MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS

SEPTEMBER+OCTOBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

Join us for the
Field Trip Final
Oct 23

GIOLDEN
EAGLE
TALK
NOV 17
starts with a
dessert potluck
@ 7PM

The MUSKRAT EXPRESS **OCTOBER 13TH, 2016**

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@shaw.ca 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 Christie Mayall, secretary Ordell Steen, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, Cathy Koot, Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Brian Chapman, Don Lawrence and Chris Coates

Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter near the end of November**.** If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the next Muskrat Express please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (296-3638) or e-mail us at muskratexpress@shaw.ca

Golden Eagle Talk

November 17th 7:00 pm at Scout Island Nature Centre
Jon Gaztelumendi, member of the WLFN, will report on his Golden Eagle Study.
Members are invited to a Pre-talk Dessert Potluck on November 17 at 7pm The Talk will begin at 7:30
More information to follow

Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park October 23th Fred McMechan (392-7680)
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.

A Traveller's Guide to Feathers

From Glen Chilton

Glen Chilton is a professor of biology at James Cook University in Australia, and author of the bestselling *The Curse of the Labrador Duck* and *The Attack of the Killer Rhododendrons*. Glen writes a weekly column concerning recent advances in the field of bird biology under the title *A Traveller's Guide to Feathers*; these can be found on his website: glenchilton.com. Each piece describes the highlights of a recently-published paper from a scholarly journal. Glen's writings are meant for bird enthusiasts who are curious about the latest advances in the field. The studies are global in scope, and consider birds of all types. From penguins on Bouvet Island to snake-eagles in Israel, *A Traveller's Guide to Feathers* provides all of the content with none of the jargon. http://www.glenchilton.com/a-travellers-guide-to-feathers/

Scout Island Nature Centre

By Sue Hemphill

A lot has happened since the last update in the June Muskrat. The summer Nature Fun program was full of surprises and adventures for the participants. Some of the highlights:

Geneva, as part of being an engineering coop student with us this summer, had lots of the fun designing and leading a week of engineering in nature. The children learned about civil engineering through investigations of animal home design (just how strong is the mud that beavers pack on their lodges). Mechanical engineering had the children analyzing animal and plant movement. Making their own litmus testing using cabbage juice took them into chemical engineering. All the examples of biomimicry Geneva demonstrated were amazing. Did you know that the shape of the super fast bullet trains is a mimic of the shape of the kingfishers beak and head. Observing how the kingfisher enters the water silently and with few ripples lead to the bullet train's design that makes the trains quieter (no sonic booms) and more efficient.

Civil Engineering in action

Carly's Birds are Dinosaurs program was a big hit as you can see from this "news" article written by Nature Fun Kids

Attention all citizens of Williams Lake! A new dinosaur species has recently been discovered at Scout Island. The paleontologists of Nature Fun have named it the Steikasaurus (stay-ka-soar-us). It appears to have been very deadly in its time and died a tragic death from eating too much steak. They uncovered this information because of the molecules of protein found in its bones. Strangely enough, this dinosaur had feathers on its tail which would have helped it attract a mate. The melanosomes found in the feathers lead the paleontologists to believe that this dinosaur was black and white. It had spines along its back to defend itself. This discovery was entirely by accident. The highly distinguished scientists were innocently walking along the beach when

Steikasaurus (stay-ka-soar-us)

they tripped over a bone. The dinosaur eggs were also discovered and they strangely resembled coconuts with fuzzy hair all over them. The scientists believe that this allowed the eggs to stay warm without their mother sitting on them. This discovery has been kept secret for safety purposes and now has been released to warn the public to not dig sandcastles in the beach any longer. Although this animal has been extinct for many years, these paleontologists have a theory that this dinosaur may have evolved into cows!!

Patrick researched the importance of being in nature to our physical and mental health then presented to a group of doctors. We want doctors to start giving nature prescriptions. To quote Patrick (from his presentation):

Dr. Marc Berman, a psychology professor from the University of Michigan, has proposed a theory known as the Attention Restoration Theory which suggests that humans have 2 types of attention. The first type of attention is a response to harsh stimulation when we focus on a specific task. The second type of attention is a response to a softly fascinating stimulus when we aren't focussed on one thing. This is what we use when we look out the window, take a walk in the woods, or watch a snail move along our hand. Dr. Berman believes that the first type of attention needs a relief time to recharge and that the second type of attention type of attention provides this period of relief. Cognitive psychologist Dr. David Strayer tried to explain this phenomenon by suggesting that the first type of attention utilizes the prefrontal cortex of the brain and that the second type of attention gives this part of the brain time to relax.

The three summer staff (Carly, Geneva, and Patrick) took on "Tales and Trails" for the summer and every Wednesday, lead parents and toddlers (ages 0-5) in song, story, and exploring. There were positive reviews from all who took part.

And some of our staff joined the Sustainable Living Leadership Program for a day on the Fraser. Then the whole crew came to Scout Island for dinner.

Paula has the big grin. Mary has the Blue hat.

I can't believe it is fall already (nearly winter). The place is hopping with people. Nature Kindergarten is in full swing with children enjoying the mud kitchen, all of the trails, dirt piles… The teacher, Sylvia Swift, and aide, Tanya Johnson, have the children outside 4 of the 5 hours every day. Every Tuesday morning, a grade 6 Marie Sharpe class shows up to be big buddies to the group and then to go on their own adventures. Every other Tuesday, a large group of home schoolers are here with their lead teachers. Grade 7 class is here most Wednesdays learning about ecosystems, watching birds and helping me with planting and moving dirt. Joan Lozier is leading Tales and Trails on Thursdays (ages 0-5)/ Frances is back guiding teachers and students outdoors as the Outdoor Education Resource teacher and providing relief time to Sylvia. Mary is busy with Owls, Spiders, Wolf and Bear programs at the schools. Paula and I are busy setting up tanks for the Stream to Sea program and the first eggs arrive this week.

We had a great Salmon Trip with 25 students this year. What a wonderful group of students—thoughtful, kind, motivated, and energetic. Russel Waterhouse summed the importance of this trip to him:
As I sit under these cedar, birch, and what appears to be balsam fir, I am humbled. There is a chipmunk not more than 15 feet to my left, apparently unaware of my presence. The river gurgles past in front of me. All feels right. I want to talk about how different this is to school but somehow I cannot find the words to compare the two. I, unlike most, enjoy

school. I'm good with it. This, this feels more complete. More whole. It almost seems to teach the soul along with the mind. There is a tangible difference between reading about salmon and being out here, hands on, catching them. Ironically the best way I can compare the two is that school and textbook learning is like a canned-salmon sandwich and this trip is like the Native way of cooking fresh salmon on a stick, over an open flame. In both, you get the sustenance but the latter leads you to fill your gut full and crave more.

Help Us Take Youth Out Into Nature—Be a Guide

We are supporting both high school environmental groups as we feel these are the naturalists of the future. The older group at the Williams Lake Campus would like to take part in more outdoor "adventures" and Paula and I need help in organizing and leading these excursions. If you would like to take a few (the group can range from 2-10 students) on a hike, fishing, canoeing, snow shoeing, blue bird box routes, bird watching, ….please contact me shemphill@xplornet.com) with your ideas. These are really great young people to be around and what a chance to be a mentor.

Care Taker's House is Upgraded!

It has been a three year effort to shrink the carbon footprint of this heritage building—a vision of Roger Hamilton's. Double windows, new roof, new insulation, new siding, bathroom upgraded. Now it is done, and Denise is warmer in winter and cooler in summer. Thanks to all involved over the three years: Roger Hamilton, Fred McMechan, Bill Lloyd, Murray Hoffman, Ray Hornby, Brian Chapman, Nola Daintith

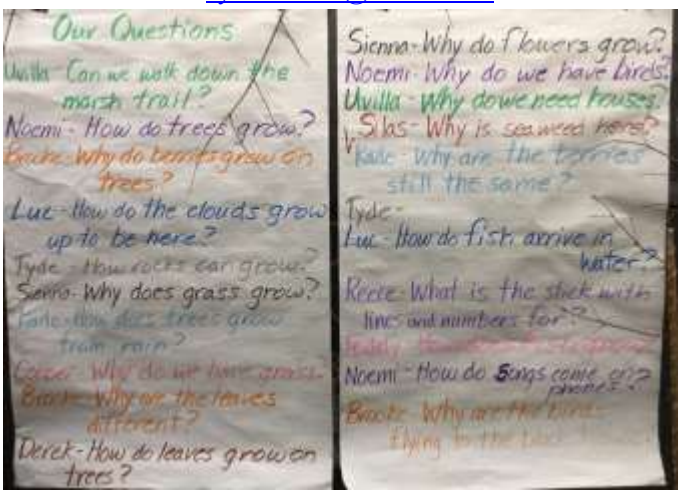
And We Have a New Kiosk

Thanks to OT Timbers for the beautiful new structure. And thanks to the volunteers who helped take the kiosk down and did the cement work.

Roger Hamilton, Fred McMechan, Ray Hornby, Brian Chapman, Don Lawrence

The Nature Kindergarten
From Sylvia Swift

The Nature kindergarten students are becoming part of the scout island landscape. We are going on daily walkabouts, working hard in the mud kitchen by the blockhouse and learning from nature. The students have some questions that need answering in the following picture. If you would like to help answer some of these questions please contact me at sylvia.swift@sd27.bc.ca.



Beddie-bye bugs

Here's one good thing about winter: you don't have to worry about getting mosquito bites. But where do mosquitos go? They can't all die off when the cold comes. If that happened, we'd never have to worry about them. So, they're out there somewhere. In Canada, there are 82 species of mosquitos, and different species have different ways of surviving the winter. In some cases, the mosquitos themselves don't survive. Instead, they lay eggs, which stay dormant until spring comes. For other species, females survive the winter. The males don't, but the females are carrying fertilized eggs. So, they find quiet places, such as caves, animal burrows, basements and sewers. There, they hunker down and wait out the winter. Some people might say these mosquitos are "hibernating," but that's not exactly right. Just like bears, these bugs are dormant, but not in true hibernation. Like hibernators, though, these mosquitoes put on fat to get through months of inactivity, which is stored in their blood and other tissues. (An overwintering mosquito will have 10 times as much fat as a mosquito during the summer.) When spring arrives, these mosquitoes come back to life. And they're out of blood. They must feed before they lay their eggs- so watch out!
Wild Magazine: So Cold! Feb/March 2014

Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)

Researched by Jim Sims

My recent work week at Eagle Lake was interrupted when David skyped me and said he was fairly certain he had photographed a juvenile Lewis's Woodpecker at his Eagle Bear Resort (the new name for the resort at Eagle Lake). I quickly grabbed my camera and headed off to see for myself. David and Jennifer showed me a photo of a juvenile Lewis's Woodpecker that he had taken earlier that morning. The bird had been around for a few days so I wandered around hoping to find it. After Jennifer had finished her chores in the horse corral I returned and found the woodpecker on the ground checking out a rather large pile of horse s—t. I chased it around and took several photos of my own, a real special birding treat.

The Checklist of Cariboo Chilcotin lists the Lewis's Woodpecker as a rare nesting species (1 to 6 individuals per season) in the region from mid-May to mid-September. Most observations are from the grasslands along the Fraser and Chilcotin Rivers. The most northerly observation is from a fir snag just north of Soda Creek. There have also been reports of breeding on the Tatlayoko Lake ranch property as well as the Bluff Lake area of the Mosley River Valley both in locations in the west Chilcotin. On the 2015 Field Naturalists trip to Tatla Lake we observed a single adult bird fighting over a nest cavity with Flickers. The Eagle Bear sighting extends the season well into October.

The Lewis's Woodpecker is a large woodpecker with a slow flight that is more like a crow or a jay. Its back and wings are greenish black. It has a gray collar and chest with a red head and pinkish belly. The wings and tail are all dark with no white markings. Note the juvenile I photographed has a blotchy pink belly and lacks the red on the head.

The Lewis's seldom if ever excavates wood in search of boring insects. It gleans bugs from the surface of the tree and often "hawks" insects (catches insects in flight). They can often be found perching on the top of a tree or pole where they fly out to catch insect much like a flycatcher. During winter months they will grind up acorns and other nuts and hide the bits in the bark of trees as a later food source. It is probable that they will mate for life and frequently return to the same nest cavity. The birds in our area will all migrate in the fall. A few birds can be found wintering in the southern Okanogan.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey indicates a decline in population of 82% from 1966 to 2015. By the way David reported this morning that the bird is still at the resort and that it is very tame and seems to follow him on his morning walks up the lane.

Member's Moment from Cathy Koot

Marble Range Hike

I took this photo during the Marble Range Provincial Park hike we did in August. Several members used the opportunity of all the elevation gain to train for upcoming backpacking trips.

"Member's Moment" is an opportunity for you to share a special scene, plant, animal, bird or outdoor activity that you have enjoyed and photographed here in the Cariboo Chilcotin. A chance for you to encourage other members to get outdoors and find their own special moments close to home and perhaps share them with all of us. For each newsletter the editors will select one or two photos for inclusion in the newsletter based on the quality of the photo as well as the interesting paragraph you must provide. We will save all submitted unused moments in hopes they may find a place in a future edition. Please email your full resolution photo and paragraph to the muskratexpress@shaw.ca. A special thanks to Cathy for your winning entry. (**We are very close to losing this feature of the Muskrat as this is the only photograph submitted for the past 4 months, please don't forget us. We know so many of you take amazing photos why not share them with us along with your story)**