



THE HARLEQUIN

Our quarterly newsletter (winter, spring summer & fall) features items regarding nature, society news & events. For more info. www.vffn.ca

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

YEAR END FESTIVITIES:

December is always an exciting time of year for everyone. For the last few years, the traditional VFFN Christmas “get together” took place at the Kelly’s home, and Joan was always a wonderful host. This year Peter Antonick welcomed us to his home. It was a fine gathering with plenty of good cheer, awesome appetizers provided by the membership, and plenty of good conversation.

For entertainment, a bird identification contest was organized. Using bird pictures, the attendees were to identify the birds; prizes were given to those who identified the most. Surprisingly, few were able to do so. Everyone agreed that in future an effort would be made to improve their skills. That, however, did not stop some from making ridiculous guesses which invoke lots of laughter. Other entertainment was provided by Tim Hall who sang a song, John Henry who recited a poem, and Rika and John Henry who sang the song, “Flying Up the Nickel Plate Road”; a song written by John Henry describing his trip up the road to get to work at the Nickel Plate Mine. Then, everybody joined Rika in singing, “Now It’s Called Princeton”, a song written by Zeke Hoskin.

With glimpses of a wonderful winter wonderland outside and starry skies above, the evening ended with a great feeling that all was well with the world.



EVENING PRESENTATIONS:

January 10, 2017

The Yukon: The Chilkoot Trail & Beyond

Presenters: Mary Masiel & John Henry

Report by : Mary Masiel

(No one volunteered to do the write up, so I did it, hence the first person narrative.)

John and I gave the first presentation for 2017. Showing slides and providing comments, we shared with the audience the hike we did on the Chilkoot Trail and our continuing journey to Dawson City — a further 886 kms to the gold fields that was the big attraction for the Stampeders.

Our daughter, KatiPaz, organized the trip, and we joined her and her two friends, Kim and Carolyn. We joked about how lucky we were because all three girls are nurses. We hiked for 5 days, camping for 4 nights. Of those 5 days, 3 were spent trekking through swollen creeks and snow and enduring non-stop rain. It led Carolyn to make the apt comment, “I came to hike a trail not a creek”! Despite the inclement weather, the landscape was spectacular and all discomforts were forgotten.

Our trip began by driving to Skagway, a landscape of rocky outcrops with green vegetation and looming snow capped mountains in the distance, but coming down from White Pass, we soon found ourselves in a very different environment, a coastal one. A swarm of mosquitoes greeted us as we started the hike. The next 2 days involved using boardwalks to negotiate wet, swampy areas, avoiding dense vegetation (the famous devil’s club in abundance), seeing mushrooms dangling from tree trunks, using rickety bridges to cross over rushing creeks, and catching glimpses of the Irene Glacier. On the third day, we began the famous hike to Chilkoot Pass. The day started with rain and fog which did not make the going easy. We ascended 1150 metres and marvelled at the people who in 1897 eventually carried a total of 1200 lbs. before being admitted into Canada. We felt, by comparison, just like day trippers. Reaching the top and the Canadian border, winter greeted us.



View of Crater Lake on the BC side.



Mist covered landscape projects a certain beauty.



Hey Guys, it's June. Isn't it summer?



Carolyn negotiates a watery path.



John tramples on trail in ankle deep water due to an overflowing lake and 3 days of rain.

Arriving at Bennett Lake, the adventure was not finished. We found, due to heavy rains, landslides now blocked the railway line from Lake Bennett to Carcross (our return destination), and as well as the highway from Skagway to Carcross. These rains also brought the closure of the Chilkoot Trail. Without skipping a beat, we took a train to Fraser, from Fraser to Skagway by bus, and from Skagway to Carcross by car, after a two hour delay while another slide was cleared. In spite of the bad weather, we were captivated and mesmerized by the incredible landscape we ventured through.

From Whitehorse, we proceeded to Dawson City, the final destination of the Stampede. Here a desolate landscape dotted with dwarf black spruce, stunted because of the permafrost, characterized most of the views seen from the car. Dawson City still retains some of its charm; many old historic buildings remain standing, and we toured the much visited homes of Jack London and Robert Service.

Historic building in Dawson City used today as restaurant. >



< Grand Theatre, Dawson City.

Equally amazing, was visiting Bonanza Creek where all the gold hullabaloo started. Just down the road from there is the biggest dredger ever employed to dig up gold. This piece of machinery is now set up for touring. From the air (we got a free helicopter ride from Air North) we could see all the devastation left by dredgers, but also the mighty Klondike River energetically joining the majestic Yukon River.



Walking along the bank of Bonanza Creek.



Biggest Dredger in the World.



Landscape left by dredging.

NATURE AWARENESS NIGHT,
February 14, 2017
Presenters: Joann, Cathy, & John



The attendance was sparse; perhaps, it was due to the fact it was the AGM, or the type of program offered. Those that failed to attend missed a great treat. Joann, Cathy, & John put together a great evening of entertainment and

enlightenment by testing the membership on their knowledge of the natural world. WHAT IS IT? A common comment that drew many puzzled looks from attendees. There were a total of 41 items to identify or at least make an educated guess. Two long tables held the items. What was there to identify? There were animal skulls, pictures of flowers and birds, leaves, needles, feathers, and rocks. Prizes were awarded. The highest number identified correctly was 21 by Johanna Nott and she got first prize. Next highest number was by Jason Lahaie with a correct identification of 17; followed by Stella Holliday with a identification of 13 items. It was an evening of fun, entertainment, and enlightenment.



Participants took their role seriously as they attempted to identify objects.



PRINCETON BIRD COUNT FOR 2017

Report: Cathy Lahaie

Eleven People braved the cold but sunny weather to help with the Christmas Bird Count on January 2, 2017. 40 species of birds were counted on this day and another 6 for Count Week. Count week includes any birds seen 3 days before and 3 days after the count day that were not seen on count day.

After the count we got together at the Riverside Center for a delicious Chili Dinner and our count tally.

Birds Seen for Count Day:

Mallard

Common Goldeneye

Barrow's Goldeneye

Ruffed Grouse

Bald Eagle

Red-tailed Hawk

Golden Eagle

Eurasian Collared Dove

Downy Woodpecker

Three-toed Woodpecker

Pileated Woodpecker

Gray Jay

Clark's Nutcracker

American Crow

Black-capped Chickadee

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Bohemian Waxwing

Song Sparrow

Red Crossbill

House Sparrow

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Rough-legged Hawk

Rock Pigeon

Northern Pygmy-Owl

Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

Northern Shrike

Stellar's Jay

Black-billed Magpie

Common Raven

Mountain Chickadee

Pygmy Nuthatch

American Dipper

European Starling

Spotted Towhee

Dark-eyed Junco

American Goldfinch



Northern Pygmy Owl



Northern Flicker

Count Week

American Robin

Red-winged Blackbird

Pine Siskin

Varied Thrush

House Finch

Cedar Waxwing



VFFN AGM

February 14, 2017

At the AGM some people were re-elected and others were elected for the first time.

EXECUTIVE:

PRESIDENT: Mary Masiel

PAST PRESIDENT:

VICE PRESIDENT: Johanna Nott

SECRETARY: Stella Holliday

TREASURER: Sue Elwell Ida will continue until Sue returns

DIRECTORS AND THEIR PORTFOLIO:

EVENING PROGRAM Joann Gabriel

BC NATURE DIRECTOR & MEMBERSHIP Donna Hills

FIELD TRIPS John Henry

SWAN LAKE & WEBSITE Cathy Lahaie

OTHER PORTFOLIOS:

HISTORIAN Judith Sloan

NEWSLETTER Mary Masiel

SOCIAL CONVENOR

SUBMITTED REPORT: Encounters with Backyard Wildlife

Princeton is a special place because the “great outdoors” is just outside our back door. Some longtime residents and some newcomers wish that it wasn’t so. If a person doesn’t want to experience this reality, then moving here is not advisable. The most important advice to give anyone is, “always respect wildlife”; treat them for what they are — wild— and always be wary of their behaviour. Our backyard is also their habitat. We are the ones crowding them out, not them.

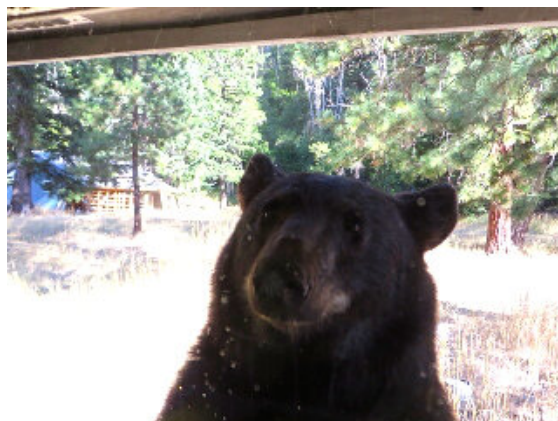
A few years ago, Princeton had an usually hot summer, and it was also a time of many bear sightings. A bear trap was even set up in our neighbours' backyard. I happened to be doing dishes and looking out the kitchen window when I spotted a bear in our yard. We have a miniscule creek, only a few centimetres wide, and the bear chose it to cool off. It was the most comical sight; this huge bear with only a small portion of its rump in the water! After a short sit down, it got up and wandered into the bushes.

Two years ago I had 2 interesting encounters in our backyard, one with a bear and the other with a cougar. We have a garden which is fenced off to keep the annoying deer out. The fence is an ugly structure which we have named Ft. MacHenry, but it works. I was weeding the garden when I noticed a movement out of the corner of my eye. Immediately, I was on the alert and hoped fervently that I had closed the gate. I turned and saw nothing. So I ventured out to look down the slope to the front fence. There, a very fat young bear was trying to go over the fence but was being, not too successful; so it went along the fence. The house obstructed my view, but the bear soon reappeared at the front door where the gate was open. It made a quick getaway, crossing a very busy street, passing many houses, and heading down to the river. I thought poor bear that's probably the last of him (knowing that there many "trigger happy residents" in Princeton). The next morning I headed up the path to the garden not really being too observant. I came up rather quickly upon the same bear sitting near the garden gate. I was really taken by surprise and so was the bear. We both sprinted off in different directions; I to the house and the bear to the safety of the bushes and trees. I never saw the bear again, and I often wondered what became of it.

That same year we were away during the fall season. We returned to hear stories of cougar sightings right in Princeton. As a matter of fact one was spotted leisurely lying on the side hill 2 houses away from ours. I found this interesting because the cougar is a shy animal and rarely seen.

Later in the fall, as I entered our bedroom to close the curtains, I saw an animal. On closer inspection I realized that it was a cougar getting ready to jump the fence into the next yard. It must have sensed my presence because it stopped and looked back and noticed me at the window. We stared at each other. I whispered rather loudly to my husband to come and have a look. My husband came and then left to get the camera. The cougar changed position and came to another window (a bigger one) and pressed its face right on the window; it and I had a good look at each other. It was a magnificent animal with great curious eyes. Only a window pane separated us! Finally, in great haste I left the room to find my camera, but by the time I returned, it was gone.

In all of these encounters I have felt very fortunate to see these animals fairly close up and that nothing happened to me or to the animals.



A friend of ours had this fellow come to his kitchen window, investigating the lovely smell of applesauce and hoping for a handout!

Photos: Rod Dixon

If you have any stories to share with us or photos please email them to us at vffnbc@gmail.com indicate that they are submission to The Harlequin, our newsletter. Thank you.