

# Central Okanagan Naturalist

[www.okanagannature.org](http://www.okanagannature.org)

March, 2025



[Barred Owl, Photo courtesy Karen Blumel](#)  
(click for full photo)

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March, 2025

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

The next general meeting takes place on March 11th, 7:00 p.m., **\*\*in person\*\*** at Evangel Church, 3261 Gordon Drive, Kelowna. Please see our Speaker details below.

## 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.

- **JP Squire**
- **Tanis Newman**
- **Morag Stevenson**
- **Said Hamdan**
- **Brittany Miller**
- **Marcia Lucertini**
- **Jody Milstein**

## CONC SPEAKER, GENERAL MEETING – MARCH 11, 2025

### NORTH TO SVALBARD – A PERSONAL PEEK AT NORTHERN NORWAY A PRESENTATION BY PAM LAING

Spectacular scenery, interesting cultural insights, abundant bird life and flora... Come with me to northern Norway as we reprise together a trip taken there last June. Our entire journey was north of the Arctic Circle, from Tromsø to the Lofoten Islands, up to the North Cape and finally to Svalbard, at 78 degrees north, the world's most northerly community of over 1,000 people. Meet a Sami reindeer herder and hear of his concerns for the future. What unusual regulations govern the lives of the residents of Svalbard? And what's it like living with Polar Night and Midnight Sun?

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

### OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN PARK BIRD & CRITTER COUNT 2025 BY LES GYUG

This is an early reminder that the Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park Bird & Critter Count will be held this year during the week of **Saturday, May 31, 2025**.

We hold the count now on the second Saturday after Victoria Day, and on more than one day so that more people can participate. We count on up to 10-15 routes per year. The before-and-after 2003 fire data have made this a unique long-term study of bird population responses to wildfire. All members, guests, and others are welcome to join a group or form a group of your own and perhaps do one of the trails that doesn't get done every year.

Hope to see many of you out there. Feel free to contact me for more info.

Thanks, Les Gyug



Central Okanagan  
Naturalists' Club  
*Know Nature and Keep it  
Worth Knowing*

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Annually, members of the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club conduct a survey of the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park for the property trustees, the Central Okanagan Land Trust (COLT). This annual survey covers avifauna, mammals and reptiles, similar to the survey that is carried out for the adjacent Okanagan Mountain Park. Since 2022, participants have been invited to capture photos of flowering plants and any unusual insects encountered during the survey. These photographs were subsequently submitted to iNaturalist as a record of species occurrences on the Johns Family property. The results of the overall survey provide the trustee with a permanent record of species and a snapshot that illustrates the changes in the park year-to-year. This in turn assists COLT in its plans for the continued management of the property under its care.

The 2025 survey will cover both the public and ecological sections of the Johns Family property, requiring six or seven teams with an interest in the natural environment. The survey is scheduled for Saturday, May 24th, from 8 am until approximately noon and will follow the CONC group activity protocols. The organisers (Eve Wegscheidler, the Park Trustee, and Mike Howard) hope that by holding the survey on a weekend, this will allow additional CONC members to participate.

If you would like to participate in the 2025 survey, please contact [Eve Wegscheidler](#) and let her know your area of interest (avifauna, mammals, reptiles, insects, or plants), and you will be assigned to one of the study area teams.

## **REGULAR COLUMNS:**

### **BIRDING REPORT**

**BY MIKE HOWARD**

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The Birding Report can be found in the [AGM Annual Reports of Directors](#).

### **AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2024**

**BY LISA RAE**

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The 2024 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) represents the 125<sup>th</sup> count held across North America. It occurs annually in 20 countries in the Western Hemisphere, between December 14<sup>th</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup>. The survey areas are pre-set as 15-mile diameter 'count circles', each managed by a 'count compiler'.

The origins of this significant and well-established event are surprising. Prior to the turn of the century, the Christmas 'Side Hunt' was a seasonal tradition in which hunters organized into teams and went afield in a competition aimed at hunting the greatest number of birds. At this time, conservation was a burgeoning science, and there was a growing awareness and concern around declining bird populations. An ornithologist and early member of the Audubon Society, Frank M. Chapman, proposed a new holiday tradition for Christmas Day 1900 – a 'Christmas Bird Census' to replace the 'Side Hunt', creating a new activity that would count birds instead of hunting them. In this inaugural year, 27 bird enthusiasts counted 90 species in northeastern North America. By contrast, in the Christmas Bird Count of 2024, 1368 counts were completed, with a total of 21,356,389 birds counted overall.

Data collected by CBC's provides a wealth of information to researchers on the early winter bird populations across North America. A bibliography of the work done by ornithologists and conservationists, as enabled by the CBC, can be found at [Audubon Christmas Bird Count Bibliography](#).

Many members of the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club participate in count circles of four regions: Kelowna, Lake Country, Big White and Peachland. Results of the Kelowna and Lake Country surveys are summarized below, while reports on the other areas have been previously sent to participants in an email. Additional details of the CBC can be found online at [Audubon](#).

### **LAKE COUNTRY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 2024**

**BY LES GYUG**

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As per usual, the Lake Country Christmas Bird Count occurred on the first possible open day. That is usually December 14, but since that fell on a Saturday this year, the Kelowna count took precedence, as did the Vernon count on Sunday. So, it was held on Monday, December 16, 2024, with 36 people covering the count circle in 11 parties. The weather was not bad; cool but not freezing, with the typical Okanagan winter overcast and the odd snow shower. We counted 6,485 birds in total of 79 species, which were both about average for this count.

Only four species broke the 500-count mark: Canada Goose (988), Mallard (508), California Quail (659) and European Starling (857). Other notable species included 24 Trumpeter Swans, a Virginia Rail, a Double-crested Cormorant, 34 Bald Eagles, a Northern Saw-whet Owl, 2 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and a Hermit Thrush.

Many thanks again to all the stalwart volunteers who come and help out and who make it a pleasure to organize this count. Next year's (or should I say, this year's) count will again fall on Monday, December 15, 2025. Already looking forward to it!

### Species Totals:

Cackling Goose	7	Pied-billed Grebe	11	White-breasted Nuthatch	3
Canada Goose	988	Horned Grebe	24	Pygmy Nuthatch	63
Trumpeter Swan	24	Red-necked Grebe	25	Red-breasted Nuthatch	67
Swan sp.	3	Western Grebe	44	Brown Creeper	2
Gadwall	25	Common Loon	8	Pacific Wren	1
American Wigeon	69	Double-crested Cormorant	1	American Dipper	1
Mallard	508	Great Blue Heron	1	European Starling	857
Green-winged Teal	8	Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Western Bluebird	31
Greater Scaup	30	Cooper's Hawk	6	Townsend's Solitaire	7
Bufflehead	4	Bald Eagle	34	Hermit Thrush	1
Common Goldeneye	43	Red-tailed Hawk	26	American Robin	329
Barrow's Goldeneye	23	Great Horned Owl	1	Bohemian Waxwing	34
Hooded Merganser	30	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	Cedar Waxwing	6
Common Merganser	153	Owl sp.	1	House Sparrow	333
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Belted Kingfisher	3	Pine Grosbeak	52
California Quail	659	Downy Woodpecker	10	House Finch	290
Ruffed Grouse	2	Hairy Woodpecker	10	Red Crossbill	74
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	Pileated Woodpecker	6	Pine Siskin	1
Rock Pigeon	83	Northern Flicker	136	American Goldfinch	138
Eurasian Collared-Dove	45	American Kestrel	2	Dark-eyed Junco	415
Mourning Dove	17	Merlin	3	White-crowned Sparrow	11
Virginia Rail	1	Northern Shrike	2	White-throated Sparrow	9
American Coot	66	Steller's Jay	8	Song Sparrow	83
Ring-billed Gull	1	Black-billed Magpie	130	Spotted Towhee	2
American Herring Gull	2	American Crow	14	White-breasted Nuthatch	3
Glaucous-winged Gull	1	Common Raven	48	Pygmy Nuthatch	63
Western x Glaucous-winged Gull (hybrid)	1	Black-capped Chickadee	232	Red-breasted Nuthatch	67
gull sp.	46	Mountain Chickadee	41	Brown Creeper	2

## KELOWNA COUNTY CIRCLE REPORT, 2024

BY CHRIS CHARLESWORTH

The 2024 Kelowna Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 14. Fifty-six observers out in the field and three more at feeders tallied 104 species on count day. Six additional species (Long-tailed Duck, Golden Eagle, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak and Clay-colored Sparrow) tallied for the count week period (three days before and three days after the count). The total of 103 is average.

The weather on count day was calm, mild, and dry. Overall, the weather throughout the southern interior of BC was unseasonably mild and dry. Due to the warmer weather, some of the ponds were not frozen, and we tallied a good number of waterfowl. We had more Hooded Mergansers this year than ever before, tallying 95, many of which were on Munson Pond. At Robert Lake, there was some open water around the edges where there were numerous Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintails. Up to 26 Wood Ducks were tallied, mostly at one property along Gordon Drive. Diving duck numbers continue to fall, and we were unable to find any Canvasbacks again this year. 2024 is the first year we failed to find Ring-necked Pheasant on the count, as they quickly disappear from the Central Okanagan due to habitat loss. A total of 164 Western Grebes, mostly on the lake off the Mission area, was significant but not a record count. Gull numbers were low, but we managed to get all the expected species, nonetheless. Raptor numbers were about average; however, we missed the Rough-legged Hawk, a species that is getting harder and harder to find in the Okanagan in recent years. Owls were well represented with six species tallied (Western Screech, Great Horned, Northern Pygmy, Barred, Short-eared and Northern Saw-whet). Three Barred Owls broke the previous high count of two. Due to extensive burns on the Westside, we had 26 Hairy Woodpeckers, breaking the previous record of 22. Unfortunately, we did not tally any Black-backed Woodpeckers, although small numbers have been seen in the area during recent months. Five Peregrine Falcons broke the previous record of three, as this species continues to do well. Due to the mild weather, we tallied 16 Ruby-crowned Kinglets this year, breaking the previous record by one. Heavily laden Mountain Ash trees attracted a few American Robins and just one Varied Thrush this year, though we did tally a single Hermit Thrush at Poplar Point. Waxwing numbers were extremely low, with just 102 Bohemian and 21 Cedar Waxwings noted. A count of 24 Spotted Towhees was a new record, as was a count of 287 White-crowned Sparrows and 23 White-throated Sparrows! Although we missed it on count day, a count week Clay-colored Sparrow at Mill

Creek was significant as it was the first winter record of this species in the Okanagan. Two Wilson's Warblers, one at Thomson Marshes and another at Chichester Marsh, were significant as this species doesn't normally spend the winter in the Okanagan.

Thanks again to all who helped on the count and to those who made chili for the intrepid birders. And thanks go out to the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club, who sponsored the count.

### Count Details

- Number of observers in field: 56
- Number of observers at feeders: 3
- High temperature (Celsius): 8
- Low temperature (Celsius): -1
- Time spent in field on foot: 74.8 hrs
- Distance covered on foot: 94.1 km
- Time spent in field in car: 32.4 km
- Distance covered by car: 510.6 km
- Total species: 104

Cackling Goose	22	Herring Gull	33	Red-breasted Nuthatch	58
Canada Goose	4137	Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	4	White-breasted Nuthatch	7
Trumpeter Swan	21	Glaucous-winged Gull	13	Pygmy Nuthatch	263
Tundra Swan	11	gull sp.	37	Brown Creeper	15
Wood Duck	25	Great Blue Heron	13	Pacific Wren	6
Northern Shoveler	1	Golden Eagle	CW	Marsh Wren	10
Gadwall	85	Northern Harrier	4	Bewick's Wren	1
American Wigeon	121	Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	American Dipper	2
Mallard	1908	Cooper's Hawk	14	European Starling	3911
Northern Pintail	6	American Goshawk	1	Western Bluebird	9
Green-winged Teal	58	Bald Eagle	51	Townsend's Solitaire	12
Redhead	33	Red-tailed Hawk	79	Varied Thrush	1
Ring-necked Duck	57	Western Screech-Owl	3	American Robin	308
Greater Scaup	99	Great Horned Owl	7	<b>Hermit Thrush</b>	<b>1</b>
Lesser Scaup	10	Northern Pygmy-Owl	3	Bohemian Waxwing	102
<b>Long-tailed Duck</b>	<b>CW</b>	Barred Owl	<b>3</b>	Cedar Waxwing	21
Bufflehead	73	Short-eared Owl	1	House Sparrow	706
Common Goldeneye	89	Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	House Finch	423
Barrow's Goldeneye	22	Belted Kingfisher	6	Red Crossbill	89
Hooded Merganser	<b>95</b>	Downy Woodpecker	15	White-winged Crossbill	1
Common Merganser	84	Hairy Woodpecker	<b>26</b>	Pine Siskin	5
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Pileated Woodpecker	5	Evening Grosbeak	CW
California Quail	976	Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker	271	Pine Grosbeak	CW
Common Loon	11	American Kestrel	12	American Goldfinch	309
Pied-billed Grebe	19	Merlin	18	<b>Clay-colored Sparrow</b>	<b>CW</b>
Horned Grebe	99	Peregrine Falcon	<b>5</b>	American Tree Sparrow	5
Red-necked Grebe	31	Northern Shrike	6	Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon)	963
Western Grebe	164	Steller's Jay	25	White-crowned Sparrow	<b>287</b>
Rock (Feral) Pigeon	198	Black-billed Magpie	355	White-throated Sparrow	<b>23</b>
Eurasian Collared-Dove	347	Clark's Nutcracker	14	Song Sparrow	314
Mourning Dove	89	American Crow	53	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Virginia Rail	5	Common Raven	198	Swamp Sparrow 2	2
American Coot	365	Black-capped Chickadee	<b>379</b>	<b>Spotted Towhee</b>	<b>24</b>
Killdeer	1	Mountain Chickadee	105	Red-winged Blackbird	218
Short-billed Gull	1	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	CW	Brewer's Blackbird	31
Ring-billed Gull	61	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<b>16</b>	Yellow-rumped Warbler	6
California Gull	2	Golden-crowned Kinglet	12	<b>Wilson's Warbler</b>	<b>2</b>

### Field Observers:

Auty, Merle	Blumel, Karen	Bredahl, Kari	Bredahl, Mabel
Bredahl, Marlee	Cannings, Richard	Cannings, Russell	Cecile, Don
Charlesworth, Chris	Chester, James	Coburn, Norma	Cosentino, Markus
Dempsey, Paul	Ferguson, Faith	Force, Michael	Fraser, Joyce
Gee, Rick	Graham, Douglas	Guild, Don	Gyug, Les
Hannebauer, Jesse	Heffernan, Alex	Heinrichs, Markus	Hindmarch, Ted
Howard, Mike	Jansen, Gerald	Jansen, James	Jansen, John
Jones, Barry	Kennedy, Bruce	Korcok, Jasmine	Kragh, Douglas
Lachaine, Annette	Leighton, Sara-Jane	Craig; Lewis	Mehta, Sara
Miller; Brittany	Ocaña, Kalin	Rae, Lisa	Rioux, Claude
Robertson, Lesley	Schleppe, Sharon	Sedgewick, Sue	Siddle, Chris

Swan, Nick  
Weilmeier, Markus  
Wilson, Don

Van Zuylen, Josh  
Weilmeier, Martin  
Wright, Wendy

Walker, Ian  
White, Deborah  
Zander, Kurt

Walker, Linda  
Williams, Huw  
Zander, Pat

## BOTANY REPORT

BY PETER COURTNEY

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The Botany Report can be found in the [AGM Annual Reports of Directors](#).

## OUTINGS REPORT

BY ROBBIE BOWERS & GLENDA NEWMAN

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The Outings Report can be found in the [AGM Annual Reports of Directors](#).

## FEATURES:

### RECENT CHANGES IN BIRD NAMES

BY DOUGLAS GRAHAM

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In a recent newsletter article, I reported on bird name changes relevant to interior BC that arose from the 65th Supplement to the AOS Checklist of North American Birds that came out in July 2024. Any change made by the American Ornithological Society is then automatically accepted on the Clements Checklist (the checklist that underlies bird names and taxonomy used by [eBird](#)) and on the North American Checklist of the American Birding Association (ABA). On occasion, as happened in 2024, the Clements and ABA Checklists move a little more quickly and make changes not yet formally adopted by the AOS; presumably, the AOS will catch up in its next update due in the summer of 2025. The ABA Checklist committee is composed of eight voting members who serve four-year terms, which are quite prestigious positions in the bird world. Starting in 2025, Melissa Hafting will become a committee member; she is well known to many of us as a regional [eBird](#) reviewer for the Vancouver area and a coordinator of the [BC Rare Bird Alert](#). Congratulations to Melissa. She took the time last month to write me and politely correct an erroneous scoter identification I had submitted to [eBird](#).

Several of the new changes to the Clements Checklist concern us and are already reflected in [eBird](#). The most consequential is the split of one of our best-known species, the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*). Previously thought of as a species that occurred in both North America and Eurasia, it is now split into four species. Most North American gulls of this complex now belong to the American Herring Gull (*L. smithsonianus*). The other new species are the Mongolian Gull (*L. mongolicus*), European Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*; confusingly retaining the old scientific name of the former Herring Gull), and Vega Gull (*L. vegae*). Do we have to pay attention to these other species? The Mongolian Gull does not occur in North America. If you've seen Herring Gulls in Europe, the new European Herring Gull will give you a new lifer. It is known rarely from Newfoundland and the east coast, but there are no records from western North America. The Vega Gull of eastern Asia is known rarely from the Bering Sea south to California, but there are a scattering of records from throughout interior North America, so it is possible in the Okanagan. Identifying one is a different matter and is well beyond my pay grade, which is already abysmally low; terrific photos and notes would be needed to convince Chris!

The scientific name *smithsonianus* is because "our" Herring Gull, that is, with its new restricted range, was first split out and given this name in 1862 by Elliott Coues, and taxonomic rules require we revert to the first name used for any given taxon. Coues described the species based on a series of specimens from the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. The name honours the English chemist James Smithson, whose bequest established the institution and who we can thank for the many great Smithsonian museums in the area of Washington, DC.

The second major change that affects us is the surprising split of the current genus *Accipiter* into five genera, scattering its 50 or so species. Researchers established that the genus *Accipiter* was polyphyletic, that is, that the members were not each other's closest relatives. After the split, each genus is now monophyletic, that is, a single branch on the family tree of the hawk family, Accipitridae. The consequences of this split mostly don't concern us except for the fact that Cooper's Hawk is now moved to the genus *Astur*. The Sharp-shinned Hawk and the American Goshawk both remain in the genus *Accipiter*. It was rather astonishing to discover that the Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk are distant cousins at best, despite being confusingly similar in some ways. Convergent evolution is responsible for these quite different species sharing many features. In those parts of the range of the Sharp-shinned Hawk where Cooper's Hawk does not occur, the Sharp-shinned does not so closely resemble the Cooper's. It is thought that where they occur together, the smaller Sharp-shinned has perhaps evolved to mimic the larger and more ferocious Cooper's Hawk, perhaps for better protection from predators.



*Larus smithsonianus*, Photo courtesy Bruce Kennedy



*Astur cooperii*, Photo courtesy Bruce Kennedy

## OBSCURATA: WITCHES' BROOMS & FUNGI

BY IAN WALKER

I'm hoping to establish a regular or semi-regular column in the newsletter, featuring something that I find fascinating, but sufficiently obscure that it escapes most people's interest. So – I'm tentatively calling the series "Obscurata". Subjects will likely deal with some invertebrates, a few fungi, occasional plants, but rarely any birds.

People who have suffered through my annual natural history quizzes may have noted an over-emphasis on witches' brooms: the bulky, dense irregular growths we find in an array of coniferous trees. These may be caused by a variety of agents, most notably species of rust fungi and dwarf mistletoe.



A witches' broom forming on a Subalpine Fir branch near the Browne Lake Ecological Reserve (19 June 2023). Close-up (at right) shows the yellow reproductive structures of the rust fungus (*Melampsorella elatina*) growing on the fir needles.

A bacterium (*Phytoplasma pini*) has also been implicated. Although apparently common in Europe, *Phytoplasma pini* seems only to have been critically identified once in North America (in Maryland). It may be more common, just overlooked in North America, but that's just speculative.

For this article, I want to focus on an obscure group of fungi, the rusts, as broom-causing agents. These fungi commonly have complex life cycles, with each rust alternately infecting two different plants. Perhaps the best known (notorious) rust fungus is Cereal Rust (*Puccinia graminis*), which alternately infects cereal crops (e.g. wheat & barley) and barberries. In order to successfully reproduce, both the cereal grain and barberry plants must be present - part of the life cycle is completed on the primary host (the cereal), while another part of the cycle is accomplished on the alternate host (the barberry). In each case, the infected plants are referred to as hosts, whereas the rusts are referred to as parasites. Like all parasites, they are very unwelcome guests.

You may also have heard of White Pine Blister Rust (*Cronartium ribicola*). It alternately infects our native five-needled pines (Limber Pine, Whitebark Pine, and Western White Pine; the primary hosts) and species of both currants and gooseberries (the secondary hosts). Many rust species cause enormous damage in agriculture and forestry.



Witches' Brooms in Juniper (left) Black Mountain – sntsk'il'ntən Regional Park (22 October 2024), Ponderosa Pine (right) in Bertram Creek Regional Park (16 June 2021)

I first became fascinated with witches' brooms in my youth. On backcountry trips, while trying to gather kindling for a fire, the discovery of a dead witches' broom seemed like a gift from someone's favorite deity. Each broom looked like a pre-made bundle of kindling, ideal for starting a campfire. In reality, the brooms rarely burned very well – I think for two reasons: 1) their dense structure prevented them from drying properly inside, and 2) mostly I was finding brooms in fir trees (spruce twigs yield far superior kindling).

Locally, I know of three rust species that generate witches' brooms in our conifers, each impacting a different native tree:

- Fir Broom Rust (*Melampsorella elatina*) —> on Subalpine Fir
- Spruce Witches' Broom Rust (*Chrysomyxa arctostaphyli*) ----> on Hybrid Spruce
- Juniper Broom Rust (*Gymnosporangium nidus-avis*) ----> on Rocky Mountain Juniper



Spruce Broom Rust at Laver Cake Mountain (14 August 2020)

Each of these rusts only completes half of their life cycle on the conifer. Each species completes the other half of its life cycle on an unrelated plant:

- Fir Broom Rust —> on Chickweeds (*Cerastium*) & Starworts (*Stellaria*)
- Spruce Witches' Broom Rust —> on Bearberry/Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos*)
- Juniper Broom Rust —> on Saskatoons & Serviceberries (*Amelanchier*)

There is one other fungus I should mention, *Elytroderma deformans*. It is responsible for the disease Elytroderma Needle Cast and produces witches' brooms on Ponderosa and Lodgepole pines. Unlike the rust fungi, this fungus doesn't require an alternate host.

You will note that each tree seems to have its own broom fungus. So - when wondering which Witches' Broom is which, the easy first step is identifying the tree.

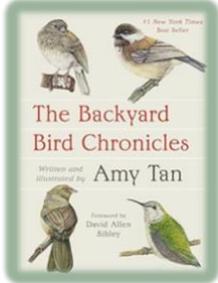
When I reflect on my youth, I now understand why I was plagued with poorly flammable fir brooms, despite an abundance of both spruce and fir in New Brunswick forests. Although Bearberry (= Kinnikinnick) is a common plant in British Columbia, it is quite rare in New Brunswick. In the absence of the Bearberry plants, the spruce broom rust faced a near impossible task in completing its life cycle.

## BOOK REPORTS:

### THE BACKYARD BIRD CHRONICLES

BY VIVIAN MANNING

Author: Amy Tan, Publisher: Knopf



Those familiar with Amy Tan's work know her through her novels (*The Kitchen God's Wife* is a favourite). In *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* (Forward by David Allen Sibley), Tan leaves her fiction behind to blend personal memoir with nature study. Tan's book is a series of journal entries as she documents her developing backyard birdwatching hobby. Detailed descriptions and original sketches (if reading the print version, which I did not) capture both the beauty of birds and the tranquility and mindfulness that birdwatching brings her. Tan reflects on how her developing hobby helped her reconnect with the natural world and find peace in doing so. As she tracks the habits and appearance of different birds, she explores broader themes of patience (of particular interest to this commenter, who sorely lacks it), observation, and the balance of nature.

Tan's wonderful descriptions helped me to reflect on my birding journey, which progressed in much the same manner – in my backyard with an ever-increasing complexity of feeders, seed, bird baths and perches, alongside an endless garden conversion to entice as many birds as possible to my backyard sanctuary.

Tan's writing is warm and easy (the audiobook version is read by Tan herself, and her voice is as pleasing to listen to as her words are to read), resulting in an invitation to follow her birding journey (and our own) with a renewed sense of wonder.

For those with a Okanagan Regional Library membership (and/or the Libby app), both the e-book and the audiobook may be borrowed through the Library.

### THE CARBON TAX QUESTION: CLARIFYING CANADA'S MOST CONSEQUENTIAL POLICY DEBATE

BY RICK GEE

By Thomas F Pedersen; Harbour Publishing; ISBN: 9781990776977



Climate change is real. We are all responsible for climate change. We should all deal with the causes and effects of climate change. Climate change is an existential problem. Our neighbours to the south are pretending climate change is not a problem. Many Canadian politicians are doing the same.

Pedersen discusses approaches to dealing with the problem, starting with the carbon tax implemented in BC; this was the world's first carbon tax. But there are other ways of dealing with climate change. This book notes there is an alternative to a price on carbon (also known as a carbon tax), a cap-and-trade system. Pedersen looks at how both these systems work, have worked, and have not worked in various countries and times around the world.

It's an easy and provocative read. You can borrow it from the Okanagan Regional Library, and I encourage you to read it before the upcoming Canadian federal election.

### CONC ON THE GO

BY VIVIAN MANNING

**!REMINDER!** The editors have introduced a new newsletter column and are inviting all travelling CONC members to submit contributions. Many of our CONC members travel well beyond the Central Okanagan exploring and enjoying many natural areas coast to coast in Canada and beyond, either birding, botanizing, hiking, or however nature may be speaking to them. We'd love to share your insights and recommendations with other CONC members who may travel to nearby areas and would love to explore. If you have nature travels to share that other members might find interesting, please send your destination info (along with any pictures) to [editor@okanagannature.org](mailto:editor@okanagannature.org) for publishing

in the next newsletter. It doesn't need to be long, elaborate, or even include a lot of photos, just enough information that another member travelling in the same area in the future might consider visiting the area. We are thinking of gathering these submissions into a "blog" for a more permanent reference for future members. Let us know what you think!

## The Land Between – An Ecotone



When I returned to South-Central Ontario last September for the first time since moving to BC in 2020, between visiting friends and family and attending a wedding, I made time to visit one of my favourite places near the Barrie area. It's just over an hour's drive north-east of Barrie, east of Lake Couchiching, referred to as "[The Land Between](#)". This is a transitional area running roughly between Parry Sound to the west and Kingston to the east, where the [barrens of the Canadian Shield and the Boreal forest meet the St. Lawrence Lowlands and limestone plain](#). It's an area of great biodiversity, including 59 species at risk. The area contains several provincial parks and wildlands, including the Carden Alvar and the Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands, and it's pretty well the last undeveloped area in South-Central Ontario. The entire area is worth exploring if you have the time – hiking, biking, kayaking, birding and botanizing - but if your time is limited, there is one rough road that's quite accessible (unpaved and rough, but carefully drivable with a regular vehicle), and it's a bio-bonanza! Wylie Road will lead you through the Carden Alvar IBA. There is roadside parking at the beginning of the dirt road and on a couple of pullouts along the way. It's a drive-and-walk outing. Expect it to be busy during weekends at the height of the season – Toronto birders and photographers make the trip north regularly on the weekend. It's an [eBird hotspot](#), with 210 species listed and a popular [iNaturalist](#) location, with 448 species recorded (including many butterflies and unusual amphibians). The best time to visit is May – July if birding is your goal. Expect to see many Eastern versions of our Western birds:

- Eastern Phoebe
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Eastern Kingbird
- Eastern Bluebird
- Eastern Towhee
- Baltimore Oriole

It's one of the two remaining locations of the endangered (in Ontario) Loggerhead Shrike, along with Upland Sandpiper and Wilson's Snipe, among many others.

If you do visit the area, it's good to contact the [Couchiching Conservancy](#) for details on area activities, including downloadable hiking and nature maps.



## WHAT'S NEW IN THE NEWS

## BY THE EDITORS

Impressive...a fitting descriptor for the second largest of the Buteos, the **Red-tailed Hawk** (*Buteo jamaicensis*). [A brief natural history of this highly recognizable hawk](#): Info tidbits include: a wingspan of over 4 feet, formidable hunting skills, co-parenting and courtship habits, and a plumage that manifests in MANY colour morphs.

Need a smile? Take a look at this [video of Russian Corvids playing in the snow](#). Just kids at heart.

**Avian (bird) flu** is a virus of growing concern. This [podcast provides a discussion around the basic questions](#) - What is it? What's causing it? And how is it spreading?

[Tiny birds, tiny radio backpacks](#). What better way to collect data on the complex mobility habits of birds, and evaluate the effects of climate change?

[A polka-dotted film on the windows of a Chicago lakeside building](#) will prevent thousands of migrant bird deaths.

[Interested in hummingbirds?](#) This article focuses on Anna's Hummingbird, who arrives for breeding in December on the west coast, and early March in the Okanagan. Helpful suggestions are provided on the various ways we can support this tiny bird in our own gardens with better nesting and food resources.

[Newly discovered species](#), and beautiful photos.

[Glyphosate, aspen, fires and logging](#). The surprising connections between all of these.

[The role of cemeteries](#) in ecosystem conservation... .

**Friday, April 11, 2025, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.**

The City of Kelowna program gives community groups and organizations an opportunity to help keep Kelowna's streams and wetlands healthy by supporting a biannual cleanup of litter and debris.

We will again be cleaning the Mill Creek area along Bulman Road and the Rail Trail towards John Hindle Drive, Maude-Roxby wetlands and Thomson Marsh. Supplies including safety vests, gloves, garbage bags and trash pickup tools will be provided.

No need to sign up, just come along and join the fun. Details regarding meeting place and a reminder will be sent toward the end of March.

**PROVISION DATA SYSTEMS – THANK YOU!**

The Club would like to thank Provision Data Systems Inc. for their continued support in providing our web hosting and linking multiple domain names to our site without charge.



**CONC COFFEE COMMITTEE**

**BY BEV THOMAS**



A big thank you to those of you who added your name to our monthly lists to bring goodies to the meetings. Anyone who signs up will get a reminder by phone or email, but if your plans change, just let us know.

Offers to help put the kitchen back in order after the meeting, or putting the coffee supplies away are always appreciated! It has also been a big help with many of you bringing your mugs to the meetings.

If you would like to be part of this small committee let me know. It is great to have the added flexibility when we have more helpers.

**CONC 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**



Written Director Reports presented at the 2025 AGM have been compiled into a PDF file, which can be accessed at [this link](#) (24 pages) and includes the following:

- 2024 Message from the Board
- 2025 AGM Meeting Minutes
- Finance Report
- Membership Director Report
- Outreach & Communications Director Report
- Programs Director Report
- Birding Director Report
- Botany Director Report
- Outings Director Report

**PHOTO CONTEST WINNING ENTRIES FOLLOW BELOW**



**FLORA**

1st Place – Vivian Manning  
“Sundew Morning”  
(Larch Hills - 28 June 2024)

[Please click here to view full presentation including all 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winning photos, with descriptions](#)

Thanks to all who contributed and judged photos, making the Photo Contest a success!



**FAUNA**

1st Place – Karen Blumel  
“10 ducklings”  
(Kelowna - 8 June 2024)



**PEOPLE IN NATURE**

1st Place – Elaine Gordon  
“Arrowleaf Trail”  
(Spion Kop, Lake Country, 24 April 2024)



**LANDSCAPE**

1st Place – Karen Blumel  
“Summertime View”  
(Waterfront Island, Kelowna - 7 Aug 2024)



Nature is not a place to visit, it is home.  
~Gary Snyder



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

**Board 2025-26**

President	Vacant	<a href="mailto:president@okanagannature.org">president@okanagannature.org</a>
Vice-president	Vacant	
Secretary	Louise Nelson & Vivian Manning	<a href="mailto:secretary@okanagannature.org">secretary@okanagannature.org</a>
Treasurer	Roy Sinden	<a href="mailto:treasurer@okanagannature.org">treasurer@okanagannature.org</a>
Past President	Douglas Graham	<a href="mailto:pastpresident@okanagannature.org">pastpresident@okanagannature.org</a>
BC Nature	Rick Gee	<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>
Outings	Glenda Newman	<a href="mailto:outings@okanagannature.org">outings@okanagannature.org</a>
Membership	Steffany Walker & Annette Lachaine	<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	Sheila MacKenzie Brown	<a href="mailto:programs@okanagannature.org">programs@okanagannature.org</a>
Conservation	Kalin Ocaña	<a href="mailto:conservation@okanagannature.org">conservation@okanagannature.org</a>
Newsletter Editor, Director at Large	Lisa Rae & Vivian Manning	<a href="mailto:editor@okanagannature.org">editor@okanagannature.org</a>

**Resource Persons**

Host Committee	Bev Thomas	<a href="mailto:cymru@telus.net">cymru@telus.net</a>
Website	Rick Gee	<a href="mailto:admin@okanagannature.org">admin@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.
- Visitors are welcome.
- Host: Bev Thomas [cymru@telus.net](mailto:cymru@telus.net). Please bring your own cup.

**MEMBERSHIP**

- **ANNUAL DUES: Single \$45, Family \$60, Students \$15.** Includes the quarterly newsletter, sent by email. (**Additional \$20 annual charge for newsletters sent by regular mail**).
- **MEMBERSHIP FORM AND WAIVER:** Available on the [CONC website](http://CONC website). Please send your application, with waiver form and dues to: CONC Membership, Box 21128, Orchard Park P.O., Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9N8, or electronically to [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org).
- **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
- **MEMORIAL MEMBERS:** Arthur Hughes-Games, Brenda Thomson, Muriel Westwood, Harry Almond, Cec Dillabough

**NEWSLETTER**

- Send submissions to [editor@okanagannature.org](mailto:editor@okanagannature.org)
- Next deadline date for submissions is May 15, 2025
- Newsletter email distribution: Steffany Walker & Annette Lachaine: [membership@okanagannature.org](mailto:membership@okanagannature.org)

**ACTIVITIES**

- All activities are seasonal. 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](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:** 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)

**NOTE: 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)

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

- **Tuesday: Ramblers** contact Robert Lake: (250) 215-3211
- **Wednesday: Sole Survivors** contact Glenda Newman: [outings@okanagannature.org](mailto: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