THE HARLEQUIN

VFFN NEWSLETTER
2016 SPRING EDITION

contact person: M. Masiel
mhmasiel@gmail.com

Our quarterly newsletter (spring, summer, fall & winter) features items regarding nature, society news & events, and items of interest. For information, visit our website, www.vffn.ca

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE: Our website & newsletter are open to all members to contribute short articles, photos or anything of interest to the club. vffnbc@gmail.com Attn: Mary

SPRING STARTUP

Spring started with some wonderful news, the Hummingbird Group received a grant from BC Nature for the sum of $1965.00. Kudos goes to all those involved in helping with the application. This grant gives the group much needed cash to buy supplies and other incidentals.

We also learned that we would be losing a lifetime member who is moving to Nelson. Joan Kelly who has been VFFN secretary for twenty-two years will be leaving in June. Stella Holliday replaces her and Judith Sloan has agreed to be historian.

Another very important person, Janis Wright, is moving to Penticton at the end of July. Her skills will be sorely missed. She's the one that organizes the field trips and does those wonderful write ups about our outings which are submitted to the newspaper. Talented people like her are difficult to replace. Anyone interested in doing publicity for the club, let us know.

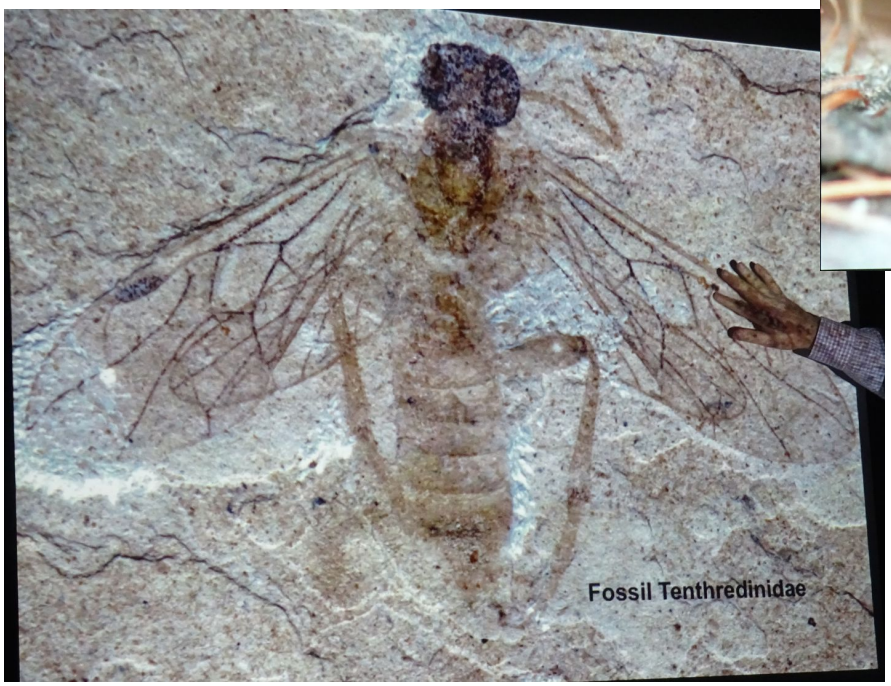
EVENING PRESENTATIONS

March 4, 2016
Dr. Bruce Archibald, paleo-entomologist
How Ants, Wasps, & Bees Changed the world 50 Million Years Ago

Our spring speaker series began with the delightful and erudite Dr. Bruce Archibald with the most incredible topic, "How Ants, Wasps, & Bees Changed the World 50 Million Years Ago!" We were not disappointed. He began by giving a historical account on how intellectuals of the 18th century discovered the merits of nature through the achievement of the Ichneumon wasp. Under observation the Ichneumon wasp demonstrated many

admirable qualities. How well it cared for its young, its cooperative nature, and its contribution to the whole.

Intellectuals extrapolated that if an insect was capable of such noble actions so could man. Man would benefit accordingly by emulating some of these admirable traits. However, in many instances, in the natural world creature are not always kind to fellow creatures, and man's behaviour should not reflect this tendency. Hence, the issue of morality. Man then had to go beyond what nature demonstrated.



The Ichneumon Wasp made its appearance 50 million yeas ago. Fossil remains give proof of its existence. Great finds have been made in Republic, Washington, and Dr. Archibald hopes to do the same in the Princeton area fossil beds which is part of the whole Eocene Period. The evolution of each family of Hymenoptera eventually leads to the present day families of WASPS, ANTS, & BEES. The talk demonstrated how the natural world and the human world are so interconnected. How life is possible by the activity of the smallest of creatures on earth. The natural world has much to teach us.

April, 12
Travis Barck, Arborist
Using Trees to Enhance Landscapes

Travis Barck attended Cornell University to study arboriculture. He nows works for the town of Princeton and brings to the job many skills and assets.

His talk focussed on using trees to enhance landscapes. Trees not only increases the aesthetic quality of a property but also increases the value of the land.

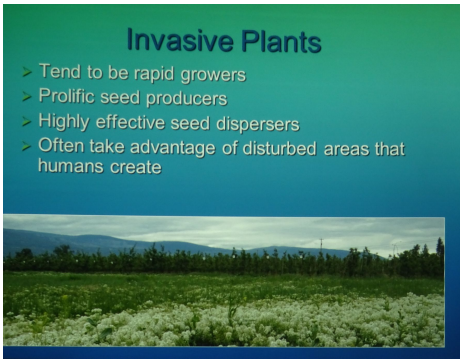
He gave the audience many practical pointers on how to approach a tree for best results, especially in pruning. For example, before making a cut you look for the branch collar, and take care not to injure or remove the collar. Always use the three cut technique when removing heavy branches. He also touched on the topic of what trees are best suited and which are not suited to the Princeton area. The evening was quite informative.

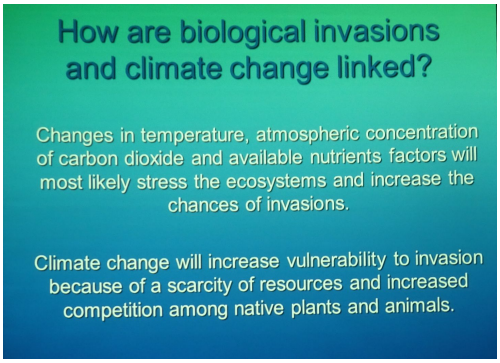
May 10
Lisa Scott, Biologist for OSISS
Invasive Species

Our speaker on May 10th was Lisa Scott from the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society. Her topic was Biological Pollution. How invasive species are devastating the Okanagan. She began with animal species; the Eastern Gray Squirrel has virtually taken over. This squirrel displaces native bird populations because it eats eggs and nestlings, it

damage trees, and it compete with the native squirrel. Zebra mussels are another damaging species; they have taken over many waterways. A newcomer is the European Fire Ant. Not only do they have a painful sting, but they can render gardens, lawns, and parks unusable for normal activities and have the potential to affect agricultural crops.

Lisa's remaining presentation can best be told with some of the slides she presented.





The link between biological invasion and climate change involves temperature change, increase concentration of carbon dioxide, and a lack of nutrients which stresses the ecosystem, thereby, increasing the invasion of unwanted plants and animals. The scarcity of resources, increased competition among native plants and animals, and susceptibility of native plants and animals will all be due to climate change. It will, however, bring plenty of invasive winners, for example, the bullfrog and the zebra/quagga mussels.

The presentation made us painfully aware of the fragility of our environment.

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

Helen Davis, Biologist—Artemis Wildlife Consultants

Helping Improve the Health of Endangered Badger Populations in south-central BC

A new project is underway using advanced genetic tools to help improve the outlook for endangered badgers in British Columbia. Biologists at UBC-Okanagan, BC Ministry of Environment, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Okanagan Nation Alliance and Artemis Wildlife Consultants are collecting hair samples for genetic analysis to find out where important connections occur between badger populations in BC and the larger population in


Photo: Phillippe Verkerk

Washington State. By looking at the genetic fingerprints of badgers in these areas, they will be able to find out if animals are still able to move between the 2 populations. It is believed that the main link is through the Okanagan Valley, which likely connects the populations through a grassland corridor that is less than 25 km wide at points. This linkage zone is important for population health and persistence of badgers, as the estimated population of about 350 adult badgers in BC may rely upon animals being able to move here from the American population. Human activities in this bottleneck may be reducing gene flow such that the continued persistence of the western population in Canada is in jeopardy. New information collected as part of this scientific research will aid in recovery of this endangered grassland animal by helping us make sure that important landscape connections are kept intact.

People are being canvassed in the South Okanagan,Similkameen, and Boundary regions to report any recent badger sightings or burrows so scientists can attempt to collect hair samples from badgers in this area. Hair is collected on stiff brushes in the burrow entrances, badgers are not harmed from sampling. If you have seen a badger or recent badger activity, please call the Badger Hotline at 1-888-223-4376, or visit www.badgers.bc.ca and submit a sighting online.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

EARTH DAY AT CORMACK MARSH, 2016

April 22, 2016 marked another successful Earth Day at Cormack Marsh.

A special event this year was the unveiling of the painting done by Johanna Nott. The kiosk which stood empty now has the mural on one side and an informational board (done by OSSS) on the other side.

When it comes to Cormack Marsh, Kelley Cook does a good job of organizing groups to assist. This year was no exception, as nine groups “pitched in” to help with the yearly cleanup of the site, planting shrubs, and gravelling trails. The participating groups were: Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society, Vermilion Forks School, Princeton Sierra’s Fire Crew, Princeton Home Schoolers, Princeton Rotary Club, Princeton Arts Council, and the town of Princeton.

Johanna Nott & her painting

Volunteers

KVR SIGN

A new sign was designed to replace the old tattered one. Have a look and see what you think.

PRINCETON TOURISM TRADE SHOW

We participate in any event that promotes our organization. At this show we told the audience "What Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists Do". The Hummingbird Group also put up a display that was very popular. Everybody wants to know how they band hummingbirds and the ladies were a wealth of information. Unlike the other groups displaying, we had enough volunteers (6) to do 3 shifts of 2 hours each so we didn't have to sit there for the entire 6 hours. Kudos goes to these people for all their help.

MEADOWLARK FESTIVAL

At the end of spring comes the Meadowlark Festival. The weather was not the best, but no one seemed to mind. The cool temperatures made for comfortable walking. The wild roses were in full bloom and fill the air with their wonderful fragrance. Also on display were the Scarlet Gilia and unfortunately the invasive species, Leafy Spurge near the hoodoos. On a brighter note, we sighted on the opposite bank 3 families of Canada Geese with their goslings.

The morning tour was led by Sue Elwell, and we had in our midst 2 very enthusiastic youngsters. The young lady (aged 7 or 8) proclaimed that she was going to be a geologist and that is why she was interested in rocks.

The afternoon Swan Lake Tour was led by Cathy Lahaie and her family. Everyone seems to enjoy these 2 venues although they are offered every year.

HAVE A FUN SUMMER