



THE HARLEQUIN

VFFN Newsletter—FALL Edition—2018

After an extremely hot and dry summer, there was little hope that fall would be different, but we experienced a beautiful autumn. The hiking season was lengthened, and the colours were spectacular.

Enjoying that fall weather were Rod Dixon and John Henry whose efforts to make a trip to the top of Tulameen Mountain, far left in the picture were unsuccessful due to the fact that the days were shorter, and they used a different way from previous times to access the top. On the way back they became bewildered (lost) and added an additional 5 kilometres to their trip!



Photo: Rod Dixon

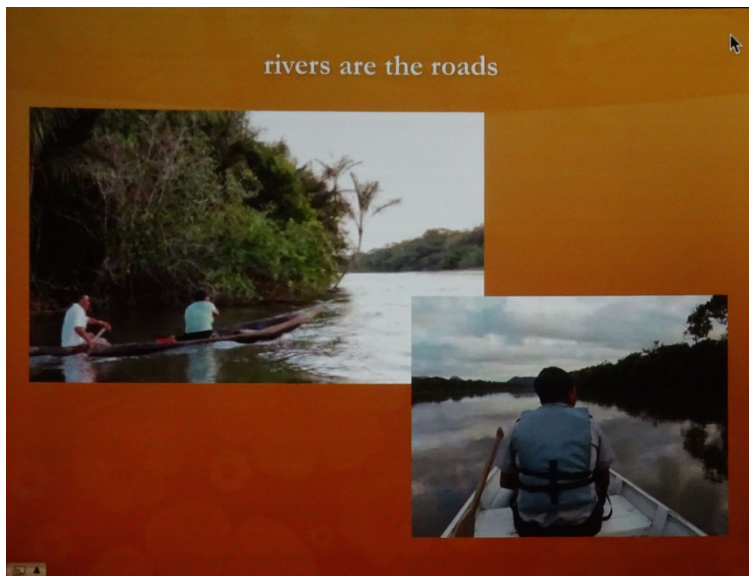
EVENING PRESENTATION:

DATE: September, 2018

TOPIC: **BIRDS OF GUYANA: LAND OF SIX PEOPLES**

PRESENTER: MERLE KINDRED

Ms. Kindred gave an interesting presentation on her time that she spent in Guyana. Initially, she went there as CUSO volunteer but found that her qualifications were not used to their potential. Before her tour of duty was finished, she visited some of the interior parts of Guyana and found that the people were keen on attracting tourists to the hinterland where nature tours such as bird watching would be an attraction and would help the country's economy. She volunteered for another work tour but this time with a project in mind which would help the local people set up eco-tourism resorts, as well as to promote local crafts. Ms. Kindred is not yet finished with her project but her vivacious personality and her enthusiasm will certainly benefit a local people who want to make their homeland a better world.



DATE: October, 2018

TOPIC: **BOBCATS & LYNX**

PRESENTER: ANDREW WALKER

Andrew Walker gave a very interesting slide show and lecture concerning his work for his PhD. Apparently, the Princeton area is almost the northerly limit of bobcat range, and the southerly limit of lynx range. Lynx extend right across Canada except for the prairies. There are a few anomalies to this statement, as there are still lynx in remote mountainous areas in the US (Yellowstone, for example).

There are other species of the lynx family in Europe. Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) and Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) are similar species, but with many differences in preferred habitat, prey, and even hunting habits. I was surprised to learn that the biggest bobcat can be bigger than the biggest lynx!

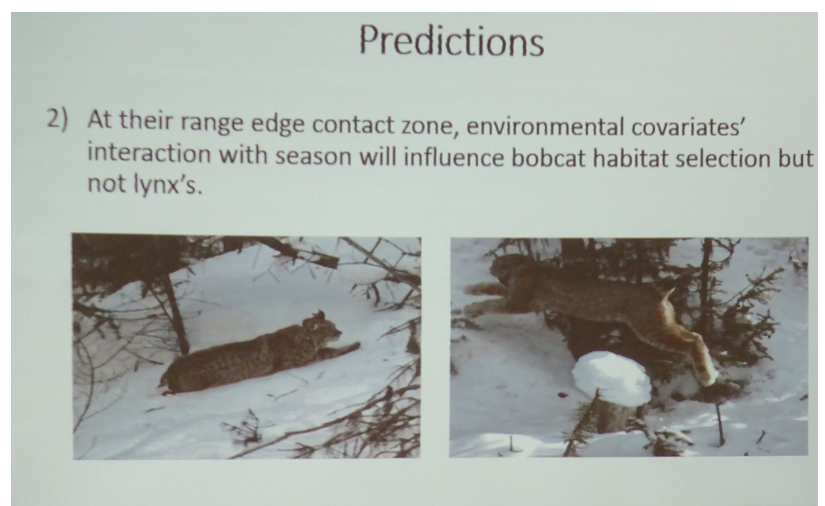
Bobcats, we learnt, have much smaller paws, more like a house cat; therefore, they cannot handle deep snow without huge amounts of energy wastage. They can sink up to their elbows in it. Lynx on the other hand have huge paws that provide flotation in the deepest snow, enabling them to chase their favourite prey the snowshoe hare. Bobcats will eat almost anything from roadkill to rodents. They have even taken down deer!

If you find a lynx track in deep snow you can pass your hand underneath it; the snow is hardly compacted. Whereas, with a cougar (*Felis concolor*) the extra weight will compact the snow to a much greater depth.

With the advent of global climate change, tracking these animals with radio collars show how their hunting territories are changing, how different travelling strategies occur, and how the animals are coping with changes. Andrew is continually engaged all winter long in trapping, collaring, and recording his findings.

VFFN members were glad that he chose to share his experiences with a small but receptive audience. Many questions were asked and answered.

Submitted by: John Henry



The first show a bobcat struggling in deep snow; the second shows a lynx bounding through similar conditions.

DATE: November, 2018

TOPIC: **INVASIVE PLANTS & STINK BUGS**

PRESENTER: LISA SCOTT

Once again Lisa Scott shared with VFFN her wealth of information on invasive plants. Every time she meets with us naturalists, we learn a bit more about a field of increasing concern.

What is an invasive plant/weed? It is one not native to the country where it now exists, and therefore, has no natural pathogens, such as insects, etc. and hence, uncontrollable. The most effective method of control or eradication is biological. However, in its new setting biologists do not know how the proposed method will affect other plants especially native or domestic ones. Without any pathogens present the invasive weed/plant thrives gleefully.



OSISS has now added invasive bugs to its agenda.

Toward the end of the talk Lisa introduced some of the bugs now identified as invasive. These are the fire ants, and the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug. This stink bug is a pest from Asia. It was introduced to N. America in 2001 and to British Columbia in 2015. The bug feeds on more than 100 different plant species. It can be identified from other stink bugs by the presence of distinctive white bands on its antennae.

Ms. Scott's presentation, as always, was informative and interesting.

UP THE ASHNOLA—SOUTH SIDE—NOV. 11, 2018—JOHN HENRY

When I was invited to hike up to the South Slope last week, I jumped at the chance! One more hike before winter sets in. The five of us drove down to the Ashnola and along Ewart Creek. The Ewart Creek Road was pretty rough so we left both vehicles near the start of the Webster Creek Trail. We hiked slowly up through two benches left by glaciers ten thousands years ago, past some very large interior Douglas fir and yellow dried grasslands. The well worn trail goes up high above Webster Creek away from the grasslands and into the forest—the shady side of the mountain.

After an hour or so we emerged from the forest with its many dead and dying firs onto “starvation flats”, a gorgeous open grassland with glorious views across the Ashnola to Crater Mountain with its snow covered peak. A few more forested trails and grasslands later, we went up the hill to check out the “A” frame. This cabin is opened to the public. It has a wonderful wood stove and makes a great overnight stay. Visitors have written their names all over the walls—interesting reading. We dropped down again and crossed Juniper Creek to Sheep Station, a couple of old cabins overseen by the Ministry of Environment for studying mountain sheep.



This is a great place to sit in the sun and eat lunch, taking in the view of Haystack Mtn., the end of Boxcar Mtn., and Red Mountain in Cathedral Park across Ewart Creek, about 2,000 ft. below us! From here we descended the South Slope grasslands to the Juniper Creek Crossing.



The log bridge and cable handrail were broken so we carefully crossed on ice-covered rocks! Lower down the trail crosses Ewart Creek, the old bridge is on the verge of collapse and may be gone by next spring. Evening was closing in as we followed the trail down to the bridge at the bottom. Because we had left the cars near Webster Creek we had to walk the last two kilometres along the road in the dark! A total hike of about 20 kms used up all the available daylight. A trip well worth doing!

Photos: John Henry

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The photo contest that SONC sponsored gave three of our members an opportunity to shine. Their entries were among the 100 (out of 600) that were selected to go on display. The talented three were Henk Piket (who had 2 of his photos selected), Ken Oliver whose entry in the waterfowl category won second place, and John Henry's entry the Barred Owl. The exhibition is highly recommended. It finishes in January.



Ken Oliver's Loon



John Henry's Barred Owl



Henk Piket's Landscapes

Contributions to the Harlequin are welcome. If you submit a photo, do a write up to go with it. Please send your submissions to Mary, vffnbc@gmail.com