

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPER WONDERFUL HARDWORKING VOLUNTEERS

MOUNTAIN HORSE BACK + BIRD ADVENTURES TUES NOV 22 7:30 PM SINC

BIRD COUNT SUNDAY DEC 18



The MUSKRAT EXPRESS

OCTOBER 27, 2011

The newsletter for the:
Williams Lake Field Naturalists
1305A Borland Road, Williams Lake BC, V2G 5K5

Membership fees: Family (\$30), single (\$25) or student (\$10) memberships can be mailed to the above address. Please complete the membership and waiver forms available at the Nature Centre (250) 398-8532, muskrat@midbc.com or the web site below. For more information about the club please contact Fred McMechan at 392-7680 or e-mail Fred_McMechan@telus.net

Williams Lake Field Naturalists Website <http://www.williamslakefieldnaturalists.ca>
Scout Island Nature Centre Website <http://www.scoutislandnaturecentre.ca>

Executive of The Williams Lake Field Naturalists: president Fred McMechan, vice-president Jim Sims, secretary Ordell Steen, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, Rob Higgins, Rick Dawson and Cathy Koot

Editors: If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the Muskrat please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (296-3638) or e-mail us at muskrat@midbc.com

Mountain Adventures in the Ilgatchuz and Monkman Park

November 22nd, 7:30pm at the Nature Centre
A slide presentation by Cathy Koot

Cathy took part in a 10-day horseback excursion into the Ilgatchuz Mountains to help with the IBA Bird Atlas. Then Cathy, Tom and Richard Case ventured into Monkman Provincial Park in the Central Rockies. For several days, they were the only people in the 63,000 ha wilderness.

Photos and stories not to be missed!

All Candidates Meetings

November 7th for Mayors and November 10th for council
TRU Cafeteria 7:00pm to 8:30pm

A variety of Williams Lake groups (arts, seniors, youth, conservation....) have been asked to submit questions. The format is as follows

Ross McCoubrey of the Council of Canadians will act as moderator for both meetings. The format for the Council candidates will be as follows

1. Candidates are being asked to provide a written bio and brief statement about what their "platform" is. This will be available to the audience ahead of time.



John Woods, following the pack train along the old wagon road on the approach to the Ilgatchuz Mtns.

2. There will be a series of 5 questions selected from the questions that groups have submitted and each candidate can give their answer for 1 minute (they are not required to answer of course).
3. There will be 2-4 questions that have been submitted on paper from the audience with 1 minute to answer.

The format for the Mayors will be similar to the one above, but more questions and more time to answer because there are only 2 candidates (not 10).

Report on Profits from the 2011 BC Nature Annual General Meeting & Conference

By Katharine VanSpall, Treasurer, WLFN

The BC Nature (BCN) Annual General Meeting and Conference which was hosted in May of this year by the Williams Lake Field Naturalists (WLFN) was a success in a number of different ways. The event and its Saturday night banquet was well attended, and many thanks and compliments were received on the interesting talks and field trips that were available to attendees. But the event was a success on a financial level too.

In advance of the event, a budget was prepared showing expected income (primarily registrations) and expenses. A small profit of approximately \$3,000 was anticipated, and the WLFN executive decided that any profit would be shared 50-50 between WLFN and BCN. Once the event was over and all bills were paid, however, the actual profit came out to \$4,803.18 per club! There are a number of reasons why the profit was so much greater than anticipated, including:

- There were approximately 40% more registrants for the conference and banquet than predicted;
- Thompson Rivers University generously donated their facilities and the use of their tables and chairs at no charge to WLFN;
- Many of the speakers and field trip leaders turned down payments for their honoraria and/or vehicle reimbursements – or donated them back to BCN or WLFN;
- The silent auction alone brought in \$1,284.00 (which was entirely profit as all the items in the auction had been donated); and
- Approximately \$500 was recovered in HST rebates after the event.

So at this time I would like to say a big “Thank-you!” to Thompson Rivers University, the event’s speakers and field trip leaders, those who donated to the silent auction, and also Betty Davison of BCN (who assisted with the HST rebate) for their help in making the event a financial success!

Nature Centre Update

By: Jenny Noble

“**Students Working and Learning in Watersheds**” has grown over the past few years into a 3-day event that high school science teachers, students and SINC staff really look forward to. This year, 17 students, two teachers, two DFO staff and Sue and Jenny stayed at the Quesnel River Research Centre in Likely for two nights and a two chockfull days of salmon-related activities.

Morning mists over the Quesnel River cleared as we netted spawning male and female Chinook, collected gametes and examined streamside ecosystems.

Afternoon training back at the Research Centre prepared us to key out aquatic insects and enabled groups of students to do their own dissections. The students counted the eggs we'd collected in the morning, then watched fascinated as Roy mixed the eggs and sperm together, and installed them in their incubating trays. [Now that they've grown to eyed stage, Sue is delivering them to schools for the "Salmonids in the Classroom" program.] In our evening circle, students brainstormed ideas for the individual projects they're required to complete, communicating something they've learned or become interested in to the broader community.



Female Chinook donates her eggs to the "Salmonids in the Classroom" program.

After an early breakfast the next day, we drove to the Horsefly River Spawning Channels, where we met with a UNBC masters student who told us how she is researching nutrients transferred from the ocean to the forest by migrating salmon. The students practiced their invertebrate keying before we drove on to the Land Conservancy's Horsefly River property. We planted conifers that Barry Booth had brought from the Nature Centre nursery to help with habitat restoration. Then we rescued several hundred juvenile fish from a soon-to-be-excavated side-channel of the river.



Busy rescuing juvenile Coho

It was a great privilege to meet and work with these keen students and their dedicated teachers, Nara Riplinger and Laura Storochuk, as well as Rick Holmes of Quesnel River Research Centre, Roy, Shona and Judy from DFO, and Barry of the Land Conservancy. These hands-on connections helped them experience the salmon's life cycle, understand how easily it can be disrupted and appreciate the work that humans are doing to protect them. Some expressed interest in studying biology and working in fisheries!

New Scout Island gear in the retail corner

We've got some new T-shirts with the handsome red-wing blackbird Scout Island Nature Centre, in 3 colours – blue, grey and olive – to adorn yourselves and maybe slip under the Christmas tree. The retail bookshelves are growing, with more children's and natural history books coming in every week. Check out the bug viewers for the kids' nature collections. These are great magnifying viewers in sturdy plastic, and very reasonably priced.

And speaking of Christmas...

We are joining with other conservation groups to put on an Earth Friendly Christmas Playshop

on November 26 from 10-3. Come for the whole day or drop in as you like. There will be activities for children, and they're welcome to create at the craft tables as well. Making your own beautiful wrapping paper and gifts, gift exchange tables, delicious local treats, holiday fun that won't break the bank or wound the earth.

Also, we're not forgetting the non-profits' Christmas tradition of reminding you that a donation to Scout Island or membership in the Field Naturalists is a most thoughtful gift. We'll send you a gift card announcement. Or you could tuck it in with a gift of...

Chocolate and Nuts

This year, in addition to our wonderful Cocoa Camino Fair Trade Chocolate fundraiser, we will have fresh crop organic nuts from Rancho Vignola for sale. Almonds, cashews, pistachios, walnuts and sunflower seeds, all out of the shell. You'll hear from us soon with prices, quantities and delivery time. See the last page for Chocolate information and order form.



The next Muskrat will feature selections from our Nature Trust writing contest, and announce the winners. Thanks to everyone who sent in entries!

New Volunteer Vests

New bright work vests are now available for all volunteers working on the grounds at Scout Island. We feel it is important that all our great volunteers are not confused with city work crews or other paid workers. The next time you are out planting trees, irrigating, weeding, building boardwalks, improving trees, working on signs, monitoring nest boxes.... please pick up a vest from the block house.



Fred and Jim Model New Volunteer Vests

Jim and Fred were unloading lumber in preparation for the construction of a replacement boardwalk on the Bullrush Trail. Work (competed by VOLUNTEERS) is expected to begin next week.

Bird Sightings from the Williams Lake Area

By: Phil Ranson

There is an old saying in birding (at least there should be if there isn't) that goes; "What you see is directly proportional to the amount of time spent looking". There's a little more to it than that including knowing what you are looking at and having a camera handy if you don't. Spending time looking is exactly what Rod Sargent and Adrian Leather have been doing at Pantage Lake on the Blackwater Road and as a result have just about turned the Cariboo Chilcotin bird checklist upside down. Weekly visits throughout the summer and particularly into the fall



Pantage Lake Icebreaker Track

migration period have added 3 new species for the region and extended the date ranges of many others.

Most of these records are shorebirds, which really gets Rod's juices flowing and has prompted him to turn his canoe into an ice-breaker for the last couple of visits. New species added were Pacific-Golden Plover, White-rumped Sandpiper (twice) and Red Phalarope. All these species would not be considered 'beyond the realms of possibility' for the region but require considerable dedication and perseverance to pick them out among the hordes of similar sized and shaped shorebirds which at this time of year could be in breeding, winter or juvenile plumage, or be transitioning through many of those combinations.

Rod and Adrian have not been alone in making life difficult for checklist keepers, John Woods who summers at Fletcher Lake and coordinates Breeding Bird Atlassing in the Chilcotin, has added Mute Swan and Sooty Grouse to the list. The Mute Swan he photographed with Trumpeter Swans at Big Creek in the Spring of 2008 and nonchalantly sent along as another checklist revision was almost complete. Separating Sooty Grouse from Dusky Grouse has become a mission for John in the Chilcotin. These two species were until recently considered sub-species of Blue Grouse but were split by Ornithologists with the Dusky in the interior and the Sooty along coast. At least that's what we thought. John has now discovered that Sooty Grouse extend over the mountains and into eastern Coast Range to Tatlayoko Lake and west of Anahim Lake with the Dusky occupying the area at least as far west as Hanceville. How do you tell these grouse apart? John explains; "if you hear them hooting from a distant tree they are Sooty-if you hear them booming from the ground near your feet, they are Dusky.



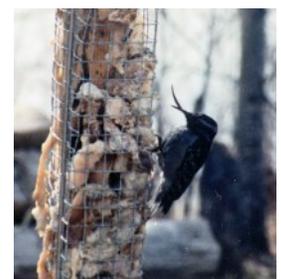
Mute Swan with Trumpeter at Big Creek
Photo by: John Woods

The Christmas Bird Count for 2011 will take place on Sunday December 18th so please set this date aside. Details will be published in the late November/December newsletter.

Birds with Deformed Bills

By: Jim Sims

Jeffrey Newman, www.jnweb.com posted this photo of a rather long billed Hairy Woodpecker to his blog <http://bc-interior.blogspot.com/2011/10/big-beaked-hairy-woodpecker.html> (sorry Phil this is not a new bird for the Checklist). It is worth visiting his sight to read his account for yourself. The Hairy was a regular visitor to his back yard and suet feeder. (By the way Jeff is the designer of our web site.) In the winter of 2002-2003 Audrey Stromberg sent me a photo of another Hairy sporting a deformed bill. This time the lower bill was longer and crossed the top bill as you can see in her photo. These two reports have prompted me to dig a little deeper into deformed bills in bird species.



Deformity in bills has been increasing in birds in the northwest of North America. Colleen Handel, a biologist studying bill abnormalities at the US Geological Survey's Alaska Biological Centre reports deformities in 28 species in Alaska. The report includes year-round residents like Black-billed Magpie, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northwestern Crows, Steller's and Gray Jays, and Common Ravens. Migratory birds with deformities include American Tree and Lincoln Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Orange-crowned Warblers and Dark-eyed Juncos. It has been noted that all of the migratory birds have developed the deformity before migrating.

Handel has conducted extensive studies but has yet to determine a cause. There has been extensive banding of Black-capped Chickadees, the species with the greatest number of deformities. Here are a few of the results:

- 8% of captured Chickadees had deformed bills
- Deformities did not appear until after the young had fledged
- There were 54 cases of birds captured with normal bills that were recaptured with deformities
- Blood samples are being tested for contaminants and DNA is being tested as well. Birds with deformities had a significantly greater amount of DNA damage

For more details you could visit her site at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/News/DeformedBillsAlaska.htm>

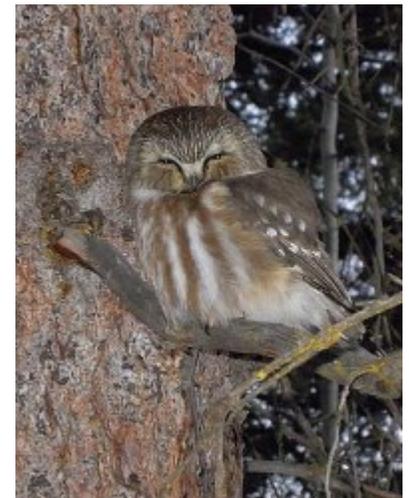
Northern Saw-whet Owl

Research by Jim Sims

Source *Checklist of Cariboo Chilcotin Birds, The Birds of British Columbia Volume II*, and the website http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Saw-whet_Owl/lifehistory

On October 20th, just before dark, I was walking with Barry Booth at Eagle Lake near the public recreation campsite when we heard the call of an Owl. It was giving a not so familiar warning like call instead of the mating season repetitive whistle. In the quickly fading light we eventually got glimpses of the small owl flying around us and momentarily landing in nearby trees. It turned out that there were three Owls and it appeared to us that there may have been an attempt to drive off one of the owls as we observed one of the owls taking a flying dive at another one. It was hard to keep track of who was doing the attacking in the fading light. We wondered if it may have been 2 adults with a juvenile and that the adults were trying to drive off the last of this-years young.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is a fairly common breeding species in the Cariboo Chilcotin region. In the province it can be found most often in the southern half including the Queen Charlotte Islands. It is not active during the day so sightings are not very common. However it is very vocal during the mating season and if you have a male in your area that is looking for a mate you will be certain to hear its repetitive whistle that sounds like an alarm. Several years ago a neighbour asked me



Saw-whet Owl at Riske Creek
Photo by Hugh Loring

“Who has the alarm that goes off every night just as it gets dark and it goes all night?” He was not in a happy mood. I don’t know if it helped when I explained that it was an Saw-whet Owl that was roosting in some dense shrubs just beside his house. The song has also been compared with the sound made by sharpening a saw with a whetstone (hence the name Saw-whet).

The owl is a cavity nester and uses abandoned woodpecker cavities. The male does all of the hunting during the mating season and brings food to its mate that stays with the young in the nest. The female will leave the nest once or twice each night to cough up a pellet and defecate. While the female saw-whet broods her nestlings, she keeps the nest cavity very clean. When the young are about 18 days old she starts spending the night in another hole, and then the dirt starts to accumulate. When the young owls leave the nest after another ten days to two more weeks, the nest cavity has a thick layer of feces, pellets, and rotting prey parts. They feed mainly on mice that are usually eaten in small pieces at two sittings. They also take a few small birds and insects.

Green Cleaning Ingredients Explained

Rid your home of the petroleum-based ingredients and chemicals found in most cleaning products by making your own. Here are a few of the Queen of Green’s favorite ingredients. They’re versatile, affordable, and eco-friendly.

Baking Soda: an excellent non-toxic and food-grade ingredient. Well known for its deodorizing properties, it also tackles dirt and grease. Add half a cup to your wash and boost your whites!

White Vinegar: also known as acetic acid, it’s a great disinfectant and deodorizer. Fill the rinse agent dispenser of your dishwasher with plain white vinegar. Works like magic.

Lemon: a mild acid, lemon juice is known for its bleaching, disinfectant, and antibacterial properties. Cut a lemon in half and rub it on a dirty cutting board, then wipe clean. Take the other half, place it in a bowl and microwave for one minute. Use this lemon to rub down the inside of your microwave. Let sit for a few minutes and then wipe clean.

See the chart below for more ingredient properties. Download all nine green cleaning recipes at www.queenofgreen.ca

Lindsay Coulter

David Suzuki’s Queen of Green

	Baking soda	Borax	Essential oils	Lemon juice	Liquid castile soap	Salt	Soap granules	Olive oil	White vinegar	Washing soda
Cuts grease	•		•		•				•	•
Deodorizes	•		•						•	
Disinfects		•	•	•					•	
Fights mould & mildew		•				•				
Lifts dirt	•				•	•	•			
Softens water										•
Whitens	•	•		•						•

Chocolate is Coming—Great Holiday Gifts

Scout Island Nature Centre will be doing a bulk order of organic free trade chocolate bars from Cocoa Camino (www.cocoacamino.com) again. Chocolate without guilt. The chocolate bars are fresh when they come and keep really well (tasting good one year later when kept at a steady cool temperature). We charge less than in a store and still make a bit of a profit for the Nature Centre. We won't be selling individual bars, but rather by the case (12 bars each 100grams **\$45 or ½ case \$22.50** taxes included). Each bar will cost \$. 3.75. You can have a full case of one kind or ½ case of one kind.

Chocolate Bars (12 bars of 100 g = 1 case) #cases Total \$

Milk Chocolate		
Milk Chocolate with sea salt (NEW!)		
Dark with Caramel Crunch 55%		
Dark Chocolate with Coconut (67%)		
Dark Chocolate (55% cocoa)		
Dark Chocolate with Almonds		
Dark Chocolate with Raspberries (NEW!)		
Espresso Dark Chocolate		
Orange Dark Chocolate		
Mint Dark Chocolate		
Bittersweet Chocolate (71% cocoa)		
Panama Extra Dark (80% cocoa) (NEW!)		

Here are some **Snack bars**. For these, **you have to order a full case of 20 bars**. The cost is **\$25**. That is \$1.25 a bar.

Chocolate Snack Bars (20 bars of 32 g = 1 case) #of cases Total \$

Peanut Butter (55% cocoa) (NEW!)		
Almond Butter (55% cocoa) (NEW!)		
Almonds & Raisins (55% cocoa) (NEW!)		
Milk chocolate /Hazelnut butter (New)		
Milk Choc. /Puffed rice and quinoa (New)		

Here is another offer—**tins of Hot Chocolate**—again you have to **order a whole case**. Each case costs you as it states

Hot Chocolate Tins (6 tins of 336 g = 1 case) no HST # of cases Total \$

Milk Hot Chocolate \$42 (\$7 a tin)		
Dark Hot Chocolate \$42 (\$7 a tin)		
Chili Spice Hot Chocolate (No Dairy) \$45 7.50 a tin)		
Drinking Chocolate (No Dairy) \$45 (7.50 a tin)		

Use the tables above to order number of each that you want and email or mail the form or call in. You can pay now or pay when the chocolate arrives.

Order is due by November 11 so we can have the chocolate by the Holidays

Name _____ Phone# _____ email _____

Send to Sue scoutisland@midbc.com or phone 398 8532—*Note: temporary change in email address*