

BC Nature - Tatlayoko Lake Field Camp

September 9 - 14 (15), 2018

Image courtesy of
Peter Shaughnessy

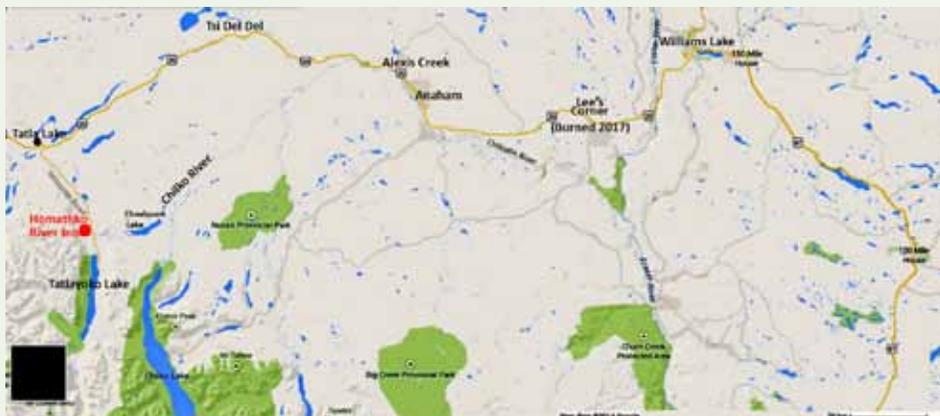
The 2018 BC Nature Fall Camp, hosted by the Williams Lake Field Naturalists, will be in the beautiful Tatlayoko Lake Valley and surrounding areas of the west Chilcotin. We will be based at the Homathko River Inn, which is about 250 km southwest of Williams Lake (see map below). Information about camp organization, registration, field trips, and evening presentations is provided below.



Getting to Homathko River Inn

The Homathko River Inn is accessed from Williams Lake by Highway 20. In Williams Lake, turn from Highway 97 onto Highway 20 towards Bella Coola. After about 220 km and about 1 km before the town of Tatla Lake, turn left onto the Tatlayoko Road. Although paved for only about 1 km, this is a good gravel road. Continue for about 30 km to the Homathko River Inn entrance. The approximate driving time from Williams Lake is about 3 hours.

West of Williams Lake, gas is available at Anaham, Tsi Del Del, and often at Tatla Lake. The gas station at Lee's corner was destroyed by the 2017 wildfires. Gas is not available south of Tatla Lake.



The Main Camp and an Added Option

The main camp will be from September 9 -14. It will include field trips in the Tatlayoko Valley and surrounding areas, including the Chilko River Valley, on September 10, 11, 12, and 13. The hikes are easy to moderate. The camp will also include evening presentations by guest speakers. A detailed information sheet will be provided to all registrants.

The added option includes an extra (September 14) full day hike to the alpine of Potato Mountain. This is a moderately strenuous hike but rewarded with outstanding views of the Valley and visits to interesting alpine ecosystems. This option includes an additional night's accommodation and meals (costs are not included in the main camp fee).

Registrants will arrive on the afternoon of September 9. Those registered for only the main camp will depart on the morning of September 14 and those staying for the added option will depart on the morning of September 15.



On Potato Mountain above Tatlayoko Lake

Accommodation

We will depend primarily on camping at the Homathko River Inn, which is rustic. Tents or pickup campers and travel trailers are options. One or two power outlets (15 amp) will be available for campers, but will have to be shared. The Homathko River Inn lodge can be used during the day and evening.

Sanitary facilities at the campsite include pit toilets and outside showers.

A limited number of guest rooms will be available in the local area for those who do not wish to camp. If you wish to reserve a room, you will need to contact the Homathko River Inn (<http://www.homathkoriver.com>) or the nearby Audra Petersen's "Shop Suite" (<https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/11159817?locale=en>), following your camp registration. Further information about the guest rooms can be provided at the time of registration.

Meals

Breakfast and dinner will be served at the Homathko River Inn. Owner Connie Bracewell has been a resident in the Tatlayoko Valley for many years and has extensive catering experience. A bag lunch will be made up during breakfast. All meal costs are included in the camp registration fee.

Vehicle travel during the camp

Vehicle travel to hiking trailheads and field trip sites will be by carpooling. We recommend a voluntary cash payment be made to drivers – carpool fees are not included in the camp fee. It is recommended that drivers arrive at the Inn with gas tanks as nearly full as possible.



Registration

Registration will be on a first-come first-served basis, by phone only on **February 21, 2018 from 9:30 a.m. onwards**. There will be no registration by email.

To register, phone Betty Davison, BC Nature at 604-985-3057.

Maximum number of registered participants = 24 (A waiting list will be made).

For further information about the registration or the camp, please contact Christie Mayall (250-398-5485; christiemayall@gmail.com) or Fred McMechan (250-392-7680; fred_mcmecan@telus.net (please note underscore)).

Registration Fees

Main Camp: \$645.00

Optional added day and hike: \$110.00

Optional guest room: contact Homathko River Inn (<http://www.homathkoriver.com>) or Audra Petersen's "Shop Suite" (<https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/11159817?locale=en>), after registering for the camp. (Note that camping fees (\$10/person/day) which are included the Main Camp fee, will be deducted from your guest room cost).

Cancellation Policy

Main Camp and Optional-added-day fees will be refunded if required as follows:

- up to April 30, 2018, all but \$50.00 of the paid amount will be refunded.
- after April 30, 2018, refunds will be given only if someone else is available to substitute for the cancellation. (A waiting list will be kept). In this event, all but \$50.00 will be refunded.

Insurance Policy

Every camp participant must be a direct member of BC Nature or a member of a BC Nature affiliated club. All participants will be required to complete a BC Nature Waiver of Liability for the camp.

Field Trips

Seven field trips with easy to moderate hiking, will be offered during the main camp. Please respect that some of these trips will be on land held under title by the Tsilhqot'in National Government.

West Chilcotin forests and grasslands

This full day trip will explore the plants, lichens, and birds of the unique dry lodgepole pine forests, Douglas-fir forests and grasslands of the west Chilcotin plateau, north and east of Tatlayoko Lake. The cold, dry climate of this region results in forests and grasslands unlike those of other areas in BC. This trip will include short, easy but off-trail walks through forests and grasslands. Bring binoculars and plant guides.



Tatlayoko Lake shoreline

After crossing the Homathko River we will walk along the gravel beach of the north shore of Tatlayoko Lake. This is a stunningly beautiful hike, with the liquid blue of Tatlayoko Lake on our left, lagoons and marshes on our right, the Niut Range on the western side of the lake, and the more gentle Potato Range to the east.



North shore of Tatlayoko Lake at Homathko River

The beach has formed as an interaction between the pounding waves of the lake and the outflow from the Homathko River, which has left ancient lagoons and abandoned river channels. Opportunities for birding abound in the marshes.

Depending on available time, we will continue on a good trail following the west shoreline of Tatlayoko Lake. This trail passes through old growth Douglas-fir forests coming down to the waters edge at the northern limits of the Homathko River – Tatlayoko Protected Area (see map above).

Chilko River salmon

A one hour drive from the Homathko River Inn will bring us to the famous Chilko River and the northern boundary of Ts'yl-os Provincial Park. In the portion of the Chilko River below Chilko Lake, 500,000 to 800,000 sockeye salmon spawn on an annual basis and are readily observed. This run is unique because when the fry emerge in the spring, they migrate upstream to rear for one year in Chilko Lake. Chinook salmon also spawn in this location. Chilko sockeye numbers are used as an indicator for other Fraser River Watershed populations. An extensive enumeration program is conducted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) annually. Both adult spawner and smolt outmigration estimates have been recorded for many years. DFO staff will be on hand to explain the unique life history of salmon in the Chilko, demonstrate enumeration techniques, and explain how technology has changed these methods in recent years. A large and increasing population of grizzly bears is attracted by high concentrations of salmon in the Chilko River. Although not guaranteed, grizzly bears are often observed fishing for salmon in this pristine and unique location.

First Nation representatives have been invited to participate in the presentation.

Choelquoit Lake

Choelquoit Lake is located in a long valley between Chilko and Tatlayoko lakes. Water levels in the lake have been receding over the past several years and this has exposed a wide sandy shoreline. Grasslands, pine forests, aspen copses and alder vegetation around the lake form a diverse habitat for birds. We will spend the afternoon birding around the lake in these habitats.



Choelquoit Lake shoreline

Skinner Meadow

Skinner Meadow is a 320 hectare fen, typical of many of the wetlands that are scattered throughout the Chilcotin. Unlike the more acidic bog wetlands of the Coast and the North, fens are nutrient rich and have a vegetation of sedges and rushes. Skinner Meadow supports an abundant and diverse bird population during both the breeding season and the migratory period. We will also be able to take a short walk to a bear marking tree and see the well-worn tracks that are made as they 'wiggle-walk' on their approach.

Peter Shaughnessy will lead this trip.

Lunch Lake

Lunch Lake is a small lake located between the Eagle Lake and Tatlayoko Lake roads. The lake level has dropped by several metres recently and a large grassland meadow has replaced half of the lake. Receding lake levels have also left a muddy shoreline, ideal for shorebirds, and a grassland where we may see Pipits and Horned Larks. Many waterfowl and migrating birds stop here as they get funneled into the Tatlayoko Lake Valley. Join us for an afternoon of birding, checking grassland plants or just enjoying the wonderful views.



Meadow near Lunch Lake

Bird banding at Tatlayoko Lake

For several years, bird banding has been done at the Tatlayoko Lake Ranch during the fall migration. We expect that bird banding will take place again during the time of this BCN camp. If so, we will attempt to arrange a short, early morning visit to the bird banding station so camp participants can watch the banding procedure. Information on bird banding objectives and results will be provided in an earlier evening presentation.

Added optional day hike (Sept 14) to Potato Mountain alpine

This hike will follow an old, well used cattle trail into the alpine on the north-west end of the Potato Mountain, on the east side of Tatlayoko Lake (see photo on page 2). The trail has a steady uphill grade (elevation gain to alpine is about 825 m), with short steep sections, that will require about 3 hours of hiking. It ascends from dry, open Douglas-fir forest with small grassland openings, into lodgepole pine forests and eventually into subalpine fir and white bark pine parkland and alpine tundra at the top of the ridge. Here, we will examine some of the low growing plants, such as *Draba*, of this unique, dry parkland and alpine. We will also examine some of the fossils found on the Potato Range. Potato Mountain is named for the abundant spring beauty, aka Indian potato, (*Claytonia lanceolata*) that has long been collected here by First Nations people.

Evening Presentations

Seven presentations will be given over the five evenings of September 9 - 13 at the Homathko River Inn lodge. We will enjoy great speakers and beautiful photographs.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada in the Chilcotin

Since 1999, Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has been hard at work conserving critical habitat for wildlife, birds and fish in the Chilcotin. A representative from the NCC will present a talk and slide show looking at the how and why of NCC's work in the Tatlayoko and Klinaklini areas and beyond.

Bird banding at the Tatlayoko Lake Ranch

For several years the Nature Conservancy of Canada has allowed two certified bird banders to band birds on their property during the fall migration. The bird banding station is located on the NCC Tatlayoko Lake Ranch about 4 km south of the Homathko River Inn. We are hoping that bird banding will take place in the fall of 2018. If so, the banders have agreed to give us an evening presentation on their objectives, methods and some of their exciting results. This will be on the same evening as the NCC presentation.

Wildflowers of the Chilcotin

Beautiful wildflowers and their amazing habitats close to my home in 'Tatlako'
Roses, lupines, sunflowers, penstemon, marigolds!
Meadows, forests, rivers, mountains, rock gardens, alpine
So much beauty!!

-Sally Mueller, photographer and long-time resident of the 'Tatlako' Valley

Forests, grasslands and wetlands of the Chilcotin

A vegetation ecologist who has lived in the Cariboo-Chilcotin for more than 30 years will introduce, with photographs, the unique ecosystems of the Chilcotin region of British Columbia. Dry grasslands, extensive pine forests, spruce forests, wetlands and alpine tundra reflect the cold, dry climate, frequent fires and insect epidemics. Many of the ecosystems and wildlife habitats are not found elsewhere in the province. Although the Chilcotin plateau may at first appear harsh and with little life, a closer look reveals a fascinating diversity of life. It is a truly special part of the Province.

Alpine Plants of Nuk Tessli; An evening with Chris Czajkowski

Chris Czajkowski was raised in England then travelled the world before arriving in Canada in 1979. Always a naturalist, she gravitated at once to the wild country of the West Chilcotin. The first cabin she built was near Lonesome Lake in the Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, a half-day walk in from the bottom of the Bella Coola Hill. After 4 years she chose another much higher, fly-in lake and built a mini resort to guide hikers and naturalists, at a place she called Nuk Tessli. Nuk Tessli is a 1 - 4 day hike depending on the time of year, or a 20-minute float plane ride from Nimpo Lake. The three cabins that Chris eventually built are only 300 m below tree line.

Chris started writing by sending letters to Peter Gzowski's Morningside on CBC radio, and has since published 12 books about her wilderness life. These include "Ginty's Ghost" (2012), "Cabin at Singing River" (2008); "Wildfire in the wilderness..." (2006); "Diary of a wilderness dweller" (2005), "Nuk Tessli..." (1999) and "*And the river still sings, a wilderness dwellers journey*" (2014).

Alpine plants are Chris's speciality and they will be the focus of her beautiful slide show.

The rare birds of Eagle Lake, presented by Jim Sims

Beginning in the spring of 2008, Jim began to notice that several "rare" bird species spend time at Eagle Lake, about 30 km north of Tatlayoko Lake. Over the years he has observed and photographed 12 rare species and two very rare breeding species: the Semipalmated Plover and Arctic Tern. Many of these species are normally seen only in the dry Fraser River Valley south of Williams Lake or on the coast of BC. Jim will discuss why so many rare bird species of the Cariboo Chilcotin visit Eagle Lake and give a description of his sightings and beautiful photographs. He carries his camera on his daily walks along the shore and while canoeing on the lake so he is constantly finding a variety of common and rare birds that provide some interesting photos and stories.

Jim has owned a cabin at Eagle Lake since 1978.

Chilcotin Chronicles, An evening with Sage Birchwater

Sage Birchwater offers an historical perspective of the Chilcotin on the strength of several books he has written about the region. His most recent book, *Chilcotin Chronicles*, tells many stories of the Tatlayoko Lake area, and the people who lived here. People and places come alive in its pages. *Chilcotin Chronicles* offers a history of British Columbia told from the perspective of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast. A strength of the book is its inclusion of indigenous people in the historic narrative. Complimenting the stories is a fabulous collection of photographs obtained from museums and archives across Canada and from private collections. Sage will present these images in a slideshow on stories from the region.

Sage Birchwater spent ten years in the mountains south of Tatla Lake where he began his career as a journalist, documenting the people and the times across the region. In 2001 he moved to Williams Lake and since 2009 has worked full time as an author. He has published several books about the local history, culture and personalities of the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast.