

The Central Okanagan Naturalist

www.okanagannature.org

Spring, 2024



Photo courtesy Vivian Manning

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Spring, 2024



Know Nature and Keep it Worth Knowing

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Monthly Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of the month.

The next general meeting is the annual CONC picnic on June 11, 4pm at Kinsmen Park. Details below.

Note from the Board: Tessa Tesluk submitted her resignation as Membership Director due to family commitments out of town. Karen Pedersen kindly accepted a nomination on 27 May 2024 to reassume these responsibilities. We extend our thanks to both for their contributions to CONC.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

PICNIC TIME!



The CONC annual picnic will be held on Tuesday, June 11th, at 4:00 pm, at Kinsmen Park on Abbott Street. Our tables will be near the washrooms on the southwest side of the park. This should allow for free parking and easy access - folks can drop off their chairs, food, etc., and then go and park on a side street.

People are encouraged to bird along the lakeshore and the Maude-Roxby boardwalk. Sherrell Davidson will be arranging a few games.

We hope for great weather and a great turnout!

Should you have any questions, please contact Fran Fisher at bcnature@okanagannature.org

WELCOME NEW CONC MEMBERS!

Our club is growing and thriving, and we welcome our newest members. We look forward to meeting you in the natural world.

- Joanne Graham
- Dodie Pritchard
- Tiara Jacobson
- Janice McQuilkin
- Patricia Palmer
- Suzanne Aubin
- Carole Robinson
- Jo-Anne Dooley
- Carmen Dyck
- Laurie Charbonneau

REGULAR COLUMNS:

BIRDING REPORT

BY MIKE HOWARD

During the first four and a half months of 2024, members participated in 44 CONC-organised birding excursions. These included:

- 20 Monday outings
- 20 Thursday outings
- Three Saturday outings including a trip to Douglas Lake (during Sandhill Crane migration)
- The Rick Howie Interior BC Swan and Eagle Annual Count (January)

On these outings, we observed 150 avifauna species and submitted 112 eBird checklists bringing our total number of checklists submitted by the “CONC Birding Group” to 451.

2024 outings are possible thanks to all the birding excursion leaders who select a location, lead the excursion, and then report the results. Our thanks to:

- Annette Lachaine
- Archie MacDonald
- Bruce Kennedy
- Carol Sharplin
- Deborah White
- Douglas Graham
- Faith Furgason
- Fran Fisher
- Gwynneth Wilson
- Ian Walker
- Jasmine Korcok
- Joyce Fraser
- Karen Blumel
- Lisa Rae
- Margaret Bryan
- Markus Weilmeier
- Mike Howard
- Pam Laing
- Rick Gee
- Sharon Taylor
- Simon Pethick
- Steffany Walker
- Vivian Manning
- Wendy Wright

Several of our very talented photographers have added photographs of the birds we observed for the benefit of our members and as evidence to eBird in our role as citizen scientists. Our contributing photographers included:

- Bruce Kennedy
- Douglas Graham
- Ian Walker
- Karen Blumel
- Lisa Rae
- Pam Laing
- Vivian Manning

A special thanks to all who have recorded the majority of our eBird checklists so far this year:

- Faith Furgason
- Markus Weilmeier
- Sharon Taylor
- Mike Howard

Birding activities planned for the next quarter in 2024:

- Monday, Thursday and monthly second Saturday outings are scheduled up to the start of our summer recess in mid-July.
- The Johns Family Nature Conservancy Annual Critter Count (May 25).
- The Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park Annual Critter Count (first week of June organised by Les Gyug).

Photos follow on next page – please click on photo for full-size picture.



Ruddy Duck contributed by Bruce Kennedy



Rufous Hummingbird (male) contributed by Vivian Manning



Brewer's Blackbird contributed by Bruce Kennedy



Wilson's Warbler (male) contributed by Lisa Rae



Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) contributed by Vivian Manning



American Avocet contributed by Pam Laing



Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) contributed by Bruce Kennedy



Hairy Woodpecker (male) contributed by Ian Walker



Calliope Hummingbird (male) contributed by Pam Laing

This year CONC's regular Friday botany outings began on May 3, focusing as always on flowering plants, and will continue until July 19. This is the period of peak flowering when there's lots to see. The schedule, including outing locations and short lists of species we expect to see, can be found on CONC's [Botany](#) webpage.

At the time this article was submitted three botany outings had been completed - two were regular Friday sessions and one was a special outing to see Steer's Head blooming.

The first outing was to Jackpine Meadows near the Telemark Nordic ski area on April 19. With some snow still in the trees at this higher elevation site this outing specifically targeted the first flowering of Steer's Head *Dicentra uniflora*. This tiny member of the Poppy family is not rare but is seldom seen because of its inconspicuous nature, early flowering, and very short aboveground life of 2-3 weeks. Seven of us saw many Steer's Head blooming as well as nine other flowering species, mostly Western Spring Beauty, Yellowbell, Sagebrush Buttercup, and Geyer's Desert-parsley.

The second outing on May 3 to Beaver Lake Road was attended by eight people. During three stops along the lower part of the road, the group saw 57 species in bloom (or with fresh seeds). The group observed spectacular vistas of flowering Arrowleaf Balsamroot, a large bloom of Skunk Cabbage, five species of the mustard family and four species of violets, as well as four or five species of mushrooms. Pictures taken of vascular plants, mushrooms, lichens, birds, and butterflies and posted on iNaturalist for this May 3 outing can be seen at: [Beaver Lake Road iNaturalist postings](#).

As usual, a checklist and field guide were used to assist identification in the field and the final list of what was seen was sent to the participants after the outing.

The third outing to Knox Mountain Park took place on a very warm May 8. Four of us saw 47 species including eight Grass, seven Aster, four Borage, and five Mustard species amongst others in bloom. We saw plants relatively unique to this site including Freckled Milk-Vetch, Western Blue Flax, Linear-leaved Daisy, and Plains Mustard. And there were lots of Bitterroot in glorious bloom!

As mentioned in the last newsletter, there are a few botany events of note in BC and Washington as follows:

[Botany BC](#), held annually, this year in Nanaimo May 9-12, was attended by about 60 participants, two of which were CONC members. Two or three sites were visited each day on Friday and Saturday by groups of about 15 participants. Subject matter experts such as Andy McKinnon (co-author of *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast* and *Mushrooms of British Columbia*) lead the outings. The weather was perfect and the wildflower blooming was very good. There was a wide diversity of plants seen in several different habitat types including Garry Oak plants communities and known rare plants in the area were examined.

[Botany Washington](#) (April 26-28 and [Study Weekend](#) June 14-16) events have been attended by CONC in previous years but apparently not this year.

To see what's flowering in our area check out iNaturalist projects such as the [Mission Creek Greenway Biodiversity Project](#) and the [Okanagan Biodiversity Project](#).

We encourage members to volunteer to lead botany outings. You don't have to be a botany geek to lead but a familiarity with some of our native plants and a knowledge of the field guide we use would be helpful. In the end, it's a chance to get out and see some beautiful flowering plants and to put names to a few of them. Plant lists will be provided to assist you.

Regarding botany field guides and helpful references, I recommend *Plants of the Southern Interior of British Columbia*, Lone Pine Press. The best online resource for BC plants is [eFlora](#). An excellent FREE cellphone/tablet app is *British Columbia Wildflowers* available for both Android and iPhone/iPad. [iNaturalist](#) is a very popular online resource for identifying plants from photos.

We don't get up as early as the birders and we don't walk as much as the hikers, but we do enjoy great scenery, fresh air and good company. Details of when and where to meet are provided on CONC's webpage and by email to interested members. If you have questions or suggestions regarding this upcoming season, please forward them to botany@okanagannaturalist.com.

Photos courtesy Peter Courtney



Red-stemmed Spring Beauty



Ballhead Waterleaf



Thread-leaved Phacelia

OUTINGS REPORT:

HIKING

BY ROBBIE BOWERS & GLENDA NEWMAN

Hiking and Snowshoeing (Sole Survivors and Ramblers)



Outings transitioned from snowshoeing to hiking in early March with Ramblers (Level 1) on Tuesday organized by Connie, Level 2 hiking on Thursday organized by Robert, and Sole Survivors on Wednesday organized by Glenda & Dave.

Destinations included Mount Boucherie, Knox Mountain, Carney Pond, Thomson Flats, Myra Bellevue Provincial Park, Trepanier and Gladstone (Peachland), Lebanon Creek and Mount. Keogan (Okanagan Falls).

Many thanks to all the members who volunteered to lead.

March 25, 2024 - Spring's Things

This outing explored the slopes of Kalamo Regional Park and offered spectacular views from the steep slopes overlooking Okanagan Lake.

April 25, 2024 - Mt. Baldy

This outing explored the grassy slopes of Mount Baldy and offered a diverse palette of wildflowers and the buzz of pollinating insects. A spectacular view of the valley was enjoyed from the summit.

Weekend Explorers will take a hiatus for the summer months. Many thanks to Ian Walker for organizing and leading these excursions. New leaders and ideas are welcome — please contact any Board member

FEATURES:

ADOPT-A-STREAM PROGRAM - APRIL 12, 2024

BY ROBBIE BOWERS

CONC works with The City of Kelowna to help keep streams and adjacent properties clear of litter. This Spring, Mike Howard led a team of seven at Thomson Marsh, and Merle Auty worked at Maude-Roxby Wetlands. As well fifteen CONC members spent the morning at Bulman Road/UBCO overpass Rail Trail, collecting 10 garbage bags and several miscellaneous large objects.

A big thank you to all our volunteers for a very successful day!



Thomson Marsh



Bulman Road



Our CONC Newsletter has a new look! Future editions will include a full-page front-cover photo and a last-page smaller photo. We encourage members to submit their CONC outing photos for the cover page or last page display in each edition of the newsletter. All photos from mobile phone to full-frame cameras will be considered. If your photo speaks to the nature of our CONC outings, we'd love to display it in the newsletter.

Photo submission criteria:

- Taken during a CONC regular or special outing representative of our activities: botany, birds, animals, hiking/snowshoeing/biking/kayaking, landscape,
- Taken in the previous three months from the issue date of the newsletter,
- The photo does not include identifiable people but if any people are in the photo, you must have notified them of the submission and received their ok,
- Don't submit a photo you intend to submit to the photo contest!
- Photos submitted for the front page must be a sufficient resolution to fill 8.5" X 11", (sized to 2048p on the long side).
- Any format is ok.
- Provide a short descriptive title, and your name.
- Email to concnnewsletterphotos@gmail.com
- Editors will choose two photos for each newsletter - one full-size photo for the front page and one smaller photo for the final page.
- Each photo will be credited to the photographer, with the title provided..
- Editors reserve the right to crop photos to best fit.

NEW CONC LOGO

BY MARJORIE GONZALEZ



The winner of the logo contest was **Candidate 2: Stylized bird and leaf with hiking boot steps!!**

We received a total of 74 votes, and the breakdown for each of the candidates was as follows:

- Candidate 1, Okanagan sunrise/sunset: 9 votes (12%)
- Candidate 2, Stylized bird and leaf: 35 votes (47%)
- Candidate 3, Okanagan landscape: 27 votes (37%)
- Candidate 4, Refreshed current logo: 3 votes (4%)

We are also happy to share that the member who submitted the original design and the winner of the contest is Vivian Manning!

Thank you to everyone for your support during this process. We are looking forward to using the new logo and we will start to transition our club materials into this new logo going forward. Stay tuned for items such as club shirts where we can show off our new logo!

CONC will have a booth at a couple of upcoming events to connect with the public. The events are:

- The RDCO's **Celebrate BC Parks Day** along Mission Creek Greenway on **Saturday June 1, between 9:30am-12:30pm**. Our booth will be up by the heron nests. Come say hi! RDCO is also encouraging folks to wear fun, festive, decorative hats to add some festive flare and walk the greenway.
- Kelowna's **Canada Day Celebrations** at Waterfront Park on **July 1st**. We plan to set up the booth between 9 - 11 am, be present 11 am - 4 pm, and take it down between 4 pm - 5 pm. If you are able to volunteer to help out at any of those times, especially during set up or take down, please contact Marjorie (outreach@okanagannature.org).

REPORT ON BC NATURE AGM 2024, QUALICUM BEACH

BY FRAN FISHER & RICK GEE

BC Nature, the Federation of BC Naturalists, is an organization to which CONC belongs. We have a director, Fran Fisher, who is responsible for coordination between us and them. Other CONC members, including Rick Gee (as a BC Nature director and CONC member) and Jennifer Matthews (as a CONC member), attend the general meetings. These meetings provide the opportunity to visit another area of BC under the direction of local naturalists.

The attendees include employees of BC Nature, the BC Nature Board, club representatives, and interested naturalists from clubs throughout BC. CONC has hosted both Annual General Meetings and a Fall General Meeting. The FGMs happen less frequently now as no club has stepped forth to host them since COVID-19.

The AGM usually takes place over four days. The first, a Thursday (May 9 in this case) is used for afternoon meetings of the Board of BC Nature and the Council of Club Representatives. Rick retired from the Board after these meetings. The first evening is used for a presentation on some aspect of local natural history. This year, the topic was the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve.

The second day of the meeting (May 10 in this case) begins with early morning birding, which Fran, Rick and Jen slept through, not in the same tent, even though it was near the campground at which we stayed. The rest of the morning consists of an official welcome from First Nations and local government representatives, followed by a series of presentations. Fran went to learn about tide pools while Rick and Jen attended the Harewood Plains (an area near Nanaimo which is in need of protection) presentation while others attended a discussion on how best to engage with local government. We all joined together for a presentation on history of the North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre (<https://www.niwra.org/>). Both the presentations we attended were interesting. The afternoon was devoted to field trips to local natural areas, led by local naturalists. Some trips focused on the seashore, others focused on walks in various natural areas. In the evening, there was a presentation from BC Bats, similar to one we had at a CONC meeting. Somehow or other, the BC Nature president found that May 10 was Rick's birthday so he was treated to a loud chorus of Happy Birthday from all in attendance. The evening concluded with a walk to see three bat houses in a Qualicum Beach park. Yes, we saw bats!

The third day of the meeting (May 11 in this case) began with early-morning birding and then a series of field trips. Jen made a visit to Hamilton Marsh while Rick visited the Big Qualicum fish hatchery for a discussion of the Indigenous use of plants. Fran went to Rath Trevor Provincial Park with Terry Taylor, who has studied coastal ecology for the past 50 years. We learned to look

deeper into the flora to find the real story of what is going on. After lunch, the AGM was held, followed by an evening banquet and awards.

Margaret Bryan was awarded a Club Service Award for her authorship of a CONC newsletter birding column for a number of years. Margaret was nominated by the CONC board. More details (and pictures) will be in the summer edition of BCnature magazine.

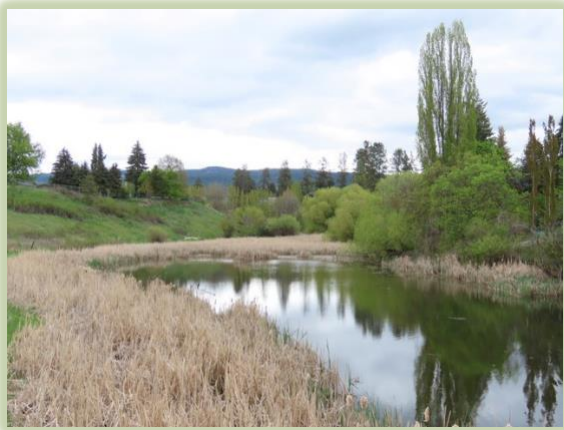
The final award of the night was given to Rick Gee. This is the Elton Anderson Award. The BC Nature website says “This award is presented to a member of BC Nature to recognize their service, dedication, devotion, enthusiasm and energy to further the aims of BC Nature to naturalists across the province.” Rick downplays his contributions and would have declined the award if he had known about it. He was truly surprised as was Jen. His nomination was kept secret by his nominators, Pam Laing, Gwynneth Wilson, Fran Fisher and members of the BC Nature Board, but his name was on a plaque on the base of the award (which needs to be returned next year) and on a bowl (which he keeps) so he couldn’t decline. The evening concluded with a thought-provoking presentation on biodiversity.

The final day of the meeting (May 12 in this case) is devoted to final field trips for those who have time to participate. We attended a trip to the Harewood Plains, so we could see why the area needs protection. It has a very interesting collection of flowering plants growing on a thin skin of soil above a rocky substrate. There is a subdivision proposal in place for the area.

We encourage you to attend a BC Nature AGM. They presentations and the field trips are always interesting. And the 2025 AGM is in Merritt, so you could almost visit for a day if you wanted.

BLACK MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - STUDENT BIRDING PROJECT

BY PAM LAING



Behind Black Mountain Elementary School

2024 marks the seventh year of an ongoing project to introduce the Grade 3 students at Black Mountain Elementary School to the joys of birding. We begin with a Zoom presentation about eleven species we usually see on our walks plus four more we might see if we’re lucky. (Two of the latter are birds here year-round while two are migrants, so we can discuss migration). The walks are an hour long with each class and take us behind the school along the Gopher Creek trail through habitat that varies from marsh and pond to bushes, pines, and firs.

The teachers prepare their classes for our experience with a module on habitat, conservation, and scientific ‘thinking’. They also help the children practise with the set of small binoculars on loan from District 23 School Board.

There are many, many questions! Children are curious and observant at this age, wanting to understand more about the natural world around them. We usually see an average of 20 species on each walk, not all of them the same. I enjoy the project enormously. I’m encouraged too by the increased knowledge and enthusiasm of the teachers, an unexpected bonus!

Since the launch last year of CONC's Checklist of all the species of fauna, flora, and funga in the Central Okanagan, work has primarily proceeded "under the hood", with the help of programmer Dakota Flath. We've added some bugs to the Checklist and also resolved "bugs" affecting the public interface at RDCOChecklist.info. Work continues on other major embellishments to come.

In this update, we review what is known about the ant fauna of the RDCO. A significant update of the ants has just been done, drawing from a range of sources with specimen records. The ant list for the Central Okanagan now includes 71 species, of which 43 are confirmed, the remainder probable or "to be determined". The complete RDCO list can most easily be obtained by going to the Checklist and searching for "Formicidae", the name of the ant family. You could search for "ant", but this would also give about 20 species of other types of insects that have ant in their name, such as the "Western Ant Queen Kidnapper", a most interesting wasp!

It's well known that ants have an amazing degree of social organization and multiple castes with different functions, but did you know that here in the Central Okanagan there are slaving species (which invade and enslave the ants of a colony of a different species), parasitic species (living inside colonies of other ant species), farming ants, aphid shepherds, predators, harvesters, wood decomposers, and of course, those annoying ants that crawl over you at the summer picnic...

This fascinating group of insects has a few aficionados in BC and there are some recent and useful publications on the ants of BC. A good place to start is a short introductory essay "[The Ants of British Columbia: abundance, significance and ecological diversity](#)" by Staffan Lindgren of the University of Northern BC.

A checklist of the ants of BC was published by Ken Naumann, William B. Preston, and Gordon L. Ayre in 1999: "An annotated checklist of the ants (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) of British Columbia". More than a checklist covering 73 species then known from BC, this publication includes a helpful key to all the BC species known at that time. It also includes notes on the specific locations where specimens have been collected, including West Kelowna and Kelowna. That list was updated to 103 species by Rob Higgins in 2024.

Ants can be fairly easily identified to genus but can be very challenging to identify to species. The taxonomy of some groups is controversial as myrmecologists slowly come to a consensus on how to delineate and classify species. Supplementary help for identifying our ants can be found in the 2007 "Ants of North America: a guide to the genera" by Brian L. Fisher and Stefan P. Cover. See also the amazing web site [AntWeb](#), hosted at the California Academy of Science, which has images and maps of all the species of the World. This site has mapped specimen records of 70 species from BC (including many RDCO records) and photos of each species.

Dr. Higgins informs me that he is working on a new key to the ants of BC and time permitting, he hopes to complete it this year. We amateur ant folks are looking forward to that.

Based on a review of these various sources, and a careful recheck of all ant records in E-Fauna BC and iNaturalist, the current CONC Checklist presents a pretty clear picture of our ant fauna. There are surely still missing species and probable species that could be "upgraded" to confirmed. It would be worthwhile if anybody wants to extend a feeler into the ant world – that's one of my plans for this summer...



To the left and below are photos of *Aphaenogaster occidentalis*, Western Collared Ant. Note the two-part petiole joining the “thorax” and “abdomen”; this is typical of the subfamily Myrmicinae (one of three subfamilies of ants that occur in the Okanagan). June 12, 2020, near Mission Creek.



BOOK REVIEW

BY RICK GEE



Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration

Author: Rebecca Heisman
Publisher: HarperCollins
ISBN: 978-0-06-316114-6

How do you track birds? How do you track where they go and from whence they came?

Many birds migrate; they appear in the summer and then disappear in the winter. Early scientists (including Aristotle) believed birds hibernated in trees or even in the mud during the winter. People saw birds heading south in the fall and flocks of birds heading north in the spring. But no one paid attention to these flocks until a Pfeilstorch appeared in Rostock, Germany, in 1822. This White Stork had a spear stuck in its neck; the wood in this spear was eventually determined to be of African origin. You can read more about this at <https://terralistens.com/blogs/bird-migration/the-case-of-the-stuck-stork>

From that point on, migration became more intensively studied. This book describes technologies used to study migration in particular, and birds in general. The first techniques (tying yarn or wire to a bird’s leg and seeing if the bird returned) developed into banding, a practice that continues. One of the local banding stations is at Vaseux Lake. Other BC stations include Rocky Point (on Vancouver Island), Tatlayoko Lake (northwest BC), and Mackenzie (northeast BC).

Banding only works if you can retrieve the band, often after the banded bird has died. How do you get more information about a bird’s travels? An early attempt was to look at the full moon and count the number of birds you saw passing its face. This led to the use of radar (often weather radar) to identify flocks of birds.

But sometimes you want to work with individual birds, placing a geolocator on a bird and then retrieving it later. Geolocators record sunrise and sunset times so you can tell where a bird is on an east-west axis. But you need to trap the bird to attach the geolocator and then you need to recapture the bird.

You can study the chemicals in a bird's feathers, particularly carbon and deuterium to determine position on a north-south axis. But you need to get the feathers and then you need to recapture the bird.

Satellites can help by recording signals sent from small transmitters glued to the back of birds, bats, and even butterflies. Motus towers on the ground record signals as well. On a recent visit to Kelowna, the Birds Canada CEO mentioned a father who set up a Motus tower in Alberta while his daughter set up a tower in Central America; they both recorded signals from the same bird! A company named [Terra](#) promises a home-version of a Motus tower for under \$500.

Genetic advances allow you to identify the source of birds with some detail. For example, we now know there are several populations of Wilson's warblers. By examining the DNA extracted from a bird's feathers, you can often tell its source. Wilson's warblers apparently were found around the edge of North America while the centre was covered by ice; the eastern and western populations had a different genetic makeup, and these differences can still be detected.

All these techniques are described in this book. The book features descriptions of the people responsible for these techniques. The author tracked them down and had Zoom conversations with many; after all, the book was written during the COVID pandemic.

But it is not just technology that helps us. Community science, formerly known as citizen science, can also help. Breeding bird surveys, where you drive a specific route, stopping frequently helps identify the birds you see and hear along the roads. But sometimes you want to get away from the roads.

That desire led to breeding bird atlases where your province is divided into squares and people count the birds in each square, if possible. I was fortunate enough to go on seven backpacking trips for the BC breeding bird atlas. Each trip was centered on a spot where four squares met, so we provided input to 28 squares during the seven trips. Actually, we probably provided input to more than 28 squares as we birded while travelling to the area.

And now there is eBird, where community scientists can record all the birds they see in a given area and submit their observations to a central database, accessible to all. Mike Howard, CONC's birding director, has done a great job of getting CONC birders interested in eBird and now almost all CONC birding trips have at least one person who is using eBird to track the sightings. The results are submitted to eBird and are available to anyone, worldwide. In particular, a CONC birding leader can see what birds were found on previous birding trips to a specific area.

Heisman describes all these techniques in loving detail. It makes for a pleasant and entertaining read. I encourage you to check out the book from the Okanagan Regional Library and settle back for a wonderful introduction to the technology behind birding.

Note from Editors: Have you recently read an interesting book relevant to CONC's mission and interests? Send us your review for a future newsletter!

ANIMAL TRACKS AND HOW TO KNOW THEM



Often in our outdoor travels, whether it's birding, hiking, snowshoeing, or cycling, we have occasion to find animal tracks. [Here's a link](#) to a handy, short reference that provides the key details for some common animals, so that you can more easily identify who has passed by.

CONC'S MAINTENANCE OF THE OKANAGAN HIGHLANDS TRAIL: IT'S A WRAP!

BY DON GUILD AND DOUGLAS GRAHAM



From 2015 to 2023, a dedicated team of CONC volunteers put in years of hard work on a stretch of the Okanagan Highlands Trail, km 0 to km 37. Every year there were major challenges resulting from blowdown, fires, overgrowth, plus a need to scout out and map suitable sections of new trail to remove it from the logging roads that it followed in several stretches. The final day of maintenance was 3 September 2023. The trail stretches from the lower elevations of the Okanagan Highlands at Mission Creek near Philpott Road (km 0), then up into the subalpine landscapes of Canyon Lake (km 37), over Little White Mountain and ends to the south at Chute Lake (km 67)(see map).

CONC's partnership agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC expired at the end of 2023 and so the CONC team decided this was a good juncture at which to call it to a close. Hopefully other teams will work out an arrangement with the Provincial Government to continue the work and to keep this trail open and functional.

Many persons contributed over the years. Don Guild, the Okanagan Highlands Trail Work Coordinator, notes that the main team members were:

- ⇒ Robin Digby (2017-2022)
- ⇒ Allan Fischer (2015-2017)
- ⇒ Rick Gee (2015-2020)
- ⇒ Jag Goel (2015-2017)
- ⇒ Don Guild (2015-2023)
- ⇒ George LeHoux (2016-2017)
- ⇒ Craig Lewis (2015-2023),
- ⇒ George McFeeters (2015-2023)
- ⇒ Gord Miller (2015-2023)
- ⇒ and Peedie, the crew mascot (Craig's dog).

Robin Digby (see photo above) was particularly helpful in scouting out a viable reroute between McCulloch Lake near Ern Lake through some difficult terrain and dense forest/understory growth over to Hydraulic Creek. He applied his log wizardry to replacing the collapsed bridge over the diversion ditch (which carries Stirling Creek water to Acme Lake), completed on Canada Day, 2022. He succumbed to cancer on 9 November 2023 ([obituary](#)). Our condolences to his spouse Linda Digby, a former CONC President (2015).

[The photos in the linked .pdf show the crew members at work.](#)

In cool, changeable conditions we completed the 2024 Birdathon this past Sunday. We began at Robert Lake at 5:30am, covered a variety of habitats from lakeshore to ponds, creeks and woodlands before finishing on upper McCulloch Road in the early afternoon. We missed our usual team members, Don Wilson and Carol Sharplin, who were unable to participate this year. Our stalwart team leader, Gwynneth Wilson, devised the route and kept us on time. You'd be surprised how quickly eight hours flies by! By the end we were pleased to tally 93 species. Best birds were a Double-crested Cormorant at Munson Pond, three breeding-plumage American White Pelicans at Maude-Roxby and a small flock of Evening Grosbeaks on O'Reilly Lane. Sincere thanks to all who have already donated in support of our efforts. We greatly appreciate it. If you still plan to donate, please do so before the end of May (see instructions below). So far, we have raised just over \$1,000 from on-line donations and \$370 from cash, cheques and e-transfers direct to direct to my personal email address (pamlaing2309@gmail.com). I will send in one cheque for all the latter in early July. All monies will be put towards Canada-wide projects of BIRDS CANADA, and some will be returned to the club to help fund the Vaseux Lake Banding Station. It was fun and certainly well worth doing.

WHY TAXONOMY?

BY MITCH MILGRAM



People love to pin labels on things. People love to make lists. Birders have their life lists, botanists have their vascular plant lists, and mycologists have their species lists. Why do naturalists generally do this? After all, one could observe a meadow of flowers and appreciate them for their beauty without knowing their identity.

A common answer is that we're documenting what is growing or inhabiting a particular area at specific times. It's with this information that a baseline can be set, establishing the extent and health of a species. Is it stable, increasing, or declining? With successive observations, we can track a species' strength or decline and thus be ready to act to remedy a situation when possible. Additionally, being able to distinguish and name different species is important if we're trying to make use of them for any number of reasons, from their edibility or medicinal qualities to their application in industry.

However, I think there's more to it than this official justification, especially for amateur naturalists. For many people, I think they simply like lists. It's a sense of accomplishment, tangible proof of mastery of a situation. It's proof of knowledge and successful observation. And the longer the list, the greater the satisfaction. The more new or rare species recorded, the greater the excitement and satisfaction. Perhaps it stems from our need to bring some order to an essentially chaotic world, a world increasingly unpredictable and rapidly changing. If you can pin a name to something, then you have a form of control over it. And this all dovetails neatly into people's love of exploration and searching. I've occasionally compared the pleasure of seeking mushrooms to that of an Easter egg hunt, full of suspense and excitement.

Whatever the reason, pursuing taxonomy, the science of naming the natural world around us, is important and rewarding. It's pursued by both professionals and citizen scientists alike. It's

particularly important now because with climate change and human activity, species are rapidly disappearing or shifting locations

But it's also important because professional field scientists themselves are a disappearing species. There are fewer professional field taxonomists, people who will observe and record the world around them based upon the morphology, or physical characteristics, of the species before them. Many taxonomists today are drawn to the ever-expanding field of molecular taxonomy and DNA sequencing.

The taxonomic changes that have come about with the advent of molecular taxonomy have been rapid and disruptive but will ultimately (hopefully) bring clarity and certainty to the names and classification of species. However, the skills and knowledge gained from traditional field taxonomy are still very much needed and have an important place in science. I don't know if this is true, as I have no first-hand knowledge, but I've heard that there are many trained mycologists whose extensive work at the molecular level leaves them unable to identify fungi at the macro level, out in the field.

With the decline in the number of traditional professional field taxonomists, amateur citizen scientists are helping to fill the gaps. With the application of internet sites such as [iNaturalist](#), or [Merlin](#) from Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, citizen scientists are making great contributions. With hundreds of thousands of observations being recorded there's a huge pool of data available for study. But even here there's a caveat. Be skeptical of many of the identification apps available, and verify any suggestions with other sources. Especially in the field of mycology, since identification apps are operating on visual input, and are missing important identification information such as smell, taste, texture, and tree associates, to name a few.

Not only is the pursuit of taxonomy valuable on a societal level, it's important on a personal level as well. When we're observing and being aware of the world around us, when we're slowing down to look, differentiate, and distinguish, we're gaining a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation. And as you learn and name the variety of life around you, they become more and more familiar, like old friends accompanying you on your walks.

IN MEMORIAM - RICK DEWAR

BY PAM LAING



CONC members will be saddened to learn of the sudden death of Rick Dewar in March. Most of us knew him either as the CONC resource person for club publicity, or through his passion for birding. A retired surgeon, Rick was a keen solo birder who also enjoyed, as many of us do, the challenge of trying to photograph birds. Although living in West Kelowna, Rick and Paulette would drive over to walk their dog Zoe on Mission Creek Greenway most days. Rick loved looking and listening for the birds along the Greenway at all times of the year. He was an excellent spotter who could pick out birds with apparent ease. I always enjoyed our encounters with pleasure when we would compare notes on the birds seen and heard and share any photographs we had managed to take. I will miss his lovely smile and curious mind. We all send our sincere condolences to Paulette and the family at this sad time.

- It's been rigorously studied and official now, "*contact with nature enhances positive emotions and induces calmer physiological activity by providing respite from taxing environmental stimuli.*" Well, yes. [Engagement with nature and proinflammatory biology - ScienceDirect](#)
- And more on the benefits of connecting with nature, from UBC. [The science of forest therapy | UBC Magazine](#)
- A wild Sumatran Orangutan was observed patching up a wound with a medical plant. Smarter than we know... ['Orangutan, heal thyself': First wild animal seen using medicinal plant \(nature.com\)](#)
- Ecotourism comes at an important cost to wildlife. [Like It or Not, Even Wildlife-Focused Ecotourism Affects Wild Animals | Hakai Magazine](#)
- The GOC ends the practice of killing wolves, coyotes, and bears with strychnine. Why? Impacts include unwanted persistence in the environment and traveling through the food chain which kills many non-target species. And because it's inhumane. [Canada ends cruel use of strychnine poison to kill wolves \(ifaw.org\)](#)
- "It is normal for species diversity and populations to fluctuate - but the rate of extinction is now 100-1,000 times faster than scientists would expect." ... "Climate change, habitat loss and the spread of invasive species are believed to be driving this." Conservation efforts seem to be slowing down rates of loss, but it's not enough. [Conservation slowing biodiversity loss, scientists say \(bbc.com\)](#)
- Here's a novel conservation strategy ... [Tired of Google? Try this new search engine that funds biodiversity efforts \(goodgoodgood.co\)](#)
- Thanks to Jen for this one: a fascinating description of the biology of Sagebrush Galls. Far more complex than you might think. [The Amazing Tale of Sagebrush Galls - Wenatchee Naturalist](#)
- Traffic noise has a measurable negative effect on birds while still in the egg. ['Alarm Bells' as Scientists Discover Threat to Birds \(newsweek.com\)](#)
- [Mammal responses to global changes in human activity vary by trophic group and landscape | Nature Ecology & Evolution](#)

Best digital nature sounds



Even within four walls or in the noise of the city, you can tune into nature using digital technology..

- ⇒ [A Soft Murmur](#) - has many soothing sounds – wind, waves and a distant thunderstorm – all are free, with others available at cost.
- ⇒ [Wild Sanctuary](#) houses five decades' worth of global nature recordings made by leading soundscape ecologist Bernie Krause. Be transported.
- ⇒ [Earth FM](#) - A not-for-profit repository of more than 800 natural soundscapes from around the world. Free to listen to, but membership is required to create and save playlists.
- ⇒ [Portal-Immersive Escapes](#) - An app that combines spatial audio (which simulates a surround sound set-up through headphones) with high-quality video to give a fully immersive experience, such as hearing the dawn chorus in the dappled light of a Devon woodland.

**Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club www.okanagannature.org
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Email info@okanagannature.org for any general enquiry**

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Newsletter	Lisa Rae & Vivian Manning	editor@okanagannature.org
Website: www.okanagannature.org	Rick Gee	admin@okanagannature.org

MONTHLY MEETINGS:

- 2nd Tuesday of the month, September to June, 7:00 p.m. at Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna.
- Visitors are welcome.
- Host: Bev Thomas. Please bring your own cup.

MEMBERSHIP: Karen Pedersen membership@okanagannature.org

- **ANNUAL DUES: Single \$45, Family \$60, Students \$15.** Includes the quarterly newsletter. (**Additional \$20 annual charge for newsletters sent by mail.**)
- **MEMBERSHIP FORM AND WAIVER:** Available on the CONC website: www.okanagannature.org. Send your name, address, telephone number, email address, waiver form and dues to CONC Membership, Box 21128, Orchard Park P.O., Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N8.
- **DUES:** Dues may also be paid by e-transfer to 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
- **MEMORIAL MEMBERS:** Arthur Hughes-Games, Brenda Thomson, Muriel Westwood, Harry Almond, Cec Dillabough

NEWSLETTER: Editors - Lisa Rae & Vivian Manning

- Send submissions to editor@okanagannature.org
- Next deadline date for submissions is September 15, 2024
- Email distribution: Karen Pedersen membership@okanagannature.org

ACTIVITIES:

All activities are seasonal. We have also launched Weekend Explorers outings on the last weekend of each month – [check Calendar for details](#). Non-members are very welcome to join one or two CONC outings. All outing details are on our website calendar. If in doubt check with the activity contact, or contact any Board Member.

BIRDING: contact: 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:** Day-long bird trips take place on the second Saturday of the month March to November (with an August recess). Meet at the Apple Bowl at 7:30 am (April through September) or 8:30 am (October and November)

TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

BOTANY: contact: 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 Robbie Bowers & Glenda Newman outings@okanagannature.org
- **Thursday: Ramblers Plus** contact Robert Lake (250) 215-3211

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



Photo courtesy Lisa Rae

The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm. If every tiny flower wanted to be a rose, then spring would lose its loveliness.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux