



THE HARLEQUIN

VERMILION FORKS FIELD NATURALISTS

POST OFFICE BOX 2074

Princeton, BC V0X 1W0

Newsletter #67

October to January 2015

Editor June Hope 295-3524

Vermilion Forks Field Naturalist -

President's Report – Jean Turner

Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists Club continues to be active. Credit our executive and members for the contributions and volunteer work which enables the enjoyment and study we gain..

Evening programs have been well attended. In January Doug Rebagliati took us on a self-guided tour of South India, then we travelled with John Henry and Mary Masiel in Croatia. Jeff and Sue Turner presented their bear film "Wild Canada". There was a talk on birds given by Tanya Luszvz and this was followed by Lynn Pollard's "Pond Study". Jessica Hobden from the South Okanagan Similkameen Invasive Plant Society (www.oasis.ca) was very informative and following her talk there was a field trip to the Turner property to demonstrate beetles and fleas at work in the management of problem plants. The final speaker for the spring session was Lauren MacFarland, her subject "The Lewis Woodpecker".

Last seasons field trips were to Fisherman's Cove, Baldy Mountain, Stemwinder Mountain, Lower Allenby, Swan Lake, China Ridge Base. Wolfe Lake, Separation Lakes, Meadow Lark Festival, (which included Swan Lake and Vermilion Bluffs), Allison Lake, Dalby Meadows, Turner property, butterfly expedition with Dennis St. John, Hole in the Wall, China Creek Road and Jim Kelly Mountain.

January 4th was the annual "Christmas" bird count organized by Madelon Schouten, her dedication is well known and appreciated. Sadly she has indicated this is her final year of undertaking this count and the Lahaie family have volunteered to take over. Cathy Lahaie's report can be found in Newsletter #65. There were 1971 birds in 54 species, 13 people in the field and two feeder watchers.

Sue Elwell will give a separate report of the hummingbird banding. BC Nature published her article "Jewels & Bling" in the BC Nature magazine Summer 2014.

Dennis St. John, the well known lepidopterist and lecturer is relocating from the Okanagan area to Chilliwack. He searched for and, I believe found, the rare "Senora Skipper" butterfly in the area.

A benefit dance, 15th February, to raise funds for the Rotary Riverside Community kitchen was organized by Joan Kelly. Evidently a good time was had amongst the fairy lights even though the attendance was low. Baillie Birdathon participants Trish Reid and Amanda Lahaie raised \$169.50 for the club. Dick Cannings survey was completed by Joan Kelly.

Earth Day, 22 April, focused on the Cormack Marsh Restoration area. Six groups – members, school children and girl guides participated in clean up and bird spotting. Kelley Cook has applied for a grant for this project.

The club was allocated 300 white bark pine seeds, collected from Blackwell Peak, Manning Park, under the guidance of biologist Randy Moody the previous September 19th on Conservation Day. However despite several delivery dates the seeds have not arrived.

The Pot Luck thank you supper for the fire suppression group arranged for 8th of July had to be cancelled at the last minute because of a call out. The club has appreciated the valued services of this club. BC Nature asked VFFN to host the 2015 Fall Annual General meeting, an extra ordinary general meeting was called for 15th of July to discuss this. 13 members attended and it was unanimously agreed not to pursue this.

Trish Reid a long time member of our executive and BC Nature director now lives in the Vernon area and has tendered her resignation. Trish is a dedicated naturalist; a club founding member. She has always been ready to share her expertise. As birding was her passion she helped with the Meadow Lark Festival and led walks particularly in her home area of Allison Lake. We wish her well in her new home.

This is the President's report from 1st January 2014 to 31st August 2014. – Jean Turner

Review for Fall by June Hope

As it is time for fall garden cleanup I would remind everyone to reread Lisa Scott's article on disposing of invasive plants in Newsletter #66. The knapweed problem is virtually gone in our area thanks to Lisa's work with the beetles, now if we could only find something to get rid of the burdock other than hacking it down and gathering all those prickly burrs!!!!!!

The pictures below are Parasol mushrooms, they are safe to eat when you know what to look for, they can get as big as a dinner plate and have a full fleshy mushroom flavour, they come up like buttons and grow in clumps. Call me if you think you have some, I can give a positive ID. Or you can Google

<http://mushroom-collecting.com/mushroomparasol.html>

Or <http://www.mushroomdiary.co.uk/2010/08/parasol-mushrooms/>



Hummingbird Surprise

One evening in June about 30 minutes after sunset I was gazing out the kitchen window. It was too late now for the hummingbirds to come to the feeder hanging outside. Skylight was fading fast and our yard light was on. I watched some friends standing around our campfire in the yard a short distance away. That is when I saw something fluttering on the ground. I thought at first it might be a large moth or maybe a bat. I raced outside to have a look and that is when I got the biggest surprise of my life. Was I really seeing what I thought I saw?

I called to my spouse “get the camera” which he luckily had in his pocket. Our four friends and my spouse ran to see what it was I was so interested in. There were 6 of us standing in a circle witnessing an adult male Rufous Hummingbird attacking and holding down a second adult male Rufous Hummingbird.

Of course we all know Hummingbirds, especially the Rufous defend their territories vigorously and dive bomb each other while in flight. There have been documented accounts of hummingbirds killing each other by impaling each other with their culmen (beak) but usually it is just an effort to drive other birds out of their area. They even harass larger birds if they venture too close.

What was so astonishing was that it was dark outside and we were within two feet of the birds and neither of them flew off. I snapped some photos then reached down to remove the aggressor. It flew off into the darkness then I turned my attention to the other bird. I kept the bird warm and secure for a period of time and offered it nectar from our feeder however it did not survive the night.

The next day I decided to have a look at the photos we had taken. I could not believe my eyes! The aggressor was using his claws just like a predator bird would do. He also used his wings to hold the other bird to the ground while changing position several times to keep the other bird in place. The photos did not show him using his beak in any way to cause damage.

I contacted expert Alison Moran in Victoria at (RPBO) about the attack and she had never heard reports of this type of behaviour in Hummingbirds. One possibility offered is that the bird which was attacked may have been weakened or injured by a collision and landed in the dominant male’s territory. Realizing the intruder was not going to move away the dominant male launched the attack.

This story proves that although hummingbirds are known as “jewels of the avian world” they are quite fearsome and capable of defending themselves. The next time someone asks you if they migrate on the backs of geese, you can let them know that they definitely can make it on their own!

Submitted by; Terry Tellier

Princeton Hummingbird Banding Team Bander with the Hummingbird Project of BC.



Great Banding Year

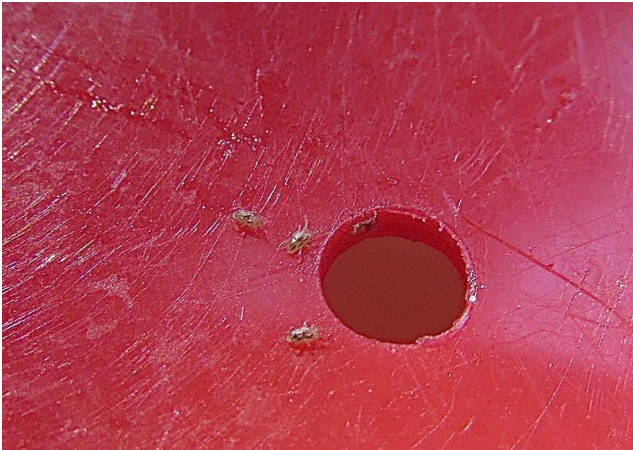
This year proved to be an excellent year for the hummingbirds and consequently the Princeton Banding Team. In May there was huge volume reported at many locations in our area. Mixed in with our breeding birds were the migrating birds who seemed to stop by and fuel up for the rest of their northern journey. We had some of the fattest Rufous males we have ever seen weighing in at 4.8 and 4.9 grams when they usually weigh around 3.4. Seeing birds still carrying this kind of fat would indicate that they had not finished their migration.

We were pleased to welcome two new members to the banding team, Donna Hill from Princeton and Ruth Bourquin from Osprey Lake. They joined Cathy Lahaie, Kathi Eldred, Joann Gabriel, Myra Quadling, Terry Tellier, Amanda Lahaie and Sue Elwell to form the best team in BC!!! (OK that would be a biased subjective opinion). Also to make our lives busier, we added three new sites, Black Mine Road, Snowpatch Road and 22 km out the Old Hedley Rd. This now gives us 8 sites. Not all sites have volume but give information. For instance, we started banding at the Old Hedley Road site because there had been reports of the possibility of another species of hummingbirds. We have not found the different species to date but, interestingly, a bird that was banded just a few kilometers out the Merritt Highway was recapped at this location at the beginning of August. Was the bird starting its migration?? Always so many questions and so far no clear answers.

As for numbers, this year we have banded 1,101 and recapped 191(121 of these from previous years and 70 from the current year). Over the three years the team has been in operation we have banded 2,481 birds(2012-592, 2013-788, 2014-1,101)!!! For the current year the breakdown of species is 49% Calliope, 46% Rufous, 3% Black-chinned and 2% Anna's. Interestingly more females than males were banded for Calliope, Black-chinned and Anna's but the Rufous were 27% male and 19% female.

We had a few notable recaps this year. At one location we had a male Rufous and a male Calliope that had been banded in 2011 during the two day training weekend. This is amazing considering the few birds that were banded at that time. Also this makes these males over 4 years of age, which is on the older end of the scale for male hummingbirds whose aggressive, territorial fighting ways contribute to a shorter life. At another site we recapped a bird that had been banded in 2009, also on a bander training weekend, making her over 6 years old. This year there have been reports from the east of female hummingbirds being over 10 years of age. Hopefully as we carry forward with this project we will find older banded birds in our area. For me, the best one was recapturing a female Anna's who had been banded last year. This was exciting as she survived the winter!! Whatever she did or wherever she went over the winter contributed to her making it through to another year. What do they do in the winter?? Another question that might never be answered.

When processing a bird and taking data, one of the things we check on an individual hummingbird is whether it has parasites – ticks, lice or mites. On a regular basis we find lice or the eggs of lice but until this year we have never found any mites. This summer we found two birds with flower mites.



*This picture is
of flower mites
Terry found on
her feeder.*

They are hitching rides on the hummingbird from flower to flower. One bird we banded only had one mite but the second had at least ten. Most of the mites we saw on this bird were along the bill and some on the throat waiting to jump off at the next flower!! They don't have direct impact on the health of the bird but are in competition for the flower's nectar thus they have an indirect effect.

To finish the season, Terry and Myra once again approached the Osprey Lake Rate Payers who kindly let us have a table at their Labour Day Corn Roast. It gives our group an opportunity to educate people about hummingbirds, one of our missions, and also to raise funds for our yearly expenses. To this end we had a raffle and Greg Tellier also donated seed bells for us to sell. The funds cover all our incidental costs like alcohol for cleaning purposes, shop cloth for the little restraints we put around the bird, paper for our reports, replacement of equipment, etc. With last year's funds we bought a canopy, which we have used several times this year during a light rain or threat of rain and also when it was hot and sunny.



Cathy Lahaie, Amanda Lahaie, Terry Tellier and Sue Elwell manned the tent/table and answered questions as well as sold tickets for the raffle. Winners of the raffle were:
Paula Steele – First and won Best One Hummingbird Feeder
Susan Matson – Second and won decorative hummingbird hook and bird seed bell
DiLorenzo – Third and won planter nectar feeder, garden stone and seed bell

We would like to give a huge shout out to Greg Tellier for the great seed bells and his generosity and support of the group. Also we could not have done this without the opportunity provided by the Osprey Lake Rate Payers!! Thank you. Last but not least, we would like to thank the VFFN who give us tremendous moral support.

VFFN Speakers List for October to January

Joann Gabriel (295-3361)
Speakers committee

October 14th – John Henry and Mary Marsiel – “Cathedral Lakes”

November 11th Kelly Cook – “Designation of the Cascade Rec. Area into Manning Park”

December – To be announced

January 13th John Henry and Mary Masiel “Travels in Italy”

This photo is an excellent example of VFFN hikes, this was to Kelly Peaks led by Rika Rubesat and the naturalists were picking blueberries



This summer on one of their many hikes in the Osprey area, Terry and Greg Tellier came upon this Pine Marten.



Pine Marten are a member of the weasel family. They have the typical long body with short legs of other members of this family and are about the size of a small cat with a long bushy tail. Unlike their relative, the Ermine, they do not change their coat colour to white in the winter but keep their beautiful dark brown coat and a bright orange throat patch. Unfortunately, this beautiful coat has been one of their downfalls as they have been hunted to extinction in areas. The fur is comparable to the Russian Sable.

Pine Marten are distributed throughout North America but prefer old growth coniferous or mixed woods. New growth forests do not support as many marten as the original forest did. Because of this loss of habitat and hunting, their numbers have declined. Concentration of their population is in most of Canada and in the Coastal, Cascade and Rocky Mountain ranges. This means in the States they cannot be found in the central and eastern part of the country, except for a few pockets, but only in the west in the mountains extending from Canada to the Mexican border.

They live a solitary life. The male, who is 15% larger than the female, scent-marks his territory and fiercely defends it against invasion by other males. Occasionally the males will fight to the death or cause injuries that ultimately cause the death of the other marten. They will, however, tolerate females in their territory. Other than the necessary breeding, there is no interaction between the sexes. Interestingly, mating season is late July and August but the

young are born in March or April which would make it an 8 month gestation, abnormally long for a small mammal. This is a phenomenon known as delayed implantation. After mating and fertilization, development of the embryo stops at a very early state. Implantation into the uterus wall does not take place until February. Young are born in a den, usually located inside a hollow tree. The young develop fast, being the same size as their parents by three months, and stay with their mother until August or September, at which time they disperse.

They are primarily carnivores but their diet is varied in the summer when they are known to eat fruit, insects and plants as well as rodents. It has been ascertained that the marten in Haida Gwaii eat mostly birds and coastal martens are known to eat fish. However, most Pine Marten eat voles, mice and even hares in the winter. During the summer they are active 60% of the day but in the winter only 16%. They have limited body-fat reserves and even though they do go into a shallow torpor daily to reduce heat loss in cold weather, it is necessary for them to find food all winter long. Curious and excitable, martens hunt by investigating underneath downed trees and stumps, inside hollow trees, and in dense clumps of young conifers. In winter, they are known to hunt beneath the snow, in tunnels created by squirrels or under snow-covered logs.

Good find Terry and Greg. Hopefully more of us will experience the thrill you had at seeing this wonderful creature!

(Submitted by Sue Elwell/Photo Greg Tellier)

Butterfly Expedition photos by Nienke



Summer Field Trips - Photo Display

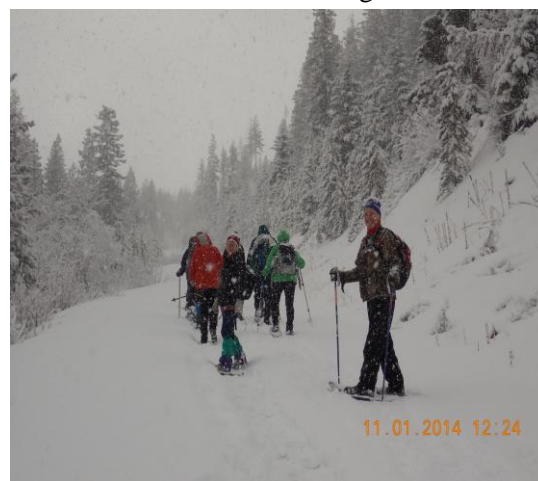
Hole in the Wall – fishing



Allison Lake hike



Winter snowshoe –Wolfe Belgie



Stemwinder snowshoe



China Creek November 2013



FIELD TRIPS: October 2014 – January 2015

If you wish to go on a walk, please phone the leader a day or so beforehand. Plans sometimes change, and you may be left waiting at Billy's Family Restaurant if you don't phone. **All destinations and dates are tentative.** Persons joining field trips do so at their own risk, and should sign a waiver to protect the society from harm. Hikers should wear appropriate clothing, sturdy boots, and **should carry a lunch with something to drink.** To reduce the production of green house gas, we gather at a central point, usually Billy's Restaurant, in order to share transportation. **If you share a ride, please make a contribution to the driver for gasoline!**

Easy field trips are generally level and not very arduous. *Moderate* field trips are longer, and may involve some strenuous gain in altitude, and may take you off roads and through forest. *Difficult* field trips often involve some steep rock scrambling, rough bushwhacking, and may last all day. Children are welcome, but it is wise to consult the leader prior to the hike about its difficulty. Leave your dogs at home unless the leader gives permission to bring them. Leaders should ensure that everyone coming on a hike has signed a waiver.

Your field trip directors have assembled this set of outings. These occasions are always congenial and highly enjoyable. Do participate!

October 4 Keremeos Columns Blaine Marsel 250-295-3404

This is a *moderate* hike through sagebrush country that concludes with a steep climb (approx. 500-1000 metres) to view the Keremeos columns, a sight well worth the effort! These five-sided block columns, formed by volcanic activity, are approximately 50 feet high and extend 300 feet in width. Meet at Billy's at 9 am to carpool, as four-wheel drive vehicles are required. Bring ample water, lunch, camera and binoculars. *No dogs please!* Phone Blaine to confirm.

October 18 China Ridge John Henry 250-295-7154

John will lead us on a *moderate* hike in this area, approximately 3 hours in duration. The terrain is varied with some great views along the way. Meet at Billy's at 9 am and bring food, water and binoculars. Phone John or Mary to confirm.

November 1 KVR Trail Ed Staples 250-295-0822

This *easy* walk takes us from Coalmont along the KVR/Trans Canada Trail to White Sands Beach, where we will stop for lunch, before we retrace our steps back to our starting point. Ed plans to have a small fire at the beach, so bring food you can cook, as well as water, camera and binoculars. We'll meet at Billy's at 9 am to carpool, or meet at the intersection of Coalmont Road and the KVR by 9:30. Phone Ed or Nienke to confirm.

November 15 China Ridge Jeannie Walker 250-295-3047

This is an *easy* hike we haven't been on before! We'll walk from the longhouse at China Ridge to the Ruben Jones shelter, where we will have lunch before heading back. Total hiking time will be approximately 4 hours, which will be nicely broken up by our lunch/rest stop at the shelter. Bring food, drink, binoculars and camera. Confirm with Jeannie and meet at Billy's at 9 am.

December 6 Copper Mtn. Road area Peter Antonick 250-295-3640

This is the night of the full moon for December, so we plan to do an *easy evening* hike on the trails near Peter's home. If there is snow we can snowshoe, but regardless we should enjoy a starry sky (with a little luck!). Wear headlamps if you have them or carry a flashlight. Bring a hot drink to help keep warm! Phone Peter to confirm and meet at Billy's at **7 pm** to carpool.

January 3?? Christmas Bird Count Lahaie family 250-295-7596

Precise date will be confirmed closer to Christmas. This annual event is an interesting, educational and most enjoyable activity. Members and friends who wish to participate this year should contact Cathy or Amanda as soon as possible and prepare for an 8 am start, meeting at Billy's.

January 17 Snowshoe Trek TBA

More about this outing as we enter the winter season and see how much snow there is, and where.

January 31 Snowshoe Trek TBA

As above, dependent on snowfall.

Wolfe Lake led by Tip Anderson April 2014



VFFN Executive October to January 2014

President	Jean Turner	0878
Vice President	Charles Weber	6419
Past President	Cathie Yingling	4802
Secretary	Joan Kelly	7743
Treasurer	Ida Larson	3044
BC Nature Director	Cathie Yingling	4802
VFFN Directors	Peter Antonick, Madelon Schouten, Janis Wright Joann Gabriel, Cathie Yingling, Anthea Pugliese, Joan Kelly Jean Turner, Ida Larson,	
Evening Programs	Joann Gabriel	3361
Field Trips	Peter Antonick (Coordinator) Thea Adamo Janis Wright	3640 0162 7560
Historian	Joan Kelly	7743
Memberships/Publicity/Communication	Janis Wright	7560
Newsletter	June Hope	3524
Social Convener	Joan Kelly	7743
Swan Lake Committee	Madelon Schouten (Chair) Peter Antonick, Cora Cherry, Joan Kelly, Ed, Cathy, Jason and Amanda Lahaie, Anthea Pugliese, Charlotte Sellers, and Charles Weber.	7078