



## THE HARLEQUIN

Our quarterly newsletter (spring, summer, fall & winter features nature, society news & events, and items of interest.

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### SPRING ARRIVES!



Lazuli Bunting



Bullock's Oriole



Sagebrush Buttercup



Sagebrush Bluebells

### JOANN GABRIEL AWARDED THE BC'S MEDAL OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP

In any group there are always some outstanding members, ones who give much of their volunteer time to organizations. Joann Gabriel is one of those people. In March she received the BC's Medal of Good Citizenship in recognition of the years of service to the community. She was a longtime driving force behind the Princeton and District Community Services, a non profit group bettering the lives of seniors and mentally challenged clients.

Joann is also very active in our organization. She has served as President and is now the coordinator for the Evening Presentations. In this capacity she has done an admirable job, keeping members interested by providing outstanding speakers. It is not an easy task to find presenters. It takes time and persistence. So VFFN is very lucky to have her in our midst.

As a new President, I have found her to be an excellent mentor, giving me assistance and acting as a resource person many times during the year. So from everyone at VFFN we offer you, Joann, our **CONGRATULATIONS** on an award greatly deserved.



## EVENING PRESENTATIONS

MARCH 14, 2017

SPEAKER: Eva Antonijevic

TOPIC: Protecting Our Natural Assets

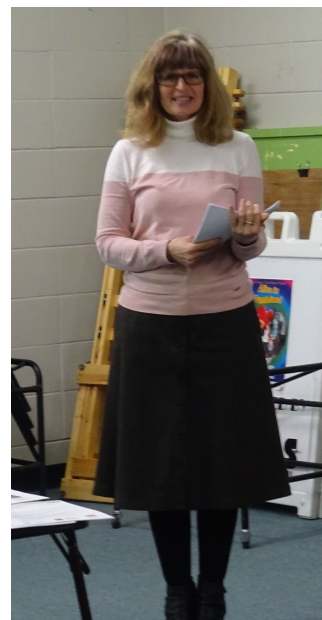
Our spring speaker series began with a presentation by Eva Antonijevic who works with different organizations, but in this instance, she represented RDOS. She gave an interesting talk about the ever shrinking wetlands along the lake shores due to housing development.

Giving a bit of history, she explained how waterways were altered to benefit progress without realizing the toll it took on wildlife, especially around the town of Penticton. For irrigation purposes and for flood control the Okanagan River was channelized. The oxbows and the wetlands were destroyed. However, people are now starting to look at these sites and trying to remedy the situation. Where ground saturation used to be 20 metres of water, it is now only 8 centimetres!

Today, the biggest culprits are builders along the lake shores. Home owners have built retaining walls (concrete wall) to prevent the lake from encroaching onto their lawns, they have scraped the beaches to erect docks, or they have brought in sand so they can have the sandy beaches. All these changes have been detrimental to all aspects of wildlife, flora and fauna, but it doesn't have to be this way. Natural shorelines can enhance property views and remain beneficial to all types of wildlife that exist in such an environment. There are regulations to prevent this type of development, but they are usually ignored and nothing is done about it. People who own such property are those with money and could probably afford to be more environmental conscious. The only solution left is education for these people and for the general public.

Ms. Antonijevic feels that an environmental priority is "retaining the Cottonwood, a native tree and keystone species important to the survival of many Okanagan Wildlife Species." The two she referred to were the Black Cottonwood and the Red Osier Dogwood.

The audience's comments were that the presentation had been different but that they had enjoyed it.



APRIL 11, 2017

SPEAKER: Lee Mcfadyen

TOPIC: Using Water Wisely

Lee Mcfadyen is well known in the Similkameen Valley for her important role in introducing organic farming. She is now a retired orchardist but not a retired gardener. She possesses a wealth of information on many things, but on this occasion she shared with us an understanding of what is involved in gardening and gave us tips.

She began by describing the different types of soil. Clay has the smallest soil particles, silt has medium size ones, sand is the coarsest of all of them, and organic materials placed into the soil is best. The type of soil found in your garden dictates how best to approach the matter, but the soil can always be improved, especially by adding organic materials to it.

When it comes to irrigation there are many factors to consider. Transpiration is affected by the amount of heat; wind tends to hasten the rate of evaporation. Expected rainfall is not a reliable way, and root depth dictates the frequency and amount of water; as well, monitoring the soil for moisture content is crucial. The moisture content in the soil is a measure of finding how much water is needed.

Lee also pointed out the numerous tools on the market available for irrigation. Most were not recommended. The important factor here was to choose a tool that could be placed as close to the ground as possible so that all important resource, water, is not wasted. Although many of the keen gardeners in attendance seemed to have known some of the basic information, they enjoyed listening to the information.

The meeting was well attended and afterwards we enjoyed the delicious coffee cake provided by Charlotte.



APRIL 9, 2017

SPEAKER: Tanya Luszcz

TOPIC: All About Bats

Tanya is a bundle of energy and enthusiasm and she adores bats! “How long do I speak for,” she asked? “One hour,” I replied. “Well, that’s good to know,” she said, “because I can speak for hours on bats!” Bat studies is a sideline for Tanya because her real work is with birds for the provincial and federal government.

Tanya is a wildlife biologist who works in migratory bird conservation with the Canadian Wildlife Service. She has a M.Sc. in Animal Ecology from University of Calgary and a B.Sc. in Biology from UVic. Tanya studied bat habitat in forests for her M.Sc. degree, and still volunteers her time to give bat programs and talks for the Meadowlark Festival, naturalist clubs and school groups. Born and raised in BC, Tanya is passionate about wildlife and habitat conservation. She spends her spare time rock climbing, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, travelling, birding, and gardening. Tanya's interest in OSCA lies in educating children and adults about the importance of conserving our natural areas.

Bats have been around for 65 million years. They evolved from a shrew-like ancestor. They are mammals, some hibernate, and others migrate to warmer climates. Some bats can live as long as 40 years! A female bat has one pup at a time, every 1 or 2 years. Females can control the timing of pregnancy and the birth of young to make delivery coincide with maximum food availability or other ecological factors that are beneficial to birth. The female can carry the fertilized egg for several months.



The following information is quoted from Tanya's slides.

"Flight evolved first! Echolocation evolved in a "flying bat". One Little Brown Bat can eat 4-8 grams of insects in a night." One can extrapolate the following information: "A single colony of 1500 Little Brown Bats can eat 0.5—1.5 metric tons of insects in a summer!"

Bats like many other creatures that inhabit the natural world are extremely beneficial to the environment and to man. One can only marvel at the intricacies of the world that we live in.





## BC NATURE AGM—CANYON TO ALPINE—LILLOOET, BC

Submitted: M. Masiel

Attending BC Nature AGM was a great pleasure. It gave us the opportunity to mingle with people of like minds; we felt very much a part of a larger group. The Lillooet Naturalists put out a fantastic venue, providing 12 field trips to choose from, mind you registration for the most popular were quickly filled as early as the end of January. We registered early and signed up Lillooet Area Geology which wasn't our first choice but which proved to be an excellent one.

We arrived in the early afternoon of Thursday, May 4, 2017, a very hot day with the temperature reaching 27° C. Luckily, that high did not continue, and we enjoyed very pleasant weather.

We picked our registration package at the Fort Berens Vineyard. We were surprised to see a vineyard, but Lillooet is at the same elevation as Oliver and Osoyoos with a similar climate. An ex-mayor and her father introduced the wine grapes to the valley. The present vineyard belongs to a Dutch couple who came to Canada, especially to the Okanagan, hoping to set up a vineyard. The land proved too expensive and someone suggested Lillooet. They have been in production for seven years and doing very well.



The vineyard operates a restaurant, as well, and there we were provided with an afternoon snack of various salads, different types of humous, and an opportunity to taste the wines (at a cost of course). At 5:00 we were given a tour of the premises and the grounds. We finished in time to attend our first evening presentation.

Butterflies and Moths was the first of five excellent presentations. The others were Grasslands—Whispers in the Wind, Fishers, Wolverines, and Lillooet Flora and Fauna

The next morning, Friday, May 5th, we had time to visit the Lillooet Friday Market and then proceeded to our tour rendezvous with our guide, Pierre Friele. Luckily, he made it because he was coming from Squamish on Highway 99 which was closed in both directions due to a mudslide. A small window of opportunity occurred, and he was able to sneak through. Throughout the weekend this route was problematic as were other routes due to high water from rushing creeks and rivers.

We met at the town cemetery because it provided an excellent vantage point to view the surrounding area. It is located high above the Fraser River. Pierre Friele was an excellent tour guide, and he led us through an amazing day tour. He gave an overview of the geological features we were going to see with an explanation of the landforms that had created this incredible area.

Carpooling, we took off to the site of the Old Bridge and viewed the remnants of mining, then on to Pavilion to look at an Earthflow which is glacier-like flow of weak rock and earth. It is this features that is problematic to the area. From here, we drove to view a potential slide on highway 20. Again, the problem is being caused by the constant shifting and moving of the land, very similar to an earthflow. In this instance, it was affecting the railway line that goes from Lillooet to Prince George. Some structural work was being done with the knowledge that the problem is never solved. Our driver, Bob Handfield, president of the South Okanagan Naturalists who has a PhD in geology, made the comment, "solid as rock could never be true because you can't fight gravity!"

We continued on to the remains of pithouses at Keatley Creek. These pithouses were built on a terrace high above the Fraser River. People lived here for thousands of years and the population was close to 1000; scientists think a similar fate occurred here, an earthflow destroyed half of the houses and blocked the Fraser River and the salmon run. The village was deserted and the people moved elsewhere. We meandered among the ruins. Some pithouses were obviously bigger than others, indicating there was some sort of social hierarchy. This site has been dug by archaeologists and dug down far enough to get a date. Pierre challenged us to find any artifact among the ruins, and one of the participants did—a well worked bifaced-scaper! We enjoyed beautiful clear skies with a very comfortable temperature and admired the view of the meadow dotted with Thread-leaved Phacelia, Larkspur, and Sagebrush Buttercup. Time was moving fast, and we set off to our next destination, Texas Creek.



An anomaly pointed out from the cemetery, a rock slide very visible on the road to Lytton on Highway 12 was our next site of investigation. We cross the Fraser to the west side and took the Texas Creek Road that runs parallel to Highway 12 on the other side. We followed a winding dirt road for some time and reached a farm/ranch on one of the many vibrant green terraces. We had permission from the property owner to walk on his land which borders Texas Creek. About a 1000 years ago tremendous landslide on now Highway 12 blocked the Fraser River and went up Texas Creek on the other side of the valley. A huge lake was created as the Fraser River started to back up. The pressure built up was so great that the dirt dam gave way and flooded the Fraser Valley from Lillooet down to coastal BC. Scientists are predicting that the same thing will happen again, but now there is more at stake. The lower mainland would be flooded and all the infrastructure destroyed. There is an uneasy truce between Nature and Man in this area of Shangri-La; for it is a beautiful area with the grasslands on one side and towering mountains peaks on the other side.

Saturday morning we were up at the ghastly hour of 5:30 to make it to the Early Morning Birding that started at 6:00 a.m. There were 5 groups of 20 and ours was #5 led by Alan Burger, the president of BC Nature and an ornithologist. Each group went to a different area; ours went to the grounds of the First Nations' Nursery where the land was being reconstructed after BC Hydro destroyed the Salmon Spawning Habitat on the Seton River. It was a bitterly cold morning, and I even had to put my down coat on. The cool breeze never abated and blew all day. I think that the birds were also cold because we spotted very few. Some of interest were Northern Harrier, White-throated Swift, Warbling Vireo, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, and Brown-headed Cowbird. The outing finished at 8:00 a.m. We had a hurried breakfast and took off to Bridge River Indian Band Reserve. The basketball court was used as the meeting place for the day's events. We got there to discover that breakfast was being provided, delicious muffins and fruits, tea, coffee, and juice, even one of the indigenous people's fruit drinks which I found too bitter but John like it.

After two presentations, we were served a delicious lunch prepared by the Bridge River Indian Band. The AGM began soon afterwards. Reports were made and eight resolutions presented. Halfway through this endeavour we were served an afternoon snack of fruit cobbler with ice cream or whipping cream; your choice! Then back to business. Business concluded; we returned to Lillooet, for dinner at the Curling Rink, catered by the Curling club. Once again we had a delicious meal and after dinner we crowded to the mezzanine for award presentations.

I would encourage anyone to attend next year's AGM which will be at Cowichen Lake on the island.

## MEADOWLARK FESTIVAL

May 20, 2017

John Henry was given the job of making signs that would keep participants from going astray. It seems that every year people arrived with stories of going elsewhere but Riverside. The first group, the 9:00 KVR outing, had participants from Kelowna, Hedley, and Penticton. It was a beautiful day for the field trip. One of the ladies had a lens that was as long as she was (she was a tiny person). Her objective was to photograph a Harlequin Duck and Cathy Lahaie, the tour leader, did not disappoint. As we were driving along the road adjacent to the Similkameen, she spotted a Harlequin Duck sitting on a rock surrounding by a turbulent, swollen, rushing river. Immediately, all of us (9 people) stopped to admire the duck. We proceeded further to the parking spot before the tunnel.



The people were amazed by the paved trail as we related horror stories of doing this tunnel without lights, unpaved, and roaring motorized vehicles. Luckily for us the scene was tranquil and extremely pleasant. Ed Lahaie waited for us on the other side of the RR bridge. We began our walk at a pace that everyone could manage. We saw (birds) and (flowers). At the hoodoos we turned back. The group was a very pleasant one and most promised to come next year and do the afternoon outing at Swan Lake.

In the afternoon we did the outing to Swan Lake. This was mostly a birding activity; although, a much younger group opted for the hike around the lake. Everything worked well. There were 10 people in this group and like the morning one they were extremely pleasant and congratulatory of the sites that they had visited.



Vermilion Forks Field Naturalist have been participating in this festival for quite a few years, thanks to Madelon Schouten who made VFFN visible to all naturalists groups. The festival is held around the same time every year, the third week in May and our venue has remained the same. We might change the venue for next year, but you have to ask why change when things work well?

**PLEASE CONTRIBUTE:** Our website and newsletter are opened to all members to contribute short articles, photos, or anything of interest to the club. [vffnbc@gmail.com](mailto:vffnbc@gmail.com) attn: Mary