

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS
MAY 2015 NEWSLETTER



Join us Wednesday
Evening on the Lake



Enjoy
the
May Flowers
and
the
Songs
of
Spring

check the Field Trip List
There are
changes
and additions
inside



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

Membership fees: Family (\$30), single (\$25) or student (\$10) memberships can be mailed to the above address. Please complete the membership and waiver forms available at the Nature Centre (250) 398-8532, muskratexpress@shaw.ca or the web site below. For more information about the club please contact Fred McMechan at 392-7680 or e-mail Fred_McMechan@telus.net

Williams Lake Field Naturalists Website <http://www.williamslakefieldnaturalists.ca>
Scout Island Nature Centre Website <http://www.scoutislandnaturecentre.ca>

Executive of The Williams Lake Field Naturalists: president Fred McMechan, secretary Ordell Steen, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, Cathy Koot, Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Brian Chapman, Don Lawrence and Christie Mayall



Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter near the end of June. If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the next Muskrat Express please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (296-3638) or e-mail us at muskratexpress@shaw.ca



ANNUAL SPRING YARD SALE REPORT

By Margaret Waring our yard sale coordinator

I want to thank all of you for an outstanding job! The yard sale was a great success. We had helpers setting up tables on Friday afternoon starting with Jenny Noble and the summer staff. People came to drop off sale items and there were others like Rick Dawson, Jim Sims, Ordell Steen, Marg Pulver, Connie Hausler and Leo Rankin pricing and arranging sale articles. Ray Coupe dropped off some plants and other goodies and helped me learn about some of the non-vegetable plants. There were lots of “things” to sell and we had a great collection of plants. Ann Carter had family members bringing in plants and wondered if anyone would want her eggplants? They were all gone before the first hour was done! Barb Scarf came early Saturday morning with a carload of plants. Bill Lloyd wasn’t sure if anyone would want the planters he brought but they too were quickly sold. We had a line up outside the door waiting to come in for the 9:30 start time. I had to negotiate several sales saying the first person to claim the object has first choice. I bet I could have started a few bidding wars! Sandra Stuart and Betty Donahue managed the cash desk. Nola Daintith and Christie Mayall provided plant and sale information and Jean Oke maintained order in the book area and porch entrance. We didn’t have any time to look around or have a break for that first hour and a half! Shoppers included people who come to our sale every year, club members who donate and people I had never seen before. Clean up was efficient. Bill Lloyd, Ann Carter, Rick Dawson, Rodger Hamilton, Jean Oke, Leo Rankin and others helped empty and return order to the Nature House. We donated left overs to the ALS Garage Sale, Salvation Army, Salt Jar and the next Rotary book sale. We took some things to the share shed and all was done by 3PM! You are a generous and hard working crew. I hope you enjoyed your participation. I am sorry if I did not mention your name but there were so many helpers I just cannot name them all. I certainly appreciated all the help and support. Last year I think we almost made enough for the \$800 bursary but this year we made \$1448.15. Congratulations to all for a job well done. I was thrilled to hear Ann Carter discussing what plants to grow for next year’s sale. During the process I was amused to see boxes labeled Scout Island /Naturalist’s yard sale...so I remind



Family leaves happy with a new tomato plant

you again Please label that box... it is not too soon to start saving for next year!

Field Trip Reports

Chilanko Marsh and Tatla Lake (by Jim Sims)

On Saturday May 16th we had a successful day of birding at the marsh with a count total of 80 bird species. After 32 years of visiting the marsh Cathy Koot found our first Great Blue Heron flying in the distance. Cathy helped us learn to distinguish the different bird songs we were listening to. Hopefully we can all still keep straight the Least and Dusky flycatchers. The highlight of the day was watching the Virginia Rail that foraged back and forth a few metres away in a small clump of cattails.



The Virginia rail

On Sunday the hike to Tatla Lake was equally rewarding with lots of birds to see and hear along with amazing scenery. Unfortunately we missed good views of the mountains due to the smoke. Again the highlight was spotted by Lubna and quickly identified by Cathy as a Lewis's Woodpecker.

Russett Bluff (by Peter Opie)

On a lovely Wednesday evening a group of us ventured up to the top of the bluff. Fabulous views and a remarkable sunset. Accompanying us were Jean William and her sister Amy Sandy, T'exelcenc elders from Sugarcane. They were willing to share their knowledge of the area. We learned the significance of this sacred place as a site for questing. Jean and Amy performed a ceremony with offerings, smudge and song. Really a wonderful and enlightening experience.

Farwell Balsamroot (by Peter Opie)

We lucked out with the weather; the rain held off for the hike. There was a host of golden balsamroot flowers and many others. Jean and Amy were there to teach us native plant uses. After a lunch at the canyon, Jean and Amy took us to the pictograph rock where they performed a ceremony in respect for this ancient site. We felt honoured to have the opportunity to participate in Secwepemc traditions.



At the end of the newsletter you will find an updated list of all remaining field trips including some new ones. Check it out and add your favourites to your calendar.

Traditional use plants in First Nation Culture

Join us on a **public** walk on Saturday, August 8 with two Secwepemc (Shuswap) elders (Jean William and Cecilia DeRose) to learn about traditional and modern uses of native plants by local First Nation people. We will join the elders in the Williams Lake River Valley to learn about the uses of plants for many purposes, including as food, medicines, and construction materials. We will even learn Secwepemc names for some plants and their importance to the Secwepemc culture. Jean and Cecilia will talk about uses and roles of native plants in traditional as well as in the modern culture. We will meet at Scout Island Nature Centre at 10:00 a.m. and drive on Frizzi Road to the lower parking lot in the Valley for a walk towards the Fraser River. For further information, contact Ordell Steen (398-5017) or Peter Opie (392-1440).

BC Nature News and a geology talk, titled “Geological Odds and Sods”

Wednesday August 19th at Scout Island Nature Centre

Kees Visser, president of BC Nature, will be giving a presentation at the Scout Island Nature House on Wednesday, August 19. He will be travelling throughout Central BC and the Pacific Northwest on a tour to visit communities with

naturalist clubs. He will also visit communities which do not have clubs with the encouragement to start a club. He is a retired geologist who lives on Saltspring Island.

Youth Got into Gear for Bike to Work & School Week in the Lake City!

By Tammy Keetch

It's spring in the Cariboo-- time to get out in the garden, bask in the sunshine, and dust off the ol' bicycle for a cruise. May 25th to May 31st was Bike to Work & School Week in British Columbia and more than 160 riders and 16 teams participated in the event locally.

We all know that riding a bike is just a plain old good time, but it's also a fantastic way to get in shape, save your wallet from the gas pumps, get your whole family out together, and improve our air quality. Motor vehicles create more air pollution than any other single human activity. In Williams Lake the air pollutant of special concern for our health is called "particulate matter," of which vehicle exhaust is a contributor. If everyone in Canada chose an environmentally friendly form of transportation *one day a week like cycling or walking*, vehicle emissions would be reduced by 20%! Using active transportation is one way to help keep our air clean.



This year the Greenologists and the Falcon Enviro Club from the two Lake City Secondary campuses helped drum up the event at their schools to encourage youth to get on their wheels. They made announcements, handed out flyers, put up posters; put a team together and helped student's register on the website. They even visited classes on their bikes as part of their promotion! There was also the Campus Challenge to see which campus could get the most participants and log the most kilometres. We really appreciate the great job that students and teachers did at the schools to support this event!



Scout Island Nature Centre News

By Sue Hemphill

It has been a busy month. Summer Staff-Patrick, Sienna, and Geneva (see their articles about themselves below) along with visiting UBC Teacher Candidate Danika Strecko were introduced to birds (thank-you Cathy Koot), forest health (thank-you David Rusch), plants and ecosystems (me) and then Danika turned around and trained us to be "experts" about the new intertidal creatures that had just arrived. Staff chose their fields of expertise and developed lessons. That was just the first week. By the second week classes started to arrive and staff had to be the nature guides.



Fry releases are in full swing with 12 classes releasing fry from the Quesnel River. The two classes today enjoyed dipping for invertebrates at the bridge, watching the Fish Guy (DFO, Guy Scharf) dissect fish, touching and learning about the intertidal creatures, and releasing their fish from the new river dock. The trout and northern pike minnow also knew about the fry release and were seen gorging themselves. Guy is coming tomorrow to net a "safe" area to give the fry a fighting chance. Guy and I also went out to the Chilcotin River to help students from Tsideldel and Naghtaneqed schools release the fish they had been raising from the Chilko River. As you can see the river is really high so we had to choose spots carefully.

If you are down at the Nature Centre, take a stroll on the Butterfly Trail to admire the developing Obstacle

Course. The Grade 7 Outdoor Academy class has been working hard with Peter Opie as supervisor to leave this legacy for all the “kids” that like to run, jump and balance. You can also admire the well-organized nursery, Thank-you Roger Hamilton. You might come upon Mike Plante working (planting, fixing, weeding...). He is Scout Island’s new outdoor all around maintenance man.

I have been busy in the Dairy Fields with the Greenologists (Columneetza Campus environmental club). We have cleaned up garbage, brushed a trail, marked two trails. Now we are “building” a guide with ideas for teachers to use to take their students exploring. In June, the Greenologists will guide several classes out to the area to explore.

Scout Island Nature Centre wants to thank Ruth Hoehne for taking over the auction at the Banquet and donating her wonderful nature prints. She gathered in \$1050 from the auction.

Registration for summer programs starts on June 15

Nature Fun
Scout Island Nature Centre
Discovering Nature Up Close
A New Program Each Day
Weekdays July 2- August 20

Ages 3-8

Mon-Fri. Mornings 9:30- 11:30am
Mon.-Thurs. Afternoons 1-3pm
\$10 per session

Ages 8-13

Art in Nature Adventures
8:30-4:30 (\$25)

For more information or to register:

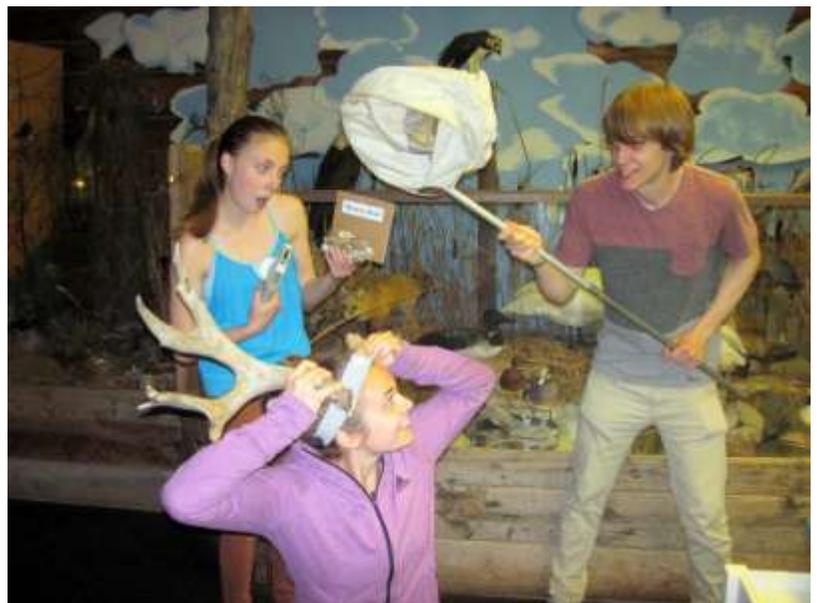
Call: (250) 398- 8532 or

Email: scoutisland@shaw.ca

Our Summer Staff!

Geneva Gordon is back at the Nature Centre this summer, but this time as Teacher Naturalist. She has finished her first year at the University of British Columbia in engineering, and hopes to pursue mechanical engineering. Geneva has recently taken up labeling items in the Nature Centre, including the animals - don't worry, not ON the animals - and looks forward to bringing order to the once chaotic place. This year she has decided to teach school groups and Nature Fun classes about the exciting world of bugs.

Patrick Newsome is a returning summer



Sienna standing, Geneva centre kneeling and Patrick with the net

student who enjoys educating the public about the local ecosystems. He has finished his third year in Biochemistry at the University of British Columbia Okanagan and hopes to go into medicine one day. He is looking forward to working down at Scout Island and is excited to relay his knowledge onto others. Using his spare time at the nature centre, he has befriended the large prickleback named Jaws (see label) who is the sea tank overlord.

Sienna Hoffos would like to educate people about nature in order to prevent Homies from lootin' the forest. She has finished her first year of science at the University of Victoria where she plans to double major in chemistry and environmental sciences. This is Sienna's first year at Scout Island and she is excited to share her knowledge of local flora with visitors and students. She likes to incorporate the use of all senses into her guided explorations... especially taste. Her hope is that people will take an interest to plants by knowing all their useful properties. Fun Fact! Dandelions are more than just weeds, they can be salad too!



Williams Lake Field Naturalists News from the Executive

By Fred McMechan

- 1) On revisions to the BC Science Curriculum: Christie Mayall received recent information from Lenny Ross who sits on the revision committee. He indicated that positive changes have been made on the inclusion of environmental education in the curriculum. The next draft is now being produced
- 2) On the BC Nature Field Camp at Tatlayoko Lake Camp, hosted by our club: There is a full registration with 26 registrants and a waiting list of about 30. At the present time we are preparing a medical emergency plan and informational sheets for the registrants. Last week the two outhouses and showers were constructed at the campsite.
- 3) On the Golden Eagle project by Jon Gaztelumendi: Financial assistance for Jon has come from two sources, the BC Nature Naturalists Foundation gave a grant of \$1380 and our club, a grant of \$800
- 4) BC Nature approved its 5 year Strategic Plan at the AGM/Conference in Ganges, Saltspring Island, on May 9. To see this plan visit the BC Nature website, www.bcnature.ca
- 5) Approval was given to assist in the funding of a bill board sign to increase the awareness of the need to reduce the killing of female moose. These signs are evident throughout the region
- 6) Kees Visser, president of BC Nature, will be travelling on a tour in late August and September to visit communities in Central BC and Northwestern BC. He will be visiting communities which have naturalist clubs and others without to encourage the formation of naturalist clubs. He is a retired geologist and will make a presentation on geology at each community. He will be giving a presentation in Williams Lake at the Nature House on August 19.
- 7) A new floating dock was purchased and installed at the river outlet. It replaces the wheel-in dock. This change was made to overcome the inconvenience of changing the height of the old dock during times when the water level was changing.
- 8) On the renovation of the caretaker's house: This year we have the funding to be able to carry out the following renovations on the west and south walls: the installation of foam board insulation, siding, and energy efficient windows. We hope to do the north and east walls next year.
- 9) In regard to the kiosk at the Nature Centre parking lot: we noticed that one of the main posts was leaning and so we had the City Building Inspector make an evaluation. He expressed concern about the possibility of a collapse of the kiosk, and recommended that the heavy roof be removed and that the posts be braced. We will pursue constructing a new kiosk.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

On Wednesday morning I ventured out on Rose Lake to look for birds along the riparian zone of the lake. My main objective was to visit the Black Tern colony in the marsh at the east end of the lake. I was not disappointed, as I found 18 adults flying around the colony location hawking insects. I did see a couple carrying small fish that were most likely destined to be offered to a female as a reward for the pleasure of raising a family with her. I spent some time trying to get a photo of the tern in flight with minimal success. Before I left they were joined by at least another 30 birds that must have been feeding out over lake or perhaps at the west end marshes. The *Checklist of Cariboo Chilcotin Birds* lists them as uncommon from mid-May to early September and of course they nest within our region.



Black Terns are members of the Gull family but unlike most Gulls they are birds of marshes. They nest in loose colonies on floating vegetation. Colony nesters are always threatened with major nest failures and this is true for this Tern. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Black Tern populations declined by 3.4 percent per year between 1966 and 2010, resulting in a cumulative decline of 78 percent. This decline can be attributed to loss of habitat, flooding of the nest site or predation by critters such as raccoons or other birds such as Herons. Since they nest in a colony if one nest is lost there is a very good chance many more will also go. I have

been concerned for our Rose Lake colony. For the past couple of years high water has impacted the colony and threatened its success. In mid to late July I expect to find the colony a bee-hive of activity with adults feeding small fish to many young and the fledglings testing their young wings. In 2013 I found no birds at the colony and in 2014 just 4 adults and one young. During these 2 years water was not released from the Rose Lake reservoir and the water in the marsh where the birds nest was very high and most likely prevented nesting. This year water is being released from the reservoir and water levels should be great for the colony and with the large numbers of Terns around now I am looking forward to a successful breeding season.



This juvenile bird is similar in colour to the non-breeding adult

Watch for this dark Tern in graceful flight over fresh water marshes as it hawks insects and hovers before diving into the water for a small fish.

Our View of the Night Sky – June 2015.

By Steve Capling

Planet Review

Mars is not visible.

Jupiter shines brightly in the western sky above Venus. There is a double shadow-transit on June 3 of Io & Ganymede that starts about 8 p.m. Jupiter & Venus are closing in towards each other for a conjunction on June 30th. They will be

a mere 0.3 degrees apart and while they will look to be about the same diameter (Jupiter is actually about twelve times larger), the reason is distance - Venus is 76 million kms from earth & Jupiter is 900 million kms away from us. Venus continues to dominate the spring evening sky. Venus is visible near the Beehive star cluster June 11 to 14. Saturn is visible low in the south-east evening sky in Libra. Best viewing is about 1 a.m. It is worth viewing Saturn over the next few weeks because the rings are tilted close to 27 degrees which is the maximum tilt they get to. Mercury is visible low in the eastern dawn sky from June 9th to 30th.

Moon Status

Full moon - June 2nd.

New moon - June 16th.

Meteor Showers

There are no meteor showers in June.

Evening Sky Map – courtesy of Skymaps.com.

For a printable sky chart go to this web site - Skymaps.com/downloads.html - and scroll down the center of the page to the download button. “June 2015: Northern Edition (PDF)”. At the end of the month it changes to show the next month’s chart.

2015 WLFN Fieldtrip List

**** new or changed**

Birding at Scout Island

Saturday May 30th 8-10 am (Leader: Cathy Koot 392-4250)

The Scout Island Nature Centre has lots of great habitat for birds. We will stroll the trails to see and hear what birds have returned. Bring binoculars if you have them.

Clyde Mountain, Churn Creek Protected Area - hike

Sunday, May 31 (Leader: Ordell Steen, 398-5017)

Meet at the parking lot at the “Y” (by A&W) at 7:30 a.m. We will hike from the campsite at the calving barn on the trail going around the east side of Clyde Mountain and overlooking the Fraser River. The first km or two of the trail includes some moderate slopes but on the east side of Clyde the trail is gentle. We will return on the same route. In addition to great views of the Fraser River Valley, the trail passes through some nice grasslands, open Douglas-fir forests, and a few small deciduous forests. This will be a joint trip with the Friends of Churn Creek P.A. Society.

Williams Lake Paddle

Wednesday June 3th (Leader Peter Opie 392-1440)

Paddle the east end of Williams Lake to the San Jose River. Meet at the Grebe Drive (Russet Bluff) boat launch at 7:00 pm. **Approved Life Jackets mandatory**

****Frost Creek Birding**

Saturday June 6th (Leader, Cathy Koot 392-4250)

Back by popular demand! Meet at 8:00 am at Scout Island to car pool the 17 km to Frost Creek off Dog Creek Road. We will walk a level route along ponds and aspen/ Douglas-fir forest to encounter more than 40 species of birds (if past trips are any indication). We will be back to town by mid-day. Wear sturdy footwear and bring binoculars if you have them.

Williams Lake River Valley Birding

Sunday June 14th (morning) (Leader 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.

****Native Bees and Flowers**

Saturday July 4 and Sunday July 5 (Contact: Peter Opie 392-1440 or Ordell Steen 398-5017)

Gord Hutchings is a very enthusiastic expert on native bees (as well as other insects, especially dragonflies). He will be making a presentation on native bees and bee/flower coevolution at the Nature Centre on the evening of Friday July 3 (7:30 p.m.). On **Saturday July 4**, he will lead a walk in the Williams Lake River Valley to look at native bees and the variety of bee species that occur in different habitats. He plans to set out some bee traps before the walk. Meet at Scout Island Nature Centre at 9:00 a.m. Don't miss this one. On **Sunday, July 5**, we will travel to Farwell Canyon, probably with stops along the way to look for native bees, other insects, birds and plants. If you would like to join us, meet at the Nature Centre at 9:00 a.m.

****Golden Eagle Hike**

Sunday July 12th (Leader Jon Gaztelumendi 250-305-8095 or gazteaxpe@gmail.com)

Meet at SINC at 7.30am to carpool; wear your hiking boots, water, scope and binoculars. We'll drive to Hanceville and then do a 45min hike to the observation point located on the top of a peak. We will enjoy the beautiful views of Hanceville Canyon and observe some Golden Eagle nests on the cliff and hopefully the pair with their young.

Fire Ecology Jaunt

Wednesday July 15 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm (Leader: Cathy Koot 392-4250)

Back in September 2013, a lightning strike led to a small forest fire at the Knife Creek Block of the UBC Alex Fraser Research Forest. We will visit Ground Zero for the fire and see the many ways that natural succession is taking place. There will be a good chance to encounter the fire-adapted black-backed woodpecker too. Meet at Scout Island NC at 6:30 pm and plan to car-pool for a half-hour drive to the site.

****Potato Range overnight**

Katie McMahan and Frances McCoubrey have offered to lead an overnight backpacking trip on the weekend of July 9th and 10th with the possible inclusion of a third day. At this time details are not finalized. If you are interested in participating on this overnight backpacking trip please contact Katie katiemcmahen@gmail.com or Frances fmccoubrey@gmail.com. Final plans will be set to fit the requested of the interested members.

Dry Farm to Grinder Creek, Churn Creek Protected Area – hike

Sunday August 23 (leader: Ordell Steen, 398-5017)

Meet at the parking lot at the "Y" (by A&W) at 7:00 a.m. This hike will be a mostly gentle downhill walk (about 6 km) from the Blackdome Mine road through the Dry Farm area, where some ecosystem restoration work has been done by BC Parks, and through a large, open grassland to Grinder Creek. We will follow riparian forests along the creek to the Empire Valley Road and the parking lot near the ranch headquarters. A car shuttle will be required. This is a joint trip with the Friends of Churn Creek P.A. Society.

Big Creek Ecological Reserve

Sunday September 27th (leader Jim Sims, 296-3638)

Details in the June newsletter and the date may change.

Junction Sheep Range

Sunday October 25th (Leader Fred McMechan 392-7680)

Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am. Bring a lunch, water bottle and your binoculars for this annual day long drive and hike into the park. This will be at the peak of the California Big-horned Sheep rut so look forward to seeing the sheep and perhaps you will be lucky and see or hear some head-butting.

Members Moment



Photo by Jenny Lui

I selected this photo of Lubna that I took at Chilanko Marsh during the recent field trip. She looked lost in the moment and, as she had been for most of the trip, was looking ahead into the horizon at something the rest of us didn't know was there. She was also conveniently placed in a spot that nicely highlighted the beauty of the landscape we visited.

We are always looking for your special “**Moments**” that you captured with your camera. So send us your photo of a scene, plant, animal bird or even friends having fun outdoors. Be sure to add in a description telling us why your photo is so special to you and something that will encourage all of us to get outdoors and enjoy. Please email your full resolution **moment** to the muskratexpress@shaw.ca