

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS
SEPTEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER



The sheep are practicing their head butting. They do this every year just to impress the Naturalists on their last field trip of the year

SUNDAY OCTOBER 19TH.



FIELD TRIP
TO
DANTE'S INFERNO
OCTOBER 5TH

Williams Lake



7PM OCTOBER 22 VISIT THE EASTERN TROPICAL
PACIFIC MARINE OCEAN CORRIDOR AQUATIC
WORLD JUST BY GOING TO THE NATURE HOUSE





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, secretary Ordell Steen, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, Cathy Koot, Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Brian Chapman, Don Lawrence and Christie Mayall



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



Diving with Sharks; Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor

An evening presentation by Susan Aspinall on October 22nd 7:00pm at Scout Island Nature Centre.

Learn about the Eastern Tropical Marine Corridor, which includes world renowned diving sites such as Islas del Coco, Galapagos, Malpelo, Coiba, and Gorgona. Come see how the aquatic flora and fauna varies across these geographically adjacent islands. Enjoy pictures of whale sharks, dolphins, hammerheads, Galapagos sharks, bat fish, frog fish, jawfish, and nudibranchs.



Field Trip Reminders

There are 2 remaining field trips this year as described below. Please note the change in leadership for the Dante's Inferno trip. Peter is not available to lead the trip and Fred has offered to step in for him.

Dante's Inferno

Sunday October 5th (Leader Fred McMechan 392-7680)

Moderate hike to new (2013) Goal 2 Park, 20 km west of Riske Creek. The hike features fabulous vistas from basalt cliffs and a trail to small lake below with a possible extension to the grassland slopes along the Chilcotin River. Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am. Bring a lunch, lots of water and good footwear. The trail down to the lake and beyond is steep so good hiking shoes are a requirement and walking sticks are also recommended.

Junction Sheep Range

Sunday October 19th (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.

Spider Identification, a family program for parents and kids ages 5 to 14

Saturday Oct. 25 12-2 pm

Learn to identify 7 kinds of spiders; everything from those big spiders on your porch to that brown spider in your bathtub. Do we have poisonous spiders? What about Black Widows, Brown Recluses and Hobo Spiders? Hear all the amazing facts and meet some local spiders (you can even bring a spider in a jar to be identified!)



Can you identify this spider?

Outdoor Education Academy at Columneetza

From Nara Riplinger and Kim Zalay

We are happy to announce the approval of the Grade 7 Outdoor Education Academy at Columneetza. Students will be using Scout Island Nature Centre as a classroom one day per week and will be participating in field trips around the Cariboo while they meet the Grade 7 curriculum. We would love to have members lend their expertise and share their enthusiasm with our kids.

Anyone interested in helping on a field trip or leading one can contact Nara 398-7369 or Kim 392-1021



Scout Island Nature Centre News

From Sue Hemphill

The extended summer is now officially over. We just finished 13 days of all day programs at the Nature Centre for children affected by the strike. Twelve children ages 5-11 took part each day in indoor and outdoor fun. The wonderful weather allowed us to dip in the water most days and track how many invertebrates were found in different areas. There were new games to try each day, writing and art activities, animals to feed and observe. Spider hunting and feeding was fascinating, and Spinny was a hit. Spinny is a resident Pholcus spider. You will find them all over the Nature House (your house too). They make a tangled cob web and when you touch the web near them, they do a strange little dance and spin. Spiny was the best of all the Pholcus we tested. She spun so fast we couldn't see her and she spun for 2 minutes. We got lots of great ideas for invertebrate activities from the great book "Bug Zoo." We have it for sale at the Nature House. By far the favorite activity was building shelters. Every lunch hour was spent dragging brush, old lumber, dried grasses... and constructing 4 different "shelters." Be sure to come and admire them next time you walk at Scout Island. A big thank-you to Frances McCoubrey, Kim Zalay, and Christie Mayall for filling in on days when we were short staffed.



SINC children enjoy building and playing in shelters

The strike program kept me from noticing the usual quiet that happens after the summer staff leaves. The three staff (Patrick, Bree

and Caitlin) had a good summer leading Nature Fun. Paula took over for a couple of weeks when the summer staff had vacation time. Geneva Gordon and Hillary Langston (just graduated from high school) helped out on a regular basis all summer also. Nature Fun for the 3-8 year olds was filled with days of exploring, hiding, creating and of course learning about nature. The all day program for the 8-12 year olds on Tuesdays again included an art component. Ciel Patenaude spent several afternoons with the group to teach them various sketching techniques. Art activities also included building an insect hotel (another must see at the Nature Centre), writing, and painting wooden fish. We are especially grateful for the grant from the Central Cariboo Arts and Culture Society that allows us to provide the arts components in our nature programs.

A lot of outdoor tasks got done around the nature centre thanks to some great volunteers. Susan Aspinall, Wade Watson, and Geneva Gordon assisted Georgia Bock (who is sometimes paid and sometimes volunteers with her partner Josh) planting, weeding, watering... A crew of volunteers fought thistle, stick weed, burdock and orach all summer long.

We are pleased to announce that Discovery Preschool is up and running under the guidance of Karen Haseldine. There are morning classes on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Karen really uses the outdoors as a classroom and children are thriving—as Karen says, “children need nature, but nature needs our children.”

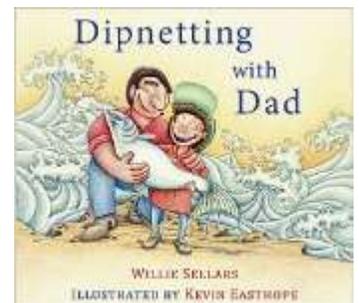
The Nature House will be full of school children soon for our regular class programs on Monday, Thursday and Friday. Paula, Mary, and I will be leading programs for grades K-12. New this fall, the Home School primary and intermediate classes will be meeting every Wednesday all day at the Nature Centre. Every Tuesday, Kim Zalay’s grade 7 outdoor education class will at the Nature Centre all day. I look forward to seeing how these two groups explore and learn from the Nature Centre.

Holiday Crafting (More details in the October newsletter)

Friday-Saturday Nov. 28-29 Holiday crafting with natural and re-cycled materials. This event has become an annual favourite for all ages. Make cards, ornaments and gifts. Details on our website and facebook page as plans develop. *If you have old CD’s you don’t want, please donate them to us and we will be using them for a craft as part of the Earth Friendly Holidays event in November.*

Dipnetting with Dad

Also, we have just received copies of Willie Sellars’ delightful new illustrated children’s book “Dipnetting with Dad”. The story describes a young First Nations boy’s rite of passage: catching his first sockeye. It’s clear that fishing is not just about the sport or the food. It’s tradition, heritage and family, and this book portrays all that in a simple and heart-warming way. We have it for sale in the Nature House at \$16.95 per copy. A great gift for anyone above about 4 years old.



Williams Lake Field Naturalists News from the Executive

By Fred McMechan

Volunteers and Projects at the Nature Centre

Volunteers were busy during the summer helping out with several projects at the Nature Centre.

The roof of the caretaker’s house was replaced. Under the guidance of Murray Hoffman and with the support of Rodger Hamilton, Ray Hornby and Fred McMechan the old shingles were removed and a new metal roof was installed.

Jim Sims, Ray Hornby and Fred McMechan took time to reset the dipping dock at the river outlet so it could be used by children. Due to the high water the dock had been displaced and needed to be adjusted.

Throughout the summer several volunteers helped on managing the invasive weeds growing on the Nature Centre grounds, Removal of burdock, Canada thistle, toadflax and orach was undertaken.

Some of the rotting rails along the trail on the east island were replaced by volunteers.

Another contribution was the trimming along the trails. Thanks to all who helped.

BC Nature Camp 2015

Our club will be hosting a BC Nature Camp September 6 to 12 in 2015. Any members of BC Nature, members of naturalist clubs or direct members, can register for this event. Registrants will be staying at either the campground of the Tatlayoko Lake Ranch or at bed & breakfasts in the Homathko River Valley.

There will be 4 field trip days with outings as follows: hiking along the shores of Tatlayoko Lake, visiting the Chilko River Valley and Choelquoit Lake, learning about the ecology of the West Chilcotin Forests, exploring the Skinner Meadows and learning about the geology of this area. Also on the fifth day there will be an optional hike to the Potato Range. We will also have evening presentations by guest speakers in the ranch house of the Lincoln Ranch, which is located close to the Tatlayoko Lake Ranch. As well we are hoping to give registrants the opportunity to observe the banding of migrating songbirds by bird banders.



WLFN 2010 Potato Range Field Trip

The Homathko River Inn will be catering and providing all the meals for the camp. At this time the camp committee is organizing the camp. We expect that the details about the camp will be available on the websites of both BC Nature and the Williams Lake Field Naturalists sometime in November. Registration for the camp will start sometime in March, 2015

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Researched by Jim Sims

Sources Checklist of Cariboo Chilcotin Birds, Birds of British Columbia Vol. 1 and www.allaboutbirds.org

A couple of weeks ago, while driving to town on the Horsefly Road I passed a gaggle of crows and ravens obviously feeding on road kill. As I passed I had a quick glimpse of a red-headed Turkey Vulture sitting on the top of a nearby fence post. Later on my return I observed the vulture soaring over the road in the same area. It was displaying a classic flight pattern with wings forming a V while it wobbled back and forth as it soared on the afternoon thermals. Since then I have observed Vultures, (perhaps the same bird) soaring over the Horsefly road in the area of Dugan Lake subdivision. This one was photographed on September 16th. Note the large broad wings with a lighter grey along the trailing edge with the wings held in a V position.



Sandy Proulx Photo on Apr. 21, 2010

The Checklist of Cariboo Chilcotin Birds lists the Turkey Vulture as a species that has been increasing in numbers in recent years and is also expected to be nesting within the region but this has not been confirmed. Prior to 2001 there were only 3 reported observations from the region. Since then annual sighting have been increasing throughout the region. The earliest sighting was on March 21, 2013 in the Soda Creek area and a late bird was photographed on Oct 14, 2010 at Big Lake. The Checklist frequency graph

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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indicates the Vulture has an occasional (*more than 6 observations but not every year*) designation from mid-April to mid-September.

The Turkey Vulture is noted to have an exceptional sense of smell, it detects just a few parts per trillion. The part of the brain responsible for smell is much larger than that of other bird species. This enables it to find carrion from a distance as well as below a forest canopy. It often flies close to the ground in its teetering V shape as it sniffs out the next meal. They can also be observed soaring high on afternoon thermals.

The Vultures of North America are in a different taxonomic family than the European vultures. This means they are not particularly closely related. In spite of this they have many similar characteristics; very broad wings, bald (featherless) heads, well developed sense of smell and the habit of feeding on carrion. This is an example of convergent evolution (species with similar habits may develop similar physical characteristics).

In North America the classic western scene of buzzards flying over a lost cowboy in the middle of the desert leaves many of us with a creepy feeling of approaching death when we see Turkey Vultures. In several cultures this is not the case at all as they are seen as almost sacred for their “cleanup abilities”. The dead are offered up to the vultures who release the soul of the deceased. Cathartes aura means either golden purifier or purifying breeze.

The next time you see what you think to be an Eagle or a large raven have a closer look for the wobbling V shaped flight pattern and don't get the creeps after all it is a “golden purifier”.

Some of my Summer Birding Highlights and Photos

By Jim Sims

In the June newsletter I reported on a Rufous Hummingbird nest that I had found in my Rose Lake yard. On July 2nd, just after I had returned following a week at the cabin I was excited to find the 2 young Hummers were leaving the nest. One was still sitting on the side of the tiny nest that was now flattened out by the 2 small fledglings while the other one was perched on a nearby branch. It was not long before they had both taken flight.

I was very disappointed that the Eagle Lake Arctic Terns did not have a successful nesting season. It would appear that a nest was never established. One benefit was that the Terns remained at the lake much longer than they did on years when they had young. In 2013 and this year no young were fledged and the adults remained at the lake until the middle of August. On all of the other years they had left with the family before the first of August. One day while walking the shore a Tern found a school of minnows very close to where we were walking and it started feeding. It hovered over the school and then dove into the water several times while I put my camera to the test of following the bird and staying in focus.



Toby's photo from Springhouse shows the Vultures bald head



Rose Lake Fledgling



All summer there were 4 adult Terns usually in the public recreation site bay. In mid-August it appeared that 2 were forming a pair as a male flew around a female carrying a minnow in its bill. It offered the meal to the female several times and also attempted to land on top of it and mate. The female realized that given the late date that this was a

foolish idea. Hopefully this is a good sign for next year, he “will get lucky” and we will once again have a breeding pair of Arctic terns at Eagle Lake. On our last walk to the bay in mid-August we observed 4 additional Terns flying with the original 4, another hope for next year.

We also had a pair of Caspian Terns at Eagle Lake for one of the few sightings in the region this summer. It was interesting to contrast the 2 species, the much larger Caspian (close to the size of a large Gull), its bulkier bill, and shorter tail.



I found this juvenile Red-necked Phalarope feeding on tiny insects while running around on the lily pads at Rose Lake. I was out in the canoe enjoying a summer evening paddle on July 27th. Before I returned home I had found a couple more.

These photos and observations have previously been shared on the Cariboo-Chilcotin-Birds Google Group. This is an email forum that is used by some of the club members and others who are interested in sharing their bird sightings. The group provides an opportunity for the members to exchange emails with photos and observation stories and to also ask for help with identification. If you wish to join the group you can contact Phil Ranson at ranson1@telus.net.

Our View of the Night Sky – September - October 2014.

Planet Review

Saturn and Mars are visible low in the southwest evening sky. Check out Mars close to the star Antares on Sept. 29 - both are a reddish colour. On Sept. 27 - 29 the moon lies close to Saturn and Mars. Jupiter continues to rise in the early morning pre-dawn sky in the east. Look for Uranus as a pale green fuzzy object less than a moon's diameter below the moon on the night of the lunar eclipse (early morning on Oct. 8).

Meteor showers

The next forecast meteor shower is the Orionids on **October 21**.

Sun - Partial Solar Eclipse

There will be a partial solar eclipse (approx. 70%) in the afternoon of Thursday, October 23. The eclipse starts around 1:30 p.m., mid-eclipse is around 2:55, the eclipse ends around 4:16. Do NOT look at the sun without proper eye protection! No part of this eclipse is safe to view without filters. Check out web sites that explain what proper eye protection is.

Moon - Lunar Eclipse

There is a total eclipse of the full moon in the early hours on Wed., October 8. This is the Northern Hemisphere's Hunter's Moon – the name for the full moon after the Harvest Moon. It's also a [Blood Moon](#), and this eclipse is the second in a series of four so-called Blood Moon eclipses. The total lunar eclipse happens in the wee hours *before sunrise* on October 8. The full eclipse happens between 3:20 & 4:25 a.m.

If you happen to be watching the eclipse be sure to look for the Milky Way getting brighter as the moon dims during the full eclipse!

Comet PanSTARRS C/2012 K1 Update

Visible very low in the eastern sky during morning twilight at ~ 04:00 a.m. below Jupiter. Check it out during the lunar eclipse on the morning of Oct. 8th.

Other

For two weeks after Sept. 21 and Oct. 20 in the eastern dawn sky - the zodiacal light – or *false dawn* – is an eerie light extending up from the eastern horizon. The light looks like a hazy pyramid of light extending up from the horizon.

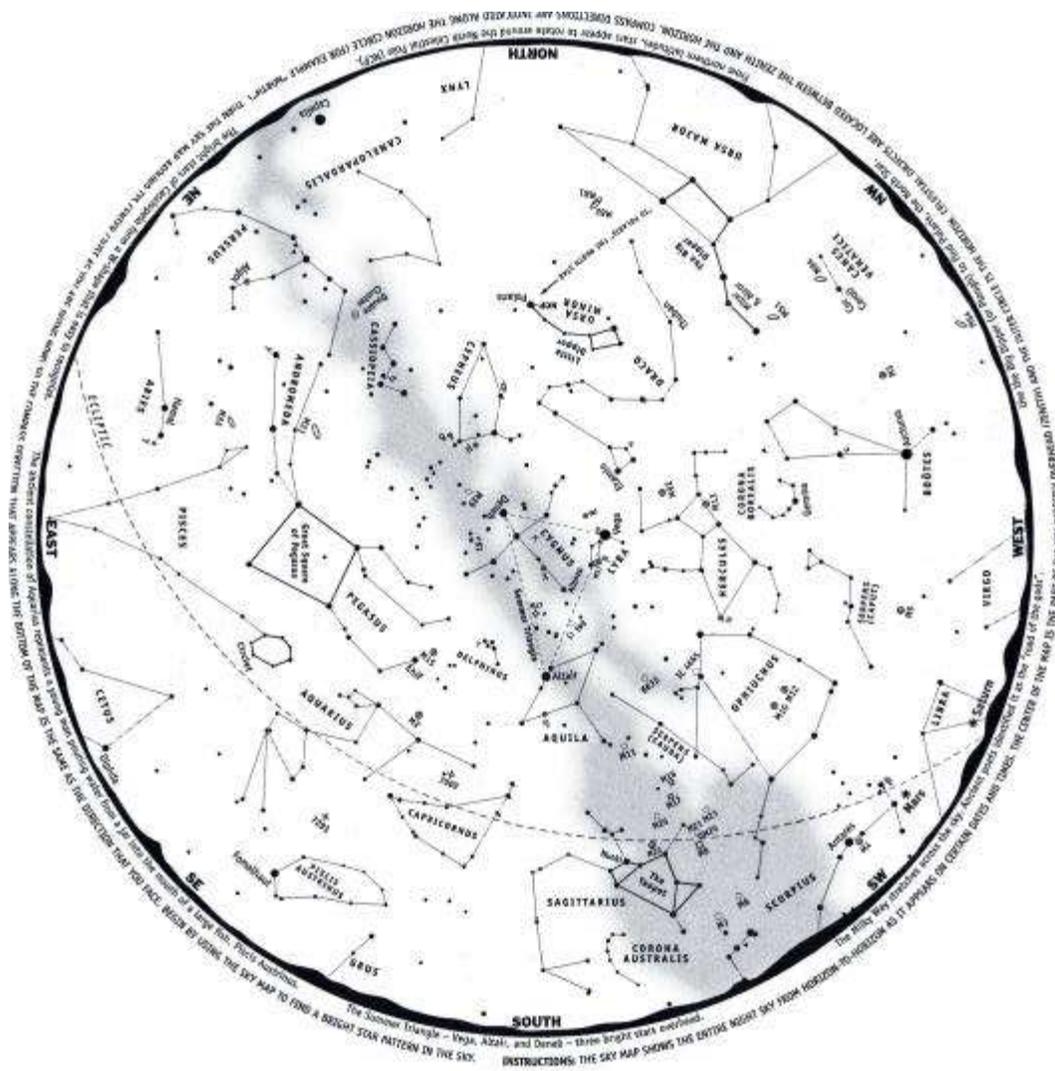
Saturday, September 20

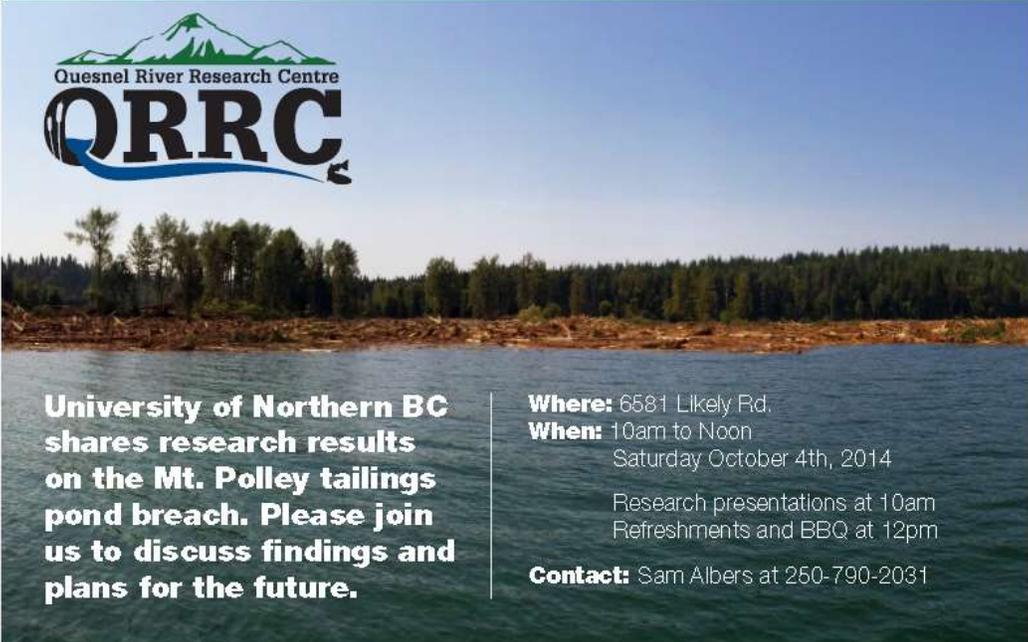
The variable star Algol should be at its minimum light again for a couple of hours centered on 7:55 p.m.

- See more at: <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/observing/weeks-sky-glance-september-1220/#sthash.wfkCVX37.dpuf>

Evening Sky Map – courtesy of Skymaps.com.

The following night sky chart is from the web site – www.Skymaps.com/downloads.html - scroll down the center of the page to the download button to obtain a pdf format chart. “September 2014: Northern Edition (PDF):” At the end of the month it changes to show the next month’s chart.





University of Northern BC shares research results on the Mt. Polley tailings pond breach. Please join us to discuss findings and plans for the future.

Where: 6581 Likely Rd.
When: 10am to Noon
Saturday October 4th, 2014
Research presentations at 10am
Refreshments and BBQ at 12pm

Contact: Sam Albers at 250-790-2031