

**Shuswap Naturalist Club General Meeting
Tuesday, October 3, 2023
SASS Library**

Di Wittner, Chair for this meeting, welcomed 26 members at 8:15 PM to SASS library, including new member Isabelle Elden.

Show n' Tell - Di Wittner brought photos to update us on this summer's highly successful nest box use on the foreshore. Tree swallows 'were everywhere', including some boxes not intended for swallows. 98 of the 103 boxes were used by 8 species. She found 11 double nests and 1 triple nest situation. One duck box was occupied by a 'mystery creature', possibly a mammal. Of 77 bird broods, an estimated 400-500 fledglings took to the skies over our nature sanctuary. This is the highest success rate (almost 80%) since Di began restoring and adding boxes. Di will collect bat guano next season which can be analyzed to determine the bat species.

We offer a huge 'Thank You' to Di for her dedication to this project, and 'Brava' for its phenomenal success. Question to consider: Should we add more boxes?

PRESENTATION: Shorebirds of Salmon Arm Bay

Don Cecile, retired educator and passionate birder from Vernon, shared some results of his 22 years of monitoring shorebirds on the bay. Since two migration flyways (Central and Pacific) overlap here, the mudflats are a critically important refueling site on fall migration, luring many species of juvenile shorebirds that nested farther north. Don introduced us to 39 species with photos, early/late sighting records and peak numbers. He hopes to do further studies of our bay's limnology, MOTUS potential, banding, and collect more July/August on site observations. Don posts his sightings at BCInteriorBirding@googlegroup.com He offered to do workshops and help with updating the Shuswap bird checklist for us.

Break – thanks to Marcia Woods and Pat Turner for refreshments tonight

Approval of Agenda: Janet Pattinson moved acceptance of today's agenda. Glenda Hanna 2nd. Carried.

Minutes: Pat Turner moved approval of the September 5 minutes. Janet Pattinson 2nd. Carried.

Treasurer's report: Gillian Richardson gave the report in Ted Hillary's absence

Bank Balance September 1, 2023 **\$4531.80**

Revenue

Dues	35.00	
Donation	35.00	
Interest	.36	70.36

Disbursements

School District #83	132.30	\$132.30
Bank Balance October 1, 2023		\$4469.86
Patronage		\$.89
Larch Hills Sign Project	\$2500.00	
Songbird Committee	\$ 80.00	

Gillian moved acceptance of the Treasurer's Report. Joyce Henderson 2nd Carried.

Old Business:

1) **Coffee Storage** – We did not receive details of the promised library storage location, so Marcia Woods chose to take the equipment home after this meeting. She/John will contact Kathleen Miede to sort this out. Marcia also asked for volunteers to bring cookies: Isabelle Elden, Barb Raynor will supply them for the November meeting.

2) **Environmental Action Committee** updates – Janet Pattinson attended a meeting this afternoon that went ahead since a quorum was met. Items discussed included the future rewilding of yards with native plantings in lieu of grass to conserve water and further public education (via webinars) regarding water conservation. No further information was available on the issue of tree cutting during nesting season, but it will be monitored.

3) **Motus** Update – Ken Raynor reported that Amie Macdonald of the bird migration tracking system (MOTUS) will give an overview via Zoom at next month's meeting. Ken will share more information about budget requirements at that time.

4) **Grebe report** & New grebe counters – Di Wittner reported a disappointing year for Western Grebe nesting, with only 11 young sighted. Wildfire smoke severely hindered monitoring efforts in August so an accurate end-of-season count was not possible. Several observers noted up to 300 grebes during August. Di invited any new volunteers interested in taking on this count to let her know:
dwildlife8@gmail.com

New Business:

1) **Blackburn Park** – Joyce Henderson is seeking at least 6 volunteers to help with a work party to tend/plant trees and shrubs beside Piccadilly terrace, and beside the picnic shelter. Date: Friday October 6, 10:00 to 11.00. Bring shovels and gloves. Contact Joyce at joyceh@shaw.ca

2) **Letter for beaver advocacy** & update on beaver activities – Janet Pattinson & Di Wittner: Janet read her draft letter to various government ministers that was circulated to members by email. Amendments suggested: add the number of SNC members (89); Di noted the letter should stress that beaver trapping methods are inhumane and do not meet minimum standards for euthanasia of wildlife.

MOTION: Di Wittner moved the final version of this letter be signed by President, Janet Aitken, on behalf of the Club and submitted by both email and snail mail to appropriate ministers. Glenda Hanna, 2nd Carried.

Di Wittner also reported that SABNES has approved the removal of wire from some of the poplar trees along the foreshore trail—which she has been doing—and that several trees have subsequently been taken down by beaver ‘engineers’. Wire has prevented them from access to their natural food, and tree removal in a natural area is constructive as new ones can grow and beavers create habitat that increases biodiversity.

Reports:

1) **Outings Committee:** (Cathy Meakes, John and Marcia Woods) John noted that smoke conditions this summer impacted plans to visit the Turtle Valley Donkey Refuge but he hopes to reschedule that for next spring. Mitch Milgram’s mushroom outing was postponed due to a scarcity of mushrooms, but could be revived at short notice if he finds a suitable site – stay tuned for a ‘mushroom alert’. **This Thursday’s outing to Christmas Island will focus on the many birds there right now: meet at 8:30 at the trail head gate.** John also reminded us about the upcoming Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 17. More information to come about a followup social/reporting gathering.

John mentioned exploring the Sicamous area next spring, especially the Eagle River and Riverbend Trail sites. Salmon Arm is becoming a popular link in a birding trail through this area. New ideas for outings always welcome.

2) **Newsletter submissions:** Marlene McDonald will accept items for the November 1 eNewsletter up to the **October 28 deadline.** It would be helpful for planning if you let Marlene know ahead of time that you intend to send in something.

3) **BC Nature News & Webinars** – Di Wittner noted the ‘30 by 30’ Salmon Arm Bay protection plan under discussion at BC Nature meetings is moving forward but still needs a positive First Nations response. She attended a province-wide zoom meeting with BC Nature to discuss progress in the province and will follow up with another this week. She will also be participating in a webinar on bat identification with the new Echometer Touch and hopes we may be able to use the device on night outings in the bay. Future BC Nature meetings and conferences can be attended by Zoom, at no cost to club representatives—Di hopes someone will take on her role in the event she moves away from this area.

Sightings:

Gillian Richardson – 2 white-breasted nuthatches, identified by Merlin and seen (photographed) on tree trunks near her home

Pat Mearns – quail near 16th St NE

Glenda Hanna - large black bear came through/over their backyard fence

Eleanor Marshall – 3 juvenile great grey owls calling near her home; sandhill cranes along the Shuswap River

John Woods – near their cottage in the Chilcotin, 2 hawk owls calling, and dive-bombing him while cutting wood

Next Meeting: November 7 at SASS Library 7:00 PM Chair: Janet Aitken. Speaker: Amie Macdonald, on MOTUS (via Zoom).

MOTION to Adjourn by Pat Mearns at 9:15 pm

Where to send What:

- 1) Please send information you wish to be forwarded to all club members to Ken Raynor, at ken.r.sa.bc@gmail.com. As Communications Director, he will relay upcoming meeting/activity announcements (or cancellations), meeting minutes, newsletters, information from any of our committees (e.g. BC Nature, Environment).
- 2) Please send any items for/correspondence about an upcoming eNewsletter directly to Marlene McDonald, mcdonald@airspeedwireless.ca. Next eNewsletter, November 1, 2023. Submission deadline: Oct 28.
- 3) Please send agenda items to **Janet Aitken** janetaitken1@gmail.com, **Chair** for the November 7 meeting.