

# MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS  
MAY-JUNE 2007 NEWSLETTER

8:30 AM

BIRD WATCHING  
FOR ME!

## MARSH FEST

I'm  
looking for  
snacks on a  
PLANT WALK

EXPLORE  
THE  
MARSH

VOYAGEUR  
CANOE  
TRIPS

### JUNE 9





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

**Membership fees:** Family (\$27) or single (\$22) memberships can be mailed to the above address. Please include your address and phone number with your membership fee. 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)

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

**Editors:** If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the Muskrat please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (296-3636) or e-mail [simsj@telus.net](mailto:simsj@telus.net)

## **Marsh Festival June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at the Nature Centre**

### **Program at the Nature Centre on Friday June 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm**

Officials from the Nature Conservancy will present a short multimedia show in celebration of The Nature Conservancy's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Scout Island Nature Centre was one of their first land acquisitions. Following their program Ray Coupe will present a second Multimedia program called "Mountains of the Cariboo". Ray is one of the authors of the popular books on plants, "Plants of Northern British Columbia" and "Plants of Southern Interior British Columbia".

### **Nature Exploration for all ages Saturday June 9<sup>th</sup>**

8:30                Birding with Cathy Koot  
10:00              What is That Plant and Why is it Growing There with Sue Hemphill  
11:00 & 2:00    All About Water with Jenny Howel  
1:00                All you Ever Wanted to Know about Bees with Diane Dunnaway  
12:00 to 3:00    Swim Like a Salmon and Paint a Dream Fish

### **All Day Long Activities Saturday June 9<sup>th</sup>**

Ride the Waves in a Voyageur Canoe—you will be out on Williams Lake helping to paddle  
Marsh Adventures –dipping for bugs, looking for turtles, snakes and lots more  
Nature Stories—drama and book reading  
Visit with the Ocean Tank Creatures

Call 398 8532 for more information or if you would like to help out with this event.

## **Chilanko Marsh Field Trip report**

The May 12<sup>th</sup> outing at Chilanko Marsh was another successful trip. A total of 77 species were observed on a warm mainly sunny day following a very cold Friday night. All of the regular species were recorded and we had no new sightings. A Sora put on a bathing display beside the tanker base just as we were about to leave. Several Least Sandpipers were busy feeding along the muddy shore of one of the ponds in the village of Puntzi. They were easily approached and provided excellent photo opportunities. While we were watching the sandpipers a Ring-billed Gull landed on the pond long enough for the ring to be identified. This was only the second confirmed sighting of the ring-billed. The Yellow-rumped Warblers were very numerous. Several White-crowned Sparrows were also there along with some Golden-crowns.



**Least Sandpiper**

## **Scout Island Nature Centre Report**

Summer staff is working hard learning about birds, bugs, etc. and setting up live displays. The first school classes have already visited. Come in and meet the summer staff: Krysta Thomson (returning from 2006), Nicole Lirette, and Sandy Lord. Ian Higgins continues to be the Nature House host on Sundays. The Nature House hours for May and June are: Monday-Wednesday 8:30 –4:30, Thursday-Friday 8:30-6 (unless all staff members are busy with school classes), and Sunday 1-4. July and August, the Nature House will also be open on Saturday 1-4.

The annual report for Scout Island Nature Centre has been completed. Copies are available at the Nature Centre.

The loafing logs that were placed at the river outflow have been a big hit with the Geese, ducks and the visitors to the Nature Centre. The cedar logs were cut in half and some were placed flat side up and some with the round side up. In this photo six American Widgeon have selected one of the logs with the round side up.



A miniature video camera has been installed in the roof of this swallow nesting box at Scout Island. The camera is connected to a VCR and a monitor inside of the Nature House. We have been able to watch and listen to the pair of Tree Swallows build their nest inside the box and we are awaiting the arrival of the first eggs. The activity is periodically recorded and we will be able to produce a video of the activity once the young have left. If anyone has a VCR that is no longer in use we could replace Jim's so he can have his at home where he can edit the tapes.

## Scout Island Nature Centre Summer Program

### Nature Fun 2007

**Come and discover the exciting world of nature!**

#### July 3-August 24th

**Ages 3 to 8** Monday to Friday morning and afternoon sessions Cost \$9

Each day there are outdoor activities that provide opportunities to explore and learn about nature, as well as games and crafts to add to the enjoyment. Activities are based on weekly themes.

**Ages 8 to 13** Wednesdays 1-3pm Cost \$9 and Fridays all day 9-3pm \*bring your lunch! Cost \$15  
Exploration, investigation and adventure for curious and adventuresome children

#### Sign up Soon

For information and to register for any of the programs call us at 398-8532 or come down to the Nature House.

#### Free Family Evening Programs

Every Wednesday (we think that will be the day) evening 7:00 pm during the summer, there will be nature programs covering a wide range of topics. Call the Nature Centre for the schedule or check out the newspaper or city website.

#### New Treasurer

We would like to thank Katharine VanSpall for volunteering to replace Nola as our treasurer.

#### Plant and Yard Sale

This year's sale was once again a big success. We raised approximately \$800, more than enough for the \$600 scholarship and enough left over to help with programs at Scout Island. A special thank-you to Gloria Atamanenko for all of the very popular tomato plants, also to Margaret for organizing the sale as well as all of the volunteers.

**Welcome to new members** Sharon Henry and Scott and Julie Sollenberger

#### Bird Sightings from the Williams Lake Area      May 19, 2007

On May 8th Kris reported "*The Loons have been checking out the platform in front of the house. Last night one flopped up on top of it for a few seconds a couple of times. The pair hung out for at least an hour in the causeway area, sometimes right in front of the beaver who was nibbling at things along the causeway. This afternoon around 3:30 pm they swam over to the platform and mated.*" We do not know if or where they have nested? Kris provided the photo.



**Mating loons on nest platform**

A few **Pelicans** are still making an occasional visit to the East end of Williams Lake.

The first **goslings** were reported at Scout Island on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Jim provided the photo of this family swimming near the outflow on May 9<sup>th</sup>. When this pair of Common Goldeneye saw me standing on the shore of Eagle lake on



**Goslings at Scout Island**



**Barrow's Goldeneye**

May 14<sup>th</sup> they quickly swam over close to where I was standing.

Then they swam around in front of me as though I might throw them some food. I'll have to check with Eve to see if she has been feeding them. They were not even bothered by the dog that was standing beside me.

The first **Osprey** was reported at Scout Island on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

Phil notes that there have been no reports of **Black Terns** so far this year. The 1992 Cariboo checklist has Black Terns as fairly common from the end of April. Is this a status change as last year the first sighting was towards the end of May? This **Bonaparte's Gull** was observed breeding with its mate on Eagle Lake on May 13<sup>th</sup>. We would not have noticed if they had not made such a ruckus.



**Bonaparte's Gull**

Why did this Ruffed Grouse cross the road? He wanted to check out the good looking chick on the other side. This guy was in full breeding display on May 14<sup>th</sup> beside the road near the boat launch on Bluff Lake. The female was waiting for him on the other side of the road.



**Ruffed Grouse**

On May 11<sup>th</sup> Singing gloriously in Manfred's yard, near Milburn Lake, was a male "**BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK!**" This species is more

typical of the Okanogan and wanders occasionally into the Cariboo in the drier riparian areas so this report for higher latitudes and elevation is remarkable. There is another record for Quesnel in May from 1989.

A flock of about 40 **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** were over Farwell Canyon on April 1<sup>st</sup> and another group of 5 were flitting along the switchbacks. A few **Evening Grosbeaks** have been showing up at feeders. On May 14<sup>th</sup> a few arrived at Rose Lake and the next day a male was at the Scout Island Day Care feeder. **Purple Finches** started to arrive back on the April 1<sup>st</sup>. By May 6<sup>th</sup> they were being reported at many feeders in the area. On May 8<sup>th</sup> there were 35 on and around the feeder at Rose Lake. Now they can be heard singing all day long.

My bird reports have been getting shorter with each month. I need to get more of your interesting stories behind your sightings and photos.

Jim Sims

**Thanks for keeping your membership up to date. Cathy is happy to report that all of you paid your 2007 membership fees!**