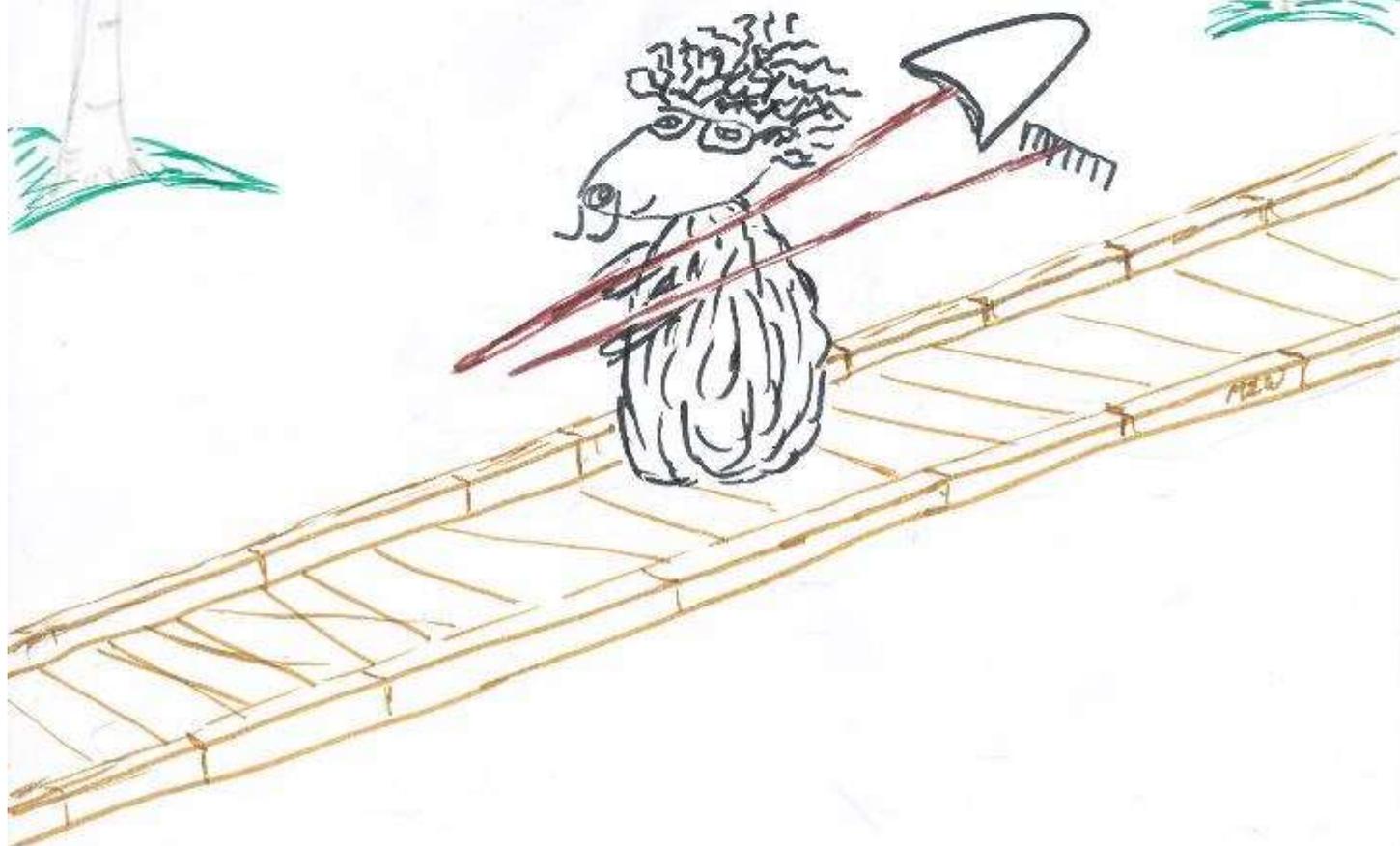


MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS
APRIL 2018 NEWSLETTER

Thank you to Fred McMechan
Our dedicated President
For 40 years





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: presidential Team Margaret Waring (Chairperson), Don Lawrence (Scout Island affairs) and Ordell Steen (Communications/liason), secretary Nola Daintith , treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Francis McCoubrey, Jean Oke, Kathie Hamm, Don Lawrence and Fred McMechan



Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter in early June. 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



A Tribute on the Retirement of Fred McMechan

After 40 years, Fred McMechan has retired as president of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists. Fred first became president in 1978, about six years after the club was formed with Anna Roberts as its first president. 1978 was also the year that the role of the WLFN expanded significantly when the club took on operation of Scout Island Nature Centre. The Nature Trust of BC (then the Second Century Fund) had purchased the Nature Centre property in 1973 and leased it to the City of Williams Lake under clear management conditions. Between 1973 and 1978, the causeway was built, the Nature House structure was built, and the campground was closed. But in 1978 when Fred became president, there were no developed trails, no log bridges, no nature viewing infrastructure, no nature interpretation developments in the Nature House or on the trails, and no children's education programs. There was much work to be done and, in 1978 a sublease for operation of the Nature Centre was signed between the WLFN and the City of Williams Lake.

Over the next 40 years, the WLFN turned Scout Island into the amazing place it is today, widely recognized as a gem of the region. Many, many people contributed to this achievement, including Anna Roberts, Frances Vyse, Gina Roberts, Jean Wellburn and others too numerous to name. But behind it all Fred was a guiding force – someone who saw what needed to be done, initiated needed projects and organized the people and support needed to get it done. He spent countless hours, often daily, on Nature Centre projects and promotion. He also recognized the visions of other people such as Anna, Frances and Sue Hemphill, and worked to implement those visions. Scout Island Nature Centre would not be the place of pride it is today in Williams Lake without the long, dedicated service of Fred McMechan.



Fred with retirement gift, a Ken Ferris painting

Over the last 40 years, Fred has also led the WLFN in numerous contributions to other nature conservation and awareness projects in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. These include the Williams Lake River Valley plans and developments, parks and protected area establishment, and provincial nature camps and tours which have brought many visitors to learn about our region.

Fred will remain on the WLFN board of directors as Past President. We are pleased that he will continue to be a part of the on-going growth of the WLFN and Scout Island Nature Centre.

Your 2018 Field Trip list is included at the end of the newsletter.

Spring Yard and Garden Sale



By Margaret Waring

Our annual Spring Yard and Garden Garage Sale will soon be here.

Saturday May 12th 2018. Sale time is from 9:30 AM – 1 PM

Now is the time to start preparing.

The success of the event depends on all of us. Help us advertise. Come and shop. Bring your friends and neighbours to shop too.

Please help

We need your **donations** of plants: seedlings to transplant into gardens, herbs, house plants, plants from your garden that you are dividing or that you no longer want and someone else might.

Other items to consider are garden pots and gardening supplies, outdoor and camping equipment, Bird houses and feeders, home baking, vinyl records, CDs, books, toys, candles, kitchen items, unique items of clothing and anything you find in your home or garage or yard and no longer want and think others might like it.

Please **deliver your donations** to Scout Island Nature House on **Friday May 11th between 4 and 7 PM.**

I need some **helpers.**

On **Friday afternoon May the 11th** between 3:30 and 7 PM we unload cars and boxes and sort and set up so we are ready for the Saturday morning shoppers.

From **1 – 2 PM on Saturday afternoon** we clean up. We help put tables away, pack up and take unsold items to the share shed, Salvation Army etc.

Please contact me and let me know if you are available to help. I can be reached at mewaring@hotmail.com and 250 398 7724

The money we earn is used for a bursary for a grade 12 student graduating from Lake City Secondary this spring. If we earn more than needed for the bursary the extra is donated to education programs at Scout Island.

What we sell depends on what you bring so I am counting on your help!!

Please contact me with any questions or ideas (see above contact information)

Your donations, help and support are greatly appreciated.



The Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Trade Crisis

Reported by Chris Coates

Dr. Chris Shepherd gave a talk on the illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles at SINC on April 11, 2018. Chris, who has recently moved

with his family to Big Lake, lived and worked in Malaysia and Indonesia for many years. He has recently set up a conservation research society called Monitor, which focuses on the illegal trade in less well-known species, including turtles and tortoises.



**Southeast Asian Box Turtles
exported for meat**

The illegal trade in terrestrial animals is worth \$8 - \$10 billion a year and is becoming increasingly controlled by organized crime.

Southeast Asia is a hotspot for the wildlife trade, being a source of animals, a transit point for the trade, and, with a growing middle class, a destination point in itself. Southeast Asia is among the biggest exporting regions of reptiles and amphibians to North America and Europe. It is also a trade hub for songbirds, involving millions of birds each year. Not unsurprisingly, it has more critically endangered wildlife species than anywhere else in the world. Wildlife is traded as traditional medicine, such as bear bile, as luxury ornaments such as trophies, and as status food or pets for the growing middle classes.

It's easy to understand why tortoises and freshwater turtles are in a crisis. Of the world's 349 species, 50% are threatened. Seven species have become extinct in the last few hundred years, the most recent being in 2012, when "Lonesome George" died in the Galapagos Islands. Seventeen of the 25 most threatened species today are from Southeast Asia. These include the Yangtze Giant Softshell Turtle, which is down to only 3 animals in China and Vietnam. One company alone, in Sumatra, Indonesia, illegally exported 25 tons of turtles every week to China for 4 or 5 years in the late 1990's.

Lax laws and other enabling conditions allow criminals to make huge profits with minimal risk. Turtles and tortoises are generally transported by air – Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur being hubs and Hong Kong and mainland China the largest end points for these



Lonesome George



Ploughshare Tortoise

species traded for meat or use in traditional medicines, and a growing number of countries being the end-point for species traded for pets. Animals such as the Radiated Tortoise and the various snake-necked turtle species are stuffed into suitcases and carried by "mules" often paid as little \$100. Bags are rarely searched by busy and sometimes corrupt airport staff. Exporters are often just given a "slap on the wrist" by judges who are more concerned about illegal drugs and other such crimes, and not about wildlife crimes. Some countries such as Thailand do not even consider the trade in non- native species to be illegal. The Ploughshare Tortoise from Madagascar, so threatened that each one is worth \$30,000 - \$45,000, can be bought openly in Indonesia. The online trade in turtles and tortoises is a growing problem – they can easily be bought on Facebook.

Fortunately, efforts are underway to stop this illegal and unsustainable trade. The number of seizures is steadily increasing. Growing support from enforcement agencies is slowly identifying the criminals. And while confiscated turtles and tortoises are often destroyed because it is expensive to return them to their original habitat, and potentially dangerous because they could introduce parasites and viruses, "assurance colonies" are carrying out captive breeding with the aim of eventually returning critically endangered animals to the wild.

Most important is education and raising awareness about the crisis tortoises and freshwater turtles are facing. Continued research and monitoring, such as that done by Dr. Shepherd, supports conservation and enforcement efforts. This evidence in turn allows treaties such as CITES to protect endangered species from illegal trade. Organizations such as Prince William's "United for Wildlife" are informing the public about the illegal trade in wildlife, with the aim of changing consumer behaviour and ultimately reducing demand.

Dr. Shepherd says wildlife crime is gradually getting a higher profile, and with more research being done on threatened animals, there's no reason to lose any more turtle or tortoise species. We as Canadians can help by educating ourselves and others, by reporting wildlife crime, by supporting conservation organizations, and by speaking up. And it's not just all about tortoises and freshwater turtles - we could, for example, ask the Canadian government why it hasn't yet banned the ivory trade. Chris says you have to be an optimist in his business, and he has every reason to hope for better days for the world's threatened turtles and tortoises.



The End of Megafires Part Two

Reported by Chris Coates

On March 7 2018, Dr. Paul Hessburg of the US Forest Service in Wentachee, Washington attended a Gibraltar Room meeting hosted by the Cariboo Conservation Society. It was a follow up to a meeting held on November 30 2017, where his multimedia presentation “The Era of Megafires” was shown.

This time Dr. Hessburg came in person to show and narrate an updated version of this presentation, and to answer questions from the audience.

“The Era of Megafires” shows how the natural landscape of the interior of western North America was shaped by fire. Fire created an evolving, dynamic patchwork of open and closed canopy forests, interspersed with meadows and grassy understories. Plants, wildlife and humans were well adapted to frequent, small fires. The patchwork of forest and meadow was maintained by First Nations who lit fires in spring and fall to create grazing areas for game.

This landscape has changed over the last 150 years. Wildfires are considered to be a public enemy, and the forest service spends much of its annual budget suppressing fires and maintaining the blanket of trees which has since grown up to fill in the patchwork landscape. Forest companies have further promoted the growth of dense, homogenous forests, to the point where we now have an “epidemic of trees.” The huge buildup of fuel in these forests has led to the huge crowning fires that we in the west are becoming all too familiar with. Climate change has intensified the “powder keg” conditions in the woods, so that we now have destructive and expensive “megafires.” Warmer winters, earlier springs, and hotter and drier summers have created a year-round fire season in California and produced the Fort McMurray megafire of May 2016 – in a location halfway to the Arctic Circle! Not to mention the catastrophic wildfires that we experienced in the interior of B.C. in 2017.

What is to be done? Dr. Hessburg said we tend to just want fires to go away, but that’s not going to happen. We must understand that fire is the primary shaper of the western landscape. Instead of reacting to fire, we must proactively find ways to “live better with fire.”

First, we must build fire resilient landscapes around our communities. We need to recreate the historical patchwork landscape that can tolerate fires, with methods such as prescribed burning, mechanical thinning, and managed wildfires. Second, we must create fire adaptive communities. Home and property owners must take responsibility for fireproofing their properties, especially those whose homes are in forested areas. This is a massive undertaking, for which most communities are currently unprepared. Finally, we must maintain a safe and effective wildfire response.

Dr. Hessburg then invited questions from the audience. Below is a summary of some of those questions, and his answers.

- Q. Should people who live in dangerous (interface) areas be required to pay higher property taxes to reflect the high cost of fire protection in those areas?
- A. High taxes are often a disincentive to fire proofing. Incentive based strategies where insurance companies offer lower premiums to those who fire proof, work better.
- Q. What role does beetle kill play in the era of megafires?
- A. Homogeneous forests mean trees all become beetle bait at the same time. In the past, when the patchwork landscape existed, 90% of the beetles got lost and died during their flight. Climate change has increased their overwintering survival. Beetle killed trees must be salvaged because of their incredible fuel load.
- Q. How will forestry employment be affected by restoring the natural patchwork landscape?
- A. In the long term we will need fewer forests so we can properly maintain them, and this means there will be fewer jobs. But for the foreseeable future, many new jobs will be created to achieve a healthy patchwork landscape. For example, we will need slash burners, consultants, community planners, tree thinners, mill workers, and lots of mill capacity. The volume-based approach is what caused the megafire problem. We need to be proactive because the cost of fighting megafires is massive.
- Q. How will mountain biking be affected by the proposed changes in forests?
- A. Mountain bikers and the forest industry will need to work together to plan and maintain trail networks. Bikers must be realistic though – many trails cannot have “forest screens,” because these can wick fire up a slope.
- Q. What kind of road access should there be in forests?
- A. We need smart roads, not stupid roads. We are learning not to build roads that go right up a valley and dump sediments into streams. 80% of roads cause no harm and can be closed after a while. However, we do need roads that connect and can be used for access and management.
- Q. How important is tree diversity?
- A. We now know that the climate has always been changing. Diversity allows species to move when the climate

changes, to adapt to new surroundings. It would be a mistake to replant just with Douglas fir for monetary reasons.

Q. How will long term management plans be affected by the proposed changes in forest practices?

A. Landscapes are dynamic – old forests can change locations. It's better to modify the existing forest so it can adapt to the wildfire environment than to have static long-term plans.

Q. What is the role of forest companies in wildfire management?

A. In the past, people haven't agreed on management and there was no common plan. However, the advent of megafires has forced us to change our thinking. Now for example, environmentalists recognize the importance of fires in maintaining healthy forests. Forest industries must do restorative work, but in many cases, they are more ready to do this needed work than we are.

Notes from the Executive

By Odell Steen

Report on the 2018 AGM of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists

The 2018 annual general meeting of the WLFN was held on March 23 at Scout Island Nature Centre. Twenty-two voting members attended. The pre-meeting pot-luck dinner was great, as it always is. The treasurer's report indicated that WLFN and SINC finances in 2017 were typical of a normal year. Year-end financial reports are available from Katharine VanSpall if you wish to see them. The new WLFN bylaws proposed by the 2017 directors were unanimously approved. No one was nominated or willing to stand for president to replace Fred McMechan. Consequently, a proposal that the 2018 board of directors appoint three directors to share the duties of the president was approved. Fred will continue on the board as past-president. Also, because no one was nominated to stand for secretary, a proposal that the 2018 board of directors appoint a director as recording secretary was approved. The total number of WLFN memberships in 2017 was 114 (individual, family and student combined), including 194 persons. Following the AGM, Fred reminisced about the history of the WLFN and SINC during his 40 years as president. Thank you to Fred for his long service.

Notes from the Board of Directors

The first meeting of the 2018 Board of Directors was held on April 17. Four new directors were present: Margaret Waring, Cathie Hamm, Frances McCoubrey, and Jean Oke, who was appointed as a director at the meeting. Directors continuing from 2017 include Nola Daintith, Ray Hornby, Don Lawrence, Fred McMechan, Peter Opie, Ordell Steen, and Katharine VanSpall.

Three directors were appointed by the board to share the role of president. They are Margaret Waring (chairperson), Don Lawrence (Scout Island affairs) and Ordell Steen (Communications/liaison). Nola Daintith was appointed to be the recording secretary.

Final plans for the BC Nature camp at Tatlayoko Lake (Sept 9 – 15) were reviewed. Registration is nearly full and preparations are progressing well.

Plans for the SINC banquet on Friday, April 20 were finalized. The United Church will cater the meal and Joanne Wright will again provide desserts. Dr Rob Higgins will be the guest speaker.

Fred McMechan will represent the WLFN at the BC Nature AGM in Vancouver on May 10-13.

Preparations for spring yard and garden sale on May 12 are underway. The sale will be announced on WLFN Facebook pages

Boardwalks have placed out on wet parts of the Willow Trail.

A Fire Smart assessment of SINC has been done by Ken Day who is preparing a report for consideration by the board.

SINC Family Event - Busy beavers and spring fun in the mud!

By Paula Laita

On Saturday, April 21st, 2018 we had well attended and fun family event at Scout Island Nature Centre. Around 30 people (12 kids and 18 adults) joined to learn all about beavers and their amazing adaptations with Education Coordinator Paula Laita. We also went for a walk to visit some of the beaver lodges at Scout Island and observe how they were built and what materials they had used. We realized that all we needed was sticks and mud! So, after collecting the materials, we headed back to the Nature House to build our own beaver lodge. While outside, there was time for lots of nature exploring and spring games too.



Earth Challenge

By Frances McCoubrey

After every Grade 7 class in Columneetza made its way through our day long crash course on local ecosystems at Scout Island, students were meant to be ready for the Earth Challenge. Each class chooses a few people from their class to compete against the other classes in a knowledge-based competition that covers 5 topics – ecosystems being one of them. It was so fun to hear the students spouting off knowledge about sharp tailed grouse, the importance of riparian areas and what species of trees you get in the “dry” forest. Students and teachers alike returned to Columneetza able to identify the noisy Flicker that has been hanging out in the deadish Fir tree at the entrance along with the fire cycle of different ecosystems and if they were really paying attention, the Tsilqhot’in name for Farewell Canyon (Nagwentled). The competition was competitive with students studying night and day leading up to the big day, arguing with their teachers about what the best way to win would be and who should be on the team. It is exciting to see them get so excited about what is essentially a very public test on how to be nature steward. The Cariboo Conservation Society, UBC Research Forest, Invasive Species Council, Water Wise and Waste Wise and Air Quality organizations were all involved. Even City Council put in a team (that didn’t come last, but were beat by most of the students, to be fair, they didn’t get the presentations ahead of time).

Mike Wilson’s class won this year and will be taking a trip to Biff’s Pond as their prize. Other prizes included trips to the salmon spawning channels in Horsefly, a day trip to Gavin Lake and tours of the dump with Mary Forbes.

If you would like to witness this spectacle, I mean event, next year, don’t hesitate to let us know and we’ll find a way for you to be involved.

Scout Island Invasive Plants

By Ken MacKenzie

Scout Island is a treasure of natural history in the heart of Williams Lake. Many species call Scout Island home, but unfortunately some of these species are invasive species introduced from other parts of the world. The impacts that these introduced species can have on our native ecosystems can be large, and many of the introduced species are hard to control. A range of management approaches for the control of invasive species are possible from cultural control, where competition from other, desirable species is used to exclude the invasive species, to mechanical methods such as pulling or mowing, and biological control where insects or diseases from the invasive species original range are used to reduce the vigour, productivity or density of the invasive. A fourth control type, chemical in the form of herbicides and pesticides, will not be used on Scout Island.

Cultural control is the most desirable control method since it simply requires the establishment or maintenance of a healthy plant community, but once invasive species become established may not be effective. Mechanical control can be very effective on new or small infestations, but not all species are easily controlled using mechanical means, and inappropriate mechanical methods can make infestations worse. For well-established invasive species that would be difficult or impossible to fully eradicate, biological control is probably the best management option.

Scout Island Nature Centre has undertaken an extensive program to control invasive plant species on the island. Efforts have been ongoing for many years to control a number of the invasive species, involving a large number of volunteers putting in long hours controlling the plants, but a coordinated program, including monitoring the effectiveness of treatments is required.

Invasive species that will be targeted for control include Dalmatian toadflax, common tansy, Canada thistle, yellow flag iris, nightshade, and burdock. The management challenges posed by these species are quite varied, and the management techniques required for each must be appropriate. There are many other invasive plants found in the Cariboo and ensuring these additional invasive species do not become established on Scout Island is a crucial part of invasive plant management. Fortunately, many knowledgeable and observant volunteers frequent the island who monitor for invasive species.

Of the invasive plant species already established on the island, the easiest to manage is Dalmatian toadflax. As recently as 20 years ago, Dalmatian toadflax and a closely related species, yellow or common toadflax, were a very serious pest across much of southern British Columbia until a very effective biocontrol agent, a stem weevil *Mecinus janthinus*, was released in the province. Now this biocontrol agent has become distributed throughout British Columbia and has effectively reduced toadflax infestations in most places in the province. In the past few years toadflax occurrences in the Cariboo have increased somewhat, but this is an expected occurrence with biocontrol and once the biocontrol responds to the increased plant abundance, infestations are expected to decline again. Several patches of Dalmatian toadflax are found in the Nature Centre, but *Mecinus* weevils were seen in several of the plants, so these infestations are not likely to persist or grow.



Mecinus stem-weevil on a Dalmatian toadflax plant

Canada thistle, which, despite its name, originates in Europe and northern Asia where it is known as creeping thistle, is another species for which biocontrol agents have been released in British Columbia. These agents have been ineffective in the Cariboo unfortunately, and Canada thistle is one of the most widespread invasive alien plants in the region. There are several challenges to managing Canada thistle. Firstly, as the European name suggests, it creeps through the soil with horizontal roots, or rhizomes. These roots allow the plant to increase the size and density of infestations. Rhizomes broken from the main plant are able to send out shoots and establish a new plant, so mechanical control is can actually make the infestation worse. The species is perennial, living for many years so mowing or dead-heading to reduce seed production can be effective at preventing new infestations from starting, but does little to reduce already established sites unless carried out for prolonged periods. Techniques that will be examined for effectiveness for Canada thistle will include smothering heavily infested sites with heavy polyethylene plastic ground cover, excluding Canada geese from foreshore areas to allow competing vegetation to develop, and repeated mowing of sites.

Burdock is another invasive species that has management challenges. This species has no biocontrol agents available and grows best in moist sites with rich soils but can be found in a wide range of ecological conditions in disturbed sites. It is a biennial or short-lived perennial so seed production control can be effective at reducing infestations, but it appears that burdock seeds can remain viable in soil for an extended period. In areas that had burdock established for extended periods an extensive seed bank can develop, allowing burdock plants to sprout from seed many years after plants were thought to be eliminated from the site. Several high-density patches of burdock have been identified on Scout Island and these sites will have a range of management techniques applied to control the development of plants from seeds banks in the area. Ongoing management of burdock has been to remove plants prior to seed set to remove all seeds, but the sites continue to have high densities of burdock, so smothering the sites with thick polyethylene sheeting will be tested to determine if this technique works for this type of site.

Common tansy is restricted to a single site on Scout Island. Mechanical control of this site is probably the most appropriate technique for this species. Hand-pulling or cutting, provided it is done before seed set is sufficient to prevent the infestation from spreading to other sites, and if done frequently enough can eliminate the infestation altogether.

Effective invasive plant management for the long-term is dependent on an understanding of the biology of the species of concern and applying the appropriate techniques from the range of options available. The use of chemicals for invasive plant management may be a short-term requirement but should not be relied on as the sole management technique for

a number of reasons. There is an ecological cost to using herbicides, a disruption in applications can eliminate all the treatment effects, and other techniques are as effective with fewer negative effects.

All management techniques applied to control invasive plants on Scout Island will be monitored for their effectiveness and cost, so that the beauty and diversity of Scout Island can be protected from invasive plants as effectively and cost efficiently as possible. All visitors to Scout Island are asked to keep an eye out for possible invasive species and report them to the Nature Centre.

In Memory of Gina Roberts

We are sad to give the news of Gina Roberts passing in January 2018. She made many contributions to Williams Lake Field Naturalists, Scout Island and our natural world. She was a great supporter of education programs at Scout Island Nature Centre. For many years she taught nature programs to children at the centre. Along with her mother Anna, she produced fun and stimulating teaching materials for children. These included a series of 23 mini-books on a wide range of topics from Hitchhiker seeds, leaves, amphibians, grasshoppers, butterflies, fish, snails to pond weeds, animal tracks and many others. Gina, for many years, was involved with training summer staff at the Nature Centre, helping them acquire the skills and knowledge needed to provide nature programs during the summer. She helped lead some very interesting field trips. We remember exploring caves in the area guided by Gina. She will also be remembered for her significant contribution to local research of the bats, small mammals and Flammulated owls in our area.



Gina Teaching Highschool Science Class

While her recent years were more difficult, for many years she enjoyed vegetable gardening, paddling and skating on the lake, and cooking and baking for her parents. Gina was a very knowledgeable naturalist with great curiosity about the natural world. She added much to the appreciation of nature for many who had contact with her over the years.



Our View of the Night Sky – May to August 2018.

By Steve Capling

Planet Review

Mercury remains too close to the Sun to view until the end of June when it emerges at dusk low in the northwest.

Venus is visible low in the western sky in the evening twilight. Look for it just to the right of the crescent moon on May 17th.

Mars is visible in the dawn sky low in the southeast. It doubles in size (from quite small to not quite as small) and the magnitude gets brighter going from -0.4 to -2.2. On May 6 the moon is less than 6° from Mars.

Jupiter is rising at sunset in the east and is visible in the evening through spring and summer. It is ideally visible in May making this a good time to look for the prominent dark belts and Great Red Spot.

Saturn is visible in the evening sky but is very low in the southern sky making it a bit difficult to observe at our latitude. However, its rings are tilted as much as they can be (26°) so viewing is worth the effort. On June 27th the full moon is very close to and a few degrees above Saturn.

Solstice

Thursday, June 21st.

Moon

New Moon - May 15th, June 13th, July 13th.

Full moon - May 29th, June 28th, July 27th.

Meteor Showers

The next major meteor shower is the Perseids - which peak on August 13th under a favourable moon situation.

Evening Sky Map – courtesy of Skymaps.com.

For a printable sky chart try this web site - Skymaps.com/downloads.html - scroll down the center of the page to the download button. “May 2018: Northern Edition (PDF)”. At the end of the month it changes to show the next month’s chart.

The Skymaps chart also has a useful list of what is visible with the eye, binoculars and telescopes.

Williams Lake Field Trip List 2018

Thanks to all of our trip leaders. There is still time for us to expand the list so if you want to add in another trip or more please contact the muskrat (muskratexpress@shaw.ca) with the details. It would be great to see few more Summer and Fall outings.

Alkali Lake

April 15th Leader Fred McMechan

Too late you missed this one. It was another great outing with lots for bird sightings.

Annual Chilanko Marsh Filed Trip

May 19th to 21st Leader Jim Sims 296-3638 or smedleysims@gmail.com)

On Saturday we will conduct an annual bird species count at Chilanko Marsh. Please allow for a 2-hour drive and follow the wildlife viewing signs on the next right after the Puntzi Lake turnoff (approx. 200km from Williams Lake). Please arrive at the tanker base by 9:00 am. After the walk around the marsh you are welcome to join the party for a pot-luck-supper and spend the night at Jim’s new home at Eagle Lake. There is limited room in the home so you might be more comfortable in a camper or tent, however there will be a lot more indoor space than other years. On Sunday you can continue to explore the West Chilcotin with a walk along the north shore of Tatla Lake, an interesting grassland slope with spectacular views of the mountains and many bird species. Before you head back to town on Monday we will do a morning walk at Lunch Lake a receding shoreline should attract some interesting shore birds and waterfowl. If you can give us an extra day on Tuesday we will be conducting a work-bee at the Bennie Cabin on Nimpo Lake and more help is needed for this day.

Bat Count

Friday, June 1 Leader: Cathy Koot 250-392-4250 (landline)

8:00pm--11:00pm

Meet at the entrance to Scout Island NC at 8:00pm to carpool. Call leader in advance if going to meet at site.

The kind owners of a ranch at 143 Mile House whose bat colonies are being monitored in the BC Community Bat Program have extended an invitation to WLFN club members to witness and participate in counting the evening bat emergence. It's about a half hour drive and we count for one hour at official sunset. Dress warmly and bring a chair if you like. Flashlights can be used to access the site but not during the count. This trip is weather dependent as it can't be raining during the survey. Alternative date is June 2, same time and place.

Fox Mountain Walk

Wednesday evening June 6th (Leader Ray Hornby 250-392-2271)

Join us for a walk along the trails on Fox Mountain. Good chance of viewing birds, wild flowers, and wildlife including deer, moose, bear, and fox. As well as an opportunity for great vista views of the lake. Meet at the corner of Fox Mountain Road and Teal Place (2nd road on left at top) at 6:30 pm. Bring camera and binoculars. Walk is relatively easy and dry.

Williams Lake River Upper Valley Birding

Sunday June 10th (morning) (Leader Phil Ranson 398-7110)

Meet at 8:00am in the Parking Lot below Comer Street. 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

Birch Lane Community Forest

Wednesday June 13th (Leader Peter Opie 392-1440 assisted by Hugh Flinton)

Meet at Scout Island at 5:30pm to arrange car pool to the site at the end of Birch Lane.

The tour will show the fuel management work being done in the Community Forest adjacent to Westridge-Hodgson-Esler Subdivisions. This work has created a shaded fuel break within Mule Deer Winter Range and Old Growth Management Areas.

Crazy Ant Downhill on Foot

Wednesday, June 20 evening 7:00 pm- ~ 9:30 pm (Leader: Cathy Koot 250-392-4250 (landline))

Meet at entrance to Scout Island NC to carpool at 7:00pm. Call leader in advance if going to meet at site.

From Hwy 97 at the Xatsu'll turnoff, the new Crazy Ant mountain bike trail provides a lovely route to walk down the slope towards the Fraser River at the Soda Creek confluence. It's about 2.5 km and 180 m vertical from top to bottom and we can organize a vehicle shuttle for the return. Back in Williams Lake around 9:30 pm.

Churn Creek (Higgenbottom Creek to High Lake)

Sunday June 24th (Leader Peter Opie 392-1440)

Meeting at SINC at 8:00 to carpool. Drive to Churn Creek where we'll take a short hike from the road above Higgenbottom Creek to High Lake. We will be reviewing the ecosystem restoration project that Friends of Churn Creek have been working on for the last few years. Bring good boots and lots of water.

Summer overnight Alpine Camp

July/Aug no date (Leaders Francis McCoubrey and Paula Laita)

At this time the details are not confirmed so watch checkout the June newsletter for details

Hazeltine Creek restoration

Saturday August 18th (leader Colleen Hughes 790-2617)

Mount Polley would be pleased to offer the Williams Lake Field Naturalists a tour of the Hazeltine and Edney Creek Remediation areas. The tour will include the newly constructed fish habitat in upper Hazeltine Creek, the upper Hazeltine Canyon area, lower Hazeltine and Edney Creek at Quesnel Lake. The tour will start at 10 am and members can meet at Scout Island at 8:30 and carpool out to lower Hazeltine (on the ditch road) or meet us there if they want to drive themselves. There is no requirement for PPE as we will not be accessing the mine site. Good hiking boots with ankle support is recommended. For more information please contact Colleen at 250-790-2617.

Suey Bay, Horsefly Lake to Slate Bay, Quesnel Lake – paddle and hike

Saturday-Sunday August 25-26 (Leader: Ordell Steen 398-5017)

This will be an overnight trip beginning with a canoe/kayak paddle from Prairie Creek recreation site to Suey Bay, on Horsefly Lake (about 8 km including a 1.3 km crossing of Horsefly Lake). We will camp at Suey Bay (a gravel beach but no developed campsites –spaces for tents are tight) and on day 2 attempt to hike the old trail from Suey Bay to Slate Bay on Quesnel Lake (about 4 km) and return. In recent years, the trail has become quite indistinct and may be difficult to follow. In that event, we may only explore the plants and birds of the Suey Bay area. Experience paddling in cross windy conditions and an adequate PFD are required. Contact Ordell for meeting place and time.

Sheep Flats, Churn Creek Protected Area – hike

Sunday, September 23 (Leaders: Ordell Steen 398-5017 and Jim Young 398-7987)

This hike is to a seldom visited grassland bench on the north side of Churn Creek near the western limits of the protected area. It provides great views of the upper Churn Creek canyon, examples of good condition grasslands, and the site of a grassland restoration project. We will see at least one rare plant species and abundant sign of bighorn sheep. We will access the flats from the Gang Ranch/Blackwater Lake area on a guide outfitters trail which is quite steep in several sections above the flat. We will return the same way for a total distance of 6-7 km and an elevation rise of about 350 m on the hike back to the vehicles. Bring lots of water and a lunch. Meet at the parking lot at the “Y” by the A&W at 7:00 a.m. This will be a joint trip with the Friends of Churn Creek.

Junction Sheep Range

Sunday October 21st (Leader 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.

Where are all those awesome Member’s Moments?

We received no submissions since the last newsletter so why not get us something this spring.

“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.