

NEWSPACKET



Journal of the North Okanagan
Naturalists' Club

June-July 2025

Sagebrush Mariposa Lily
by Harold Sellers

NONC

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC)**P.O. Box 473****Vernon, B.C. V1T 6M4****Email****info@nonc.ca****Website****www.nonc.ca**

NONC acknowledges the presence of the traditional, ancestral and unceded lands of the Syilx and Secwépemc peoples who have resided here since time immemorial. We recognize, honour, and respect the Syilx / Secwépemc lands upon which we live, work, and play.

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The Rarest Birds Recorded in the North Okanagan

by Chris Siddle

Part Three – Wrens to Grosbeak

THIS paper is the third and final part of a summary of birds that are considered most rare, and, more importantly, out-of-range for the North Okanagan region. This summary is representative but not comprehensive. I have collected enough records that the list can be considered a list describing each rare bird's status rather than a complete collection of every sighting. The main sources of records were eBird files, recent Okanagan and North Okanagan checklists and *Birds of the Okanagan Valley*, British Columbia (Cannings, Cannings and Cannings 1987). Each account begins with a summary statement of the species' usual range that is closest to the North Okanagan.

Abbreviations used throughout the text:

BOKVBC = *Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia* by Robert A. Cannings, Richard J.

Cannings and Sydney G. Cannings. 1987. Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria.

Mobs = many observers

N Ok = North Okanagan Regional District

c = central

e = eastern

n = north

w = west

and combinations of cardinal directions.

PDF = Photo Duplicate File. A file of photographs of rare vertebrates maintained by the Royal B.C.

Museum, Victoria. The photographs were taken in the field to document a rare or unusual occurrence.

Ph = photo

Bewick's Wren: Resident throughout the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. In the past fifty years small numbers in Washington State have pushed northwards along the lowland valleys and streams e of the Cascades and now are resident in the S and C Okanagan. In the N Ok there are two records, a bird photographed at Swan L 3 Nov. 2016 (CS) and one at Rawlings L 9 Oct 2021 (ST).

Northern Mockingbird: Breeds regularly no closer than s-c Washington State; however, singles irregularly turn up as vagrants across s BC. Although there may have been a few records in the past, I have only one sight record, a single at McLennan Road, Vernon on 4 Nov. 2000 (CS).

Sage Thrasher: BOVBC contains the only N Ok record: a pair nested at Okanagan Landing 5-7 June 1925 (ACB), a site "some 75 miles north from [its] nearest colony."

Brambling: A Eurasian species and casual winter visitant to North America. One record for the N Ok: 28 Nov 1998 Springfield Marsh (PLM, m obs), Learmouth Road, Lavington.

Lesser Goldfinch: Breeds locally in extreme s-c Washington State. Spreading northwards with increasing vagrancy to s BC since about 2000. So far only one documented N Ok sighting, a single photographed near Lumby 7 March 2023 (BK fide ST).

Le Conte's Sparrow: The closest breeding locations for this secretive marsh species are n-e and n-c B.C. Only one N Ok record: (one at Swan L 15-16 Nov. 1983 (PRa; mobs. – PDF 1022) (BOKVBC).

Brewer's Sparrow: This species has two distinct races, the Sagebrush Brewer's that breeds in the

continued on page 4

NONC

Rarest Birds continued

Great Basin n to the s Okanagan Valley, and the Timberline Brewer's that breeds in subalpine of the Rocky Mountains. One record, race uncertain, photographed at Swan Lake Nature Park 21 Sept 2019 (CS).

Sagebrush Sparrow: Breeds in the Great Basin as close as c Wash. One record for the N Ok: 2 March 1996 (CS) along Grey Canal Rd. Five other single records for the rest of Ok Valley (Cecile and Ocana 2023).

Green-tailed Towhee: Breeds in c and e Oregon, s Idaho and s-c Montana. One was discovered along Whitevale Road sw of Lumby on 4 Oct. 2019 and remained in the area for about 3 days (ST; mobs.). It was photographed. So far this is the only Okanagan record, though the species has been seen on Vancouver Island at least twice.

Common Grackle: Breeds in c Alberta and BC's Peace River as well as very locally in the East Kootenays. Adult male seen with aggregation of Red-winged Blackbirds at O'Keefe Ranch 26 Nov 2022 (CS).

Great-tailed Grackle: Breeds only as close as n California. Phil Gehlen discovered a female in cattails along Okanagan Landing Rd. in 5 Dec 1993. The bird, the second record for BC, attracted many observers from the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island and remained in the area throughout Dec.

Ovenbird: Breeds across s-c Canada including ne and n-c B.C. One N Ok record, a singing bird detected off Harris Creek Rd. near Lumby 26 June 2005 (CS).

Prothonotary Warbler: Breeds in the se US. One record for Vernon 10 Oct 2011 (CS).

Blackpoll Warbler: Breeds across n BC in the boreal forest. One record for Vernon: Grey Canal Rd 25 Aug 1995 (CS).

Blackburnian Warbler: Breeds in n-c Alberta. One N Ok record: an imm. or female along MacLennan Rd, Vernon, in a mixed flock 29 Aug 1995 (CS).

Prairie Warbler: Breeds throughout the e US from e Texas to Maine. A small population breeds in Ontario around the e end of Lake Ontario and ne Lake Huron. One record for the n Ok at Polson Park, Vernon mid-Oct 2020 to about Oct 30 (GG; m. obs). Two other records for the S Ok.

Photo below: Prairie Warbler at Polson Park Oct 2020 by Scott Thomson



Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Breeds locally in ne BC. Casual transient throughout BC's c interior. One record at a bird feeder at Okanagan Landing 30 May 2018 (IF-ph.) An adult male, possibly the same bird, was photographed at 8830 Okanagan Landing Road 28 May 2025 (IF). Three other Ok records (BOKVBC).

continued on page 5

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Rarest Birds continued

Observers: (EA) Eric Anderson; (ACB) Allan C. Brooks; (DB) Denise Brownlie; (JMC) Jean Cannings; (RAC) Robert A. Cannings (RJC) Richard Cannings; (RuC) Russel Cannings; (SGC) Sydney G. Cannings; (SRC) Steve Cannings; (CC) Chris Charlesworth; (ACr) Allan Chartier; (BCr) Bonnie Chartier; (MC) Mary Collins; (TC) Tom Collins; (GD) Gary Davidson; (IF) Inge Friesen; (GG) Glen Goerzen; (JGr) James Grant; (KG) Karl Gruener; (MH) Margaret Helm; (BK) Brian Krog; (HMo) H. Moore; (PLM) Pat McAllister; (JM) J. May; (MN) Mark Nyhof; (AP) Al Preston; (Pra) Phil Ranson; (CS) Chris Siddle; (ST) Scott Thomson; (JvD) Jack vanDyk.

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For weeks I have suspected that Northern Flickers have nested in one of our Blue Spruces. I doubted that a flicker could excavate a hole in the hard wood of the main trunk with the cavity going unnoticed, but I couldn't find a cavity anywhere. Then I thought of the wood that was exposed when the one spruce was cut off by the tree trimmers years ago. Would an exposed stump "face" soften enough for a flicker to work on? This morning I tracked down a nestling flicker calling from the top of the stump. I haven't yet been able to climb to examine the stump, but I suspect the flicker dug down on the horizontal surface, to create a unique horizontally oriented cavity. Here's one or two of the soon-to-fledge chicks photographed from the base of the snag. — Chris Siddle



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Adventures on the Adventure Bay Bluebird Trail

story & photos by Loretta Bemister
June 7, 2025

WELL we've had a couple of bear predations on our trail. The bears are very active in and around our community this year.

In the one case - the box was badly damaged (we were able to repair the other on site). Dana (my walking partner) recently took a "She Shed" course in Vernon and decided to tackle the repair. So she removed the box, cut a new

front flap from plywood she was able to find, cut a new hole the appropriate size, glued and screwed the sides, replaced all the signage, washed it (to remove any lingering bear smell) and re-hung the box last Saturday (May 31).

This was done within days of it being broken open by the bear. We walked today and decided to check the box — there is already a Western Bluebird nest in the box with 1 egg. I guess the Mom decided to get going again as quickly as she could. We were very excited to see that her quick work has already brought success.



As well, we are happy to confirm that all 6 White-



breasted Nuthatches (above) are surviving and thriving. I took the picture with my "scope" as they are close to fledging and I did not want to open the box.

Last pic is a box with the signs explaining to leave the boxes alone. We are hoping that the bears will pay close attention to the signs. 🌿



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Let's protect and enjoy our lovely lakes: A call to action for Okanagan waterfront property owners

by Roseanne Van Ee with help from the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)

THE Okanagan's stunning landscape, strong economy, and unique culture are deeply intertwined with our beautiful, expansive lakes. Unfortunately, these vital natural assets are facing significant damage from misuse. We need to act now before it's too late.

This is Part 4 of my "Protecting Our Lakes" series. (You can find Part 1 on protecting from our homes posted on Dec 6, with Part 2 and 3 on protecting from our properties on May 1 and May 29, on my Facebook page). This article focuses specifically on waterfront properties.

It might seem obvious that no one should be building, developing or storing items on floodplains or in riparian areas (along shorelines), yet with ever increasingly frequent flood years, we see all sorts of structures and equipment —shacks, farm sprayers, old vehicles, etc. sitting in water and mud. These items can leach toxins directly into the water eventually polluting our beloved lakes. You can report these infractions to 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP) Report all Poachers and Polluters.

Beyond visible debris, seemingly small projects can have a massive cumulative impact. Wood preservatives from docks and walls leach into the water, polluting it. Docks and shoreline retaining

walls often disrupt natural water circulation and alter the functioning of the shoreline, especially during construction. Activities like dredging, excavating in water, installing pipes or culverts in streams, and building shoreline retaining walls may appear minor individually. However, their accumulative impacts are immense, destroying vital habitats for waterfowl, fish, crayfish, clams, and other wildlife.

The best approach is to maintain native trees, shrubs, and other vegetation in riparian areas — our shorelines and waterways. This natural vegetation:



- prevents soil erosion by anchoring slopes and shoreline banks,
- filters pollutants and chemicals, preventing them from entering lakes and streams,
- acts like a sponge, absorbing water and releasing it slowly, which helps prevent flooding.
- creates shade, keeping water cool enough to inhibit bacteria and algae growth,
- and provides crucial habitat and food for Kokanee and other fish, eagles, osprey, shorebirds, and a wide array of other wildlife.

Additionally, we need to eliminate or improve the design and maintenance of septic systems which can
continued on page 8

NONC

Lakes continued

contribute to algae and bacteria growth in our waterways and lakes. If you have wetlands on your property, it's essential to maintain or restore them.

For excellent guidance, check out the [Okanagan Lakeshore Living Guide](#) at [OBWB.ca>tools>library](#). This invaluable resource was created for property owners who are fortunate enough to live along our shorelines and are committed to protecting their property from flooding and wave erosion, safeguarding drinking water, and preserving natural areas for future generations.

The combination of increased watershed disturbance — from population growth to toxic herbicides, and the increasing size, intensity and frequency of wildfires — is wreaking havoc on our lakes. Let's



become more aware and take action before it's too late. Please share this information with any property owners who could benefit from it. Thanks! 🌿

*Photos, this and previous page:
Natural shorelines help protect our lakes*

Joyce Heard — A week ago, we had a fawn “hidden” under our barbecue, which required us to change plans for dinner! The doe took the fawn and ambled slowly (as the fawn was still quite unsteady) to the adjacent yard where she nursed it. Another doe entered the yard and the fawn seemed to be approaching it. Mama deer suddenly rushed at the intruder and chased it out of the yard, came back to her fawn and continued grazing. After that, we found out that the doe actually had triplets, which she had hidden in three different places!

This afternoon, a bunch of magpies were creating a ruckus across the street in another neighbors yard with a large tree and tall grass, directing their wrath at a doe in the yard. They even started dive bombing the doe. She seemed really agitated and I could see her moving about the yard. Then suddenly a doe, presumably mama, erupted and started chasing the intruder doe out of the yard! The three fawns seemingly got the zoomies and went bouncing out of the yard too, looking somewhat like popcorn. A short time later, mama doe rounded up her fawns and herded them back to the cover in the yard. Meanwhile, the intruder doe had gone around the block and came back into the yard once again from the other direction. This time mama chased her out very aggressively and the intruder doe went running down the street. Mama came back and next thing, she and the triplets behind her, left the side yard where they have been for the past week, and headed to that neighbor's front yard. I can't see in there so don't know how far she has gone - I suspect she has moved her family to a safer place. I researched online and does do chase other deer away from their offspring for the first couple weeks to make sure they imprint who their mother is. I assume it was a barren doe that wanted one of her own. The fawns are about 2 weeks old now and move very quickly, although lacking in direction! Maybe that is the plan to confuse a predator.

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New crayfish species identified: Okanagan Crayfish

by Harold Sellers

In early June CBC Radio Kelowna aired an interview with Eric Larson, the co-author of a new study that had found a new species of Crayfish in Okanagan Lake. He warned that the new species is already at risk (*because of its very limited habitat area-ed.*). Mr. Larson is an associate professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois.

Upon hearing the story I was reminded of an article I did for *Newspacket* a few years ago (November-December 2022 issue). I had caught a crayfish in Duteau Creek at Dure Meadow Road, south of Hwy 6. At the time everyone would have thought it was the Signal crayfish, the species expected to be here and found in many areas of Canada and beyond. But it lacked markings that were indicative of the Signal species.

I found an e-mail address and wrote to Prof. Larson, sending him my photographs. He immediately wrote back, saying: *Thank you for sending these images. Yes, I think this is likely the newly described Okanagan Crayfish, Pacifastacus okanaganensis. The claw morphology and lack of white spot at joint of the movable finger supports P. okanaganensis, and I think the rostrum morphology looks right. Great find - thanks*

for sharing it.

Here's two of my original photos. You'll note that there are no white spots on the claws. Now we know that this new species is found in other local waterways, not just Okanagan Lake. How cool is that! 🌱



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Rare Dragonflies and Damselflies of our area

Editor's Note: I recently came across the document mentioned below. Plug the title into Google to get a copy. Perhaps some of our readers will discover a rare dragonfly or damselfly this summer!

We quote just a portion of the survey report below and also found some illustrations of several species.

A Survey of Rare Dragonflies and Damselflies (Odonata) in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys,

for the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
Victoria

Contract CRS01

31 January 1998

by: Richard J. Cannings, R.P.Bio., Dennis St. John,
Gordon Hutchings
Cannings Holm Consulting

INSECTS and other invertebrates form an abundant and tremendously diverse component of the biodiversity of British Columbia.

Most groups of invertebrates are difficult to survey, since taxonomic problems and sheer diversity make accurate identifications problematic or impossible. In a few groups of large insects (dragonflies and

butterflies, for example) identifications are relatively straightforward, since good keys are available and the number of species is rather low. There are only 84 species of Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) in British Columbia, and identification keys and a summary of their known distributions have been produced by Cannings and Stuart (1977). Odonates are thus an excellent candidate for preliminary invertebrate surveys in British Columbia.

Dragonflies are also important predators in wetland habitats. These ecosystems, particularly those in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys, have been heavily impacted by human activities and development in this region continues at a fast pace (Cannings et al. 1987, Hlady 1990). The diversity



and abundance of dragonflies in these habitats may prove to be a good indicator of their overall health.

For these reasons, we carried out an intensive survey of almost all wetland sites in the Okanagan Valley and, to a lesser extent, in the Similkameen Valley in 1997. We concentrated on a suite of 12 species that were known or expected to occur in the area and that were candidates for threatened or endangered status:

above: Sweetflag Spreading
left: Emma's Dancer

continued on page 11



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Dragonflies and Damselflies continued

Sweetflag Spreadwing (*Lestes forcipatus*); Emma's Dancer (*Argia emma*); Vivid Dancer (*Argia vivida*); Hagen's Bluet (*Enallagma hageni*); Lance-tailed Darner (*Aeshna constricta*); Pronghorn Clubtail (*Gomphus graslinellus*); Olive Clubtail (*Stylurus olivaceus*); Western River Cruiser (*Macromia magnifica*); Lake Emerald (*Somatochlora cingulata*); Twelve-spotted Skimmer (*Libellula pulchella*); Western Pondhawk (*Erythemis collocata*); and Yellow-legged Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum vicinum*).



above: Western River Cruiser

left: Twelve-spotted Skimmer



BC Nature, also known as the Federation of BC Naturalists, is an organization serving natural history societies, other environmental organizations, and individual naturalists across the province of B.C.

NONC is one of 64 clubs and groups that hold a membership in BC Nature. Those groups and the individuals who are members of BC Nature, total almost 7,000 people!

There are many reasons NONC is a BC Nature member. These include supporting the work of our provincial society, drawing upon its expertise and resources to aid in our programs and efforts, and to have access to insurance for our club, members, and activities.

Our membership in BC Nature is also why you receive the *BCNature* magazine (either by e-mail or by postal mail) and the periodic Nature's Voice e-news.

NONC's vice-president, Eric Kowalski, is our rep to BC Nature. NONC president, Harold Sellers, is the vice-president of BC Nature.



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NONC CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETINGS

NONC monthly meetings are held in the Emerald Room at The Schubert Centre for Seniors, 30th Ave., in downtown Vernon. No entry fee. Members and non-members welcome. Coffee and cookies served!

Next meeting : 7:00 pm, Wednesday, September 3rd. Speaker to be announced.

SATURDAY NATURE WALKS

Join us Saturdays at 9:00 am. Visitors welcome. Dress for the weather. We do a lot of birdwatching, so bring binoculars if you have them. No dogs please. See list below.

DR 1 & 2 are generally suitable for almost anyone, of any age. However, if you have issues of mobility and/or stamina, you should speak to the leader before attempting.

DR 1 Easy — Suitable for most people. Mostly paved or good-surface path, fairly level with some gentle climbs.

DR 2 Moderate — Suitable for most walkers and hikers with no mobility or endurance issues. May have longer distance with steeper hills and switchbacks, some uneven and rough path.

June 28 – 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk on the Grey Canal Trail in Coldstream, between Buchanan Road and Warren Road. There and back, as far as we can go in about 2 hours. Meet at the new laneway access to the trail on the north side of Buchanan Road, east of Grey Road. Enter through an unmarked gate between 8585 and 8467

Buchanan Road. Contact Harold at hikerharold@gmail.com

July 5 – 10am-1pm

Join the Friends of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park and the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk to celebrate the 50th year anniversary of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park.

This will be a day to celebrate the diverse and engaged community who champion the stewardship of Kalamalka Lake. On this commemorative occasion there will be an opportunity to hear about the Park's vibrant history, join a volunteer-led nature walk, as well as enjoy cake and refreshments. The formal festivities will begin at 10:00 am, with additional optional activities from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm. The event will be taking place in the grassy day use area between Jade and Juniper Bays.

July 12 – 9am DR 3

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the BX Creek and Falls Trail. Meet at the parking area on Star Road. This walk is three hours and sections of the trail are steep, rough and slippery. Contact Marnie/Paul at mpw660@telus.net

July 19 – 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Bear Valley Trail at Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park. Meet at the park entrance at the Cosens Bay parking lot on Cosens Bay Road. Contact Margaret at Mhubble@telus.net

July 26 – 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk in Ellison Provincial Park, loop on the Nature Trail and Beach Trails. Meet in the first beach parking lot. Contact Jean at Jean.amatt@gmail.com