

September 2023



SAGE WHISPERS

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



Donkey friends watch out for each other; they cannot see behind so protect each other by standing this way. Learn more about donkeys and the Turtle Valley Refuge on Pg. 4!



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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!

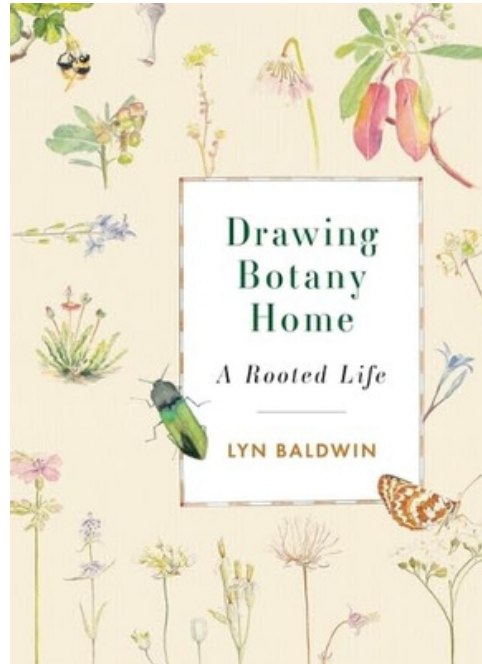
kamloopsnaturalistclub.com
or
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PROGRAMS

Meetings:

September 21. Heritage House at 7 pm.

Lyn Baldwin will be talking about her new book, *Drawing Botany Home: A Rooted Life*. A beautifully illustrated natural history memoir that reminds the reader that re-storying our relationship with the plants of home can be our first step in restoring the world.



October 19: Heritage House at 6pm (PLEASE NOTE EARLY START TIME) - Karyn Sutherland, Executive Director of Children's Circle Daycare, will present on nature-based early childhood education and engage KNC members on ways our group could support. Details to follow via KNC InfoLine/email.

November 17: Heritage house at 7pm - TRU Graduate Student Presentations (tentative)

Events:

Sept 20. 1:30pm - TRU International Students Interpretive Nature Hike up Tranquille River,

September 30, 9 am - Adopt a Road Clean up, Saturday.

September 23, 10.30 am to 3.30 pm - Restoration Workshop in Lac du Bois, Red Hill Area.

September 24. 9 am to 12 pm, Rivers Day Cleanup, McArthur Island Butterfly Garden.

NEW TNCC INTERN ALEX BRUVOLD

Alex is a new Kamloops Naturalist Club member working part-time with the KNC and part-time with Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative. Growing up in Kamloops, Alex knows the area well and was inspired to work in the field by the many conservation initiatives in the Kamloops area. Alex graduated from Thompson Rivers University in April 2022 with a major in Geography and Environmental Studies and a minor in Sociology by which she furthered her understanding of the physical and social environments around her. This led Alex to work in the environmental and public outreach fields. Alex has technical skills, field work experience, and experience in public communications, and she has received multiple academic awards during her time at Thompson Rivers University. In her free time Alex loves kayaking, going camping, and reading books. Alex hopes that being a part of the Kamloops Naturalist Club will help to further her career in conservation and climate action as well as allow her to discover new skills and connections for the future.

*Welcome
Alex!*



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TURTLE VALLEY DONKEY REFUGE FIELD TRIP AND PICNIC - JUNE 17, 2023

By Jean Crowe



Birdwatching in the meadow in the refuge

About 40 club members and visitors enjoyed a great day of birding, picnicking and learning about the donkeys at the Turtle Refuge on Saturday June 17th.

First, club members Bob & Sandra Ewart led us across the meadow, part of the refuge's 51 acres in the beautiful Turtle Valley. Sandra is also a Donkey Refuge volunteer. The temperature was a little warm but we gathered a good list of sightings, including a first for many with the Black-headed Grosbeak.

An impressive list of sightings: Black-headed Grosbeak, Common Yellowthroat, Marsh Wren, Willow Flycatcher, Song Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Say's Phoebe, Northern Flicker, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-winged Blackbird, Bald Eagle, Savannah Sparrow, Merlin, Vesper Sparrow, Cedar Waxwing

Yellow Warbler, Mountain Bluebird, four species of swallows - Tree, Violet-green, Barn and Northern Rough-winged. There was also a Barn Swallow and a Say's Phoebe nest in the barn. Our enjoyment was enhanced by the use of the Merlin app, which may have led us to the location of the grosbeak (I'm sure some will dispute this!).

After our picnic lunch and a short club meeting, we had a tour of the barns and met the donkeys - the highlight of the day.

Founders Rob Miller and Shirley Mainprize devote their time to caring for the senior, neglected, and abused donkeys. The Turtle Valley Society runs on a budget of up to \$500,000 per year and obtains their funding through grants, sponsors, admissions, and donations. The farm currently has 95 permanent resident donkeys, which includes



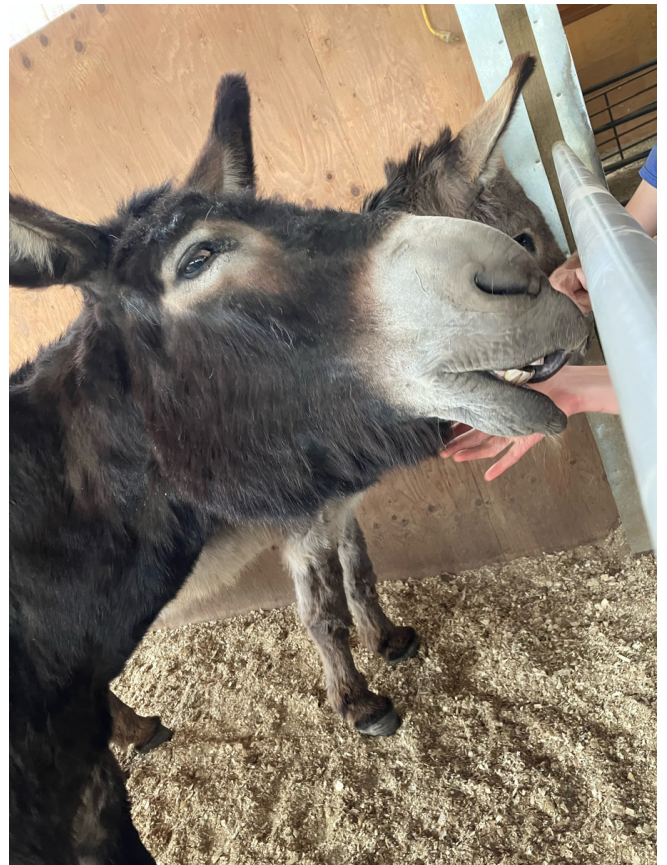
Donkeys in the barn at the donkey refuge

three different sizes of donkey: mammoth, standard and mini.

Having never been within 10 feet of a donkey before, I didn't know what to expect, and I was pleasantly surprised. Their faces and behaviour were adorable; they were so interested in what we were doing and in particular they all made note of where Rob was and who he was paying attention to!

In the photo above, you will notice a few things. The donkeys all have their butts touching the wall, which they do when they sleep since they can't see behind them. Notice the dark cross-shaped marking down their backs and across the shoulders (there is a legend about this). Another thing you notice is the steel-enforced beams and the repaired cracks on the wall, which is because they eat wood! It was fascinating to learn about the donkeys, and the entire experience was very peaceful (and the barns are spotless too).

Do you know donkeys make friends with one other donkey for life? - an essential requirement for their emotional well-being. Part of Rob's routine is to make sure all new donkeys make a good friend. Two of the ambassador donkeys available for sponsorship are best friends and cousins, Julio and Nova (right). I think I will sponsor them under my granddaughters' names!



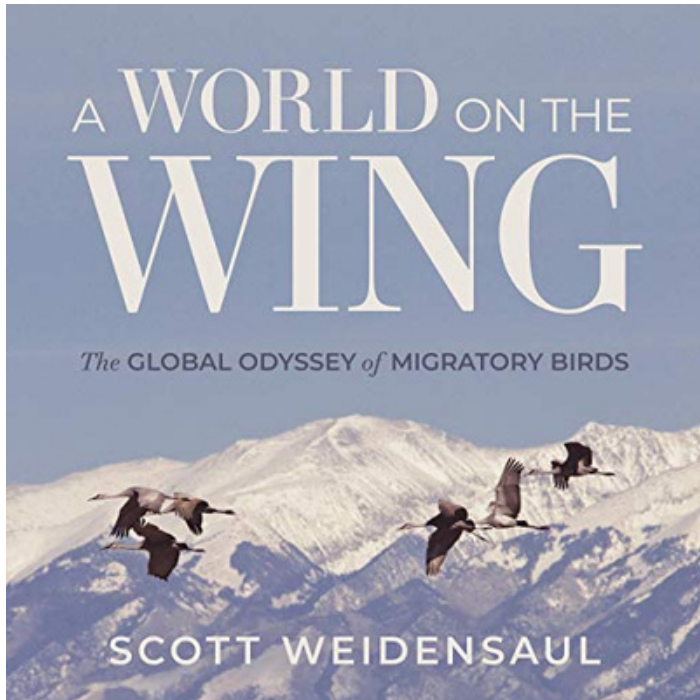
Maximo, the oldest donkey in the refuge



Nova and Julio

BOOK REVIEW: A WORLD ON THE WING

By Tom Dickinson



The Behaviour and Conservation of Migratory Birds
A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of
Migratory Birds,
2021, W.W. Norton & Co. New York, NY. 385 pp. Scott
Weidensaul

If you are interested in wonderful stories about the spectacular feats of migration that birds undertake in every region of the world, you will like this book. If, in addition, you enjoy great stories that highlight the commitment of people who carry out research on bird migration, you will be thoroughly entertained. Finally, if like me, it has been a while since you paid much attention to the research into bird migration, you will be blown away by how the advances in technology have opened some previously closed windows and have given us insight into how truly amazing the migratory behavior of many birds really is.

Scott Weidensaul's real message in his book is, however, that because so many migratory birds face uncertain futures, we need to be especially vigilant to conserve their habitats so their marvellous behaviour will last into the future. Whether it is due to the destruction of salt marshes along the coast of the Yellow Sea, or the effects of a changing climate on the

concentration of microscopic crustaceans, migratory birds face a changing world.

Weidensaul's book is organized into chapters that focus on one of two targets: some chapters aim at understanding particular species and the challenges they face during their annual journey (such as the loss of key habitats or being poisoned by pesticides). Others delve into stories of the researchers who, using the findings of new research, have changed what was ornithological dogma about how birds migrate (one chapter is even titled "We Used to Think"). As a lifelong researcher and conservationist, Weidensaul is careful to describe the evidence for the cases he reviews and provide citations that back up his points. His personal friendships with many of the volunteers and professionals involved has given him access to the stories behind the research and allows him to write in vivid prose that brings these people to life.

The book abounds with wonderful descriptions of the places he has assisted professional ornithologists with their exciting (and sometimes action-packed) research. These range from the sweltering heat of impenetrable scrub habitat on an island in the Bahamas in search of Kirtland Warblers to the shadow of the glacier-wrapped Alaska Range in search of tagged Swainson's Thrushes (and a near escape from a grizzly). Weidensaul does a very good job at explaining the research he is describing and making the science come to life. It is a joy to read, and hard to put down.

I encourage anyone interested in conservation to read this book. Although often the challenges that migratory species face seem monumental, the author has succeeded in instilling his readers with hope that at least some solutions exist if we work hard and if we care.

KNC LEADERS PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

By Joy Gothard



Day 1:

Julie, Chelsea, and I were the first to arrive for the Board's retreat Jul 31-Aug 2 in Wells Gray Provincial Park at the TRU Education and Research Centre (See video: [www.tru.ca/Wells Gray Education and Research Centre](http://www.tru.ca/Wells_Gray_Education_and_Research_Centre)). We decided to scout out the area around the Centre and the trail to the former schoolhouse, pulling Knapweed as we went. Upon our return, the trail diverged in the woods and we wandered up the hill and bushwhacked around to find our way back to our home base.

Tom Dickinson and Nancy Flood welcomed us and gave us the grand tour of this magnificent facility and we each chose a private room (rooms can accommodate up to 3 people). After lunch, Gary, Nancy, Chelsea, Julie, and Joy drove to the Helmcken Rim trail to walk the 4 km forest trail beside the Murtle River to views of the waterfall and the rainbow it creates. Gary Hunt pointed out interesting plants and

fungi along the way including "ghost pipes" and red belted brackets/conks. Meanwhile back at the Centre, Tom heated up the BBQ and we enjoyed a delicious pot luck supper of shish kabobs, salads, and apple cake. The evening was spent brainstorming for the three-day BC Nature Camp that KNC will be hosting in 2024 with the theme: "Land of Ice and Fire". Suggestions were made for field trip trails and leaders, speakers, caterers, and activities to explore at Wells Gray Park pre and post camp. Follow up actions were taken on.

Day 2: Jean, Julie, Joy, Chelsea, Gary and Nancy went up to Green Mountain lookout. This viewing platform is located on the site of a former forestry lookout with panoramic views of the Clearwater Valley. Interpretive signs identify most main features in the valley. Diane and Jesse joined us for the afternoon Strategic Planning session during which we discussed the membership survey and



drafted a vision, goals, and objectives for the next 3-5 years. Tom Dickinson facilitated intensive dialogue and several people took notes to support the flow charts created during discussions. We were finished by 4pm. Jesse arranged a walk to view nearby wetlands and gardens of neighbour and lichenologist, Trevor Goward. We were rewarded for our hard work with BBQ burgers, potluck salads, and fruit cobbler.

Day 3: After breakfast and a sweep and vacuum of the building, we took our leave. Julie, Chelsea, and Joy went to the Trophy Mountain meadows trailhead and hiked to the Shepherd's cabin. The meadows were well past their summer bloom and going to seed (about a month earlier than normal). A trail crew was beginning a month of work to replace bridges and boardwalks and fill in washed out/braided trail segments.

Summary: Focused hard work,
fun learning, and fabulous
company!

