual Picnic on June 14 and feted the club's 60th and the achievements of our past presidents (see the picnic article). Birding, hiking, and botany trips all took place on a full schedule at the end of spring/beginning of summer but took a summer break in late July/August. Of note was a successful and adventurous multi-day trip out to Vancouver Island organized by the CONC hikers. The team that maintains our section of the Okanagan Highlands Trail (Don Guild, Craig Lewis, and others) had a lot of work this summer to clear extensive windfall; I joined them one day and came to appreciate how much work this is! On July 1, CONC set up a booth at the Canada Day festivities in downtown Kelowna, partnered with NatureKids; we had a lot of folks stop by to talk to us and a few have followed up to become members. By the way, Rick Gee will run a booth for us on Sept. 10 for the Kikinee Festival in Kelowna, as we have done for many years.

For about two decades Margaret Bryan has been writing the Birding article for our newsletters, summarizing our outings, the birds seen, and regaling us with facts and figures about birds from the world over. She's hanging up her keyboard and has decided to retire. I don't know how many articles that adds up to, but it's an impressive number and I want to send a huge thank-you to Margaret for this amazing contribution. Thank you! Our Birding Director Mike Howard will contribute a regular article on CONC's birding — see his first one in this newsletter. I continue to send in a regular bird article for those of you who like the rarer things in life.

This fall we plan to restart our traditional in-person meetings, with a first one on 13 September at Evangel Church. Take this chance to come and see fellow members that you may not have seen for quite some time. As the speaker, our very own Glenda Newman will take us on a tour of Newfoundland. She and Dave traveled there this summer and she will regale us with stories and photos.

Welcome to new members and welcome back to “near normalcy” to the faithful who have stuck with the club over these last few trying years.

Douglas Graham  
President, CONC

**Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club** [www.okanagannature.org](http://www.okanagannature.org)  
**P.O. Box 21128, RPO Orchard Park, Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N8**  
 Email [info@okanagannature.org](mailto:info@okanagannature.org) for any general enquiry

**EXECUTIVE - 2022-23**

President	Douglas Graham	<a href="mailto:president@okanagannature.org">president@okanagannature.org</a>
Vice-president	Vacant	
Secretary	Linda Walker	<a href="mailto:secretary@okanagannature.org">secretary@okanagannature.org</a>
Treasurer	Margaret Ramsay	<a href="mailto:treasurer@okanagannature.org">treasurer@okanagannature.org</a>
Past President	Rick Gee	<a href="mailto:pastpresident@okanagannature.org">pastpresident@okanagannature.org</a>

**Directors - 2022-2023**

BC Nature	Fran Fisher	<a href="mailto:bcnature@okanagannature.org">bcnature@okanagannature.org</a>
Birding	Mike Howard	<a href="mailto:birding@okanagannature.org">birding@okanagannature.org</a>
Botany	Peter Courtney	<a href="mailto:botany@okanagannature.org">botany@okanagannature.org</a>
Conservation	Mike Whitaker	<a href="mailto:conservation@okanagannature.org">conservation@okanagannature.org</a>
Outings	Vacant	
Membership	Karen Pedersen	<a href="mailto:membership@okanagannature.org">membership@okanagannature.org</a>
Outreach and Communications	Marjorie Gonzalez	<a href="mailto:outreach@okanagannature.org">outreach@okanagannature.org</a>
Programs	Vacant	

**Resource Persons**

Avocets	Les Gyug	<a href="mailto:lesgyug@shaw.ca">lesgyug@shaw.ca</a>
Ecological Reserves	Don Guild	<a href="mailto:guilds@telus.net">guilds@telus.net</a>
Host Committee	Bev Thomas	<a href="mailto:cymru@telus.net">cymru@telus.net</a>
Library	Jen Matthews	<a href="mailto:jematthews@yahoo.ca">jematthews@yahoo.ca</a>
Newsletter	Lisa Rae & Vivian Manning	<a href="mailto:editor@okanagannature.org">editor@okanagannature.org</a>
Ornithology	Gwynneth Wilson	(250) 762-6876
Publicity	Rick Dewar	<a href="mailto:dewar.rick@gmail.com">dewar.rick@gmail.com</a>
Website: <a href="http://www.okanagannature.org">www.okanagannature.org</a>	Rick Gee	<a href="mailto:admin@okanagannature.org">admin@okanagannature.org</a>
Nature Kids Kelowna	Marjorie Gonzalez	<a href="mailto:outreach@okanagannature.org">outreach@okanagannature.org</a>

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month, September to June, 7:00 p.m. at Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna.
- **NOTE: MEETINGS WILL NOW BE TAKING PLACE IN PERSON!**
- Visitors are welcome.
- Host: Bev Thomas. Please bring your own cup.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Karen Pedersen [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org)

- **ANNUAL DUES:** Single \$35, Family \$47, Students \$14. Includes the quarterly newsletter. (Additional \$10 annual charge for newsletters sent by mail).
- **MEMBERSHIP FORM AND WAIVER:** Available on the CONC website: [www.okanagannature.org](http://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.
- **DUES:** Dues may also be paid by e-transfer to [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org). Please note your full name(s) in the field for providing additional information.
- **HONOURARY LIFE MEMBERS:** Hugh Westheuser, Pat Westheuser, Eileen Dillabough, Cec Dillabough, Arthur Hughes-Games (deceased), Brenda Thomson (deceased), Muriel Westwood (deceased), Harry Almond (deceased)

**NEWSLETTER:** Editors - Lisa Rae & Vivian Manning

- Next deadline date for submissions is **November 15, 2022**
- Send submissions to [editor@okanagannature.org](mailto:editor@okanagannature.org)
- Email distribution: Karen Pedersen [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org)

**ACTIVITIES:** All activities are seasonal. All outing details are on our website calendar. If in doubt, check with the activity contact, or contact any of the Executive.

**COVID-19 policies and practices for this CONC 2022-2023 year remain the same as for the previous year. Please refer to individual activity email notices and the [CONC website](http://www.okanagannature.org) for details.**

**BIRDING: contact: [birding@okanagannature.org](mailto:birding@okanagannature.org) - TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE!**

- **Monday Birding:** meet 7:45 a.m. (April-Sept.) or 8:45 a.m. (Oct-March) at the Apple Bowl\*
- **Thursday Birding:** meet 7:45 a.m. (April-Sept.) or 8:45 a.m. (Oct-March) at the Apple Bowl\*
- **Saturday Birding:** 2nd Saturday of month - meet 7:45 a.m. (April-Sept) or 8:45 a.m. (Oct-March) at the Apple Bowl\*

**BOTANY: contact: [botany@okanagannature.org](mailto:botany@okanagannature.org)**

- **Friday Botany** trips meet according to emailed details sent for each outing by Botany Director Peter Courtney (Spring to Fall)

**HIKES: All hikers meet at the Apple Bowl\* (Bring a lunch)**

- **Tuesday: Ramblers** contact Robert Lake: (250) 215-3211
- **Wednesday: Sole Survivors** contact Sherrell Davidson (250) 864-4007 & Gerda Watts (250) 862-1925
- **Thursday: Ramblers Plus** contact Robert Lake (250) 215-3211

\*Apple Bowl: 1555 Burtch Road - Apple Bowl parking lot, corner of Burtch and Bernard

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

### CONC SPEAKER, SEPT 13 GENERAL MEETING – NEWFOUNDLAND ADVENTURE, 2022

---



Glenda and Dave Newman

Glenda has been a member of CONC since 2013, and is involved with hiking and biking. She was formally the Business Manager of Okanagan Optical and Tutt Street Optometry.

---

## CONC MEETINGS HOSTS COMMITTEE

BY BEV THOMAS

Hello everyone, we are so excited to be able to get together for monthly meetings in person again!

I've contacted everyone that has been on our 'coffee committee' over the last number of years. Some now have conflicting pursuits, while others feel they need a break.

So, if you are interested in joining our group, we could use your help. We share the job of preparing the coffee, and also send around a sign-up form for others to bring goodies for each General Meeting. It isn't a difficult position and we do help each other if someone is unable to do a month that was previously signed up for. It's also a great way to meet other members.

For the first two meetings there will probably not be coffee available, but hopefully with your help we can restart this practice as soon as possible. Please let me know as we need at least three or four people to make a committee doable.

Thank you,  
Bev Thomas, (250) 762-7610

---

## CONC MEMBERSHIP ANNUAL FEES

BY KAREN PEDERSEN

A reminder that membership fees for the upcoming year are due on September 1st – the membership year is September 1st to August 31st.

There are two membership application forms available - a fill-able (DOCX) form which you can type your information onto and then print, and a printable form which you print and then write your information onto. These forms can be downloaded from the CONC website at <http://okanagannature.org>.

Membership fees have not changed from last year - \$47.00 (Family), \$35.00 (single), \$14.00 (student) or if you are an existing member/s of another Naturalists Club \$19.00 (single) and \$29.00 (Family).

Please complete the membership form, sign in both places, and mail to - Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, Box 21128 RPO Orchard Park, Kelowna, BC, V1Y 9N8 - Attn. Membership Director. If paying by cheque, make it payable to Central Okanagan Naturalists Club.

You can also pay via e-transfer, the email address is: [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org). If you use the e-transfer method you still need to either mail in your application form or scan a copy and send via email to me at [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org), as your signature is required for insurance purposes.

On the membership application form there is a "main interest(s)" section where you can indicate your interests: Birding, Botany, Hiking - Ramblers, &/or Hiking & Cycling - Sole Survivors. The interests that you check off are used to establish email outing information lists so please check only the groups that you are interested in to avoid receiving unwanted emails.

## PLEASE NOTE:

- Everyone (including life members) must sign both the "Central Okanagan Naturalist's Club Membership Form" and the "Informed Consent and Assumption of Risk Agreement".
- If you wish to receive a printed and mailed copy of the newsletter, there is a Canada Post surcharge of \$10.00 for all classes of membership.
- An email confirming receipt of your payment and application form will be sent to everyone with an email address on file. Your hardcopy receipt for payment of membership will be kept on file and will be available at the membership table at the next in-house monthly General Meeting.

Thank you,  
Karen Pedersen, [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org)

## KIKINEE SALMON FESTIVAL

BY RICK GEE

Do you enjoy speaking with people about nature? Are you available on September 10, sometime between 10:00 and 3:00? Well, actually we set up before 10:00 and take down after 3:00.

The Regional District of Central Okanagan is holding their annual Kikinee Festival on September 10 and CONC will have a booth there. Rick is in charge of the booth and would love to have some other CONC members present. Come and see our beaver and lynx pelts; show the pelts to the people dropping by; talk to people about CONC's activities; talk to people about their natural history experiences; come and see the Kikinee (or Kokanee.)

Come and see CONC's new canopy!

Festival details are at: [Kikinee Salmon Festival](#)

## ACTIVITIES REPORTS:

### BC NATURE AGM 2022

BY MARJORIE GONZALEZ



CONC President, Douglas Graham, with the cake to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of CONC

The Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club (CONC) hosted the BC Nature AGM 2022 in sunny Kelowna. The conference took place at the UBC Okanagan Campus on May 26-28 and it was the first in-person AGM since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

The pandemic created an added layer of complexity for the organizing committee, and forced one of our main organizers to miss the conference entirely. However, the conference went ahead as planned and CONC is happy to have hosted over 100 naturalists from across BC.

In June 2022, CONC celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a naturalists' club and an early celebration was held during the AGM. CONC was one of the founding member clubs of the Federation of BC Naturalists (now BC Nature) and they have been instrumental in establishing green areas in and around Kelowna.

The conference featured many excellent talks and presentations, and while we cannot describe them all in detail, some examples of the speakers and topics covered are below:

- Richard Gregson, who advocates for green wildlifying, provided many great ideas and inspiration for being naturalists in our own backyards.
- Judie Steeves and Sigrie Kendrik, representing the Okanagan Xeriscape Association, provided an introduction to gardening using plants that thrive in low water conditions. In the Okanagan, almost 1/4 of all water is used for landscaping and our garden choices can aid in water conservation efforts.
- Dick Canning, MP for the South Okanagan-West Kootenays, was the keynote speaker for the banquet on the last day of the conference. He gave an overview and status update of the proposal to have a National Park Reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. The area is a great candidate due to its diverse ecology and high conservation value. After several decades of work, the next step is to negotiate a formal agreement between all stakeholders – stay tuned!
- Other speakers included Don Guild who discussed ecological reserves in the Okanagan-Shuswap, Les Gyug who described the colony of American Avocets in Kelowna, Liam Ragan who provided an update of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Area programs, and Pam Laing who shared a photographic overview of birding in the Okanagan Valley.



During the conference, several groups set up Information Tables with pamphlets and display boards that shared a lot of important information regarding their work in conservation and advocacy. Some of the groups that participated included BC Nature, Friends of Robert Lake Society, Langley Field Naturalists Society, BC Naturalist's Foundation, and the Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists (who also had a giveaway of Eocene fossils from 30 to 50 million years ago!).

The conference featured 12 field trips to many local parks, favourite birding spots, a Xeriscape Demonstration Garden and a pontoon boat offering the opportunity of birding from the beautiful waters of Okanagan Lake. The field trips were one of the highlights of the conference and, despite some challenges in organizing the different meeting times and locations, participants had a great time.

One of the sessions held on Saturday was a roundtable discussion with NatureKids BC, and topics included the challenges being experienced in restarting many activities after the forced hiatus due to COVID-19. There is also a desire to create more connections between the children and adult naturalists' clubs across BC. As a result, a key initiative that CONC took during the conference was to reach out to the local representatives from NatureKids BC more often and have shared events whenever possible.

Overall, the conference gave participants a great opportunity to connect with fellow naturalists in-person again. There were many great discussions, shared experiences and plans for the future. If you would like to see some pictures and videos taken during the conference, an online album is available at this link <https://photos.app.goo.gl/W3greVF4YkSddFbJ8>, or by using the QR code shown here.



There were many people who made the conference possible. We would like to give special thanks to Fran Fisher (CONC's BC Nature Director) and Rick Gee (CONC's Past President) for their hard work over the last year. In addition, the AGM would not have taken place without the many CONC volunteers who helped at the registration desk, organized and lead excursions, set up and ran presentations, helped with accommodations and food, etc. We also want to thank UBC Okanagan who worked with us to provide accommodations, food services, conference rooms, and IT help.

Finally, we would like to pass on the torch to the club who will organize the next BC Nature AGM in 2023: the Langley Field Naturalists Society. See you in Langley in 2023!

## **BC NATURE RECOGNITION AWARD – ROBERT HOBSON**

---

The BC Nature Recognition Award was presented to Robert Hobson (see [photo of Robert](#) with the Annual Picnic article). This Award is presented to a person or persons from outside the Federation (BC Nature) or its affiliates who has made an outstanding contribution to the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the natural history of B.C.

Robert Hobson made significant contributions to the preservation of natural areas in the Central Okanagan. Elected as a councillor for the City of Kelowna and then serving on the Regional Board Council (often as Chair), Robert represented an environmental and conservationist voice on councils which appeared to have their focus on expansion.

In particular, he worked for the preservation of two large areas of parkland, natural areas within the central Okanagan Valley. The first regional park is known as Goats Peak Regional Park. Located in the City of West Kelowna, it preserves a large, rocky area home to many Okanagan specialty species, including Lewis's Woodpecker and Northern Alligator Lizard. It includes land from the lakeshore into the hills. Before its preservation, it was under threat of development and now is a notable destination for hikers and naturalists.

The second regional park is known as Black Mountain - sntsk'il'nton Regional Park. Located on the eastern edge of the City of Kelowna, this park preserves some of the last native grasslands in the Central Okanagan as well as one of the mountains within the city boundaries. As we note nearby grasslands being developed for a cherry orchard, hikers and naturalists are especially grateful for the habitats that have been preserved within Black Mountain Park.

To recognize his years of service, the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club nominated Robert Hobson for a BC Nature Recognition Award.

On June 14, CONC held its annual picnic at Bertram Creek Park. Other than excursions, it was the first in-person event of our club since the beginning of the pandemic. Many thanks to organizers and those who were able to attend. We were fortunate to have a warm sunny day, without rain! All attached photos courtesy of France Marcoux.

Apart from chatting, picnicking, and birding (Mike located some fledgling Great Horned Owls!), we had four events. First, we were grateful to Meg Bjordal and Lauren Wishart of WildsafeBC Central Okanagan who spoke to us about bear safety and gave a demonstration on the correct use of bear spray. Second, this year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CONC's founding – we were proud to mark this achievement with a delicious birthday cake (provided by the Walkers). Third, on CONC's initiative, BC Nature this year provided a special award to Robert Hobson; Robert was able to join us and be honoured in person (the full text of the award can be read [above](#)).

Finally, we were truly honoured to have with us many of our past presidents who had been invited to join and say a few words about their presidential tenure. The anecdotes and recollections were much appreciated! Of the 13 living presidents, 7 were at the picnic (Don Wilson and Craig Lewis sending their regrets).



Hugh Westheuser



Don Guild



Pat Westheuser



Cec and Eileen Dillabough



Rick Gee



Robert Hobson

For interest, here is the list of all the previous CONC presidents. They are deceased unless otherwise noted.

Les Kerry	1962	Eileen Dillabough	1987 - 88: Current member
H.J. Hocking	1963	Brenda Thomson	1989 - 90
Rex. Marshall	1964 - 65	Mike Chappell	1991 - 92
R.M. Wilson	1966	Ralph Kuipers	1993
Jim Burbridge	1967 - 68	Don Wilson	1994 - 95 Current member
Rex Marshall	1969 - 70	Cec Dillabough	1996 - 97 Current member
Les Kerry	1971 - 72	Pat Westheuser	1998 - 2000 Current member
Marius Kuipers	1973	Art Hughes-Games	2001 - 02
Rex Marshall	1974 - 75	Bob Fulton	2003 - 04 Current member
Vern Hopkins	1976	Jean Christensen	2005 - 06 Status unknown
Ray Davis	1977 - 78	Don Guild	2007 - 09 Current member
Margaret Schwartz	1979 - 80	Fiona Flook	2010 - 12 Moved out of town
Jack Stephenson	1981 - 82	Craig Lewis	2013 - 14 Current member
Hugh Westheuser	1983 - 84 Current member	Linda Digby	2015 Not a member
Harry Almond	1985 - 86	Rick Gee	2015 - 20 Current member

Douglas J. Graham 2021 - 2022

CONC activities will recommence after the August hiatus. Activity details and organizer contact information can be found on the CONC website calendar: [www.okanagannature.org](http://www.okanagannature.org) and on the 2nd page of this newsletter.

**Birding** outings continue with three formats: the Monday group starts at one location and walks a predetermined route for a few hours, while the Thursday group travels to several sites by way of carpooling. The Saturday group travels on day-long excursions that allow our member birders to explore areas between Osoyoos and Salmon Arm. Mike Howard is the Birding Director and may be contacted for additional details: [birding@okanagannature.org](mailto:birding@okanagannature.org).

- For details of past Birding outings, please see [Mike's Birding report below](#).
- For details of past Botany outings, please see [Peter's Botany report below](#).

**Hiking (Sole Survivors, Ramblers, and Ramblers Plus)** continues enthusiastically on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with excursions by the Sole Survivors to Pincushion and beyond, Mt. Boucherie, High Rim Trail, and Gillard Forestry Service Road area, and excursions by the Ramblers to Frazer Lake, Wilden, and Myra Bellevue, among other locations.



## BIRDING REPORT

BY MIKE HOWARD

Our thanks to Margaret Bryan who has prepared a birding report for the CONC newsletter for the past two decades. Margaret has decided the spring edition of 2022 was her last. When you see Margaret, please thank her for her ongoing and much appreciated efforts.

So far in 2022 we have had 73 CONC organised birding excursions:

- 27 Monday outings
- 29 Thursday outings
- 5 Saturday outings
- 12 special events outings (Sweagle count, Critter counts, BC Nature AGM tours etc.)

These outings have been possible because of the effort of several birding excursion leaders who selected a location, lead and then reported on the outing. Our thanks to Dave Palsat, Deborah White, Annette Lachaine, Bitten Tisdale, Merle Auty, Douglas Graham, Sheila McKenzie Brown, Bruce Kennedy, Stu Weir, Margaret Bryan, Elke Fischer, Fran Fisher, Rick Gee, Pam Laing, Margaret Ramsay, Lesley Robertson, Ian Walker and Gwynneth Wilson.

We decided to open an account in eBird for the "CONC Birders Group" and record the results of our outings in eBird checklists. Existing and new birding excursion leaders in 2023 will be able to consult the 2022 outings that were conducted in the same time period as the outing they are planning. The 2022 eBird checklists provide a route map, a listing and abundance of species observed and, in some cases, supporting photographs.

Fortunately, the CONC Birding Group includes very talented photographers (Bruce Kennedy, Ian Walker, Vivian Manning, Lisa Rae, Karen Blumel and Pam Laing) who have chosen to contribute photographs of species observed during an excursion to the outing eBird checklist. This photographic record of sightings, which can be of common, unusual or rare species, has increased the value of these checklists to science, to CONC members who like to see the results of an outing, and to future leaders.

So far this year we have submitted 96 complete checklists and recorded sightings of 179 species during the CONC organised birding excursions.

Later this year we will conduct a survey of the Birding Group members to solicit your views on the future structure of the birding excursions i.e.: How long and when the summer break should be; Do we need to change the excursion format for either of Monday, Thursday or Saturday outings; Should we consider selective overnight outings such as the Creston spring festival or Sandhill Crane migration through Merritt; What training could Birding Excursion Leaders benefit from etc. Something to think about.

Birding Excursion Leaders are currently needed on the following dates:

- Monday, September 19, 2022
- Monday, November 7, 2022



If you are available to lead any of these outings, please contact Mike Howard at [birding@okanagannature.org](mailto:birding@okanagannature.org) or [mikehoward@shaw.ca](mailto:mikehoward@shaw.ca)

Advice on selecting a location and other support is available. Without a leader there will unfortunately not be an outing, so please volunteer if you are able.

Some of our birding group observations:



Great Horned Owl – Bertram Creek –  
Ilan Walker – July 14



Pacific Slope Flycatcher – Bertram Creek –  
Ilan Walker – July 14



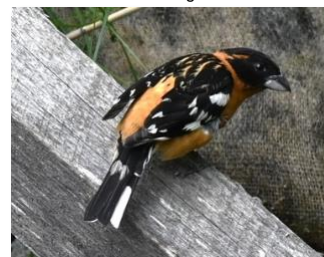
Lazuli Bunting – Black Mountain –  
Vivian Manning – June 27



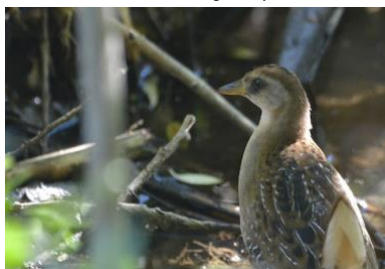
Great Blue Heron – Chichester Wetlands –  
Vivian Manning – July 25



Eastern Kingbird – Robert Lake –  
Bruce Kennedy – July 18



Black-headed Grosbeak – Rose Valley –  
Lisa Rae – May 30



Sora – Capital News Centre –  
Ilan Walker – July 21



Ruddy Duck – Robert Lake – Bruce Kennedy –  
Robert Lake – July 18



Red-tailed Hawk – Stevens Coyote Ridge –  
Bruce Kennedy – July 18



White-breasted Nuthatch – Knox Mountain –  
Ilan Walker – July 11



Black-backed Woodpecker – Brenda Mines –  
Jesse Olsen (visitor) July 9



Spotted Towhee – Postill Lake Road –  
Pam Laing – July 7



Gadwall – Rotary Marsh – Karen Blumel – March  
14



Blackpoll Warbler – Rose Valley –  
Bruce Kennedy – May 30



Rare bird records from the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) are reported through various sources such as eBird and as compiled by Chris Charlesworth on the BC Rare Bird Alert. This note covers the late spring through summer of 2022, from 29 May to 23 August 2022. Thanks are extended to Mike Howard, Birding Director, for his review. As usual, the summer period was very slow (or at least the birders were slowed down and not out in the field as much) but there are some sensational records to report.

A **Band-tailed Pigeon** was found and photographed at a private residence's feeder in Kelowna 29 May-2 June.

A sensational **Ancient Murrelet** was spotted and photographed by Nick Swan on August 27 off the mouth of Mission Creek; it flew north after a minute and was not re-found. This pelagic species is exceedingly rare on Lake Okanagan but there was a previous record from the Central Okanagan — a 21 August 1981 Peachland record noted in the 1987 *Birds of the Okanagan* by Cannings, *et al.* Furthermore, this column noted a 24 August record last year from Penticton; late August is obviously the right time of the year to look for them.



The most sensational bird of the period, and one of the rarest birds ever recorded in the Kelowna area, Nick Swan on 6 June found a **Bar-tailed Godwit** at the mouth of Mission Creek (see my photo). This species is an extremely rare Asian vagrant that has been seen a few times on the coast but to my knowledge, it was a first record ever from the BC interior. It was seen by a few observers but within about 2 hours vanished, presumably heading northward, perhaps to breeding grounds in Asia. A **Short-billed Dowitcher** was at Robert Lake (Kalin Ocaña) July 18-2 August (same bird?).

Another one-day wonder and wondrous shorebird was a juvenile **Upland Sandpiper** found at Robert Lake on 21 Aug. 2022 by Calvin Chan (see his photo); the only other RDCO record in eBird is an August 1992 record from Chichester Marsh. To make it all the more remarkable that this bird would turn up, the Upland Sandpiper is a grassland species in decline across most of its range. All grassland species are in trouble but the Upland Sandpiper is less tolerant than most to modern agricultural practices ("The Grassland Conundrum", *American Birding*, June 2022).



A **Double-crested Cormorant** was at Munson Pond on 3 June 2022 (Jasmine Korcok, *et al.*). A **Sabine's Gull** (Nick Swan) was seen on the lake 2-4 June and there were further records in August. Nick found a **Forster's Tern** 11 June, at the mouth of Mission Creek. A **Franklin's Gull** was noted 3 July off Mission Creek (Kalin Ocaña).

The **Great Egret** noted in the spring report continued at Munson Pond until 5 June. A **Black-crowned Night Heron** was at Munson Pond 2-6 June. A **Green Heron** was at Rotary Marsh 24 June (Roberta Snow).



Michael Force recorded a **Broad-winged Hawk** 30 June; this was an unusually late record for a species normally uncommonly seen in spring migration in May (see his photo).

Kalin Ocaña reported a rare **Brewer's Sparrow** on 22 July on the Gillard Forest Service Road, possibly paired with a Clay-colored Sparrow?

In the warbler category, some great and rare sightings this spring. A **Black-and-white Warbler** was recorded on 29 May 2022 on Beaver Lake Road (Lev Frid, *et al.*).

This eastern warbler has only been recorded in the Central Okanagan a very few times during migration. Amazingly, another one was found on 8 June at the mouth of Mission Creek (Nick Swan); this confused male seemed to be singing on territory. On 30 May Ian Walker, on a CONC birding trip to Rose Valley Reservoir, spotted a **Blackpoll Warbler**, another equally rare eastern warbler in this area (seen through to 3 June). Finally, yet another rare spring warbler was a singing **Chestnut-sided Warbler** found at Bear Creek PP on 23 June (Benoit Hilty) and continuing through to 7 July; a CONC birding trip went to see it with great success.



Sometimes the weather was good; sometimes not.  
Photo by Bitten Tisdal

A relatively cool, wet May and June delayed the flowering of many plants, especially at higher elevations. As a result, we extended our scheduled botany season by one week and even then, we were a little early for the peak flowering in the subalpine at Big White Mountain. There were lots of morels this year, in a lot of places you don't normally see them. Mushrooms have otherwise been sparse so far this season.

Our 2022 outings focused primarily on plants with flowers or fruit/seed as these are important identification features that many guidebooks require. We used an expected checklist of species based on previous sightings by CONC members and others and fine-tuned it with a reconnaissance trip made about a week before the actual outing.

Over the entire season we averaged 57 species per outing (range 44-78). The average number of attendees was 8 (ranging from 4 to 17) and our usual time in the field was about 3 hours. We rarely walked more than 2 km as it was just too difficult to search the ground and cover any great distance. While there were repeat sightings of some species from week to week the diversity changed as the season progressed and as we visited different habitats. Even when we revisited the Jackpine Meadows site 6 weeks after an initial visit we only found 33% of the plants we had seen on our earlier visit (June 7 - 58 species as compared to July 15 - 56 species).

We visited a variety of lowland, mid-elevation and subalpine habitats including grassland, wetland, forested, and riverine areas. We mostly stayed close to home but did manage a trip north to Larch Hills. Mostly the weather was good but at Wrinkly Face Provincial Park it was not. We saw lots of interesting plants. Attracting perhaps the most attention were the 13 species of orchids we saw. We puzzled over the many confusing mustards. We found a few red- and blue-listed species, so-designated for being of conservation concern by the province of BC: Needle-Leaved Navarretia (blue), Whitebark Pine (blue), Cusick's Paintbrush (blue), and Alpine Sorrel (red). We saw carnivorous plants (e.g. Long-Leaved Sundew) and some parasitic plants (e.g. Pale Comandra). We marveled at the wide variety of flower configurations such as Wild Ginger. We looked at a few grasses and sedges but mostly avoided these often difficult-to-identify plants. And, of course, we saw Dandelions everywhere.

We had a few participants interested in mushrooms and a few experts so where we found mushrooms, we tried to identify them. Mostly there were a few polypores living on wood and the odd morel except for our outing to Prather Creek where we found at least a dozen species including several large boletes.

Throughout the season a good way to monitor the plants and other wildlife in our area was to check in on iNaturalist projects such as the Mission Creek Greenway Biodiversity Project at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mission-creek-greenway-biodiversity-project> and the newly created Okanagan Biodiversity project at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/okanagan-biodiversity>.



Heart-Leaved Twayblade: a small orchid  
Photo credit: Peter Courtney



Needle-Leaved Navarretia: a blue-listed plant  
Photo credit: Peter Courtney



Round-Leaved Sundew: a carnivorous plant  
Photo credit: Peter Courtney



Wild Ginger: one of many plants having an unusual flower  
Photo credit: Peter Courtney

The 2022 version of the Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park Bird and Critter Count was held over the week from June 1st to 6th. The 37 observers tallied 1930 birds of 99 species on 14 routes in 47 party-hours. The 99 species is slightly lower than the average post-2003 fire species count of 102, but slightly higher than the pre-fire (1993-2003) average of 96 species per count. These totals do not include the John's Family Conservancy Park count done earlier in May.

Most birds that increased in numbers after the 2003 fire continue to do well. The top six species were: Spotted Towhee (157), House Wren (124), American Robin (98), Warbling Vireo (95), Canada Goose (93) and Dusky Flycatcher (74). Excepting the Canada Geese, which are usually seen in flocks flying overhead between Penticton and Kelowna, these are among the shrub-loving and open-habitat birds that seem to have done quite well after the 2003 fire. The most common critters were Yellow-pine Chipmunk (46), Yellow-bellied Marmot (17), Columbian Ground Squirrel (11), and Mule Deer (8).

House Wrens are a good example of a species that benefitted from the fire. After the two-year hiatus in 2004-2005 when the park was closed and the count was not done, House Wrens had increased from an average of <3 per count prior to the fire to 51 counted in 2006. That kept increasing year after year until they were the most abundant bird counted from 2010-2019, with an average of 271 counted per year, topping the count list each of those years. As most of the fire-killed snags have now fallen, cavity nests have become fewer, and the open habitats that House Wrens prefer are closing into dense 3-6 m tall lodgepole pine at mid-elevations. Consequently, House Wren numbers have decreased, with an average of only 112 counted in 2021 and 2022.

Some forest birds continue to do rather poorly. Again this year there were no Townsend's Warblers or Golden-crowned Kinglets detected, which compares to 55 and 27 averaged per year respectively before the fire. Brown Creepers have still not been recorded on the count since 2003. Only 20 Red-breasted Nuthatches were counted this year, which is close to the average of 23 counted per year since the 2003 fire. That compares to an average of 83 Red-breasted Nuthatches counted per year before the fire.

The only new bird species for the count this year was Fox Sparrow. I found two singing males halfway up to Divide Lake in the driving rain. Other adventures included the more than 200 runners that passed Douglas Graham and his crew on the Boulder Trail. The Wildhorse Traverse is a Kelowna to Naramata run through the park each year on the first weekend in June. Tanya Luszcz led the only party at the south end of the park, completing a 20-km route new to the count including going up the Mountain Goat trail, across to Baker Lake, down Frederick Creek, and back to the south parking lot on South Wildhorse trail.

Ian Walker deserves a special mention for contributing 139 observations and photos of all manner of birds, beasts and plants to iNaturalist from the Rimrock trail. And on that note, there are plant lists on paper going back almost 30 years to the early days of the count, and more recently digital lists, that have never been tallied or totaled. Should anybody be interested in compiling those, or comparing those from before the fire to after, I'd be happy to provide the lists and to assist.

Once again thanks to all the volunteers, both this year and other years, who have kept this count going since 1993. The 2022 bird species list follows.

Canada Goose	93	Willow Flycatcher	10	Swainson's Thrush	19
Mallard	5	Least Flycatcher	1	Hermit Thrush	1
Common Merganser	20	Hammond's Flycatcher	5	American Robin	98
California Quail	33	Dusky Flycatcher	74	Cedar Waxwing	7
Ruffed Grouse	4	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	15	House Sparrow	1
Grouse sp.	1	Empidonax sp.	3	Evening Grosbeak	2
Mourning Dove	14	Say's Phoebe	8	House Finch	15
Common Nighthawk	1	Western Kingbird	3	Cassin's Finch	12
Common Poorwill	3	Eastern Kingbird	11	Red Crossbill	5
Black Swift	1	Cassin's Vireo	13	Pine Siskin	4
Vaux's Swift	7	Warbling Vireo	95	American Goldfinch	8
White-throated Swift	12	Red-eyed Vireo	4	Chipping Sparrow	53
Rufous Hummingbird	5	Steller's Jay	5	Fox Sparrow	2
Calliope Hummingbird	14	Black-billed Magpie	17	Dark-eyed Junco	30
Hummingbird sp.	1	Clark's Nutcracker	29	White-crowned Sparrow	10
Spotted Sandpiper	14	American Crow	2	Vesper Sparrow	14
Common Loon	6	Common Raven	11	Savannah Sparrow	1
Turkey Vulture	44	Black-capped Chickadee	11	Song Sparrow	12
Osprey	6	Mountain Chickadee	4	Lincoln's Sparrow	5
Golden Eagle	4	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	5	Spotted Towhee	157
Cooper's Hawk	1	Violet-green Swallow	69	Western Meadowlark	3
Northern Goshawk	1	Barn Swallow	12	Bullock's Oriole	21
Accipiter sp.	1	Swallow sp.	2	Red-winged Blackbird	2
Bald Eagle	12	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	22
Red-tailed Hawk	13	Red-breasted Nuthatch	18	Brewer's Blackbird	3
Great Horned Owl	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	10	Orange-crowned Warbler	36
Red-naped Sapsucker	5	Pygmy Nuthatch	16	Nashville Warbler	66
Lewis's Woodpecker	4	Rock Wren	3	MacGillivray's Warbler	31
Black-backed Woodpecker	1	House Wren	124	Common Yellowthroat	3
Hairy Woodpecker	8	European Starling	17	Yellow Warbler	22
Northern Flicker	41	Gray Catbird	28	Yellow-rumped Warbler	58
American Kestrel	7	Western Bluebird	3	Wilson's Warbler	9
Peregrine Falcon	2	Mountain Bluebird	33	Western Tanager	27
Olive-sided Flycatcher	3	Townsend's Solitaire	12	Black-headed Grosbeak	38
Western Wood-Pewee	24	Veery	45		



Many CONC members have walked the Mission Creek Greenway from Hollywood Road South to the gazebo overlooking Layercake Mountain. If you have not done so, the trail follows the creek, climbs to a grassland area, skirts the grassland, drops back to the creek, and climbs again to a grassland, finishing at the gazebo. The late Dr George Scotter suggested that these grasslands would probably be good places for a bluebird trail. So, we decided to make it so.



Photo Credit E.Wegscheidler

What is a bluebird trail? Birds like Western Bluebirds and Tree Swallows are cavity-nesters, using holes in trees or posts that have been excavated by other birds, particularly woodpeckers. As the number of holes decreases (fewer trees and fewer woodpeckers) the cavity-nesters find it harder and harder to find holes. So, people come to their aid by placing nest boxes in suitable habitats, like our grasslands. A bluebird trail is a series of nest boxes placed in suitable habitat, typically grassland with the occasional tree or bush.

Most people attach their nest boxes to fence posts, along an existing fence. You'll see such nest boxes along Beaver Lake Road, in Black Mountain - sntsk'il'ntən Regional Park, north and west of UBC's Okanagan campus, and in the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park. Volunteers (CONC members Stu Wier, Carol Millar, Michelle Hamilton, and Mike Howard respectively are in charge of those trails; they welcome assistance) and monitor the nest boxes.

CONC applied to BC Nature in 2018 for funding for materials; this was granted. With a quick trip to Rona, we had the materials we needed.

A number of people met in George Lehoux's workshop and constructed 20 nest boxes. The plans are readily available on the internet but be careful; Western and Mountain bluebirds like a hole that is exactly 1 9/16 inches in diameter while Eastern Bluebirds like a slot across the top for entry. Our first boxes were made from Eastern plans, but we didn't realize that until we had drilled the hole; our houses have both a slot and a hole, but we have only ever seen the bluebirds use the hole, not the slot.

Once the boxes were built, we had the problem of mounting them to posts. Along the Mission Creek Greenway there are no fences, so we had to purchase our own posts. Instead of getting wooden posts, we bought metal ones. In retrospect that was a good idea; snakes can't climb metal posts while they can climb wooden ones. Other bluebird trail monitors report great surprise when they open a box to find a gopher snake looking back at them.

Before we mounted the boxes on the posts, we had to get everything near the Greenway. We drove 12 posts and boxes into the Gallagher's Canyon Community as close to the Greenway as we could, unloaded them, and then carried them to the grasslands.

But you can't put the boxes just anywhere. Previous experience from other bluebird trails suggests we put up pairs of boxes about 100 metres apart. It appears bluebirds don't like bluebird neighbours within 100 metres and swallows don't like swallow neighbours within 100 metres. By putting the boxes in pairs, with about 100 metres between pairs, there is a chance one box will be occupied by bluebirds and the other by swallows; in practice we have seen this happen only rarely.

Carrying the posts and the boxes (and an ax we used as a hammer), we headed down the Greenway. Using a GPS, we placed the posts 100 metres apart and mounted a box on each. Over the five years we have been monitoring the bluebird trail we have moved six of the boxes.

The second, downstream, section of the bluebird trail is a little more difficult to access. Walking along the Greenway, you may have seen a trailer park on the left bank of Mission Creek. We found its access road and drove down hoping to park the cars there. After a little negotiation, the park owner agreed we could do so. We unloaded eight posts and nest boxes; we carried these, along with the ax, up the stairs to the grassland and placed them in what we deemed to be suitable spots. We have since moved four of the nest boxes.

In 2021, Mike Howard was making nest boxes for a bluebird trail on the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park; he had enough extra material to make six new boxes for CONC's trail and we mounted them in this downstream grassland. Getting them there was a little easier as the golf course professional brought them to the grasslands via



cart from the course above. So, this portion of the trail now contains 14 nest boxes, and the upstream portion contains 12.

To facilitate recording information on the use of the nest boxes, they are numbered. In addition, a friend of my son made wooden plaques that we mounted on each box noting that CONC is involved in monitoring them.

Monitoring the nest boxes involves checking them approximately once a week during the nesting season, April through July. Some years the monitoring begins earlier, some years it ends later; in 2022 the monitoring period extended into August. In addition, there is some preparation at the beginning and ending of the season.

In the first years we had few if any Western Bluebirds; we did see a Mountain Bluebird on the golf course, but none have used our nest boxes. Tree Swallows found the nest boxes and began using them to raise one or perhaps two broods a year; if a pair raises a brood early in the year they may go on to raise a second one. As the years passed, we had more and more Western Bluebirds using the nest boxes to the point we now have five or six nest boxes of bluebirds. We have approximately the same number of nest boxes containing Tree Swallows. That accounts for about a dozen of the nest boxes.

The other nest boxes may be empty or may contain nests of other species, including our nemesis, the House Wren. House Wrens will often fill a nest box with sticks just to ensure they do not have a neighbour. In 2022 we had a couple of House Sparrows take up residence.

The birds seem to prefer “experienced” nest boxes. It is unusual to see a brand-new nest box that is occupied. But wait until next year!



Photo Credit E.Wegsheidler

What do you do when you check a nest box? First, you stand to the side and tap on the nest box, announcing your presence. If there is a bird at home, it will usually leave. On occasion, particularly while sitting on the eggs, the bird (most likely the female) will not leave until you open the nest box. That's why you stand to one side! Don't worry, the parents return to the nest box when you leave.

You then open the nest box (often from the front but occasionally from the side, depending on the design) and note the condition of the nest (if any) and count the eggs (if any). Record all this so that when you next visit, you'll know if there are young in the nest box. If you suspect young, especially if they are close to fledging, you can slide a piece of plexiglass over the hole that appears when you open the nest box. Mike's newer nest boxes have the plexiglass built in.

If the young are very close to fledging, you don't open the nest box in case the young leave prematurely. It's challenging to chase young fluttering on the ground and get them back into the nest box. You then go on to the next nest box and repeat the procedure.

Pre-season work. Fix any nest boxes that need work. Drive in any posts that are leaning. Most people like a clean home; bluebirds (and swallows) seem to do so too. So, as a bluebird trail monitor you need to clean house for the birds. In the spring, clean out the nest boxes since they may have been occupied over the winter by mice; you may want to use a mask and gloves for this task. Then rub a bar of unscented soap over the inside of the nest box, particularly the roof and top of the walls; this discourages wasps from using the nest box.

Post-season work. Clean out the nest boxes again, removing used nesting material. Bluebirds are clean birds; the adults remove feces from the nest box. Swallows are not clean birds. Re-soap the nest box again. Summarize your nesting data.

What do you do with the data you gather about nesting success? The BC Bluebird Society (<https://www.bcbluebirds.org/> an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society <http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/>) gathers the information and publishes it so we know how the bluebirds are faring. After all, we mentioned earlier that bluebirds and other cavity-nesters need some help from us.

Do you want to become involved in monitoring a bluebird trail? All trails welcome monitors. In particular, Rick and Jen hope to spend next summer going to Newfoundland and Labrador so the trail along the Greenway will need monitors. Interested? Call Rick and he'll give you his unscented bar of soap, piece of plexiglass, etc.

People are interested in wild mushrooms for a variety of reasons. Some are attracted by their beauty, others by their novelty and mystery. Some like to photograph them, while others use them as natural dyes for fabrics. For a growing number of people, the medicinal properties of mushrooms are drawing more and more attention. However, it's the appeal of harvesting and eating wild mushrooms that's attracting most people to the woods and fields. When I lead a group into the woods I'm always bombarded with the question, "Is it safe to eat?" There's not an easy answer to this question. However, before addressing this question, here's a bit of context.

Most reports of mushroom poisoning are the results of overindulgence (especially of raw mushrooms), allergic reactions, and food poisoning from the eating of rotten mushrooms. Though there are poisonous mushrooms, there are not that many that are dangerous. The poisonous toxins come in a variety of forms. Most "poisonous" mushrooms will give you nausea and/or gastrointestinal distress, to varying degrees. Some poisonous mushrooms will give you hot flashes and sweats. Most hallucinogenic mushrooms are considered poisonous mushrooms. But anyone collecting and consuming wild mushrooms needs to be aware that there are some truly dangerous mushrooms, with toxins such as Amatoxin and Orellanine. These mushrooms could kill you. The good news is, as stated previously, is that there aren't that many of this type, and with proper guidance and observation a person should have no difficulty avoiding them. The fact is that as far as edibility goes, many wild mushrooms are often unappealing, bland, or simply just don't taste good. However, this doesn't, and shouldn't, deter a person from experiencing the excitement of collecting and eating wild mushrooms, and there are numerous types that are easy to identify and tasty. Here are some things to consider.

Have you made a positive identification? This can be difficult, as there are thousands of different mushrooms, many of which look very similar, especially to the novice. In the excitement of collecting, many people will "shoehorn" their mysterious find into a likely identity, wishfully thinking it matches the picture they've settled on in their guidebook. A close relative of mine fell prey to this. He has some limited experience collecting wild mushrooms. While a guest at a cottage north of Toronto a few summers ago he was keen to impress his hosts with his foraging skills. The weather was hot and dry, mushrooms were scarce. When he chanced upon an attractive group of Boletus mushrooms he took them back to the cottage, cooked them up and served his wife and hosts. They didn't taste very good, so all except my relative, just had a taste. All except my relative were mildly ill a couple of hours later. My relative, not wanting to show reluctance had a sizable portion and was violently and seriously ill, all night. He recovered the next day but learned his lesson. In questioning him afterwards I was baffled to know what he was thinking. He knew not to eat anything unless he'd made a positive identification. His best response was, "I just wanted to eat some wild mushrooms".

The answer to whether a mushroom is edible or not can be hazy at times. Is it usually tolerated by most people? For example, consider Morels. Morels are one of the most popular and most collected wild mushrooms. They're sold around the world both fresh and dried. Yet ten percent of people are made ill by them. An acquaintance fed them to her family, everyone enjoyed them, but her son was ill afterwards. Unfazed, she served them again the following evening, and once again her son was ill. Likely he's among the ten percent. A rule of thumb when trying a new wild mushroom is to just have a small portion the first time. Additionally, to be safe with new varieties, eat them separately the first time.

When collecting for the table make sure the mushrooms come from a wholesome environment. Mushrooms can act like sponges, absorbing nutrients from the soil, but that same ability means they are also very good at absorbing toxic heavy metals. They're so good at this that people are experimenting using them for the remediation of polluted landsites, such as mine tailings. Don't collect mushrooms from sites such as beside a busy roadway, where they can be absorbing pollutants, or from a lawn that gets sprayed with insecticides.

Ensure that the mushrooms you intend to eat are unspoiled. You might be thinking, "Why even mention this, it's obvious." However, I'm surprised at how undiscerning people can be on occasion. They're so excited to have found an edible variety of mushroom that they are willing to ignore the rotten spots and larvae damage, things they'd never consider taking home from the supermarket.

A basic rule of thumb is to cook wild mushrooms. Most mycologists feel all mushrooms should be cooked, including the common white button mushrooms from the supermarket. An incident a few years ago illustrates this. A cook preparing for a banquet in Vancouver was given fresh morels. Not being familiar with them he chopped them up and added them raw to the salad. Scores of people from the banquet ended up in the hospital with severe abdominal pain and upsets. Some mushrooms are very mildly toxic, but cooking will neutralize any harmful tendencies.

Are you basically healthy? If your immune system is compromised be cautious, because as mentioned above, some wild mushrooms can have low levels of harmful compounds. To illustrate this, and at the same time to go back to an

earlier statement that it's sometimes not easy to answer definitively whether a mushroom is safe to eat, here's a cautionary tale. There's a common mushroom named "angels wings", *Pleurocybella porrigens*. For many years it was considered (and is still considered by many) to be a good edible mushroom. Many mushroom guidebooks around still list it as such. However, fairly recently it was blamed for multiple deaths among a group of elderly Japanese men, all of whom were on dialysis.

A final thing to remember is moderation. Many reports of mushroom poisoning are actually instances of overindulgence. Again, sometimes the excitement of a large haul of choice edibles can influence people's better judgement. Most times the worst effect is a transitory case of gastrointestinal upset. However, rarely, the consequences can be far worse. There's another common mushroom whose status has recently been re-evaluated, the "Man on Horseback", *Tricholoma equestre*. As mentioned previously, it, too, was considered a popular and desirable edible mushroom, and it, too, is listed in some older guides as such. But not that long ago there were huge fruitings of it in France. People ate large quantities day after day. Shortly afterwards there were reports of deaths, assumed to be the result of the rapid accumulation of low levels of toxins.

Having considered all these factors you might be thinking, "Do I want to eat wild mushrooms?" This is good. You should be cautious. As the saying goes, "If in doubt, throw it out". If you want to try eating wild mushrooms, go with someone knowledgeable in the subject and use caution. Then enjoy the experience, because there are many safe and easy to identify mushrooms to be found, and because it can be a truly engaging and exciting pursuit.

The webpage Mushrooms Up provides pictures and information on many of BC's edible and poisonous mushrooms at <https://www.zoology.ubc.ca/~biodiv/mushroom/>



Angel Wings *Pleurocybella porrigens*, previously considered safe is now deemed unsafe in certain circumstances



Man-On-Horseback *Tricholoma equestre*, previously considered safe is also now deemed unsafe



## CANADA'S EMBLEMATIC BIRDS – WHO'S WHO, AND WHERE?

Can you identify the bird species, and the province which claims it as their provincial emblem? Answers are below.

All photos credited to Canada Nature Notebook, copied with permission.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13

### Answers

- Alberta: Great Horned Owl
- New Brunswick: Black-capped Chickadee
- Newfoundland and Labrador: Atlantic Puffin
- Ontario: Common Loon
- British Columbia: Steller's Jay
- Manitoba: Great Gray Owl
- Northwest Territories: Gyrfalcon
- Nova Scotia: Osprey
- Nunavut: Rock Ptarmigan
- Prince Edward Island: Blue Jay
- Quebec: Snowy Owl
- Saskatchewan: Sharp-tailed Grouse
- Yukon Territory: Common Raven





"This warning seems like a good description of a Sharp-shinned Hawk!  
Photo taken in West Kelowna on 7 Feb. 2022 by Rick Durand; used with permission