



# THE HARLEQUIN

VFFN NEWSLETTER  
2016 WINTER EDITION

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Our quarterly newsletter (spring, summer, fall & winter) features items regarding nature, society events and items of interest. For more information visit our website, [www.vffn.ca](http://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](mailto:vffnbc@gmail.com) Attn: Mary

When December comes around some of us are looking forward to winter and all the wonderful activities involved with this particular season. Especially with the first snow fall, then we really know that winter has arrived. We are so lucky to be able to experience all four seasons.

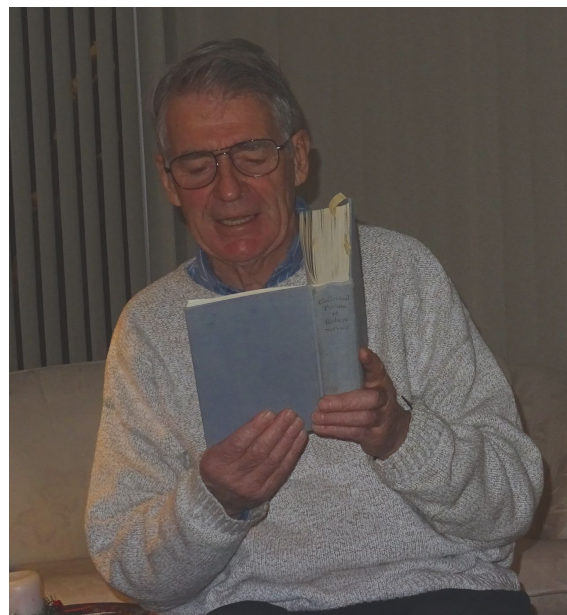
## YEAR'S END EVENT

2015 for VFFN came to a close with the Christmas party at the KELLY'S home on December 17th. For 24 years Joan has hosted this event.

The pool table becomes a dining room table filled with all sorts of Christmas goodies contributed by everyone. The gathering is soon full of good cheer and bonhomie. Entertainment was provided by Tim Hall doing his Christmas readings; the Christmas skit featured Joan and anyone she persuades to join her. This year it was a hoot with Joan, Dell, and Donna singing a birder's song with hats, binoculars, and other accoutrements of birding. The skit brought gales of laughter. It was followed by jokes which caused paroxysms of hilarity. The party provides a good milieu to enjoy the company of fellow members. Every year this is an event eagerly anticipated.



The ladies enjoy a good laugh after their performance



Tim Hall gives a good Christmas read.



Looking for the elusive owl at the airport. Members of VFFN braved very cold weather, minus 22 degrees Celsius, to do the 2016 bird count.



It was an exceptionally cold winter day, on January 3, 2016, with the thermometer hovering at minus 22 degrees Celsius, when 14 brave, enthusiastic VFFN members gathered to participate in the annual bird count. There were four groups of 3 and one group of two. Each group received a designated area to visit and to record what birds were seen and how many of each species.

Starting at 7:30 a.m., most groups were finished by 3:00 p.m. Members were instructed to return home and do a count at their bird feeder as well. Everyone met at 4:00 at Riverside to enjoy some good chili and buns provided by Joan and Cathy.

The results of the bird count were as follows: 50 species were recorded, the same as 2015. The most sighted were the Common Redpolls at 482. Two unusual species for this time of year were the Boreal Chickadee and Audubon's Warbler.



Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), a frequent visitor to the Henry's feeder

Below is the complete bird count by species and numbers. The Boreal Chickadee was unusual for town. The last one was spotted in the count area was 2010 on the Christmas Bird Count. All bird count information provided by Cathy Lahaie. (cw stands for count week which are birds spotted 3 days before and after the count day)

Hooded Merganser	2	Barrow's Goldeneye	28
Common Merganser	2	Ruffed Grouse	2
California Quail	1	Bald Eagle	28
Red-tailed Hawk	8	Golden Eagle	4
Hawk Sp.	2	Rock Pigeon	23
Eurasian Collared Dove	42	Northern Pygmy-Owl	3
Downy Woodpecker	10	Hairy Woodpecker	20
Three-Toed Woodpecker	1	Northern Flicker	21
Pileated Woodpecker	1	Northern Shrike	2
Gray Jay	1	Steller's Jay	33
Clark's Nutcracker	73	Black-billed Magpie	36
American Crow	75	Common Raven	218
Black-capped Chickadee	58	Mountain Chickadee	106
Red-breasted Nuthatch	29	White-breasted Nuthatch	10
Pygmy Nuthatch	27	Brown Creeper	2
American Dipper	8	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
Townsend's Solitaire	1	American Robin	1
Varied Thrush	5	European Starling	1
Bohemian Waxwing	12	Spotted Towhee	3
Song Sparrow	9	Dark-eyed Junco	12
Pine Grosbeak	73	House Finch	29
Red Crossbill	20	Common Redpoll	482
Hoary Redpoll	1	Pine Siskin	3
American Goldfinch	61	House Sparrow	26
Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	Boreal Chickadee	4
Audubon's Warbler	1	Common Goldeneye	2 cw
Great Blue Heron	1 cw	Long-Eared Owl	1 cw
Belted Kingfisher	1 cw		



## EVENING PROGRAMS

### **JANUARY 12, 2016**

Brenda Gould, Archaeologist  
Revisiting Rock Art of the South Okanagan & Similkameen

Our first speaker for the 2016 series was Brenda Gould, archaeologist and restaurateur from Hedley. Brenda focussed on the new technologies for recording and photographing rock art sites, specifically pictographs. The presentation illustrated the use of d-Stretch Digital Enhancement. The result is amazing. Placing the slides side by side before the enhancement, one can barely make out the pictograph. Once subjected to the enhancement, the transformation is amazing. Unfortunately, I forgot to take photos of the samples and therefore, I can't give the reader a taste of the magic involved here.

According to Brenda, Europe, especially France, has shown a great interest in the rock art of the Similkameen and the Okanagan. She even provided a tour of our area for very prestigious personalities in the field.

This was an excellent presentation enjoyed immensely by all those present.



Brenda Gould enjoys refreshments after her evening's presentation

### **FEBRUARY 9, 2016**

Norm Druck, Forester and Professional Animal Tracker

The evening speaker was Norm Druck, Forester and Registered Professional Trapper. Norm is somewhat different from the average trapper. He is not interested in pelts but in animals and their habitat, in how to manage animal population and to distribute information on animals in his specific area.

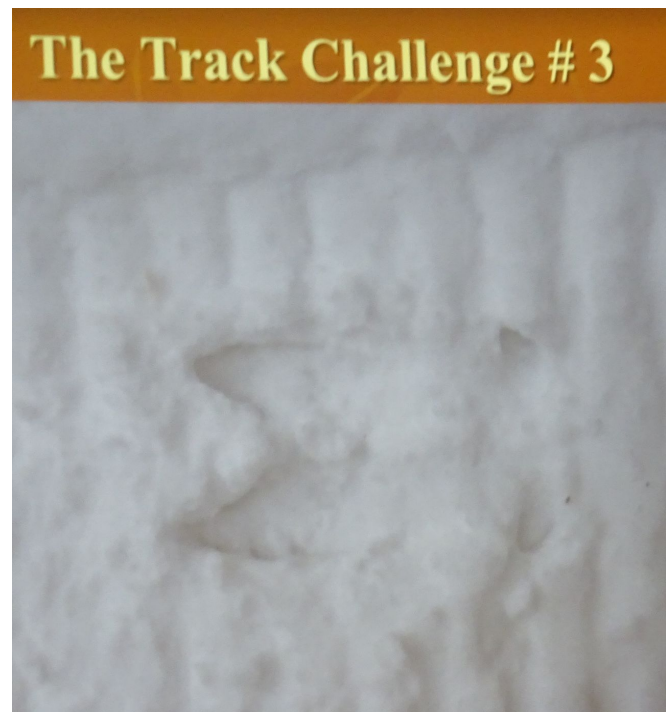
With a twinkle in his eye, great glee and enthusiasm, Norm gave the audience a score sheet and told them to identify 15 animal tracks as shown in the slides presented. Anyone giving the correct identification of slide #15 would get a bottle of wine, a worthy prize! As the answers were read everyone had a good laugh, but it was also a learning experience as each outstanding feature of the track print was discussed. This was a well attended and interesting presentation.

## What helps with identifying tracks?

- Understand physical features of animals:
  - Weight (cougar – lynx)
  - Size (squirrel – hare)
  - Stride (coyote – wolf, cougar - lynx)
  - Shoulder Width (cougar – lynx)
  - Number of toes (cat – weasel)
  - Toenail function (dog – cat)
  - Webbed/Unwebbed Feet (beaver – coyote)
  - Foot anatomy/shape (hare - lynx – dog)
  - How they hop, jump, walk (otter – hare - cougar)
  - Tail track markings (squirrel – weasel)
- Animal Habitat – what does the local ecotype support? (wetland-upland)



Norm shows lynx tracks in the snow.



What made these tracks? Correct answer is moose. The imprint on top of a snowmobile track shows the depth, hence something quite heavy to make the print.



## NEWS ITEM:

### STORING ICE SAMPLES

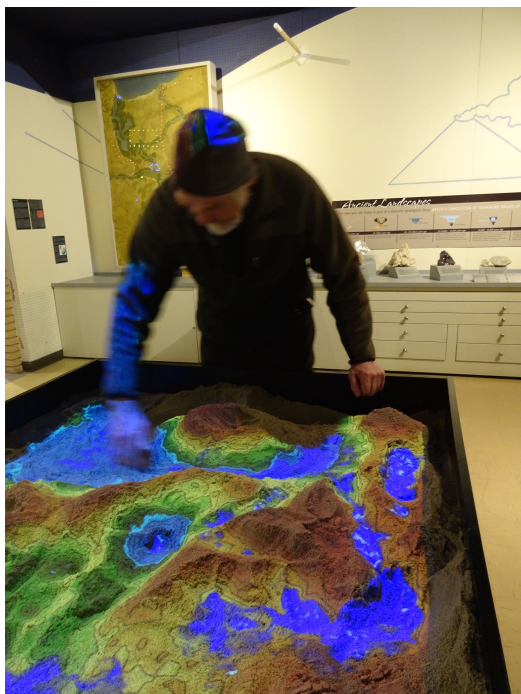
Scientists are planning to ship ice to the Antarctic. They're afraid that mountain glaciers around the world are melting as a result of climate change and want to store samples of ice in a new vault in the coldest place on Earth. "We are probably the only scientific community whose archive is in danger of disappearing from the face of the planet," says Jerome Chappellaz, of the French National Centre for Scientific Research, which is involved in creating the new ice storage in the Antarctic. [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com) May 27, 2015

### IN PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

**After** reading in the SOSCP January e-news about the Penticton Museum new sandbox, we paid a visit to the museum to investigate this new attraction. We were quite enthralled with the possibilities of this new addition to the museum. The Augmented Reality Sandbox is an educational and technological tool, one to be enjoyed by all ages. It is the second of its kind in Canada and the museum curator set it up himself. It is a sandbox



Museum curator gives a demonstration of how to use the technology.



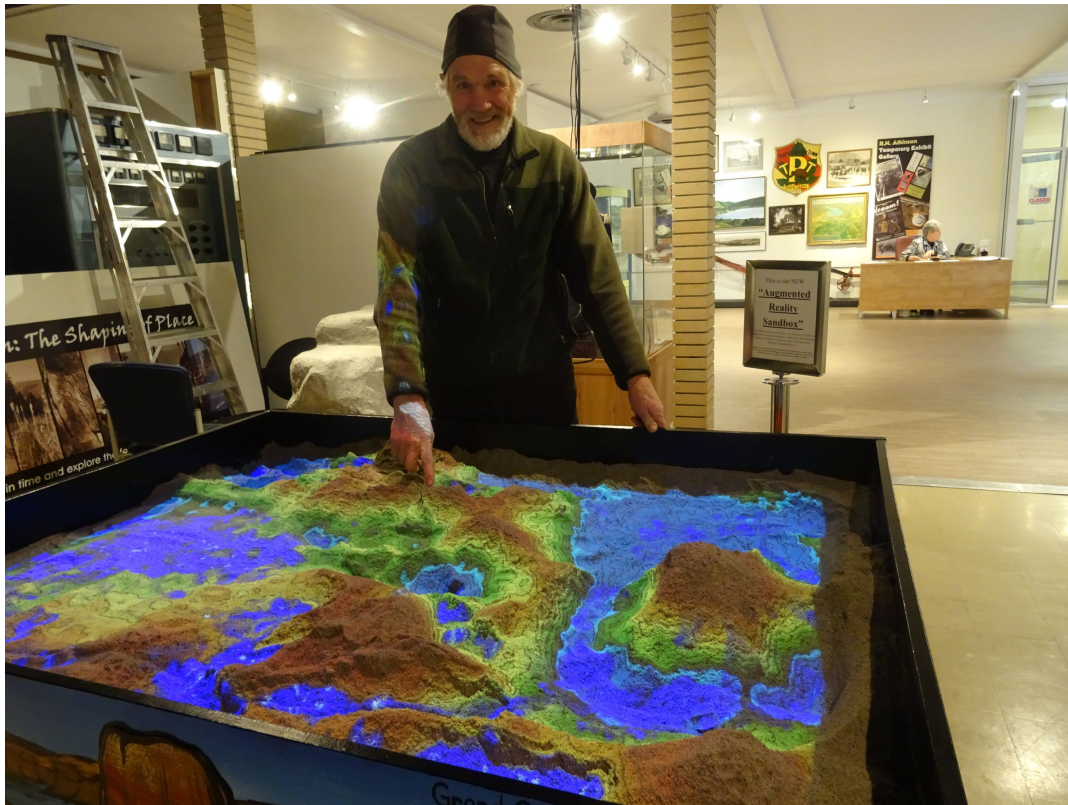
filled with ordinary sand with a bit of oil to hold it together.

A person can sculpture almost anything they want. John Henry duplicated the landscape from the Cathedral Lakes Park whilst a young fellow of 4 or 5 built a fantasy castle! There is plenty of technology involved here. The shifting and shaping of the sand is recorded by a 3 D camera suspended above the sandbox. Think GPS in a room; this is the computer (camera) above the box. Software in the camera then interprets the

John Henry demonstrates his knowledge of Cathedral Lakes Park landforms.



changing landscape and projects images based on topography onto the sand's surface demonstrating concepts of mountain heights, lakes, snow, and so forth. Vivid colours show the changing landscape. The contour lines are differently coloured, thus, blue for water, green for lowlands, brown for mountains, and white for snow.



Otter at Secret Lake enjoys the winter landscape.  
Photo by Greg Tellier.

Our winter activities have been enjoyable and rewarding. Soon our sights will be set on Spring.