

May 2023



SAGE WHISPERS

Newsletter of the Kamloops Naturalist Club
Know nature and keep it worth knowing



"The turtles are best seen in sunny weather, when they bask on the cattails and bulrushes that circle the lake."

from *Turtles in Pineview*, pg. 3; western painted turtle photo by Bill Gilroy



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CLUB INFO

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, and Nature Canada.

Sage Whispers is published every two months, except for July and August.

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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

Find us Online!

kamloopsnaturalistclub.com
or
facebook.com/kamloopsnaturalistclub

PROGRAMS

Meetings:

May 18. Heritage House at 7 pm- Emily Lomas: Invasive Mammals in BC. Emily is the Terrestrial Invasive Fauna Specialist with the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship. Emily joined the provincial government in 2019 and comes from a background of environmental project management in municipal government and wildlife research. During her MSc work, Emily studied the effects of human disturbance on the body characteristics and movement patterns of Western Rattlesnakes in the south Okanagan. In previous positions she has worked on a variety of topics, with a focus on human-wildlife conflict prevention, mitigation strategy development, and field research with a focus on herpetofauna and small mammals.

Events:

May 28, Sunday. Big Bird Day. Two teams will compete to find the most bird species. This fun, friendly competition takes place on Sunday, May 28th. The search begins at MIDNIGHT and ends at 4:00 PM on the 28th. 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 or email Teresa Corboy, teresa_corboy@hotmail.com. 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.

If you can't make it to the tally in person, please phone your results to Teresa at 250-320-0889 or email teresa_corboy@hotmail.com. Teresa will compile the totals for each team to discover which team won bragging rights for the most number of species seen.

Big bird day boundaries are 50 km radius from Mount Dufferin Tower. Teams are divided into North and South using the South Thompson and Thompson Rivers as dividing line.

June 15: The June Picnic will be a trip to the Donkey refuge; meet in parking lot of Valley Centre for carpooling at 5:30. Details coming soon, until then, see their website for more information about the refuge!
<https://turtlevalleydonkeyrefuge.com/>

WESTERN PAINTED TURTLES IN PINEVIEW

By Diane McKelvey

At the April 20 club meeting, Alexa Wiebe gave a presentation on seasonal movement patterns of Western painted turtles at site in the Kootenays. Western painted turtles, which are a blue-listed species in BC, can also be seen locally at Python Lake in Pineview. A small resident population of turtles has been identified there, and there is some evidence that these turtles utilize a nesting area adjacent to the lake. The turtles are best seen in sunny weather, when they bask on the cattails and bulrushes that circle the lake.

School District 73 has released plans for a school to be built on the hillside east of the pond, which is home to not only turtles but over 72 species of birds that nest either in or adjacent to the pond or utilize it during migration. Preservation of the turtle and bird habitat has become the focus of conservation efforts initiated by club members and Pineview residents. Working with the School District and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change Strategy, club members are attempting to identify the potential disturbances to the pond and its residents that may be brought about by the construction of the school, and to investigate ways in which these can be mitigated. If you are interested in helping out with the project, contact Patricia Spenser (earthwise@shaw.ca) or Bill Gilroy (bgilroybc@gmail.com).



Western Painted Turtles by Bill Gilroy

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Doug Smith with Gary Hunt

THREE REFLECTIONS ON THE BC NATURE AGM

By Gary Hunt, Sky Jarvis, and Adam Soames

Gary

The 2023 AGM was held in Langley and hosted by the Langley Field Naturalists. There were about 175 registered to attend and this is back to the pre-Covid numbers that we expect for any meeting in the lower mainland or Vancouver Island region. The Kamloops club was well represented by seven members. Aside from the host club, it was the largest delegation at the conference. A highlight of the meeting was the official installation of our own Nancy Flood as president of BC Nature for a two year term.

There were three field trip days and a choice of 17 trips. There were four featured speakers with talks on urban pollinators, the importance of top predators in ecosystems, and the salmon of the Chilliwack River system. The keynote speaker at the banquet was Andy Mackinnon, mycologist and botanist, and co-author of the very popular field guide, *Mushrooms of British Columbia*.

I went on two field trips that were particularly interesting. The first was to Derby Bog that is in the Derby Reach Regional Park. There are many bogs, and former bogs in the lower mainland. They all have a history of serious disruption from harvesting of peat (sphagnum moss) and conversion to farms. From the 1930s to mid 1950s, Derby Bog was heavily harvested for peat and used for cranberry production. The good news is that it is now protected and off limits to the public. A special permit is required to enter the area. Because sphagnum is very slow to grow, the leader pointed out that it will be a few millennia until the bog returns to its original state.



Because the Derby Bog was drained of water, it is dryer than it should be and is invaded by trees and shrubs that don't belong. There are, however, many typical bog plants such as Labrador Tea and Sundew insectivorous plants.

This is a strip where peat was harvested with large machines. It is slowly recovering. ➤



◀ It was a delight to see this nest and eggs of the Western Meadowlark. It was completely exposed on the surface of the walking path. The adult birds were nearby doing their broken wing display to distract predators.

One of the Sunday morning trips was to Fort Langley Historical Site. This is the site of the original Hudson's Bay trading post. Our tour guide was from the Kwantlen First Nation and he explained the traditional methods for harvesting and processing cedar bark. The bark fibers have been used for many things including hats, baskets, and clothing.



The bark is dried for several weeks and can then be cleaned and pounded to separate the fibers.



Skye

Five Kamloops Young Naturalists attended the 2023 BC Nature Conference and AGM, from May 4th to 7th in Langley. The conference was officially kicked off with a series of presentations on native bees, apex predators, and current watershed conservation initiatives. Under the grey skies of the Lower Fraser Valley, attendees got to explore nature where the city and country meet. This included short excursions to local attractions where lush layers of shrubs, forbs, and a plethora of birds were observed. The weekend was full of opportunities to connect with and learn about the natural world, as well as network with members of other nature clubs.



Thank you to Chantiers Jeunesse for supporting the opportunity for local young Naturalists in attending this conference through the provision of funds to cover costs associated with registration, accommodation, and travel.

Adam

The BC Nature AGM was an excellent opportunity to both expand my knowledge and make new connections. Presentations spanned through topics including effects of peregrine falcon establishment on migrating bird populations, adventures undertaken by coho salmon, native bees and their



domestic “honey cow” counterparts, and even psychedelic mushrooms. The field trips also took us to some fascinating locales, where I was lucky enough to encounter the rare Oregon forest snail and had an opportunity to expand my knowledge of the native coastal flora and fauna.

By far the highlight of the trip, however, was the connections I made with other passionate naturalists from across the province. Among the most serendipitous was my encounter with David Clements, who happens to be an expert in invasive knotweeds – the plant species I am studying for my master’s thesis. We spent a great deal of time exchanging ideas and speaking about our experiences surrounding its study. It is likely we are going to continue to work together through the course of my research. It was also excellent to connect with many others throughout the BC Nature network, both individuals I had met previously through zoom meetings, such as Stewart and Kephra from BC Nature, and new faces to add to my network such as Paulina and Fernando from Chilliwack Nature. Overall, the experience was rewarding and enlightening. I look forward to continuing efficacious ventures through my time with BC Nature and the Kamloops Naturalist Club.

MAY IS NOW

By Isaac Nelson

May is now. Green is once again the dominant shade and the air hums with birdsong. Red-naped sapsuckers have returned to the stands of trembling aspen, their ratta-tat..tat..tat drums bouncing off the tree trunks. The blue grouse hoot quietly from the hillsides and the ruffed grouse make deep thumping sounds with their wings from the lower thickets. The migrating sandhill cranes and white-crowned sparrows have mostly passed by, although many cranes and white-crowns spend the summer months on the higher plateaus surrounding Tk'emlups. Now, as the world gets leafier by the day and insect life comes out of dormancy, warblers and flycatchers are appearing along with vireos and hummingbirds. Near lakes and marshes at this time of year a bizarre noise comes from the sky that sounds kind of like a sheet of flexible metal (like a thin handsaw blade) whipping back and forth rapidly, and with a quality that sounds like sawing through wood. This is the display of the snipe, a long-billed shorebird type who easily goes undetected when among the reeds and mud. By the first days of June all the migratory birds will be back for the summer and before we know it they will start to disappear as the nights get colder.



photos by USFWS: top, Wilson's snipe by Tom Koerner, bottom, Sandhill Crane by Scott Hereford

EVERYONE EATS UPDATE

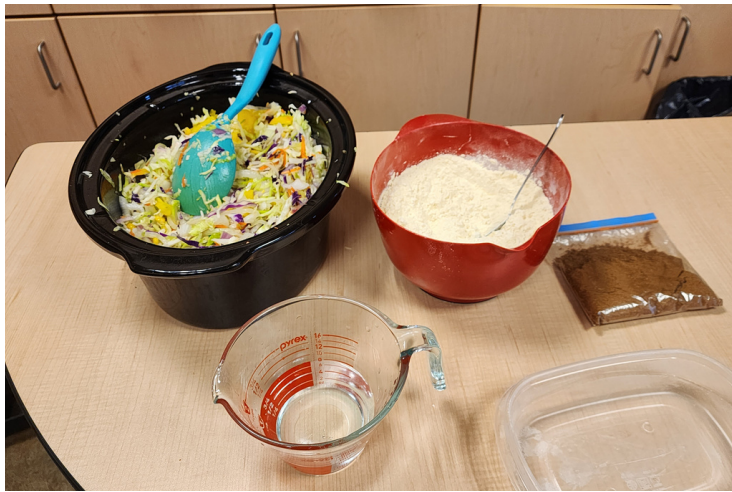
By Jesse Ritcey



Chef Roanaa Lee

The Everyone Eats program was busy in April, holding 8 classroom sessions at Sk'elep and Skeetchestn Community schools.

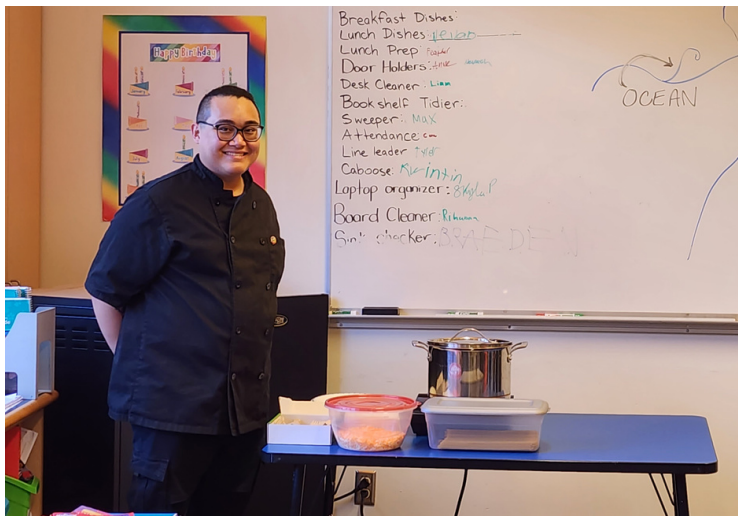
The program provides cultural learning about different food traditions from around the world. We worked with two chefs, Roanna Lee who prepared pakoras and talked about South Asian foods, and Chez Rodriguez who prepared Filipino spaghetti. The program also involves discussion and activities on anti-racism, led by Fauve Garson. Finally, there is a reflection activity where students are



Pakoras in Process

invited to draw answers to several questions, including what they learned and what surprised them.

Roanna's pakoras were different than what you might see in a restaurant. She mixes a lot of coleslaw and a wide varieties of vegetables like corn, onion, and green pepper. They get coated in a flour mix and are then fried. The recipe is versatile, she explained that her mom would use any left over vegetables from the fridge.



Chef Chez Rodriguez

The sauce for Filipino spaghetti was a real surprise for the students. Rather than being tomato based, it is made from bananas! 4 different kinds of cheese, including cream cheese, and melted in with the mashed bananas, along with other flavours, to make a rich, creamy sauce.

The classes were well received, providing a memorable experience and lots of good learning.



Filipino spaghetti in the making



Anti-racism lesson with Fauve Garson

EARTH DAY SPRING CLEAN UP

By Nancy Flood

On April 22 (Earth Day), sixteen dedicated KNC members came out for the annual spring clean up of the part of Tranquille Road adjacent to the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) - our contribution to Kamloops' Adopt-a-Road Program. As usual, the parking lot adjacent to the pond (where we hope our viewing platform will be one day) was a mess! We got quite a bit of stuff (a mattress, dumped lumber, etc.) along the road to Cooney Bay as well as in the ditches back toward the city, to the point where the WMA begins. Special thanks go to Margaret Patten, Cathy Hall-Patch and Susan Hayes, who picked up at the Mara Mountain trailhead and the unofficial "overlook" of Tranquille Pond further up Tranquille/Criss Creek Road; this was above and beyond our call of duty (but was really needed). I am happy to report that for the 3rd year running, the prize find was a toilet dumped—although this year it was a camping potty, rather than a household one. Members brought cans and bottles collected elsewhere and with those accumulated on the day, we contributed about \$25.00 to the viewing platform fund. Bonus!



**Thanks to all
who helped!**

