

NEWSPACKET

June 2024

**Journal of the
North Okanagan
Naturalists' Club**



Lazuli Bunting
photographed by
Charlie Peti

NONC



North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC)

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LIFE MEMBERS

Ray Arlt*	Kay Bartholomew*
Joan Heriot*	Phil Jones*
Peter Legg*	Malcolm Martin*
Frank* & Mary* Paul	
* deceased	

PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Contact the following if you have questions.

BC Nature	Eric Kowalski 604-600-6725
Bluebird Trails	Margaret Mackenzie 250-542-2712
Botany	Margaret Mackenzie 250-542-2712
Christmas Bird Count	Don Cecile
Conservation	Harold Sellers 250-307-3543
Cools Pond	Rod Drennan 250-545-4999
Hummingbird Banding	Louise Breneman 250-542-4050
Nature Walks	Ruth Drennan 250-545-4999
Newsletter	Harold Sellers 250-307-3543
Speakers	Bruce Tattersall 778-874-4614
Swan Lake	Joyce Heard, Robert Hettler, Margaret MacKenzie, Chris Siddle, Marnie Williamson
Swan & Eagle Count	Norbert Maertens 250-503-8790 & Rod Drennan 250-545-4999
Trips	contact the club
Website & Social Media	Harold Sellers 250-307-3543

Annual Membership Dues:

Couple/Family	\$50
Single	\$35

see nonc.ca

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Hummingbird Banding Leader: Gail Loughridge

BEFORE moving to the Okanagan, Gail Loughridge and her husband Jim, belonged to the Victoria Naturalist Club. Here they discovered the work of Cam Finlay, a Canadian author, naturalist and master-bander. He was associated with the Hummingbird Project, a part of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) located in Victoria, BC. The banding of hummingbirds at this location was initiated by Cam in 1998.

After Gail and Jim put up a feeder in their backyard in Victoria, Cam came to their house at 7 am one morning in February 1998 and set up a banding station where he banded 2 or 3 birds. With Cam as the bander, Gail held the birds, thus beginning her 24 year involvement with hummingbirds.

Gail and Jim moved to Vernon in 2002. They put up hummingbird feeders in their backyard and were excited when hummingbirds came to their feeders. Cam kept in contact with Gail and he came to Vernon in 2004. This was the first location a hummingbird had been banded in the BC Interior. A friend of Gail's also had Rufous and Calliope hummingbirds so Cam and Gail checked these out as well. Cam used this opportunity to teach Gail how to identify the species and their age, and how to band the birds. Cam later certified Gail and she received her banding permit while keeping Cam as her mentor through her banding career. Hummingbirds are only handled by trained banders, certified through the Canadian Bird Banding Office in Ottawa. The Banding Office issues scientific permits to capture and band migratory birds in Canada under the authority of the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

Interesting fact - hummingbird bands are the only ones that are formed by hand, due to their small size. Bands come in a strip and they are cut to the correct size for each species and then formed into a circular shape, e.g. adult male rufous is a 5.6 mm band; adult female rufous is a 6.2 mm band.

It is also interesting to note that Gail was instrumental in starting the process of producing reference sheets for each of the hummingbird species, in order to help with identification of adults and especially the juveniles, which are more difficult to identify.

As Gail was the only certified bander in the North Okanagan area, she recruited volunteers to help with the banding sessions. She trained her helpers to trap the birds and record the data: species, age, sex, band number, fat deposits, parasites, culmen length, etc.

In 2007 Gail began to train interested members as sub-banders under her permit, which resulted in more birds being banded at the sessions. Typical banding sessions last for two hours. More locations were secured such as Buchanan Road, Kalamalka Lake, Lavington, Lumby, Sunset Properties and Whitevale Road.

In 2010 a site in Lumby was chosen to participate in The Hummingbird Monitoring Network (HMN) of North America, which is focused on monitoring and studying hummingbird populations to obtain important information that supports conservation of these magnificent creatures. Trap counts are done at HMN sites providing important data on the bird numbers over the banding season. In 2013 a site on Okanagan Lake off Westside Road became a secondary site for trap counts. These two sites continue to provide important information on

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Gail Loughridge continued

fluctuations of bird numbers at the sites over each banding season.

To advance the local base of banding knowledge Gail has organized and hosted several hummingbird banding workshops in Vernon. These involved a hummingbird banding session early in the morning followed by lectures for the rest of the day. Invited guests have included Susan Wethington, PhD from The Hummingbird Monitoring Network and Alison Moran, PhD who is the head of the Hummingbird Banding Program in BC.

It is important to note that Gail has volunteered over 1000 hours of time in the banding of hummingbirds in both Victoria and here in the North Okanagan. It is for this significant contribution of time, dedication and mentorship that Gail is being recognized with an entry in the Book of Honour of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club.

Gail and Jim remain active members of our naturalists' club and are avid birders in the region.

Submitted by Louise Breneman April, 2024

Editor's Note: Gail recently stepped down as leader of the Hummingbird Banding Program. Louise Breneman has taken over.

Why do some birds stand on one foot?

www.allaboutbirds.org

photo and additional notes by Harold Sellers

BIRDS will often stand on one foot to minimize heat loss. Some birds with fleshy feet, such as doves, have relatively short legs and can hunker down so their warm belly is pressed against their feet while perched. Some birds have longer legs that make this far more difficult. These birds will often hold one foot inside their belly feathers to minimize heat loss, and often switch back and forth between their feet. This Wilson's Snipe, photographed recently at the Swan Lake Nature Reserve Park, is an example.



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Climate Action Ripple Effect

story & photos by Roseanne Van Ee

THE Climate Action Ripple Effect - CARE program - created waves in our community recently. On May 27th many people attended the Community Climate Expo in the curling rink, featuring about 100 local groups, organizations, agencies and individuals caring for our environment. Norbert Maertens, Robert Hettler and I helped at the NONC booth. SENS, Climate Action Now, ABNC, City of Vernon, RDNO, SD22, Invasive Species Council of BC, BC Grasslands, TOTA, Roost Solar, and many more had displays with representatives there.

Then the next day, about 400 students, with their 15 teachers, 60 mentors and more, packed the hall, along with the students' fabulous climate action displays for the CARE Student Summit showcase. Students from high schools from Vernon to Lumby participated, with projects that began in March. There were waste reduction, eco-friendly transportation, energy and buildings, nature and biodiversity, agriculture and food, human health and culture, economy and entrepreneurship categories.

I happened to mentor two groups. Two grade 8 buddies from Lumby, who love being outside, came under my wing. I took them on a hike along the Salmon Trail and introduced them to a few native trees and plants. They really enjoyed learning about them and later went out on their own to take photos of the plants while enjoying the outdoors. They put together a fabulous Lumby ReWilding (AKA NatureScaping) native plant display. Originally their display included sample branches and pieces, which featured in their school

presentations, but unfortunately they weren't allowed to bring them into the curling rink. They were surprised and delighted that their mayor, Kevin Acton, popped by their display and mentioned that he is re-wilding his yard. The boys, Ebani and Lincoln, said that they will probably carry on with their project.

The afternoon culminated with short speeches, awards, prizes and entertainment that created quite a buzz with loads of cheers and applause. How often



do you remember wildly cheering on your teachers?

CARE was originally dreamt up by a group of local teachers who wanted the school district's strategic plan on climate action to include as many students as possible. Plus the City of Vernon's Climate Action advisory committee wanted youth engagement.

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CARE continued

These teachers knew that students lived in neighborhoods throughout Vernon, giving the best opportunity to inform, inspire and mobilize our community towards climate action. High school students have the passion and energy to influence their future rather than suffer the consequences of an unstable climate and unhealthy environment.



These teachers wanted community mentors for the students and soon realized that they needed help to plan and coordinate a special climate action learning opportunity. So they reached out to Jo de Vries of the Fresh Outlook Foundation — a registered charity that works to inspire community conversations for sustainable change. Together the teachers and Jo planned an event that would help the students, their

families, and the community, understand what actions can be taken to repair climate damage. Thus the Climate Action Ripple Effect (CARE) program was initiated.

Interested local teachers were trained to help students choose an environmental issue and create a climate action solution. Then the student groups chose an experienced environmental mentor from our community to guide them on their project, which would culminate in a community-oriented display similar to science fair exhibits.

This was CARE's third annual Student Summit showcase. In the first year about 120 students were involved. Last year about 160 participated. And this year it really took off, with almost 400 students! Please contact Jo at jo@freshoutlookfoundation.org if you'd like to help mentor students next year. This is such an important and inspiring program. 🌱

CARE
Climate Action Ripple Effect

Mobilizing student climate action in Vernon and beyond!

- CARE is an educational program facilitated by Fresh Outlook Foundation in collaboration with teachers, students, and local climate experts and advocates.
- CARE is teacher driven, student focused, and community embedded and supported.
- CARE is funded by School District 22, City of Vernon, Social Planning Council of BC, Fortis BC, Community Foundation of North Okanagan, other granting organizations, and a variety of local businesses.
- Thanks to our supporters who have made CARE a growing movement!

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Swan Lake Nature Reserve Park

Recent activities

Bat Box Experiment

Over the years, it occurred to me that bats like to roost behind the loose bark of Black Cottonwoods. Most likely because the bark offers a safe place to roost during the day, while the bark is a good insulator from the heat from the sun. As a way to simulate those conditions, four bat boxes made with Cottonwood bark have been mounted on the corners of the Swan Lake Nature Reserve observation tower. Having the bat boxes facing the different directions gives the bats the option of which one is comforting depending on the ambient temperature. Each bat box has a small tray to collect guano that could help to determine which species likes our experiment. — Norbert Maertens



survival of the over two hundred trees, shrubs and forbes planted this past May 1st, water reservoirs have been installed.

Presently there are five collapsible, 100-gal, rain barrels placed near the new plantings. Two more will be added for the plants near the tower.

Thanks to Stawn's Honey, our neighbour, we have a supply of water, which NONC volunteers transport to the barrels as needed. Anyone is welcome to give the plants a drink, when you think they need it. Buckets have been provided and you can record the date of watering on the buckets, to help avoid over-watering (which likely won't be an issue, given our climate!). — Harold Sellers



New Plant Watering

To help improve the chances for

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Salmon Arm Birding Visit

by Margaret MacKenzie

SALMON Arm Pier and the walk to Christmas Island is always a great outing. [In early May] we watched the Western Grebes close to us, near the pier, performing many of their courtship behaviours and one pair came close to performing the finale, the “rushing” ceremony.



The Cliff Swallows at the end of the pier were busy nest building and not paying attention to us as we stood a few feet away. Some mud nests had been destroyed or broken down and the swallows were busy re-building them. They flew back and forth in front of us to the nearby shore where they gathered mouthfuls of dirt and dried grass and flew back to their nests. Here, they deposited the wet mouthfuls of mud in ball shaped



pellets placing one on top of the other and moulding them into place, much like a brick layer might add on bricks. The resulting nest made up of 900 to 1200 pellets is a gourd-shaped affair with a small round tubular opening..... very clever really. The same

nests are used year after year so if you have them on your property you save the swallows time and energy which gives them a chance for a

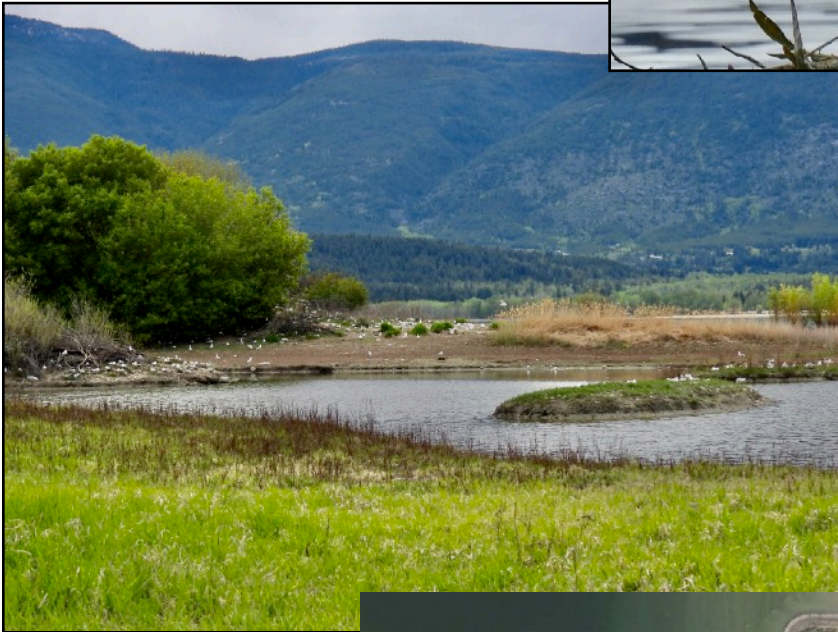
second nesting. Barn Swallow mud nests are slightly different and they too, will use their mud nests year after year and raise 2 and even 3 broods a season. We also watched a pair of Barn Swallows sitting on rafters under the building where their mud nests, quite different than the Cliff Swallows, were placed.

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Salmon Arm continued

Since Cliff Swallow and Barn Swallow populations have declined in our area, it is important to help them out by not removing nests. According to 'Partners in Flight' and "The North American Breeding Bird Atlas", both species are relatively stable and are of low conservation concern except for here in the Pacific Northwest where populations have declined. And, surprise, one of the reasons for their decline is by their nests being taken over by House Sparrows!



Christmas Island was built and dedicated in 1991 to Eric Christmas, a long-time Rotarian who was very involved in saving the foreshore and developing the sanctuary. The Google Earth photo below shows the island at a time in the year when water levels are lower, providing for access.

For information about the waterfront trails and opportunities for birdwatching visit the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society. <<http://www.sabnes.org/>>

At Christmas Island (above), about 130 Ring-billed Gulls (rough count) were also building nests. They were collecting mouthfuls of dried weeds, grasses, and mud just like the swallows! 🌿



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Introducing New Canadians to Our Natural Environment

by Norbert Maertens

[RECENTLY] a dozen people who are new to this country, came out for a nature walk, organized by the Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Services Society.

We walked the trail in the Swan Lake Nature Reserve and from the lookout tower they could enjoy a close view of the Osprey on its nest and the male bringing food.

Although several are still struggling with English as their new language, most of them could relate to several birds and plants as they are also found in their country of origin, while here we see them as invasive.

As they learned the English names, some of the participants did teach me the Ukrainian names (which I forgot by now, except of 'Fazan'). Nevertheless, as they recognized familiar plants and birds, it could be sensed that after the walk, their new country is not that foreign after all. 🌿



Recently Louise Wilcox, near Cherryville, alerted us to a Great Gray Owl spending time on her property. Louise kindly welcomed Jack VanDyk to come and take some pictures of this beautiful bird.



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Invasive, Toxic Shrub at Carlson Park tackled by NONC

by Harold Sellers

ON June 6, at about 9:30 am, four volunteers from NONC, along with a staff person from the Invasive Species Council of BC (ISCBC) met at Vernon's Carlson Park in The Commonage.

Our objective was to cut down and dig up as many Mezereon shrubs as we could in a couple of hours.

Approximately one hundred plants were dug up. There are many more still to be dealt with and we will be planning future days to try to control this introduced and dangerous plant.



be handled with caution, as the sap and juice contain the toxins. If poisoned, victims experience a choking sensation. Handling the fresh twigs can cause rashes and eczema in sensitive individuals.

Thanks to Lara Phillips of ISCBC, and my fellow NONCers Marnie Williamson, Kerry Richardson and Laurel McDonald. 🌱

above: a Mezereon plant dug up
left: early Spring blossoms of Mezereon
below: red berries of June-August



Daphne mezereum, commonly known as mezereon, mezereon, February daphne, spurge laurel or spurge olive, is a species of *Daphne* in the flowering plant family Thymelaeaceae, native to most of Europe and Western Asia, north to northern Scandinavia and Russia.

Daphne mezereum is very toxic because of the compounds mezerein and daphnin present especially in the berries and twigs. All parts of the plant are to



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NONC CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETINGS

No meets until September — 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!

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. Watch our website for updates and additions.

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 15 - 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club on the Kal Crystal Waters Trail, starting from and returning to Crystal Waters Road. Frequent ups and downs on this trail. Take Hwy 97 south from Vernon to Lake Country, turning left onto Crystal Waters Road (north access). Park and meet at trail entrance beside the road.

Contact Harold at hikerharold@gmail.com

June 22 - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk in the Cypress Drive area, Coldstream. A 2.25 km walk takes you up Vernon Hill onto Galiano Road (1km of steep uphill) a trail with beautiful views. Drive from Buchanan to Upland Dr, turn left onto Cypress Dr and park at the trailhead at the dead-end.

Contact Rod/Ruth at rdrennan@shaw.ca

June 29 - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Whisper Ridge Trail, Lavington. Approximately 2 hours - the first 20 minutes is a steep uphill with switch backs on a gravel trail. Short slightly steep sections occur throughout the remainder. Proceed 2.0 km on Brewer Rd from Hwy 6 then look for laneway to trail parking opposite 6845 Brewer Rd or park on Brewer Road.

Contact Jean at Jean.amatt@gmail.com



left: Thank you to Matt Boos for this photo of a Blue-winged Teal