Central Okanagan Naturalist

www.okanagannature.org

June 2026

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Know Nature and Keep it Worth Knowing

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Monthly Meetings: 2nd Tuesday of the month.

The next general meeting is our Spring Picnic taking place on **Tuesday, June 9th at 4pm at Kinsmen Park** on Abbott Street near the tennis courts. Please see 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.

- Michael Force
- Ray Fisette
- Kristine Heckman
- Andrea Oke
- Karen Krysko
- Corrine Whitney
- Andrew Stevens
- Sharon Strong
- Kate Boggiss
- Jane Ainslee
- Cindy Lavallee
- Laurel McDonald
- Francisco Pena Fernandez
- Sheona Schulenborg
- Marianne Taylor
- Ellen Perrich
- Bruce Ainslee
- Laurel McDonald
- Gabe Coupal

CONC Annual Picnic

By Robbie Bowers

The June annual potluck picnic will be held on **Tuesday, June 9th at 4pm at Kinsmen Park** on Abbott Street near the tennis courts. Our tables will be set up near the washrooms on the southwest side of the park. Members can drop off their chairs, food, etc. and then move to nearby side streets (parking is free).

We are hoping for favorable weather so come out to join your friends!

A reminder email will be sent closer to the date.

REGULAR COLUMNS

BOTANY REPORT

BY PETER COURTNEY

CONC's 2026 botany season began in April with two outings to see early bloomers at Okanagan Mountain Park and Jackpine Meadows. The regular Friday botany outings began on May 1, focusing as always on flowering plants, and will continue until July 17. This is the period of peak flowering, when there's lots to see. The schedule, including outing locations, can be found on CONC's homepage calendar.

At the time this article was submitted, four botany outings had been completed. In addition to plants, participants observed birds, insects, mushrooms, and anything else of interest. A checklist, field guide, and phone apps were used to assist identification in the field and photos of things seen by participants were posted on iNaturalist.

The first outing was to Okanagan Mountain Park where we saw the early blooming Scalepod *Idahoa scapigera* and 24 other flowering species. Several other non-flowering plants were observed including three fern, and several moss, lichen, and non-flowering species. Pictures taken by the group can be viewed at: Observations · iNaturalist

The second outing to Jackpine Meadows focused on flowering of Steer's Head *Dicentra uniflora* but we also found nine other flowering species. 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. Pictures taken by the group can be viewed at: Observations · iNaturalist

For the third outing on May 1 to Beaver Lake Road our group made five stops along the lower part of the road and saw 65 species in bloom or with fresh seeds. The group observed spectacular vistas of flowering Arrowleaf Balsamroot, a large bloom of Skunk Cabbage, and several species from each of the mustard and violet families. Pictures taken can be viewed at: Observations · iNaturalist

For the fourth outing to Knox Mountain Park on May 6, unfortunately no one came, but not for want of trying as car or traffic problems seemed to prevail. The feature for this outing was to be flowering Bitterroot, which seemed particularly prevalent this year. Our normal walking route was marred by construction at Knox Mountain this year reducing ease of walking and access to several species. Pictures taken during the May 2 recon for this outing can be viewed at: Observations · iNaturalist

For the fifth outing on May 16 to the lower portion of Scenic Canyon, we saw 73 species in bloom or with fresh seeds. Of particular interest was the Mountain Lady's Slipper but several other interesting species were found. Pictures of some of the things seen during the May 10 recon and May 16 outing can be seen at Observations · iNaturalist

To see what's flowering in our area, check out iNaturalist projects such as the Mission Creek Greenway Biodiversity Project at https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mission-creek-greenway-biodiversity-project and the Okanagan Biodiversity project at https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/okanagan-biodiversity.

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 and photograph some beautiful flowering plants and to put names to a few of them. Plant checklists 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* https://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/eflora/. iNaturalist and Seek are popular cell phone apps for identifying plants from photos, at https://inaturalist.ca/.

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, please forward them to botany@okanagannaturalist.org

The Weekend Explorers have hosted four excursions in 2026. A fifth excursion is slated for May 31st, just as this newsletter is scheduled for distribution. Here's a very brief synopsis for this year:


Pied-billed Grebe on Kelowna waterfront (25 Jan 2026)

25 January: Winter Waterfowl

This was a sunny, winter day, but perhaps the coldest of the year, with the early morning temperature hitting -12 at the airport. We walked Kelowna's waterfront from Rotary Marsh to Tim Horton's, recording 28 bird species, before frozen fingers dispersed our crew (our checklist here).

Despite the astute eyes of our eight observers, no haggis was spotted this year; clearly, they were wise enough to stay home (basking in a 70°C hot tub in anticipation of supper, and the bard's famous ode).

28 February: Exploring the Wilden Ponds

Still a bit early for wildflowers or turtles, but local wetlands thawed early this year. On the last day of February, we meandered past Still Pond, Walroy Lake, and Cat-tail Pond in search of early migrants. We recorded 23 species for the day, including about a dozen species of waterfowl (checklist here).


Club members examine a segment of the Okanagan Fault (28 Feb 2026)

29 March: Wood Lake Geology

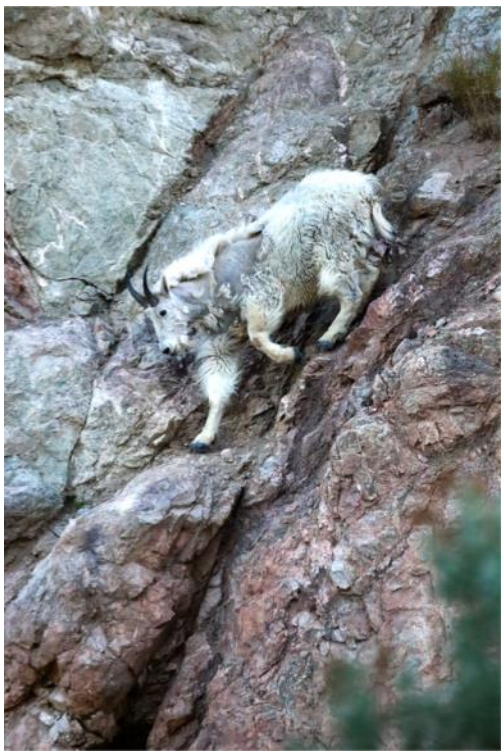
UBC Geologist John Greenough led us on a counterclockwise circuit about Wood Lake. It's impossible to adequately summarize a few hundred million years of Earth history in two or three sentences. Topics ranged from the origins of the Okanagan Valley and its many faults to glaciation, deglaciation, local volcanic activity, seismic activity, building standards, household radon, and the politics of uranium mining in British Columbia. Thanks, John!

25 April: Old-Growth Larch & Williamson's Sapsucker

Les Gyug led us into the Williamson's Sapsuckers' world, high above Okanagan Falls. We trudged about the 400-year-old larch, enjoying the sapsuckers' calls and brief glimpses of the birds high overhead. I don't think anyone managed to capture a convincing photo, but we did manage several recordings, and an eBird list. We learned a LOT about the sapsucker's ecology and threats to their future in BC. Thanks, Les!

Ian went head-over-heels at one point. Was that his happy dance?

On the return trip some of us stopped opposite the cliffs at Callan Road, just north of Summerland, for a great view of the resident Mountain Goats.

Club members in the old-growth larch, and Mountain Goat at Callan Road (25 Apr 2026)

31 May: Okanagan Mountain Bird and Critter Count

Given the date of the excursion, and the probable date of this newsletter's circulation, it's unclear whether this should be written in the past, present, or future tense. Perhaps even as you read this, Les Gyug and the Weekend Explorers team will be trudging up the CN Trail into Okanagan Mountain Park, recording all the floral and faunal diversity that trail offers.

Shortly after their return, I'm sure we will be treated to an eBird list, and a collection of photos documenting their success.

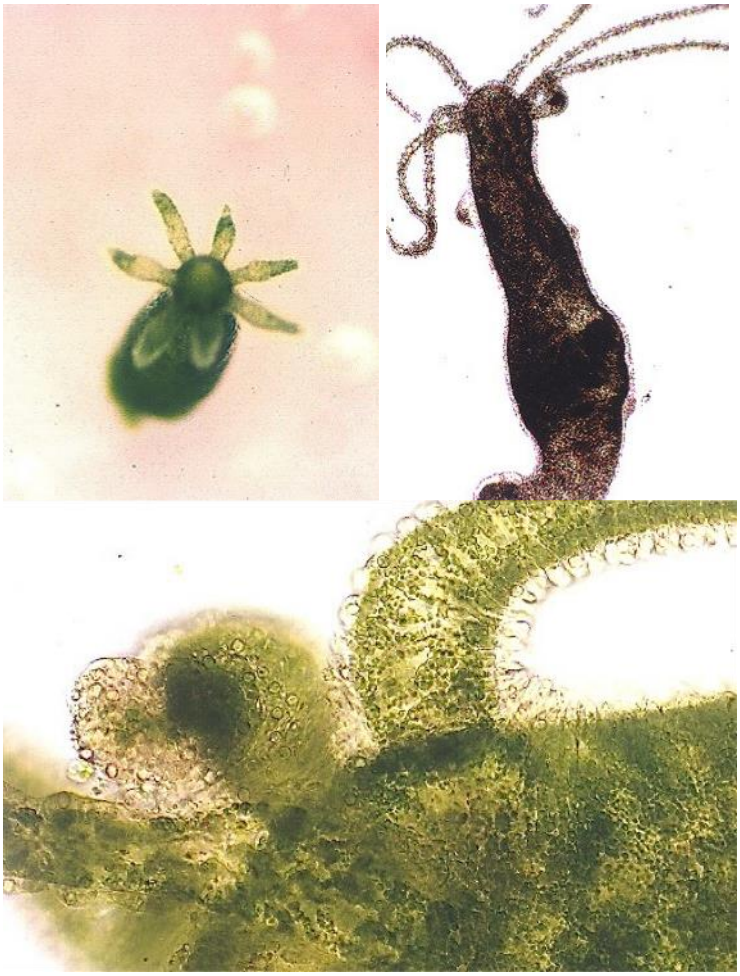
Eager to know what they saw? Any time after their return, you can check this link for the earliest results: (link to iNat records here)

Future Trips

Our excursions typically alternate between Saturdays and Sundays on the last weekend of each month (but we occasionally make exceptions). We are always looking for new ideas for trips. Hmmm…. Maybe something about bats or astronomy?

If you have thoughts, or wish to lead an excursion, please let Ian know.

As I stated in my previous article (in the last newsletter), the biological 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). Another rule: animals lack chlorophyll and can't photosynthesize (except for those that do!). I can think of two local animals, that illustrate this exception, and a few farther afield.



Green Hydra (*Hydra viridissima*) collected from Redwing Pond on current UBC Okanagan campus. The embedded green algae can be seen in the close-up (bottom photo).

Some years ago, I was visiting "Red-wing Pond" on the current UBC Okanagan campus. I was using a white enamelled tray to collect a few invertebrates for use in the biology labs. I noticed something odd in the tray. They were small, and green; so small that you almost needed a microscope to see them at all. They also seemed to be changing shape. This was definitely something weird, and worth investigating further.

I collected some of the water containing the little somethings and carried it back to the lab. Under the microscope, I could see that the little green things had a "trunk" and tentacles, and not much else. Also, embedded in the "trunk" and tentacles, I could see little green bodies, algal cells – these animals were Green Hydra!

Hydra are minuscule animals that use their tentacles to stuff food into their mouths. They are related to jellyfish, and, like jellyfish, their tentacles contain stinging cells which are used to subdue their prey.

But these weren't ordinary hydras. Green Hydras cultivate green algae inside their tissues. In essence, the internal algae function like the chloroplasts of plants, and allow the Green Hydras to photosynthesize!

Since that first encounter, I've never seen any other Green Hydra, but they are so tiny that they are very, very easily overlooked.

I have, however, seen some other photosynthetic local animals – freshwater sponges. In this case too, it is actually algae embedded in the sponges' tissues that perform the photosynthesis. Although sponges largely feed by filtering their food from the water, the algae cultivated within the sponges' internal tissues supplement that diet.

Freshwater sponges don't always contain algae, but they commonly do.

Freshwater sponges are common in our highland lakes, but they are commonly overlooked. Species identifications are difficult, but several species are known to occur in BC.

Nothing seems to eat them. This is probably owing to their internal skeleton, which consists of glass needles (I think everybody can appreciate the discomfort inherent to ingesting and digesting a mouthful of glass shards.)

If you want to view freshwater sponges, I recommend a slow paddle around Idabel Lake

Freshwater sponges from Idabel Lake (top & bottom, 23 July 2017; centre, 8 Aug 2016)

(*Hydra viridissima*) collected from Redwing Pond on current UBC Okanagan campus.

in mid-to-late summer. They often grow abundantly on dead tree branches and other submerged wood. A pair of polarized sunglasses, a bit of shade on the water, and a calm day will help your search.

Beyond the Okanagan there are other animals with acquired photosynthetic abilities. The Giant Green Anemones, common in BC tide pools, contain embedded algae.

Spotted salamanders are common in eastern Canada. This salamander's eggs contain the alga *Oophila amblystomatis*. In BC, more recently, the same alga has been reported in the eggs of Northwestern Salamanders.

If you find any salamander eggs in the Okanagan, check carefully. It's possible the alga might also inhabit the eggs of our native Long-toed Salamanders.

Instead of cultivating algae internally, some sea slugs acquire their photosynthetic partners by theft (a phenomenon known as kleptoplastidy). These sea slugs consume algae, and while doing so they steal the chloroplasts from the algae. The sea slugs then allow the chloroplasts to happily persist and photosynthesize within them.

So - maybe we can consider all of the above to be "honorary plants"?

Of course, there are some fungi which have similarly acquired photosynthesis through algal partners. What do we call those fungi? Lichens!

Top: Giant Green Anemones near Tofino, BC (11 Oct 2019); Middle: Spotted Salamander near Fredericton, NB (10 May 2014); bottom: Northwestern Salamander in Mystery Lake, Mount Seymour Provincial Park (21 Aug 2007)

GOPHER TRAIL BIRD WALK - BLACK MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY BY KAREN BLUMEL

Friday May 8, 2026
15C, high cloud, light breeze

# of Species: 21
# of Individuals: 91

Our teacher distributed binoculars to each student, and we assembled at the gate to Gopher Creek Trail around 9am. Standing at the schoolyard gate to view the pond, we had a distant look at a handsome male Common Merganser, a few male Mallard and a couple of American Coot. And the ducks stayed for both birding sessions. Lucky us!

The sounds of Red-Winged Blackbird were ubiquitous as we moved closer to the pond! In the gully we stopped where the paths cross and viewed many males and females doing what Red-Winged Blackbirds do. There are active nests in the marsh as was noticed when a female Red-winged Blackbird sat atop cattail stalks and stayed there for over an hour. Perhaps her nest is below?

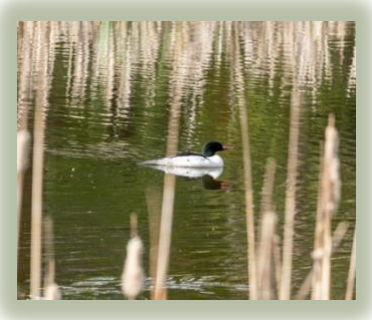
As we walked towards the forested habitat, we watched an American Robin on the property fence and then enjoyed views of a Rufous Hummingbird at the top of a bush. The hummingbird was perched on a vertical branch and gave us a very good look. A few times this hummingbird entertained us with fluttered wings and then moved on. Shortly after, we got a second look in a similarly bare tree.

We were alerted to the presence of Spotted Towhee by its mew calls and chips. This Spotted Towhee moved along the path for a bit, and we watched him fly into a nearby tree. The Northern Yellow Warbler was present, singing the bright musical sweet-sweet-sweet, sweeter than sweet call. We did not see the Northern Yellow Warbler until the second group passed the same area. As usual, the warbler was flitting high up in the tree and was mostly unseen.

As we made our way down the path, we noticed Saskatoon bushes in blossom along the way. A lovely House Finch greeted us with warbling notes for quite some time. We got a good look at a few of them as they perched on tree branches.

There were American Robins, American Goldfinch and House Sparrow singing in the background as we made our way back to the schoolyard. And three Brewers Blackbird were seen as we left the park.

Our second group enjoyed watching a muskrat swimming across the pond as well as a very large Western Painted Turtle resting on the large rock on the pond. Nearby, an American Coot female was seen feeding her recently fledged chick. Three female Evening Grosbeak caught our attention at the top of a fully leafed tree near the bridge. They were very camouflaged by the tree branches, making it a challenge to spot all three of them.



Wandering along the forest path, California Quail were seen and heard. A handsome male walked along a tree branch as he alerted his covey to our presence. We were excited to get good views of a handsome male American Goldfinch first seen by one of our young birders. Later, a Song Sparrow landed on a cable and gave us a good look as we watched him sing. As we left the area, we got good looks of the same male Common Merganser seen earlier, and then he majestically flew away.

Near the end of our walk, we saw our first raptor, a Red-tailed Hawk, who soared above us in the distant sky. As we walked back to the entrance, we watched more Red-winged Blackbirds fly and perch on cattails.

For a complete list of birds seen visit this eBird link where my photos from today's walk are also posted:

https://ebird.org/checklist/S334799170

It was a pleasure to bird with teachers and students at Gopher Creek Trail!

REPORT ON THE 2026 BIRDATHON — BY PAM LAING

Our 5:10am start in a 7C steady light rain at Robert Lake south was not the most pleasant way to begin the 2026 Birdathon Wilson's Warblers' Day. But ducks don't mind the rain, and it proved to be a flying start to our day's list with many waterfowl and other species recorded. Highlights were Cinnamon Teal and Black-necked Stilt, and at the north end we were able to add American Avocet, Bald Eagle and Wilson's Snipe. At Sutherland Bay Joyce spotted a bird flying which obligingly landed on one of the leftover pilings from the now demolished mill. It was a Double-crested Cormorant, a very welcome coastal visitor.

We worked our way steadily southwards, stopping at various locations such as Rotary Marsh and Maude Roxby. The mouth of Mission Creek produced shorebirds: Killdeer, Sanderling, Spotted and Pectoral Sandpipers. Bertram Creek Park was delightfully resonant with songbirds, notably Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullock's Oriole and Western Warbling Vireo among others. By the time we took a welcome break at Tim Horton's shortly before 11am, we had already tallied 82 species.

Sadly, the afternoon proved much, much slower and it was a challenge to reach a count of 90 species, as the bird world settled in for its daily nap. Perhaps the improving weather, now warm and sunny at 19C, was a contributing factor. Try as we might working our way up McCulloch Road onto the First Nations land, we could not top 94 species. Our final four species, all seen as well as heard, were MacGillivray's Warbler, American Kestrel, Cassin's Finch and Pine Siskin.

Thank you to all who have sponsored the Birdathon again. We greatly appreciate all donations and are delighted to report that we have surpassed last year's total. If you still plan to donate, please do so before the end of May by using the link recently sent out to all CONC members or if you prefer, send me a personal e-transfer, to pamlaing2309@gmail.com In early June I will be sending one cheque for all the cash, cheques and e-transfers I have received along with the donor details. You can also mail a cheque directly to Birds Canada at:

Birds Canada
115 Front Rd.,
Port Rowan, ON
N0E 1M0

Mark your envelope Birdathon 2026, attention Kris Dobney. Be sure to include your email address and your full mailing address so that your tax receipt can be emailed or mailed to you when ready. On behalf of this year's team, (Wilson's Warblers) Gwynneth Wilson (leader), Joyce Fraser, Annette Lachaine and myself, thank you all.

SPRING CLEAN-UP APRIL 17, 2026 — BY ROBBIE BOWERS

CONC works with the City of Kelowna program that 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. Mike Howard led a group of seven at Thomson Marsh collecting garbage and doing weeding the area around the birding platform, and Robbie Bowers worked with eleven volunteers at the Carney Pond, Mill Creek and Bulman Road/Rail Trail area collecting numerous bags of garbage and large objects.

Many thanks to all the volunteers for another very successful cleanup!

Acer platanoides (Norway Maple)

We all love to see the spring flowers appear, and the bigger and showier they are, the better. We appreciate them for their vivid colours but forget that they are there not to please us, but that they have a job to do. They need to attract pollinators, bees, flies, insects in general, to form their seeds. That's why they put so much energy into flowering. So it was with interest that I wondered, why are some of the flowering plants producing such small and obscure flowers?

Alnus alnobetula

To encourage pollination, plants have evolved three main strategies, with big showy flowers being the most noticeable. But there's a couple of others. Common shrubs in the Okanagan like the Falsebox (*Paxistima myrsinites*), and Soopolallie (*Shepherdia canadensis*) are crowded with tiny flowers in the spring. You won't notice them unless you stop and look very closely. These tiny flowers are relying on nectar to attract hosts of flies to pollinate them

Paxistima myrsinites

In other cases, the flowers are even more obscure. Think of the catkins dangling from poplar, alder, birch and willows. These are still flowers, though they lack petals or showy bracts. Here the plants are relying upon the wind to spread their pollen. These flowers appear early in the spring, before the leaves emerge, so that the leaves are not obstructing the pollen dispersal. They also produce large numbers of male flowers to boost the chances of success by wind pollination.

All conifer trees rely on wind pollination too. Some trees, such as those in the pine family, have small air bladders in the pollen grains to help keep them afloat, and the female cones can produce a sticky drop to help catch the male pollen. Since they rely on the wind for pollination they need to produce massive quantities of pollen, something perhaps you've seen on some conifers when a gust of wind comes up, and clouds of pollen go drifting.

So, like many things while out walking, slowing down and looking closely will often reveal another world.

Shepherdia canadensis

2026 Johns Family Nature Conservancy Park Survey — By Eve Weishelider

Members of the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club conduct an annual survey of the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Park for the property trustees, the Central Okanagan Land Trust (COLT). This survey covers avifauna, mammals, reptiles, flowering plants and any unusual insects, like the Critter Count that is carried out for the adjacent Okanagan Mountain Park. In addition to the park records, this information is 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 indication of the changes occurring in the park year over year. This in turn assists COLT in their plans for the continued management of the property under their care. The survey covers both the public and the larger geographic area of the ecological section of the Johns Family property.

This year the survey was held on Thursday May 7th from 8am until noon with seventeen CONC members and guests in attendance.

The group documented 50 species of 551 birds, sighting and evidence of Coyote, Black Bear, deer, Yellow-pine Chipmunk, Columbian Ground Squirrel in addition to various insects. A record number of ticks was also collected.

The number and species of birds recorded was lower than the 2024 high, although comparable to last year. We had the greatest number of Dusky Flycatcher, Spotted Towhee and Nashville Warbler ever sighted, with very high numbers of Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers, Western Warbling Vireo and Chipping Sparrow.

It was noted that the park was much drier than in previous years with diminished or no water flow in regular channels.

Many thanks again to our survey volunteers.

	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
	May 07	June 07	May 25	May 27	May 14	June 10
Number of birds	640	563	638	582	485	566
Number of bird species	51	47	64	60	54	55

CONC ON THE GO - WINGING IT ON THE COAST

BY KAREN BLUMEL

If you are not vacationing in January, what is the next best thing? Planning a birding adventure! In January, three of us decided to book a spring birding adventure on the coast. Time passes quickly and suddenly our April trip was just weeks away. Everything all at once! Vivian was just back from Mexico and Brenda and I were busy taking scenic spring Okanagan photos.

We loved the idea of photographing coastal birds, but identifying some of them would prove challenging. Sure, we have Merlin, but…..I made the call to Chris Charlesworth and he assigned Melissa Hafting to be our birding guide. Lucky us! We were ticking all the boxes as April 28 approached. Hotel booked. Route decided. SD cards empty. Batteries charged and binoculars all spit and polished! Soon after, we were on our way westward, driving towards Marron Valley.

Closer to Vancouver, we stopped at Cheam Lake Wetlands Park and were delighted to breathe in that first sip of humid coastal air as we got out of our vehicle for a stretch and short walk. All species seen were familiar Okanagan birds, however, the marsh was a spring runway of wildflowers, marshy delights, and a lovely boardwalk directing us to the middle of the pond. We had an enjoyable rest at this highly rated stop.

Upon arrival in Vancouver, we decided to go to dinner, leaving our cameras and binoculars behind. After dinner we took a stroll along Great Blue Heron Way. This area offers seaside views along a boardwalk and path circling mudflats and the Salish Sea. The sun was setting and the lighting was incredible. Barn Swallows were posing on the wooden railing, a majestic Great Blue Heron posed for us and seemed to say "HAHA, where are your cameras ladies???" Without our camera gear, we felt like fish out of water, however, it didn't take us long to bring out our iPhones and photograph a friendly Marmot.

The next day, we met Melissa Hafting at Richmond Nature Centre. Melissa is a fabulous expert birder and the author of *Dare to Bird*, a wonderful and engaging book brimming with her gorgeous photos. At Richmond Nature Centre we were greeted by Bushtits, their nests, and plenty of hummingbirds. The Bushtits were lifers for us! And it just so happened that the first EVER BC sighting of the Blue-headed Vireo was happening at another park. Melissa asked us if we wanted to join a group in their search to find this bird at Discovery Place Conservation Area in Burnaby. Nothing like striking when the iron is hot! Upon arrival, the bird was proving to be very elusive for the young birder who originally spotted it. We looked with the group for about an hour. There were sightings behind leaves and branches but few clear views. It was fascinating to participate in the chase to find this bird, as you know birders are patient and persistent when pursuing a rarity. This friendly network of birders was strategically positioned in different areas of the park using cell phones to share the latest sighting update.

After one hour of searching, we left the park only to learn that the bird had been spotted again, and good photographs had been taken. Ahhhh! We zoomed back to the park for our second round of searching. While briefly looking for the Blue-headed Vireo, we also got good looks of many warblers including Townsend's, Black-throated Gray, and Wilson's. And the Blue-headed Vireo made a final appearance for us with a dive and perch. Thanks to our persistent and expert guide, we saw it and we heard its sweet song several times!

Our next stop was a Delta city park where Melissa shared that a family of Great Horned Owls were nesting. I know, I know, we have them here. But hey, when you say "owlet" doesn't everyone just drop everything

and head out to the location? We spent one hour photographing an owlet. High up in the tree with parental supervision nearby, this owlet was visible and adorable.

Next up, the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal Jetty to photograph Harlequin Ducks. This area was like a birdy candy store. Melissa rhyming off new bird species names as they arrived in our view finders or were heard in the distance. Harlequin, Pelagic Cormorant, Black Oystercatcher, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Hudsonian Whimbrel, Short-billed Gull, and more. A photographic frenzy ensued! We stopped at the Great Blue Heron Rookery on the way out to view a sampling of 300 noisy and nesting Great Blue Heron.

Our last stop of the day was Iona beach. What a wonderful birding destination! Have you been? It's where the Fraser River meets the ocean. There were a lot of long lenses and binoculars in this park. It was getting close to 6pm at this point, and the birds were very active. Vivian and I toured around the marsh and came upon nesting Tree Swallows and a Golden-crowned Sparrow foraging on the ground. A memorable moment was when 175 (ish) Dunlin flew over us, twisting and banking. The sound and sudden rush of birds was incredible!

On the last day, we enjoyed a quiet morning photographing flowers at VanDusen Botanical Garden. On the other side of town, this beautiful garden was a restful way to end our trip. We headed home shortly after, with cameras full of great memories!

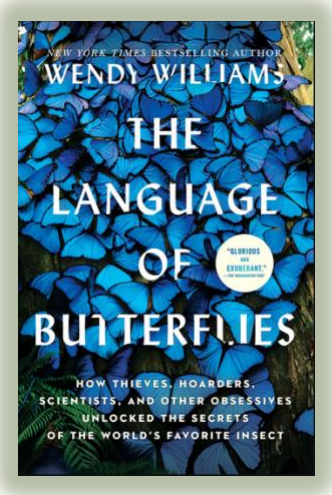
Oh, one last thing. I know you are wondering why we didn't go to Reifel Bird Sanctuary in Delta! Well, we had the greatest intentions and tried to work in advanced reservations and entry schedules. We shuffled things around to get other activities in and basically ran out of time. But next year, you bet!

I hope you enjoyed reading about our coastal adventure!

Here are a few links to our bird walks:
https://ebird.org/checklist/S330437170 - Discovery Bay Burnaby where the Blue-headed Vireo was seen for the first time in BC
https://ebird.org/checklist/S329656123 - Iona Island where the Fraser River meets the ocean
https://ebird.org/checklist/S330437029 -Tsawwassen Jetty was very birdy

BOOK REVIEW — RICK GEE

The Language of Butterflies: How Thieves, Hoarders, Scientists, and Other Obsessives Unlocked the Secrets of the World's Favorite Insect, by Wendy Williams



The cover of this interesting book changes colours as you look at it from different angles. Why? Because many butterflies change colour as you look at them from different angles.

How does that happen? It's not because there are different colours on the insect, it's because the structure of the scales on the wings reflects different wavelengths of light differently and different wavelengths are interpreted by our brain as different colours.

Here are a few other ideas you will hear of from this interesting book.

- Which came first, the butterfly, the moth, or the flower?
- Darwin found a flower with a deep throat, almost 30 cm deep. The nectar was at the bottom of the throat. He predicted there would be an insect with a 30 cm tongue. Eventually someone found such an insect.
- How do you protect a butterfly. You might think it's easy; just preserve its environment. But what do you do for a butterfly that is active for two months a year, feasting on the fresh leaves of a lupine that then goes dormant.
- What do you do for a butterfly that prefers burned over land; but its surviving areas are in a city.
- These are just a few of the interesting points raised in this fascinating book. I happened to run across it because Jen is interested in butterflies. Now you too know about it.

This book is available from the Okanagan Regional Library, 595.789 WIL.

MANTIDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA — SOURCED BY LISA RAE

Have you ever seen a Praying Mantis? They are a bit of a curiosity in the insect world. While doing the bluebird box survey in the Fall, two mantid egg cases were found firmly attached inside the boxes. We found another two egg cases attached to plants in our garden. And, on a few occasions I've noticed two distinct kinds of adult mantid stock-still, well disguised by their stick-like form and colour, waiting to capture unsuspecting bugs in our garden. I had some questions about these striking insects. Were these mantid two different species? What was their life cycle?

Mantids are carnivorous insects of the order Mantodea; we easily recognize them by their distinct upright form, elongated bodies and front 'raptorial legs' in a prayer-like posture. Two species of mantids live in BC: the native ground mantis (*Litaneutria minor*) and the introduced European mantis (*Mantis religiosa*). The two species are predacious between species and within their own species. The Chinese mantis (*Tenodera aridifolia*) is often sold in pet stores, and while it may be seen as an escapee in the wild, it is not known to reproduce in BC due to our winter temperatures.

The ground mantis is the only mantid native to Canada. It is greyish-brown and much smaller than the European mantis, at a maximum of 35 mm long when an adult. It is commonly found in the south Okanagan Valley grasslands. Female ground mantis lay eggs in a small rectangular mass that hardens into an egg-case called an ootheca, which is attached to plant stems, such as Big Sagebrush and Antelope-brush. The egg cases overwinter and hatch in the spring. Nymphs look like smaller versions of the adults and mature to adult size in about 13 weeks through repeated molts of their exoskeleton. They have a one-year life cycle, dying before the next winter. I have seen very tiny brownish-coloured mantids in my garden, and now know that they were not adults, but nymphs!

The European mantis was introduced to the Okanagan Valley in 1937-1938 to control the grasshopper population which was deemed a crop nuisance. This mantid has since spread across southern BC and to Vancouver Island. It is much larger than the ground mantis, being about 75 mm in length, and can be bright green or light brown, with a diagnostic black-ringed white spot on the inside of each foreleg. This species can be found in tall vegetation in gardens, fields and by roadsides. Females lay large, oval egg masses on

stems, rocks or other flat surfaces. Like the ground mantis, *M. religiosa* eggs overwinter in the egg case and nymphs are hatched in late summer, becoming an adult through numerous molts.

Mantids are ambush predators, remaining motionless and well-camouflaged by their colouration and form to resemble twigs and leaves, until a suitable prey comes by. A common myth is that they are effective at insect pest control, and happily, I think they are the reason for the sudden disappearance of an abundance of aphids on my garden roses. But, since mantids are generalist predators, their diet includes all manner of harmful and harmless, or even useful insect species.

So, we continue to monitor the egg case, but nymphs have not yet emerged as of late May. Did they not survive the winter? Was the Spring too variable and cold? Or maybe they will emerge with hotter temperatures and more insect activity? Time will tell.

Sources:
Cannings, R. December 13, 2022: Mantids in British Columbia: A Changing Story Mantids in British Columbia: A Changing Story | Royal BC Museum and Archives
Cannings, R. and G.G. Scuder, 2005 Families of Mantodea of British Columbia: Families of Mantodea of British Columbia (ubc.ca)
e-Fauna BC: Mantids of BC (ubc.ca)

CONC Newsletter Distribution Changes — The Editors

Dear Members,

The CONC Board of Directors has recently passed a motion to no longer offer members the option of a newsletter hard copy, effective September 2026. Currently there are fewer than eight members requesting a mailed hard copy. The CONC Board considered a few aspects to come to this decision:

- The true cost of copying and mailing a paper version is 2-3 times higher than the extra $20/year charged to members who request it. CONC has covered this difference in cost in the past, however this subsidy cannot be sustained.
- There are environmental costs inherent in printing a hard copy, including paper use, printing and transportation. As a member of BC Nature, and being a conservation-focused club, we feel that CONC should not generate these environmental costs.
- The newsletter is really intended to be read in a digital format. This format allows for more colour photos and hyperlink access to more content.

The digital newsletter will of course continue as a free benefit to all members, as well as being circulated to member clubs and posted on our website for public access.

Should a CONC member wish to print a newsletter hard copy for themselves, and need suggestions on how to do this, please contact us, editor@okanagannature.org

Thank you for your understanding,
The Editors.

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."
– Marcus Tullius Cicero

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

Board 2025-26		
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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 August 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 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 bubbaloo101@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**