

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

*To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing*

**NEWSLETTER
February 2011**

“Good morning world.”



View from Scott and Julia’s house in Paxton Valley. Not a bad place to live!

Regular Club Meetings

1st Tuesday of month

- September: 11 AM - Sunnybrae Park
- October to May: 7 PM
Library, Sullivan Campus of
Salmon Arm Secondary School
- June: 4 PM – meeting & potluck
Peter Jannink Nature Park

Club website:

www.shuswapnaturalists.org

Mailing address:

Box 1076, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 4P2

Member of BC Nature -

the Federation of BC Naturalists

Executive and Committees

President: Ed McDonald
Vice President: Ed Dahl
Secretary: Michelle Weisenger
Geoff Benson
Treasurer: Ted Hillary
Directors: Molly Bell
Gary Carder
Clare Meunier
Dorothy Parks
Janet Pattinson
Gillian Richardson

Programs: Gillian Richardson
FBCN Director: Janet Pattinson
Website & E-mail: Dorothy Parks
Membership: Ted Hillary
Publicity: Barbara Hillary
Newsletter:

Ed and Marlene McDonald

Historian: Gillian Richardson
Sunshine Person: Cathy Gillick
Coffee Convener:

Mike and Pam Saul

Good News Reporter:

Hanne MacKay

Award /Bursary: Dorothy Parks,
Joanne Leatherdale

SABNES Rep: Don Parks

alternate: Geoff Benson

Grebe Count: Ed and Monica Dahl

Christmas Bird Count: Ted Hillary

Mara Meadows Warden:

John Coffey

BC Bird Atlas: Ted Hillary

Bird Checklist:

Dorothy, Ed, Ed, Ted and Joyce

District Environment Committee:

Janet Pattinson

alternate: John Henderson

City OCP Review Rep:

Joyce Henderson

Nature Park: John Coffey

Naturalist Trail: Greg Wiebe

Outings Committee:

Dorothy Parks, Monica Dahl,
Hanne McKay, Dos Burman,
Marlene McDonald

Young Naturalists:

Sherry Bowlby

Karen Beggs and Snina
talk to the Young Naturalists



Notes to members:

Your club memberships for 2011 are now due and can be paid either at a meeting or through the mail.

In March, our mailing address will change to:
1740 16th St. NE
Salmon Arm, BC
V1E 3Z7

Any contributions to our club's educational award are greatly appreciated. Donations can be made to the Janet Pattinson - Shuswap Naturalist Club Bursary Fund with the Shuswap Community Foundation

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Christmas Bird Count

Twenty-four birders ventured forth on Sunday, December 19 for the 2010 Count. Another seven counters reported from their home feeders. Co-ordinator Ted Hillary reported:

- a total of 70 species
- a total of 6135 birds counted in all
- the most common birds seen were
 - 690 rock pigeon
 - 596 house finches
 - 558 European starlings
 - 510 black capped chickadee
- the rarities seen were an American kestrel, a fox sparrow in Raven subdivision and 10 pygmy nuthatches in the Sunnybrae area.

Paxton Valley Update

From Scott Marmont:

It is in the unexpected that Julia and I meet with traits that mark what it is to be “Canadian” or more to the point, that mark our progress in becoming Canadian. “Are you ready for Christmas?” has a very current ring. We only guess as to the answer; have you decorated the house, does my hair sit okay, is the turkey ordered and have air-tickets been bought for the children's return flights?

It's then that a walk over the farm that both confronts and confounds - that while the cultural obligation of Advent overflows in engagement, nature, by contrast, calls only for stasis. Following the recent snow, the forest landscape is beautiful beyond compare and if not completely bereft of wildlife, it is unquestionably dormant. One of the loveliest surprises is how the snow clings to the small shrubs and standing reed-canary grass like cotton blossoms. We take heart that despite the toll of the past hunting season, there is a remnant of deer and moose to enjoy the roughage left from summer. But very soon, we find we're taken into a quieter space, best allegorized by the image of winter's solitary American Dipper.

It was on one such walk we came upon a pair of river-otter. Toby, our dog, put them up, so to speak. They'd been foraging amongst the cat-tails, likely for muskrat, and being carnivores writ large, we've no doubt they put paid to the little family we knew existed. Within 20 minutes, we spied them again, cruising a patch of open water where the flow of a warm spring enters the nearby dam. Sleek and glistening as seals, they clambered out and onto the ice-shelf, tracking our scent with a boldness that both surprised and delighted.

Notwithstanding such moments, everywhere there's a pervading air of calm. Even as the wind goes about its business of building drifts, there's solitude. The coyote's

howl and the raven's crow speak of winter; that this season be recognized not in activity, but rest.

Strange as it may sound to locals' ears, it's proving to be part of becoming Canadian we're enjoying beyond all expectation.

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Shuswap Naturalist Club Award

The 2010 recipient of our \$750 club award was Paul Antonelli from Kamloops. It was presented to him on November 25 at the Thompson Rivers University Award Ceremony.

Here is his letter:

Dear Shuswap Naturalist Club Members,

I am grateful that I was chosen for this year's Shuswap Naturalist Club Award. It is a truly great feeling to be recognized for my dedication to pursuing a degree in Natural Resources Sciences.

I am very interested in doing environmental consulting work for civil engineering purposes, possibly eventually owning my own firm. My care for the environment is vast, but I understand that the development of infrastructure is an ongoing process so I aim to find the equilibrium between the two.

My greatest goal is to be involved in as many sustainable development projects as possible, perhaps even internationally. I have already begun my job search for next summer and hope to be hired under the wing of an engineering or consulting firm, either in BC or Alberta.

Once again, thank you for the award. I am honoured to be the one who was chosen. With finals nearing, it feels like I have gained confidence as a result of receiving this award.

Sincerely,
Paul Antonelli

Sandhill Crane Chick in Mara Meadows

**Mara Meadows Ecological Reserve
2010 Review by Warden John Coffey**

General Condition of the ER:

The Reserve is in good condition. The water levels seem to be normal, as opposed to 2009 when they were well below normal.

Species Observed:

One new species may have been observed and of interest: Two times I had what I believed to be leaches on my ankle. The second time I took a closer look with a magnifying glass and the creature was a small slug. It may be the red listed Pygmy Slug (*Kootenaia burkei*). Unfortunately the slug was returned to the water so confirmation will have to wait until another is found or it finds one of us. Anyone out there know slugs?

The blue listed Olive-sided Flycatcher was definitely observed in the meadow.

The blue listed *Epipactis Gigantea* (Giant Helleborine) was found to be much more numerous than previously thought with vast numbers of plants along the western edge of the meadow.

Visitor Activities:

Geoff Styles was granted permission to conduct a survey of birds in the Reserve. His identification of birds is exceptional. He has posted his results and provided that information to BC Parks. We were joined by Joyce Henderson on the June 26 outing. Joyce has Mara Meadows in her Breeding Bird Atlas area. We were pleased to see one young crane with the adult pair on that occasion.

On July 9 I accompanied a crew of 4 from Invasive Plants BC into the meadow to pick oxeye daisy. Bags of daisies were also pulled

John measures the water levels - at the beaver dam pond



photo by Jim Hoskins

and in the fen



photo by Jim Hoskins

on five other visits. We are making headway with this invasive as Peter Bailey used to haul out black garbage bags full; we only had small grocery bags after each trip. It was great to have the Invasive Plants crew, though the real headway has been made by all of you who have come in over the last few years and faithfully pulled daisies.

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Is anyone familiar with this slug?

Is Anyone Out There?

**Dorothy Parks writes about the
Shuswap Naturalist Club website:**

As the current webmaster this question is of great interest to me. How much use does our website actually get and who uses it? While I can't determine the who, there are useful statistics available to give me an idea of how many.

Website usage statistics are expressed as *hits*, *pages*, or *visits*. The number of hits a website receives is very misleading. For example, if you click on a page with 25 photographs, it will be recorded as 25 hits (each photo is a separate file). Our website received 101,505 hits over the last 11 months. More indicative of use is the number of visits or the pages opened. We average about 35-40 visits daily and approximately 70 pages are opened. In the last 11 months we had a total of 10,555 visits and 22,120 pages were opened.

People visiting the website are able to send email enquiries which are redirected to my mailbox. We get about 50 enquiries a year with an interesting variety of questions. Recent questions have ranged from a local person asking 'what birds are likely to breed in the White Lake area,' to a Simon Fraser professor asking about how statistics on the Western Grebe population are compiled. Non-members obviously read the minutes and newsletters and admire the photos. One comment came in asking about a poisonous spider Hanne had mentioned in her Good News report - could it be found in the Okanagan?

Your feedback and contributions to the website are always welcome.

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***The Swallows return mid March. Who
will be the first to spot them this year?***

***Chipping Sparrow nest with eggs
in Mara Meadows***



photo by Geoff Styles

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NOTICE

**Official Community Plan Review
Community Workshop # 3
at the Prestige Inn
Tuesday, February 8
6:00 – 9:00**

From Joyce Henderson:

At that time a draft OCP document and a draft Greenways strategy will be presented for review and input. One can review both these documents at the City Hall beginning February 1.

One issue that needs your consideration is the proposed expansion of Salmon Arm's urban containment boundary and hillside development. There has been a suggestion to request removal of marginal agricultural land within the ALR, particularly in the Hillcrest area. There was debate about the definition of marginal agricultural land.

At the OCP review committee we have also been discussing whether there should be more residential zoning on the Mt. Ida side of Foothill Road and what types of residential development should be allowed, considering a perceived need to protect viewscapes.

Joyce encourages everyone to attend.

The Young Naturalists' Club

co-ordinated by Sherry Bowlby



visit the biology lab at the college with Tom Marshall



see a crab spider lunching on a mason bee on the foreshore trail



discover how friendly snails can be



visit the fish counting station at Gene Puetz' farm on the Salmon River

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Outings 2011

A Note from the Outings Committee:

Outings will take place on alternate Thursdays this year, with two each month through April, May, June, September and October. The survey conducted last fall did not indicate any clear preference for Wednesday versus Thursday.

We'll start the season on April 14 at 10:00 with our usual tour of the Foreshore and with an optional lunch. On April 28 at 9:00, we will revisit the First Nations land at the delta of the Salmon River.

The complete schedule for the year will be emailed and available on the website by mid-April. Print copies will be distributed at the May meeting. You still have lots of time to give us your suggestions for outings.

April Outings:

April 14 – Salmon Arm Foreshore
Meet at the Interpretive Centre at 10:00.
Optional lunch at the Prestige.

April 28 – Salmon Arm River Delta
Leave from Lordco at 9:00.
Walk along the First Nations trail to the rivermouth. (difficulty - intermediate)

Karen and Kee-Two

After twenty-two years of dedicating her life to the rehabilitation of injured wildlife in this area, Karen Beggs is ready to have someone else take over.

She is a person we can all be very proud to know, and the community should be grateful for her service.

Her philosophy in her practice was to keep wildlife wild, and so she limited visitors to her site. Here is a chance to know her better.

An Interview with Karen Beggs:

Q: *How did your interest in wildlife rehabilitation begin?*

A: I was born into it. My dad started what people called Mr. Walker's wild animal hospital in 1940. This was in Yorkshire. I was born in 1949, and so it was always a part of my life.

Q: *What are some of your earliest memories?*

A: My "first case" - I was between 5 and 7 when I inherited an orphaned herring gull. The major species around were gulls. Herring gulls nested on top of chimneys and people would shoot at them. So a lot were brought in. This one was brought in to dad and I fell in love with it.

I was brought up with fields and horse troughs outside and guillemot, gannets and gulls soaking in the kitchen sink.

Q: *How did your father influence you?*

A: I think it isn't so much what parents teach us as what we simply learn from them. I remember at 13, caring for a coot with two broken legs. The vet had put casts on both its legs and handed it over to us for its recuperation. Even there, the vets were very willing to help my dad.

My dad was known as an ornithologist, but he cared for badger, foxes, etc. and his interests were much broader. He was the

animal person, and my mom was the plant person. Growing up, what we had was a way of life, a natural life in a beautiful setting, it was a lifestyle.

Q: *When did you come to Canada?*

A: At 18, in the spring of '68. I first went to Victoria to work for a vet. I bought a horse, adopted a cat and had my Irish Setter sent to me. When the old vet I worked for left a year later, so did I. I put my cat into a basket and packed it with my belongings onto my horse, then, along with my dog, started out on foot. I was heading for a promised cow watching job in Osoyoos. We walked through the Fraser Valley, stopping at farms overnight. When my horse's leg got cut, the vet in Chilliwack wanted to put him to sleep. But he did sew him up and we spent the next six weeks on a farm on Majuba Hill near Yarrow while the leg healed. I paid that vet bill over time. When I got a job, I sent bits of money, one week at a time. That horse stayed with me another 22 years; together we walked over all the hills around here. I had done the same thing in Summerland.

Q: *Summerland, not Osoyoos?*

A: From Yarrow, I got a ride to Summerland. I got a job there as manager of an Arabian horse ranch. I took a Saturday job with a vet in Penticton. This turned into full-time work. When wildlife came in, I would take it home after it had been treated. I realized then that there was no after-care available for these animals.

In 1977, I moved to South Canoe with my young family. We farmed cows, pigs, turkeys, chickens and vegetables, living as independently as possible. I took in injured skunks and raccoons, which you could legally do at that time.

Q: *Was that the start of Kee-Two?*

A: In 1988 I got my first permit to care for a kestrel. My dad's kestrel were always called Kee. I named my kestrel Kee-Two and that's where the name came from.

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I started with a bird cage and looked at what the requirements were. I took courses in animal biology and nutrition from the University of Guelph and was granted a permit based on this and my experience working with my dad and the vet clinics.

My first permit was for birds. Occasionally something else would come in and I would phone Kamloops for a temporary permit. At their suggestion they gave me a complete permit that would cover birds, reptiles and mammals.

Q: *Is that when the Shuswap Naturalists became involved?*

A: The Naturalist Club support has been huge. The club first helped by building my clinic. The members canvassed businesses for material and scrounged around for anything else they needed and then built the whole thing. It was like an old-fashioned barn raising, with everyone helping. MaryLou was a big mover in all of this. The clinic is used for babies, where I do triage, and for intensive care.

I built the pens myself, first a bird house or shed with several aviaries and then a flight pen. But the club has always come through with their support, moral and financial. It has been my constant. And I want to say how deeply I have appreciated it.

The vets have also been amazing. I could not have done all this without their surgical expertise and medical advice, particularly the

Shuswap Veterinary Clinic and Vernon Veterinary Clinic.

Q: *What have you enjoyed the most?*

A: It has been the privilege of getting to know animals, getting to know their differences, see their individual personalities and behaviours, just being able to observe them up close. I am most happy that so many animals have been returned into the wild, back into their own environments, that the percentage of success has been good.

Q: *What do you hope for now?*

A: That someone with enthusiasm and caring will be able to take over, someone with a passion and vision of their own. I would like to continue to educate the public and I want to have time to write my book about the many varied, funny and tragic moments.

***Karen releasing a rehabilitated
Great Horned Owl into the wild***



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Nocturnal Owl Survey

This survey monitors trends in nocturnal owl populations. Most of these owls have been poorly monitored. This North America-wide initiative to collect information on the distribution and abundance of all nocturnal owl species is needed in order to develop sound conservation strategies.

Each survey takes about one to two hours.

The routes consist of 10-30 stops, 1.6 km apart. The observer simply listens for two minutes at each stop and notes any owls heard. The surveys must be completed before midnight, so no-one falls asleep at the wheel on some remote road.

This year the Shuswap area owl survey will be done starting at the end of February. If you are interested in participating, call Ed Dahl at 832-0544.