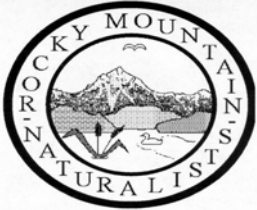


Rocky Mountain Naturalists Newsletter

RM naturalists newsletter is published quarterly

Fall 2006

Volume 3, Issue 3



Editors corner

Please send any articles or comments to
scoutfir@shaw.ca



Also, note that the deadline for articles
for the winter issue is December 22

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CLUB NEWS:

Check your emails for the next meeting of the RM Nats. usually at the Mt. Baker School. Check your e-mail for agendas and final locations.

Regular meeting dates for 2007 at the Mount Baker School

January 17, 2007 - 7:30 - 9:30 PM

April 4 2007 - 7:30 - 9:30 PM

June 4th week

October 3rd week

Outing leaders: Don't forget to jot down quick notes on your outing and pass them into the newsletter. Humour highlights, sightings and pictures work just fine.

Special note on the Christmas party!!!

Saturday December 9th, at Elaine Doran's at Columbia Lake,

12:00 noon till 4:00 PM

Potluck, salads, vegetables and desert, Elaine is cooking a turkey.

\$10.00 gift exchange

Elaine will send out directions

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Elizabeth Lake update (Tara Szkorupa)

Well it's certainly been a busy summer at Elizabeth Lake! Thankfully the rains are beginning now, temperatures are dropping, and we can all take a bit of a breather from the restoration work. First I'd like to extend a huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped out at the site. In my financial summary for our different funders I calculated our efforts to be close to 500 person-hours of volunteer work! A lot more work than I originally anticipated was required, and many club members stepped in to help as soon as the call went out.

A lot was accomplished this year. In the spring we:

- Printed another 3000 copies of the Elizabeth Lake Brochure. These brochures have been very popular with the public at the tourist information centres and businesses in Cranbrook.
- Met with partners (BC Parks, The Land Conservancy, Weed Warriors, Regional District) to plan the Elizabeth Lake Festival Day and exchange ideas about restoration activities.
- Hosted the Elizabeth Lake Nature Festival. This year, local school children and The Land Conservancy were also involved.
- Erected fencing around the perimeter of the site. The fencing was designed to exclude geese from the site and allow planted grass to become established. It had the added bonus of keeping people and dogs off the area. The fence was very effective - there were no observations of geese on the site until August, at which point the grass had germinated and a little grazing was no longer problematic.
- Planted many trees and shrubs. In April, the Naturalists planted over 400 seedlings. Shrub species included Chokecherry, Antelope Brush, Wolf Willow, Upland Willow, Saskatoon, Ceonothus, Prickly Rose and Shrubby Cinfoil. Tree species included Ponderosa Pine and Cottonwood. In June, the Naturalists, students from local elementary schools and The Land Conservancy planted seedlings and 1 gallon potted plants. Species included Ponderosa Pine, Aspen Poplar, Black Cottonwood, Willow, Saskatoon, Red-Osier Dogwood, Prairie Rose, Buffaloberry, Oregon Grape, Antelope Brush, Rabbit Brush and Juniper. We'll be monitoring the success of these plantings over time to determine which species have the best chance of survival.
- Disked and harrowed the restoration site. Disking destroyed much of the weed growth and incorporated decaying vegetation into the soil. Harrowing broke up soil lumps and prepared the soil surface for seeding.
- Picked rocks and placed these in piles to create habitat features for small mammals and reptiles.
- Broadcast and harrowed fertilizer into the soil before seeding. Fertilizer needs were identified based on the soil test results from 2006.
- Seeded the site with a cover crop of annual/perennial ryegrass and blend of native grasses suitable for upland conditions. The cover crop will provide initial ground cover and erosion protection until the native species are established.

And over the summer we:

- Irrigated the grass and shrub/tree plantings six times per week from June to September. This proved to be quite time intensive, as hoses and sprinklers had to be moved around the site to ensure even watering.
- Mowed and weed whacked emerging non-native plants.
- Provided a tour of the site for the Communities in Bloom judges.
- Hand pulled weeds throughout the site.
- Clipped back weeds and grass that were invading shrub and tree plantings and spread mulch around these plantings

We will be holding an Elizabeth Lake Committee planning meeting later this fall. If anyone is interested in joining this committee, or helping out occasionally at the site, please let me know.

Thanks again! Tara

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Update from the AGM for the FCBN (G.Ross)

Notes from the FCBN – FGM, Sept. 28th – Oct. 1st

Meeting with the many Naturalists from around the province is always a great stimulant for me. I become encouraged, hearing of all the clubs projects and activities as well as enjoying the greatly informative outings planned around the event.

A few notes that came out of the meetings that I think our Rocky Mountain Naturalist members would be interested in;

- **Fairmont Hot Springs Resort SOLD** - FHSR president Carol Seable announced Saturday, Sept. 23 that one of the valley's largest and oldest resort and development companies, was acquired by Ken Fowler Enterprises (KFE) of St. Catharines, Ont. This leaves environmentalists wondering about the proposed development of Columbia Lakes East Side.
- **BC Nature** is looking for a new logo to coincide with the new name of the BC Naturalist magazine.
- **The FCBN Website** <http://www.naturalists.bc.ca/> needs rearranging and improvement, not being used to it's potential.
- **Mountain Pine Beetle** - what should the local naturalists and the FCBN's part be in confronting this epidemic.
- **Ecological Reserve** warden and co-ordinator Eva Durance would like to encourage Regional ER wardens to meet locally in all areas of the province to discuss their progress and problems.
- **Canadian Nature Network** - established after the 2002 conference on the future of the naturalist communities in Canada, organized by the provincial federations of naturalists and Nature Canada. Sahara Weaver Kipp would like to meet with RMNats to help us reflect on their own activities and priorities and issues.
- **Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS)** - <http://www.wildlifetree.org/> an environmental stewardship program of the Federation of BC Naturalists that aims to create, co-ordinate, and assist a network of community stewards interested in conserving wildlife tree habitats through volunteer monitoring, landowner agreements, and community education in Southern BC.
- **Naturescape in Action** - included a very insightful presentation by the Manager of Environmental Services, Julie Pavey. An astounding overview of the City of Port Moody's Naturescape program on both civic and private lands.

Our first outing was a boat tour of Burrard Inlet and Indian Arm aboard the MV Oceanwatch. This included a look at the Burke Mountain Naturalists Purple Martin nest boxes on the dolphins (Aids to navigation found on Canadian waters, commonly known as buoys or channel markers) through harbour. We also enjoyed watching Steller's sea lions at the only research facility of its kind. Then a short stop to stretch our legs at Twin Islands, a portion of the Indian Arm Provincial Marine Park.

Early morning birding at 7AM both mornings was a challenge but actually very productive despite the fog and the number of birders out.

Finally on Sunday we toured the Minnehada Regional Park in at the foot of Burke Mt. In Coquitlam. We took the optional hike led by David Mounteney to "High Knoll" that offered a wonderful; vista of the confluence of the Lower Fraser and Pitt Rivers.

The following are some pictures of the events

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Fernie Naturalists start up

**Fernie Nature Club
by Bob Livsey**

A short note to the Rocky Mountain Naturalists letting you know that we are up and running with the Fernie Nature Club. Thanks to the FBCN as well as Greg and Sue Ross for your support.

Our first hike up the Tamarack trail at Island Lake was a great day despite the fact that I ill advised on the length of time it should have taken us and the degree of tiredness we would all have attain afterwards. It was a beautiful trail plenty of birds American Robins, a Thrush, Clarks Nutcrackers, Stellars Jays, Chickadees a Red Tail Hawk were a few and even the wildflowers were out. I found the Cadomin layer of conglomerate rock to be extremely interesting on our way up. Our next short evening hike to the Cottonwoods was also pretty neat and I'm sure that all there enjoyed it greatly including our guests from the Rocky Mountain Naturalists. Afterwards we also enjoyed the evening and dinner at The Currie Bowl .

Here is a short list of outings we have planed for the next month and the Rocky Mountain Naturalists are welcome to come along. We would appreciate your knowledge and insight.

Saturday, Oct. 14 . meet at 11:00 at the Aquatic centre and we will car pool to travel to Elko where we will take a hike on the trail that heads in towards Wigwam flats. Bring a lunch and I expect that we will be finished about 4:00 PM. Objective is to focus on what we see for birds and mammals. I am hoping that there will be some sheep in that area about that time of year.

Friday, Oct 20 evening - Meet at the aquatic centre at 5:00 PM and we will car pool and drive top Hosmer were we will hike into the old mining operation then up to the lighthouse and old mine entrances. We will be back to Hosmer before dark.

Thursday, Oct 26 at 7:00 PM We will be holding a general meeting where I hope that we can develop a strategy for the club, get people involved, and for that evening / will try to arrange a slide show or DVD type presentation.



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All of the above pictures were taken by Suzanne H at Elizabeth Lake, very nice indeed. Thanks Elaine for getting her to submit

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Special recognition for one of our members

Rocky Mountain Naturalist President, Peter Davidson presents Elaine Doran with a certificate of the adoption in her name of an acre of land in the Wycliffe Land Conservancy. Elaine is remaining a member of the Rocky Mountain Naturalists but has moved her home to Columbia Lake.



Historical Fall Bird Sightings in the Southern East Kootenay Trench From the Notebooks of Mildred White

By Dianne Cooper

The larches around Kimberley were noticeably tinged with orange the second week of September; a reminder to get ready for the influx of staging and migrating waterfowl and the mid-fall flocking of the medium-sized perching birds. Night-time temperatures have been dropping continually since late August and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Bluebirds, and American Robins responded by starting to flock up under the pines and aspens. Daytime temperatures tumbled from warm to cool after September 9, 2006 and raucous families of Blue Jays started marauding my neighbourhood, going farther afield from their birthing territories a few streets over.

Mildred White's notes from October to December point out interesting species and usual numbers of common species as well as the locations and areas for viewing:

Waterbirds:

Pied-billed Grebe - Wasa Sloughs:

Wasa Sloughs seems to have been very productive for this species in recent years.
20 were seen in October, 2000 from Prairie Road.

Western Grebe - Wasa Lake:

You may chance upon a dozen of these at the south end of Wasa Lake just like Mildred White and Anne Redfearn did on 29 Oct 1999.

Great Blue Heron - Wasa Sloughs:

The 10 herons seen by Mildred on 04 Oct 1998 on the brush piles out from the back road off Prairie Road may have represented the production of herons locally that year. Ten were also seen 10 days later by Mildred and Anne.

Canada Goose - Anywhere:

The largest single count of Canada Goose recorded by Mrs. White was a total of 200 birds on Wasa Sloughs 23 Oct 1999. Flocks ranging in size from 6 to 100 can be seen flying overhead anywhere anytime throughout the area in October and November, from Columbia Lake to Moyie. Even the upper elevation airways are byways for honkers; a flock of 100 was reported by Dennis Schimdt on 06 Nov 1995 flying over Kimberley. Mrs. White's records indicate only smaller flocks remain in the area in December.

Tundra Swan - Travelling South

In 1992 and 1996, the swans arrived early, being recorded the third week of October on Columbia Lake at Canal Flats and at Wasa Sloughs.

In 1995, 1997, 1998, and 2001 they arrived in the lower East Kootenay Trench in November with the largest single count of 24 birds on 12 Nov 1998 reported by Anne Redfearn.

Hooded Merganser - Thunderhoof Ditch

The all time high for hoodies was recorded by Mrs. White on 30 Oct 1998. She saw 28 of them in the roadside ditch across the highway from Prairie Road.

Common Merganser - Columbia River

The place to see large numbers of Common Mergansers may be generally inaccessible; Greg Ross reported seeing 1000 of them while travelling on the train north of Fairmont on 16 Nov 2001. Otherwise, family rafts of up to 20 individuals may be seen at Wasa Sloughs from the end of October to the middle of November as recorded by Mrs. White on 28 Oct 2000 and 12 Nov 1999.

Bald Eagle - Kokanee Rivers

Congregations of Bald Eagles were recorded by Mrs. White from the end of October to the first week of November.. This is the time Kokanee come to spawn in the tributaries of the big rivers.

Sixty-five Bald Eagles were seen in the Dutch Creek area of Columbia Lake/River by Greg Ross on 27 Oct 1993. Smaller gatherings of about 20 to 28 eagles may be seen around Skookumchuck in the areas bordered by Sheep Creek, Skookumchuck River and Kootenay River. Dates for Mrs. White's records from this area range from 28 Oct 2000 to 05 Nov 1996 and 1998.

Some noteworthy fall records:

<i>Species</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>December</i>
Wild Turkey	12 to 36 in 4 flocks in 1998, 1999, and 2000 in the Bull River and Fort Steele areas	<u>80 in a flock</u> , 12 Nov 1999, 3000 block Wardner Fort Steele Road; otherwise flocks of 14 to 45 in Fort Steele and Ta Ta Creek	none recorded
Clark's Nutcracker	15 in a flock, St. Eugene Mission, 1993	12 to 15 in 3 flocks in 1996 and 2000 around Kimberley and Wasa	28 in a flock, 16 Dec 1998, Kimberley
American Robin	10 to 12 in flocks in Kimberley and Ta Ta Creek, 1992, 1996, and 1998	24 in a flock 16 Nov 1997	12 in each flock on <u>16 Dec 1978</u> and 06 Dec 1997 in Kimberley
Bohemian Waxwing	no flocks larger than 10	<u>3000 in a flock</u> 18 Nov 1997 around Cranbrook; other flocks ranging from 30 to 1000 in 1964, 1992, <u>and odd numbered years from 1995 to 2001</u> in Kimberley, Ta Ta Creek and Wasa	2000 in a flock <u>still around Kimberley in 1995 and 1997</u>
Red Crossbill	15 to 50 in flocks around Kimberley and Ta Ta Creek in 1993, 1995 and 2000	10 to 50 in flocks in Ta Ta Creek and Wasa in 1992, 1993, and 1999	14 to 15 in flocks around Ta Ta Creek in 1993
Evening Grosbeak	no flocks larger than 10	flocks of 10 to 35 in Kimberley and Ta Ta Creek <u>in even years from 1994 to 1998</u>	<u>50 in one flock</u> 27 Dec 1995 at Mrs. White's Ta Ta Creek Residence; otherwise 10 to 40 in each flock around Ta Ta Creek in 1992, 1994, and 1995

19-Sep-06

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Mail to:
Rocky Mountain Naturalists
P.O. Box 791
Cranbrook, B.C.
V1C 4J5

\$25 for family
\$20 for individual

Name _____ Phone # _____
Address _____ Postal Code _____

FALL & WINTER OUTINGS

Oct 21st "Bull River - Wardner, Hatha Cr. Road"

Meet: Tamarack Mall - Staples End

Time: 9:30

Greg: 489-2566

Bring a lunch



Nov. 18th

Birding with Al & Kathy
"Wasa Via Wolf Cr. Area"

Meet: Black Bear Diner

Time: 9:30

Kathy: 427-4784

Bring a lunch



Dec. 16th

Fernie "Christmas Bird Count"
Bob 423-6699

Dec 17th

Cranbrook "Christmas Bird Count"

Greg - 489 2566

Dec. 30th

Kimberley "Christmas Bird Count"

Greg - 489-2566