

# MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS  
APRIL AND MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER



What is  
happening in  
your Backyard?

Lots is happening in our Backyard



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

**Membership fees:** Family (\$35), single (\$30) 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](mailto: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](mailto: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:** presidential Team Margaret Waring (Chairperson), Don Lawrence (Scout Island affairs) and Ordell Steen (Communications/liaison), secretary Nola Daintith, treasurer Katharine VanSpall and directors Peter Opie, Ray Hornby, Francis McCoubrey, Jean Oke, Kathie Hamm, Don Lawrence, Sean Donahue and past president Fred McMechan



**Editors:** Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter late in June. If you have comments, suggestions or articles for the next Muskrat Express please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (778 764-2752) or e-mail us at [muskratexpress@shaw.ca](mailto:muskratexpress@shaw.ca)



From Jim at Tern Inn on Eagle Lake: The Arctic Terns have returned to Eagle Lake for another year. The first one arrived on May 7<sup>th</sup> and today 2 more Terns joined it. Around the house the days are filled with the sounds of birds singing to declare a territory, Purple Finch, Yellow-rumped warblers, Wilson's Warbler, the list goes on. Every morning the Dusky Flycatcher sings from the top of the old dead Cottonwood tree, the same tree it uses each year. The Rufous Hummingbird shows off his amazing aerial acrobatics for his girlfriend.

Today was Niut's first trip in a canoe as we finally enjoyed a nice calm day on the lake. It was slow going for a while with one hand holding the dog while the other tried to handle the paddle just enough to keep us off the rocks. It did not take long before he settled and even quicker before he was asleep below my seat. Being in the canoe allows me to search out the shoreline around the islands in search of some interesting bird species and I was not disappointed. I found the pair of loons near the site on Tern Island where they have been traditionally nesting. A quick paddle along the shore and I found the nest with 2 eggs. Usually the nests have just been a shallow depression in the sand but this year they used a new location and the nest was built up with some vegetation.



Close by on a very small rocky shoal I found this pair of Dunlin in breeding plumage. When I checked my records, I found I had seen them last year on the same day. I'll see them here during both spring and fall migration but not every year.

Niut and I look forward to enjoying many more mornings out on the calm lake in the canoe just like today.

**Field Trips**

At this time, we are still not offering any field trips due to the covid-19 restrictions. We hope that restrictions will be lifted enough that we can offer some Fall outings and that we will be able to announce these in the June Newsletter. We hope you have been able to get outside and enjoy nature with your family.

**House Plants for Sale**

Jean Roberts at 250 392 6984

Jean potted some spider plants and Christmas Cactus that she wants to donate to the yard sale. If you would like one or more please call her at the above phone number and arrange plant sale with payment to Jean which she will donate to WL Field Naturalists "Yard Sale."

**Notes from the Executive**

From Margaret Waring

I wanted to share with you some activities of Williams Lake Field Naturalists and the Directors during the past two months. Just seven weeks ago on Friday 13 March 2020 we had our annual general meeting (AGM) at the Nature House. The evening began with one of our outstanding Potluck suppers and was followed by the AGM meeting. We had reports on membership and from the Co-Presidents and the Treasurer. A motion was made in case it was necessary: That if no one is elected to be president, the new board will appoint three directors from the new board to share the duties of president. A president and vice president were not elected so with an email motion that will be formally recorded in the minutes of our next meeting Ordell Steen, Don Lawrence and Margaret Waring were again selected to be co-presidents for the year. Elected for next year, as well as the co-presidents were: Katharine VanSpall-Treasurer, Nola Daintith-Secretary and Directors: Sean Donahue, Cathie Hamm, Ray Hornby, Frances McCoubrey, Jean Oke, and Peter Opie. Fred McMechan holds the position of Past President. We discussed the cost for future membership and whether we should charge extra for people receiving paper copies of the newsletter. It was decided to let individuals donate if they were able and wanted to.

The finale of the AGM evening was an excellent presentation by Sage Birchwater with slides of the West Chilcotin including Turner Lakes and learning what a Jokulhlaup is.

Just before the AGM we had produced our February – March Newsletter and were busy working on the new entrance and roof for the Nature House, working with the city regarding the new bridge and making plans for spring activities. A few weeks later we needed to start cancelling events such as the Banquet, the Yard Sale, field trip planning and the field trips.

Now a new challenge is occurring for the directors and the Field Naturalists. The lake has water levels higher than anyone remembers. Trails are flooded, some have been closed and bridges have hopefully been secured with heavy containers filled with water on their decks. The City has closed the causeway to vehicles. *(Note the gate to the Nature Centre is now open but a lot of the trails are still closed)*

I wanted to let you know the directors are working hard on your behalf. We mainly communicate with each other by email. I have had notes and phone calls from members too and I am so impressed by the many interested skilled dedicated members. Please contact any of us with any questions you might have.



**The New Pedestrian Bridge to Scout Island – Challenges and Opportunities**

By Ordell Steen

Last fall, the City of Williams Lake built a pedestrian bridge from the R.C. Cotton site to Scout Island across the outflow diversion channel from the lake. The bridge is part of the City’s long term goal to have a walking trail from the lakeshore on Scout Island to the Fraser River. The T’excelcenc Band and the City have named the bridge *Nekw7usem*, a Secwepemc word which can be translated as “all one” or the “same all over” according to Jean William of T’excelc.



The bridge presents some real opportunities for walking and nature viewing by the public and school classes. However the bridge has also raised some concerns for the integrity and security of Scout Island Nature Centre (SINC). This article briefly summarizes some of the concerns and solutions the directors have been addressing in numerous meetings and communications with the City.

A principal concern with having access to the west end of Scout Island has always been the increased risks that it may pose to the security and integrity of SINC. Concerns arise primarily from the inability of the caretaker to view activity at the west end of the island. Uncontrolled, after-hours access likely increases the risk of grass or other fires, whether intentional or unintentional, and damage by vandals to SINC infrastructure. Although pedestrians have always been able to enter the Nature Centre after-hours via the causeway, risks to SINC have been limited by the presence of the caretaker and the long walk to the island from the causeway gate. In recognition of after-hours access risks, the City agreed prior to bridge construction to include a gate on the bridge which would be closed and locked whenever the causeway gate was closed. In addition, the City agreed to limit vehicle access to the bridge entrance, increasing the length of the walk to the island. However, the City was told after the bridge was constructed that a locked gate would present a public liability issue for the City. A gate on the bridge is not an option.

After discussing various options in place of a gate, the City proposed that they place a video camera on or near the bridge with a feed to the caretaker's house for after-hours viewing of the bridge area. The caretaker would be able to note any suspicious activity at or near the bridge in real time or in the past. In addition, the City agreed to block vehicle access trails to the bridge on the Cotton side. That is, the expected risks to SINC would be similar to those presently associated with the causeway.

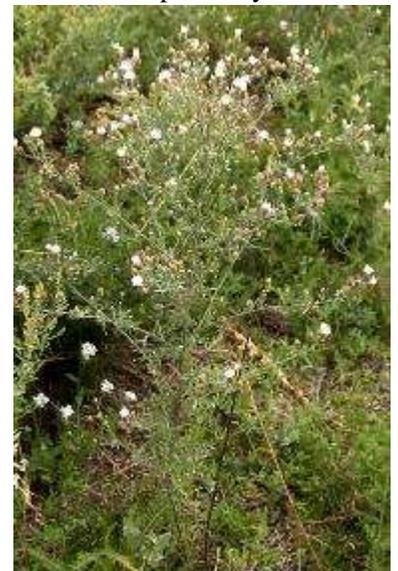
The present agreement with the City to limit after-hours access is to place a video camera at a height of about 13m on the pole with the osprey nesting platform. Imagery data from the video camera will be sent wirelessly to the caretaker's house for viewing and retrieval. Because the wireless transmission requires a clear view from the pole to the house, the City initially proposed cutting and trimming trees near the Nature House to obtain the view. However, after further negotiations, the City has agreed that a receiver will be placed on a BC Hydro pole, or a new pole if necessary, a few metres from the caretaker's house and a cable will be buried from the pole to the house. There is a clear view between these poles at present, so this will not require tree cutting. The WLFN has agreed to install a pole if necessary and to dig a trench to bury the cable. The City will provide a receiver and a video monitor in the caretaker's house.

The vehicle access trail from a public road across BCR property to the bridge was not blocked by the City until late April when they finally received approval from BCR to install a temporary block. Many people have been parking right at the bridge. The City has agreed to construct a bridge parking lot at considerable distance from the bridge to increase walking distance.

A second principal concern arising from the bridge is the extensive patch of dense knapweed at the proposed bridge entry location on the RC Cotton side. Because knapweed is an aggressive, invasive plant that can displace native vegetation, directors requested that the potentials for spread of knapweed to Scout Island, where it is presently unknown, be eliminated before the bridge was opened to the public. However, this has not been possible. Options for controlling the knapweed are limited by restrictions on digging soils due to their contamination, the presence of archaeological sites, proximity to the lake, and the large extent of the knapweed patch on BCR property. As a result no measures to remove, spray, or bury the knapweed were applied. The access trail to the bridge across the BCR property, mentioned above, passes through the knapweed patch.

The current plan is to block vehicle access through the knapweed patch, erect signs making people aware of knapweed, and encourage people to stay on the City's new pedestrian trail by installing signs and a low fence. A low fence will be constructed on either side of the trail through the knapweed patch and information signs about knapweed will be installed at the parking area and along the trail. Signs have been designed by WLFN directors. Hopefully this will minimize transport of knapweed seeds to SINC.

As many people know, heavy vehicle traffic during construction of the bridge damaged the Butterfly Trail on SINC. Although the trail was pretty muddy this spring,



the contractor has now restored the trail with compacted crushed gravel with a level surface of 1.6 m wide and sloping sides to minimize puddles. Areas disturbed by construction will be reseeded with native species. A native grass seed mix, containing species selected by the WLFN, has been purchased and the area will be seeded when the lake water level goes down. Some native trees and shrubs are also planned for areas near the bridge on Scout Island.

Plans are underway to construct a kiosk near the bridge on the Scout Island side. A “Welcome to Scout Island Nature Centre” sign (1.2 m x 2.1 m) has been prepared by directors and will be installed in the kiosk, probably along with another sign about nature viewing opportunities on the Nature Centre lands and marsh. Visitors will be encouraged to not disturb wildlife in the channel, the marsh, or SINC lands.

The bridge has significantly increased the number of visitors to the west end of Scout Island. This presents a challenge as well as an opportunity for Scout Island Nature Centre. Thank you to the directors and others who have contributed days of time and lots of energy to this project working with the City of Williams Lake.

### Scout Island Nature Centre

By Sue Hemphill



#### Summer Staff Have Started at the nature House

It is not a normal year between flooding and pandemic, but our three intrepid summer staff are up for the challenges. The three are Jacob Johnson, Amy Hanson, and Mackenzie Magnowski. We really work at the 2m dance to keep everyone safe. They are also working different shifts so not everyone is there at the same time. This is easier right now, as we are not doing any programs. They are busy learning about their specialty so that they can develop programs that can be shared in different ways during these times. As well they will be helping with clean up after the flood waters are down and fighting weeds. If you stop by to say hello remember to wait at the door until someone can come out and greet you from a 2 metre distance. So in their words here they are:

Jacob

Hi my name is Jacob Johnson. I just finished my first year of university in a Bachelors of Science program majoring in biology and minoring in environmental sciences. I also have a personal interest in the environment and health. Currently I am interested in animal behaviour, ecosystems, and how they function.



My name is Mackenzie Magnowski. I was born in Williams Lake and have lived here all my life. This past school year I completed my first year of General Studies at Trinity Western University, and I am excited to see where this path takes me in the future. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with the amazing people at the Scout Island Nature Centre after dreaming of being a summer student here for years.

Hi I’m Amy! I’m currently in my 4th year of a Bachelor in Natural Resource Science at TRU in Kamloops. I recently completed a semester in Natural Resource Science in Haifa Gwaini, which was an amazing experience and I had the opportunity to learn a lot about coastal ecosystems. I’ve played the fiddle for 13 years and been a part of many music groups. In my free time I also enjoy hiking, snowboarding, kayaking, painting and sewing. I’m excited to spend this summer learning and teaching at Scout island!



### Year-Long Student Mentoring Projects Wrapping Up

Since the Spring of 2019, Sue and Bill have been mentoring 2 graduating high school students, Jeff Voght and Tessa Clement, who have been working on independent studies projects. “Mentoring” is a loose term, because WE have been

learning along the way with Jeff and Tessa! Each will be preparing a paper and a presentation of their procedures and results.

Jeff has conducted a survey of aquatic macroinvertebrates at four locations around Scout Island using sampling protocols from the CABIN Wetland Macroinvertebrate Protocol and A Citizens Guide to Biological Assessment of Wetlands). He collected samples by using “bottle traps” as well as by netting. The presence or absence of invertebrates is considered an indication of the health of a wetland. He has customized a “Scout Island guide” to collection procedures, a data collection form as well as habitat / vegetation descriptions of collecting sites. Jeff has also created a taxa, or dichotomous key specific to Scout Island as well as tested water quality at each site during collection periods.



Jeff Checking Bottle Traps



Dragonfly Nymphs



Sorting invertebrates from collection sample

Tessa has conducted an amphibian survey at Bond Lake using several methods including, call and visual surveys, identification of egg masses, the use of coverboards and “light touch” sampling. Coverboards are typically used to sample for salamanders and toads, which are “fossorial,” in that they are found under rocks, logs, etc. for part of their lives. 55 coverboards were placed at 6 metre intervals along a portion of the Bond Lake Shoreline. Light-touch is a visual-encounter method facilitated by gently overturning and replacing moveable natural cover objects. Bond Lake was chosen because it is fish free (fish eat tadpoles!), easily accessible and has lots of submergent and emergent vegetation, which amphibians prefer. Western toads, Columbia spotted frogs, wood frogs and long toed salamanders were identified over multiple surveys. Toads (mostly juveniles) were very abundant while salamander presence was determined by only one sighting in an ephemeral (temporary) pool early this spring.



Cover Boards



Wood Frog



Wood Frog Breeding Site

**Flooding**

Thanks to all who have been helping with the flooding at Scout Island with special thanks to Don Lawrence, Ray Hornby, Ordell Steen, Ken Day and Glen Davidson. The bridge to the east island did move off the abutments but we realigned it generally before adding water tanks to hold it in place. Thanks to Ken for coming up with the idea of using water tanks for weight and the UBC Research Forest for loaning us the pump. When the water recedes enough to examine the abutments, we will have an engineer assess it to determine if it is safe as is or how much re-alignment will be necessary.

When it is time to begin repairs a lot more help will be needed. You can contact Sue at [shemphill@xplornet.com](mailto:shemphill@xplornet.com) or phone the Nature House 250 398 8532 if you can help.

## Dwarf Mistletoe

By Vanessa Robinson



Ever seen a plant growing ON a plant? I bet some of you have - Spanish moss in the tropics, Licorice Fern on Bigleaf Maple, those little “air plants” popular with city hipsters . . . all those plants sit on the surface (i.e., bark) of their hosts.

Okay - what about a plant growing IN a plant? Some plants grow roots right INTO the host plant. The parasitic plant connects to the host’s xylem or phloem - the parts of the host that conduct water, sugar, and nutrients around, and uses the host’s resources to survive.

*Arceuthobium americanum*, or Lodgepole Pine Dwarf Mistletoe, is a native plant parasite you are apt to notice on drier lodgepole pine sites in our region. The plants are yellow-green, and different sexes - some plants produce pollen, some plants produce seed.

A Manitoba study found that roughly 5% of mist-netted birds were carrying Dwarf Mistletoe seed, including the Brown Creeper, Swainson’s Thrush, Red-breasted Nuthatch. Canada Jays and Dark-eyed juncos were the most common vectors for the spread of Mistletoe seed northward, along the passerine migration route sampled in the study. Dwarf Mistletoe can infect Jack Pine, a tree found across northern Canada, so seed carried by birds from the south are thought to be able to infect northern trees.

However, in areas where winter temperatures reach or exceed -40 C, Dwarf Mistletoe is cannot survive. This means the range of Jack Pine in Canada goes well beyond the range of Dwarf Mistletoe. It is possible that Dwarf Mistletoe may experience a range expansion as temperatures warm in northern climes. If a seed lands in a suitable position on a branch, the seed may germinate and grow roots through a pine tree’s thin bark or young stems. It takes the mistletoe plant 6 whole years to reach maturity; a seed takes 2 years to grow.

Dwarf Mistletoes are famous for their explosive seed release - the seeds can be flung up to 18 m from mistletoe parent plant! Recent research suggests that the method of release involves *thermogenesis* - an internal chemical process within the plant releases enough energy to increase the temperature at the seed pod 2 degrees C above ambient temperature, triggering the explosive release of the seed!

Lodgepole Pine Dwarf Mistletoe is flowering in our region right now (as seen in the close-up pic). This close-up photo showcases the pollen-producing, or staminate flowers. Each flower has 0 petals, and 3 sepals. Each sepal has a single anther attached to it directly. In the center of each flower, the plant exudes a sweet nectar that some insects just love.



## Becher's Prairie Bluebird Route

By Loyd Csizmadia

Since 1988 or 89, Michaela Waterhouse and I have maintained a Mountain Bluebird route on Becher's Prairie. It is a beautiful place to work. The original purpose of the route was to provide a biological alternative to the spraying of pesticides. Today, this route and others like it provide a valuable boost to the flagging song bird population and give naturalists like me another reason to be outdoors. Michaela and I have also collected data on species, eggs, and hatchlings over most of our thirty years on Becher's.

The fire in 2017 greatly improved the grassland habitat for the bluebirds on Becher's Prairie by removing many small trees. At the same time, however, it wiped out the fence lines on which we had 50 plus houses. Happily, the government reconstructed most of the fences this year, just before Covid-19 interrupted the work. I am truly grateful to our government for funding the reconstruction, not just at Becher's, but on other bluebird routes as well. Fences are critical for the success of this project.



Michaela Cleans a nest box



Gently lift the female Bluebird out of the nest so you can count the eggs

To rebuild the Becher's Mountain Bluebird route, I required at least forty new houses. A few houses had survived the fire, so I left these in place, even though they were no longer on the updated fence line. Thankfully there were plenty of houses available at Scout Island Nature Center. I am grateful to Jim Sims and Fed McMechan for constructing most of these. The nail-latches on all of their houses worked perfectly. Other houses required a hammer to pry the latches free. In addition, most of the houses had predrilled holes for mounting. These holes speed up the job of attaching the house to the post.

Last week, I contacted Fred McMechan about the availability of houses. Before I knew it, there were thirty new boxes in the back of my pick-up. It took two full afternoons to restore the route, but I didn't mind one bit. As I said earlier, Becher's is beautiful. On the first afternoon I was able to restore houses onto four fence lines. Carrying eight houses at a time in my wheelbarrow, I bounced over the stony grassland from station to station. Fortunately, Michaela and I had mapped the GPS location of each one, so I was able to put houses close to the original sites. I didn't see many Mountain Bluebirds or Tree Swallows as yet. Tree Swallows compete with the bluebirds for boxes. That is why there are two houses in close proximity. The theory is that swallows won't nest next to each other, thereby leaving one box free for a pair of bluebirds. In my experience, swallows don't mind each other as neighbours. Bluebirds, on the other hand, prefer isolation from other bluebirds and swallows alike. So, during the reconstruction, I left more space between houses. In time, the data will prove me right or wrong.

While installing houses during the first afternoon, I saw one ruffed grouse and heard the drumming of four more. It seems that each island of Aspens has a grouse this year. I also observed three Marsh Hawks. This prompted me to move some of my stations further away from the ponds. The profusion of Yellow-rumped Warblers was quite unexpected. They filled the nearby fields with clouds of activity. Vesper sparrows were also abundant, but not unusually so. I don't remember seeing any horned larks.



Yong Bluebirds developing pin feathers

During the second afternoon, I completed the remaining fence lines and compounds. The afternoon slipped by so peacefully that I was reluctant to hang the final box. As my empty wheelbarrow and I trundled our way across the prairie, I observed Tree Swallows

congregating around the newly erected boxes. Two Bald Eagles soared overhead, winging their way toward the Separating Lakes. An unexpected cliff swallow fluttered by, its orange rump catching my eye. As I passed the last station, a pair of bluebirds landed on the shiny new wire next one of the houses. I watched as the female peeked inside. Then the pair flew off. “No point settling on the first house,” I thought. “There are forty-nine more to choose from.” And I left, satisfied with my day.

## Bear Can

By: Loyd Csizmadia

Normally when I discover a discarded beer can at my favourite lookout, it spoils the view. In this situation, it altered the view. Instead of enjoying the lovely panorama provided, I looked warily over my shoulder into the forest. If you had taken a shotgun and blasted this beer can at close range, you couldn't have shredded it half as well as the black bear that recently stood at this spot. How recently? That's the question, isn't it. The warmer weather probably coaxed this beer-bear out of hibernation yesterday, or even more unnerving, today. Maybe the bear was standing right here as I approached. He was having a beer, and I interrupted!

After a few “YO BEAR's,” I attached a bell to my hiking staff. “Dingley-Ding-Ding” rang the bell as I shook the staff at the forest. A cautious reconnaissance indicated that the bear had probably gone. However, there was still a little beer in the bottom of the shredded can. Or maybe it was water. I sniffed. Maybe it was bear drool. Maybe the bear would be back.

I laughed at my imagination. After many, many bear encounters, I've learned one thing: we want nothing to do with one another. Years ago, close to this very spot, a cinnamon coloured bear and I nearly collided. I threw up my arms, the bear raised his and we both fled in opposite directions.

No worries. The bear would not be back.

I spread my coat over the ground so that my back was against some stones. The panoramic view was to my left and the forest to my right. It never pays to get too cocky. Reaching into my pack, I pulled out a single beer. I was about to pry off the cap when a thought struck me: how much beer had been in that can when the bear found it?

Incredible! The tab was intact. That bear had finished an entire can of beer. Now how worrying could that be? I mean it's only one beer! But it's one beer on an empty stomach.

To the best of my knowledge, I have never encountered a beer-drinking bear. I have, however, read news items connecting bears and beer. In one *CBC* article, a black bear entered a grocery store, climbed into a large beer cooler, and chilled for an hour before conservation officers arrived. I don't think he drank anything. In a second, a two-year-old chanced upon a cooler in a campground. After guzzling 36 beers, he passed out. In a third article, this one published by the *ABC News* network, a mother and her cubs smashed through a cabin wall and consumed a hundred beers between them. No animals passed out in this story. Then there was the city bear. According to *CBC*, this bear was captured on video testing cars for unlocked doors. Was he looking for beer?

So what have we learned from my trip to the lookout? First, that one beer is not going to have much impact on a bear. Second, humans need to do more to prevent unwanted encounters with bears, encounters that typically result in the death of the animal. Since 2011, BC Conservation officers have killed about 4,300 black bears, mainly because they become conditioned to human food like beer (*The Williams Lake Tribune*, Jan 3 2020).

I once read a guide outfitter's advice to bear hunters: do not drink any beer the night before your hunt. A bear can smell even trace amounts of the stuff. It is sugar after all. As hungry bears come out of hibernation, it's probably wise for hikers to leave the beer—and all sweet drinks for that matter—at home as well. I put my unopened beer away and simply enjoyed the view. The bear did not return.



## Our View of the Night Sky: May/June 2020.

by Steve Capling

### Planet Review

Mercury is lost to the Sun's glare until mid-month. Visible low in the dusk sky until mid-June. May be visible near the thin crescent moon on May 23-24.

Venus is highly visible in the western sky in the evening at twilight and into the evening. By month end it will be very low in the evening sky and then will not be visible until mid-June when it becomes visible in the morning twilight in the

east. There is a close conjunction of the crescent moon and crescent phase of Venus in the early dawn sky on June 19<sup>th</sup>. Careful observation may reveal the Pleiades 10 degrees above Venus.

Mars is visible in the morning twilight close to the horizon in the east. The Moon passes south of Mars on May 14<sup>th</sup> / 15<sup>th</sup>.

Jupiter is visible in the dawn sky as part of the group of planets that includes Mars and Saturn.

Saturn is visible in the dawn twilight. The waning crescent moon passes close to it on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

For those wanting to know more accurate rise and set times for the Planets check out this website:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/night/canada/williams-lake>

### **Summer Solstice**

Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> marks the summer solstice.

### **Moon**

New Moon - May 22<sup>nd</sup>, June 21<sup>st</sup>.

Full moon - May 7<sup>th</sup>, June 5<sup>th</sup>, July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Monday May 11<sup>th</sup> pre-dawn low in the east: The bright moon is visible with three planets to the left - Jupiter, Saturn and Mars.

The moon passes less than 4 degrees south of Jupiter and Saturn in the pre-dawn sky of June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Meteor Showers**

The Perseids peak on August 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Evening Sky Map** – courtesy of Skymaps.com.

For a printable sky chart try this web site - [Skymaps.com/downloads.html](https://www.skymaps.com/downloads.html) - scroll down the center of the page to the download button. “May 2020: 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.

## **Member’s Moment from Jean Oke**

### **Lunch at the “Take Out Window”**

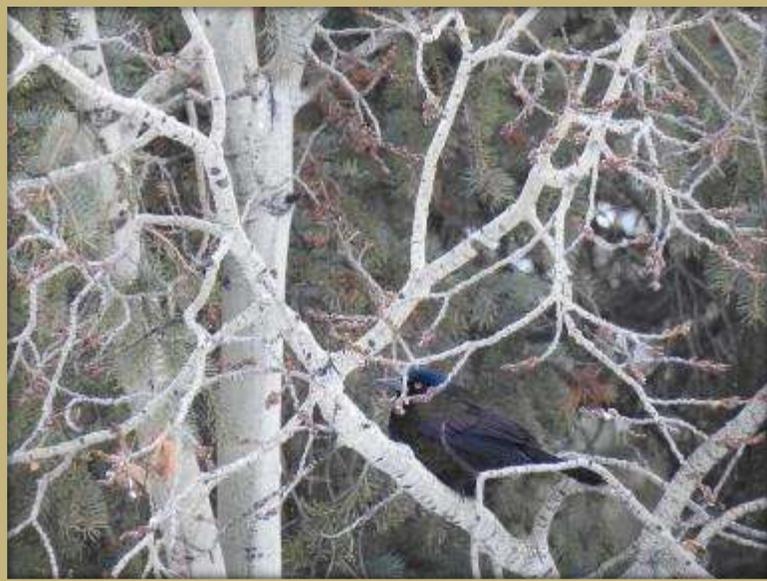
Something hit the window, that was why I looked. When I saw it two crows were harassing this Sharp-shinned Hawk, trying to get the robin. They followed it over the fence when it left the yard, robin still in talons. Loyd Csizmadia was saying that a sharp shinned in his yard was driving small birds into the windows and then pouncing on them. This one may have done that.



**Member’s Moment from  
Sharron Henry**

**Common Grackle**

A medium size blackbird with metallic purple sheen on back head, neck and breast. Eyes are bright yellow. Central feathers of long rounded tail. (Longer than a Red-Wing or Brewers blackbird). They breed throughout North America east of the Rocky Mts and south of the tundra and usually not in the Cariboo-Chilcotin area. The diet includes insects, bird eggs, small mammals and seeds. One was reported at Riske Creek in October 2019 and was still there in residence un February 2020. Where the bird wintered the residents there keep two free standing bird feeders and two hanging ones year around and several species can be



found there all year.)

**Member’s Moment from Don Lawrence**

**“Who cooks for you ... two”**

Joyce and I found this Barred owl on our snowshoe hike the other day. Just lucky to have packed the camera. Heard him hoot and got right under his tree. Walked away and he was still sitting there calm as can be.

We also heard a hoot a ways off so I suspect a pair are nesting nearby.



“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](mailto:muskratexpress@shaw.ca). A special thanks to Jean, Sharron and Don for their photos.

Pictures from the Flood of 2020

