

SHUSWAP NATURALIST CLUB

*To know Nature
and keep it worth knowing*

**NEWSLETTER
September 2011**

Oregon Grape



Mahonia aquifolium

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:

1740 16th St. NE
Salmon Arm, BC V1E 3Z7

Member of BC Nature - the Federation of BC Naturalists

Executive and Committees

President: Ed McDonald

Vice President: Ed Dahl

Secretary: Michelle Weisenger

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

Coalition Rep: Pat Mearns, Ed Dahl

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

Book Review by Dorothy Parks:

Wild Berries of British Columbia

Fiona Hamersley Chambers.

Lone Pine Press, 2011. \$21.95.

Includes index and bibliography.

Author Fiona Hamersley Chambers spent her formative years on coastal BC, in an area that is now part of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. It is to this early experience in nature and with First Nations communities that she attributes her life-long interest in ethnobotany. She dedicates the book to her colleague Nancy Turner who studied with the late elder Dr. Mary Thomas, and who visited Salmon Arm to participate in a tribute to Dr. Thomas.

The book has detailed descriptions of the 111 berries and berry-like fruits commonly found in the province. Scientific names and differing common names are provided. It is prolifically illustrated with colour photos and sketches. Pictures show the leaves, the flower and the fruit, helping make identification easier. Species are organized by growth forms into three main sections - trees and shrubs, flowering plants and poisonous plants.

Most plants have significant information on ethnobotanical uses and early Native management. The edibility scale ranges through highly edible, edible, not palatable, edible with caution (toxic) and poisonous. The provincial average is given for the flowering and fruit production seasons. A lengthy description of each plant includes its form and growth characteristics, and indicates the general habitat and range where it will likely be found. A few tips for gathering and drying fruit, plus 18 tasty berry recipes are included. However, there are many cautionary notes about where and what to pick and eat.

Lone Pine Publishing has again produced a field guide which makes a useful addition to a BC nature library.

Genetic Modification

by Ted Kay

Sometimes the natural world's ability to bounce back from our meddling is a pleasant surprise. All we may need to do is leave it alone with the elements of its recovery. The bit of nature this article refers to of course is bees, not entirely natural to the Shuswap, but the point is being illustrated by my bees.

Owing to my interference with this organism and an unusually long winter, my colonies have been considerably reduced. When we select through a breeding program for a particular trait some other quality is often lost. So we have glamorous roses with no scent or cows that produce so much milk they need chemical assistance to continue doing so. In my case the Turtle Valley bees have been selected to transfer a mechanism which controls a bacteria so that this process helps depress an introduced arthropod graphically named *Varroa Destructor*. I and other eccentrics in the craft are beginning to see some success in this strategy, and mainstream breeders are moving into the field in greater numbers. But as noted, when you breed out along a limb of the genetic tree there is often something behind you gnawing through the branch. I had seen a clue or two recently that this might be happening and made a mental note to reduce the risk. Then last winter clarified the issue entirely, the bees were losing their ability to live through a long confinement. They were reverting to their South Eastern Europe origins.

So now, Hanne, the good news - As winter waned I looked carefully at the scruffy remnants and, being a lazy fellow, left them mostly alone. Despite the cool damp spring, the remaining hives began to perk up in May, and some new queens started laying. Then quite to my surprise, I had to set up two colonies to collect a honey crop. While doing this I found another surging ahead and had to go back and prepare that one too. All this after expecting a bare survival. Since then the replacement colonies with their new queens have become quite handsome. A small spark

of optimism illuminates the future in that these are from stock severely tested for wintering in the Shuswap.

What seems a success on this small scale may not be easily transferred to the things we are doing elsewhere. Leaving nature alone may be possible here and there, but matching that with the elements of its recovery will be harder to manage, but it is fleeting comfort to see that this capacity exists.

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Juvenile Osprey on Nest



photo by Clive Bryson

A Note from Mike Saul:

We received a call from Peigi MacMillan, who was looking after the Brighthouse Nature Centre, to say she'd received word of a large raptor on the grass near the wharf. Pam and I went down there and carefully collected a juvenile osprey - I distracted it while Pam dropped a blanket on it from behind. We checked, and it wasn't from the wharf nest which still had its three young, so we went to the Prestige nest which had only one babe. (We had seen two when we were there the day before.) We went into the Prestige and they gave us a key for a third floor room. With the help of Don, the Prestige's grounds keeper, we carefully unloaded the bird onto the pool roof opposite the nest. We checked later and lo and behold, there were two juveniles back in the nest. I guess it took off a little early!! Very interesting and satisfying.

BC Nature AGM

Report by Janet Pattinson:

The Williams Lake Field Naturalists Society hosted a very successful AGM on the weekend of May 12th to 15th at their Thompson Rivers University facility.

There was a selection of excellent field trips offered and many presentations. Of the latter, I especially enjoyed the one given by a University of Saskatchewan professor who studies the flickers in the Chilcotin during the summer with some of her students. They are discovering the nest sites and consider the success of the choices of location as well as the predators the birds contend with. Another very interesting talk was given by one of the TRU professors about his study of ants. He has a focus on the ants of the Cariboo Chilcotin but included some information of others. Not only are there trillions to the Nth degree of ants on this world, but also a huge number of species.

I took a field trip to a grassland area to see the plant life. Not much was growing since the spring was pretty late, but we picked out the brown bits of last year's plants and some hardy ones that had made a start for this year. In the group was an entomologist from Victoria who showed us all the bugs she was finding, including a small bee and some ants that are rare in that area.

One interesting detail I picked up at the conference was mention of the fact that originally the Fraser River and its tributaries flowed north toward the Arctic. It was noted that so many of the tributaries are heading north when they join the Fraser. The direction changed radically after the Big Ice Melt.

There was a picture show of the habitat created by volcanic activity in BC, particularly an area north of Anahim Lake. Excellent photography.

All the resolutions were carried, in some cases with wording adjustments. The item

about the birds caught in fishing nets off Boundary Bay was really directed at the American fishers who are still using a kind of net that has been banned by Canada's DFO.

With regard to the cat by-law issue raised by delegates from Victoria, I mentioned Ed's comment about the greater risk to the birds of windows. The Victoria delegates were interested in the comment and the information about the source of window stickers that alert the birds to the danger. I have been able to get those from the BC SPCA Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre near Victoria. I think it would be appropriate for all naturalists to put these on their windows for the sake of the birds. They are not obtrusive, but they are a bit pricey.

Overall, I found the AGM very enjoyable and definitely worth the trip to Williams Lake. The FGM is at the Coast Hotel in Tsawwassen at the end of September.

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Fall Club Outings

Sept 15 - Salmon River Delta.

A look at the First Nations' land along the river. Conditions permitting, we will walk to the rivermouth.

Leave Lordco at 9:00.

Sept. 22 - Salmon River - Gene Puetz farm.

See the salmon trap on the river on his farm.

This outing is a follow-up to Gene's presentation earlier this year.

Leave Lordco at 9:00.

Oct. 6 - Paxton Valley.

By popular demand, we will revisit Julia and Scott Marmont's farm in Paxton Valley.

Bring lunch. Leave Lordco at 8:30.

Oct. 20 - Haig-Brown Provincial Park.

Walk along the Adams River to see spawning salmon, eagles and mushrooms.

Optional lunch at Quaaout Lodge.

Leave Lordco at 9:00, Tappen Co-op at 9:15.



Western Grebe Report

Report for 2011 by Ed and Monica Dahl:

It has been an interesting spring and summer on Shuswap Lake. Monica and I started counting the Western Grebes May 11th, when the lake water level was 345.82 metres above sea level. The low level for the year was recorded at 344.97 m. on March 15th and 16th, so the lake level had increased by 0.85 m. We counted 258 Western Grebes on May 11th. There was no evidence of nest building and not much courting going on.

There were 213 grebes on May 21st, ten days later, and the lake level had escalated by 0.77 m. In the next ten days the level increased by 0.95 m., which is about 4 inches per day. The grebes were not as easily found during that count. We counted only 121. Likely the grebes were nesting, although this wasn't noticeable.

Our first sighting of nests was on June 8th. We counted 9 between the Prestige Inn and Peter Jannink Park. On June 15th we counted 22 nests in the same area, and the water level was 348.42 m. and only rose to 348.50 m. the following week.

The Government of Canada high water level for the year was recorded at 348.863 m. about July 25th, while the records of the City indicated a high level of 348.63 June 25 - 28. The high water level in 2008 was 348.74 m. on June 9th.

June 30th we counted 91 adult Western Grebes and 1 Clark's Grebe, 8 nests and 2 newly hatched young grebes. The Grebes were still courting despite many nests having been destroyed the previous night by a wind storm which created waves. Eight nests were still intact on July 2nd. Clive Bryson observed that strong winds through the night had wiped out the remaining nests.

July 6th the grebes were spread out all over Salmon Arm Bay. We counted 84 adults, 10 young and one nest. The lake water level was in decline, at 348.51 m.

We continued to count the Grebes even though the situation appeared somewhat dismal. By July 20th there were 19 young, and the total keeps on rising. On August 10th we counted 155 adults, 70 young which we think were from 54 families.

August 24th we counted again, 197 adults, and 111 juveniles. Our count of families was 76. It's quite likely that the number of families is slightly high because some of the young are quite developed and don't necessarily remain close together. It is remarkable that so many young have hatched despite the destruction of nests during wind events at high water.



photos by Clive Bryson

Breeding Bird Atlas

Ted Hillary reports on Year 4 of the BC Breeding Bird Atlassing Project

Year 4 is completed – bring on year 5!!!

Because of the cool and damp weather birding was initially slow. But it picked up in June and conditions were almost ideal. The temperatures were not too hot, and it was just wet enough to keep the dust down on the backroads. Participation was disappointing; however, people are busy in many different directions and it is difficult to add one more thing to full schedules. Hopefully, participants will have more time next year.

This year, four more squares were completed, bringing our total to 18 adequately covered for breeding evidence. The goal for the five years is 36 squares, so we are half way there. Work has now been done on 44 squares, an increase of 13 squares from last year's totals. A few incomplete squares have more than 10 hours work in them, but most have much fewer.

Point counts have been completed in 15 squares, also an increase of four squares from last year. Point counts have been done in 35 squares, but in many of the squares not adequately covered. The predetermined locations are difficult to access. We have completed a total of 374 point counts, with a

goal of 547 over the five years. This is an increase of 142 over the third year.

A start has been made on the north side of Shuswap Lake. Many of the point counts between Anglemont and Seymour Arm have been completed, as have some hours collecting breeding evidence in half a dozen squares. Many families of black bears, with one to three cubs, were encountered as were lots of deer, to add to the interest. Next year's challenge will be getting into the area north of Seymour Arm and also into the Humamilt Lake area.

Also, a start has been made on the west side of Adams Lake. Point counts have been completed to Skwaam Bay, and some time has been put in past Brennan Creek. Next year's challenge is to get to the top of Adams Lake and onto the east side to Momich Lake and connecting with the road from Seymour Arm. This is interesting country, and there are several camping spots which would provide easy on-site accessibility.

I would like to thank all those who partook in this year's atlassing in this area. These are Howard Coneybeare, Joyce Henderson and Geoff Styles who gathered breeding evidence in several squares and completed point counts. I have a special thanks to Barbara Hillary who recorded 131 point counts and nearly 100 hours of breeding evidence in 27 squares.

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Club Notes

Garage Sale:

Gary Carder's garage sale in June raised about \$160 for the club. Thanks Gary and Darlene for doing the bulk of the work, and thank-you also to Pat, Clive, June and Molly for your help.

If we have another sale next year, we will give everyone more notice and prep time.

New Phone Committee Needed:

Margaret Wrench and Margarete Johnson have been phoning our members without email with announcements and reminders. Marg Wrench has been in charge of this for many years. Thanks for your diligence, Marg. Your phone buddies will miss you.

There are only about a dozen people left on the phone list. If you would be willing to take this on, please let us know.

On Margarett and the bursary:

Every year our club presents a \$750 award to a third year environmental studies student at Thompson Rivers University. Janet has generously made another donation to this fund in memory of Margarett Johnson, and the award this year will be given in Margarett's honour. Donations to the Janet Pattinson – Shuswap Naturalist Club Bursary Fund with the Shuswap Community Foundation are always gratefully accepted.

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How I Spent My Summer

by Karen Beggs

You don't need to travel vast distances to discover amazing wilderness places, including a great diversity of flora and fauna and awe-inspiring geological formations. Beautifully striated rocks, interspersed with ferns, mosses and many other species, with a mountain stream rushing through, the effect is magical.

Within the last three weeks, my daughter and I have made several wonderful day trips from Salmon Arm. With the wet spring and early summer, plant growth has flourished. The orchid population seems to have exploded. There are literally forests of bog orchids filling the unusually moist ditches, and I have never seen such huge flowers on the bunchberry plants.

Edgewood, on Highway 6 out of Vernon, was a beautiful, peaceful place. The beaches were clean and sandy, and we didn't see a single person. The Arrow Lakes had only a couple of small boats out fishing, none of the motor boats or houseboats we are so used to on Shuswap Lake. We found three dark brown garter snakes lounging together at the edge of some rocks. They were so torpid, and didn't move as we approached. An adult bald eagle flew over with a fish in its talons. As it approached a tall cottonwood tree, we heard the clamorous screaming of excited eaglets in

Nature on the Move –

Fall Migration through the Delta:

This is the theme of BC Nature's Weekend and Fall General Meeting this year, and is being hosted by the Delta Naturalists' Society. It will take place September 29 to October 2 at the Coast Tsawwassen Inn near Boundary Bay. It promises many interesting presentations and outings. See your BC Naturalist Magazine for details. There is still time to register.

the nest. The pathway was edged with banks of baby's breath, and the trail was covered with hare's-foot clover, interspersed with clumps of harebells. We saw five separate white-tailed deer on the trip over the pass.

On the road to Whatchan Lake, we stopped at a roadside gorge with crystal clear water running into a forty foot deep pool. There were smooth bowls eroded in the rocks, and the gorge walls were decorated with ferns and mosses. A truly magical place.

The open glades of flowers on Hunter's Range were brilliant. The blue of the lupins mixed with orange hawkweed were stunning.

Spruce Lake, near Mabel Lake, is a small dark peaty lake with water lilies. Surrounded by trees, the ground around the lake is a very quaking bog land and a bit disturbing to walk on, as the whole ground moves around you. There was a lot of bog myrtle in flower.

Then absolutely stunning was Johnson Lake on the Adams Lake backroad to Barriere. The colours and clarity of this lake and the different shades of blue and green as seen on a sunny day have to be seen to be believed. There is a quiet resort between big and small Johnson Lakes.

So don't think you have to travel forever to see amazing things. Pick up a few back-road maps and you will get hooked, as I have been for the last forty years.