

Central Okanagan Naturalist

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March 2026



Photo courtesy Bruce Kennedy

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March 2026

Monthly Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of the month.

The next general meeting takes place on March 10, 7:00 p.m., 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.

- Issy Aguiar
- Vince Patton
- Alan Peterson
- Linda Thiel
- Brian Peterson
- Sharel Verigins
- Angela Popoff
- James MacGregor
- Eddie Song
- Kim Semonick
- Carly Lowen
- Natalie and Scott Marleau

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES: CONC GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS

GENERAL MEETING - MARCH 10TH J. P. SQUIRE — FAVORITE SPOTS AND HIKES



Senior reporter-photographer J.P. Squire moved to the Okanagan from Chatham, Ont. in 1980 and immediately began exploring local trails. In 1983, he began co-writing a ski column as the Ski Sheriff and eventually convinced his city editor to let him make it a year-round column as the Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding and Kayaking Sheriff during the warmer months. After 40 years of Outdoors pages in The Daily Courier, his weekly column moved to Castanet News three years ago. He has written numerous outdoor recreation columns on trails throughout the Southern Interior as well as the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, Kootenays, U.S., Mexico, South

America, Europe and Southeast Asia. His presentation to our club will focus on his favourite trails in the Okanagan with photos, maps and a link to his columns. Maybe even a secret trail or two.

GENERAL MEETING – APRIL 14TH TBA



Know Nature and Keep it Worth Knowing

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GENERAL MEETING – MAY 12TH

DAVE JORDEN — AVIAN INFLUENZA

Dave Jordan graduated from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in 1982 and was in private practice for four years. He then worked for the Federal government for 32 years in a department that had several names but ultimately was the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). His career involved import, export and disease control. He retired in 2017 but, if he had still been working, he may well have been involved with the Ostrich situation at Edgewood. He had numerous experiences with disease control operations with various species and various diseases during his career with the government.

Dave will give a short overview of Avian Influenza, and an overview of the CFIA Disease Control Policy. He will discuss “Depopulation vs Quarantine (isolation)”, and biosecurity issues, while also referring to the Ostrich situation in Edgewood.

We will be asking you to send us questions for Dave between now and the end of March.

OKANAGAN MOUNTAIN PARK BIRD & CRITTER COUNT – 2026

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 centring on Saturday, May 30, 2026.

In conjunction with BC Parks and the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club, we count birds and critters on the second Saturday after Victoria Day each year, which is May 30 this year. We typically count on 10-15 routes per year and do it on more than one day so that more people can participate. 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 to 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



CONC SPRING STREAM CLEAN-UP

BY ROBBIE BOWERS

Friday April 17, 2026 - 9:00am - 11:30am

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

We will again be cleaning the Carney Pond, Mill Creek, Bulman Rd area, and Thomson Marsh on Friday, April 17, 2026. Supplies including safety vests, gloves, trash pickup tools and garbage bags will be provided.

No need to sign-up, just come along and join the group. A reminder email with details regarding meeting times will be sent toward the end of March.

2026 JOHNS FAMILY NATURE CONSERVANCY SURVEY

BY EVE WEGSCHEIDLER

Since 2014, members of the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club have conducted an annual survey of the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park for the property trustees, the Central Okanagan Land Trust (COLT). This survey covers avifauna, mammals and reptiles, like the Critter Count that is carried out for the adjacent Okanagan Mountain Park.

The results of the overall survey provide the trustee with a permanent record of species and a snapshot indication of the changes occurring in the park year over year. This in turn assists COLT and the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) in their plans for the continued management of the property under their care. Participants are invited to capture pictures of flowering plants and any unusual insects encountered during the survey. These photographs are submitted to iNaturalist as a record of species occurrences on the Johns Family property.

The survey will cover the public and ecological sections of the Johns Family property. It is scheduled for **Thursday, May 7th** from 8 am until approximately noon and will follow the CONC group activity protocols.

If you would like to participate in the 2026 survey, please notify Eve Wegscheidler at ewegscheidler@gmail.com indicating your area of interest (avifauna, mammals, reptiles, insects or plants).



DIRECTORS' REPORTS

The Directors' Reports (not included below) are in the CONC Annual General Meeting package at this link: [AGM Reports](#)

OUTINGS REPORT

BY GLENDA NEWMAN

This has been the winter that wasn't. The Ramblers have continued hiking weekly and the ice grippers have only been needed two or three times. Snowshoeing has been minimal, with three snowshoe trips to Nordic and six to Beaver Lake. Thank you, Rick, for organizing Sole Survivor hikes when the snow didn't cooperate. Hopefully the latter part of February and March will be cooler and wetter, giving the mountains the snow they need.



CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NOTES

BY LISA RAE

- A public hearing will be held on **March 10, 2026**, regarding the **rezoning of half of the 106-acre Kelowna Springs Golf Course from the designation of "P3 - Parks and Open Space to 'I2 – General Industrial"**. A City Council vote will then decide the fate of this biodiverse and important flood mitigation area. If approved, the developer Denciti Penno Limited proposes a land exchange, retaining the eastern portion as a 9-hole course to be transferred to the city, while they will develop a 55-acre industrial park on the west side.

On the City of Kelowna website, this application for rezoning from Denciti Penno Limited is **Z25-0024** dated 2025-06-10, and can be found in the following link: <https://www.kelowna.ca/homes-building/property-development/current-development-applications>. Details can also be found in local newspapers: [Castanet](#) and [Kelowna Cap News](#)

- The Barn Owl nesting box project is now well advanced, with the nesting box built and installed in a promising Kelowna location. The area will be monitored for activity, and we will report back on progress! If successful, another nesting box or two will be built and installed in other locations.
- Meetings are underway with the City of Kelowna to establish riparian plantings at Truswell Park, and to install signs which identify the Mission Creek mouth and beach zone as an ecologically important and sensitive area.

FEATURES:

THE RICK HOWIE INTERIOR BC SWAN AND EAGLE COUNT 2026

BY MIKE HOWARD

18 members of CONC participated in the 2026 Swan and Eagle Count for the Kelowna Area under cloudy skies and cool temperatures.

The results of the Kelowna Area count were sent to the Kamloops overall coordinator for inclusion in the Birds Canada Swan and Eagle database.

This has been a mild winter compared to the past few years with daytime highs slightly above 0C.

A comparison of recent counts follows:

- **Bald Eagle adult:** 2026 37; 2025 50; 2024 45
- **Bald Eagle immature:** 2026 8; 2025 18; 2024 10
Area 2 leader reported they could not access a productive part of their area due to equipment working at the landfill which accounts for some of the lower number in this area in 2026.
- **Golden Eagle adult:** 2026 0; 2025 1; 2024 0.
Golden Eagle observations this time of the year remain low.
- **Trumpeter Swan adult:** 2026 24; 2025 20; 2024 11.
- **Trumpeter Swan immature:** 2026 13; 2025 1; 2024 6.
Significant increase in Trumpeter Swans in the Kelowna area this year with a larger number of immatures.
- **Tundra Swan adult:** 2026 8; 2025 6; 2024 4.
- **Tundra Swan immature:** 2026 4; 2025 1; 2024 0.
An increased observation of Tundra Swans compared to recent years.

A special thank you to our participating counters this year:

- Area 1: Michael Force
- Area 2: Pam Laing with Karen Blumel
- Area 3: Deborah White with Merle Auty, Wendy Wright and Steffany Walker
- Area 4: Mike Howard with Bruce Kennedy, Alan Peterson, Brian Peterson and Douglas Graham
- Area 5: Rick Gee with Karen Pedersen and Vince Patton
- Area 6: Julia Proulx with Joan Morgan
- Area 7: Les Gyug

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

KELOWNA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2025 BY CHRIS CHARLESWORTH

Observers in field: 60. Max number of parties in field: 17; Distance covered on foot: 106.11 km; Time spent on foot: 79.6 hours; Distance covered by car: 538.3 km; Time spent in car: 41.55 hours. Temperature min: -2 degrees C; Temperature max: 10 degrees C; Wind Direction: South; Wind Velocity: 15 km; Snow Depth: 0 cm; No rain; No snow; Partly cloudy with good visibility.

NOTE: Count details are below. Species in bold type are rare. Species where just the number is in bold type indicates that this is a new high count. 'CW' means that the species was seen in the count week.

Cackling Goose 1; Canada Goose 2415; Trumpeter Swan 35; Tundra Swan 1; Wood Duck 31; Northern Shoveler 16; Gadwall 67; American Wigeon 252; Mallard 2107; Green-winged Teal 45; Canvasback 2; Redhead 9; Ring-necked Duck 38; Greater Scaup 315; Lesser Scaup 9; Bufflehead 90; Common Goldeneye 53; Barrow's Goldeneye 13; goldeneye sp. 11; Hooded Merganser 69; Common Merganser **187**; Ruddy Duck CW; California Quail 1413; **Wild Turkey 3**; Ruffed Grouse 1; Ring-necked Pheasant 1; Rock Pigeon 338; Eurasian Collared-Dove 412; Mourning Dove 140; Virginia Rail **31**; American Coot 525; Killdeer CW; Wilson's Snipe 2; Short-billed Gull 1; Ring-billed Gull 177; American Herring Gull 20; California Gull CW; Glaucous-winged Gull 8; Iceland Gull CW; Pied-billed Grebe 21; Horned Grebe 46; Red-necked Grebe 8; Western Grebe 9; Common Loon 5; Great Blue Heron 12; Golden Eagle 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk 6; Cooper's Hawk 13; Northern Harrier 8; Bald Eagle 43; Red-tailed Hawk 78; Rough-legged Hawk 2; **American Barn Owl 1**; Western Screech-Owl 1; Great Horned Owl 19; Barred Owl CW; Short-eared Owl 1; Northern Saw-whet Owl 3; Belted Kingfisher 10; Black-backed Woodpecker 1; Downy Woodpecker 30; Hairy Woodpecker 19; Pileated Woodpecker 7; Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker 346; American Kestrel 8; Merlin 9; Peregrine Falcon 2; **Say's Phoebe 1**; Northern Shrike 4; Steller's Jay 18; **Blue Jay 1**; Black-billed Magpie 426; Clark's Nutcracker 6; American Crow 227; Common Raven 135; Black-capped Chickadee 370; Mountain Chickadee 48; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 13; Golden-crowned Kinglet 26; White-breasted Nuthatch 4; Pygmy Nuthatch 314; Red-breasted Nuthatch 26; Brown Creeper 5; Canyon Wren 1; Pacific Wren 5; Marsh Wren **32**; Bewick's Wren **8**; American Dipper 3; European Starling 9688; **Gray Catbird 1**; Western Bluebird 73; Townsend's Solitaire 11; Varied Thrush 1; American Robin 835; Bohemian Waxwing 23; Cedar Waxwing 29; House Sparrow 599; Evening Grosbeak 1; House Finch 548; Pine Siskin 15; American Goldfinch 358; American Tree Sparrow 3; Dark-eyed Junco 613; White-crowned Sparrow 217; **Golden-crowned Sparrow 1**; **Harris's Sparrow 1**; White-throated Sparrow **31**; Song Sparrow **431**; **Lincoln's Sparrow 1**; **Swamp Sparrow 2**; Spotted Towhee 12; Red-winged Blackbird 416; Brewer's Blackbird 58; Yellow-rumped Warbler 2; **Wilson's Warbler 1**.

Observers: Ainley, Jody; Auty, Merle; Cecile, Don; Charlesworth, Chris; Chester, James; Coburn, Norma; Dempsey, Paul; Edwards, Evan; Ferguson, Faith; Fisher, Fran; Force, Michael; Forder, Trevor; Fraser, Joyce; Gee, Rick; Gonazlez, Marjorie; Graham, Douglas; Guild, Don; Gyug, Les; Hannebauer, Jesse; Heffeman, Alex; Hindmarch, Ted; Howard, Mike; Jansen, Gerald; Jansen, James; Jansen, John; Kennedy, Bruce; Korcok, Jasmine; Kragh, Douglas; Lachaine, Annette; Leighton, Sara-Jane; Malkinson, Paul; Martin, Andrew; Matthews, Jennifer; Mayner, Cheryl; Mehta, Sara; Miller, Brittany; Morgan, Joan; Ocana, Kalin; Patton, Vince; Peterson, Brian; Proulx, Julia; Rae, Lisa; Robertson, Lesley; Sewell, Louise; Siddle, Chris; Swan, Nick; Vissia, Brad; Walker, Ian; Walker, Linda; Walker, Steffany; Warkentin, Ian; Weilmeier, Markus; Weilmeier, Martin; White, Deborah; Wilson, Don; Wright, Wendy; Yang, Lateef; Zander, Kurt; Zander, Pat.

LAKE COUNTRY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2025

BY LES GYUG

As per usual, the Lake Country Christmas Bird Count was held on the first possible count day that isn't also on a weekend. Counts can start as early as December 14th in any year, but since that was a Sunday this year, the count was moved to Monday, Dec. 15th. A total of 28 people covered the count circle in 10 parties in 63.5 party-hours.

Weather was pretty good this year, really good, and the warmest day (up to 13 C) that this count has ever been held. Sort of a harbinger of the "winter that wasn't" this year.

We counted 5708 birds of 81 species on count day. The number of species was pretty much average (82.3 species per year), but the number of birds was below the long-term average of 7604. The only new species for the count were Great Gray Owl (which was just a count-week bird last year) and Say's Phoebe. Only four species broke the 400 count this year: European Starling (1116), Canada Goose (761), Mallard (578) and American Robin (450). There were no particularly unusual counts of any other species.

Many thanks to all the stalwart volunteers who come and help, and who make it a pleasure to organize this count

Species	Count
Canada Goose	761
Trumpeter Swan	17
Gadwall	12
American Wigeon	19
Mallard	578
Green-winged Teal	6
Ring-necked Duck	5
Greater Scaup	29
Lesser Scaup	4
Bufflehead	16
Common Goldeneye	11
Barrow's Goldeneye	6
Common/Barrow's Goldeneye	1
Hooded Merganser	2
Common Merganser	45
Red-breasted Merganser	1
California Quail	343
Wild Turkey	20
Ruffed Grouse	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	1
Rock Pigeon	81
Eurasian Collared-Dove	38
Mourning Dove	30
American Coot	10
Killdeer	2
American Herring Gull	4
Glaucous Gull	1
Glaucous-winged Gull	7
gull sp.	2
Pied-billed Grebe	9
Horned Grebe	57
Red-necked Grebe	28
Western Grebe	14
Common Loon	6
Great Blue Heron	16
Golden Eagle	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3
Cooper's Hawk	2
Bald Eagle	30
Red-tailed Hawk	22
Northern Pygmy-Owl	4
Great Gray Owl	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	5
Downy Woodpecker	7

Species	Count
Hairy Woodpecker	6
Northern Flicker	103
American Kestrel	4
Merlin	4
Say's Phoebe	1
Steller's Jay	2
Black-billed Magpie	100
Clark's Nutcracker	5
American Crow	145
Common Raven	77
Black-capped Chickadee	163
Mountain Chickadee	37
Golden-crowned Kinglet	7
White-breasted Nuthatch	7
Pygmy Nuthatch	142
Red-breasted Nuthatch	20
Brown Creeper	2
Pacific Wren	1
Bewick's Wren	1
American Dipper	1
European Starling	1116
Western Bluebird	17
Townsend's Solitaire	13
Varied Thrush	1
American Robin	450
Cedar Waxwing	15
House Sparrow	268
Evening Grosbeak	8
Pine Grosbeak	4
House Finch	283
Cassin's Finch	1
Red Crossbill	6
Pine Siskin	68
American Goldfinch	62
Dark-eyed Junco	168
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored)	1
White-crowned Sparrow	12
White-throated Sparrow	4
Song Sparrow	77
Red-winged Blackbird	37
passerine sp.	2

Total 5708



Spring is coming and it's the best time of the year for this birder. I really enjoy wandering diverse Kelowna habitats listening and looking for the usual suspects and the new arrivals. It's the season where you can bird by ear and confidently make an identification with the help of Merlin if you need it. The ducks and songbirds sport their most fashionable spring coats with a goal to attract a mate, and then after all their pairing and nesting is done, their eggs hatch in late spring / early summer!

We birders know that in spring, the fashionable and most embellished ducks and waterfowl we see are typically male adults. Think Wood Duck, Mallard and Harlequin. But nature seems to have made an exception by gifting the tiny vulnerable American Coot chick a vibrant and adorable look.

A few years ago, while on a spring CONC walk at Walroy Pond, several of us had an opportunity to watch and photograph mother American Coot feed their newly hatched chicks slurries of pond delights, prompting me and other members to wonder why these handsome chicks are so vibrantly coloured and the story of their survival in the open pond. I have made a project of it, to unpack the story in my own words.

I am a birder. Not a scientist. And as you know, no one can summarize the whole story about a species in one article. I'll do my best to share fact-based edited insights, knowing that many American Coot behaviours are still unsolved mysteries.

I'm writing as an observer, a thirsty birder of sorts.

First, did you know that American Coots are not classified as ducks? American Coots are members of the Rail family.

Baby American Coot chicks (also known as cooties and downies) are classified as precocial. That means shortly after hatching, the chicks are impressively able to leave the nest and follow their parent around. And while most bird chicks are hatched with a camouflage coat, coot chicks arrive donning a red beak, a bare head and red/orange fluffy feathers. Cute! Surprisingly, momma American Coot can tell which chicks and eggs are hers, in other words, which ones were egg dumped by another mother.

Have you heard of egg dumping? During nesting season, American Coot mothers may lay as many as 10 eggs in a clutch and often practice the evolutionary reproduction strategy of egg dumping.

Egg dumping is a widespread practice. For coots, it's a term used to describe when the female coot lays an egg in another American Coot nest and the chick is raised by that other mom, maybe. There are two classes of chicks in an American Coot nest. The first class is host chicks. Their mother is the nest mother, and the hatched chicks might be redder. And those laid last become the reddest chicks. The second class is parasitic chicks that were egg dumped from another mother into the host nest. These hatched chicks are generally much less colourful and may not survive.

American Coots are skilled nest builders. Their nests have the appearance of a hidden raft on water. Housekeeping and renovating are done by the female. American Coot moms will deposit one egg per day, and she may lay more eggs than she can incubate. Eggs typically are deposited in a nest between sunset and midnight. And she might move the other mom's eggs aside so that she can lay more eggs and protect her DNA. Hatching order mimics laying order, and after hatching, the parents may give less priority to the other mom's chicks at feeding times, as the task of so many mouths to feed can be overwhelming. Food insecurity raises mortality rates, especially amongst the later hatched chicks.

Why did nature make such a fragile creature appear so vibrantly vulnerable, like a store bought Jellycat soft toy? Is it the mom that makes this happen or, is that chick too smart for its own good?



According to studies, and there are lots of them, I learned that the carotenoid content contributes to colouration of the chick. Carotenoid content is high in coot chicks' yolks, especially later -aid eggs, and is thought to contribute to fancy ornamentation. Where the egg is positioned, as well as hatch order in the nest also seems to have an impact. Maternal investment and so many other coot things are at play.

When coot parents begin to feed their chicks, they feed them on a first come first served basis, those that surround get fed. Here's where it gets interesting. After about day ten, the parents pick favourite chicks and allocate the food, giving priority to the reddest chicks, the host chicks that may have hatched last. There is an entire study that explores

the idea of parental favouritism. These smaller chicks often have the highest level of ornamentation. Their embellished plumage seems to be preferred by the parent, resulting in more feeding. The result is that the smallest latest hatched chicks catch up to the growth of larger chicks. And it is noted in research that maternal intervention influences growth, behaviour and social habits too.

Whew, pond parenthood can be complicated.

I hope you enjoyed reading about American Coots. I certainly enjoy sharing these insights with you and encourage you to read studies if you want to learn more.

No AI was used in the writing of this article and no coots were harmed. Here are some good sources to consider if you want to learn more:

The American Coot: A Tough Love story; PNAS.org; Audubon; Studies by Lyon and coauthor Daizaburo Shizuka; INaturalist

OBSCURATA

I. R. WALKER

5. PLANTS THAT CAN'T

In biology, the world is full of exceptions: e.g., legless lizards, flightless birds, egg-laying mammals, and vascular plants without vascular tissues, to name just a few. Rules are made to be broken, and nature is really good at it. One of those rules is this: plants have chlorophyll and photosynthesize (except for those that don't).

Most local naturalists are probably aware of at least one of these local plants: Ghost Pipe, Pinesap, Pinedrops, or one of our three species of Coralroot. These plants lack chlorophyll, and chloroplasts, so they can't photosynthesize; they need another mechanism to supply their energy and nutritional needs. They have become parasites.



A few local native plants, that lack the green pigment necessary for photosynthesis. They survive by parasitizing fungi. Left to right: Ghost Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*), Mount Carleton Provincial Park, NB (August 1993); Pinesap (*Monotropa hypopitys*), Macdonald Lake, BC (30 July 2024); Woodland Pinedrops (*Pterospora andromedea*), Sutherland Hills, BC (14 June 2013); Spotted Coralroot (*Corallorhiza maculata*) Sutherland Hills, BC (14 June 2013).

The species mentioned above are all examples of the so-called myco-heterotrophs – plants that parasitize fungi (i.e., these plants steal nutrients, water, and sugars from fungi to survive). Note, however, that there is an additional level of complexity to these relationships, because the parasitized fungi commonly also have a mutualistic relationship with a nearby tree.

In the former, parasitic, relationship, one partner (the parasitic plant) benefits to the detriment of the other (the fungus). In the latter (mutualistic)



Short-stemmed Russula (*Russula brevipes*) near Mabel Lake, BC (26 Oct 2014). In southern BC, this is the only mushroom species parasitized by Ghost Pipe.

Short-stemmed Russula may also be parasitized by a fungus, *Hypomyces lactifluorum*. The *Hypomyces*-infected *Russula* mushrooms develop a distinctive "Day-glo" orange colour, and are commonly known as Lobster Mushrooms, a choice edible extensively collected by BC foragers.

relationship, the fungus helps supply the tree with nutrients and water, thereby aiding the tree; in return, the tree supplies sugar to the fungus, assisting the fungus' growth. Both relationships are considered symbioses.

The most famous of the myco-heterotrophs is Ghost Pipe. In Southern BC, Ghost Pipe is reputed to exclusively parasitize one mushroom species, the Short-stemmed Russula (*Russula brevipes*). Pinesap is reputed to parasitize several fungi, including *Tricholoma* and *Russula* species. Pinedrops parasitizes Bearded Truffles (*Rhizopogon salebrosus* and *Rhizopogon arctostaphyli*), and Coralroots are known parasites of various fungi, including *Thelephora* and members of the Russulaceae.

All these parasitic, myco-heterotrophic plants directly parasitize fungi, but since each fungus has a close, mutualistic relationship with nearby trees, these plants are also indirectly parasitizing the trees.

There are some plants that directly parasitize other plants (i.e., with no fungus involved). Our local botanists are familiar with Yellow Clustered



Two members of the Broomrape Family (Orobanchaceae): Yellow Clustered Broomrape (*Aphyllon franciscanum*), Jackpine Forest Service Road (11 July 2025); Giant Red Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*), Big White (26 July 2017).

Yellow Clustered Broomrape is a holoparasite. It lacks chlorophyll, completely deriving all its nutrition by parasitizing its host. The Paintbrush is a hemiparasite. It has chlorophyll and photosynthesizes but derives part of its nutrition by parasitizing its host.



Field Dodder (*Cuscuta campestris*) adjacent to Glenmore Road at North Glenmore Elementary (20 Sept 2018)

Broomrape (*Aphyllon franciscanum*). It has no chlorophyll, deriving its nutrition by parasitizing the roots of a variety of plants including members of the Aster (Asteraceae) family.

There are other plants that are only hemiparasitic (i.e., partially parasitic). For example, the Giant Red Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) has chlorophyll and can photosynthesize, but that is insufficient for its needs; it supplements its "income" by parasitizing grasses. If you want to grow Paintbrushes in your garden, you will need to supply them with a suitable host to parasitize.

Before I conclude, I want to mention one last plant, the one that inspired this article.

This past summer, like every summer, Kelowna roads were plagued with major infrastructure projects. This summer that included widening and repaving Glenmore Road.

Roadwork is always disruptive, and the Glenmore upgrade frequently impeded my northward escape from Kelowna. I'm sure many people have mixed feelings about these projects. The city seems to have an inordinate budget for paving, then soon tearing up, and repaving the same road. Was it really necessary?

While that sentiment about summer roadwork was surely widely shared, there was an extra note of sadness in my thoughts – I was potentially losing a good friend, an obscure little roadside plant, Field Dodder (*Cuscuta campestris*).

I had first found the patch in September 2018 during my afternoon commute from UBCO to home. I had noticed a little orange tangle along the road adjacent to North Glenmore Elementary. It looked like a tangle of orange fly-fishing line discarded in the ditch. Closer inspection revealed that the “fishing-line” had dozens of small white blooms, but no leaves - in fact, no greenish parts at all.

Field Dodder is one of five Dodder species occurring in BC. All species look roughly similar, apart from minute details of their flowers. Since Dodder species have no leaves, and no chlorophyll, they cannot photosynthesize and only survive by parasitizing other plants. Field Dodder mainly parasitizes legumes (e.g., alfalfa). Another Dodder species, Pacific Goldenthread (*Cuscuta pacifica*) parasitizes Pacific Glasswort (*Salicornia pacifica*), in BC’s coastal salt marshes. Field Dodder has an unusual status in BC; it is considered to be a rare, native species. You would think that would render it some special legal protection, but parasites are not, generally, held in very high regard. In BC, Ontario and Quebec, Dodder species are instead listed as noxious weeds. My sympathies lie with the “weed”, but local alfalfa farmers are unlikely to share my view. So, as I drive Glenmore Road next summer, I will be watching the roadside for a familiar orange tangle. Maybe, there’s a slim chance that some of the Dodder has somehow survived.

CANADA LYNX (*LYNX CANADENSIS*)

SOURCED BY LISA RAE



Canada Lynx mother and kitten. Photo courtesy Julia Proulx

I admit to a partiality for all members of the Felidae family but find the Canada Lynx to be especially admirable for its beauty and notable adaptations to a northern life, and given a recent sighting, worth a bit of research.

The Canada Lynx is one of four species in the Lynx genus. Others include the Bobcat (*L. rufus*), the Iberian lynx (*L. pardinus*) and the Eurasian lynx (*L. lynx*). In our region, the usual range of the Canada Lynx is the high-elevation, mature boreal forests of the Okanagan Highland(s) and Thompson-Okanagan Plateau. This region is considered to be high quality habitat and based on a 2021 assessment, has a healthy and stable population of 454 individuals. However, the Canada Lynx is listed as “Regionally Endangered” in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and “Threatened” in the United States. While a very elusive species, in the last couple of years Lynx have been spotted at Big White, Penticton (feasting on a domestic chicken), Vernon (strolling along Skaha Lake) and near Beaver Lake Road.

The Canada Lynx can be distinguished from its cousin the Bobcat (more commonly seen in our region) by several key features. Lynx have longer legs and bigger paws, prerequisites for hunting Snowshoe Hare, their preferred prey, and maneuvering in deep snow. Lynx are also somewhat larger, more substantial felines, weighing between eight and twenty kilograms while the Bobcat weighs between eight and sixteen kilograms. The Lynx has a solid, black-tipped tail, and the Bobcat tail has a black upper but white underside. Other distinguishing features of the Lynx are its pronounced, black ear tufts and fuller, ruffed face. The coat of the Lynx tends to be thicker and lighter in colour than the Bobcat, an adaptation to cold and snowy environments. Although their ranges can overlap, Bobcat are usually lower elevation felines and live in more diverse habitats.

Female Lynx typically have a litter of 1-6 kittens, who are born in the early Spring and remain with their mother for 3-5 months until fully weaned. After this time, they will accompany their mother on hunts and remain with her for the first winter. Between 8 and 23 months of age, the young cats will venture out on their own to establish a new territory. Territory size varies according to gender and prey availability. Males are solitary and have a larger territory (145-243 sq km), compared to females (52-140 sq km). Their lifespan is 12-13 years.

A specialist of the north, Canada Lynx populations are challenged by hunting, climate change and human encroachment into mature boreal forests.

Sources:

<https://wilden.ca>

https://youtu.be/3LIZPAh2_k

<https://www.osstedardship.ca/post/bobcat-or-lynx>

<http://www.fishbc.com/adventure/wilderness/animals/lynx.htm>

<https://linnet.geog.ubc.ca/efauna/Atlas/Atlas.aspx?sciname=Lynx%20canadensis>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/sports-recreation-arts-and-culture/outdoor-recreation/fishing-and-hunting/hunting/trapping/lynx.pdf>



Title: Crossings: how road ecology is shaping the future of our planet.

Author: Ben Goldfarb

Available: Okanagan Regional Library, 577.27 GOL

What is your favourite natural area to visit? Is it an old-growth forest? A beach? An alpine meadow? A grassland? A desert?

How do you get to your favourite area? Most likely at least part of your trip is over a road. This book looks at roads and the effects they have on the natural environment.

Some effects you can imagine and perhaps have seen. Along Highway 97 south of Peachland there are kilometres of fences, keeping wildlife from crossing the highway. While this may keep the animals safe, it fragments their range and isolates populations. The fence wouldn't be there if it were not for the road.

How about the turtle crossing signs we see everywhere? Turtles have different needs at different points in their lives, as do salamanders, toads, and many other species. Have you ever helped a turtle cross the road?

What other effects do roads have? Traffic noise drives the animals away from the roads, but we are building homes away from the roads too so where do the animals go? Using electric vehicles might seem to lessen the noise, but at highway speeds it's tire noise that dominates.

A different effect is that roads drive evolution. Many Cliff Swallows use bridges and overpasses for nesting. Those who do so find their wing lengths are shrinking since shorter wings are better for maneuverability; after all, swallows don't want to hit (or be hit by) vehicles.

What about over the roads? Have you ever wondered about the animal overpasses you see on the Okanagan Connector and across Highway 1 in Banff? Who uses them? Why were they erected at those specific locations? Overpasses are being constructed to resolve some of the difficulties roads cause, but they must be designed correctly. How wide should an overpass be? How long can it be before the animals won't use it? Those answers depend on the species at which the overpasses are targeted.

What about under the roads? Bridges allow water to flow freely, most of the time, but culverts restrict the flow and block fish and salamanders from going upstream. Dams also block fish, but these are not covered in this book. How large should a culvert be to allow movement through it? How high, how wide, how long?

Which animals prefer overpasses? Which prefer culverts?

And what about the verges and medians of the roads? Should these be mowed or allowed to grow wild? Particularly on the prairies, the verges provide small area of wildland for the birds and insects that use them as home. But the speed of vehicles causes vortices which disrupt flight. And mammals may come for the grass, only to be hit by vehicles.

All these topics are covered in this book. It also includes a long, final section on how we can deal with the unpleasant effects of roads.

I encourage you to borrow this book from the Okanagan Regional Library and read it. You will come away with a different perspective on roads.

NOTE: As you are likely aware, there has been violence in Jalisco, Mexico, in the last week. While Ajijic is in Jalisco, along the north shore of Lake Chapala, there was no violence in this area. That said, every traveller to the area should pay close regard to any warnings issued by the Canadian and Mexican governments.



Since I'm currently "On the Go", I thought I'd write a bit about where I went!

As many know, I am not a person who suffers the cold of winter with a smile and an urge to step outdoors into the (so far almost non-existent) snow. When the snow flies, so do I. South. This year "south" means Mexico. We are currently in Ajijic, Jalisco, Mexico, nestled between Lake Chapala (Mexico's largest lake) to the south, and the Sierra Madre Occidental Mountain range to the north. The town population is approximately 12,000 people, at about 1550m elevation, located in [Mexico's Volcanic Axis](#) (the southern edge of the North American Plate). The year-round average temp is about 19°C, with low humidity. The winter months are sunny and very dry.

The town itself, while one of Mexico's many [Pueblos Magicos](#), filled with murals, galleries, great food and friendly people is, for me, a place to winter while surrounded by mountains, water, birds, hiking, kayaking, and natural beauty (kind of like the Okanagan in the summer...).

BIRDING

The state of Jalisco, stretching from the Pacific coast to 400 km to the east has, of all Mexico's states, the [most species of birds, at 593](#). I have been birding with the [Lake Chapala Birders](#), and birding on my own (while being tortured by an invisible but persistent neighborhood Ferruginous Pygmy Owl!) and have enjoyed the variety immensely. Lots of lifers will do that!



Northern Jacana

I haven't yet been too far afield, confining my birding travels from the town of Jocotopec on the east end of the lake, to Lake Chapala town about mid-lake, on the north shore. The variety in that small area has been incredible, especially all along the various malecóns (boardwalks), and water's edge areas.



Broad-billed Hummingbird

Some of the local birding areas of note are:

- Ajijic Malecón,
- Jocotopec Malecón
- Lake Chapala Malecón
- Riberas marshes
- Parque La Milagrosa

Further afield at elevation, Rufous-crowned Mot Mot, Blue Mockingbirds and many more await. Around the south-east end of the lake are huge squadrons of over-wintering American White Pelicans.



Giant Katydid

INSECTS

Early one morning I peeked out to see if the hummingbirds had discovered their special swing and saw something on the swing that definitely wasn't a hummingbird – a Giant Katydid had decided this was a good place to perch! This area is fantastic for butterflies and more. In August, when we were here for a week to check out the area, the hike we took was a butterfly bonanza – I have never seen so many butterflies in one small area. Ajijic is also not very

far from the winter [Monarch mountain sanctuaries at the Oyamel Fir forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site](#). It's about a 3-hour drive to the east, but this site is at much higher elevation, above 3000 m, with an uphill hike before arriving at the sanctuary location. The prime viewing window is January to mid-March.



Tepalo Circuit Trail

HIKING

There is no shortage of day-hiking trails throughout the region, but be warned – they can be steep, and the footing can be very slippery. In the winter, the few waterfalls in the area will be dry. [Most of the hiking trails shown in AllTrails are graded as “Hard”](#), and that's an understatement of what it feels like to start at 1500 m, when unused to the elevation, then head steeply uphill! That said, the views to the south over the Lake Chapala and mountains are well worth the effort!



Mexican Poppy

BOTANY

Ajijic and area enjoys a 12-month growing season. Something is always in bloom, and wildflowers and native trees are numerous in the mountains. It is much more lush during the rainy season, but our latest hike up Tepalo Circuit yielded many varieties of native plants and trees in bloom even in February. [iNat has many entries to help with botany explorations](#).

All in all, if you are headed down to Central Mexico at any time, this is a great area for a naturalist of any interest to explore.

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.

Pam Laing and Gwynneth Wilson offer below their memories and thoughts:

From Pam:

Club members will be saddened to learn of the passing of longtime CONC member, Don Wilson on February 11th, after a short illness. He was 82. Born in Kamloops and raised in Kelowna, Don spent most of his working career teaching in Prince George before returning here. Don was not only a superb birder but had a wide knowledge of natural history in general. I learned so much from him about observing field marks and bird behaviour. He loved to share his knowledge, especially with young people. A born teacher, he was a valued mentor to young birders such including Chris Charlesworth and the late Ryan Tomlinson. He drove them to see special species such as owls, and to cherished birding spots both near and farther afield.

For several years he volunteered to drive a team of young birders so that they could take part in the annual fund-raising Birdathon. This was a commitment of over 24 hours as they birded from midnight to midnight with the energy and enthusiasm of youth! Because of his observational skills and attention to detail, Don was also an excellent researcher. I'm not sure how many of us would be willing to get up at 2:30am to perform field studies but Les Gyug can attest that Don did. (Perhaps it was during these years of sleep deprivation that he developed the endearing habit of nodding off in a vehicle driven by someone else!)

Don was an exceptionally kind person, always willing to give time and help where needed. So many stories abound of things he did for other people, from serving Meals on Wheels, to personal acts of kindness. We will miss him so much.

From Gwynneth:

I was fortunate enough to have known Don for many years through our membership in the CONC birders group. At first there were Thursday outings and then longer Saturday trips through the valley. South Okanagan and Douglas Lake in Spring were long weekends and when Chris Charlesworth joined us there were wonderful trips to birding hotspots through North America.

Don was a very knowledgeable person and a great teacher. We both had degrees in Geography, so we had much in common. We both enjoyed "listing" and kept up a friendly rivalry.

He was a great person to search for rare birds with because he was very persistent. On one trip, an elusive Hawk Owl was found by Don after everyone else had left. But, of course, he sped after us to let us know!

A highlight of the year was the Big Day Birdathon. Our team 'Wilson's Warblers' did the 8-hour Little Big Day. We won many trophies, even the Bird of the Day!

So many wonderful memories. Don will be sorely missed.



Don Wilson (left), Gwynneth Wilson (centre) and Pam Laing (right).



Keeping hummingbirds healthy. Many of us provide hummingbirds with a supply of nectar throughout the spring and summer. To avoid the introduction and spread of bacteria, [a reminder to keep the feeders clean by washing the feeder with each new supply of nectar](#). Homemade nectar is best, made by using water boiled for two minutes, mixed with *one-part white table sugar and four-parts water* to approximate the nectar that would be found in flowers. Allow the nectar to cool before filling in the feeder. Extra nectar should be stored in the fridge. Dyes, alternative sugars, honey and other materials should never be used. *A higher ratio of sugar to water is not safe and can cause dehydration and liver/kidney damage*. Potential signs that a hummingbird is not well include a bird with its tongue sticking out, lethargy, ruffled feathers and staying perched for long periods of time.

Spring! Snakes are awake! [A reminder to be careful while driving](#). Thanks to J. for this one.

Do you admire bees? Love glimpses at nature through macrophotography? [You might enjoy this article](#).

Thallium, copper, cobalt, arsenic, zinc and nickel extracted from the soil by plants? [This is phytomining](#), a fascinating biology that has the potential to secure metals without using typical and destructive mining practices.

A report on the status of bird populations and conservation efforts in the United States. [The Executive summary is worth a read](#).

Neighbours spent a year communicating with owls. [Or were they?](#) Thanks to B. for this one.

Northern resident Orcas and dolphins show cooperative salmon hunting strategies. [A fascinating study in survival and adaptability](#).

[Beavers are dam good for biodiversity](#).

Anna's Hummingbird, now a year-long resident of our west coast suburbs, [are a marvel of adaptation and range expansion](#) over the last 50 years.

[Weaver Ants, a marvel of cooperation](#) that has applications for the design of autonomous robots.

A Cooper's Hawk that [used a traffic signal and consequent traffic congestion to provide cover for hunting](#) prey. What???

Preventing bird collisions. Bird collisions with windows and buildings are the second leading cause of death of birds in the US annually, roaming domestic cats being the predominant cause. [This article provides many tips and research on this major issue](#).

CONC 2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Written Director Reports presented at the 2026AGM have been compiled into a PDF file, which can be accessed at [this link](#) (22 pages) and includes the following:



- 2025 Message from the Past President
- 2026 AGM Meeting Minutes
- Finance Report and Summary
- Birding Report
- Botany Report
- BC Nature Report
- Membership Report
- Programs Report
- Outreach and Communications



FAUNA

1st Place – Ian Walker
“The Hitch-hiker”
Swalwell Lake,
6 July 2025

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

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



FLORA

1st Place – Karen Blumel
“Early Morning Sunflower”
Kelowna
23 July 2025



LANDSCAPE

1st Place – Karen Blumel
“Spring Blossoms in the Orchard”
Kelowna
24 April 2025



PEOPLE IN NATURE

1st Place – Ian Walker
“A Bluebird Day”
Rose Valley
29 September 2025



Photo courtesy Julia Proulx

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”
~John Muir



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

Board 2025-26

President	Vacant	president@okanagannature.org
Vice-president	Vacant	
Secretary	Louise Nelson	secretary@okanagannature.org
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Conservation Director	Kalin Ocaña	conservation@okanagannature.org
Newsletter	Lisa Rae & Vivian Manning	editor@okanagannature.org

Resource Persons

Host Committee	Bev Thomas	cymru@telus.net
Website	Rick Gee	admin@okanagannature.org

Club Information

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 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. 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.
- **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

- Send submissions to editor@okanagannature.org
- Next deadline date for submissions is May 15, 2026
- Newsletter email distribution: Annette Lachaine: 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

- **Monday Birding:** meet 7:45 a.m. (April-Sept.) or 8:45 a.m. (Oct-March) Robert Hobson parking lot*
- **Thursday Birding:** meet 7:45 a.m. (April-Sept.) or 8:45 a.m. (Oct-March) Robert Hobson parking lot*
- **Saturday Birding:** Day-long outings on second Saturdays, March to November, (except August recess) Osoyoos to Salmon Arm. Meet Robert Hobson parking lot* at 7:30 am to sign in for a 7:45 am start – return mid to late afternoon. Route details provided by email Thursday prior to outing. Carpooling is encouraged - rate paid to the driver is shown on the [Activities](#) page. Bring lunch / refreshments.

NOTE: TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE!

BOTANY: contact botany@okanagannature.org

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

HIKES and SHOWSHOEING: All hikers meet Robert Hobson Environmental Education Centre parking lot* (Bring a lunch)

- **Tuesday: Ramblers** contact Cynthia Robertson: 250-951-2786 cynrober@shaw.ca
- **Wednesday: Sole Survivors** contact Glenda Newman outings@okanagannature.org
- **Thursday: Trail Trekkers** contact Brenda Johnson 250-808-8370 bubbalo101@gmail.com
- **Thursday: Snowshoeing** contact Robert Lake 250-717-1029 wipguy@gmail.com

* East End of the Robert Hobson ECCO parking lot where Leckie Road meets Springfield Road