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March 2018



Kamloops  
Naturalist  
Club

*We Enjoy, Protect and Promote Nature*



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# SAGE WHISPERS

Newsletter of the Kamloops Naturalist Club

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Eagles taken near Mission Flats  
Rick Howie

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## Coming Events

### KNC Executive and Officers

**President**

Nancy Flood

**Past President**

Julie Schooling

**Vice-President**

Frank Ritcey

**Secretary**

Adele Stapleton

**BC Nature Director**

Gary Hunt

**Treasurer**

Jean Crowe

**Directors**

Justine Densmore-McCulloch

Ken Lipinski

Jesse Ritcey

**Communications**

Margaret Graham

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**Membership**

Winnifred Fischer

**Newsletter Committee**

Lynne Borle

**Programs**

Justine Densmore-McCulloch

Margaret Graham

**Bluebird Co-ordinator**

Susan Weilandt

### KNC Programs

All meetings except the June picnic will take place at 7 pm at Heritage House in Riverside Park.

**Thursday, Mar. 15.** Rick Howie, long-time club member, Senior Biologist and well-known birder. The Azores, Madeira and the Canaries are island clusters that are part of Macaronesia located in the Atlantic Ocean west of Africa. The Azores are closest to Canada and only about a 5-6 hour flight from Toronto. Madeira is another 2 hours closer to Africa. Rick's talk will focus on some of the natural history of the islands along with a bit of cultural exploration and lots of photos of these beautiful volcanic archipelagos that are actually part of Portugal.

**April 19,** Tom Dickinson, Dean of Science at TRU and a past president of the Kamloops Naturalist Club, will present "Around the Horn of South America – Charles Darwin's Voyage Re-visited". Tom has taught evolution for over 40 years and has always commented on how important the voyage of the Beagle was to Darwin's subsequent thinking. In February, he had the chance to fulfill a long-time goal – to retrace Darwin's voyage and see some of the things he saw. In this presentation, Tom will show some pictures of the experiences he had on this 14 day trip from Buenos Aires, around Cape Horn, and ending in Valparaiso, Chile.

**May 17,** Curtis Bjork on Lichens. Curtis has studied lichens and plants in the US and Canada for over 25 years, working in regions from California to the Arctic, and from the Prairies to the Pacific. Lichens are the most neglected part of the BC flora. On Vancouver Island, Metchosin's headlands (Albert Head, Mary Hill, Rocky Point) have so many lichen species - there is nowhere else in the world where such a rich flora has been recorded in such a small area. The talk will highlight some of the diversity of the lichens and their habitats found during inventory work for the Department of National Defense and Natural Resources Canada.

June picnic – details to follow!



## Kamloops Naturalist

The Kamloops Naturalist Club was formed in 1971 and became a registered Society in 1981. It is a member of the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists [www.bcnature.ca](http://www.bcnature.ca) and Nature Canada [www.naturecanada.ca](http://www.naturecanada.ca)

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**Meetings**  
7:00 PM, the third Thursday of the month from Sept. to June. Meet at Heritage House, 100 Lorne St., Kamloops, BC.

**Annual Membership**  
(Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)  
Family \$40  
Individual \$28  
Student \$23  
Contact:  
Winnifred Fischer  
Tel: 250-376-3944

## Upcoming Field Trips

We have planned a number of field trips for the next few months but haven't pinned down the dates yet, so stay tuned. On all field trips, dress for the weather. Bring a lunch or a snack and water. If you have any ideas for field trips or would like to lead one, please contact Margaret [marggraham@shaw.ca](mailto:marggraham@shaw.ca) or 250-554-1285.

There is no need to register in advance. Everyone will be asked to sign an attendance form. Guests are always welcome. Non-club members will be asked to sign a day trip waiver form and pay \$1.

When carpooling, at trip-end, please offer the driver compensation for gas and wear-and tear on the vehicle. Consider offering what you feel would be fair if you had been driving that vehicle and would be receiving the compensation.

Proposed field trips include:

Separation Lake, Cranes (Ken)

Dunes Golf Course to observe "pond life"

June picnic at Isobel Lake (to celebrate trail improvement)

Jensen Island-Oxbow Provincial Park in the summer for birdwatching

Mushroom Walk (Gary)

Rose Hill/Good Lake Rd. - (Tom/Nancy)

Dufferin Wetland Tour

Lac du Bois and/or Neskonlith Wildflowers

McGowan Pond - ducks and other "water birds" (Margaret)

Reptiles/herpes walk (Frank)



## Dewdrop Cleanup 2018

The Kamloops Naturalist Club will be holding its third annual cleanup of the Dewdrop Flats area on **Sunday, April 8.**

This will be nearly three weeks later than last year so the snow should be gone, the roads dried up, and the temperatures warmer.

Last year more than 10,000 kg of garbage went over the scales at the landfill while some big-ticket items were diverted for recycling. More than 140 volunteers were involved with support from various levels of government, businesses, and other organizations.

The event is scheduled to begin at **9:30 a.m.** for registration and assignment to designated areas. We're planning on putting in a couple of hours of work before enjoying a hamburger (or veggie burger), hot dog, and a coffee or hot chocolate back at the rendezvous point.

**WHAT TO BRING:** Remember to bring a pair of work gloves, sturdy shoes (there's lots of broken glass to contend with), and dress appropriately for the weather. Other items you might bring include 5-gallon buckets, rakes, wheelbarrows, flat shovels, tarps for securing your load, and travel mugs.

**DIRECTIONS:** We will be meeting on the Dewdrop flats, 3.5 km in on the Frederick Road. To get there, take Tranquille Road past Cinnamon Ridge and turn right onto the Tranquille-Criss Creek Road. Cross the tracks and stay on the road for 4.3 km and turn left onto the Frederick Road at the hairpin turn. Continue straight along the road for another 3.5 km and you'll see all the vehicles parked there.

Following the cleanup, the Kamloops Naturalist Club will lead a hike, starting at 1:30. It is over uneven ground so is suitable for people that are used to hiking off-trail but is very doable by children that are active hikers.

People should wear good sturdy shoes and bring their cameras. Hike will be about 2 hours in total with a lot of stopping to chat about the local flora and fauna. **No dogs please.**

The cleanup will coincide with the Fish and Game Club's annual spring California Bighorn Sheep and Deer count along the north side of Kamloops Lake from Rousseau Creek to the Ord Road area. The count starts at daybreak. Contact Doug (250-573-5570) for information on times and location for this count.

If you have questions about the cleanup, contact Frank Ritcey, [fritcey@hotmail.com](mailto:fritcey@hotmail.com).





Volunteers



Registration



Big Trailer Load



Lumber, Oil Drum, etc.



Car Parts, Lumber, Wire, etc.



Creek Cleanup, Carcasses, Metal, Garbage



## Lifetime Membership Award Joan Best



Joan Best was awarded a lifetime membership in the Kamloops Naturalist Club at the AGM in January. Joan has been a member of the club since 1995 after moving back to Kamloops, where she grew up. Since joining the club, she has held many of the executive positions, including President, Director and Program Coordinator. She has been a field trip leader, particularly at Tranquille, her childhood stomping grounds. She has been a frequent contributor to the KNC newsletter, and is currently interviewing club members to provide informative biographies. Joan monitored a bluebird route on the Dewdrop flats for many years, and is still one of the wardens of the Tranquille Ecological Reserve, now being assisted by June and Kats Kitamura. She monitored spadefoot toads on the Dewdrop and still monitors loons on Saul Lake during the breeding

season. Joan also helped to organize two AGM's for the Federation of BC Naturalists (BC Nature) which were held in Kamloops.

On the province-wide front, Joan has been a Secretary, Director, and Regional Coordinator for the FBCN. She won the highest award from BC Nature in 2006, the prestigious Elton Anderson Award, to recognize her dedicated service on behalf of the FBCN. She spent many years working with Bev Ramey of BC Nature to get the regulations for off-road vehicles enacted into legislation by the provincial government in 2014. In the past, Joan has been active with the Sierra Club and has acted as liaison with various committees and agencies including BC Parks and the BC Outdoor Recreation Council. She served on the TNRD Advisory Planning Commission for Area J, as well as the Southern Interior Weed Management Committee.

Joan Best continues to write letters, make phone calls, and speak out for the environment. Like many club members, she picks up garbage whenever she is out and about. Joan turned 90 in December and is currently awaiting cataract surgery on her second eye. She is also seriously looking into moving into town from her beloved Tranquille Valley home if she can find a buyer for her property. She is looking forward to coming to KNC meetings once again and partaking in other social activities which have been limited by the one-hour drive into town along the treacherous Red Lake Road past Tranquille.



## 2018 "Sweagle" Count

By Rick Howie

On Jan. 14, members of the Kamloops Naturalists conducted the annual mid-winter survey of swans and eagles in our area. Dubbed the "Sweagle" count by Laurie Rockwell from Summerland, the club started this survey in 1974 and I have been coordinating it for 39 years. We have expanded coverage over the years by involving members of other naturalist clubs in the interior from Prince George south to the US border. Over the next few days, I expect to receive counts from all of those other groups and I will be rolling up the results for the entire southern interior.

Our group counted from Kamloops along the South Thompson River to the town of Chase. Despite the extensive freezing conditions experienced a short while ago and lots of ice remaining on the river, Trumpeter Swans numbered 208 (169 adults and 39 juveniles). Bald Eagles numbered 96 (62 adults and 34 sub-adults).

This was a decent number of swans for the conditions. We found no Tundra Swans which is not surprising. When we initiated these counts back in the 1970s, the entire wintering population here consisted of Tundra Swans. As the overall population of Trumpeter Swans in western North America has increased over the years, they have completely replaced the smaller species wintering on our river which once numbered around 400 individuals. Now, we are hard-pressed to find 2 or 3 Tundras. This is a fascinating story of one species replacing another and dominating the use of limited foraging habitat. I will share more about this in another posting.

Thanks to Sweaglers Richard Wright, Norm Dougan, June and Kats Kitamura, Karen Willies as well as Bob and Sandra Ewart who drove in from Shuswap Lake to join us.



The two swans on the left are Trumpeters and the one on the right with the yellow nasal mark is a Tundra



2018 Sweagle counters from left to right: Richard Wright, Sandra Ewart, Bob Ewart, Kats Kitamura, June Kitamura, Karen Willies, Norm Dougan



# Shaggy Mane

## *Coprinus comatus*

Gary Hunt

*Coprinus comatus* (Shaggy Mane) is one of many mushroom species called ink cap mushrooms or coprinoid fungi. They share the unusual feature of having gills that digest themselves at maturity producing a liquid mass of black spores. Some of the liquid drips to the ground and infiltrates the soil and some dries on the mushroom cap and is wind dispersed. If insects land on the liquid mass, they can serve as dispersal agents. The enzymatic dissolution of tissues is called deliquescence. It begins at the cap margin and progresses toward the stem. The ink is permanent and is used in art work.

All coprinoid fungi are saprophytic and occur in many habitats such as on dung in pastures, in lawns, forests, and a wide range of disturbed habitats. The name coprinoid comes from the Greek and means "dung" which is reference to this common substrate for their growth.

Shaggy mane is one of the easiest wild mushrooms to identify and a great beginning species if you are tempted to try eating your first wild mushroom. Most people say they are delicious. Cut them lengthwise to be sure they are young and pure white. They have a columnar cap covered with shaggy scales. Look for them along road sides, in grassy areas, and in garden wood chips. They are famous for bursting up through asphalt and damaging tennis courts.

There is another species of ink cap that is commonly eaten. It is *Coprinopsis atramentaria* (Inky Cap). It is recognized by its smooth, silky, pale brown cap. It grows in clusters on rotting tree stumps or on buried wood. Big caution about eating this: It contains a toxin (Coprine) that produces an Antabuse effect with alcohol. It causes a racing heart, elevated blood pressure, facial flushing, and extreme nausea and vomiting when consumed with alcohol. You should abstain from alcohol several days before and after consuming it. With that in mind, many people do eat and enjoy it.





## News and Updates

### Tracking in the Kamloops Area

Frank Ritcey

A hardy group of naturalists braved the deep snows and wandered around looking at deer and moose tracks this Sunday morning. Outings like this are always fun as there are often folks with passions about every aspect of nature on the hike. Some will know plants, some will know herbs, and a lot will know birds.



## Our Members

### Lynne Borle



I was born in Victoria, B.C. where my father was enlisted in the navy. When I was 8, we moved to Edmonton, Alberta. I lived in Edmonton until I was married and had my first child. My husband worked in the oil patch, so we moved a few times - these included 10 years in Fort St. John, BC, then Whitecourt, AB for another 10 years, followed by 15 years in Red Deer. I have four sons and twelve grandchildren. I was widowed in 2007.

I was fortunate enough to be a stay at home mom while my boys were growing up, but when they were teens, I started my career as a Registry Agent, first in Whitecourt, and then in Red Deer, where I managed a busy office.

After I was widowed, I decided to try something new, and “apprenticed” with a local photographer. I discovered that I loved dabbling in photography and spend lots of time doing that. I love to photograph nature, landscapes, animals and people. I must say I miss taking pictures of my grandkids!

In 2014 I went to Penticton to be a "den mother" to my oldest grandson and a couple of other boys. They all played hockey with the Okanagan Hockey Academy. When his two years were up, I moved back to Red Deer, but missed living in BC. I decided to sell my home and move to Kamloops to be with my mom, as we are great friends and get along famously. I have been to Kamloops off and on over the years to visit, so knew I liked the area.

I enjoy walking and have found many beautiful trails and hikes around Kamloops. One of my favourite places is McArthur Island Park, and when I saw the club's involvement in keeping it, I decided to join. I don't know a lot about nature so I'm excited to learn new things and meet some people. I love to explore, but am not big on solo exploring so I think this will be right up my alley!

I grew a garden last year and was happy to find that I have a bit of a green thumb! I'm looking forward to learning more about that this year - where to buy local plants and seeds will be of interest to me if anyone has suggestions.

I'm fairly skilled with the computer, and when I saw that the newsletter volunteers were stepping down, I decided to step up and give it a whirl!

I appreciate the help I'm getting with content and would invite everyone to send me articles and photos that will be interesting to club members.

