

Summer 2025



# SAGE WHISPERS

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

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KNC Members on a picnic walk, by Barb Klie (see pg. 7)



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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 both the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists and Nature Canada.

**Sage Whispers** is published quarterly.  
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P.O.Box 625, Kamloops, BC  
V2C 5L7

### 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

### Field Trips, Events & Meetings

The Greenstone Mountain field trip was our last planned event for summer. Please check the info line for other goings on over summer.

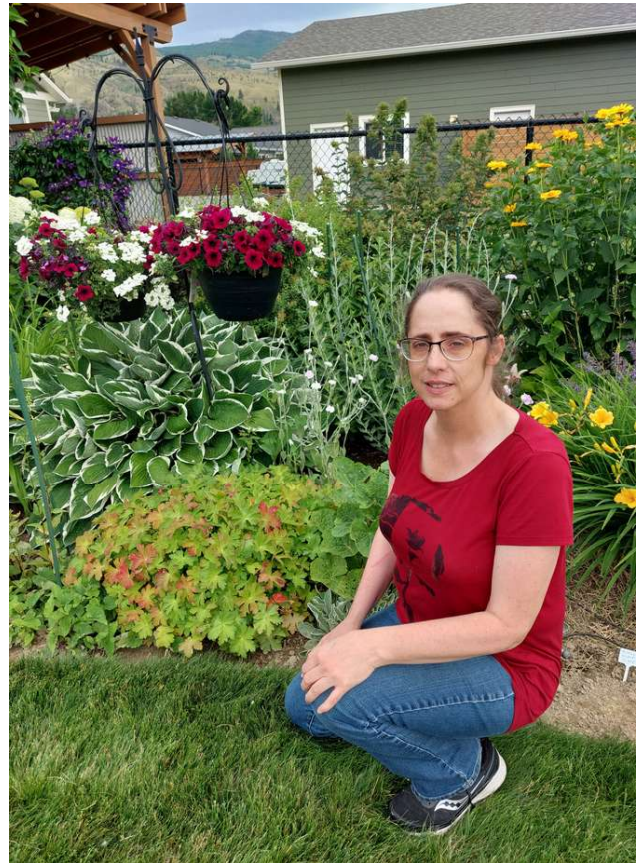
Meetings are also over for the summer; see you in September!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The Kamloops Naturalist Club is welcoming the following new members for Summer 2025: William and Pierrette Beaton, Judy Sturm, and Connor Rogers. Please send them warm welcome!

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER!

Amanda Bond is a returning KNC member and new board member who has a B.Sc. in Ecology and Environmental Biology from TRU. She has worked on many environmental education programs such as Bear Aware, and in conjunction with Ecorational Technologies, she set up the Integrated Pest Management program for the City of Kamloops. Amanda was also a Research Associate at TRU focusing on plant studies and Climate Change - Plant Watch. In addition, she has been involved in agriculture research such as pest



management on organic farms. At this time, she is working as a Certified Education Assistant and has been part of the Master Gardeners organization since 2008.

# KNC MEMBERS RECOGNIZED AT THE ANNUAL BC NATURE CONFERENCE!

By Diane McKelvey

*Diane*

KNC members will likely recall that in 2024, club members received 2 BC Nature Awards: Winnifred Fischer got a BC Nature Club Service Award, and Mandy Ross received the Daphne Solecki Award. This year, at the 2025 Annual Meeting in Merritt, BC Nature recognized Gary Hunt, who received a BC Nature Regional Award. Gary, a retired TRU professor, has been a member of the KNC for over 30 years; he has served on the BC Nature board for 7 years and been Coordinator for the Thompson/Okanagan/Shuswap (TOS) region for 5 of these. In that role, he holds regular meetings of the 10 TOS region clubs and is their liaison with BC Nature—passing along info and answering questions. Here at home, he has led field trips, helped organize the summer camp in Wells Grey in 2024, assisted with the Club newsletter, and is currently serving on the KNC Executive. For a full writeup and photo, see the BC Nature Summer 2025 magazine at

<https://bcnature.org/bc-nature-summer-magazine-2025-2/>

At the 2025 conference, BC Nature also recognized our KNC Program Manager, Jesse Ritcey, as a Naturalist Mentor. In addition to keeping KNC finances and grant applications in order, Jesse has undertaken a variety of teaching opportunities, including work with BC Immigrant Services, BC Parks junior rangers, NatureKids, and Next Generation Naturalists as well as the high school and university students that KNC hires each summer to support club activities. For more details, see

<https://bcnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-Spring-for-e-version.pdf>

## ABERDEEN NEIGHBOURHOOD NATURE WALK

By Joy Gothard and Sue Cane

*Joy & Sue*

Eight KNC members and 8 guests and Aberdeen residents met leaders Joy Gothard and Sue Cane across from the Skyline Nature Park trailhead at 2659 Bentall Drive for an Aberdeen neighbourhood nature walk.

After the signing of waivers for non-members and a welcome, we began on the Bunchgrass Trail on the east side of Bentall Drive. This trail took us downhill and Kamloops Naturalist Club Summer 2025



## EXECUTIVE & OFFICERS

### President

Nancy Flood

### Vice President

Diane McKelvey

### Past President

Julie Schooling

### Secretary

Jean Crowe

### BC Nature Director

Gary Hunt

### Treasurer

Chelsea Enslow

### Directors

Justine Densmore

-McCulloch

Pam Willis

### Program Manager for Special Projects

Jesse Ritcey

### Membership

Winnifred Fischer

### Newsletter

Chelsea Enslow

Nancy Flood

Julie Schooling

### Field Trips

Tom Dickinson

Bob Needham

### Communications

Margaret Graham

Winnifred Fischer

### Bluebird Co-ordinator

Susan Weilandt

### Webmaster

Doug Smith with Gary Hunt

through a lot of invasive spotted knapweed. We soon began to see grasslands with pink wild geraniums and brilliant yellow arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*) in bloom. There is an example of an engineered/reshaped hillside with topsoil removed. Several areas of erosion were juxtaposed against the natural grassland meadow of Highlands Park as we passed through a gully of wild rose and saskatoon into a grassland area.



In this area, we identified lupines, meadow death camas (*Zigadenus venenosus*), old man's whiskers (*Geum triflorum*), and the early shoots of the mariposa lily, which will bloom in its purple/mauve splendor in June. We stopped in front of a wildflower interpretive sign for which KNC members had supplied photos, which are now very faded. We shared how to use iNaturalist, or your iPhone, to identify flowers, wildlife and birds. Western Meadowlark, Chipping Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Vesper Sparrow, House Finch, American Robin and Violet-green Swallows were identified using the Merlin app, and Boisduval's blue butterflies (*Icaricia icarioides blackmorei*) fluttered over the field.

There were views of the North Shore. A trail traversed the meadow to two other trailheads off Bentall (unmarked trailhead) and Aberdeen Drive at Laurier Drive. There was a small aspen grove on the east side of the meadow. We returned to our start on a loop trail passing abundant sagebrush and an example of how the city is working to slow trail erosion. Crossing Bentall Drive, at the Skyline Park Trailhead sign/map, we continued on Bunchgrass Trail. We



left the late spring blooms of the grasslands and entered a different ecosystem containing Douglas-fir with an understory of pine grass and early spring blossoms of saskatoon. Before turning onto switchbacks, Sue shared a story about the naming of Causeway Trail.

At this point, we did not follow Bunchgrass Trail to the top of Pacific Way, where the ecosystem changes again to open grassland punctuated with aspen groves and wild roses. After another short stop to examine features of Douglas-fir bark and cones, we climbed gently up the switchback flanked by small clusters and larger areas of shooting stars in bloom. Above the trees, views of Kenna Cartwright, Lac du Bois, the North Thompson River, and Mts. Peter and Paul could be seen. As we descended to our start, we observed a wider view of the changing landscape - to one of development of residential lots, where topsoil that could retain the hillside moisture had been stockpiled.



## JUNIPER RIDGE OUTING - FIELD TRIP REPORT

By Tom Dickinson  
Photos and contribution  
by Jean Crowe

*Tom & Jean*

On Saturday June 10th, about twenty people, including 11 non-club members, met at the junction of Rosehill Road and Scott Road for an outing to the property above Juniper Ridge recently acquired by the BC Parks Foundation.

Tom Dickinson acted as the trip leader and provided background about the property. The



517-acre property consists of old pastures and hayfields, with patches of undeveloped grassland at the interface of Douglas-fir forest. The area is aptly named because it contains a large number of

old Rocky Mountain junipers on the north side, which borders the Juniper Ridge neighbourhood.

The weather was lovely, with temperatures in the mid-teens and a cloudless sky. The goal was to get to know more about the natural history of the area. Silky lupine blanketed many of the fields, and there were patches of various native shrubs, including rabbitbrush, pasture sage, snowberry, wax currant, and lots of blanket flower. We had sightings of Red-tailed and Swainson's hawks; Mountain Bluebirds and Tree Swallows; Western Meadowlarks; Vesper, Savannah, and Clay-coloured sparrows in the grass; and Warbling Vireos and Western Tanagers in the aspen stands. In places where past disturbance had been extensive, noxious weeds, especially spotted knapweed, were abundant.

**How the property should be managed was discussed, with a consensus reached that KNC should be part of the ongoing work!**



# KNC SPRING PICNIC

By Diane McKelvey

*Diane*

The Kamloops Naturalist Club's annual June picnic was held on June 19, with 27 people in attendance. After meeting at the Knutsford Community Hall, we carpooled for a short distance down Highway 5A to Separation Road. Our destination was a newly protected Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) grassland along that road—the only one of several recently acquired properties that will be open to the public. And we were the first public visitors! Our gracious and informative host was Danielle Cross, Interior Program Director for the NCC. Danielle led us on a short walk through the grasslands, where we observed birds (including a Northern Harrier, Western Meadowlarks, and Vesper and Savannah Sparrows), a native bumblebee, both native and invasive grass species, and something in the distance that looked a lot like a black bear (but wasn't). Danielle told us about the history of the site and the work done locally by the NCC to protect this and other grassland areas. We had our supper in the grassland where we had parked our cars—all in all, it was a lovely evening. For more information on the NCC, including opportunities to donate to their efforts, see [www.natureconservancy.ca](http://www.natureconservancy.ca)



Danielle tells members about the property. Photo by Mandy Ross



A brave KNC member facilitates close observation of a native bumblebee. Photo by Barb Klie



Picnic in the Grasslands! Photo by Becky Monroe

# A SHORT WALK IN THE VALLEYVIEW SILT CLIFFS

By Alan Vyse

*Alan*

A few weeks ago, CBC was asking listeners to name their favourite vacation spots in Canada, and this request started me thinking about my own favourite places. While I immediately conjured up images of the seaside beach where I learned to swim and my grandparent's travel trailer parked in a farmer's field beside a stream, those images are yellowed with age. I have much fresher images of walking in the grasslands of Lac du Bois and, in winter, skiing at Stake Lake. And even closer, right outside my door, I can walk into the silt cliffs. There I can be sure that the rumble of the nearby Trans Canada highway and the CPR railway will fade and the annoying sounds of my neighbour's whipper snipper can be left behind.

So, when the club neighbourhood walks were proposed, I thought I should share my favourite local place. After all, the species in the club's logo can all be found in the silt cliffs. This led to ten members of the club taking a short walk in the

Valleyview silt cliffs on the last Sunday in April. We parked in Sunset Lane under a brilliant blue sky and a cooling breeze. The gardens in Valleyview were in full bloom with the crab apples blazing in pinks and purples. After I gave a short introduction to the silt cliffs and their land status, we walked across Valleyview Drive and up the new gravel road that leads to the City's truly ugly emergency water reservoir. Walking

past the reservoir, we headed up the old track that leads steeply upwards to the new houses at the eastern end of Juniper Ridge subdivision, and there, we examined the aspen and river birches in flower and talked about the formation of the silt cliffs.

These imposing cliffs were formed about 10,000 years ago at the end of the most recent ice age. Enormous amounts of sediment were released by melting glaciers and settled in a lake dammed by ice at the junction of the Thompson Rivers. The lake stretched east to Chase and must have been milky white, full of silt and clay that settled to the floor of the lake. Each year, over a period of no more than 100 years, the spring melt sent charges of sediment into the lake and added another layer of silt and clay to the bottom. After a century of melt events, the ice dam broke, and the lake water was sent westwards to the sea; only the old lakebed was left behind, carved into steep gulleys by the sudden flow of water.



Surface of the old lake bed carved into gulleys when the ice dam collapsed and the water flowed west in a catastrophic surge



The annual layers of silt and clay laid down over 100 years

After that catastrophic release of water, grasses and herbaceous plants colonized the remaining sediment, and then time stopped for millennia. Our climate is so dry that very little erosion has taken place, and even now, it is possible to stand above the cliffs and imagine the ancient lake and surrounding landscape. But that isn't the only catastrophic event that has influenced the cliffs. When Mount Mazama, in the Cascade Range of Oregon, erupted 7,700 years ago, billions of tons of ash were blown into the atmosphere. Volcanic ash was dispersed over the Pacific Northwest, Alberta and in southern BC as far north as Kamloops. Distinctive grey ash layers are visible 1 to 2 metres below the surface in several places around town, including the cut bank of Sunset gully.

There have been many other more minor disturbances over the years, including grazing cows and sheep, trail building, logging, young men on motor bikes and fires. Twenty years ago, the mountain pine beetle epidemic killed many large ponderosa pine trees. Then, in the early summer of 2021, lightning struck a dead pine above the Sunset gully, and fire spread downhill on evening winds to the edge of Valleyview Road, burning grass, sagebrush and small trees. On our hike, we could see the effects of the fire up close because only the

west side of the Sunset gully burned leaving an excellent comparison: grey sage on one side and green grass on the other. The grasses have recovered quickly in most places, but it will take decades before the sagebrush recovers. Fortunately, the mariposa lilies have been blooming in profusion in the fire area, perhaps stimulated by the release of nutrients in the fire ash.

On the walk, I explained that our club has long had an interest in protecting the silt

cliffs as a place to contemplate and explore nature. Nearly 40 years ago, the Naturalist Club members of the day decided that they should try to persuade our city to protect the silt cliffs. The city was expanding, and the club was concerned that building might take place. We did raise awareness, but the real saviour was that early attempts to build on the silt cliffs had ended in disaster. Foundations had cracked, and houses and trailers had teetered on the edge. And then there was the famous example of the Valleyview swimming pool that leaked when first filled and never saw swimmers. The City's response was to place building restrictions on the land, which in turn dampened any desire to invest in developments. In time, the City recognized the natural values and established the Valleyview Nature Park. But the park only covers a small proportion of the silt cliffs habitat within the City. Much remains to protect.

**Could we exert pressure to move the park eastward to include Sunset gully? That would be an achievement to cherish!**