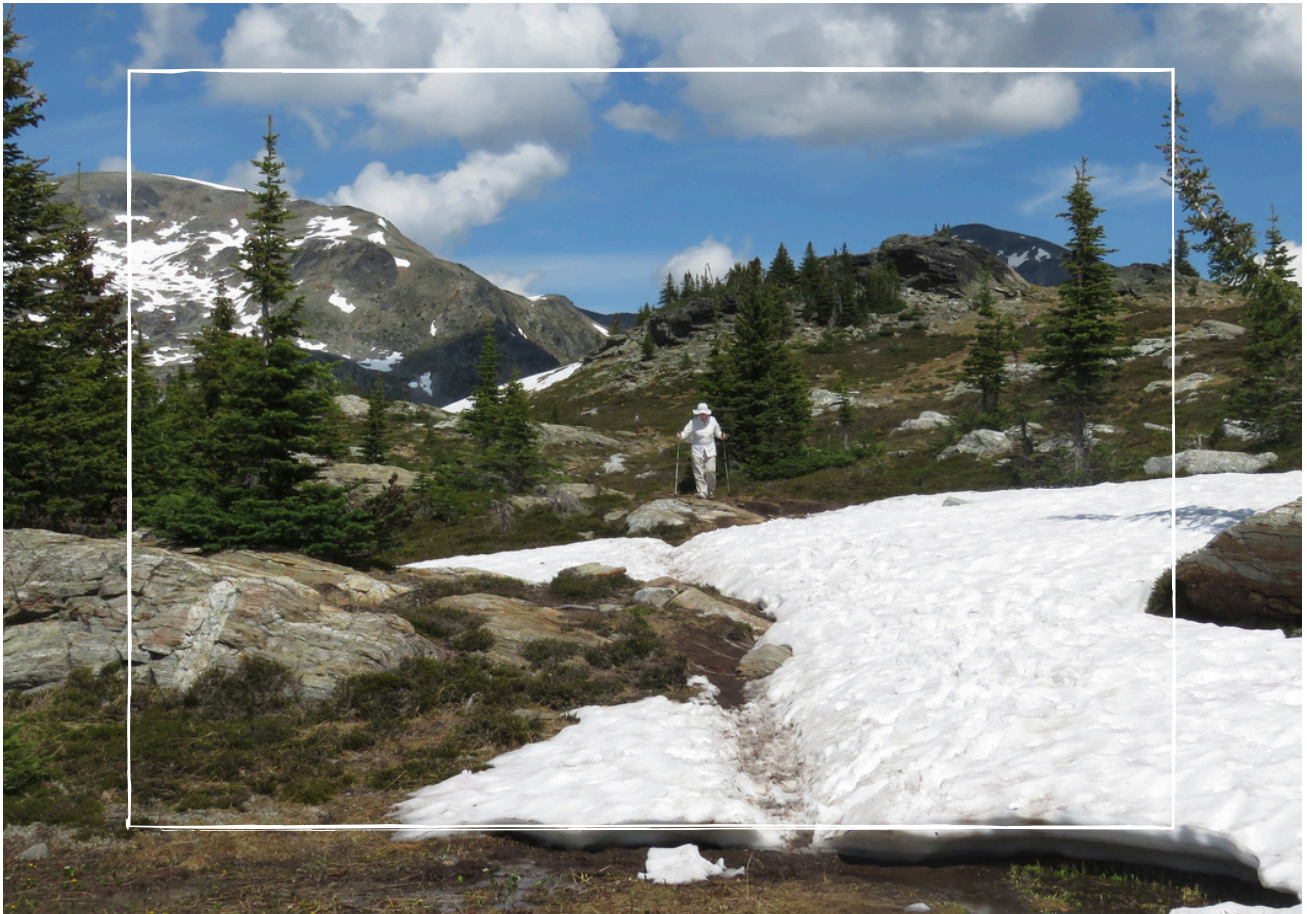


Fall 2024



SAGE WHISPERS

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



A photo by Jo Chipperfield of one of the lovely hikes during KNC's Wells Gray Camp this summer. Read more about this fabulous event on pages 3-6!



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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 quarterly.

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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
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Find us Online!

kamloopsnaturalistclub.com

or

facebook.com/kamloopsnaturalistclub

PROGRAMS

Meetings

November 21 TRU M.Sc. student talks (5-6 minutes each):

Sean Seal:

Forest Fires and Fish Food: Stream ecological responses to post-wildfire restoration in the Deadman watershed.

Mae Frank

Of Mice and Weasels: What are fishers preying on in the interior of BC?

Larisa Murdoch

Sisterhood of the Travelling Ewes: Assessing habitat selection in Bighorn Sheep

Selena Carl

Where are the Fish: Tracking Juvenile Chinook Salmon Throughout the Okanagan River System

Sylvie Lloyd

What's wildlife worth? An assessment of the conservation, education, and recreation values of the BC Wildlife Park

A view point along the Trophy Mountain Hike. Photo by Jo Chipperfield



KNC AND BC RIVERS DAY

By Nancy Flood

Nancy



On 22 September 2024, KNC celebrated World Rivers Day by coupling our traditional fall clean up of Tranquille Road with some restoration work on Tranquille Pond—where, under the guidance of agrologist Catherine Tarasoff, we have been experimenting with various ways to get rid of invasive Reed Canary Grass. We applied for and received a very welcome \$300 Rivers Day microgrant from the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC to support the day’s activities and were thus able to supply snacks as well as buy supplies relevant to completing both tasks.

We scour the sides of Tranquille Road from the Cinnamon Ridge Compost Facility to (and including) the parking lot at Tranquille Pond at least twice a year as part of the City’s Adopt a Road program. This time only 7 hardy KNC members came out, but despite this, we got the job done, collecting over 10 BIG bags of trash—including return-ables (which we returned, of course), metal items (which we recycled) and other interesting objects. BC Parks Rangers brought a big trailer and took way 4 full loads of yard waste that had been dumped in the parking lot. (We shake our heads every year about this, since the compost facility is so close!) In addition, the group of folks working on the restoration project added several bags of weeds to our take. A fine haul!

The 8 people involved in the restoration project lifted another one of the strips of barrier material that we had laid in previous years to try and kill (by blocking the sun and rain) reed canary grass. The grass did indeed seem to be dead and to ensure it didn’t just fill the space again, 276 native plants, including species like goldenrod, hemp dogbane, asters, and wild mint, were planted in the space. For this project we have been collaborating with BC Parks and the BC Conservation Foundation—and the long and wide strips of thick barrier material have been laid and/or removed in various years to examine how long it needs to be there, etc. In the strip adjacent to the one removed this year, the native plants that had been added were doing well—a good sign for being able to at least reduce the density of invasives and increase plant diversity in the area where we hope to build a viewing platform. Some invasive trees were also girdled, and native cottonwoods wrapped with wire to protect them from beavers. Six nesting boxes will be installed in the area to improve reproductive opportunities for swallows.

All in all, a great—and productive--event!

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BC NATURE CAMP 2024 WELLS GRAY PARK

PART 1. ORGANISER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Nancy Flood

Nancy

In July of 2024, the Kamloops Naturalist Club (KNC) held the first BC Nature (BCN) Camp since COVID. According to all reports—from organizers, leaders and participants—it was a great success. The KNC treasurer, glad to receive approximately \$3000 raised for the club by the event, was very happy as well! How did it happen and what did it take? Well, it all started almost a year earlier...

KNC had run a BCN camp in Wells Gray years ago and based on the success of that venture, we knew we wanted to hold one there again. In 2020, Thompson Rivers University (TRU) had opened a new, relatively plush building, at its Research and Education Centre adjacent to Wells Gray Park, 25 km north of Clearwater, BC*; when we discovered that KNC was qualified to use this facility for the camp, we were all in!



TRU Research and Education Centre. Photo by Jo Chipperfield

<https://inside.tru.ca/2020/11/16/new-centre-in-wells-gray-means-more-opportunities-for-students-faculty-researchers/>

At our first meeting, we discussed possible dates, debated the merits of each, and finally picked July 11-14, based on availability of the venue, as well as some aspects of the biology of the area: we were aiming for the fewest conflicts with other events, a low chance of wildfires or smoke cancelling the event, and the best possible balance between the numbers of mosquitoes out and alpine flowers in the nearby Trophy Meadows! A lot to consider!

Over the next few months, a core team of 5 volunteers (Chelsea Enslow, Nancy Flood, Joy Gothard, Gary Hunt and Julie Schooling) met about 5 times online or in person to iron out the details. Between meetings, we each specialized in various tasks (e.g., corresponding with potential, then realized camp leaders, food and accommodation planning, seeking sponsorships, keeping notes to track our progress, communicating with Betty Davison of BCN and then with registrants, and deciding on the program for each day, etc.) each of which had a deadline! We worked together to produce the “advertising” copy and the registration form, as well as on other tasks, including creating a budget that would ensure we could cover our expenses, and perhaps come out ahead at the end. Luckily, our sponsors (Costco, Fresh Street Market, Surplus Herby’s, and Rancho Vignola) were very generous in terms of cash, discounts or product donations and we were able to make a nice profit (split 50/50 with BC Nature)—while still giving our 21 “campers” good value. We had originally set the cap at 20 participants, given the number of available beds (which had to accommodate volunteers as well) and work that needed to be done. We were happy to take an extra though!

Sadly, Gary caught COVID in early July and was unable to attend the actual camp; we were thus especially glad that Jo Chipperfield stepped up to help with the many tasks involved in the daily running of events, starting with sorting “swag” into bags, and welcoming guests on Thursday afternoon. We were certainly kept busy, from cooking and setting out breakfast (eggs/toast/porridge, cereal, yoghurt, juice, coffee and tea) then cleaning up and setting out lunch materials: breads, sandwich

fillings, fruit, snacks, etc. Happily, we hired Susan, of the Hungry Hiker Café in Clearwater to cater the four dinners we provided. The food was excellent, diverse (something for all sorts of diets) and enjoyed by all. We then only had to do the dishes (luckily, there was a dishwasher), clean up and get ready for tomorrow! Each day, some of us drove to the day's locations, carpooling to reduce emissions, while others cleaned and organized for the next day, etc.

Patricia Spencer has done an excellent job of describing the program for each day as well as the talented leaders we managed to attract—so I'll let you read her account for that. Suffice it to say, the camp was a success: great food, good weather, wonderful scenery and events, dedicated volunteers, diverse and talented leaders and fun company. An excellent experience overall. What's next!?

PART 2: ATTENDEE'S PERSPECTIVE

By Patricia Spencer *Patricia*

The BC Nature Camp at Wells Gray Park (July 11-14th), hosted by our own Kamloops Naturalist Club, was a wonderful experience and great learning opportunity. Based at the TRU Education and Research Centre in the Clearwater Valley, the gathering provided fascinating field trips, interesting and engaging evening presentations, and opportunities to meet other naturalists from all over the province.

This was my first BC Nature Camp and I thoroughly enjoyed it. While I have visited Wells Gray Park many times over the years, the activities at the Nature Camp enriched and deepened my understanding of the park and its inhabitants.

The Camp was called "Land of Fire and Ice" and it began with an evening presentation by Dr. Cathie Hickson on the Geology & Volcanoes of Wells Gray Park. This was an introduction to the geology of the park, and the next day Cathie led a field trip to various places within the park, explaining some of the geological history at each location. Wells Gray Park has a long history of volcanic eruptions and periods of glaciation. In fact, sometimes volcanoes would erupt underneath the glaciers! We learned about "pillow lava" and "tuyas." A trip up to the Green Mountain viewing tower provided a view of the large expanse of the park, and Cathie had us imagine what it would have been like when glaciers covered most of the park, except for a few peaks such as Trophy Mountain. A wildfire burned a large portion of the park in 1926, but it has grown back well.



Above: Camp attendees hike about to learn about geology with Dr. Cathie Hickson. Photos by Jo Chipperfield

Of course, we also visited some of the park's waterfalls, including Helmcken Falls. Overall, it was a fascinating, if not a bit mind-boggling, day.

That evening Bevan Ernst gave a presentation titled "Southern Mountain Caribou Survival in Wells Gray Park." Bevan has been conducting research for the BC Caribou Recovery Program. Mountain Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) populations have been experiencing significant declines in the last 25 years. However, the caribou populations in Wells Gray Park seem to be fairly stable.

On Saturday we had the opportunity to explore the Trophy Flower Meadows, which are well-known for their beautiful alpine wildflowers. At the beginning of the trail, botanist Dr. Lyn Baldwin gave an engaging and animated talk about "flower sex." That got everyone's attention! I can still remember looking at a bog orchid and trying to see the various parts of the flower. When we arrived at the flower meadows, participants had 2 options. We could do a field journaling workshop with Lyn or we could hike further up to Sheila Lake area with Chelsea Enslow.

That evening we visited Trevor Goward's property, Edgewood Blue, which is located near the TRU Centre. Trevor is a lichenologist, and he co-authored the book *Nature Wells Gray* with Cathie Hickson (1989). Trevor gave us a tour of his property, and he discussed his partnership with The Land Conservancy. The goal is to provide environmental education opportunities for youth and other groups. Edgewood Blue has a rich diversity of plant species and vibrant wetlands, and is full of life, including bugs. Trevor had a challenge for us. In order to take effective action to address Climate Change and biodiversity loss, he would like BC Nature to advocate for reinstating Park Naturalists in BC Parks.

In addition to the presentations and field trips, each morning we had the opportunity to go out birdwatching along the Clearwater Road with Dr. Tom Dickinson. And there were lots of birds, including American Redstarts and a Magnolia Warbler (a first for me).

On Sunday morning there was another hike to the Flatiron area, as well as a visit to Spahats Falls, where black swifts (endangered) nest on the cliff edge close to or behind the waterfall.

I would like to extend a big THANK YOU to the organising committee for doing such a great job in hosting the camp. We participants had a wonderful time and everything ran smoothly. And did I mention that the food was fantastic? I'm looking forward to the next Camp.



Glacier Lily



Moss Campion



Spahats Falls

A REVIEW OF TWO BOOKS ABOUT STROLLING THROUGH THE TREES

By Diane McKelvey *Diane*

This is a review of two books with very similar names, which could lead one to expect that they would have much in common. However, although both these authors convey a deep and lively appreciation of trees, their writing style and approach to the subject could not be more different. And although neither of these books is suitable for a person who is looking for a purely scientific description of the forests, both were very entertaining and conveyed the delight of walking in a forest.

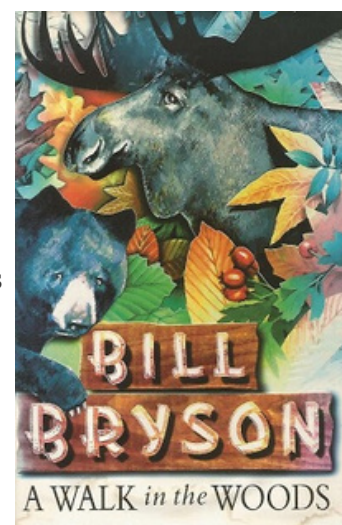
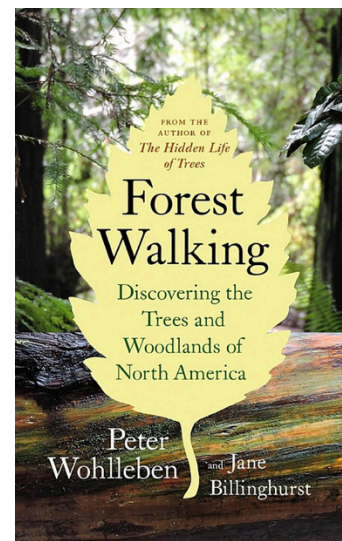
Forest Walking is written by Peter Wohlleben, who worked as a professional forester for 23 years, but left his position to found a forest academy that advocates for environmentally responsible forest management. His 2016 best-seller, *The Hidden Life of Trees*, is passionate in its advocacy for undisturbed forests and has been embraced by the environmental movement for its discussion of the complexity of the interactions between trees, fungi, insects, and other forest components. However, like Suzanne Simard's *Finding the Mother Tree*, Wohlleben's book has been criticized by some professional foresters for its anthropomorphic interpretation of some recent scientific studies on trees.

In his more recent (and less controversial) book, *Forest Walking*, Wohlleben reveals that he is a master of the art of looking at small things, pointing out details that people are usually too hurried or too distracted to notice. As in *The Secret Life of Trees*, he focuses on the web of interactions between trees and their environment, from fungi and tiny insects to wind, sun and rain. He reveals how all our senses—taste, smell, hearing, sight and touch—can be used to immerse the careful observer in the complex forest ecosystem. This makes for an entertaining read; he notes, for example, that if you eat a raw pill bug, you can tell immediately

that they are related to shrimp (in fact, he recommends sauteed pill bugs with a little added oil and salt). His style is informal, even folksy, and he speaks with the voice of a teacher sharing knowledge. This is not just for interested adults: there is much in this book that would be suitable for a child exploring nature (although perhaps not the paragraph about eating pill bugs). He shares many tips on forest travel, garnered from long experience; for example when walking through a dense growth of blackberry bushes, one should “walk like a heron” (he describes this method in detail). As a person who loves trees but doesn't know a lot of tree science, I found this book entertaining, enlightening, and fun to read.

A Walk in the Woods is written by Bill Bryson, a very successful American-British author who has written books on travel, science, and the history of the English language. *A Walk in the Woods* is a personal narrative of his summer backpacking the Appalachian trail in the Eastern United States, along with his feckless companion Stephen. (If you haven't read the book but this sounds familiar, you may have seen the 2015 film adaptation starring Robert Redford and Nick Nolte.)

I loved this book: with humour and insight he perfectly captures the joy, challenges, and suffering of hiking a long distance trail. He is particularly good at pointing out the contrast between the beauty and harmony of the natural world and the ugliness that modern civilization creates. Bryson has a critical eye and doesn't suffer foolishness gladly—although never mean-spirited, his writing is so sardonic that even his description of filling out a form to obtain a wilderness permit is laugh-out-loud funny: “You have to complete a lengthy form detailing where you plan to camp each night, which is a little ridiculous because you haven't seen the terrain and don't know what kind of mileage you might achieve. Appended to the form were several pages of regulations and warnings of severe fines and banishment for doing, well,



pretty much anything.” Bryson is sharp but never mean, and unlike many authors of books and blogs on hiking trails, he doesn’t clutter his writing with self absorbed material on his personal dramas and emotional state. His underlying theme is his deep love for the forests that he encounters along the trail, and he is unsparing in his criticism of how poorly they have been managed, even in the national parks. I’ll leave the final word to him: he describes the forests as “not just very fine or splendid, but perfect, unimprovable”. I totally agree.

URBAN TREES

By Nancy Flood

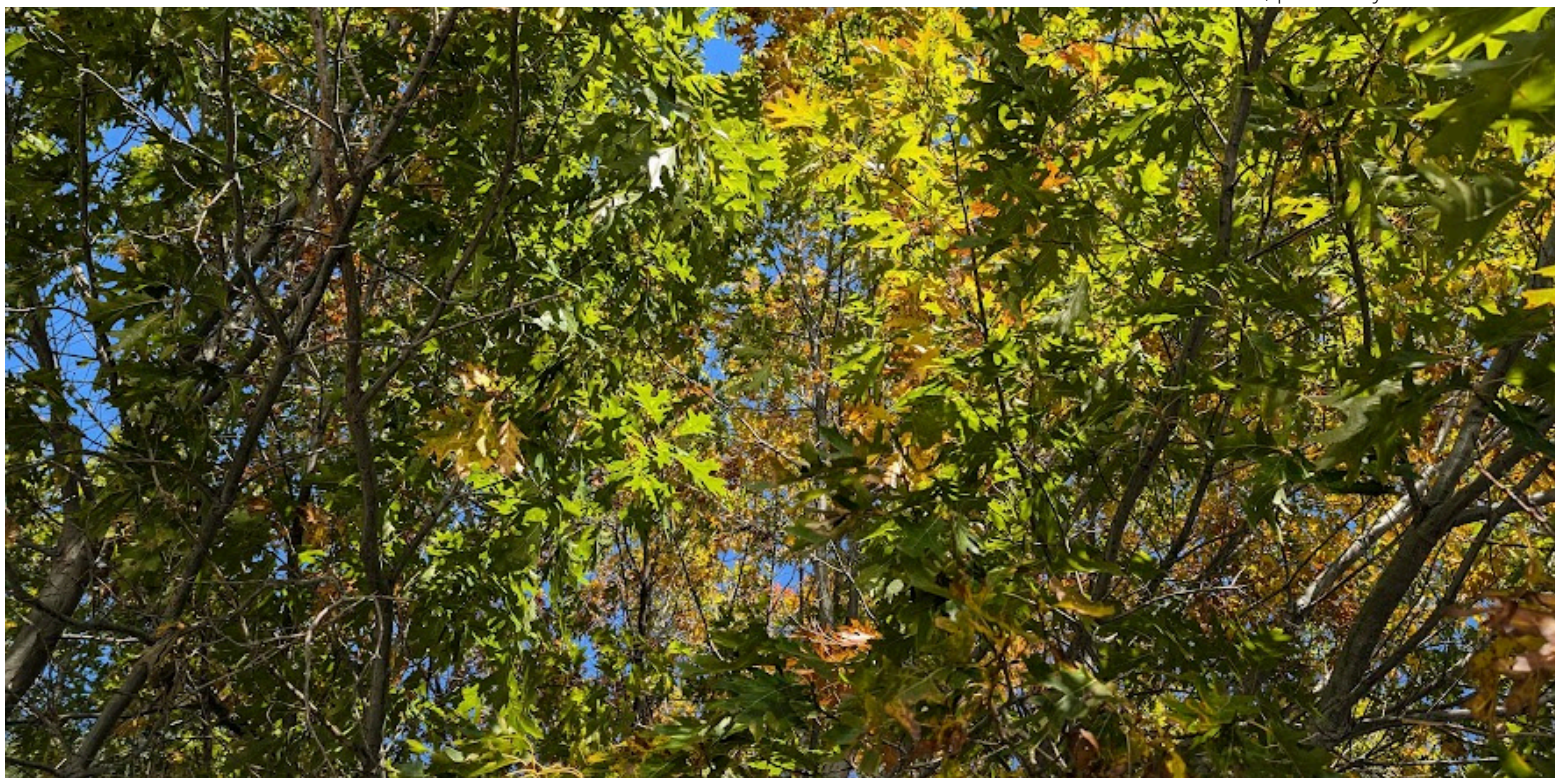
Nancy

How do you feel about the trees you can see from your house or apartment? On a Sunday in June 2023, neighbours living near a 6-acre lot in Salmon Arm were shocked to see more than 100 trees being felled or already on the ground. They reported it and in response, the city charged the property owner with cutting down trees without a permit—specifically for violating the city’s Tree Removal and Protection Bylaw 2305. The case came to court in May of this year and, after pleading guilty, the owner was charged \$55,000!

It wouldn’t happen in Kamloops. Although we do have a bylaw (50-1) “For the Management and Protection of Trees Within the City” (1), it has many exemptions—including allowing any tree to be cut on privately owned lots that are zoned residential and less than 2 ha in size—and allowing trees < 5m in height and < 10 cm in diameter to be cut on any private lands. And developers pretty much have carte blanche on lands “undergoing development.” This is, of course why there are many fewer trees in new Kamloops’ developments as opposed to more established ones (2). While some BC communities, like Salmon Arm, have stringent tree protection bylaws, many don’t (3).

And yet studies on the many values of urban trees abound. They have been shown to improve the mental and physical health of a city’s citizens (4). They increase the water-holding capacity of soil (e.g., witness the effects of atmospheric rivers in burned over areas), reduce emissions, sequester carbon, lower the effects of heat, and perform many other functions. We even know, from the work of our own Julie Schooling, that trees can help manage rainwater in urban settings (5). Trees provide shelter and food for insects, including, of course, the caterpillars that become butterflies and moths. They provide nesting sites, food, and places to hide from predators for the birds we love to watch.

A Rivers Trail Oak from below, photos by Chelsea Enslow



Many cities have programs that aim to increase their urban canopy. Vancouver, for example, has a goal of increasing its canopy cover from the current level of 23% to 30% by 2050. Kamloops currently has an urban canopy cover of approximately 15%—up from 12% in 2016 and has a goal of achieving 20% in the future. The city’s annual tree coupons are part of the program to get us there (6).

In addition to thinking about the average canopy cover of a city, it’s also important to think about the distribution of those trees. Do all citizens have trees near where they live? That’s not true in many cities: it has been shown that lower income or racialized neighbourhoods sometimes have lower levels of canopy cover. Nature Canada suggests that the following might be best practice: “the 3-30-300 rule...states that everyone should be able to see at least three trees from their home, that all neighbourhoods should have at least a 30% tree canopy, and that all residents should have a greenspace of at least one hectare within 300 metres of where they live” (7). Something to think about! How does it relate to where you live?

1. <https://www.kamloops.ca/public-safety/community-services/common-bylaws>
2. <https://www.kamloops.ca/sites/default/files/docs/our-community/urbanforestmanagementplan.pdf>
3. <https://www.raincoast.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/tree-protection-bylaws-in-bc-2021.pdf>
4. Urban Trees and Human Health: A Scoping Review. Wolf et al 2020 <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/12/4371>
5. https://arcabc.ca/islandora/object/tru%3A9?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=a6aa6d051ee7e5ff5340&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=6&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=25
6. <https://cfjctoday.com/2024/04/03/city-of-kamloops-tree-coupon-program-returns-aims-to-increase-local-tree-canopy/>
7. <https://naturecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Nature-Canada-Report-Tree-Equity.pdf>

Trees along Brocklehurst Secondary School



Oak on Lilac Street



Knox St. Ponderosa Pine Contends with power-line



Cottonwood on Rivers Trail

