



VFFN Newsletter – Winter 2020-2021

Christmas Bird Count

Submitted by: Cathy Lahaie

This years Christmas Bird count will be on Dec 19. Due to the Corona Virus we will not be looking for any help for driving and recording. If you have a bird feeder and would like to do a feeder count for us, this would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Cathy Lahaie at encmail@gmail.com or 250-295-7596 with your bird list.

Hummingbird Banding Update

Submitted by: Sue Elwell

As we all know, life changed this year with Covid-19. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the protocol at the very beginning and not even knowing if birds could catch the virus from humans, my banding season was at first put on hold. Once May rolled around and Dr. Henry relaxed some restrictions, I decided to go ahead with a very reduced banding schedule. In the end I did 4 sites instead of 7 or 8. Even these 4 sites were limited with early cancellation at one and cancelled days at others due to no volume in late June and early July. To date(might have another banding day), the Hummingbird Banding Group handled 288 birds with 245 new bands applied. The breakdown of the banded birds was 43% Rufous, 36% Calliope, 7% Black-chinned, and 13% Anna's. There was one hybrid, an Anna's Calliope cross which is always very, very exciting. In the nine years we have been in operation we have had 4 hybrids, two of which were Rufous Calliope cross and two Anna's Calliope cross.

Unfortunately, with all this extra time I did not have the opportunity to chase birds or butterflies as I did volunteer work at our church. That being said, in the last couple of weeks I have been enjoying Ken and Anna's garden as they have been having hummingbirds, flies, bees, butterflies and any other creature/insect that love nectar. Just a couple of days ago I was thrilled to find and get a picture of both an immature male Anna's and a Juba Skipper (butterfly)!!

Nature is always there to be discovered and enjoyed.

Muskratails

Submitted by: John Henry

Last week I was at Swan lake, strolling around enjoying a drizzly grey day. I stopped in the noon blind to have a gaze at the various “ducks” on the water. There were a few surprise visitors, six Trumpeter swans, a few juveniles included. All was calm until I noticed a swell of water behind one of the swans. A muskrat reared its head up and went straight for the swan’s tail. The swan, turning around and backpedalling, flapped it’s wings and was chased up into the thin ice, which promptly broke. After a few more half circles about the swan, the muskrat went about its business. The swan, for some reason, continued across the edge of the ice, breaking it as it went, to produce more open water. It progressed across the breaking ice for about 30 meters, until a larger area was open for the rest of the swans to “bottom–up” in.



Tundra Swan - Photo by Cathy Lahaie

Later I drove up to Separation Lake and as I was returning past Wayne Lake, which was partially ice covered. I saw a dark brown blob on the ice and wondered what it was. I reversed back toward the blob and tried to get off the busy road. As I watched the blob unfurled and became a young muskrat crouching by a hole in the ice. A further three blobs emerged from the hole, and shaking themselves became a muskrat family! Two trucks came down the road and the muskrats all disappeared down the hole.



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First Field Trip of the Winter!

John promised us stunning scenery, a commentary on the mine, and geological information. What he failed to tell us (a total of 7 persons) was that there would also be 15 cm / 6 in. of snow! BUT it was a beautiful day and the scenery was spectacular! The aspens which had not lost their leaves added beauty and colour to the vistas. We were just enthralled with the whole experience.



Photo by Johanna Nott

We also encountered some interesting instances. On the way up we met some maverick cows that had broken a fence higher up and now were heading to Hedley for the weekend. However, their owner was busy herding them back up the road. Then we met a young man who was on his way down to pick up a friend who was coming down speed gliding. We watched as he went down. He was doing spirals and somersaults in the air before landing safely by the highway. On the way back from our hike we met these guys again. One was going to repeat the performance; we trooped behind him to watch the take off event. The day was full of fun. Overall, we agreed that it had been an eventful and fulfilling day.

VFFN Membership renewal for 2021

Unfortunately all our educational evening programs and indoor gatherings are cancelled for the near future due to COVID. So the Executive is offering a 2 tier membership renewal system as there are no club activities.

Single \$30 or you may renew at \$20

Family \$40 or you may renew at \$30

Go to VFFN website to click on membership, fill out the application form and mail or give it to an Executive member.



Northern Pygmy-Owl - Photo by Cathy Lahaie



Long-eared Owl - Photo by Cathy Lahaie