
May 2018



Kamloops
Naturalist
Club

We Enjoy, Protect and Promote Nature



SAGE WHISPERS

Newsletter of the Kamloops Naturalist Club



Mountain Bluebird

Photo by Glenn Dreger

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Coming Events

KNC Programs

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Past President

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Adele Stapleton

BC Nature Director

Gary Hunt

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Ken Lipinski

Jesse Ritcey

Communications

Margaret Graham

marggraham@shaw.ca

250-554-1285

Membership

Winnifred Fischer

Newsletter Committee

Lynne Borle

Programs

Justine Densmore-McCulloch

Margaret Graham

Bluebird Co-ordinator

Susan Weilandt

May 17 - Please note the change in venue for this meeting. We will be at St. Paul's Cathedral Hall, 360 Nicola Street, 7:00 PM

Curtis Bjork will be speaking about 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 that 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.

May 27, Sunday. Big Bird Day and the Team with the Most Species Wins a Prize!

Two teams will compete to find the most bird species. This fun, friendly competition takes place on Sunday, May 27th. The search begins at MIDNIGHT and ends at 4:00 PM on the 27th. Phone Glenn Dreger at 250-372-3837, gdreger@telus.net to be placed on Team South. Team North leader is June Kitamura at 250-374-8734, kitamura2@telus.net. HOME BIRDERS are most welcome.

The count will take place after dinner. This year, the club will be providing a barbecue – hamburgers and hot dogs, tea and coffee. Feel free to bring a salad or dessert to share. Bring your lawn chairs to the home of Bruce and Anne Ritcey at 877 Crestline Street in Brocklehurst starting at 5:00 PM. Bird sightings will be tallied and prizes will be awarded for *Best Backyard Bird*, *Most Unusual Sighting*

June 21 picnic – Isobel Lake. Meet at the A&W Fortune Shopping Centre at 4:30 for carpooling. Isobel Lake is about a 40 minute drive from Downtown Kamloops. Follow 8th street to the intersection which leads to Batchelor Heights. Follow Batchelor Hills Drive all the way through the residential area and over the cattle guard where the road becomes Lac Du Bois Road. Continue on Lac Du Bois Road for 15.5 km. Turn right onto McQueen-Isobel Lake Road. When the road forks, roughly 1.6 km in, keep to the left. The parking lot is not much further.

Bring your own food and drinks for the picnic. This is not a potluck or barbecue. After supper, we will walk around the lake so don't forget your binoculars and camera. Dress for the weather.



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 and Nature Canada www.naturecanada.ca

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Editor: Lynne Borle
kncnewsletter2@gmail.com

KNC Mailing Address

P.O. Box 625
Kamloops, BC
V2C 5L7

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

Come and Visit Our New Website: www.kamloopsnaturalistclub.com

By Gary Hunt

Travel over to our new website and check out the wealth of information about nature in the Kamloops region as well as club activities. Here is some of what you will find:



The banner is a rotating gallery of images so each time you visit it will change. The menu bar contains a variety of information about the club and posted nature information. When you scroll down the news feed, you will see the stories about plants, animals, and fungi.

The **About Us** link has information about our purpose, interests, and meetings

Click on About Us on the menu bar for more information including past newsletters, KNC videos and contact information for NatureKids.

On the right side is listed our **Upcoming Events** (field trips and programs) with details on how to participate.

The **Naturalist Notes** are for interesting sightings and short reports about what people are seeing in the Kamloops area. You can contribute your observations right on the website. Anyone is welcome to comment on any story on the website. There is a comment box at the bottom of each story. In order to prevent spam and inappropriate comments, we ask that you give your name and e-mail address. Under the **Help** menu (on the right side of the menu bar) you will see an option to **submit a post**. We encourage anyone to use this feature to let people know what you have seen or any other appropriate nature related news item. You can upload images on this form too.

Please let us know if you have suggestions about how we can improve our website. You can use the **Contact Us** link to let us know what you are thinking. The website is a work in progress so check back often.

Thank you to Doug Smith for creating the user-friendly website and to Gary Hunt for keeping the information up to date.



Dewdrop Cleanup 2018

The 2018 cleanup of the Dewdrop range on Sunday, April 8, was a great success, thanks to Frank Ritcey giving interviews to the local media prior to the event. Because of rain showers the day before and overnight, the road across the flats consisted of lots of muddy ruts and puddles which the cars and trucks tried unsuccessfully to avoid. In spite of the mud, a steady stream of cars arrived at the rendezvous site and parked along the roadside. At 9 am, with plastic bags in hand, a crowd of people gathered around Frank, waiting for instructions. A few raindrops started to fall but they soon stopped, giving us perfect weather conditions for the cleanup. Frank gave his “tick talk” and other safety instructions, and divided the groups into teams with maps to areas which needed cleaning. After a couple of hours, people started to arrive back at the rendezvous site and helped themselves to burgers, coffee, and snacks. While a crew of volunteers stayed behind to pack up the tents, tables, chairs, etc., Frank led 19 eager participants on a nature hike through the grasslands towards Kamloops Lake.

By the end of the day, more than 150 people turned up to help, with a total of 2780 kg (6116 lbs) of garbage that went over the scales and a further 800 kg (1760 lbs) that did not go over the scales (metal, tires, and other recyclables). We also collected \$38 worth of cans and bottles to add to the club’s coffers.

We would like to thank the following groups and organizations that donated personnel, supplies, and/or publicity to help make the cleanup a success: City of Kamloops; BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; BC Parks; Conservation Officer Service; Kamloops This Week; CBC Daybreak Kamloops; CFJC TV; Costco; Shoppers Drug Mart Columbia Place; PepsiCo; NutriGrow; Kamloops Fish & Game Club; Kamloops 4x4 Club; Four Wheel Drive Association of BC; Kamloops Thompson Trails Alliance; Kamloops Outdoors Club; Kamloops Hiking Club; Big Little Science Centre; and Love Hard Kamloops. Also supporting us were online kamloopsmatters and infonews.

A special thank you to all of the volunteers who showed up because they care about keeping the grasslands clean, especially since the ticks are out in force in the grasslands and many people found that they had acquired these hitchhikers when they gathered for the lunchtime barbecue.

To report known or suspected violations of fisheries, wildlife, or environmental protection laws, call the toll-free RAPP line at 1-877-952-7277 or report a violation online at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/rapp/form.htm>



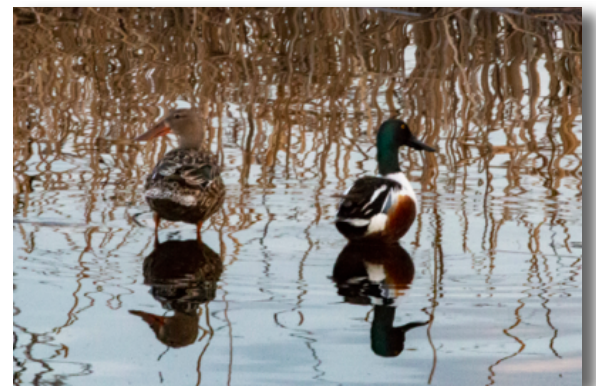


Gamble Pond Field Trip May 2, 2018

It was a perfect evening to view the birds at Gamble Pond in McGowan Park - not too hot or too cold, no wind. Fifteen people showed up and we counted a total of 20 species of birds plus several muskrats and a frog.

OSPR - Osprey
MALL - Mallard
NOSL - Northern Shoveler
AMWI - American Wigeon
RUDU - Ruddy Duck
AMCO - American Coot
BBMA - Black-billed Magpie
MAWR - Marsh Wren
SOSP - Song Sparrow
YHBL - Yellow-headed Blackbird

CAGO - Canada Goose
CITE - Cinnamon Teal
GADW - Gadwall
REDH - Redhead
SORA - Sora Rail
European Collared Dove
AMCR - American Crow
YRWA - Yellow-rumped warbler
RWBL - Red-winged Blackbird



Niskonlith Field Trip May 6, 2018

It was a beautiful spring day and a never ending stream of people arrived at the Valleyview meeting place to be sorted into carpools. By the time we reached Pritchard to meet up with Arne Raven, the Ballins, and the Ewarts, we were a convoy of 12 vehicles winding our way up a very rugged private road into the hills above the South Thompson River. Arne was given special permission to allow us onto the property and at our first stop on a flat meadow, surrounded by curious cattle and serenaded by a meadowlark; he explained the history of the ranch and pointed out the piles of rocks picked from the fields by the early settlers. Bob Needham, range technician, explained how the area had once been heavily infested by knapweed but it had been eradicated using biological controls – weevils imported from Eurasia which attacked the seeds or the roots of the knapweed. Our convoy climbed a little higher before we turned around and were treated to the magnificent views of the hills, fields, and river as we wound our way back down to East Shuswap Road and followed Arne to his home at Niskonlith Lake.

Because there were so many of us (30), we were divided into two groups. While Shirley Ballin led the flower people to find the Blue Clematis, I followed Peter Ballin across the road to a cabin on the lake where we appreciated the view of the calm water reflecting the blue sky and gentle hills. A Violet Green Swallow perched on the weather vane to allow for photos and some of the avid photographers found the perfect patch of Woodland Stars on which to focus their cameras. We climbed through the rails of a wooden fence to follow Peter down the road to the turtle pond where we saw at least 50 Western Painted Turtles sunning themselves on logs in the pond, as well as a Common Garter Snake swimming lazily by the shoreline. A couple of Bald Eagles soared overhead and tiny bees were spotted along the dusty roadside where they had made their homes. Brady Mathes swept his net through the air to capture several early butterflies – Western Brown Elfin, Spring Azure, and Stella's Orangetip

Arriving back at Arne's place, we found the first group were already eating their lunches of buns, cheeses, and fresh veggies supplied by Arne along with cakes brought by a couple of the ladies. While eating lunch, four kinds of swallows were identified – Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Cliff Swallow, and Violet Green Swallow. A Say's Phoebe was heard and a Rufous Hummingbird visited the feeder.

It was a wonderful way to spend a sunny Sunday in May. The Saskatoons were blooming, and the hillsides were alive with spectacular displays of yellow Arrow-Leaved Balsamroot. We saw large blue patches of Upland Larkspur, the dainty Woodland Star, well-camouflaged Chocolate Lily, and the occasional Chocolate Tip (Fern-Leaved Desert Parsley). Lemonweed was just starting to bloom and it wouldn't be long before the Lupines were turning the hillsides blue. We were too late for the Glacier Lilies but the Oregon Grape was blooming and the wild strawberries were promising sweet berries in the future. On the way home, a carload of ladies was lucky enough to see a Long-billed Curlew as well as Mountain Bluebirds, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a Cinnamon Teal.

Thank you to Arne for providing us with lunch and leading us up onto the private ranch property, to Shirley and Peter Ballin for leading us on our hikes, and to Brady Mathes for sharing his butterfly knowledge.

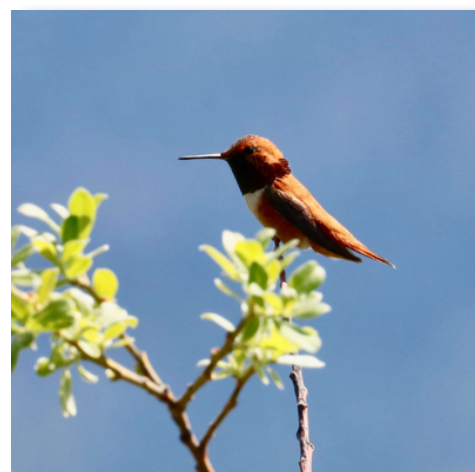




Stella's Orangetip
Lyn Macdonald



Violet Green Swallow
Lynne Borle



Rufous Hummingbird
Lyn Macdonald



Chocolate Lily
Lynne Borle



Balsam Root
Adele Stapleton



Indian Paintbrush
Lynne Borle



Painted Turtles – we were told there are about 50 in this pond



Fern Leaf Desert Parsley
Lynne Borle



Lunch! Thanks Arne!



Making Bluebird Boxes

Margaret Graham and Peter Gray

In January, 2018, the Kamloops Naturalist Club applied for funding available from BC Nature to build 50 bluebird boxes in order to replace damaged and/or missing nest boxes. The boxes are subject to deterioration from the sun and weather over time, as well as damage caused by animals and vandals.

For nearly 40 years, the Kamloops Naturalist Club has been setting out nest boxes in the Kamloops area to increase the number of bluebirds and tree swallows. Their natural homes are in the cavities of dead or dying trees which have been excavated by woodpeckers, but due to logging activities and cutting of trees for agriculture and housing, these nest sites are no longer available; however, the birds have readily adapted to the nest boxes to raise their families.

The club currently has 17 trails that are monitored by KNC members, with an additional trail monitored by the Options and Opportunities community group. There are approximately 40 individuals monitoring more than 400 boxes.

The bluebirds return to the Kamloops area in early March, the males a few days ahead of the females. The volunteers monitor the boxes every 7 to 10 days through the nesting season, recording the species of bird using the box, the number of eggs laid, numbers hatched, and number of young surviving to flying age. Mountain Bluebirds and Tree Swallows are the main occupants of the boxes, but they are also used by House Wrens, Mountain Chickadees, mice, and squirrels.

Our club is an associate member of the North American Bluebird Society and the Southern Interior Bluebird Trail Society. Each trail monitor records nesting information on their route for each box, and sends it to Susan Weilandt, the bluebird co-ordinator who collects the data at the end of the season. The data is summarized and this information is shared with the aforementioned organizations as well as with Matt Reudink, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biological Sciences at TRU. Matt and his students use the data for their bluebird research projects.

On a cool day in April, four members of the Kamloops Naturalist Club got together to assemble over 50 new bluebird boxes. Organized by Peter Gray, the project took place in his garage with assistance from Judy Gray, Davina Neve, and Scott Brown. As you can see in the pictures, the garage is only just big enough for the four of them to work in.

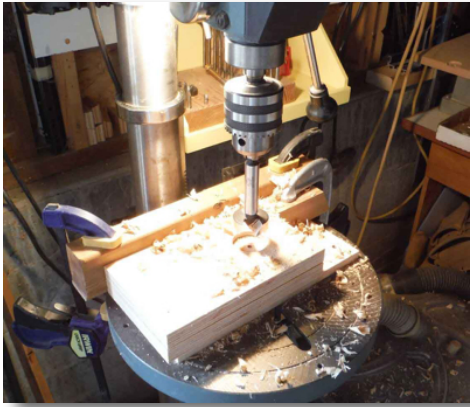
For the assembly to go smoothly, Peter pre-cut all the pieces and drilled the big entrance hole. He had already purchased the drill bit with a previous grant. Apparently 1 and 9/16" is just the correct size for a Bluebird pair. Peter then set up stations so that the final hole drilling and assembly jigs would work consistently.

Each year Peter tries to make improvements. This year it was to use the plywood sheets more efficiently. This was done by slightly adjusting the size of non-critical parts so that there would be less waste. Also the lid attaching system is being improved each year. Scott suggested a swivel lid that he has tried on some of his boxes, so next year, Peter is hoping to develop an even simpler swivel lid. It was a good day with all the boxes completed and delivered to the Bluebird Box depot people.

Thank you to BC Nature for approving our request for funding to purchase materials, to Peter Gray and his helpers for building the boxes, and to all of the volunteers who put in countless hours and mileage during the nesting season to ensure the survival of the Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and other useful bird species.



Photos by Peter Gray



Boring Entrance Hole



Judy drilling hinge holes



First one finished



Peter adjusting cleanout door



Cut pieces



Davina attaching lid blocks

