

# MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS  
APRIL 2013 NEWSLETTER



WELCOME SPRING

LOTS  
TO!  
DO!

FIELD TRIPS: ALKALI LAKE  
SUN APR 21

BIKE TRIP WED EVE MAY 8

BIRD HOUSES TO CLEAN

YARD SALE  
MAY 11

I AM OFF TO  
BE A  
WEED  
WARRIOR!

RICK D.

REPLACING  
RETIRING  
DIRECTOR

WELCOME 2 NEW DIRECTORS

RAY H.

PETER D.



MANY THANKS  
TO ALL THE  
DEDICATED  
HARDWORKING  
DIRECTORS.



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, [muskratexpress@midbc.com](mailto:muskratexpress@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](mailto: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, Cathy Koot, Peter Opie and Ray Hornby

**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 [muskratexpress@midbc.com](mailto:muskratexpress@midbc.com)

### **Fund Raising Banquet Report**

Thank-you Pat Teti for saving the night. Unfortunately our planned guest speaker Briony Penn was unable to get to Williams Lake. The plane was unable to land due to extensive fog at the airport. We are hoping to have Briony back to Williams Lake so we can all hear her talk sometime soon. Pat stepped up and presented a wonderful talk on his visit to Peru. During the evening our pre-school teacher Margaret Onneken was recognized as Scout Island Nature Centre Volunteer of the Year. Margaret devotes countless extra hours volunteering to make her children's program so exceptional. Thank-you Margaret. We must also thank all of United Church caterers for an awesome meal, we can't forget Joanne Wright and her amazing deserts, and finally to all of you who attended the evening party.



**SINC Volunteer of the Year  
Margaret Onneken**

### **Photos Required**

Do you have a lovely photo taken at Scout Island Nature Centre? Please consider sharing the use of some of your eye-catching photos for use on Scout Island Nature Centre greeting cards. Small batches of cards are printed for use by the Nature Centre, and are available for sale at the Nature House. Photographer's names will be acknowledged for all photos used. We are seeking digital images of animals, plants, people enjoying nature, and scenery in different seasons and locations throughout the various habitats. Please email your photo(s) (do not reduce the file size please) to [cathykoot@telus.net](mailto:cathykoot@telus.net). This is an on-going project, so please keep us in mind as you take photos in the future.



### 2012 WLFN Field Trip List

Our field trip season will begin again on Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup> with the first our annual outing to Alkali Lake. Details can be found in the trip list at the end of the newsletter.

### Spring Yard and Garden Sale

**Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup> 9:30AM until 1:00PM at Scout Island Nature**

By: Margaret Waring

I will be coordinating the sale again this year. If you have questions or would like to help please call me 250-398-7724 or email [muskratexpress@midbc.com](mailto:muskratexpress@midbc.com). Areas where help will be needed are pricing and set up on Friday night, at the sale on Saturday morning and for the early afternoon clean up. Please let me know if you are interested in one of these tasks. Of course most needed are your donations. Preparing for Spring now includes preparing for our annual Yard Sale! Please gather all of your unused treasures from your basement and share some of the plants you are starting for your garden. Feel free to ask your friends for some donations and encourage them to come to the sale too! Try some new recipes for the goodie table, sort through your stack of books, take some cuttings from your favorite house plants, clean out your garages and sheds, share those pieces you never use anymore and bring all to the Nature House on Friday afternoon May 10th. It is helpful if you are able to price your items before you drop them off.

The proceeds from the sale provide a bursary for a graduating secondary student who will continue further education in a field of biology or earth sciences and any extra earnings are donated for education programs at Scout Island.

Items that are not sold or collected are taken to the Salvation Army, Library, Rotary Club Book Drop, Share Shed, Potato House etc. Please mark your calendars!

### Blue Birds Young Naturalist Club and Family Explorer Event at Scout Island Nature Centre March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

By: Mary Forbes

Spring was definitely in the air as we welcomed 28 people to the Nature House on a lovely Saturday. As I looked around at the smiling faces I noticed many new participants to the Free Family Explorer events hosted on the last Saturday each month. Sandy Proulx our local blue birding guru, a soft spoken man with a sharp eye for detail, was invaluable for everyone at the event.

We had planned to visit the nest boxes near the dipping dock to clean them out and to show kids how interesting it is to have a Mountain Blue Bird Trail (or in Scout Island's case Tree Swallow Trail). Mary had collected four boxes from her route so we had an indoor option in case of inclement weather. Each box yielded different discoveries: a previous year's egg, swallow nest instead of blue bird nest, one was empty, one has two nests stacked up inside. Volunteer children opened Mary's boxes to share their discoveries with the crowd. To tell a Tree Swallow from a Blue Bird nest look for mess. Swallows leave feathers and poop throughout their space while blue birds are quite tidy. When it's time to motivate their young to fledge, blue bird parents let some waste build up. I mistakenly identified this "get out" blue bird nest for a swallow nest -- good thing Sandy was there.



Photo by: Wolfgang Hofmeier

We sold nest boxes made by the Williams Lake Field Naturalists to participants who wanted to start

up their own blue bird routes. Mary thought nest boxes with round openings were as acceptable as slotted openings. However, Blue Birds prefer the slot top openings which give each little mouth equal access to the delicious grasshopper morsels the parents bring. Interestingly, Tree Swallows prefer the round hole, as they enter the box to feed their young. Mary didn't know that Swallows will not nest near other swallows but will allow blue birds to use a box as close as 10 feet away. If only one box is available Swallows will out-compete the blue bird. Since both these birds eat huge quantities of insects and are wonderful additions to our backyards, why not invite both? Place a slot top box and a round hole one about 10 feet apart at least 4 ft. off the ground with access to an open grassland-like environment and a few trees for perching. That's why fence lines are so great for blue bird trails.

Sandy told us that baby birds don't do as well in hay fields. If they falter when fledging, the long grass rarely gives them a second chance, and the lack of perching trees is also a drawback. So native grassland is best for blue birds, and considering it is one of the most endangered ecosystems in BC, anything we can do to help is great. Grooves or steps inside your nest box below the entrance help baby swallows escape your lovingly erected nest box. If you would like to build your own nest box we have great plans available at the Nature House. Happy Blue Birding! Fun for the whole family and feathered friends. If you missed out on the Blue Bird day with your kids, you now know everything Mary does. Houses are available for \$10 at the Nature House for you to enjoy installing one of these fine spring days.

Our Young Naturalist Club email reminder was lost in cyberspace, which may account for the high proportion of new faces at this event. If you would like to be added to our new and improved notification email list please contact the nature house 398-8532 or [yncwilliamslake@gmail.com](mailto:yncwilliamslake@gmail.com) with "Add my email to YNC" in subject heading. If there is a topic you would like the YNC to host over the summer or when we return in the fall let us know; we are always open to suggestions! Please note our April 21 Archaeology and Planting Earth Day Event elsewhere in this Muskrat. This will be the last of our monthly events until September, but summer staff will soon be offering great programs for kids at the nature house. Don't miss Scout Island's booth at the Children's Festival in Boitano Park the last Sunday in May. Sincerely, Mary Forbes YNC co-leader with Julianne Trelenburg.

## **Sustainable Leadership Program**

### **Do you know someone....**

- who is between the ages of 18 and 35?
- who enjoys being out in nature?
- who is community minded and believes in sustainable living?
- who would like to work on a project with Scout Island Nature Centre?
- who would like to travel down the Fraser River in August this summer for 3 weeks while developing/polishing that project?

**Then** this person may want to become a participant on the annual Sustainable Leadership Program sponsored by the Rivershed Society of BC, a non-profit organization founded by Fin Donnelly after his initial swim of the Fraser River in 1995. To find out all the info about this opportunity, go to [www.rivershed.com](http://www.rivershed.com), or contact Bette McLennan at 250 392 6423. As well, if you or a potential participant you know would like to join me to go to the Rivershed Forum in Lillooet on Friday, April 19- Sunday am, you/he/she would be able to meet some of the past participants of the SLLP, Fin himself, other Rivershed Board members and people



from throughout the Fraser Basin who are interested in the health of our waterways. See the website above to see the full agenda for this Forum. Bette McLennan, RSBC Board member.

**Dig into the Dirt on Earth Day 2013 at Scout Island Nature Centre**

By: Mary Forbes

**Plant a tree for the Earth April 21<sup>st</sup> 10am-Noon**

**Junior Archaeologist Day Camp April 21<sup>st</sup> 12-3pm**

Scout Island’s Family Explorers and Young Naturalists’ Club invite you to join them the Sunday before Earth Day April 21st at Scout Island Nature Centre. Starting at 10am, dig into the earth to enhance habitat for wildlife. This annual event is always popular so come early to be sure you get a chance to plant. Please wear sensible shoes and wear gardening gloves.

At noon come to the Nature House and meet special guest Beth Bedard, professor of Archaeology at Thompson Rivers University, who will share her lifetime of adventures from around the world. Make an archaeology sandwich with Young Naturalist Club

leader Mary Forbes to see how archaeologists learn about people from the past by studying what they have left behind in the ground. Practice making stone tools using an ancient skill called “*flint knapping*”, and get your hands dirty excavating for artifacts in our special junior archaeologist day camp.



**2011 Archaeology Dig**

Call Scout Island Nature House if you have questions about this FREE Family Explorer Event 250.398.8532 or [yncwilliamslake@gmail.com](mailto:yncwilliamslake@gmail.com)

**Snow and Star Party for the Williams Lake Field Naturalists**

By: Mary Forbes

This past February 9<sup>th</sup> the Field Naturalists gathered for gastronomy and star gazing on the Bells Lake Road near Horsefly. After a day of skiing the trails at Sue and Jurgen’s Moose House, a feast of homemade soups, stews, homemade bread and delicious desserts was shared over table conversation that, as is typical of the Naturalists, ranged from wildlife viewing to children. (The two were found remarkably similar in their shared “wildness and ability to raise our heart rates with their sudden moves”.) We all then carpoled down the bumpy road to the Bells Lake Wellness Centre, recently bought by Maggie Ranger and Electric Bill. The retreat centre is a beautiful open concept home overlooking the wolves and otters that play on frozen Bells Lake and is well suited to chatting, potlucks, yoga and wonderfully...Stargazing.

“Electric Bill” is an amazing man, self-taught electrician and passionate astronomer, but his abilities far surpass this simple statement. As the group of cheery naturalists wandered the trail to Bill’s homemade observatory, we didn’t know what to expect, but for a man who can hand make perfect box speakers from scratch, building his own observatory is just a drop in the bucket. It looks at first to be the size of a greenhouse about 15 feet square with a shallow hip roof and green walls. When you step inside you discover two sleeping telescopic mounds covered by wool blankets within a



**Bill’s Observatory**

warming hut that takes up half the space. Bill says “you can never guarantee the night but I can always promise a positive experience”. I spent a lot of time in the warming hut so I will describe its creature comforts. With built-in benches, reading material, heaters and star charts on the walls, you can watch the progress of the heavens from a window that overlooks the two telescopes. The warm glow of a red light doesn’t affect your night vision but allows you to navigate the space without banging into a precious Takahashi telescope.

Speaking of Telescopes, there is a special science to star gazing in cold climates. While the warming hut is warm, the sheltered telescope space is not heated. At first you wonder how you will see the sky, but then the walls and roof give way to a series of latches and secret sliders that afford a full view of the sky. Every person could not help but express wonder at the simplicity and working sense of this building.

When the blanket and assorted protections finally release the other sleeping mound, a beautiful open- sided telescope is revealed. While it’s being set up, Bill describes the multitude of tiny fans and motors that keep the lenses, mirrors and eyepieces condensation free. A mechanism that is 1/24<sup>th</sup> gear keeps the telescope pointed at its objective throughout the night, compensating for the Earth’s rotation. Bill often refers to Mr. Takahashi like an old friend but the other telescope remains nameless until someone asks, who built this amazing telescope? Bill replies “Mr. Irwin”. We know that Mr. Takahashi lives in Japan, “Where does Mr. Irwin Live?” Electric Bill replies “Here at the Bells Lake Wellness Centre, I am Mr. Irwin.” Whoa, and just like that your mind expands like the big bang at the extent of Mr. Irwin’s skill. Vast barely scratches the surface here.

Now you may be thinking, someone like this must be hard to connect with, you know those really smart folks that speak an entirely different language? Not the case; Mr. Irwin explains the heavens in a humble and understandable way, with a depth and interest that cannot help but inspire. We saw many things that chilly night in February but to describe their greatness would be like trying to describe a rainbow to a blind person. All I can say is, if you get an invitation to ski and eat at Sue and Jurgen’s or the chance to meet Mr. Irwin’s telescope do not hesitate to pull your kids from school, cancel your vacation and bring warm boots and your sense of wonder. Email Maggie Ranger at [spottedheart@hotmail.com](mailto:spottedheart@hotmail.com) or call 250-620-0596 to find out about the next event at the Bells Lake Wellness Centre and of course keep your eyes on the Muskrat Express for the wonderful things coming from Moose House.

### **Notes from the Executive**

By: Fred McMechan

This report from the executive provides a brief summary of the business carried out during the March executive meeting

Williams Lake Field Naturalists Business

- 1) We decided to send a letter to the BC Chief Forester to express our concern about Bill 8, section 24 regarding converting volume-based to area-based tenure and recommending that more public consultation take place before a decision is made
- 2) On the Prosperity Mine Project : The CEAA (Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency) Panel is still receiving required information on the Environmental Impact Statement from Taseko Mines. Information about the public hearings will be received at a later date from the CEAA.
- 3) There was a large turnout to listen to Roy Argue on his presentation about his experience in Uruguay helping to protect sea turtles.



- 4) Letters prepared by the executive will be made available to the membership when a request is made.
  - 5) Fred McMechan will be the delegate for our club at the BC Nature AGM, May2-5
- Scout Island Nature Centre Business
- 1) The name of the new legacy fund was changed to the Scout Island Nature Centre Endowment on the recommendation of The Nature Trust of BC (TNT). We are in the process of developing a brochure to provide information about this fund. We will also request more information and direction from TNT in regard to the management of this fund.
  - 2) We have been in communication with the City, BC Hydro and Horizon Climate Controls in regard to the planning for the underground wiring project at the Scout Island Nature Centre, The date of commencement of the construction has not been determined as more decisions on the project have to be made.
  - 3) Discovery Preschool: Barb Langford, the assistant to Margret Onneken, our preschool teacher, has resigned. We are fortunate that Amandah Cullum has agreed to take over this position for the next school year. Fees for the next school year and wages were approved, and a brochure for the next school year will be prepared
  - 4) Sue Hemphill gave a report on the educational activities, and other plans or events at the Scout Island Nature Centre. This information is found in her report in this newsletter

### **Annual General Meeting of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists**

The AGM was held at the Scout Island Nature House on March 22, 2013

At the beginning a large turnout of our membership enjoyed having a wonderful pot luck supper. Next the formal AGM business meeting was held. The treasurer's report was given by Kath VanSpall, the president's report by Fred McMechan and the membership report by Cathy Koot, Cathy reported that our club has a healthy membership and during 2012 we had 65 family memberships and 52 individual memberships. There was a total of 213 members, including 20 new members. The following officers and directors were elected: president-Fred McMechan, Jim Sims-vice president, treasurer-Kath VanSpall, secretary-Ordell Steen, directors- Nola Daintith, Rob Higgins, Ray Hornby, Cathy Koot and Peter Opie. Rick Dawson resigned and was given a hearty thank you for his contributions. Ray and Peter are new directors. A motion was passed to keep the membership for next year, 2014, the same as this year.

Our newest members, Paula Laita & Jon Gazteumendi, newly arrived in Williams Lake from Spain contributed some wonderful slides from "the Old Country" as part of the after AGM entertainment. Thanks and welcome to Jon and Paula.

### **Scout Island Nature Centre April 2013**

By: Sue Hemphill

The **Spring Break** program has become very popular. Julianne and I played with 15 children the first week, but there were 10 more that wanted to come. So Mary and Geneva (a new junior teacher naturalist) played with 10 more the second week. All of the children chose a mammal to be for the week and learned through their mammal's eyes, ears, and noses. They learned how to hide and hunt like their mammal, how important plants are to each animal, and how nice spring was to their animal. Then when they turned back into people, they wrote about their animal, drew pictures of their animal and its habitat, and "built" centerpieces with the plants they had been sniffing and looking at. As usual, the games were the favorites of each day and were repeated often. "Wildlife are Watching" really worked well along the late winter trails, but the new game "Predator in the Dark" turned out to be the favorite this time. I have included the directions below as this is a great

game to play outside or in. If you are not in the habit of playing games with children-try it. It is as much fun for you as it is for them. You might want to admire the shelters the children built along the Butterfly Trail.

**Predator and Prey in the Dark (an outdoor game for children)**

Age: 3-whatever

- (a) Children sit in a circle about 10 feet (3 meters) across (I have played it with as few as 4 people. Just use objects to define the circle)
- (b) Place the "predator" blindfolded in the center of the circle. Have that child choose the kind of predator he or she wants to be and the kind of prey he or she wants to hunt.
- (c) Point silently to a child you want to become the prey and tell the predator when the prey comes inside the circle. Both predator and prey are down on hands and knees.
- (d) Each prey must come inside the circle and go around the predator ( in either direction) then return to his or her spot in the circle without being tagged by the predator.
- (e) Children forming the circle should not make distracting noises or the predator will be thrown off the trail. However, when the predator grabs at the circle instead of the prey, the circle children can say, "You are at the circle."
- (f) When the predator "catches" its prey by hearing and tagging it, the prey then becomes the predator

The Nature House is now open on the weekends 1-4. Our new junior teacher naturalist, Geneva Gordon, will be there some days, and the others are being hosted by WLFN volunteers. If you want to help with this, contact Sue. We also are looking for weed warriors to fight the thistle, burdock, and now stickweed. You can have a plot that you work at whenever you want to be outdoors, using muscles, and focusing on a task. Contact Sue to claim a plot. We continue to look for skulls of any type. We are expanding our "Bone Detective" program and the more hands on materials we have the better. So let me know if you have a skull you would like to donate (not your own skull of course).

**Energy Upgrade Update—Funding Needed**

I regret to say we did not get a grant from the Western Diversification Canada Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund for our energy upgrade. Yet this project must go ahead. We will do the first half of the project (new furnace) as it fits in nicely with BC Hydro's plans to bury the electric lines and upgrade our service. This means we must raise all of the required (\$38 000) for the project starting with \$19000 for the furnace. The WLFN directors have decided to go ahead with the project in May using reserve funding. We have received \$1250 from the Williams Lake and District Credit Union and a total of \$2665 in generous donations from individuals which will help to replace our reserve funding (funding held in reserve for paying staff in years that grants do not come through). If you can help out with a donation, that would be appreciated. There is a beautiful wooden chickadee for those who contribute. The Scout Island Nature Centre Annual Report for 2012 is now available on the website on the [About Us](#) page.

**Spring Birds**

By: Phil Ranson

Birds are returning pretty much in the order of arrival as they should. Some are a little ahead of schedule and some a little behind, but there does seem to be a trend for birds to be arriving a little earlier with several species showing up a day or two earlier than previous records indicate. Tracking arrival times is always contingent on being there to observe them when they arrive and only long term data can balance out the variables including weather induced arrivals or delays.

Weather, including ice conditions, does seem to influence arrival times, but not greatly. Some birds which rely on insects such as Tree Swallows show up in the third or fourth week of March and

seem to 'make do' during inclement weather. Pelicans are quite consistent in arriving in the first and second week of April and huddle in the small patches of open water at river mouths or lake outlets, or if these are not available, congregate in slack water such as on the Quesnel River, at Quesnel where a flock were recently observed.

It would seem that a warming trend in global weather would certainly influence short range migrants such as many of our waterfowl and those birds that retreat only as far as favourable conditions will allow. I'm not sure whether neo-tropical and other long distant migrants that are programmed more by seasons would be as affected. Looking through the short term (10-15 years) information I have available and the checklist data, it's interesting to note that 3 warbler species returned to this area on record early dates last year. The only way to find out the answer to these questions is to keep watching and recording.

### Where do all those Early Spring Butterflies come from?

By: Jim Sims

A week ago Anna Roberts sent out this reminder: "*On your walks look for the early spring butterflies. Two of the ones that overwinter here as adults, Compton Tortoiseshell and Mourning Cloak were out around Williams Lake by March 24th this year.*" This reminded me of my hike back from fishing at Middle Lake west of Tatla on an early April day. It was a sunny hot day in the mountain valley and butterflies were all around us. A young 6 month old Smedley was quickly attracted to these colourful butterflies that kept flying up in front of him and he happily gave chase in his awkward puppy gallop. As the butterflies escaped his grasp Smedley often confused the butterfly with its shadow, which was also much easier to catch. At least he thought so. Often I would watch him pounce on the shadow with both feet and as he slowly lifted his paws away you could see the confusion and disappointment in his eyes as the Houdini butterfly had disappeared.



One of Many Green Comma Butterflies that Eluded Smedley

As Anna mentioned above the Morning Cloak and Compton Tortoiseshell overwinter as adult butterflies just like the Green Commas of Middle Lake Valley. In late fall these butterflies will gorge themselves on sap and rotting vegetation, carrion and dung much like a bear as they prepare to hibernate. The hibernating adult will find a sheltered hiding place under the bark of a tree, a cave or crevasse in rocks or even a building (window frame, under siding..) I often find a morning cloak awake on a warm day in the middle of the winter in my garage. As soon as it has warmed up enough they will take flight often for only a few warm days and will return to hibernate when it gets cool again like it is now. These butterflies are most likely to have only one brood each year and the adults can live for up to 10 months.

### Williams Lake Field Naturalist Field Trip List

These outings are restricted to members unless otherwise stated (day memberships are available).

#### Alkali Lake

Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup> (Leader Fred McMechan 392-7680)

Meet at Scout Island Nature Centre at 9:00am to arrange carpooling. Enjoy this annual field trip to view bird species along the road to Alkali Lake. Be sure to bring a lunch with hot beverage, your binoculars or spotting scope. Birding will be done from the road so expect minimal walking.

**Bike trip along Moon Road**

*Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup> (Rick Dawson 392-3370 and Margaret Waring 398-7724)*

Meet at Scout Island at 6:00 pm Wednesday evening. We will do an evening bike trip on Moon Road. We will park at the beginning of Moon road and cycle out past Doc English Bluff parking lot. Highlights include great views of the steep cliffs into the Fraser River, interesting geology at road cuts, many eagles and other birds.

**Wycott Flats, Churn Creek Protected Area, hike**

*Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup> (Leader Ordell Steen 398-5017)*

Meet at the parking lot by A&W at the “Y” at 6:30 a.m. This hike will explore grasslands and dry forests within that portion of Churn Creek Protected Area on the north side of Churn Creek. Access to the trail head will require an approximately two hour drive from Williams Lake through Farwell Canyon and then south on forestry roads to Blackwater Lake. The hike will be a moderate difficulty hike of about 4 km (one way) on relatively gentle slopes to the old log house built by W. Wycott (“Stranger Wycott”) and an additional about 2 km to a terrace at the edge of Churn Creek canyon, about 100 m above the creek. The views of the canyon and Churn Flats on the other side are spectacular. Some people may camp overnight on May 11/12 near the trailhead. Contact Ordell Steen (398-5017) for further details. This will be a joint trip with the Friends of Churn Creek P.A. Society (contact Glen Davidson 398-5809).

**Chilanko Marsh & Patterson Lake**

*Friday May 17<sup>th</sup> to May 19<sup>th</sup> (Leader Jim Sims 296-3638)*

Meet at Puntzi Lake Tanker Base at 9:30 am on Saturday morning (allow a minimum of 2 hours driving time from Williams Lake) or contact Jim if you want to meet him at the marsh on Friday night and camp out for the night. This is an annual bird species count conducted on the marsh and the surrounding riparian zone. The marsh provides an opportunity to see most of the waterfowl that are summer residents on Chilcotin lakes and marshes. Join us for a casual day long walk around the ponds as we search out the variety of bird species around the marsh. Following the birding you are welcome to gather at Jim’s Eagle Lake cabin for Saturday night. Bring a tent or camper as there is limited space available. (the sauna will be warmed up) There will be a pot luck supper Saturday evening and a pancake breakfast Sunday morning. Sunday we will take a walk along the shore of Patterson Lake. Patterson Lake is a recently approved goal 2 Provincial Park. You are welcome to stay with Jim for the holiday Monday but you will be on your own for the rest for your meals. Please call Jim for more details if you plan on participating.

**Frost Creek Birding**

*Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup> (morning) (Leader Cathy Koot 392-4250)*

Meet at the SINC at 7:30 am to organize a car pool. We’d drive about 17 km and walk around the Colpitt Lake area looking and listening for water birds and forest birds. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

**Williams Lake River Valley Birding**

*Sunday June 16<sup>th</sup> (morning) (Leader Phil Ranson 398-7110)*

Meet at 8:00am in the lower parking lot (Frizzi Road past the transfer site and down into the river valley). Join with Phil for a morning walk in the river valley. Learn some of the bird songs of the many birds that will be nesting in the valley at this time of the year.

**Voyageur Canoe Paddle on Rose Lake**

*Wednesday June 19<sup>th</sup> (Leader Jim Sims 296-3638)*

Meet at the public access on Allpress Road at 6:00pm. Bring an approved life jacket for all family members. Paddles can be provided. Listen to the Sora and the Virginia Rail as we paddle along the shore of the marsh on our way to the Black Tern colony.

**Canoe/Kayak Jaunt around Helena Lake**

*Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup> (Leader Cathy Koot 392-4250)*

Canoe/kayak jaunt around Helena Lake, just west of Lac La Hache for a day trip. Meet at SINC at 8 am. Call Cathy at 250-392-4250 by July 5 to sign up. Please indicate if you have extra space in your vehicle or boat. All participants must wear approved life preservers at all times while in their boats. Bring your lunch, lots of water and sunscreen.

**Viewland Mountain**

*July 20<sup>th</sup> (Leader Sue Hemphill (250)620-3498 or (250) 398-8532 or [shemphill@midbc.com](mailto:shemphill@midbc.com))*

**Please register ahead of time so you can be informed in the case of a change in plans**

This is a good hike for anyone with walking ability-children 5 and up should be fine with it. We will meet in Horsefly at 9:30 am to carpool. Viewland Mountain is located between Quesnel Lake and Horsefly lake and the sub-alpine summit provides views of the Cariboo Mountains. The drive to the beginning of the trail is on good gravel road and will take 1.2 an hour. It is about an hour's hike to the top through forest (some stepping over downed logs) and a great view at the top. I will have some games and activities for children and adults that want to join in.

**Niut Range Backpacking Trip**

*August 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> (Leader Jim Sims 296-3638)*

**You must register in advance to participate on this outing.**

This is an overnight backpacking trip into the alpine of the Niut Range. Final details are not confirmed at this time. Expect to see more details in the May newsletter.

**One Eye Lake Weekend Camp**

*August 17<sup>th</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> (Leader Shary and Ben Stephen 989-5583)*

Join Shary and Ben for a relaxing weekend camped at the beautiful recreation site on One-Eye Lake (West of Tatla Lake on highway 20). Venture out on the lake for a paddle in your canoe or kayak.

**Copper Johnny Day Hike**

*Saturday September 14<sup>th</sup> (Leader Peter Opie 392-1440)*

Join us for a stroll through the new CCLUP Goal 2 protected area. Meet at SINC parking lot 8:00am. Rendezvous at 100 Mile 9:15. We will explore this new park south west of 100 Mile House which features eskers, pothole and alkali lakes and wetland complex. Wildlife viewing opportunities and moderate hiking. Bring a hearty lunch as well as water. Expect two hours travel each way.

**Churn Creek Lone Cabin Creek hike**

*Saturday September 28<sup>th</sup> (Leader Ordell Steen 398-5017)*

Please contact the leader for meeting place and other information. This is a moderate to challenging hike in spectacular grassland landscapes of Churn Creek Protected Area. We will access our starting point from the Blackdome Mt road on the west side of the protected area and hike along Higginbottom Creek to a crossing of Lone Cabin Creek. Old trails then gently ascend the slopes on

the south side of the Lone Cabin creek canyon to reach views of the Fraser River valley near the southern edge of the Protected Area. We will travel through a variety of grasslands, riparian ecosystems, old cabins, and some great scenery. Contact Ordell for details. This is a joint hike with the Friends of Churn Creek.

**Junction Sheep Range**

*Saturday October 19<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> (Leader Fred McMechan)*

Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am. Bring a lunch, water bottle and your binoculars for this annual day long drive and hike into the park. This will be at the peak of the California Big-horned Sheep rut so look forward to seeing the sheep and perhaps you will be lucky and see or hear some head-butting.

**From the Muskrat's Desk:**

Thanks again to the contributors to the newsletter. All of your articles are appreciated. We hope to publish again near the end of May so have your new articles ready! If you do not receive your May newsletter by the end of June you might want to check with Cathy Koot (392-4250), your membership coordinator. You might have forgotten to pay your 2013 membership fees (you know, the ones that were due on January 1<sup>st</sup>). During this morning's snow storm it was nice to be editing the summer field trip list and thinking of nicer weather to come. A big thanks to all of the trip leader volunteers and in advance to all of the participants. We are looking forward to seeing you on several field trips this year.