

Autumn, 2022

# The Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club

www.okanagannature.org



Know Nature and Keep it  
Worth Knowing

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Snow Goose - Immature

The next newsletter will be  
Winter, 2023

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

The next general meeting takes place on December 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 have re-started, we look forward to meeting you in the natural world.

- |                    |                    |                             |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Brenda Detlefsen | • Markus Weilmeier | • Barbara & Mark Rebagliati |
| • Lindael Rolstone | • Mike Teixeira    | • Sheila Marshall           |
| • Elaine Beyeler   | • Brenda McKay     | • Larisa Kalin              |

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY DOUGLAS GRAHAM

It seemed like summer would never end this year and indeed it was not your imagination that it was crazy warm (see the climate notes in the rare birds article). Speaking of rare birds in hot climes, I slipped out to Peru for the month of November, chasing rare tapaculos. In a remote indigenous community on the Ucayali tributary of the Amazon, I just spotted this amazing basket/backpack — any guesses what it is made of and what the feathers are from?



I'm told that winter snows arrived brutally in the central Okanagan in the first week of November, but I can't confirm if this is true or not. [Ed. comment: This is brutally true.]

Now that we are back in the full swing of in-person monthly meetings at Evangel Church, I hope you have had a chance to get to one of the meetings. We've had some great presentations recently: a trip to Newfoundland by Glenda and Dave Newman, member's night in October with great photos and stories from five of the members, and most recently the inimitable Ian Walker in November. My thanks to Rick Gee for stepping in to chair the November meeting. We'll have an interesting talk on 13 December on Western Screech-Owls by Megan Buers.

As always, some interesting articles are in this newsletter. Lots of people work hard to try and produce some interesting content for you — please enjoy.

Looking forward, please note that, appropriately, snowshoeing outings are again back on the schedule. The Christmas Bird Counts will as always, be a birding highlight of the winter season. The potluck dinner on 10 January will take place, as per tradition; please buy your tickets in advance by contacting Rick Gee ([pastpresident@okanagannature.org](mailto:pastpresident@okanagannature.org)) or any member of the Executive. Finally, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on 14 February.

Douglas Graham  
President, CONC

**Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club** [www.okanagannature.org](http://www.okanagannature.org)  
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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
- **MEMORIAL MEMBERS:** Arthur Hughes-Games, Brenda Thomson, Muriel Westwood, Harry Almond

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

- Next deadline date for submissions is February 15, 2023
- 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 calendar at our website. If in doubt, check with the activity contact, or contact any of the Executive.**

**BIRDING: contact: [birding@okanagannature.org](mailto:birding@okanagannature.org)**

- **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:** on pause until the spring – start date in 2023 will be announced\*

**TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE!**

**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)

**SNOWSHOEING & 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, DEC 13 GENERAL MEETING

#### ARE RIPARIAN AREAS THERMAL REFUGIA FOR WESTERN SCREECH-OWLS?

BY MEGAN BUERS



Immature Western Screech Owl, photo - Megan Buers

Megan Buers will be our speaker for the General CONC in-person meeting December 13, 7:00 pm at Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna.

Megan graduated from the University of British Columbia Okanagan with a degree in ecology and evolutionary biology in 2018. She spent the following 4 years working across Canada on a variety of ornithological conservation projects including working with Burrowing Owls in Alberta, Canada Jays on Vancouver Island, and Nightjars in Ontario. She's also worked at several bird observatories across Canada, including Longpoint Bird Observatory and Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Megan hopes to be able to continue to protect habitat and to work toward the conservation of those raptors she's grown so fond of.

For my MSc thesis, I aim to determine how threatened Western Screech-owls (*Megascops kennicottii macfarlanei*) in southcentral British Columbia are being impacted by changes in climate, namely temperature fluctuations and extreme heat events, and whether riparian areas offer owls some thermal buffering compared to upland environments. I will determine how temperature fluctuations and other habitat features impact owl behavior through locating nests, then monitoring how often chicks are fed, the diet, and overall reproductive output and success.

### CONC MEETING COFFEE COMMITTEE

BY BEV THOMAS

Would you be interested in being part of our little group that prepares coffee for the monthly meetings? There needs to be at least four of us, in order that we only take a few turns a year, and so that we may substitute for each other if someone is unavailable.

So far there are only two of us, as others have gone on to volunteer elsewhere for a change. If you think you might like to join us, **please call Bev at 250-762-7610**. Thank you!

### CONC LIBRARY

BY JEN MATTHEWS

Now that our monthly Tuesday evening meetings have resumed, we are going to set up the CONC library again for in-person borrowing. We have birding, botany, geology, and hiking guides as well as some fiction. A basic list of titles has been added to the CONC website (on the About Us page) if you want to have a look at what is in our collection.

### 2022-2023 CONC PHOTO CONTEST

BY IAN WALKER

As has become our practice through the pandemic, we have decided to host the 2022-2023 photo contest on-line. In the New Year we will set up a website to facilitate judging.

At this point, it is most important to remind you to submit your photos. Entry is open to CONC members only. Entrants may submit up to four (4) total photos maximum - with no more than one per category.

There are four categories:

- 1) Flora (Plants, lichens, mosses, algae, fungi, and even bacteria)
- 2) Fauna (Animals of any sort, big or small, from weevils to whales. Protozoa, too!)
- 3) Landscapes
- 4) People in Nature

Please note, all entries must:

- 1) have been taken in 2022 or 2023.
- 2) be emailed to [concphotocontest@gmail.com](mailto:concphotocontest@gmail.com), together with the entrant's name, the category for each photo, and the title/location for each photo. Acceptable image formats include .jpg, .png and .tiff.
- 3) not include any watermarks or other indicator that would identify the entrant.
- 4) be received by [concphotocontest@gmail.com](mailto:concphotocontest@gmail.com) no later than 10:00 a.m., **5 January 2023**.

Also, please note that because of the common dimensions of computer screens, images taken in portrait format may be disadvantaged during judging relative to those having a landscape orientation. Images should be submitted at a relatively high resolution, as low-resolution images will appear pixelated on the judging website.

Winners will be announced at the CONC February AGM, and winning images will be published in the CONC Spring newsletter.

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

### **Overview**

Source: *Birds Canada website, and article by Yousif Attia, Canadian CBC Coordinator, Birds Canada*

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a bird census which occurs in almost 2000 localities throughout the Western Hemisphere (105 are in British Columbia). The counts are done by volunteers and are administered by Bird Studies Canada and the National Audubon Society. Data collected is used by conservation biologists to assess bird population trends and distribution. Count circles are 25 km in diameter and are organized by a local compiler. The field counts typically occur between 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM and take place from December through to January.

Last year (2021-2022) was the 121<sup>st</sup> year of the CBC. Results were submitted for 450 circles in Canada; fourteen new circles were registered. There were 10,741 field counters and 4586 feeder counters, who reported on sightings of almost 3,500,000 individual birds of 284 species. Species diversity increased for most regions in this year's count. Counts reporting the highest diversity of species were Victoria, BC (143), Ladner, BC (128), Halifax-Dartmouth, NS (127), Parksville-Qualicum Beach, BC (123), and White Rock-Surrey-Langley, BC (123). Weather conditions are always an important factor in this count, and varied greatly across the country, with the coldest temperatures noted in Arctic Bay, NU, at -37 degrees Celsius.

**For this upcoming 122<sup>nd</sup> year**, the dates for each count circle in our region are below. Please contact the survey compiler if you would like to participate:

- Lake Country, **Wednesday December 14**, Les Gyug, ([les\\_gyug@shaw.ca](mailto:les_gyug@shaw.ca))
- Kelowna, **Saturday December 17**, Chris Charlesworth, (250) 718-0325, or [c\\_charlesworth23@hotmail.com](mailto:c_charlesworth23@hotmail.com)
- Big White, **Tuesday December 20**, Chris Charlesworth, (250) 718-0325, or [c\\_charlesworth23@hotmail.com](mailto:c_charlesworth23@hotmail.com)
- Peachland, **Thursday December 29**, Mathias Bieber ([mbieber1488@gmail.com](mailto:mbieber1488@gmail.com))
- Kamloops, Rick Howie ([howierick@gmail.com](mailto:howierick@gmail.com))
- Penticton, Dick Cannings ([dickcannings@shaw.ca](mailto:dickcannings@shaw.ca))
- Vernon, Chris Siddle ([chris.siddle@gmail.com](mailto:chris.siddle@gmail.com))

More information on CBCs and other counts in British Columbia will be found in at [www.birdscanada.org](http://www.birdscanada.org) or <https://bcfo.ca>.

## **SWEAGLE (SWAN AND EAGLE) COUNT**

The 2023 annual Sweagle Count is scheduled for **Sunday, January 15**.

If you would like to participate, please contact Mike Howard at [birding@okanagannature.org](mailto:birding@okanagannature.org) or [mikehoward@shaw.ca](mailto:mikehoward@shaw.ca) and you will be assigned to one of the area leaders.

Unfortunately, this will be the last year that the global organizer, Rick Howie, will be taking part. Rick is a member of the Kamloops Naturalists' Club, and for the past 48 years has been organising the Sweagle Count for all the clubs in Central and Southern Interior, West Kootenay and the Cariboo. We thank Rick for his dedication and are hopeful that Birds Canada will make use of the data resulting from all his work accomplished through the Naturalists' Clubs.

## **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

The Great Backyard Bird Count will take place **February 17-20, 2023**.

This is an annual four-day event that engages bird enthusiasts of all ages around the world in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Anyone can participate, from beginners to experts. You can count for as little as 15 minutes on a single day, or for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy – and it helps the birds! The Great Backyard Bird Count is a joint program of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon with Canadian partner Birds Canada. Participating is easy, fun to do alone, or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds. Simply watch birds for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days, February 17-20, 2023, and tell us what you see! Additional details will be found at: <https://www.birdcount.org>



## ACTIVITIES REPORTS:

### CONC OUTING ACTIVITIES UPDATE

BY VIVIAN MANNING

Some CONC activities will continue throughout the winter months. 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 will continue with two formats (Sat. birding on pause until 2023 – dates TBA): 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. Please complete the [Birding Excursions Survey](#) below to provide your input on birding activities in for 2023

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](#). (Botany outings now on pause until the spring)

**Snowshoeing & Hiking (Sole Survivors, Ramblers, and Ramblers Plus)** continues enthusiastically on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, with past excursions by the groups to many varied locations such as Kalamalka Lake, Johns Family Conservancy, Scenic Canyon, Mt. Boucherie, High Rim Trail, Myra Bellevue, Okanagan Mountain Park and Pincushion, among many other scenic locations. Time to strap on those snowshoes!



Photos Courtesy Sherrell Davidson

### BIRDING REPORT

BY MIKE HOWARD

One of our keen birding leaders, Elke Fischer, moved this Fall to the south-eastern portion of B.C.. Hopefully we will see Elke next spring during a local birding festival in her area. We wish her all the best.

Since the last Birding Report in the CONC Summer Newsletter, we have increased our organised birding excursions to 82 in total:

- 34 Monday outings
- 29 Thursday outings
- 7 Saturday outings
- 12 special events outings (Sweagle Count, Critter Counts, BC Nature AGM tours etc.).

During these excursions, to date we have submitted 134 complete checklists to eBird and recorded sightings of 193 species.

These outings have been possible thanks to all the birding excursion leaders who select a location, lead and then report 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, Gwynneth Wilson and Jasmine Korcok.

If you would like to become a Birding Leader for the 2023 season, 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 supports are available.



Rough-legged Hawk – Photo courtesy Ian Walker



Pygmy Nuthatch – Photo courtesy Bruce Kennedy



Great Horned Owl – Photo courtesy Ian Walker



Pileated Woodpecker – Photo courtesy Ian Walker



White-crowned Sparrow – Photo courtesy Bruce Kennedy



Redhead – Photo courtesy Lisa Rae



Spruce Grouse – Photo courtesy Vivian Manning



Mountain Chickadee – Photo courtesy Vivian Manning

## **Membership Birding Excursions Survey**

We would like you to have your say in the future direction of the Birding Excursion plans.

Please think about the following questions and send your survey responses to Mike Howard at [birding@okanagannature.org](mailto:birding@okanagannature.org) or [mikehoward@shaw.ca](mailto:mikehoward@shaw.ca). Kindly number each of your answers, so it is clear which question you are responding to.

1. Do you currently participate in CONC Birding Excursions?
2. Would you participate if Birding Excursions were offered at a different time such as on a weekend? Please state your preference.
3. We traditionally have a summer recess from Birding Excursions for the month of August, due to heat and low member availability. Should this recess period be extended to include July and August?
4. Should the frequency of Monday Birding Excursions be reduced to every second Monday?
5. The Monday Birding group typically walk about 5km over a three-hour period during the outing. Is this a comfortable distance?
6. Should the frequency of Thursday Birding Excursions be reduced to every second Thursday?
7. Would you like to see the stop and go format of the Thursday outings changed?
8. Should all day Saturday outings be held in the Winter months in addition to the current schedule of Spring to Fall?
9. Would you be interested in participating in an overnight trip to Birding Festivals such as the Creston Spring Birding Festival?
10. Can you think of any other overnight outings you would be interested in going to?
11. Should we organise one major multiple day Birding trip per year?
12. Would you be in favour of 2 Monday outings/month + 2 Thursday outings/month + 2 Saturday all day outings/month?
13. Should we consider matching experienced leaders with first time leaders to encourage greater participation?
14. Would you like to learn how eBird works and start creating your own checklists?

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 summer through fall of 2022, from 24 August to 15 Nov. 2022.

It was a remarkably warm fall! J. P. Squire in The Daily Courier of 3 Nov. 2022 nicely summarized the unusual season. August was the warmest ever on record in Kelowna with temperatures 3 degrees warmer than the average. September tied the record of 2020 for warmest on record and October was the warmest month ever recorded in Kelowna, more than 4 degrees higher than usual. Perhaps these warm temperatures this year may have delayed fall departures and winter arrivals?

It was a remarkably brutal arrival of winter! By the end of the first week of November, suddenly we were in deep snow. One must wonder if the sudden arrival of all that snow caught out some migrants who had been procrastinating about getting going...

The most sensational birds of the period were a Brant and an Ancient Murrelet, the former a first record for the RDCO to our knowledge.

A CONC birding group saw a Wild Turkey on 1 Sept. on Philpott Road.

Kalin Ocaña on 7 Sept. found and photographed a Brant at Robert's Lake. At least in eBird, there was no previous record of this species from the RDCO (there are a scattering of previous records from the areas of Penticton and Vernon). Kalin also had a few Long-tailed Ducks on 5 Nov. (and again by Blair Dudeck on 8 Nov.); rare in our area but pretty well always seen in the last week of October or first week of November.

An American Golden-Plover (Blair Dudeck) was seen by many observers 8-11 Sept. at Robert Lake. Blair also photographed a Pectoral Sandpiper at the mouth of Mission Creek on Nov. 8, one of the latest RDCO records ever of this species.

In the last rare birds article, we noted that Nick Swan found one of the rarest birds ever recorded in Kelowna, the Bar-tailed Godwit. He again came up with a sensational sighting, also from the mouth of Mission Creek, an Ancient Murrelet, briefly seen and photographed on 27 Aug. There was one previous RDCO record of this species, from Peachland in 1981 (reported in Cannings, et al.'s Birds of the Okanagan).

Kalin Ocaña reported a Parasitic Jaeger on 13 Sept., always a rare bird for the Okanagan. Two days prior on the CONC Saturday birding trip, Mike Howard, et al., saw a likely Jaeger over the lake but could not be sure of the identification.

A Sabine's Gull was seen 4 Sept. (Nick Swan). A Franklin's Gull was seen that same day by the same observer and then an immature (the same bird?) was widely reported from different locations near Kelowna 2-17 Oct. (but eluded my several attempts to find it!). A couple of Arctic Terns were reported 28 Aug. (Kalin Ocaña).

An impressive kettle of 22 Broad-winged Hawks were seen by a group of observers on Pyman Road on 17 Sept. Mike Howard noted a very late and uncommon Swainson's Hawk on 30 Sept. (several later records by other observers were not accepted by the eBird Regional Reviewer).

A sensational Tropical Kingbird was not seen in the RDCO; it was seen and photographed 20 Oct. in Vernon by Chris Siddle. This southern species has never been recorded in the central Okanagan but it's a good bet that this individual traveled through our district to get to Vernon!

A very late Warbling Vireo was reported 25 Oct. by Kalin Ocaña at Sutherland Hills Park, in eBird the latest ever record in the RDCO by one or two weeks. A CONC birding group reported a late and uncommon Tennessee Warbler on 22 Sept. from McKenzie Road. A very late Yellow Warbler was seen 31 Oct.-2 Nov. (Chris Charlesworth, et al.); any record after September is rare for this species. An even later Nashville Warbler was seen at Rotary Marsh on 24 Oct-1 Nov. (Chris Charlesworth) and remarkably, probably the same individual, was seen as late as 10-13 Nov. at the same location.

A Purple Finch was reported by Brad Vissia 9 Oct. on Beaver Lake Road.

#### Late fall records

- Aug. 29: Western Kingbird (Loren Kliwer)
- Oct. 25: Violet-green and Cliff Swallows (Chris Charlesworth)
- Nov. 1: Nashville Warbler (David Bell)

#### Early fall records

- Sept. 8: Swamp Sparrow (Kalin Ocaña)

August and early September were hot and very dry. These conditions extended the vascular plant growing season at higher elevations and suppressed the fruiting of mushrooms in general. While most of the usual good mushroom spots were poor this year there were still a few places where mushrooms were found.

The regularly scheduled season for vascular plants ran from May 6 to July 22 and included 13 outings, which were reported in the last Botany Report. Additional occasional excursions included an aquatic plant outing to Idabel Lake on August 23 and a mushroom outing on October 17.

We had beautiful weather for the August 23 outing to Idabel Lake where we focused on aquatic and shoreline plants. Led by Ian Walker we used canoes and kayaks to find and identify 30 species of plants as well as freshwater sponges, which are classified as animals. Check out Ian's iNaturalist link to many of the plants we saw that day at [https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?on=2022-08-23&place\\_id=any&user\\_id=lesfreck&verifiable=any](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?on=2022-08-23&place_id=any&user_id=lesfreck&verifiable=any)

We also had a beautiful day for our October 17 outing to Prather Creek, looking for mushrooms. We were fortunate to have mushroom experts Dan Durrell and Mitch Milgram join us to help with identifications and provide commentary on many of the species. We found 40+ species, the larger ones being five species of boletes and the more colourful ones being Larch and Miniature Waxy-Caps (*Hygrophorus speciosus* and *Hygrocybe miniata*). Others in moderate abundance were Late Fall Oyster (*Sarcomyxa serotina*), Woolly Velvety Polypore (*Omnia tomentosa*), Pear Puffball (*Apioperdon pyriforme*), Honey Mushroom (*Armillaria mellea*) group, Orange Fuzzyfoot (*Xeramphalina campanella*) as well as *Hygrophorous*, *Russula*, *Lactarius*, and *Clitocybe* species. Some were collected for eating.

As mentioned in the last newsletter a good way to monitor the plants and other wildlife in our area is 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 Okanagan Biodiversity project at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/okanagan-biodiversity>. During the fall mushroom season you can participate in annual forays and mushroom shows sponsored by the Sicamous Fungi Festival Society <http://www.fungifestival.com/>, Vancouver Mycological Society <https://www.vanmyco.org/> and South Vancouver Island Mycological Society <https://svims.club/>.

While we've finished our scheduled outings for the year, we may host one or two winter lichen excursions, looking at macrolichens on trees at different elevations.



Larch Bolete (*Suillus clintonianus*) Peter Courtney



Late Fall Oyster (*Sarcomyxa serotina*) Peter Courtney



Western Yellow Pondweed (*Nuphar polysepala*) Ian Walker



Marsh Cinquefoil (*Comarum palustre*) Ian Walker

We don't get up as early as the birders and we don't walk as far as the hikers but we do enjoy great scenery, fresh air and good company. Details of when and where we meet are provided on [CONC's Botany webpage](#) and in email notifications to the members. If you have questions or suggestions regarding this year's activities, please forward them to [botany@okanagannature.org](mailto:botany@okanagannature.org).

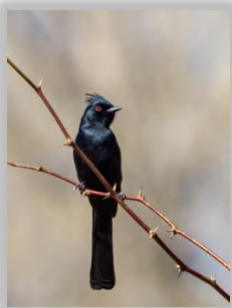


The annual Member's Night was held in-person on October 11. A total of five presentations were provided by members; each included exceptional photos and stories on the natural world both near and far.

1. **Hiking in the Lake Louise region:** Rick Gee related the hiking adventures which he and Jen Matthews experienced early this Fall. Trips to Arnica Lake, Vista Lake and Bow Lake revealed the beginning color changes in the surrounding forests.
2. **Treading Lightly in Tombstone Territorial Park:** In late August of this year, Melanie Lee conducted a solitary hiking trip into this remote and largely untouched region of the Yukon Territory. Located north of Whitehorse, camping access to this region required an early application, and careful selection and formal approval of gear. Melanie completed hikes into Grizzly Lake, Divide Lake, and Talus Lake. A sample of her photos are provided below, and reveal the spectacular vistas of lakes, mountains, and northern tundra plains of this region. Photos courtesy Melanie Lee



3. **Birds of the Coachella Valley:** Vivian Manning delighted us with her exceptional photos and descriptive accounts of birds seen in this region of California in January and February of this year. Species presented included birds who reside in the Okanagan during the summer and overwinter in the south, as well as birds who are resident to the Coachella Valley. Photos courtesy Vivian Manning



Phainopepla (male)

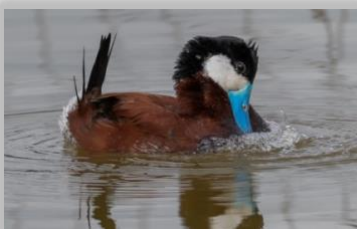


Greater Roadrunner



California Scrub Jay

4. **Favorite Okanagan Bird Images:** Bruce Kennedy provided members with an array of outstanding photos of birds from the Okanagan region, each revealing a moment representative of typical life behavior. Photos included among others, Osprey, Burrowing Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, Greater Yellowlegs, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Mountain Bluebird, Common Merganser, and Ruddy Duck. Photos captured birds in moments of nesting, caring for young, feeding, mating, and hunting. Photos courtesy Bruce Kennedy



Ruddy Duck Male, in courtship display



Greater Yellowlegs, with prey



Rough-legged Hawk, with prey.

5. **Lifer Chasing:** Douglas Graham shared his exploits which were carried out along the Western USA coast in July and August of 2019, as he ultimately aimed for a sighting of the Himalayan Snow-cock in the Ruby Mountains of Nevada. As the species name suggests, this large grouse is endemic to the Himalayan ranges and the Pamir range of Asia but was introduced as a game bird to northern Nevada in the early 1960's. Other noteworthy sightings along the route included Horned Lark, Rock Wren, Clark's Grebe, Yellow-billed Magpie, and the Common Nighthawk. Douglas shared a final photo from the Ruby Mountain region, in which the elusive species was spotted using a super scope. Success!

## PARKS CLEAN-UP SUMMARY

BY MERLE AUTY

The day shone sunny and warm on October 14 for 15 CONC members as they gathered for the semi-annual clean up around the Mindy Tran Park area and Maude Roxby Wetlands. I was thrilled to see three senior members; Judy, Eileen and Lillian join us.

Once again, the bus stop area along Springfield Road needed the most attention. I agree with our work crew that the road is very busy with cars and the noise is considerable. This area is not our choice of location, as in past years we cleaned along both sides of Mission Creek, away from the noise and cars on Springfield Road. However, this section has experienced a considerable increase in traffic and refuse accumulation, so city staff workers have taken on this responsibility and must clean that area on a daily basis.

I am now retiring from the responsibility of organizing this event, and it is for CONC members to decide how and where this semi-annual project can now take place. The parks department will need to be informed if we want our club taken off the 'duty roster'. When a decision is made, I can contact the city staff on behalf of the club.

Anyone interested in organizing this project can contact the President, Douglas Graham, at [president@okanagannature.org](mailto:president@okanagannature.org)



## 2022 RECIPIENT OF THE BRENDA THOMSON MEMORIAL BURSARY

BY MARJORIE GONZALEZ

CONC currently supports a \$1,500 bursary in honour of Brenda Thomson. Brenda and her family were responsible for the land donation that makes up the Thomson Brook wetland. The bursary in her name is given annually to a student in an environmental field who demonstrates financial need.

We are pleased to announce that this year's recipient of the Brenda Thomson Memorial Bursary is Ian Polard. He will be majoring in Biology at UBCO, and we received a very nice thank you letter from Ian after he was awarded the bursary.

We are very happy to support this bursary that helps local students and CONC will continue to support the bursary.

## FUNGA, FLORA AND FAUNA:

### GREEN FIGWORT AT SCENIC CANYON

BY PETER COURTNEY & GEORGE SCOTTER

While walking near the fish pond in Scenic Canyon on September 29, 2017 Helene Schock and I noticed a very tall plant bearing very small purple flowers. Upon closer examination we identified the plant primarily by its flowers as a figwort but couldn't pin the species down using plant reference literature for BC. George Scotter consulted with outside experts and ultimately with the author of the figwort section of the Flora of North America. Over the subsequent year Dr. Kim Kersh identified the plant from photographs and plant samples George sent him as Green Figwort (*Scrophularia umbrosa* Dumort).

It turns out this plant is a native to most of Europe and West Asia and new to Canada in a wild setting. The flower distinguishes it as a figwort and the different basal and stem leaves as Green Figwort when compared with look-a-like species. It was likely introduced to North America as ballast aboard ships and/or as a garden plant.

This imposing plant has a square stem, usually indicative of a mint family member, but this one belongs to the Scrophulariaceae or Butterfly-Bush family. It grows to 2 m tall in wet habitats and in our Scenic Canyon situation the habitat is saturated year-round. It propagates by dispersal of its seed and by underground stems.

George and I researched the literature for records of Green Figwort in North America and found a few reports for the New York area related to its introduction to North America via ship ballast. George also contacted plant nurseries and garden clubs in the Kelowna area asking whether Green Figwort had been sold or planted in the Kelowna area. Nurseries had not sold the plant and the garden clubs were not even aware of it. So we don't know where this plant came from or how it got to its present location. Mud on tires of vehicles and equipment is a possible mode of dispersion. Dissemination by birds would be a remote possibility. Either possibility would suggest that there may be undiscovered populations of Green Figwort in the region.

George and I studied this species from 2017 until George's death in July 2021. We counted the number of plants as well as its branches and seeds to measure its increase or decrease over the 2017 to 2020 period. We witnessed an increase from 1 plant in 2017 to 24 in 2020 and an increase in the number of stems from 46 to 230. Based on the number of seeds and seed capsules per branch we estimated one mature branch could produce from 3,800 to 6,500 seeds. From these observations we concluded that in the right conditions this could be a very invasive plant. Given the proximity of the area to Mission Creek and Okanagan Lake we thought the potential for seed spread by wind and water dispersion was high. We provided the results of our findings to the Regional District of Central Okanagan office responsible for the park with a recommendation that the plant be removed as soon as possible<sup>1</sup>.

I continued to monitor the plant's growth in 2021 and 2022, expecting it to spread downstream. However, the growth area increased in density of branches as well as laterally and upstream by 5-10 m but not at all downstream. Having watched the spread both upstream and downstream of the highly invasive Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) in this same area over the 2017-2022 period I was surprised to not see Green Figwort following the same pattern. My only theory is that this plant is highly dependent on the nutrient-rich seepage stream that it is currently growing in, that is, it spreads upstream following higher nutrient concentrations and not downstream where these nutrients are diluted and filtered out by other vegetation.

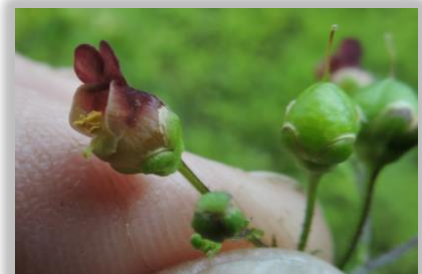
There are already a lot of other invasive species that land managers have to deal with each year, so how does this one rank in importance? Unlike other invasives like Knapweed that require yearly removal attention and keep replenishing themselves from surrounding areas, this figwort is currently confined to a 35 x 35 m area so elimination now should be rather easy and inexpensive. If the plants were to be eliminated now there would still need to be follow-up monitoring and management to remove plants growing from the seeds dispersed thus far. The plan developed for management of the Himalayan Balsam in the Vancouver area, for example, could be applied to manage both the Himalayan Balsam and the Green Figwort now growing side by side in Scenic Canyon<sup>2</sup>. Delaying removal could give rise to a situation where containment would be impossible and control measures expensive.



First year Green figwort (right) is as tall as George photo by P. Courtney



Different basal and stem leaves and distinctive flower photos by P. Courtney



#### References:

<sup>1</sup>Scotter, G. W. and Peter Courtney. Green Figwort (*Scrophularia Unbrosa Dumort.*), A Potentially Invasive Species New to the Flora of Canada. Unpublished manuscript

<sup>2</sup>Metro Vancouver's Regional Planning Advisory Committee - Invasive Species Subcommittee, 2021. Best Management Practices for Himalayan Balsam in the Metro Vancouver Region.



It is with sadness that we report the passing of Helene Schock on November 14, 2022. Helene was a long time CONC member and botany enthusiast who knew her plants. At 87 years old, she participated in several of this year's botany outings and helped with the plant identifications. After a long winter she loved to get out every spring and refamiliarize herself with 'her' plants. She will be missed.



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The Editors thank and are grateful to all newsletter contributors for their timely submissions and informative and interesting articles. We wish all the very best to CONC and all its members in the coming year.



Winter is a season of recovery and preparation.  
-Paul Theroux