

MUSKRAT EXPRESS

WILLIAMS LAKE FIELD NATURALISTS

SEPTEMBER + OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

JUNCTION +
SHEEP FIELD
TRIP
OCTOBER 17TH.



Have you seen
any mushrooms?



MUSH ROOM FIELD TRIP
OCT 3RD

I'm looking
for sheep!



We are going home.

MEAN



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) you must include an additional \$5 if you request a paper copy of the BC Nature magazine. Memberships can be mailed to the above address. Please complete the membership and waiver forms available at the Nature Centre (250) 398-8532, muskrat@williamslakefieldnaturalists.ca or the web site below. For more information about the club please contact Margaret Waring at (250)398-7724 or e-mail muskrat@williamslakefieldnaturalists.ca

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 Ken Day, Vice President Jane Wellburn secretary Cathie Hamm, treasurer Sue Hemphill and directors Jeremy Vogt, Jean Oke, Michaela Waterhouse, Raymond Getzlaf and Shelly Peel



Editors: Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Please expect your next edition of the newsletter in November. If you stop receiving the newsletter please contact the editors. We always welcome your comments, suggestions, articles and Member's Moments. Please contact Margaret Waring (398-7724), Jim Sims (778 764-2752) or e-mail us at

muskrat@williamslakefieldnaturalists.ca



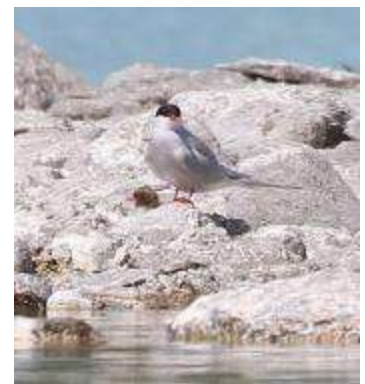
By Jim from Tern Inn. This summer one of our 2 pairs of nesting Arctic Terns successfully fledged a Juvenile Tern. Over the past several years the Tern eggs and young have been preyed on by predator bird species, mainly Raven. There have been no surviving young.

This summer I tried to keep my observations to a minimum and also from a distance. A lot of my conclusions were not confirmed especially as it relates to the nest with eggs. It appeared that a pair were incubating on Tern Island on May 28th. The other pair were setting up territory on the East end of Goose Island. I never was able to confirm a nest on this location. On June 14th all 4 Terns were on Tern Island. The female of the nesting pair appeared to be departing and landing on a different location and I assume that the original nest had been destroyed. I also assumed that the 2nd pair had also had a nest destroyed on Goose Island. On June 27th it looked like both pairs were incubating.



will locate a chick. On June 28th a series of photos showed the female on top of a rock in a none incubating position. About 5m away I made out the male and could see a fish in the bill. The male bent its head down as it would do when feeding the young and the fish was gone. The next day I returned and took this photo that confirmed the juvenile Tern. It was on July 4th that Lubna and Betty visited and we observed the male feeding the chick, see the Members Moment.

When I survey the island from a distant shore I scan the complete Island with a series of photos. When I return home and to the computer I zoom in on each photo to look for incubating posture and location of the female or any sign that she has moved or perhaps I



Newly hatched chick at the feet of Dad.

On July 12th the distant observations indicated that the 2nd pair were feeding a young. Both males were bringing fish

back to the island and the 2nd female had changed location. By July 22nd I had assumed that both nests had failed as I had seen no sign of the young on several visits to the island. Some of these visits were from a canoe and I scanned both sides of the island from a distance that did not disturb the adults. I found it strange that the Terns were still there during a nest check on July 30th. In past years, once the nesting has failed in July the adults leave for the long trip south. I discovered this immature Tern perched on a rock close to the shore of the island, all ready to fly. The adults did an amazing job of hiding the chick from my camera and Raven. The other pair of adult terns were together on the same rock and they did not have a chick.



On the first day of August the 2 Sachis (bird banders from TLBO) stopped in at Eagle Lake on their way to the Research Station and saw the Tern Family. This was the first time they were able to see the Terns as this was the first year they were still here on Aug 1st. The Terns were not seen again. Will the adults bring their youngster back with them next summer?

Fungus Field Trip to Viewland Mountain near Horsefly BC

October 3rd at 9 am - early afternoon

Leader Tim Philpott

Tim Philpott is a Soil Research Scientist with the BC Ministry of Forests, based in Williams Lake. He specializes in fungal ecology and nutrient cycling in forest soils. His research has focused on fungal biodiversity and old-growth forest management, the roles of fungi in forest ecosystem function, and the interactions among fungi, soils, and natural disturbance, particularly wildfire. An enthusiastic naturalist and mushroom observer, Tim enjoys sharing his knowledge about the diversity, ecology, and natural history of fungi and fostering an appreciation for their foundational role in ecosystem function.



Diamond Willow Fungus. (Haploporus odoratus)

Tim will meet you at Scout Island at 9am so that people can carpool. It is a 1-hour drive to Horsefly. You can also meet the group in Horsefly just over the bridge in the parking area. The trail head is ½ an hour from Horsefly on good gravel road. The hike up is about 1 hour but we will stop to look at and discuss the fungus we find so we may not make it to the top. This will depend on how everyone is doing. The hike is steep but not difficult with only a few logs to clamber over.

Sue Hemphill is the contact to sign up for this trip. Please sign up ahead of time. You can email Sue shemphill@xplornet.com (preferred) or phone her at 250-620-3498

*Tim recommended downloading the ap **MycoMatch** to your phone ahead of time. This will help narrow down the possibilities and then you usually use a good mushroom (book) guide to distinguish at the end.

Junction Sheep Range Field Trip

Saturday October 17th (Leaders Loyd Csizmadia & Michaela Waterhouse 250-398-5754)

This day-long drive and hike into the park is rather challenging. Dress warmly and wear sturdy hikers. Walking poles might be handy as well. **Meet at Scout Island at 8:00am.** To minimize our impact on the grasslands, we encourage carpooling. If you own a vehicle with good clearance and traction, we will appreciate your services. Don't forget to bring lunch, a thermos of warm liquid or freshwater, as well as your binoculars and camera. The California Bighorns may be in rut, so look forward to seeing some sheep, and perhaps some head-butting!

NatureKids Update

By Sue and Kim

We hope you've had a wonderful summer with your families! As everyone settles into the busy back-to-school routine, we wanted to share a few upcoming **family-friendly events**—no advance planning required!

For these **NatureKids Adventure Events**, please register your children by email (williamslake@naturekids.ca) with their **names and ages**. Feel free to share this information with family and friends—we'd love to welcome new NatureKids families!

If not already a NatureKids member, register for free at naturekidsbc.ca.

October 10, 2026

NatureKids Adventure: What's Happening in the Forest?

Take a walk with us along a forest trail and discover how plants prepare for winter. Explore the different survival strategies plants use—and enjoy the spectacular colours of autumn!

- **Time:** 1:00–3:00 pm
- **Location:** To be announced closer to the date
- **Dress:** Layers! October afternoons can range from pleasantly warm to a little nippy.

November 7, 2026

NatureKids Adventure: Animal To-Do List—Preparing for Winter

How do Cariboo animals get ready for winter? We'll explore the winter habits of a variety of animal groups and discover how they survive our sometimes-harsh winters. You may even recognize a few habits of your own!

- **Time:** 1:00–3:00 pm
- **Location:** Scout Island Nature Centre
- **Dress:** Be prepared for both indoor and outdoor activities. Bring a winter jacket, hat, mitts, and boots.



Strategic Planning Session

By Margaret Waring Past President

Your Board of Directors gathered at the Senior's Centre on Saturday evening Sept 25 from 5-9 PM and again on Sunday September 26 from 9 AM until 1 PM.

Ken and Jeremy organized the event for us getting together to look at goals for the future. Diane Wright lead the sessions. Jane Perry took notes. There were some lively, interesting discussions regarding our vision and plans. Next step will be a written record for us to review. We are looking toward the future and will share more with you when available.



Thanks to Diane and Jane, two of our club members who shared their knowledge and time to guide us. Thank you to Red Tomato Pies for donating pizzas for our supper. Thank you to all involved.

20 years of Migration Monitoring at the TLBO

By Sachi Snively TLBO Bander-in-charge

It is hard to fathom that the Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory (TLBO) has nearly completed its 20th season of migration monitoring in the beautiful West Chilcotin. When the biologist Andrew Harcombe initiated the project on behalf of the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) on the newly acquired Tatlayoko Lake Ranch property as a biodiversity effectiveness monitoring tool back in 2006, the intention was for the project to continue to run indefinitely. After 20 years everyone who has ever been involved with this project is no doubt pleased to see it continue to exist and flourish for the next 20.

The observatory which is a member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring, was run by NCC for its first decade (2006 – 2015). Sadly, during the transition year in 2016 it did not operate, but was then run by BC Spaces for Nature from 2017 – 2019, and jointly with the Tatlayoko Field Station Society (TFSS) in 2020. From 2021 to present the TFSS has run the project and it appears that the TLBO has finally found its permanent home.

Banders have come and gone over the years, with only five banders-in-charge (BICs) running the station over the 20 seasons with the shortest stint being just a single season (2017), and the longest seven (2013 – 2015 and 2018 – 2021), for a mean of four years which is an excellent rate of retention! There have been eight additional banders who have filled the assistant role for a total 13 staff members to date.

As of the date of writing this article, the TLBO has banded over 30,000 birds of over 100 species and detected more than 477,000 individual birds of 220 species! Swainson's Thrush is our most highly banded species with 3,483 banded followed closely by Lincoln's Sparrow with 3,005. These two species have seen rather divergent trends over the past 20 years with the former showing a marked increase in our banding totals in the last 10 years (2017 – 2026) with an average of 227 banded per season which is over 100 more than the average



Lincoln's Sparrow
52 banded in

of 121 during the first 10 years (2006 – 2015). For Lincoln's Sparrows on the other hand, we have banded an average of 109 per season over the past decade, while over the first, our average was 192. No doubt shifts in climate and habitat are responsible for the divergent trends that we have seen in our banding totals for these two species. See Table 1 for a list of our top 10 most banded species over the past 20 years.



Swainson's Thrush
455 banded in 2026

Species	Banded 2006-2026
Swainson's Thrush	3483
Lincoln's Sparrow	3005
Warbling Vireo	2683
Song Sparrow	2648
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2049
Common Yellowthroat	1979
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1553
Orange-crowned Warbler	1416
Yellow Warbler	1311
American Redstart	994
Total	21121

For more information you can find our annual reports which are posted on our website. We also have been writing a blog since 2009 for which we post daily throughout the season which begins on August 3rd and ends on September 28th. Since 2021 we have extended our Northern Saw-whet Owl monitoring program through to October 15th where we sporadically write

updates when necessary.

To learn more, visit our site: <https://tatlayokobirds.wordpress.com/>

Fall Creativity Blooms at Scout Island

By: Lara Roorda *Manager SINC*

This year's free Fall Art Event at Scout Island was a wonderful success! Led by Lara Roorda, 23 creative participants gathered on the afternoon of September 26th to enjoy the crisp outdoors, good company, and a little seasonal inspiration.

With an assortment of seedy or colourful dried plants provided, everyone got busy creating. Participants also wandered along the trails, harvesting grasses and herbs to add a personal touch to their projects. By the end of the event, everyone headed home with either a beautiful fall planter arrangement or a charming grass wreath.

It was a lovely day of creativity, connection, and gratitude—a chance to slow down, enjoy nature's gifts, and celebrate all that the season has to offer.



Going Green at Scout Island

By: Lara Rooda

One of our commitments this year at Scout Island has been to reduce our ecological footprint, and we're excited to report that the green upgrades to the caretaker's home are nearly complete! Led by volunteer and Williams Lake Field Naturalist member **Rodger Hamilton**, the project has included an electrical upgrade (Gridlock Electric), a new heat pump (Horizon



Climate Control) replacing the propane furnace, baseboard heaters, and solar panels on the roof (Pro Circuit Electrical Ltd.). The final steps are to remove the old propane tanks (City of Williams Lake) and install a ventilation system (Degree Management). Funded by bottle returns since 2012 as well as two **very** generous anonymous donations, once complete, the project should allow the caretaker's home to operate almost entirely on solar power—a big step toward a greener Scout Island!



Annual High School Salmon Trip

By: Martin Kruus *Education Coordinator Scout Island Nature Center*

On Wednesday the 23rd of September twenty-two intrepid high school students set forth, convoy style, on an expedition to learn about the magic of salmon. They experienced the wonder of the red, sometimes smelly, Sockeye spawning at Horsefly, then climbed Viewland Mountain to explore the Quesnel River watershed. That evening they were treated to Bev Sellars and her wonderful film, "The Spirit Who Swims". The following day they leaned into forest ecology with Sue at Gavin Lake camp, also exploring aquatic invertebrates (salmon fry food) and dissecting Coho jacks. Many fine entries were submitted for the fabulous fungus photo contest. Agnes the cook took good care of the victuals, and Roy Argue helped guide the young canoeists.



By Friday some light rain had moved in... undeterred they made their way by school bus to Quesnel River Research Centre near Likely, where they worked with the Chinook hatchery crew. They shocked and picked eyed eggs, and collected valuable data from recently deceased males from the Nazko River. They were also given a hands on tour of the UNBC research side of the facility, where they are exploring oil-spill-eating biofilms and the effects of wildfire ash on the eyesight of alevins. Despite returning wet, hungry, thirsty, tired, homesick, and dirty, it was undoubtedly a memorable experience. Thank you to the Field Naturalist volunteers who supported the trip.

Thank you to Our Volunteers and Donors

By: Lara Rooda

Scout Island would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the many volunteers, donors, businesses, and organizations who have supported us recently. Your generosity, hard work, and commitment help keep Scout Island Nature Centre thriving and make so many of our projects and programs possible.

A special thank you to **Rodger Hamilton** for leading our green initiatives; **United Concrete** for donating and delivering sand for our sandbox; and the **Williams Lake Garden Club** for accepting donations on our behalf during the garden tour. We are grateful to **Ken Ferris** for donating more than 100 hours of painting the many critters for our new interpretive sign and **Gibraltar Mines** for their generous donation and ten-person labour team.

Thank you to **Faren Lozier** from Exploring the Puddle for donating the bus and her time for our guided day hikes this summer, and to all our invasive weed warriors, particularly **Jim Buckland** and **Janis Kazuki**, for their hard work. We

also appreciate the **Invasive Species Council of BC** for their guidance and materials during our yellow flag iris treatments in the marsh.

A big thank you to all who helped repair the Willow Boardwalk this September! The email alert came in from a concerned walker at 10 am. Arnold was out with his son cutting the fallen tree 2 hours later, Ray Getzlaf came out to assess, measure and find materials and Corey had it fixed by evening! What a team! Thank you to the **Williams Lake Field Naturalists board members** for their hard work bringing the Management and Ownership guidance document to completion with the City of Williams Lake, and to **Joel Rooda and Pioneer Log Homes** for providing the log barriers in the Nature House parking lot.

And finally, our appreciation to all personal and business donors! We truly could not do this without you. Thank you for helping care for, improve, and protect Scout Island for our whole community to enjoy!

Member's Moment from Lubna and Betty



“A Tern Moment”

Have you ever wondered why Jim Sims calls his home Tern Inn? Several years ago, he discovered that Arctic Terns were nesting on one of the small islands on Eagle Lake. In early July, a group of us were treated to the rare sight of an Arctic tern chick on the shore of an island. We watched the busy parents swoop and dive to catch a fish for the hungry chick. These elegant birds would also swoop over our group of birders with loud warning calls to keep our distance. Jim was happy to report another sighting of the thriving chick in early August.

Glimpses Through the Lens



Chipping Sparrow

Photograph by Loyd Csizmadia, Chilanko Marsh, May 16, 2026



Garter Snake

Photograph by Lubna Khan, Eagle Lake, July 7, 2026



Arctic Tern Chick

Photograph by Jim Sims, Eagle Lake, August 1, 2026



Common Merganser Chicks

Photograph by Susan Gower, Sulphurous Lake, July 7, 2026