

# MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS  
FEBRUARY - MARCH 2009 NEWSLETTER

BANQUET  
FRIDAY APRIL 3



FRIDAY MARCH 27  
WINTER SOCIAL (IN SPRING!)  
POT LUCK  
AGM.



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 us at [muskrat@midbc.com](mailto:muskrat@midbc.com)

### **Formation of a New Organization to Support Churn Creek Protected Area**

An organization to support Churn Creek Protected Area is being formed. Tentatively called the "Friends of Churn Creek Protected Area", a formative meeting will be held at Thompson Rivers University in Williams Lake on Saturday April 18, 2009, from 12:30 to 5:00. The broad purpose of this new organization is to support implementation of the Churn Creek Protected Area (CCPA) management plan with its vision to:

*...conserve and restore nationally significant grasslands and wildlife populations while maintaining a viable, year-round working ranch. The fragile nature of the grasslands and wetlands and their importance for wildlife habitat are recognized in the plan. Protected area management also reflects the historic importance of the Churn Creek ecosystems for First Nations, ranchers, hunters, miners, and recreational users. (from "Management Plan for Churn Creek Protected Area")*

This organization will be separate from government and is proposed to become a registered, non-profit society.

The meeting is open to the public, following a Local Advisory Group meeting for CCPA in the morning. Objectives of the formative meeting are to:

- Raise public awareness and endorsement of the new organization;
- Define vision, goals and objectives of the organization and activities for 2009;
- Define the structure and membership and elect an executive.

Further information and registration forms for this meeting as well as membership forms for the "Friends of Churn" are available from Ordell Steen ([oasteen@shaw.ca](mailto:oasteen@shaw.ca)) (after March 20), Glen Davidson ([gcdavidson@shaw.ca](mailto:gcdavidson@shaw.ca)), or Mike Kennedy ([mspkenedy@yahoo.com](mailto:mspkenedy@yahoo.com)). Organizers of the meeting sincerely thank Thompson Rivers University for providing space for the meeting.

## BC Breeding Bird Atlas

Meeting at Scout Island Nature Centre March 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am

Join us to find out more about the BC Breeding Bird Atlas and how you can contribute to this important initiative - and have fun. Bird Atlassing is available to all, whether you want to report breeding activity in your yard, neighbourhood or on your daily walk; or claim any one of the 390 - 10Km x 10 km survey squares in the Cariboo for yourself. Find out how it's done by joining Phil Ranson, the Cariboo Region Atlas Coordinator at the Nature Centre at 10:00 am. on Saturday March 28 for a 2 hour informal workshop on the different survey methods and how to enter the data, either on-line or in pencil. This is the second year of a 5 year program which will set base line data for the status of breeding birds within the Province and map the strategies for preserving our species at risk and determining which species may soon be at risk and which species are thriving. Contact Phil Ranson at 398-7110 or reply to the [Muskkrat@midbc.com](mailto:Muskkrat@midbc.com) for more details.

## REMINDER! Winter Social and AGM

PLEASE! Join us for our annual Winter Social and AGM on **Friday March 27<sup>th</sup>** at The Nature Centre.

- Pot luck supper starting at 6:00pm
- Meal will be followed by a very brief AGM
- Following the AGM Kris Andrews will present "**Wildflowers of Sichuan and Yunnan**": from her bus journey through the mountains of western China in search of wildflowers, with a glimpse of Tibet.

Remember that we need better participation in order to maintain some of our very important grants for Scout Island. Our summer student staff will soon be back and this year we anticipate there could be financial problems. We hope to see you there for this most entertaining social evening.

## REMINDER "The Art of Nature: An Evening with Ken Ferris".

### Annual Fund Raising Banquet

**Friday April 3<sup>rd</sup>** at the United Church (Pre-meal social begins at 6:30pm)

**Ticket \$30 are available from the executive or "The Open Book**

Ken will bring some of his original paintings, and sketches to show the process used to produce a final painting. He will also talk about how his art has progressed over the years. He will give greater insight into some of his paintings; why he chose to paint them, how he got the ideas for the subject, the composition, and the scene. Please plan on joining us again this year for another very entertaining evening. More details in the January Muskrat.



### Annual Plant and Yard Sale

It is time to start thinking about our annual plant and yard sale that will be held on **May 9<sup>th</sup>**. If you are starting some plants please include a few extras for the sale. Perhaps you could also set aside a box to start collecting some of your treasures that are no longer of use. The proceeds from the sale provide a bursary for a graduating student who is perusing further education in the field of biological sciences. Margaret Waring will be coordinating the sale again this year. If you have questions of her you can reach her at 398-7724 or at [muskrat@midbc.com](mailto:muskrat@midbc.com)

### Field Trip Planning Meeting

Tuesday March 31<sup>st</sup> at 5:00pm at The Nature centre

There is a promise for warmer weather to arrive soon so it is time for us to start to think about some more club outings for this year. If you want to lead a trip or if you have an idea for one but you need a leader please attend the meeting or you could contact Fred (392-7680) or Jim (296-3638) or [muskrat@midbc.com](mailto:muskrat@midbc.com)

### Breeding Bird Boat Tour of the Fraser River

Kris Andrews, Sandy Proulx and I hiked down the north side of the Chilcotin River early last April to check out the breeding bird habitat in an oxbow a couple of kilometres downstream from Farwell Canyon. We were a little early in the season but realized the potential of these isolated riparian oases along the riverbank for breeding birds. We talked at that time about the numerous areas along the lower Chilcotin and the dry Fraser that were inaccessible to all but the most determined hiker, and the possibility of taking a boat into these places during the height of the



breeding season. We have formulated a tentative plan for this season. Using Google Earth we have identified about 10-12 potential areas we would like to visit from Sheep Creek to Dog Creek and possibly beyond. The primary purpose is to conduct breeding bird atlas surveys but there is also an element of adventure in visiting these hard to get to places. Cariboo Chilcotin Jetboat Adventures will charter a 12 passenger boat for the estimated 10 hour trip. The plan is not confirmed and there are some variables and unknowns that must be considered. The peak breeding season could coincide with peak water levels along the Fraser and high water usually means a lot of debris. Once confirmed we must hope for reasonable weather on the day. Which day is still undecided but mid-June would ensure the greatest variety and bird activity. Start and end point would be the Sheep Creek Bridge and costs are estimated at \$220 person if the boat is full. We currently have 7 people interested.

If this would be of interest to you please contact Phil at [ranson1@telus.net](mailto:ranson1@telus.net) or 398-7110

*Please note that at this time the trip has not been endorsed by the Williams Lake Field*

### Scout Island nature Centre Report

by: Sue Hemphill

Don't let the snow and cold get you down—go outside and play. That is what visitors to Scout Island have been doing. One of the favorite things to do is to follow the tracks in the snow. This

is the way we discovered that there are hares hopping on Scout Island. Another favorite pass time is watching the Short-eared Owl dive into the snow. And yes there are signs of spring. There are Robins and Varied Thrushes and even the odd House Finch and the pussy willows are starting to show. Scout Island is a great place to bring children during the Spring Break. The Nature House will be open to the public March 17 to 20 from 1 to 4 pm each day thanks to our Katimavik volunteer Jeremie Coote. Then March 24-26 will be a Spring Break program that will have Children (ages 6-13) outside exploring, playing games and having adventure every day from 9:30 -4:30.

March 24: Owls Hoot and Song Birds Sing

March 25: Skulls and Tracks (be a Detective)

March 26: We'll go Wild

Sign up for one day or all three (call 398-8532 for more information and to register)

The Nature Centre will continue with early spring programs through March and April. Classes and Community groups can book "Snow Fun" and "Spring Birding" programs. All are welcome to join Patricia Spencer as she helps you learn about tracks on March 21<sup>st</sup> 10:00 an till noon at the Nature CENTRE. We are also getting ready for the Spring Scholl programs. Summer Staff( high school and university student) will be hired soon. Resumes can be sent to [shemphill@wlake.com](mailto:shemphill@wlake.com) or call 398-8532 for more information.

## **A Brief History of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists Club**

**1971 - 2007**

By: Fred McMechan

The Williams Lake Field Naturalists Club (WLFN) was formed in 1971. In that year Elton Anderson of the Federation of BC Naturalists (FBCN) came to Williams Lake to encourage local naturalists to form a club. The first executive of the WLFN was Anna Roberts-president, Winnie Bennie-vice president and Carole Thompson, secretary-treasurer. The WLFN became the fourteenth club of the FBCN and was incorporated under the Society Act of British Columbia in 1977.

The principal focus of the WLFN since its inception has been to increase awareness and understanding of the world of nature in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Every year the club has provided nature education programs for school and pre-school aged children at Scout Island Nature Centre as well as several indoor and outdoor programs for adults. The club has also promoted the conservation and wise management of natural areas in British Columbia, especially in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, and has been involved in many land use planning processes.

Many people from the Williams Lake area have served on the executive of the WLFN. In the 1970's, presidents were Anna Roberts, Larry Hollbrook, George Barker and Jim Hilton. From 1978 to the present Fred McMechan has served as the president. Treasurers who managed the finances for extended periods were Karen Willies, Jean Oke, Lorna McLagan, Audrey Stromberg, Nola Daintith and Katharine VanSpall. Winnie Bennie was the secretary from the early 1970's to 1992. Since then the secretaries have been Maureen Dunlop, Lyn Konowalyk, Nola Daintith, Charlene Smythe and Kris Andrews. Members who acted as vice presidents at various times are Frances Vyse, Ordell Steen and Jim Sims. Many acted as directors for two or

more years; they include Margaret Waring, Bette McLennan, Ordell Steen, Anna Roberts, Michaela Waterhouse, Kristi Iverson, Cathy Koot and Rob Higgins.

The "Muskrat Express", the newsletter of the WLFN, was first published in the late 1970's and continues to inform membership several times per year of natural history, conservation, land use planning, and Scout Island Nature Centre news. The editor until 1998 was Fred McMechan and since then editors have been Jim Sims and Margaret Waring. Articles on birds and bird sightings have been in every issue along with topics on management and operation of Scout Island Nature Centre. Jean Waite wrote an article entitled "Bird Sightings in the Williams Lake Area" until 1992 when Jim Sims took over. Linda Durrell contributed an article on bird sightings near her home along the Chilcotin River from the early 1980's until 2005. Information in these articles has increased provincial understanding of bird migrations.

Over the years, the club has presented many natural history awareness programs for the public at the Scout Island Nature House and at an annual spring banquet. Presentations have been made by club members as well as invited speakers from many parts of British Columbia. In 2006 a series of six programs was presented to the public including "An Introduction to Cariboo Birds" by Cathy Koot, "Bats of the Cariboo-Chilcotin" and "Butterfly Watching" by Anna Roberts, "Ants" by Rob Higgins, and "Grasslands of the Cariboo-Chilcotin" and "Forests of the Cariboo-Chilcotin" by Ordell Steen. Members that have made presentations to the Elder College on behalf of the WLFN include Cathy Koot, Anna Roberts, Phil Ranson, and Jim Sims.

Every year the WLFN organizes a series of natural history oriented field trips into the Cariboo-Chilcotin for members of the club and usually led by members of the club. Areas visited frequently include Alkali Lake in the early spring; Chilanko Marsh in the Chilcotin; the Williams Lake River Valley and Scout Island Nature Centre; the Chilcotin grasslands at Riske Creek, Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park and Churn Creek Protected Area; various Cariboo-Chilcotin lakes; and alpine areas such as Eureka Peak in the upper Horsefly river valley.

The WLFN has developed several guides to the natural history of the Cariboo Chilcotin, which are available to the public at Scout Island Nature House. These include "Cariboo Field Checklist of Birds" (1976) and "Checklist of Cariboo Birds" (1992) prepared by Anna Roberts and Martin Gebauer. The first plant guide for the Williams Lake area, "Some of the Plants on and Near Scout Island" was prepared by Jean Waite in 1977. Gina Roberts, Naomi Roberts, and Anna Roberts prepared several guides including "Vertebrates of the Williams Lake Valley", "Common Butterflies of the Cariboo-Chilcotin", "Ants in the Cariboo-Chilcotin", "Trees and Shrubs in the Williams Lake Valley" and "The Wet Sock Guide to Living Things in the Water". Several additional guides have been prepared by Gina Roberts specifically for children.

The WLFN has been a member since 1971 of the Federation of BC Naturalists (now BC Nature) which is the provincial organization that provides a unified voice for naturalist clubs in BC. The WLFN hosted the annual general meeting of the FBCN in 1978, 1988 and 2001. In 2005 the WLFN hosted a FBCN nature camp at the Gavin Lake Forest Education Centre. Nature-oriented field trips included visits to the UBC Research Forest, Beaver Valley wetlands, Quesnel Forks and the Chilcotin grasslands. WLFN members who led field trips or otherwise assisted with this event included Kris Andrews, Fred McMechan, Cathy Koot, Michaela Waterhouse, Richard

Case, Sue Hemphill, Pat Teti, Ordell Steen, Kristi Iverson, Ken McKenzie, Rob Higgins and Joanne Wright.

Each year since 1971, the Christmas Bird Count for the Williams Lake area has been organized by the WLFN. Club members and others tally numbers of birds by species along designated routes and at backyard feeders. The Christmas Bird Count is a North America-wide event; results are sent to Bird Studies Canada who coordinates the counts in conjunction with the National Audubon Society in the USA. Each year, the Williams Lake count is announced and results reported in the Williams Lake Tribune. Coordinators for the Williams Lake count have included Anna Roberts, Bette McLennan and Phil Ranson. The public is always invited to participate.

The Bluebird House Project was initiated in 1978 on the grasslands near Riske Creek with a goal to increase the bluebird population in the area. Large numbers of bluebird houses have been put out and are being maintained and monitored annually by club members. The initial objective was to increase the bluebird population as a biological control for grasshoppers and their consumption of grassland plants. The project was initiated under the direction of the Becher's Prairie Resource Management Committee and funding was provided by the Federal government to construct and install bluebird houses. There has been a dramatic increase in the bluebird population since inception of the project. Anna Roberts has coordinated the project for the WLFN and studied the best placement and design of houses. Other monitors have included Bette McLennan, Libby Abbott, Chris Coates, Margaret Waring, Rick Dawson, Steve Howard, Jean Oke, Lloyd Csizmadia, Michaela Waterhouse, Bev and George Butcher, Leo Rankin, Connie Haussler, Christine Constabel, Jim Sims, Ordell Steen, Pat Teti, Fred McMechan, Roger Hamilton, Kris Andrews, Denise Dechene, Sandy Proulx, and Fred and Winnie Bennie.

Public appreciation and non-motorized use of the Williams Lake River Valley has long been promoted by the WLFN. In the early 1970's, a government grant was obtained by the WLFN for cleanup and construction of a trail in the upper valley. In 1975 the WLFN submitted a report entitled "The Williams Lake Creek Valley: A Conservation Proposal" prepared by George Barker, Winnie Bennie, Carole Thompson, Anna Roberts, Frances Vyse and Mike Yates. The report included a set of recommendations to preserve the natural values of the valley, disallow physical disturbances such as gravel removal, and construct a public access trail. In 1978 the Ministry of Environment prepared "The Williams Lake Creek Valley Land Use Plan" which addressed many of the WLFN recommendations. In 1988 the WLFN participated in the planning process that resulted in the establishment of a Ministry of Forests and Lands Recreation Reserve in the valley. Input was also provided to the preparation of the Williams Lake Rotary Trail Plan which resulted in construction of the present trail system. In 2001 and 2002 the WLFN contributed to the plan initiated by the City of Williams Lake to manage the trail system in the valley.

The WLFN has been involved in many other land planning processes. In the 1970's, the WLFN contributed to a report to establish and manage the Junction Wildlife Management Area. In those same years, a proposal was developed to establish a provincial park on the Snowshoe Plateau. Club members who prepared this proposal were Alan Vyse, Carole Thompson, Jim Hilton, Tom Mackenzie, John Morrison and Anna Roberts. In the 1990's the WLFN was active

in the development of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan. Members also represented the club in the development of management plans for Bowron Lakes, Cariboo Mountains, Cariboo River, Junction Sheep Range, Ts'yl-os, Flat Lake, and Itcha-Ilgachuz provincial parks, and Churn Creek Protected Area.

Since 1997 the WLFN has given a bursary to a graduating high school student who plans to attend a university or college to further their education in the biological sciences. A plant and yard sale each spring provides funds for the bursary amount. Winnie Bennie coordinated the sale each year until 2007 when Margaret Waring volunteered to be the coordinator.

### **Scout Island Nature Centre**

Operation, development, and maintenance of the Scout Island Nature Centre have been a major focus and contribution of the WLFN since 1977. The WLFN operates the Nature Centre in partnership with The Nature Trust of BC and the City of Williams Lake, based on a 1977 sublease between the WLFN and the Williams Lake Town Council. This sublease was based on the conditions of the main lease agreement between the Town and The Nature Trust of BC, the land conservancy which owns most of the Nature Centre property.

The elected executive of the WLFN has functioned each year as the administrative body for operation of Scout Island Nature Centre. Securing funds for operation of the Nature Centre is a principal task of the executive and the Nature Centre coordinator. Funds are needed to:

- employ staff, including the coordinator, teacher naturalists, preschool teachers, bookkeeper and janitor;
- carry out repairs or improvements to the Nature House and Nature Centre area ; and
- purchase educational services and supplies.

Funds have come from public fund raising appeals, annual Nature Centre banquets, fees-for-service from the City of Williams Lake, grants from provincial and federal agencies, grants from foundations, donations from local businesses, and a donation box at the Nature House.

A large number of volunteers and employees have contributed to operation and development of the Nature Centre and its programs. The WLFN has employed coordinators, teacher naturalists, university students, and preschool teachers. People who have been key to the development of the educational programs, training of the teacher-naturalists, and planning and development of the Nature Centre include:

- Frances Vyse, coordinator from 1977 to 1985, made significant contributions to early development of the Nature Centre;
- Jean Wellburn was the first teacher naturalist from 1978 to the early 1990's and started the program for preschool children called "Spiders, Snakes and Frogs" and initiated "Discovery Preschool", the nature-oriented preschool, in 1979;
- Bette McLennan was a teacher naturalist and coordinator in the 1980's;
- Anna and Gina Roberts were coordinators from the late 1980's to 2003;
- Sue Hemphill has been the coordinator from 2003 to the present;
- Margret Onneken and Marcia Aitkin have been pre-school teachers since 1993;

- Fred McMechan and Jim Sims have coordinated and done much of the planning and physical work to develop and maintain Nature Centre structures.

Services provided by the WLFN at the Nature Centre include:

- nature education programs for school classes;
- “Nature Fun”, a summer nature program for children;
- operation of “Discovery Preschool”, a nature oriented pre-school;
- nature programs for the general public;
- operation and development of the Nature House as a nature interpretive centre;
- welcoming tourists to the Nature Centre;
- construction and maintenance of trails, walkways, bridges interpretive kiosks and wildlife viewing structures at the Nature Centre;
- preparing written materials and displays about the natural history of the Cariboo-Chilcotin;
- planting native trees, shrubs and flowers to enhance the natural habitat;
- weed management at the Nature Centre; and
- input to protecting the west end of the lake and the marsh for their natural values.

In 1980 Gary Runka of G.G. Runka Land Sense outlined the ecological, educational and other values of the Nature Centre wetlands in a report prepared for the WLFN. A principal recommendation of the report was to establish an Order-in-Council Reserve on the wetlands to legislate their protection and management. After public meetings and approval by the City of Williams Lake, application for a Reserve was made by the WLFN in 1983. On January 4, 1984 the Cabinet of B.C. approved this Reserve through Order-in-Council #8.

A management plan for the Nature Centre was developed by the WLFN in 2002 and 2003. Jane Perry facilitated input from club members as a basis for writing the plan. The main objectives outlined in the management plan are to:

- expand nature educational programs for students and the general public;
- expand services for visitors, including tourists, to the Nature Centre;
- maintain or enhance the natural integrity of the Nature Centre's habitats; and
- encourage public use of the Nature Centre without jeopardizing the natural environment.

In 1988 the WLFN received the “Minister's Environmental Award” in environmental education from the Ministry of Environment and Parks. This award was in recognition of the nature education programs at Scout Island Nature Centre and was presented at Government House by the Hon. Bruce Strachan, Minister of Environment & Parks, and Lieutenant Governor Bob Rogers. Fred McMechan received the award on behalf of the WLFN.

In the early 1990's the Scout Island Nature Centre was recognized as one of the principal wildlife viewing sites in British Columbia under the Wildlife Watch program of the Ministry of Environment. Large numbers of people visit the Nature Centre each year, many of whom are tourists from all parts of Canada and many from other countries.

## **Where have all the Redpolls Gone?**

Researched by: Jim Sims

Yesterday I was having my mid afternoon tea by the kitchen nook window when I noticed what looked like a different bird flying near the feeder.

Eventually it appeared again from behind the trunk of a tree and there it was a Common Redpoll. Did they know that I planned to feature them in this month's newsletter? I wanted to get some photos so I quickly went outside and tried a few in some very testing light conditions. While I was busy snapping off pictures a Pine Grosbeak sang to me his beautiful spring song while perched in a nearby tree. Was he telling me that the -35° last night will be the last for this year! Phil's report from the weekend indicated that the Redpolls had started to move back into the area after being all but absent for the winter. Perhaps these are migrating Redpolls on their way back to the breeding grounds in the far north of the province. There were reports of a few at a couple of feeders in the region throughout the winter.



**Common Redpoll at Rose Lake March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Why do we experience a year like this with so few around and a few years ago we could easily have as many as fifty at our feeders at one time along with a salmonella problem caused by the over crowding. This year we had no sightings of Redpolls during the Christmas Bird Count but in 2004-5 we counted 504. Prince George recorded over 900 this Christmas but since then they have had very few until recently. Reports from Dawson Creek indicate there were good numbers on the east side of the mountains this winter.

It is expected that there are two reasons for their inconsistent presence. During the non breeding season they tend to travel in very large flocks so it is natural that they would be found in relatively few groups at any one time. The other reason is their dependence on deciduous seed crops in particular the catkins of birch and alder that produce large numbers of seeds. The Redpolls will search out prime sources of these seeds along river valleys or in logged areas. Other seed eating finches such as Pine Siskins, Grosbeaks, and Crossbills have very similar years of high and low numbers and when one species is low in numbers in an area the others are likely to follow.

References "The Birds of British Columbia" and results from the Christmas Bird Counts available at [http://cbc.audubon.org/cbccurrent/current\\_table.html](http://cbc.audubon.org/cbccurrent/current_table.html)

## **February Bird Sightings from the Williams Lake Area**

By: Phil Ranson

Predictions of Trumpeter Swans alighting in the open water at the Williams Lake outlet in late February were off by about one week. Swans were seen in flight on March 6<sup>th</sup> but were not seen on the water until a couple of days later. They were joining 4 pioneering Canada Geese who were already committed to ride out the last icy blast of winter. This group has now been joined by more Canada's, Common Goldeneye and a male Common Merganser.

Song Sparrows can be heard singing softly buried deep in the willows at Scout Island as though

adding any lustre to their song might be considered inappropriate for the conditions. The Nature Centre Red-winged Blackbirds are also cranking up in preparation. A flock of Red Crossbills were observed over Town for a first local sighting for many months, whether this along with the emergence of the Redpolls can be considered an impending sign of spring is unclear

Birds that set off too early often pay the penalty. Although the outcome will never be confirmed, the fate of a Tree Swallow that was found moribund at Tatla Lake in late February, warmed up and then released again by a resident can only be in doubt. Similarly, a Kestrel reported huddled on the wires along Hwy 97 last week must have been susceptible to the last of winters chill.

A Peregrine Falcon appeared over the Frizzi Rd Transfer station on March 7 much to the dismay of the resident crows and starlings. It landed on a hopper at the mill site long enough to be identified, and was quickly on its way. This may be the earliest spring sighting in the area for this species. Wintering Owls seem to be no hurry to leave with the Fox Mountain Hawk Owl first reported in mid-December still being seen on the same property. Pygmy Owls were in above average numbers this winter and are still being regularly reported. The 3 Short-eared Owls that graced the late afternoon landscape around Scout Island for most of January and early February are down to the occasional report of a single bird. Kris photographed what is believed to be the imprint of this species after it dived headlong into a snow bank to capture a rodent.



**Expected imprint of Short-eared Owl**

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**WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS MEMBERSHIP**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Cost: Family membership \$27 \_\_\_\_\_ Single membership \$22 \_\_\_\_\_

Membership cheque made out to Williams Lake Field Naturalists.

I have included a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ to the Scout Island Nature Centre Fund Raising Campaign (Please provide a separate cheque made out to Scout Island Nature Centre. A charitable receipt will be given.)

Please mail completed form and cheque to:

Williams Lake Field Naturalists - 1305A Borland Road - Williams Lake, BC - V2G 5K5