

NEWSPACKET

Journal of the North Okanagan
Naturalists' Club

May 2025



Milbert's Tortoiseshell
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 Two – Jaegers to Shrike

THIS paper is the second 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 representative of each 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) which was invaluable for records prior to its date of publication. Each account begins with a summary statement of the species' usual range that is closest to the North Okanagan.

Acknowledgement: Many thanks to Scott Thomson who added missing records and proof-read the document as well as supplying photos.

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

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

Long-tailed Jaeger – Breeds widely across Alaska and arctic Canada e of Hudson's Bay. Generally an oceanic migrant well off-shore but individual vagrants appear throughout inland N America. BOKVBC gives two N Ok records: a female (unaged) at Okanagan Landing 30 Aug 1905* (ACB) and a juvenile male at the same site 2 Sept 1942* (ACB).

Ancient Murrelet – Breeds around coastal Haida Gwaii and s-e coastal Alaska islands. According to BOKVBC one was collected 26 Oct 1939 at Rawlings L*. Another was collected at Okanagan Landing 29 Aug 1942*. One was found dead at Vernon 19 Nov 1975*

Black-legged Kittiwake – Breeds on n islands of Alaska, n-e Canadian arctic, Newfoundland, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but spends non-breeding seasons on the open ocean. Migrant and winterer off the B.C. coast but very rare on inland waters. An immature was seen and briefly sketched at Swan L 10 Nov 2023 (CS).

Great Black-backed Gull – Breeds along the Atlantic coast of Canada and the United States. Records of strays w to inland waters are very rare. In earliest Dec 2023 a first-fall bird was discovered on a Penticton beach (CC; RT). The same bird first appeared in the N Ok on 14 Dec 2023 (DC; JVD). Subsequently this individual travelled the length of the Okanagan Valley, re-appearing at Penticton. It was last seen in the N Ok early Apr 2024.

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Rarest Birds continued

Great Black-backed Gull in first winter plumage, Okanagan Landing, Dec. 2023 ph by C Siddle

Slaty-backed Gull- An Asian species that strays regularly to Alaska and far less regularly down the N American w coast, and sparsely to the Great Lakes and n-e US. Very rare vagrant elsewhere. So far, the only record for the Okanagan Valley came on 11 Nov 1993 when an adult was discovered frequenting the Birnie Road landfill and the mouth of Coldstream Creek. (CS, mobs).

Least Tern- Breeds along the American Atlantic and Gulf coasts, sparingly along the S California coast and along major interior rivers of the contiguous American states. The closest point of regular nesting to the Okanagan Valley of BC is n-e Montana. The only N Ok record is of two adults that appeared for a few hours at Rawlings L 24 July 2024 (ST; CS, phs).

Clark's Grebe- At least one pair among Clark's Grebes has bred as close to the N Ok at Salmon Arm. Large colonies of Clark's Grebes are found in s Oregon, but Western Grebes dominate colonies n of

that location. The presence of possible hybrid WEGR X CLGRs and winter-plumaged Western or Clark's grebes have confused species identification throughout the Okanagan Valley. Nine sightings of birds that clearly showed the field marks of breeding plumage Clark's Grebes are listed in my eBird account. A single was with 15 Western Grebes on Swan Lake 6 Aug 1989 (CS). One spent most of July on Swan L in 1991. First seen on 2 July (CS), it was located again on 3 July (CS; GD); 10 July (CS); and 21 July (CS; PRa). Another single, or perhaps the same bird, was on Okanagan L at Okanagan Landing 29 June - 26 Sept. 1992 (CS). On 26 Sept 1992 it was also seen by several other observers (CC; DB; and mobs.). One was on Swan L 14 Oct 2002 (CC). One was at Head of the Lake, Okanagan L 22 May 1994 (RJC). Another was at the same site 29 July 1999 (RJC). Doubtlessly there are likely to be several sightings of single stray Clark's Grebes among flocks of migrating Western Grebes in the N. Ok. that I am unaware of.



*above, left: Least Tern
Photo by Scott Thomson, Rawlings L. 24 July 2024*

Red-throated Loon- Breeds extensively in Alaska and throughout the Yukon, NWT., and Nunavut.

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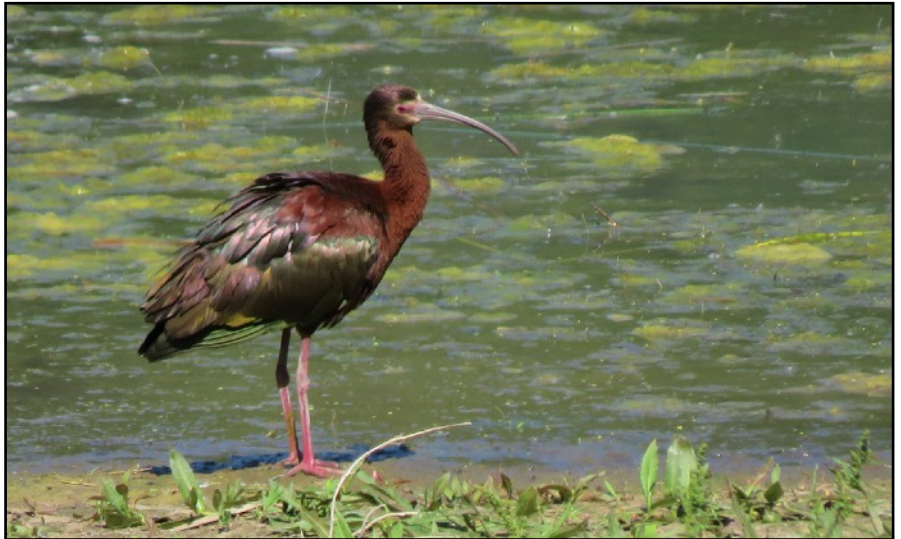
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Rarest Birds continued

Winters coastally on Pacific and Atlantic. Rare migrant inland. BOKVBC lists seven records from Okanagan L near Okanagan Landing scattered from 18 Oct. 1935 (ACB) to 15 Feb. 1964 (KG). My five sightings range from 4 Oct. 2016 (n Kalamalka Lake – ph), 9 Nov. 2002 at Head-of-the-Lake, 15 Jan. 2011, 8 Feb. and 12 Feb. 2011 at Okanagan Landing, Okanagan L, all records of singles. An interesting summer record comes from Neil Paprocki who photographed a Red-throat in breeding plumage from Everly Recreational Site on Okanagan L 17 June 2024. This location is just outside the North Okanagan.

Yellow-billed Loon- Breeds in the high arctic from n Alaska across n Nunavut. Casual to rare along the BC coast. Casual on inland waters. Records for the N Ok include 1 near Paddlewheel Park, Okanagan Landing Rd 20 Jan 1989 (WW), 1 on Swan L 18 Nov. 1992 (CS); 1 on Kalamalka L at Kekuli Bay Prov. Park 17-31 Nov. 1995 (PG; CS); and 1 also on Kalamalka L 22 April 1995 (MC; CS). Several more recent winter records for the c and s Ok.

White-faced Ibis- Closest colonies are in s Oregon, s Idaho, n Montana, and s Alberta. Several records for Ok. There are at least 2 records for the S Ok including 3 birds flying along Highway 97 n of Oliver on 23 May 2021 (DBe; SD). Five plus records for the C Ok include an early 1990s record (CC; m. obs.) 1 at the mouth of Mission Ck 5 May 2018 (KO-ph) and 1 at Carney Pond 1 Oct 2023 (BID-phs). The first N Ok record at Rawlings L 31 May 2021 (ST, thereafter mobs and phs). The second record was of a single in the marsh at the n end of Otter L on 23 March 2022 (CS).



White-faced Ibis

Photo by Scott Thomson, Rawlings, 31 May 2021

Black-crowned Night Heron- Breeds in s Alberta and s-c Washington State with a tiny wintering population at Reifel Island, Ladner. Currently a very infrequent stray to the Ok Valley but during the 1970s-1980s recorded several times, especially in the s Ok. BOKVBA mentions 27 non-breeding records by 1987. The species was first recorded in the N Ok on 3 Aug. 1908 (ACB). N Ok spring records included an ad at Swan L 20 Apr. 1980 (JGr; PLM) and 13 May 1980 (RJC, SRC, MH, MN) and 18 May 1985 (RJC; AP). Since then sightings in the N Ok have dwindled to nil, while during the 1970s and 1980s a small group could usually be found in the s Ok around Osoyoos L and Deadman Slough.

Least Bittern- Breeds locally throughout the eastern half of the United States northwards to extreme s Manitoba, s Ontario, and s-w Quebec. In the w States, very locally in s Oregon and California. BOKVBC gives the only Okanagan record as 30 July 1955 when an adult was found on 26th St, Vernon. (JM).

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Rarest Birds continued

Snowy Egret- Breeds locally with other colonial wading birds from s-e Oregon and across the s United States. The only record for the N Ok was of one at the mouth of Coldstream Creek, Kalamalka L, 25 Sept 1994 (CS).

Western Cattle-Egret- An invasive species to North America probably from Africa. First recorded in North American in the West Indies in the 1930s. Spread across most of the contiguous United States by the 1970s. During the height of its spread, individuals and even small flocks appeared in the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island and even the s BC interior during the 1970-1990s. Spread has slowed dramatically or ceased, with the closest colonies to the Okanagan now in s Idaho and nw Nevada. The first sighting (PDF 744) in the N Ok was from 2-14 Nov 1981 (JGr; MC; TC) BOKVBC. Sightings thereafter included 1 at km 1, Westside Road 30 Oct 1992 (CS) and 3 along L and A Cross Road 1 Nov 1992 (CS).

Great Egret- Regularly breeds as close as s Washington State, with post-breeding dispersal throughout the state from more southerly colonies (Oregon and California) in summer. Prior to 1987 records for interior BC were very few. The first Okanagan documented record was of 4 at Road 22, S Okanagan (BOKVBC 1987). The first N Okanagan record occurred with a single Sept 1991 at Swan L (m. obs) and was photographed 22 Sept (CS). One was seen by many observers 1 Aug (CS) to 30 Aug 2017 (JVD-ph) at Swan Lake Nature Park. Other N Ok probably exist.

Red-breasted Sapsucker- Permanent resident along the wet w coast of B.C. s to California. Also breeds in the wet interior of BC and presumably migrates to the coast to winter. BOKVBC lists one record for N

Ok: one collected at Okanagan Landing 18 Aug 1956. There are two records for the C Ok and several for the S Ok because the S Ok eBird region includes Manning Park, the western sections of which are within the breeding range of the Red-breasted Sapsucker.

Alder Flycatcher- Breeds in n-c and n-e BC. May occasionally breed within the N Ok at Wap Lake near Revelstoke. Further field work is desired.

Eastern Phoebe- Breeds as closely as the Peace River region of B.C. Only one sighting for the N Ok, a single photographed at Otter L 17 April 2016 (CS).

Tropical Kingbird- Annual fall transient from the sw United States to the Vancouver area and the outer coast of Vancouver Island. Thus far the only s BC interior sighting was of one photographed along Meadowlark Rd, Swan L on 20 Oct 2022 (CS-ph).



Tropical Kingbird - Meadowlark Road, Swan Lake, Vernon 20 Oct. 2022 Ph by Chris Siddle

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Rarest Birds continued

Loggerhead Shrike- Breeds as close to the s Ok as central Washington State and s Alberta. Vagrant to s BC many times with several N Ok records in BOKVBC: Okanagan Landing 28 Feb 1943*, Okanagan Landing 28 March 1927, Swan L 21 August 1976 (SRC, JMC), 15 Oct 1928* Okanagan Landing (Munro and Cowan 1947), and 1 Feb 1981 Vernon (KG). A very co-operative bird was found at O'Keefe Ranch 31 March 2019 (CS: mobs). The most recent record is of one along Horner Rd s of Lumby on 29 March 2002 (ST-ph).

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; (GG) (IF) Inge Friesen; 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; NP (Neil Paprocki); (AP) Al Preston; (Pra) Phil Ranson; (CS) Chris Siddle; (RT) Ryan Tomlinson; (ST) Scott Thomson; (JvD) Jack vanDyk; (WW) Wayne Weber.

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below: Lincoln's Sparrow, photographed by Jack VanDyk in 2024



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Grey Canal Trail

by Harold Sellers

THE Grey Canal Trail was extended last year with a 4 km addition to the east. These pictures show a new parking lot and access off Buchanan Road, between Gray Road and Ricardo Road, as well as the entrance off Warren Road, above Buchanan Road.

You can still park at the old trail entrance on Cypress Drive and walk east. The new access off Buchanan offers the most parking and is an easy 0.5 km walk to the Grey Canal Trail.

The parking lot also has a portable toilet during the Spring-Fall season.



At the Warren Road end parking is limited and users should be careful not to block private driveways and the cattle gate. 🌱



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Invest in the future of the North Okanagan naturalists' club

Donations may be mailed to the club in a cheque or sent by e-transfer to nonc2021@telus.net or sent by mail. All funds received will be spent locally. Please include your name and address in the message portion of the e-transfer.

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Monitoring Vernon's Garter Snake Dens

by Harold Sellers

THIS Spring the club put out a call for volunteers to monitor the garter snake denning location at North Vernon Park. We hadn't seen any pictures or received reports last year, so we had some concern that perhaps the snakes were not doing well.



Several wonderful NONC members stepped forward and watched the site in late March and through April.



Thank you to Catherine Christensen, Bonnie Anderson and Dennis & Marg Smith. They sent in many photos and reports.

We can now rest assured that the snakes are doing well and continuing to occupy what might be several underground dens. Snakes were observed at all of the rock piles, which sit atop the entrances.

Here are a couple of the photos sent to NONC. 🌿

Sunscreen from a Tree

photo courtesy

<https://www.theblissfulgardeners.com/natural-sunscreen/>

The aspen tree (*Populus tremuloides*) also commonly called quaking aspen, trembling aspen, American aspen, white poplar, plus many more names, are found in colder regions.

The side of the tree that faces the sun “perspires” and gives off a white powder coating (called bloom) that can be used to wipe on the body as a natural sunscreen. In the past, Native Americans used this powder for sun protection.



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Enjoy Our Bountiful Native Saskatoon Blossoms and Berries

by Roseanne Van Ee

OUR hills come alive each spring with flamboyant, brilliant yellow Wild Sunflower bouquets (AKA Arrow-leaf Balsamroot, Spring Sunflower) amid splashy, sparkling white-blossomed Saskatoon bushes (AKA Serviceberry or Juneberry). We enjoy these sensationally spectacular, colourful displays on warm, dry, undeveloped open hillside slopes throughout the valley in April and May.

Once the Saskatoon flowers are pollinated, bunches of berries soon start to appear. Then by early summer, the plentiful dark purple/blue ripe, sweet berries are a real treat for people, bears, birds, squirrels, deer and more. If you see Prickly-Pear Cactus blooming in June or July, the Saskatoon berries should be ready to pick.

Before European settlement, Saskatoons were so plentiful that they provided a deliciously abundant food source and medicine for the original First Nations Syilx/Okanagan people when most other vegetation was still unavailable. The Okanagan people called them Siya (pronounced as in “see ya later”). ‘Saskatoon’ may be an Anglicized version of the Blackfoot name for this bush ‘mis-ask-a-tomina’ meaning ‘fruit of the tree of many branches’.

The original Okanagan people had a myriad of uses for these plentiful berries. They enjoyed them freshly picked; a real treat for children. They often mashed and dried them into fruit leather and pemmican. But many were dried to use in soups and stews, or used as a sweetener with other foods or

rehydrated later. And the dried berries were a popular trade item with coastal people.

The berries’ size, texture and taste can vary from plant to plant. The Okanagan people recognized eight different Saskatoon varieties depending on where they grew, their shrub height (1-7 metres tall) and berry sweetness. These profuse berries are rich



in antioxidants, anti-inflammatory, antiviral and astringent properties. They contain calcium, iron, vitamin C plus other minerals. and are high in fibre. Ungulates browse on Saskatoon bushes throughout winter.

Pick Saskatoons to eat fresh or add to muffins, pancakes, puddings and pies, or make delicious jams or syrup. Swallow their small seeds or spit them out. I enjoy picking them. And any that I don’t eat fresh I collect to freeze on cookie sheets then store in yogurt containers for later use. They’re delicious canned too. My favourite is canned Saskatoons with French vanilla ice cream in February.

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Saskatoons continued

I also love making no-bake Saskatoon pie:

- Pour 1 cup fresh berries into a graham cracker pie crust
- Cover another cup of Saskatoon berries in water in a pot with 2 tablespoons of corn starch, cook and stir until the juice is clear (not cloudy) Adding sugar is optional
- Pour this over the pieshell berries and let cool
- Top with whipped cream, Greek yogurt or French vanilla ice cream

butterflies, and for yourself. I love watching our hillsides spring to life, then feasting on these berries. How about you?

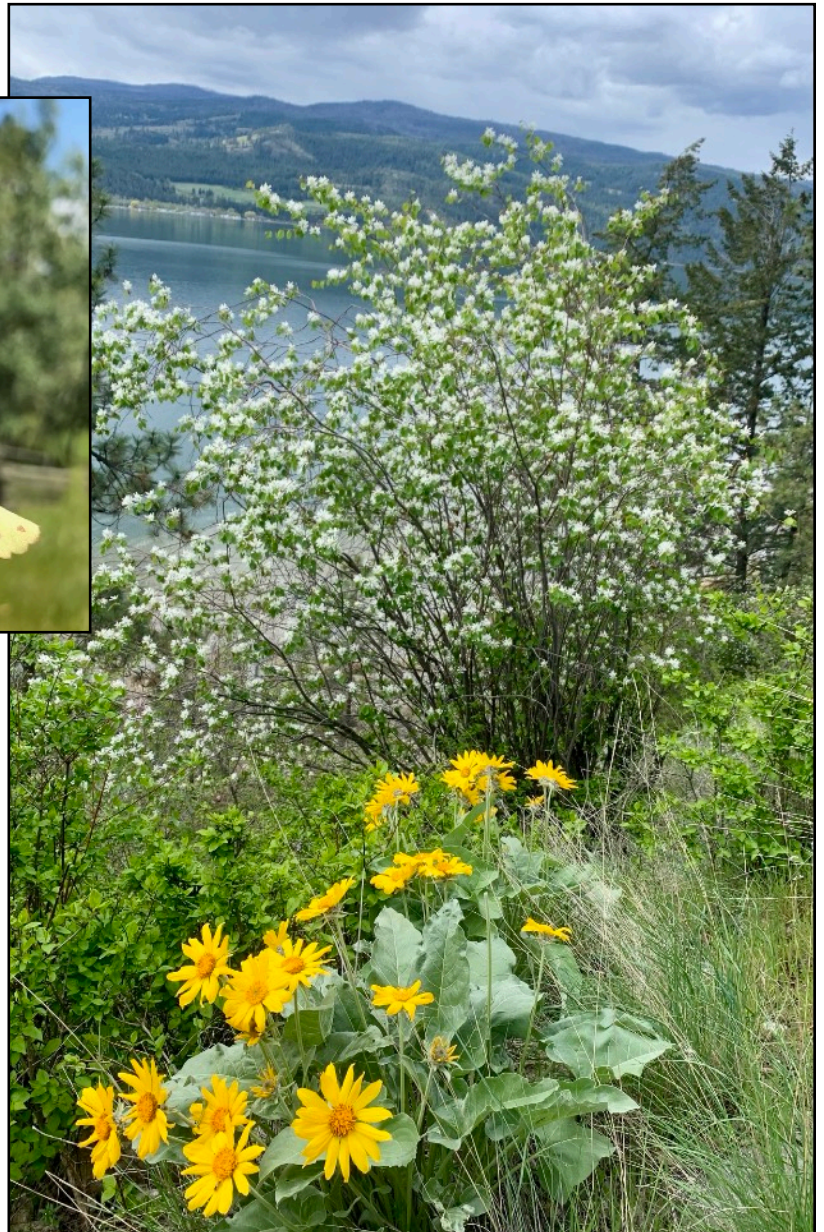
photo credit: Roseanne Van Ee

Wild Sunflowers (AKA Arrowleaf Balsamroot) and Saskatoon blossoms fill local sunny hillsides in April-May. 🌿



Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of the award-winning book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, has a delightful, little new book, *The Serviceberry*, about their abundance and reciprocity. Locally, Mikaela Cannon includes Saskatoon expertise in her book, *Foraging (as a way of life)*. Our library has them all.

Saskatoons are easily propagated from wild seedlings or rooted cuttings for a dashing spring display and copious summer berries. This is a tremendous way to Rewild/ NatureScape your yard to attract native pollinators and provide food for wild birds and



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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, May 14th:

Our guest speaker will be Mikaela Cannon on the subject of foraging. Mikaela is the author of *Foraging as a Way of Life: A Year-Round Field Guide to Wild Plants*.

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.

May 17 – 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Grey Canal Bella Vista Section, 6 km there and back. Take Bella Vista Rd towards The Rise. Turn right off Okanagan Hills Blvd onto Vineyard Way and meet at roadside parking at access to trail. Contact Jean at Jean.amatt@gmail.com

May 24 – 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Thomas Hayes Ecological Park in Spallumcheen Township. Take Otter Lake Cross Road exit from Hwy 97, follow this road behind the Tolko Mill and turn left onto Thomas Hayes Road. Contact Norbert at nmaer10s@gmail.com

May 31 – 9am DR 2+

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Okanagan Lake Lookout Trail at Predator Ridge. 4 km loop, up and down terrain, uneven surfaces. Views overlooking Okanagan Lake. Includes Birdie Lake visit. Meet in the trail parking lot on the left side of Birdie Lake Drive on the road towards Sparkling Hill. Contact Harold at hikerharold@gmail.com

June 7 – 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Grey Canal Bella Vista Section beginning at the parking lot at the end of Crosby and Sierra roads. We will walk toward the west. Contact Rod/Ruth at wereadquilt@gmail.com

June 14 – 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Barb Anderson property. The hills between Swan Lake and Goose Lake. Meet at the private residence of Barbara Anderson's property at 6747 Goose Lake Rd. Contact Marnie/Paul at mpw660@telus.net

June 21 – 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Grey Canal from McLennan Rd to Glenhayes Rd. Scenic walking trail, some uneven ground. Take McLennan Rd off L&A Rd and meet at trail parking on north side of McLennan Road at Grey Canal Rd. Contact Norbert at nmaer10s@gmail.com