



Sage Whispers

Newsletter of the Kamloops Naturalist Club

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Avalanche Lily

by Vanessa Robinson

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Programs

May 16 at 7 pm at Heritage House. **Vanessa Robinson** is a 4th year undergraduate student in the Natural Resource Sciences Program at TRU. She will be speaking about **Anomalies and Outliers in South-Central BC Interior Plant Communities**. She will be using pictures she has taken to showcase anomalies and outliers in BC's Interior flowering plant communities which highlight the sometimes strange and unexpected biologies of our most familiar plant species.

June 20. The annual picnic will be held at 6:00 pm at TRU Horticulture Gardens, 1030 University Drive. Parking is free on the campus after 5:00 pm. The closest parking lots to the Horticulture Gardens are lots J and K, which are across the street from the Horticulture gardens, between the New Residence (New Rez) and the Campus Activity Centre (CAC). On the map in the link below, these lots are blue and orange, respectively. <https://www.tru.ca/transportation/parking.html>.

If you need a ride, contact Margaret marggraham@shaw.ca (250-554-1285). **Please bring your own food. There will be cold water, juice and granola bars supplied by the club.**

Events

May 26, Sunday. Big Bird Day. Two teams will compete to find the most bird species. This fun, friendly competition begins at MIDNIGHT – 12:01 on May 26th and ends at 4:00 PM. 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 tally will take place after dinner which starts at 5 pm. Bring your own picnic dinner and lawn chairs to the home of Bruce and Anne Ritcey at 877 Crestline Street in Brocklehurst. Beverages will be provided by the club. This is a friendly, fun event with no prizes, only bragging rights going to the winning team, North or South.



Kamloops Naturalist Club

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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Meetings

7:00 PM, the third Thursday of the month from September to June. Meet at Heritage House, 100 Lorne Street, Kamloops, BC

Annual Membership

(January 1 to December 31)

Family \$40
Individual \$28
Student \$23

Contact: Winnifred Fischer
250.376.3944

Life and Death on McArthur Island

By Karen Willies

On a recent walk on McArthur Island, Frances and I were checking out the foot bridge over the slough for bird life when we noticed a Canada Goose chick struggling on the rocks below. We soon realized that it was caught up in fishing wire and was struggling unsuccessfully to extricate itself.

On closer investigation we saw that the wire was wound around a stick and then around the chick's neck. The stick was soon broken free, but the wire around its neck was still in a tight noose.

Once up on the path a passerby produced some nail clippers and the wire was cut free. We carried the chick to the butterfly garden and released it on the bank where other goose families were nearby. It scurried to the water's edge and floated away, chirping cheerfully

Alas, the chick's good fortune did not last long. An adult Bald Eagle swooped in and carried it off!

On a brighter note, we did see the Greater White-fronted Goose.



Photo by Lynne Borle



May 2019

Congratulations to Mandy Ross for being a Naturalist Mentor of Distinction!



Mandy Ross comes to British Columbia from the big city of Cambridge, Ontario. She headed out west to volunteer, work, and explore in the beautiful province we call home.

Mandy got her start in nature education as a WildSafeBC coordinator, where she presented to communities and students across the Thompson-Nicola Regional District about wildlife ID, behaviour and living safely near wildlife.

In 2016 she received her Masters of Science degree from Thompson Rivers University where she looked at the ecotone between aspen copses and grasslands. Her work was related to the hypothesis that species biodiversity is higher in these interface areas. She found that aspen copses and ecotones were similar in diversity and both higher than in the grassland alone. After spending so many summers closely studying the forests and grasslands in various parts of BC, she wanted to help others experience the wonder of our natural environment.

In 2016 she became a co-leader of the Kamloops chapter of Nature Kids BC (previously the Kamloops Young Naturalists Club). She leads hikes, organizes outings led by a diversity of other naturalists, and has increased the membership of Nature Kids by getting the word out about the fun and interesting outings kids and their lucky parents get to attend.

On any given day, Mandy can be found hiking, camping, rock climbing, ice climbing, and biking around the Southern Interior, all with her adventurous 2-year-old son in tow. We here in Kamloops are lucky to have a knowledgeable and dedicated leader for our future Naturalist Club members.



May 2019

The following cover letter was sent to BC's Minister of Environment accompanied by BC Nature's resolution in support of the Southern Mountain Caribou, specifically the Wells Gray Mountain Caribou as submitted on behalf of the Kamloops Naturalist Club by Nancy Flood and Gary Hunt at the BC Nature AGM in Duncan in early May. The resolution contains 28 references. If you wish to view the references, contact Gary at garyalan.hunt@gmail.com.

The Honourable George Heyman,
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy Room 112 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Heyman:

Re: Support for Southern Mountain Caribou

On May 4, 2019, members of BC Nature unanimously endorsed the attached resolution. The survival and recovery of this endangered herd depends both on 'primary habitat' within their annual range and on 'matrix habitat' outside their annual range. Logging in areas adjacent to the park reduces critical habitat and enhances predators that sometimes kill caribou. We are very concerned that logging continues to be authorized in the critical habitat of this rapidly shrinking population.

BC Nature (the federation of naturalist clubs across BC) has over 6,000 members in clubs around the Province with a mandate "To know nature and keep it worth knowing". We have had a representative on the Mountain Caribou Recovery Committee since its inception. Because the numbers of caribou continue to decline yearly, we believe the implementation of this resolution is critical for the future of the caribou in this region. Therefore, we strongly urge you to take all necessary steps to halt timber harvesting in the range of both the Wells Gray Park South and the Wells Gray Park North herds of Southern Mountain Caribou.

Yours truly,

Kees Visser Ph.D., P.Geol., President BC Nature
Contact information: Kees Visser, keesvisser44@gmail.com

cc The Honourable John Horgan Premier of British Columbia
East Annex, Parliament Buildings Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

The Honourable Doug Donaldson
Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

The Honourable Catherine McKenna,
Minister of Environment and Climate Change House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6



Resolution 2019-01: Wells Gray Mountain Caribou

Submitted by Nancy Flood & Gary Hunt, Kamloops Naturalist Club

WHEREAS Southern Mountain Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) (SMC) have been listed as Threatened under the Species at Risk Act since 2003 and a federal recovery strategy was posted in 2014;^{1,4}

WHEREAS SMC numbers have declined drastically over the last 20 years, from about 2500 in 18 herds in 1994 to about 156 animals existing in 13 herds in 2014;^{2 3 4, T.Goward pers comm} and all of these herds continue to decline in size:

WHEREAS the Wells Gray Caribou herd, specifically, has declined from an estimated 336 animals in 1995¹⁶, to 242 in 2006, to about 111 currently and is projected to continue declining;^{5,6,16}

WHEREAS The evidence is clear that although predation is currently a major cause of population declines in SMC, this problem has originated with, and continues to be exacerbated by, human disturbance, particularly as it results in habitat loss;^{3,7,8,9,10,11,15}

WHEREAS culling predators, use of maternity pens, and translocations may assist in the short term preservation of some SMC populations, research shows that these measures are expensive, must include about 60% of females to be effective, and will need to be continued in perpetuity for at least five or six decades post logging for populations that are not self-sustaining; and that maintenance of sufficient habitat for the population is critical for the maintenance and hoped-for growth of caribou populations;^{3,5,11,12,25}

WHEREAS low population density by itself exacerbates the effect of all these other issues for SMC (i.e., they experience Allee effects), such that capita growth rates decrease with declining population density;^{13,14}

WHEREAS in April 2017, BC Nature, along with other groups made legal application to the federal government under Canada's Species at Risk Act (SARA) for an Emergency Protection Order to ban Canfor's proposed logging in caribou habitat adjacent to Wells Gray Park; they argued that this logging was occurring in habitat designated as critical habitat for SMC;¹⁶

WHEREAS in June 2018, the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada declared that there was "imminent threat" to 10 SMC populations (Local Population Units, or LPU)—those under 100 animals in size, which would not be considered "self-sustaining." Even though the report acknowledged that "No estimate of minimum viable population (MVP) size exists for SMC," research on the Boreal Caribou (which have a different migratory pattern) was used to define "Self-sustaining" for SMC: as: (1) "the LPU on average *demonstrates stable or positive population growth over the short term (≤20 years)*, and is large enough to withstand random events and persist over the long term (≥50 years), without the need for ongoing active management intervention; and (2) there is an increase to at least 100 caribou within LPUs that currently consist of fewer than 100 caribou, and there is *no reduction in the number of caribou within LPUs that currently consist of over 100 caribou*;"¹⁷ (italics ours).



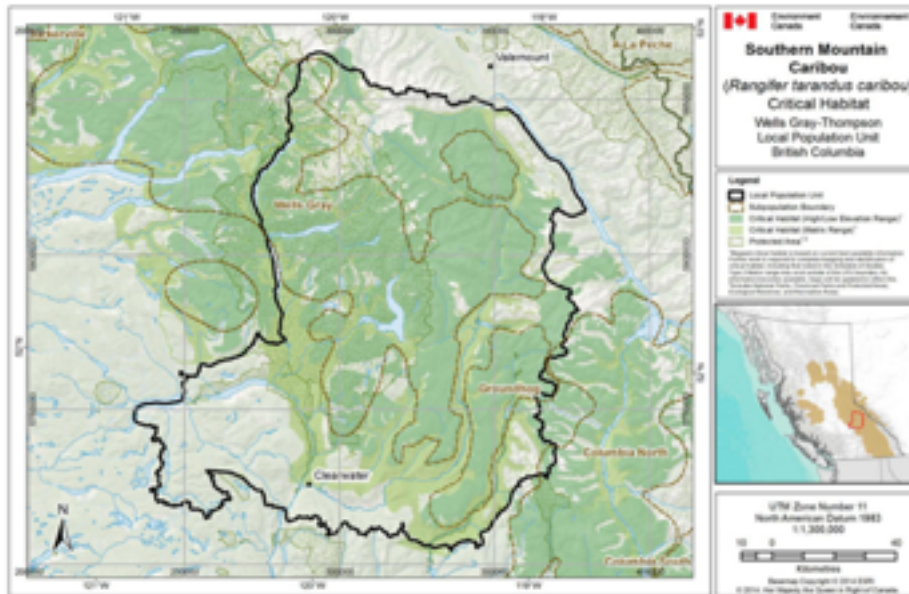
WHEREAS despite this declaration of imminent threat, no Emergency Protection Order (which would have stopped further logging etc.) was issued, 3 of the 10 populations described above are now extirpated^{3,18} and, according to many sources, 83 + 314 = 397 logging permits have been issued within the ranges of the endangered herds since June 2018;^{19,20,21,26,27} Although scientific evidence surrounding the reasons for the decline of SMC is abundant, campaigns of denial have clouded the issue in the public's eyes and delayed an appropriate response;²⁴

WHEREAS the best hope for the recovery of SMC may lie with herds such as the two herds that overlap with Wells Gray Park: they face less risk of the deleterious effects of genetic drift, inbreeding and stochastic events than smaller herds^{22,23}; and their possibility for long-term viability is greatly increased compared to that of any other remaining herds by the fact that much of their range is currently protected;

BE IT RESOLVED that BC Nature call on the governments of British Columbia and Canada to:

Apply the precautionary principle and take all necessary steps to halt timber harvesting in the range of both the Wells Gray Park South and the Wells Gray Park North herds of SMC; this includes harvesting in the matrix areas as outlined by the 2014 Environment Canada Recovery Strategy for SMC.

Figure B-18



Long Description for Figure B-18



May 2019

Niskonlith Wildflower Meadows

by Vanessa Robinson

Despite the rain, a few dozen people joined Vanessa Robinson and Jesse Ritcey for a walk amongst the wildflowers at the Niskonlith Wildflower Meadows (Adams Lake Indian Band) on Easter Monday, April 22nd.

The spring ephemerals were in full swing, with a carpet of yellow avalanche lilies interspersed with bluebells and spring beauties.

Julia Housden-Proulx drove up from Kelowna specially just to photograph the yellow avalanche lily, and also won the prize (Poisonous Plant of the PNW chapbook) for finding the first chocolate lily (not yet blooming).

Isaac Nelson heard and spotted a few white-winged crossbills, and the yellow-rumped warblers and white-crowned sparrows were plentiful.

Many people made the 10 km round trip to Star Lake, but the wildflowers were so plentiful, many would have been satisfied walking only a few hundred metres from the parking area!



Photos all provided by Julia Housden-Proulx



Gamble Pond and Separation Lake Field Trip

by Isaac Nelson

On the evening of April 23, an enthusiastic group of birders led by Tom Dickinson met at Gamble Pond (Albert McGowan Park) to begin what would be a very successful evening of birding.

We found over 35 bird species at Gamble Pond, including Ruddy Ducks, Buffleheads and Cinnamon Teal, among many other species of waterfowl. A Virginia Rail and a Sora (rail) were calling from the reeds, and a curious Marsh Wren allowed a few of us to get close-up views.

Two Snow Geese were seen among the Canada Geese.

After an hour of birding at the pond, we moved on to Separation Lake (in Knutsford) to look for migrating Sandhill Cranes. A Northern Harrier was hunting along the lakeshore when we arrived, and we were lucky enough to see a rare Barrow's Goldeneye-Common Goldeneye hybrid. It didn't take too long before a flock of Sandhill Cranes appeared briefly on the horizon. They landed behind a ridge in the distance, so we decided to drive back in that direction and soon found the flock of 40 Sandhill Cranes foraging in a field.

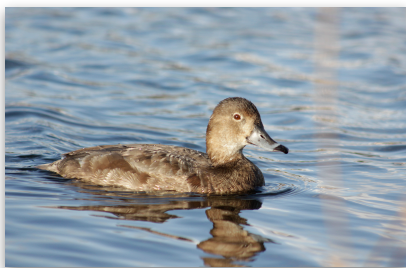
We had a fairly good look at the birds with binoculars, and some great views with a spotting scope.

It was a fantastic end to the evening, and we eventually left the cranes on their own and headed home.

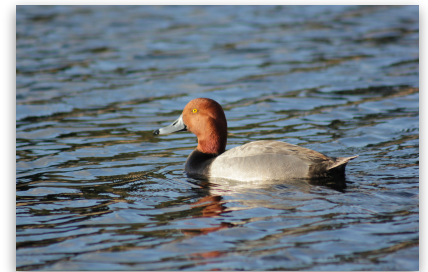
American Coot



Female Redhead



Male Redhead



Photos by Isaac Nelson



Rare Yellow-Rumped Warbler Sighting!

by Tristan Semeniuk

Last Monday, on April 29th, I (Tristan) saw a leucistic yellow rumped warbler at Albert McGowan park, right beside Gambles pond. Yellow rumped warblers are pretty common this time of year as they migrate through and nest here, especially the Audubon's yellow-rumped warbler, which is one of two sub-species. This was different though, the yellow rumped warbler that I saw was mostly white, with a little bit of grey and black colouration on the wings and tail, as well as having the yellow rump, yellow throat patch, yellow on both sides of its chest, and yellow on its head. When I first got a look of it from afar, I thought that it might have been a snow bunting, which would be an unusual sighting for this time of year. As I got closer to it though, I could see the yellow throat patch, and I immediately thought yellow rumped warbler. I observed it for about an hour as it flew back and forth from a small Russian olive tree, to the reeds in the pond, and to the fence bordering the pond with the ranch right beside it. It was catching and feeding on insects in mid-air. From observing it closer, I was able to notice the yellow rump, which confirmed my guess of a yellow rumped warbler.



Photo by Tristan Semeniuk

