



THE HARLEQUIN

Our quarterly newsletter, highlights every season. It features nature, society news & events, & more. CONTRIBUTIONS are welcome; contact Mary; vffnbc@gmail.com

The last speaker before our summer break was Don Gayton who spoke about BC Grasslands. So much of the area around Princeton is grasslands, and Mr. Gayton's knowledge of such habitat gave the audience a greater appreciation of what is available in the Princeton area.

BC has six grassland types:

- Peace River grasslands
- Cariboo Chilcotin grasslands
- Southern Interior grasslands
- Aspect Grasslands
- Alpine Meadows
- Garry Oak Meadows



We, of course, are in the Southern Interior Grasslands. Mr. Gayton went on to describe “The Holy Trinity” of Grasslands: Bluebunch Wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Rough Fescue (*Festuca campestris*), and Idaho Fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*).

Having attended the grassland tour earlier in the afternoon, made prior knowledge and experience beneficial to truly appreciate what Mr. Gayton had to say.



ORCHARDGRASS
(*Dactylis glomerata*)



JUNEGRASS
(*Koeleria macrantha*)



CHEATGRASS
(*Bromus tectorum*)



GIANT WILDRYE
(*Elymus cinereus*)

THE SALMON CEREMONY @ COYOTE FALLS (Enloe Dam, between Nighthawk and Oroville) —Honouring our Ancestors and Praying for the Salmon—June 20, 2017

I received the invitation from Rick and Gere Gillespie (founders of the American group, “Friends of the Similkameen River”) who had been informed of the event, and they in turn invited us. Stella and I represented Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists.

The drive to Enloe Dam is always spectacular. A morning that started in the low teens, however, soon rose to a mighty 29°C! As to the occasion, I had no idea what to expect. We arrived at the turnoff to the dam, drove a very short distance and decided to walk the rest of the way because it was a truly a 4X4 road to the bottom parking lot. As we descended we caught a glimpse of a stunning waterfall cascading down to join the Similkameen River. John and I have seen this waterfall when not a drop of water was visible.



Once all the invited people arrived, mostly elders and some young people, we proceeded down to the water's edge. Richard Armstrong, the hereditary chief for the salmon ceremony from the Colville Reserve, began the ceremony. This was his fourth ceremony, having performed it at Castlegar, Revelstoke, McIntyre Canyon, and now Enloe Dam. As spectators and participants, we were asked to collect 2 rocks.

At the water's edge, Chief Armstrong knelt and performed ablutions using the swift flowing Similkameen River; he washed his face, wet his hair, and rinsed his mouth, while reciting prayers. We gathered around banging our rocks together. Then he stood up with arms held high and wide, embraced the river and motioned for us to throw our rocks in. These rocks carried our prayers down the river. It was a very simple ritual ceremony, one that had not been performed at Enloe Dam for 143 years!

Walking back to the parked cars, we proceeded to the state park in Oroville located on the shores of Osooyos Lake and had lunch. After lunch Chief Armstrong told the story of Coyote and the Salmon. Coyote asked the Similkameen people for a bride, and he in return would give the people the salmon. The Similkameen People refused him; so then he turned to the Okanagan people and made the same request. They gave him a bride, and he gave them the salmon. Chief Armstrong told the story in a delightful, funny way, and everyone had a good laugh. There were other speakers after him; mostly those that helped organize the event. The refrain was the same that the Salmon Ceremony should once again become an annual event.



According to First Nations legends, the salmon never went beyond Coyote Falls and many of them feel that it should remain this way. Scientists take a different spin; they say that existing conditions are not conducive to salmon habitat.

After everyone had their say, gifts were given out. The main organizers received blankets and the rest of us received tins of salmon processed at Penticton. To me it was a worthy gift because I have had this salmon before and it is very tasty. With good-byes and thanks, we all headed home.

SUMMER HAPPENINGS:

JUNE

Summer has a mixed bag of weather with plenty of rain at the beginning finishing with extremely dry weather that brought forest fires some even in our own backyard! Many people were stressed about these events, and the smokey days did little to alleviate matters. Participation in the summer hikes was down considerably and one has to wonder whether people were really busy or the outings have lost their interest. Setting aside two days of every month for an opportunity to join others on a naturalist adventure hardly seems an unwelcome intrusion.

Some good hikes were done. The Mt. Kobau was particularly delightful. The flowers were fantastic and so were the views. It was an easy, easy outing, mostly drive and stop, with a ten minutes hike to the top at the end of the road. Most importantly, we were under the guidance of Lee Mcfadyen who makes anything interesting. At the end of it all, we all said, "I enjoyed that".

JULY

The Othello Tunnels Outing was cancelled yet again. Some of the comments were that it was too far to travel and yet Hope is only as far as Penticton. It just seems far. I still recommend a visit to these tunnels, but if the membership is not interested, we won't bother with scheduling a tour.

Granny went biking with grandpa John, daughter (Kati), granddaughter (Zandra), and Nana Amann to Myra Canyon. I now see things with different eyes and John has to explain to everyone that I stop for flowers, especially if I don't have photos of them.



Trestle at Myra Canyon



Timberry flower
(*Rubus parviflorus*)



Red Columbine
(*Aquilegia formosa*)

AUGUST

Some of us braved the smoke and ventured up to Stemwinder Mountain and were pleasantly surprised to escape from some of the worst part of the smoke and were delighted with the new flowers now in great profusion, such as the Fireweed.

Princeton proclaimed Aug. 14th through 20th as Cultural and Heritage Week and two of our members gave presentations, John Henry on his experience working at Nickel Plate Mine and Tip Anderson on "The Other Allisons". We also experienced a solar eclipse. Those with proper equipment were able to view the phenomena.

For all of you that have not visited our website, please do so. Jason Lahaie has done an awesome job setting up a new server that also saves the club money, especially check out the Birding Section. This page shows the four great birding sites in Princeton with accompanying google map to show exact location and a link to E-bird that shows all the birds sighted at each site. Great Job, Jason! Also don't forget to visit The Honker, SONC; they post some wonderful information and some fantastic photos.



FIREWEED
(*Epilobium angustifolium*)

SPECIAL REPORT: WHITEBARK PINE, a species in peril, The Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation

Whitebark Pines grow at high elevations in the West. Many living things depend on whitebarks. Man depends on these trees to act as snow fences, slowing down spring runoffs and ultimately making possible a water supply to the valleys below. A special relationship exists between the Clark's Nutcracker and Whitebark Pine. The bird depends on the seeds found in the cones of the tree; they bury these as a winter supply. Uneaten seeds can grow into mature trees. Most importantly these jays prefer to bury seeds in burned forests, a habitat where this pine grows best.

The tree has its natural enemies, such as the blister rust, a fungus that reduces cone production. The bark beetle and beetle epidemics greatly affects the tree. Climate change is yet another enemy of the Whitebark Pine. Due to all these natural catastrophes the Whitebark Pine is in rapid decline. It is a declared endangered species in Canada and soon to be added to the list in the U.S. Restoration of the Whitebark Pine is imperative and when the call goes out to help plant these trees, everyone should answer the call.

What does it look like? A wide crown with upraised branches that gives the tree a distinctive shape, a broad silhouette rather than a pointy look. Its needle are in clusters of five; the cones are purple or brown and are no more than 4 inches long.

