

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS

APRIL 2017 NEWSLETTER

♪ Spring Time! ♪
Much to Enjoy!



Hmm where to go?!



FIELD TRIP LIST
Please can you?
ADD A TRIP.



I'm off to SHOP!



We like to play outside!





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, vice president **Vacant**, secretary Ordell Steen, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Nola Daintith, Cathy Koot, Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Brian Chapman, Don Lawrence and Chris Coates



Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter early 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



Spring Yard and Garden Sale

Saturday May 6th 2017;our annual Spring Yard Garden Garage Sale is almost here.

The plans are underway and the success of the event depends on you.

Please help

1. Your **donations** of plants and garden pots, outdoor and camping equipment, records, CDs, books, toys, baking and candles, dishes and kitchen items, boots and car parts and gardening supplies.....whatever you clean off your shelves or find under a bed or in your garage and no longer want and think others might like it.
2. Please **deliver your donations** to Scout Island Nature House on **Friday May the 5th between 4 and 7 PM.**
3. On Friday afternoon between 3:30 and 6:30 PM I **need helpers** to unload boxes and sort and set up so we are ready for the Saturday morning shoppers. Please let me know if you are available. Call 250 398 7724 or email mewaring@hotmail.com
4. Shop and bring friends and neighbours to shop too, on Saturday from 9:30AM –1 PM
5. I need some **helpers from 1 – 2 PM on Saturday afternoon** for clean up to help put tables away, pack up and take unsold items to the share shed, Salvation Army etc. Please contact me and let me know if you can help with clean up. I can be reached at mewaring@hotmail.com and 250 398 7724

The money we earn is used for a bursary for a grade 12 student graduating from Lake City Secondary this spring. If we earn more than needed for the bursary the extra is donated to education programs at Scout Island. What we sell depends on what you bring so I am counting on your help!! Your donations, help and support are greatly appreciated.



AGM, Williams Lake Field Naturalists April 7, 2017

By Fred McMechan

We had a very good turnout for the AGM evening. 42 members attended to enjoy socializing and to making sure there was a quorum for the AGM business meeting. Thank you for your support.

To start we had a delicious pot luck supper.

The AGM meeting occurred after the supper. Kath VanSpall, our treasurer, presented financial statements for the Williams Lake Field Naturalists club account and the Scout Island Nature Centre account. Fred McMechan gave the

presidents report. He reported on the many activities offered to our members over the year and thanked the members who organized these activities. Cathy Koot, our Membership Director, reported that we have a healthy membership. She indicated that we have 63 family memberships consisting of 149 people, 49 single memberships, 2 student memberships. 10 new memberships were received. Sue Hemphill, our Executive Director for the Scout Island Nature Centre, reported that the 2016 Annual report will be available at the banquet and then it can be found online at www.scoutislandnaturecentre.ca.

The election of Officers and Directors took place.

The following were elected: 1) president- Fred McMechan 2) vice president- no nomination 3) Treasurer-Kath VanSpall 4) Secretary- Ordell Steen 5) Directors- Brian Chapman, Chris Coates, Nola Daintith, Ray Hornby, Cathy Koot, Don Lawrence, Christie Mayall, Peter Opie
Christie Mayall had to decline on becoming the president this year.

The nominations committee, consisting of Fred McMechan, Don Lawrence and Ordell Steen, will continue to be active attempting to secure a nomination for president and/or vice president before the next AGM. Members interested in becoming or nominating someone for president or vice president please contact a member of the committee

Under new business a motion was approved unanimously to increase the club membership fees for 2018. Membership will be increased from \$30 to \$35 for family and \$25 to \$30 for individual. Student membership will remain at \$10. These fees will come into effect next year when memberships are renewed. The membership increase will accommodate a BC Nature membership fee increase.

To finish the evening an interesting presentation and slide show by Jim Sims on rare and other birds at Eagle Lake was given. Thanks Jim.



Scout Island Nature Centre

By Sue Hemphill

April has been so busy that this summary will be brief as it is all the time I had to write it.

April is Earth Challenge month and we had 8 classes of grade 7 come for a day each at the nature centre to learn about ecosystems. The weather did not cooperate very often, so the students had to brave the cold and wet and they did. Frances McCoubrey and Laura Ulrich (summer staff from a few years ago back in Williams Lake to practice being a teacher) helped me each day to involve students in lots of hands on activities to help them understand the ecosystems of the Cariboo Chilcotin and appreciate the animals and plants that are part of it. Very full days! A big thank-you to the Woodlot Education Society who paid for the bussing costs to get all the classes to Scout Island and will be paying for the bus to the Horsefly River for the two classes that chose this for a prize. By the way, City Council was one of the teams and came in 7 out of 9.

Our Air Quality educators, Jane Welburn, Martin Kruus, and Jacinta D'Andrea have also been busy. You may have noticed their bi monthly articles in the Tribune as they try to raise awareness about air quality in the town. Martin presented "Air Aware" programs to all 8 Grade 7 classes to prepare them for the Earth Challenge. Our goal is to make sure citizens do not take our air for granted. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Bert Groenberg for being our community's representative on the Air Quality Round Table for the last 13 years. Without his voice, no one would even know there was a Round Table that is supposed to be caring for our air. And I want to welcome Jane Perry who has offered to step into this volunteer position so that there can continue to be a voice for the community on the Round Table. Please go to breatheasywilliamslake.org more information about the role of the round table.

Two UBC Community Based Field Experience students (on their way to being teachers as of September 2017) will join us for 3 weeks starting this week. Four more will come in June. They will be busy helping summer staff (starting May 2) lead classes on outdoor adventures.

Help Request

Is there a member who is proficient in windows/word etc. programs and computers in general who is willing to be our "go to person" when we are having problems? Volunteer would be wonderful, but we could pay. We just can't quite afford the costs of the various computer centres in town. Contact Sue if you can help.

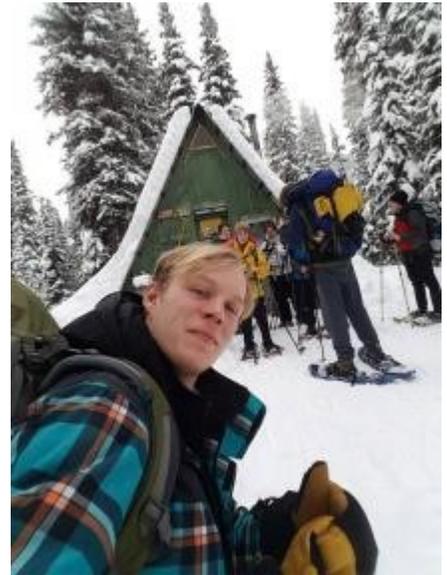
Murray Cabin Trip March 2017

By Paula Laita

On March 11-12, 2017 two Greenologists (Columneetza Campus Environmental Club), three members of the Falcon Enviro Club (Williams Lake Campus), SD teacher Jodie Mason and Environmental Educator Paula Laita went on a great-awesome-super fun overnight snowshoeing trip to the Murray Cabin in Wells. Thank you Tom Foley, Jon Gaztelumendi, Georgia Bock and Finn for volunteering and joining us on the hike up to the cabin! ☺

From Russell Waterhouse, Lake City Secondary Grade 12 Student:

“This trip was probably my favourite outdoors experience to date. The hike up, despite being incorrectly advertised as “mostly flat with some uphill,” was beautiful, and what followed was well worth the long trek. It made me appreciate the sight of the cabin a little bit more. Very soon after arriving, we had all found a bunk and dried off our cloths. Not too long after that, all the students had recuperated enough to go outside for a game of football. Naturally, we couldn’t play with our snowshoes on, but we also couldn’t play the full game without them, as the snow pact was taller than most of the players. It ended up becoming a game of keep-away (the main strategy was simply to get enough members of the other team buried in the snow that you could easily intercept a pass. You had bonus time if you could get them into a tree well). After we were thoroughly soaked, we returned to the warm cabin and enjoyed a night of chili and cards. There was more than enough chili to go around, but luck with the cards were not shared so equally, as Paula won game after game. It got dark quickly, but we didn’t fall asleep nearly as fast. The next morning, despite waking up earlier than normal, I prepared the part of the weekend I knew everyone had been waiting for: pancake breakfast. I am convinced my homemade pancakes are the reason the hike down were so much fun. Once again, there weren’t really too many flat parts, but this time gravity was working in our favour, so we walked and slid down the mountain on our snowshoes. More than most other things, I remember the descent, because that was way too much fun. It didn’t last nearly long enough, as we were at the vehicles in no time.



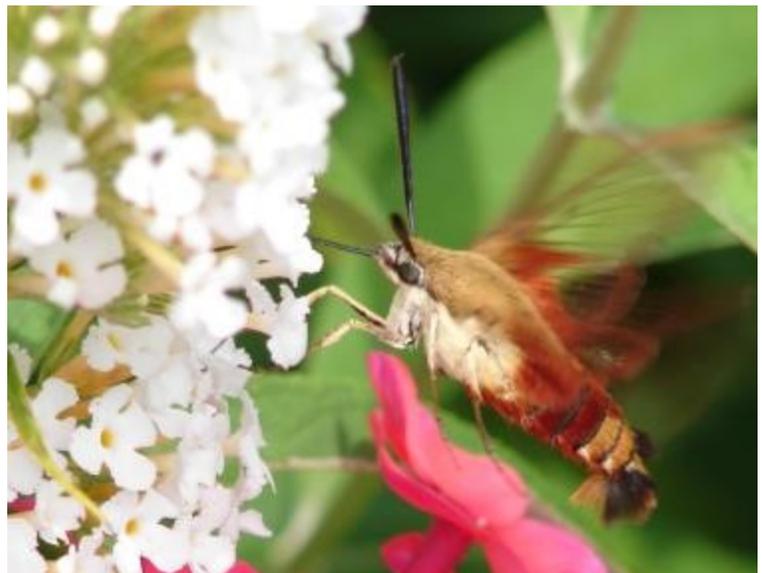
This trip brought me closer to my classmates and to nature, and I will treasure it for the rest of my life.”

Hummingbird Moth (*Hemaris thysbe*)

Researched by Margaret Waring

I wonder if you have ever seen a Hummingbird Moth. I have only seen one, once, for not very long, around a Currant Bush and Hop Plant. It was late spring last year in my backyard garden. Rick and I watched it until it left. It was interesting and different. Initially I thought it might be a Hummingbird. It was quite large, the size of a Hummingbird and it made a humming noise. It was a fast strong flier and hovered in mid air. The wings were see through and had some colour around the edges I did a little research to find out about what we saw.

The Hummingbird Clearwing Moth (*Hemaris thysbe*) is the most commonly seen species and can be seen all across Canada in similar ranges as Hummingbirds. They are members of the sphinx



Hummingbird Moth
Photo by Jim Sims

moth family (Sphingidae). They, the adults, unlike most moths, fly during the day and are pollinators, feeding on flower nectar with a long thin proboscis. They like gardens and fields and edges of forests. In Britain they are referred to as Bee and Hawk Moths and likely a different species.

These moths lay tiny round green eggs on the underside of leaves. The Caterpillars are also green and have a horn like tail at the rear end and are well camouflaged among the leaves. They might have some white spots on their back and small red spots along their sides. When they are full grown they drop to the ground and spin a loose cocoon and pupate in leaf litter where they spend the winter and are somewhat protected. The adult will emerge next spring. In the north, which I assume is us, there is only one generation per year.

The adults like to visit bluebells, bee balm, phlox, honeysuckle and verbena. The pupae use leaf litter and the caterpillars eat leaves of honeysuckle, snowberry, hawthorn, cherries and plums.

I am glad I have lots of leaf litter and a cherry tree. I will be on the lookout for the Hummingbird clearwing Moth this year. I would like it to return. I hope both you and I are lucky enough to see one.

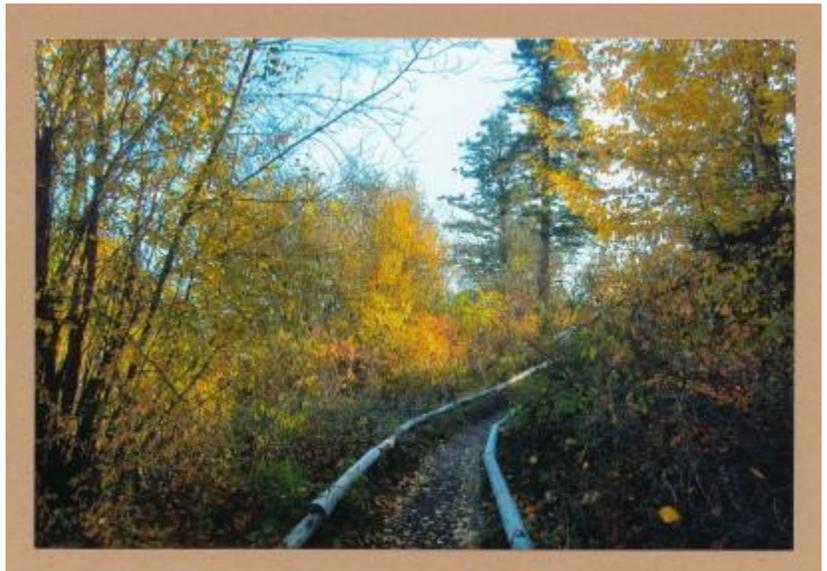
Once Around Scout Island “Trails”

by Chris Hornby

On my many walks at Scout Island I have taken many (possibly 100's of photos) and I'd like to share this with you.

When I walk the trails at the Island I thank God literally for every step. I see and feel life and beauty all around me. Recently I walked with Miria Myers and it was so stimulating to hear the plant and bush names said in the Chilcotin Language. It was an honour.

I entered two of my photos in the Fall Fair which I photographed from the same place on the trail but in two different seasons, winter (snow) and fall where the light from the sun was ideal. The photos won first prize.



When my Mom was passing away in Alberta I went to the Island and found a bench to sit upon on a quiet secluded trail. I prayed when I went home a phone call was on my answering machine to come to Alberta. My Mom did pass away two days later.

The sunrises and sets viewed from Scout Island are brilliant with the rolling hills of South and North Lakeside in the background. I now understand why the Shuswap people built their Kickwillies and Cache Pits on the Island's south tip and survived the winter seasons!

Scout Island (in Nature) is where I get my strength to carry on.

Our View of the Night Sky – May 2017.

Planet Review

Mercury reappears in the morning gloaming in mid-May. Look for it lower and to the left of Venus. It will be difficult to see because of the low angle of the ecliptic.

Venus shines brightly in the early dawn sky low in the east.

Mars is visible as a reddish 'star' low in the evening sky just east of Venus as it passes through the constellations Pisces, Aries and Taurus. Look for it less than 7 degrees from the star Aldebaran an hour after sunset in early May. By the end of May it will be lost in the twilight glare.

Jupiter is conspicuous in the south at dusk.

Saturn rises at sunset in the south east evening sky and is due south in the middle of the night in late May. Its rings are tilted so they provide a great view through a telescope!

Sun

Note there will be a solar eclipse on August 21 this summer that passes through Oregon and then across the US. If you haven't yet observed a solar eclipse this is one of the closest to us there will be in the near future!

Moon

New Moon - May 25th.

Full moon - May 10th and June 9th.

Summer Solstice is on June 20th.

Meteor Showers

The Aquariid meteor shower peaks on May 5th.

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. "May 2017: Northern Edition (PDF)". At the end of the month it changes to show the next month's chart.

The Skymaps chart also has a useful list of what is visible with the eye, binoculars and telescopes.

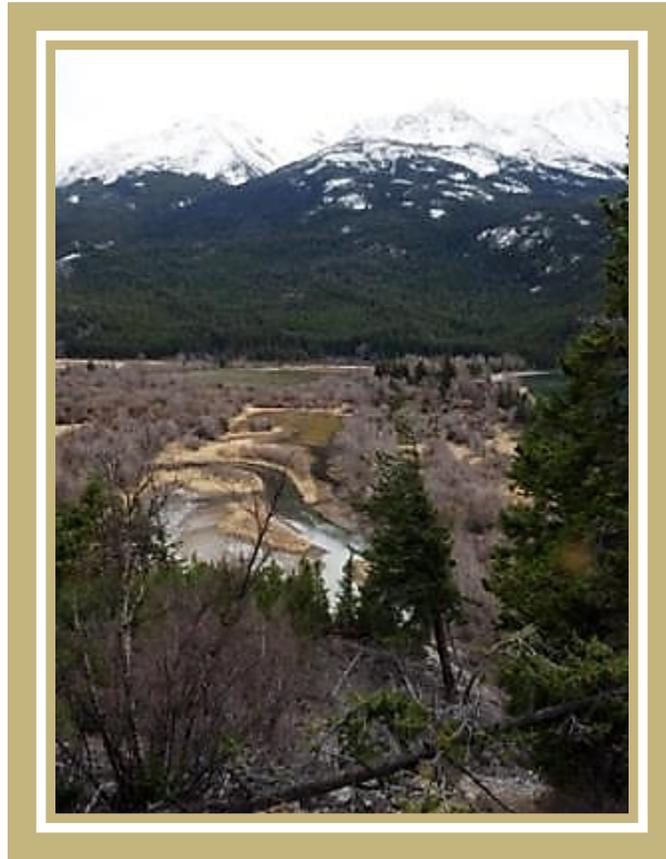
Hope you had the chance to catch the Art Show 'Impact Craters, Sisters & Other Circular Objects' - a celebration of the night sky - at the Stationhouse Gallery. Show ends April 29th.

The Nimpo Lake Bennie Cabin

Why not plan an enjoyable get-a-way to this rustic West Chilcotin Cabin this summer. Fred and Winnie Bennie were long time members of the club and they gave their property to the Land Conservancy of BC so that others could enjoy the cabin as they had for so many years. Enjoy fishing on one of the Chilcotin's famous fishing lakes, take a relaxing paddle down the Dean River or just sit and enjoy the awesome views.



To find more information and reservation details check the site <http://conservancy.bc.ca/featured-projects/nimpo-lake/> Jim takes care of the cabin for TLC and will be opening up the cabin on Tuesday May 23rd following the Victoria Day Weekend. You are welcome to tag along and lend a hand and see the cabin at the same time. Jim might also be able to answer some of your questions. The cabin sees very little use and you would make Fred and Winnie very happy if you spent some time there. TLC will be happy as well!

Member's Moment from Kris Andrews**A Chilcotin Easter Weekend**

A group of naturalists spent Easter weekend in the Chilcotin looking for the Yellow Billed Loon on Tatlayoko Lake on the Saturday (with no success) and exploring the birding and fishing possibilities at Middle Lake on Moseley Creek on Easter Sunday. This view is of the inlet end of Middle Lake where Moseley Creek enters the lake. Middle Lake has an approximate elevation of 800 m. The beach formed by the strong sw. winds hold back and appear to dam some of the flow from the watershed above, creating some nice riparian and marsh habitat for birds and other species. We counted over 20 Common Loons on the lake and waterfowl species in the marsh area included Trumpeter Swans, Canada Geese, Green Winged Teal, Barrows Goldeneye, Mallards and Ring Necked Ducks. A large group of Yellow Rumped Warblers were catching insects on the beach including biting mosquitoes that emerged after lunch.

Ruffed Grouse and one of the Blue Grouse species was heard among the beach vegetation. Should be a great place for warblers and other birds that like riparian areas to breed a bit later in the season. Involves a 2.5 km hike from the locked gate on the road to the lower part of the Moseley Creek Valley. Some nice old homesteads along the way.

“Member’s Moment” is an opportunity for you to share a special scene, plant, animal, bird or outdoor activity that you have enjoyed and photographed here in the Cariboo Chilcotin. A chance for you to encourage other members to get outdoors and find their own special moments close to home and perhaps share them with all of us. For each newsletter the editors will select one or two photos for inclusion in the newsletter based on the quality of the photo as well as the interesting paragraph you must provide. We will save all submitted unused moments in hopes they may find a place in a future edition. Please email your full resolution photo and paragraph to the muskratexpress@shaw.ca. A special thanks to Kris Andrews for the winning entry.

Field Trip List for 2017

There is still a lot of time for additional club field trips, if you would like to add to our list please contact Jim (250)296-3638 or muskratexpress@shaw.ca or Fred at (250)392-7680 or Fred_McMechan@telus.net Thanks to all of the volunteer leaders.

Alkali Lake (April 9th) *Too late you missed this one*

Chilanko Marsh, Tatlayoko Lake and Group Choice

Friday May 19th to May 22th (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. 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 and the ice is already off the lake). There will be a pot luck supper Saturday evening and a pancake breakfast Sunday morning. Sunday we will take a walk along the east shore of Tatlayoko Lake that features some old fir with spectacular views of the valley and maybe a Yellow-billed Loon. On Victoria Day Monday we will make a group decision on where to spend the morning. Some of us will be going to the Bennie Cabin on Nimpo Lake on Tuesday and you are welcome to travel with us and help open the cabin.

Williams Lake River Upper Valley Birding

Sunday June 3rd (morning) (Leader Phil Ranson 398-7110)

Meet at 8:00am in the Parking Lot below Comer Street. 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.

Airport Flats, Churn Creek Protected Area – hike

Sunday, June 4 (Leader: Ordell Steen 398-5017)

Airport Flats is an extensive grassland plateau with good condition grasslands and open Douglas-fir forests. We will explore grassland plants and birds and examine tree encroachment of grasslands and its control by BC Parks. The plateau provides great views of the surrounding landscape, including the Fraser River valley. We plan to hike from near the camp site at the calving barn up moderate slopes (average about 12%) through open forests onto the gently rising grassland plateau top and return the same way for a total of about 6 km. Bring lots of water and a lunch. Meet at the parking lot at the "Y" by the A&W at 7:00 a.m. This will be a joint trip with the Friends of Churn Creek.

Fox Mountain Walk

Wednesday evening June 7th (Leader Ray Hornby 250-392-2271)

Join us for a walk along the trails on Fox Mountain. Good chance of viewing birds, wild flowers, and wildlife including deer, moose, bear, and fox. As well as an opportunity for great vista views of the lake. Meet at the corner of Fox Mountain Road and Teal Place (2nd road on left at top) at 6:30 pm. Bring camera and binoculars. Walk is relatively easy and dry.

June 21 st	Russett Bluff	Peter
June 28 th	Asbestos Pits	Peter

Russet Bluff Hike

Wednesday evening June 21nd (Leader Peter Opie 392-1440)

Meeting location and time will be confirmed in the next newsletter wear your hiking boots. Be prepared to climb up out of the valley to the top of the bluff. Enjoy the grand views of the valley from the top of the bluff.

Asbestos Pits

Wednesday evening June 28nd (Leader Peter Opie 392-1440)

Meet at SINC at 7:00 pm to carpool; wear your hiking boots. We'll drive to the top to view the landscape and enjoy the birds. Plan to explore interesting features in the vicinity including the "Asbestos Pits" and associated plant communities.

Teapot Mountain Hike and Camp

Friday July 14th to Saturday July 15th (Leader Paula Laita 250 305-8095)

Friday: leave in the morning, drive to the trailhead, have lunch, hike up to the cabin, overnight.

Saturday: hike up to the alpine, ridge to the top and explore around, back to the cabin, pick up backpacks, down to the car. Stop at the Horsefly waterfalls for a swim and drive to the Arts on the Fly in Horsefly. Due to the nature of the trip and the possibility of alternative options it is imperative that you pre-register for this trip by contacting Paula.

Sheep Flats, Churn Creek Protected Area – hike

Saturday, September 23 (Leaders: Jim Young 398-7987 and Ordell Steen 398-5017)

This is a hike to a seldom visited grassland bench on the north side of Churn Creek near the western limits of the protected area. It provides great views of the upper Churn Creek canyon and examples of good condition grasslands. We will see at least one rare plant species and abundant sign of bighorn sheep. We will access the flats from the Gang Ranch/Blackwater Lake area on a guide outfitters trail which is quite steep in several sections through the forest above the flat. We will return the same way for a total distance of 6-7 km and an elevation rise of about 350 m on the hike back to the vehicles. Bring lots of water and a lunch. Meet at the parking lot at the "Y" by the A&W at 7:00 a.m. This will be a joint trip with the Friends of Churn Creek.

Junction Sheep Range

Sunday October 22nd (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.