

# MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS  
APRIL 2009 NEWSLETTER





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

**Executive of The Williams Lake Field Naturalists:** president Fred McMechan, vice-president Jim Sims, secretary (**VOID**), treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, Ordell Steen, Beverly Anderson, 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)

### **AGM report**

Thank you to all of you who made the AGM a big success. The potluck goodies were delightful. A big thank you goes out to Kris for her amazing photos from China. We also need to thank Anna Roberts and Kris Andrews for their service to the club as they have both decided to step down from the executive this year. We welcome Beverley Anderson who was elected to replace Anna. I guess we also need to be thankful for the rest of the executive who have decided to continue for another year in their current positions (especially Fred). **Unfortunately we are still missing a secretary to replace Kris.** If you are interested in helping us out in this position we would greatly appreciate it (please call Fred).

### **Fund Raising Banquet**

Thank you to Ken Ferris for providing a glimpse into his amazing works of art. Thanks to the United Church catering crew who prepared a delicious meal and of course Joanne Wright for her delightful deserts. Thanks also to all of you who attended the annual fund raiser. It was a sold out event.

### **Birds of British Columbia – Species Updates**

Since the publication of the 4-volume set “*The Birds of British Columbia*” (1990-2001), the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies (BCFWS), a non-profit organization established in 2004 in British Columbia, has been publishing updated species accounts as “Featured Species” in their bi-annual journal *Wildlife Afield*. The comprehensive accounts may be of interest to naturalists as many have contributed information and each account includes a strong conservation component. As well, changes in arrival and departure dates and length of stay, suggesting partial implications of climate change impacting birds in the province are included.

To date, published accounts include **Canada Warbler** (66 pp.), **Common Loon** (75+ pp.), **Common Nighthawk** (53 pp.), **Heermann’s Gull** (53 pp.), **Semipalmated Plover** (7 pp.),

and **Turkey Vulture** (20 pp.). Accounts in preparation include **Clark's Grebe** and **Forster's Tern**.

Other published wildlife species include **Moose** (33 pp.), **Thinhorn Sheep** (9 pp.), and **Wood Frog** (9 pp.).

These accounts, except Common Loon which will be posted in September 2009, are available on-line as PDF files at [www.wildlifebc.org](http://www.wildlifebc.org). The loon account will be of special interest to members of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists. Two of the six authors, Anna Roberts and Kris Andrews, are WLFN members and the account is dedicated to "The loon Lady" – Winifred M. Bennie who was a co-founder of the club. Fred McMechan and Jim Sims have been helpful in providing information and especially in documenting the events around setting out a loon nesting platform on the lake.

Also on-line are 135 additional "Feature Articles" and "Notes" that can be downloaded for the first nine issues of *Wildlife Afield*. These include an assortment of peer-reviewed articles on status, distribution, food habits, natural history, population trends, conservation, and effects of climate change for amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals in British Columbia. Some articles are from the Cariboo-Chilcotin area.

A single supplement to *Wildlife Afield*, also on-line, has been issued as "*Roads and Wildlife*". This 60-page booklet contains eight papers on highway mortality in British Columbia and announces a provincial ROADWATCH BC program.

For more information contact R. WAYNE CAMPBELL, Director, BCFWS ([rwcampbell@shaw.ca](mailto:rwcampbell@shaw.ca)) or visit the web site.

*Submitted: 5 March 2009 (R. Wayne Campbell, Director BCFWS, Associate Editor, Wildlife Afield)*

## **Anna Roberts – Life Membership**

On Friday April 17, the Williams Lake Field Naturalists will present Anna Roberts with a life membership in recognition of her many contributions to our club and the Nature Centre. The presentation will be at the Scout Island Nature House starting at 7:30 p.m. following a pot luck supper at 6:00. Members not able to attend the supper may join us at 7:30.

Anna has been a principal contributor to our club since its formation in 1971. It was her initiative and inspiration that was principally responsible for formation of the club and she was the first president. She has been a key member of the executive for many years, serving both as director and treasurer and providing critical guidance to our development. During this time, she participated in several land-use planning processes such as for the Williams Lake River Valley and Ts'yl-os and Junction Sheep Range provincial parks. She has worked tirelessly to make Scout Island Nature Centre one of the best nature centres in the province since our club took over the operation in 1977. At the Nature Centre she was the educational coordinator from the mid 1980's to the early 2000's and was instrumental in the preparation of educational materials as well as the development of the displays in the Nature House. She has coordinated the Mountain Bluebird House Project since its beginning in the late 1970's. Her enthusiasm for learning about nature in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and for passing on her knowledge to others has provided many memorable field trips as well as a wealth of scientific and educational materials, including a 'Checklist of Cariboo Birds', guides to grasses, sedges, and wetlands, and descriptions of bats, butterflies, and biodiversity in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. She has always been a

keen mentor to anyone wanting to better understand the natural history of the region or to participate in the club and Nature Centre activities. Her enthusiasm and knowledge of natural history have enriched many, both within and outside the club.

Join us in saying thank you to Anna.

## **Bluebird Routes**

It is that time of year again to start thinking about cleaning out your nest boxes. The Bluebirds have returned and will soon be staking a territory. If you are in need of some bluebird boxes there is a good supply outside the block house at the Nature Centre. Any unused nests can be left for the birds to add to this year.

## **Plant and Yard Sale**

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> starting at 9:30am

It is now time to get serious about the yard sale. Try some new recipes for the goodie table, sort through your winter stack of pocket books, take some cuttings from your favorite house plants, add a few more bits of junk (treasures) to the box you set aside last month. It would help us a lot if you could price your items before you drop them off. Remember the proceeds from the sale will provide a scholarship to a grade 12 graduating student with plans to pursue further education in earth sciences. Left over funds will be donated to the education program at Scout Island.

### **Yard Sale details:**

Please drop sale items off at the Nature on Friday May 8th

Please call Margaret at 250 398 7724 if you can help with sale jobs which are pricing, set up on Friday night, at the sale on Saturday and the afternoon clean up

Of course the most needed is your donation of treasures, goodies, plants, junque, etc!

## **Cavity Nesting Birds of the Cariboo Chilcotin and Argentina**

An evening program presented by Andrea Norris on May 12, 7:30 pm at the Nature Centre

Andrea Norris is a PhD student at the Centre for Applied Conservation Research, in the Forestry department, at the University of British Columbia. She is investigating how outbreaks of forest insects, such as the mountain pine beetle and the western spruce budworm influence the population dynamics of cavity-nesting birds in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of British Columbia. Andrea and her research group have monitored cavity nester densities using point count and nest surveys on 27 forest stands, before (1997-2002), during (2003-2005), and following (2006-2008), a mountain pine beetle outbreak in British Columbia. The outbreak increased food availability for cavity-nesters, and caused a doubling in populations of woodpeckers, nuthatches, and chickadees. However, as the outbreak subsides and tree mortality causes needle loss, food abundance for many species, such as foliage gleaners, may be lower than it was before the



outbreak. Andrea will present her major findings from this research, and will present some other research that she conducted in Argentina on another cavity-nester project.

### Scout Island Nature Centre News



Spring Break program was lots of fun for the 12 children and four staff that took part. Despite the cold temperatures, we were outside playing and exploring every day. In fact, snow on the second day allowed us to track deer and squirrel. We found wood pecker skeletons, crawled in deer beds, and played outdoor games that were great fun and honed nature observation skills.

Speaking of playing out doors, children from the Youth for Christ after school program have been coming every Thursday afternoon to play outside with our new educator, Stephanie Bird .

You might recognize the name as she is also part of the caretaker team that includes her husband Mike and daughter Amina. Stephanie and the boys and girls have been digging snow caves, looking at tracks, and “walking on the water (frozen).” There have been a variety of other classes and schools that have come for a day of outdoor exploration. I am happy to report that all of the classes in the Salmonids in the Classroom program have successfully raised their eggs to the fry stage and the fry are eating and growing. I have visited many of the classes to discuss the watershed(s) their fry will be traveling in soon and the effect of each our Eco Prints on the watersheds. The mantra is “Shrink your Print, Don’t snuff the fry!”

The first ground prep and planting to restore the north side of the marsh will begin the end of April. The entire Katimavik crew will be available to help us begin this work. Ray Coupe and Richard Case will be helping to lead this work. We will **need more help with planting** later in the spring if you are interested in volunteering. We also need **volunteers to help with weed control** throughout the Nature Centre. Call Sue for details if you would like to adopt a section to work on (on your own time).

Several of our summer staff from 2008 will be returning including Sari Small, Wyatt Klopp, and Ian Higgins. New this year is Monica McMahan. We are still looking for a high school student who would like to be a teacher naturalist in training. Spring high school programs have started and the elementary programs will start May 4. The Nature House is open to the public on Saturdays (1-4) in April and Saturday and Sunday May-October. Here is another way you can help out. We need **volunteer hosts** for the weekend times so that the summer staff has most of their weekends free. If you would like to host, again call Sue for details and training times.

### Conservation News

*A Balanced Life: Creating a Sustainable Future Together*  
**Williams Lake Sustainability Fair**  
*Saturday June 13, 2009 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.*  
**Gibraltar Room & Boitania Park**

Join us in connecting as a community to share our excitement about sustainability and how we can achieve it for our future survival. A variety of groups will have displays and activities. Other planned features: special musical performances, Kids' Activities in the Gibraltar Room, in the Park and at Scout Island Nature Centre, Prize draws, Community Walk (and Bike Ride?), Round Table discussions with community leaders.

#### Prosperity Mine

The Williams Lake Field Naturalists submitted extensive comments regarding the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine Project and the draft EIS Guidelines in October 2008. If you would like to see a copy of these comments please contact Sue.

#### Eureka Peak

The WLFN are investigating the possibility of the legal recognition of the Eureka Trail so that funding would be available for moving a section of the trail that will soon be impacted by logging. This would allow continued access to the alpine area on a reasonable walking trail.

### **Scout Island Staff Sits on Sustainability Committee**

Sue, Jenny and Stephanie are all involved with Williams Lake's Sustainability Committee. (Did you know we had one?) The committee grew out of Climate Change meetings that MLA Bob Simpson organized in the Spring of 2008, and has been adopted as a sub-group of the CRD and City Council's Joint Committee. Our objective is to advise and influence the governing bodies of the Central Cariboo toward the greening of our communities. Since the Municipalities have signed onto the Premier's Climate Action Charter, they are required to become carbon neutral by 2012, and we aim to support them in that goal through research and consultation. Further, we work closely with groups such as the Food Policy Council, TRU's sustainability council, Air Quality Round Table, CCBAC's Sustainability Coordinator and other environmentally active groups on non-governmental projects. The Energy Fair at TRU in November was one of our projects, and a film series gets underway April 9 with a free screening at the library (7:00 pm). Sub-groups of the SC have formed around 3 topic areas: Energy, Education and Green Development Standards. Projects are underway in each of these groups. This is an open committee, meaning anyone is welcome to participate. Meetings are generally held the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm in the downstairs meeting room at city hall. Next one is May 7, and your ideas and energy will be warmly welcomed. Email Jenny [Neptune.noble@gmail.com](mailto:Neptune.noble@gmail.com) if you want any further information or want to be added to the email list.

### **Dead Wood is Needed for a Living Forest**

Rob Higgins

What do we mean by a word like 'Waste'? Generally we mean that it is useless and is a burden just to discard. The less the better.

Why then do we use this word to refer to the dead standing or fallen wood in our forests? It is anything but waste. Rather, it is a vital resource for countless animals, plants and micro-organisms in our forests. Its decayed fibre contributes organic material to our forest soils



and helps to buffer soil pH. It also acts as a water reservoir in forests where drought is common.

It can be called waste only if we do not understand its function in forest ecosystems or it can be called waste by those who want to use it for other purposes. This is the term used today by the BC government and the bioenergy industry to describe this resource.

Despite the desire by the modern forest industry to emulate (i.e., imitate) natural disturbances in log harvesting operations, the massive removal of tree biomass in no way emulates what normally occurs in nature. How much biomass can be removed before we see a serious disruption to the ability of forest soils to regenerate new growth is uncertain. Traditionally though, forestry operations in British Columbia have left more wood behind on cutblocks than occurs in most areas of the world. Still, this may not be enough.

Now, the bioenergy industry wants to greatly reduce the volume of remaining wood. On a visit to a local bioenergy facility I once heard a manager talk about obtaining a Swedish machine to scrape and bundle the smallest pieces of wood from the forest floor. Worse, the claim is made that this is a 'Green' technology.

This month the Williams Lake Field Naturalists will present a resolution to the Annual General Meeting of the Federation of BC Naturalists. It reads:

"Whereas, coarse woody debris (CWD) is a fundamental component of forest ecosystems, critical to:

- 1) providing habitat to many dead wood dependent organisms (e.g., fungi, insects, vertebrates) which in turn support a broader food web (e.g., insectivorous birds, bears);
- 2) providing energy to support forest resilience (e.g., ability to resist extensive damage from forest pests, climate change or invasive species);
- 3) providing water storage in ecosystems frequently experiencing drought;
- 4) providing pH buffering capacity to forest soils which become acidic as a result of biomass removal;
- 5) providing nutrient and structural components to forest soils in a province noted for low-productivity soils.

Whereas, management guidelines for CWD retention under the Forest and Range Practices Act are inadequate for protecting this resource under existing harvesting pressures, there is concern that additional plans for biomass removal by the bioenergy industry will exacerbate this problem.

Be It Resolved: That Nature BC communicate to the Government of BC the need to develop a science-based woody debris (organic matter) management system with the view that maintaining CWD is fundamental to the sound ecological management of our forests."

## Field Trips

The annual first field trip to Alkali Lake is scheduled for Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup>. If you have not taken in this annual outing why not join us this year for a leisurely drive to Alkali Lake with stops at all the favorite birding spots along the way. Thanks to all of the trip leaders for this years full schedule of trips. The complete list is attached to the end of the newsletter.

## March, April Bird Report

Phil Ranson

You really have to take full advantage of the spring waterfowl migration spectacle in the Cariboo because in the blink of an eye, it's over. Geese generally lead the parade seeking out the few bare spots to graze or areas of run off to root for rhizomes. Large expanses of field such as the Mission Flats, Sugarcane Flats or farmlands along the Fraser benches are favoured locations. These flocks are joined by Pintail, Wigeon, Mallard and Green-winged Teal.

To add a little spice to the birding opportunities, look amongst the Wigeon for the rusty red head and gray flanks of the male Eurasian Wigeon or search the small groups of Teal for a male bird which has



European Wigeon by Kris

the distinctive white shoulder crescent replaced by a white horizontal line across the mid section. This is the 'Common' or Eurasian Green-winged Teal which to the best of our knowledge will be heading to Alaska along with his Wigeon counterpart to make the perilous journey across the Bering Sea.



Green Winged and Eurasian Teal by Phil

The Cariboo is probably the best place in the interior to look for these birds in mid to late March and early April. Up to a dozen Eurasian Wigeon may be seen in a good days birding in early spring, and with a bit of luck a Eurasian Teal may be picked out. Two were in the 150 Mile pond on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Finding the females of these species is a different matter. A practiced eye may be able to pick out the subtle difference in colour of the Wigeon. This can be greatly assisted if the female is paired with a male. Good luck with the female Teal.

It's not uncommon to find hybrids of these species with seemingly red-headed Eurasian Wigeon showing the iridescent green sheen of the American counterpart around the eye. Similarly, Teal can be found showing traces of both the white shoulder patch of the American and the horizontal wing line of the Eurasian. There is speculation that the Eurasian Wigeon now breeds in N. America and a couple of mid summer sightings in the Cariboo in recent years may support this. There are very few fall records for either species indicating that either return migration occurs

mainly along the coast or that the fall 'eclipse' plumage of the males obscures the recognisable field marks.

With the change in the weather in the last week, many of the early arrivals will be moving on to be replaced by later species such as the Shoveler, Greater Scaup, Cinnamon Teal, Barrow's Goldeneye and Ruddy Ducks. These birds will be concentrated behind the ice as it slowly recedes from the bays. There will never be a better time to get close views of the array of waterfowl for which the Cariboo is renowned than in the next week or two.

## **Varied Thrush**

Researched by Jim Sims

Each year at this time I can expect a visit from one of my favorite species, the Varied Thrush. This one arrived under my feeder a couple of days ago. I often wondered why I usually see only one and my research answered the question. Apparently the males, but only rarely females, defend and maintain small feeding territories around bird feeders. They are aggressive and dominate many other feeder species. When defending a territory a male may try a Tail-Up display where the bird faces away from the intruder and holds its tail up to show off the gray-and-white patterned undertail coverts. If this did not work and the intruder keeps coming the male may turn around and give the Head-Forward display with the wings fanned to show off the orange wing stripe and the tail cocked up over the head showing the white corners.



The Georgia Basin is a popular winter habitat for this thrush. Christmas Bird Counts will often report over 1000 birds. The arbutus tree often produces a heavy fruit crop and this is a favorite of the Varied thrush. When food becomes scarcer they will often frequent feeders or parks with berry bushes. By this time of the year they will be starting their migration back to the summer breeding territory and on their way they may stop for a visit at your feeder. Their breeding habitat is usually dense coniferous forests where they remain very secretive often only being heard. It mainly feeds near the ground, foraging for invertebrates, but also eats berries and some seeds.

The male Varied Thrush is a striking bird, and is virtually unmistakable. It is similar in size to an American Robin but has a shorter tail and its posture is less upright. The orange breast, eye stripe and intricate patterned wings are distinctive in both the male and female. The male also has a dark breast band. Female and juvenile birds are browner above and the orange is more subdued. The breast band and facemask are a blotchy brown. The song is a long, often buzzy whistle on one pitch. Subsequent songs are given on different pitches.

Sources from "The Birds of British Columbia" and the following web sites  
[http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Varied\\_Thrush.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Varied_Thrush.html)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varied\\_Thrush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varied_Thrush)

## Calling All Chilcotin Bird Watchers: The BC Breeding Bird Atlas Needs You!

By John Woods, Regional Coordinator for Region 25 (Chilcotin)

Running just behind the Cariboo Region lead by Phil, 'Team Chilcotin' gathered evidence of 167 breeding bird species in 2008. While we all know that the Chilcotin is a great place to bird-watch, it is interesting to document that we are one of the top 5 regions of the province in terms of breeding birds observed during the first year of the Bird Atlas project (after the South Okanagan with 195 species, the Cariboo with 171, and tied with the Peace Region at 167).

What is really amazing is that about 14 observers submitted more than 1000 observations across 53 Atlas squares. Ten-by-ten km squares are the basic surveying units for the Atlas. The Chilcotin Region includes a staggering 483 squares—so we have a big job to survey a reasonable sample. The good news is that we have four years left to gather observations and already breeding records are coming in for 2009 (a pair of Great Horned Owls calling at Kleena Kleene, ravens carrying nesting material at Gaspard Lake).

I'd like to encourage bird-watchers who spend time in the Chilcotin to consider joining our Atlassing team this year.

Did you know that just about ALL observations of birds made during their breeding season in suitable habitat are useable for the Atlas? A number of people have told me that they didn't join last year because they rarely find nests. No need, your June observations of singing robins and April sightings of displaying sharp-tailed grouse can provide useful evidence of a breeding species. Bird-watchers also noted that they don't have high-speed internet access. I accept hand-written observations and I can send you printed instructions and forms by snail-mail.

The use of a digital camera can be a great assistance when birding especially when rare species are observed. These photos can be used to confirm that your observations are accurate and the correct species can be confirmed. On some occasions a brief bit of video may also pick up the call of the species to assist with identification. This photo of a Semi-palmated Plover faking a broken wing at Eagle Lake not only confirmed the species but also gave a high level of evidence of breeding. This was only the second recorded breeding in the Chilcotin region.



Whether you are a seasoned veteran, or a beginning bird-watcher wanting to hone your skills, you are welcome to participate in the Atlas project. To get more information you can visit the project website (<http://www.birdatlas.bc.ca>) or contact me directly ([john.woods@wildvocies.ca](mailto:john.woods@wildvocies.ca) or 250-837-1847).

It would be nice to close the species gap with the South Okanagan this year...and pull ahead of the Cariboo...

**Your 2009 Field Trip List**

**Alkali Lake** April 26<sup>th</sup> trip leader Fred McMechan (392-7680)

Meet at Scout Island Nature Centre at 9:00am to arrange car pooling. Enjoy this annual field trip to view bird species along the road to Alkali Lake. Be sure to bring a lunch with hot beverage, your binoculars or spotting scope. Birding will be done from the road so expect minimal walking.

**Brunson Lake** May 1<sup>st</sup> Trip leaders Rick Dawson (392-3370) and Margaret Waring (398-7724)

Enjoy a Friday evening paddle and picnic dinner on Brunson Lake. The plan is to paddle the length of the lake and explore the marsh at the far end. Bring your own boat, PFD, dinner and meet at Scout Island at 5:30pm. If you would like to come but don't have a canoe please call before the trip and we may be able to find room for you.

**Chilanko Marsh** May 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> trip leader Jim Sims (296-3638)

Meet at Puntzi Lake Tanker Base at 9:30 am on Saturday morning (allow a minimum of 2 hours driving time from Williams Lake) or contact Jim if you want to meet him at the marsh on Friday night and camp out for the night. This is an annual species count conducted on the marsh and the surrounding riparian zone. The marsh provides an opportunity to see most of the water fowl that are summer residents on Chilcotin lakes and marshes. Join us for a casual day long walk around the ponds as we search out the variety of bird species around the marsh. Following the birding you are welcome to gather at Jim's Eagle Lake cabin for Saturday night. There will be a pot luck supper Saturday evening and a pancake breakfast Sunday morning. Please call Jim for more details if you plan on participating.

**Birds at Scout Island** May 24<sup>th</sup> Cathy Koot (392-4250)

Join Cathy for an early morning of birding at Scout Island from 7:30 to 10:00. Scout Island is home to some of the best birding opportunities in the Cariboo so take advantage of this opportunity to identify and learn more about our local birds.

**Birding in the Williams Lake River Valley** June 13th Phil Ranson (398-7110)

Meet at 8:00am in the lower parking lot (Frizzi Road past the transfer site and down into the river valley). 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.

**Becher's Prairie day walk/drive** June 20<sup>th</sup> Ordell Steen (398-5017)

Follow the trails east from the old CIFAC camp to the Rock Lake area. Tour the many waterfowl ponds, aspen stands and grasslands. Bring your lunch, and binoculars. High clearance vehicles may be needed. Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am Saturday morning.

**Perkins Peak day hike** July 25<sup>th</sup> lead by Jim Sims (296-3638)

Drive to the alpine via the Miner Lake Road and enjoy a great day of wandering through the alpine or take the challenge of a climb to the summit of Perkins Peak. Please meet at the turn off to Miner Lake at 9:00 am sharp on Saturday morning. Vehicles should have high clearance and good tires. If you plan to climb the summit the last part that can be driven is very rough rocky road. Bring a hearty lunch with extra snacks, good hiking boots, binoculars camera sunglasses

and screen as well as rain gear. Walking sticks are a great asset on the rocky slopes and you will be sorry if you don't have them. You may want to turn it into a camping weekend. There are lots of recreation campsites in the area that could be used. In fact you could even car camp in the alpine on Saturday night. **Please register by phoning Jim or email the Muskrat.**

**Thursday Evening Bats** at Scout Island Aug. 6<sup>th</sup> with Anna Roberts (392-5000)

Join Anna for an evening of bat facts and identification. Meet at 8:30 pm at Scout Island Nature House to learn about our local bat species, then at dusk watch and listen to bats as they feed.

**Eureka Peak** Aug 9<sup>th</sup> Sue Hemphill and Jurgen Homburg (398-8532)

Meet at the Horsefly Bridge at 8:00am. Join Sue and Jurgen for a hike into the alpine on the north end of Eureka Peak located in the Cariboo Mountains near the headwaters of the Horsefly River. There will be an elevation gain of close to 1500 feet so be prepared for a healthy hike. This trip is planned to coincide with the peak of the alpine flower season so bring your plant book to help with identification. The steeper East side of the Eureka ridge is home to a large mountain goat herd and they can often be seen from the top of the ridge. Be sure to pack a hearty lunch and trail mix as well as good rain gear as you are in the rain belt of the Cariboo Mountains. Streams on the hike up as well as the plateau are dependent on snow melt and rain fall so you should bring a water bottle. Good foot wear is imperative and gaiters could be an asset as the vegetation will be very deep and most likely wet. The last part of the drive is over rough logging access roads so high clearance vehicles should be used. Car pooling will be arranged at Horsefly. If you wish you are welcome to camp over Saturday night but your guides will most likely be returning home Saturday evening. **Please phone or email the Muskrat to register so you can be informed if a change must be made.**

**Hike the South Side of the Chilcotin River East towards the Fraser** September 19<sup>th</sup> Ordell Steen (398-5017) and Jim Sims (296-3638)

Explore low grassland benches and ridges along south side of Chilcotin River below Farwell Canyon (8 - 10 km hike). Meet at Scout Island at 7:30am. Join Ordell and Jim for a Fall hike in the grasslands. We will start at Farwell Canyon and hike down river towards the Fraser River. The trip starts with a steep climb up from the valley floor. Bring your lunch and water bottle and enjoy the amazing views along the way.

**Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park** October 25<sup>th</sup> Fred McMechan (392-7680)

Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am. Bring a lunch, water bottle and you 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.