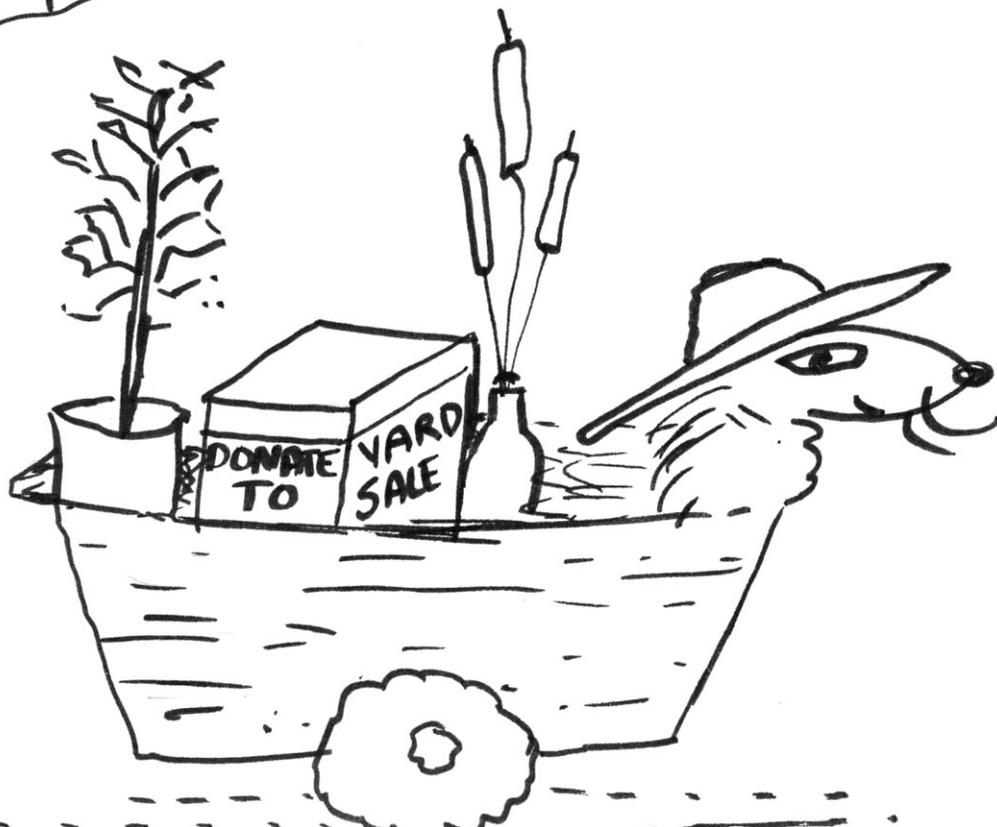


MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS

MARCH + APRIL 2012 NEWSLETTER



SPRING
YARD
+ GARDEN
SALE !

SATURDAY
MAY 12
9:30AM - 1PM

SEE YOU AT
THE SALE



The MUSKRAT EXPRESS

APRIL 16, 2012

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@midbc.com 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, vice-president Jim Sims, secretary Ordell Steen, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, 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 (296-3638) or e-mail us at muskratexpress@midbc.com Thanks to all of the contributors for your help in producing another great edition of the Muskrat Express. We missed Phil's report on the Birds of the region but we do hope he is enjoying his holiday in the United Kingdom and we look forward to his big report in June. Your next newsletter should be ready by mid June.

Alpine Pollinators

An evening program by Anya Ried in the Nature House
Tuesday April 24 Tuesday at 7pm (*Note early start time*)
Details in the February Newsletter.

Annual Alkali Lake First Field Trip of the Year

April 29th 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. The complete field trip list for 2012 is attached to the end of the newsletter.



Alkali Lake Pelicans

Spring Yard and Garden Sale Saturday May 12th

Time to prepare for the Yard Sale! Please gather all of your unused treasures from your basement and share some of the plants you are starting for your garden. Feel free to ask your friends for some donations and encourage them to come to the sale too! Try some new recipes for the goodie table, sort through your stack of books, take some cuttings from your favorite

house plants, clean out your garages and sheds, share those pieces you never use anymore and add a few more bits of junk to your collection and bring all to the Nature House on Friday May 11th. It would be helpful if you are able to price your items before you drop them off.

The proceeds from the sale provide a bursary for a graduating secondary student who will continue further education in a field of biology or earth sciences. Any extra earnings are donated for education programs at Scout Island.

Areas where help will be needed are pricing and set up on Friday night, at the sale on Saturday morning and for the early afternoon clean up.

Of course most needed are your donations. Items that are not sold or collected are taken to the Salvation Army, Library, Rotary Club Book Drop, Share Shed, etc.

I (Margaret Waring) will be coordinating the sale again this year. If you have questions or would like to help please call me at 250-398-7724 or email at muskratexpress@midbc.com

Mark your calendars!

**Our annual Spring Yard and Garden Sale will be held on Saturday May 12th
9:30 AM until 1:00PM at the Scout Island Nature House**

Earth Day 2012 Sunday April 22nd 10am-2pm

2nd annual downtown Williams Lake “Family Mural Painting” with recycled paint. Help beautify the downtown by participating in the community art project on the Rona Building at the corner of 3rd and Proctor St. with creative host “Art 4 Wellness” Kimberly McLennan. Please bring water to drink, paint brushes, gloves and safety glasses.

QUESTIONS? Contact Mary Forbes at mmmforbes@yahoo.ca 250.855.8443

AGM and President’s Report

Submitted by Fred McMechan

At the AGM there was a wonderful turn out of members for the social and AGM meeting. Thank you to those who were able to attend. The potluck supper had a fine selection of main dishes and desserts; thanks to the contributors.

The following people were elected to the executive: president, Fred McMechan; vice president, Jim Sims; treasurer, Kath VanSpall; secretary, Ordell Steen; directors, Nola Daintith, Rick Dawson, Rob Higgins, and Cathy Koot

I must thank each of you who made presentations during the “show and tell” section of the evening. A highlight was the announcement by Ordell Steen that a new book on a nature guide to the Williams Lake River Valley will be completed and printed this year. The principal authors are Ordell, Anna Roberts and Ray Coupe. Ordell showed photos from the book and the audience had to try to recognize the subject in each photo.

For your information I have included the president’s report which I presented during the AGM. I did recognize many of our members who acted as leaders and coordinators in the report. But in this letter I must thank all our club volunteers who helped with club activities during the year. A major successful undertaking by our club for which a large number of our club members assisted was our hosting of the BC Nature AGM in May 2012. It was very successful with about 180

registrants. Thanks to all our members who assisted in this event.

The newsletter was circulated several times throughout the year to provide worthwhile information to our members. Thanks to Jim Sims, Margaret Waring and others who have contributed articles.

Scout Island Nature Centre continued to be operated by our club, a significant service to the community of Williams Lake. Nature educational programs were provided for school classes, adult groups, children's groups in the summer and others. Discovery Preschool operated satisfactorily from September to May. The Nature Centre welcomed many tourists and residents when they visited this wonderful natural area. The Nature House continued as an important interpretive place for visitors. We were able to employ university and high school students who acted as interpreters especially in the period, May through August. A major trail addition, built mainly by volunteers, was the elevated board walkway along the Bulrush Trail. Outdoor projects such as planting trees and shrubs, and weed maintenance were carried out. Fund raising was an important activity to provide educational programs. Thank you to Sue Hemphill and Jenny Noble for their wonderful efforts to allow the Nature Centre to operate successfully.



Summer Staff Milana Cecco and Ian Higgins with Nature Fun kids

Several Field Trips were offered to members, and these were enjoyed by all participants. Thank you to the leaders. Thanks to our members who have supported the club and to Cathy Koot, our membership director. The annual Christmas Bird Count was successful and provided worthwhile information. Thanks to our members who participated and especially to Phil Ranson, the coordinator. Thanks to our members who continued to look after Bluebird House trails in our area. Activities for the Young Naturalists were provided periodically throughout the year under the guidance of Mary Forbes, thank you Mary. A \$600 bursary was given to a high school graduate. Thanks to our members who helped with the plant/ yard sale which was the main source of funds for the bursary. Special thanks to Margaret Waring. Finally thanks to the other executive members for their support and leadership, and for letting your names stand for re-election.

Scout Island Nature Centre Report

By: Sue Hemphill

It is definitely spring at the Nature Centre. Phil and Kris keep reminding me of every new bird arrival and then update the board outside. People really do check that bird board and ask where they can go to see each species. I always add plant updates, but I am not sure those are as appreciated. But they excite me. I can watch the choke cherry buds swell before my eyes out the office window. Have you ever looked at the fat, purple buds in the top of a cottonwood? Come check them out on the roof of the Nature House. Soon they will burst with the catkins.

There wasn't much spring weather during our spring break program, but that didn't keep us

indoors. So many children wanted to take part that I had Mary run the program again the second week while I was away. The first day, it was still cold enough that we could cross the ice over to what we call Hare Island. The hare action on this island is quite obvious. It also is the favorite place to play Fox and Hare. This is a hiding game, but the children also learn some great observation skills at the same time. The island is the boundary so they must recognize when they are going off of it (cattail edge). They must hide as quiet as a hare and this gives them an opportunity to watch for the real hares that may be hiding nearby, so quiet observation and being alone in nature are practiced. Finally, when they are found, they must find their own way back to home base. There is no trail to follow just the lay of the land—home base is at the highest point. It gives them a real sense of adventure—no adult leading them. All of the days were filled with outdoor exploration, games, and observing all the birds that were arriving including the swans in a snowstorm. We added visual arts (sketching, collage and sculpture with dormant branches) using natural materials of the day, led by Allison Tew. She is the young woman who has been painting murals inside the Nature House. She did a wonderful job of leading these activities. Her time is being paid by a grant we received from the Central Cariboo Arts and Cultural Society. This funding will be used to add an arts component to each of our nature programs through the year.



In the last Muskrat, I talked about some of our ideas to encourage families to take their children out into nature. Some of you got back to me with some great ideas for our family field trips and our future book on local hikes for families. Please continue to send me your ideas. Jenny and I are working with Tammy Keetch, who is the Air Quality Educator for the Williams Lake Environmental Society (and a new member of the WLFN), to create articles and activities to help people understand how a healthy environment affects their personal health (mental, physical and spiritual) as well as how enjoying nature affects these same things. We are calling this initiative “Healthy by Nature.” It is a play on words. We need to work at keeping nature healthy so that we can be healthy by nature.

I want to introduce you to a new member of staff, Julianne Trelenberg. Her family has been in the Young Naturalist Club and she and her daughter are frequent volunteers. She will be a co-leader for the Young Naturalist Club while Mary is off having a baby. She is busy planning some field trips for the members of the club for April and May. She is also helping me when I have large classes for a full day, which is what teachers have been booking lately. The class is at the Nature Centre for 4 hours giving us time to do a wide range of outdoor activities (then I take a nap).

The Nature House is open on the weekend from 1-4 through April. Starting in May, it will be open seven days a week from 8:30-5 unless there is a class using it. Summer staff will start on April 30. We always need help from volunteers so that there is a host for the weekend days. If you would like to be a host, please contact me. I would be happy to train you if you are new to this job. I also need volunteers to help with the following event:

Celebrate Earth Day
Playing with Earth
Sunday April 22 10:30-1:30
Scout Island Nature Centre

- We will be painting and building with Earth (mud), and getting up close to soil creatures, so come dressed for the occasion
- And we will be planting trees

Call 250 398 8532 for more information

All Welcome to Play and help

Are the Personal Care Products You Use Safe for You and for the Planet?

By: Sue

I recently had to change shampoos because the "safe" one I had been using was no longer being made. I have been working on finding a new one that is healthy for me and for the planet for 4 months. I am still working on it as I also would not like to add to the plastic problem. I am testing bar shampoos right now (no package). It is unreal how much research one has to do to make sure the ingredients listed are ok or at least not on the dirty dozen list (David Suzuki website has excellent information and action items --check health section). This makes me angry. Why aren't we being protected from unsafe personal care products? May I suggest you join the campaign and ask our government to do the protecting by not allowing products containing unsafe chemicals to be used (see below).

I'm calling on Canada's Health Minister to protect Canadians and our environment from harmful chemicals in personal care products. From shampoos, to soaps, to lotions, to makeup it is not uncommon for a single person to use 10 or more personal care products each day. But some of the ingredients in beauty products aren't that pretty. U.S. researchers found that one in eight of the 82,000 ingredients used in personal care products are industrial chemicals, including carcinogens, pesticides, reproductive toxins, endocrine disruptors, plasticizers, degreasers, and surfactants. In Canada, many chemical ingredients in cosmetics have never been tested for their effects on human health and the environment.

Tell Canada's Health Minister to strengthen Canada's approach to regulating chemicals in cosmetics and demand clear warning labels on consumer products listing key ingredients that threaten our health and our environmental. Go to <http://action.davidsuzuki.org/cosmetics> and help protect human health and the environment from toxic chemicals in consumer products.

Our View of the Night Sky – April - June 2012.

Planet Review

By: Steve and Lynn Capling

Venus (magnitude -4.6 ; in Taurus) shines very high and very bright in the west during and after twilight. It doesn't set now until some $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours after dark. This is just about as high and bright as Venus ever becomes in its 8-year cycle. Look to its lower right for the Pleiades star cluster, and to its left for orange Aldebaran.

Mars (magnitude -0.7) shines bright reddish-orange in Leo. The star Regulus is just $4\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ to Mars's right in the evening. They're high in the southeast at nightfall and highest in the south by mid-evening. Mars is now a month past opposition, fading and shrinking as Earth pulls ahead of it along our faster, inside-track orbit around the Sun.

Jupiter is sinking ever lower toward the sunset below and to the right of Venus. Jupiter is rounding toward the far side of the Sun, which is why a telescope shows it a disappointingly small 33 arc seconds wide. In addition, Jupiter appears increasingly fuzzy at its ever-lower altitude.

Saturn (magnitude $+0.2$, in Virgo) is at opposition April 15th. This week it rises almost around sunset and stands highest in the south around 1 or 2 a.m. daylight-saving time. Shining $5\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ to Saturn's right is Spica: fainter, bluer, and twinklier.

Keep careful watch on Saturn and its rings in a telescope. In the days leading up to opposition, watch for the *Seeliger effect*: a brightening of the rings with respect to the globe. This happens because the solid particles making up the rings backscatter sunlight (reflect it back in the direction it came from) more effectively than the planet's cloud tops do.

For those of you who prefer using binoculars, check out this web site for information on what to look for and how to get the most out of binocular viewing: <http://www.philharrington.net/>

Other neat happenings

Monday, June 4 - Partial lunar eclipse

There are no total lunar eclipses this year, but western Canada does see a nice 37 percent partial eclipse of the Moon at dawn, as the eclipsed Moon sets at sunrise. This occurs just one day before the big event for 2012: the transit of Venus.

Tuesday, June 5 – Transit of Venus

There is no astronomical event more famous in the history of science than this: Venus silhouetted on the face of the Sun for up to six hours. Past transits (only six have been seen in recorded history) launched expeditions to far-flung corners of the world in a quest to measure the distance to the Sun. The 2012 June 5 transit is the second repetition of the pair of June transits since James Cook and his astronomer Charles Green were on Tahiti, 243 years ago, and is the last transit of Venus that anyone now alive will ever experience. (See RASC 2012 Observer's Handbook, p. 144 and p. 220.)

The beginning of the transit is in the afternoon around 3 p.m. We will not see the end of the transit as the sun sets around 9:20. (<http://transitofvenus.nl/wp/where-when/local-transit-times/>) MAKE SURE YOU HAVE PROPER VIEWING GLASSES OR WELDING LENSES. It will help if you have a good, clear view of the western horizon. This year, all of Canada sees some part of the transit. If you are at all interested in this event – don't miss it! The next transit doesn't occur until 2117!

Northern Flicker

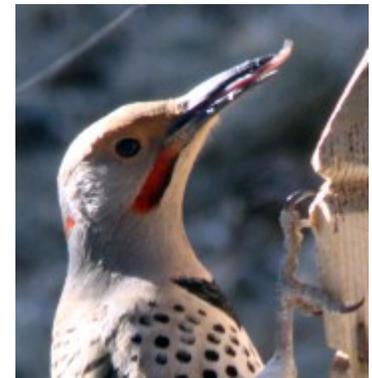
Researched by Jim Sims

I recently returned from an Easter weekend retreat to my Eagle Lake cabin. It soon was obvious that the local Flickers were back after abandoning the area for the winter months. All day long three birds chased each other around the neighbourhood constantly calling “kleeyer-kleeyer...” to each other or hammering on a resonating tree or building. In fact I didn’t need an electric alarm clock as they woke me up each morning precisely at 6:00am with a very rude hammering on the cabin gables. Like the Eagle Lake Flickers many of our local Flickers will migrate short distances to warmer lower elevation sites during the winter but we always have some stay in the Williams Lake Valley. I also remember Linda Durrell from the shores of the Chilcotin Ranch reporting that she fed them at a special peanut butter feeder every winter. This past winter was a bit milder than usual and I did have a Flicker stop by my feeder a few times through the winter. It took sunflower seeds but preferred the suet.



Flickers are different from other woodpeckers in that they are primarily brown rather than black and white. They also differ in their feeding habits for they feed primarily on ants and other insects that they find on the ground. They can be found in most wooded areas of the Cariboo Chilcotin as well as suburban areas. They require some open spaces and will not nest in dense forests. The Flicker is a primary excavator of nesting cavities, providing habitat for many other bird and animal species.

There are 2 forms of Northern Flicker, Red-shafted and Yellow-shafted. The flight feathers of Red-shafted Flickers have reddish-orange shafts, and their wings and tail are reddish-orange below. Red-shafted Flickers have gray heads, throats, and napes, and their foreheads are brown. Male Red-shafted Flickers have red moustaches; the moustaches of females are pale brown. Typically, neither sex has a colored nape crescent. The flight feathers of Yellow-shafted Flickers have yellow shafts, and their wings and tail are yellow below. The heads of Yellow-shafted Flickers are gray above, and their faces and throats are brown. Males have black moustaches; females have none.



Both males and females have red nape crescents. There is a lot of hybridization between the two forms as this photo demonstrates (note the bi-coloured mustache). Which form of Flicker is shown at the top of the page?

Butterflies

Submitted by Anna Roberts

Spring is here! Butterflies are out on South Lakeside. Compton Tortoiseshells were out of hibernation on March 23rd. this year. Then Mourning Cloaks were seen a week later. These are two of the four species that over winter as adults and come out of hibernation between March and mid-April. The other two species to look for this month are Grey Comma, and Milbert's Tortoiseshell. Look for Milbert's Tortoiseshell laying eggs on stinging nettle at Scout Island. Later on two other butterfly species also lay their eggs on stinging nettle. It must be a safe host plant!



Compton Tortoiseshell



Mourning Cloak



Grey Comma



Milbert's Tortoiseshell

Williams Lake Field Naturalist

2012 Field Trip List

(Note: We are hoping that this list is incomplete and that we will be able to add more outings. If you can lead a trip that will help fill in some of the gaps please contact Jim or Fred)

Alkali Lake April 29th 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.

Two Wednesday Evening “hump-day holidays” Recreation Trips May 9th, and June 20th trip leaders Rick Dawson (392-3370) and Margaret Waring (398-7724)

Meet at 6:00 pm at Scout Island with the essential gear (helmets, bikes) for these two bike rides.

These two evenings will feature easy recreational outings using bikes. For the May 9th bike trip, after meeting at Scout Island, we drive down to the last parking lot in the Williams lake Creek Valley. From there we will bike down to the Fraser River and back looking at the birds and trees on the way. On June 20th, we will do an evening bike trip on Moon Road. We will park at the beginning of Moon road and cycle out past Doc English Bluff parking lot. Highlights include great views of the steep cliffs into the Fraser River, interesting geology at road cuts, many eagles and other birds. Meet at 6:00 at Scout Island.

Chilanko Marsh May 19th to 21st 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 bird species count conducted on the marsh and the surrounding riparian zone. The marsh provides an opportunity to see most of the waterfowl 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. Bring a tent or camper as there is limited space available. (the sauna will be warmed up) There will be a pot luck supper Saturday evening and a pancake breakfast Sunday morning. Sunday we will take a walk along the shore of Martin Lake. Please call Jim for more details if you plan on participating.

Birds at Scout Island May 27th trip leader Cathy Koot (392-4250)

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

Birding in the Williams Lake River Valley June 16th 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.

Farwell Creek Day Hike July 8th Ordell Steen (398-5017)

This hike will follow Farwell Creek for about 8 km downstream from near the junction of the Farwell and Gaspard roads to the Chilcotin River. We will leave a return vehicle in Farwell Canyon. The falls of Farwell Creek are about 2.5 km from our start and a large pit house village occurs on a grassy bench near the falls. The first 3-4 km of the trip passes through a pleasant mosaic of grassland, riparian communities and forest on relatively level ground. The remainder of the trip enters the Farwell Creek canyon and will require some sidehill contouring of moderately steep slopes bordering the creek. Good boots are required. Depending on numbers of people, it would be possible for some to return to the start after visiting the falls. Please contact Ordell Steen (250-398-5017) to join this trip.

Viewland Mountain July 14th Sue Hemphill (250)620-3498 or (250) 398-8532 or shemphill@midbc.com *Please register ahead of time*

This is a good hike for anyone with walking ability- children 5 and up should be fine with it. We will meet in Horsefly at 9:30 am to carpool. Viewland Mountain is located between Quesnel Lake and Horsefly Lake and the sub-alpine summit provides views of the Cariboo Mountains. The drive to the beginning of the trail is on good gravel road and will take 1.2 an hour. It is about an hour's hike to the top through forest (some stepping over downed logs) and a great view at the top. I will have some games and activities for children and adults that want to join in.



Viewland Summit from 1987 WLFN Field Trip

Waterfalls in the Horsefly Area August 18th Sue Hemphill

shemphill@midbc.com (250)620-3498 or (250)398-8532 or *Please register ahead of time*
We will meet in Horsefly at 9:30 am to carpool. We will go first to Horsefly Falls (about 45 minutes from Horsefly). These are spectacular falls and the walk in is short (5 minutes). Small children will have to be kept close as there are no railings. We will drive back to Horsefly and out to Moffat Falls (about 20 minutes from Horsefly). This is also a very short walk in and a lovely view of the falls. Again, small children will have to be kept close as there are no railings. There is a cliff to climb down which I have done with children as young as 6. At the bottom the wading and swimming is quite safe (with adults watching of course) and you can even swim under the falls if you are a reasonable swimmer. And yes, we have succeeded in taking tubes down for floating.

Junction Sheep Range Provincial Park October 21st 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.