

NEWSPACKET

September 2024

Journal of the
North Okanagan
Naturalists' Club

Kalamalka Lake
Provincial Park
&
Kalamalka Lake

NONC



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Annual Membership Dues:
 Couple/Family \$50
 Single \$35
 see nonc.ca

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Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park

by Roseanne van Ee

WE'RE so lucky to have Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park! A sentiment so often echoed by locals. But how were we so fortunate to get this?

Dedicated residents and local naturalists fought hard to preserve and protect one of the last remaining native bunchgrass ecosystems in the Okanagan for its natural beauty, wildlife and future generations to experience and enjoy. Park visitors enter a rare landscape preserved as a living museum of the low elevation Okanagan region. One steps back over a hundred years in time.

formed from an ancient beaver dam that separated Kalamalka and Wood lakes). Eventually, between the 1870's to '90's a few British settlers pre-empted and developed this land with residences, grain, a grist mill, small orchard, livestock, corrals and farm buildings. They called the lake Long Lake. In 1891 Lord and Lady Aberdeen bought 13,261 acres on the lake's northeast corner to develop the Coldstream Ranch with eventually 2,000 head of cattle, 70 horses and a mostly apple orchard. In 1923 Long Lake was renamed Kalamalka Lake. It's unsure if the lake was named after an Okanagan chief or is Hawaiian in origin. The western far reaches of Coldstream Ranch were used as a WW2 commando training area. Occasionally unexploded ordnances



From Kalamalka Lake Park's Lookout Trail. Looking down to Cosens Bay. (Barb Deglow photo)

For thousands of years this area was part of the Okanagan First Nations territory. They called Kalamalka Lake Chelootsoos, meaning long lake cut in the middle (the middle, Oyama's isthmus, was

(UXO) are still found in the park.

By the early 1970's Marathon Realty, a subsidiary of CPR, proposed buying 1,500 acres in the Cosens Bay area from the Coldstream Ranch for development of a posh resort and golf course. This

continued on page 4

NONC

Kal Park continued

was almost approved, but lifelong resident and Coldstream councillor and NONC member Denis Seymour knew the value of preserving this precious natural habitat. He alerted NONC.

So NONC advocated for the Kalamalka Lake end of Coldstream Ranch to be maintained as a park. They spearheaded a petition to declare it as a park with publicly accessible land. Support was overwhelming and there was no significant opposition. So Denis Seymour and MLA Pat Jordan went to Victoria with the petition to lobby the government to have the land protected. Joan Heriot adamantly spoke up for this park. She told me that she'd stop bulldozers if she had to.

In 1975, the BC government, with strong financial support from the Nature Conservancy Fund and others, purchased 2,459 acres. A local public advisory committee helped plan the Park's development in the 1980s with the Jade and Juniper beaches, parking lot and trails, to safely allow access with minimal impact on this rare grassland wilderness. A further 5,493 acres of protected area was added in 2008.

It's believed that Cosens Bay, Twin Bays and Juniper Beach, with its cliffs, beaches and attractive bays, together comprise some of the most beautiful freshwater shoreline in BC. This is a favourite bird watching area with at least 130 species. Meadowlarks, Western and Mountain Bluebirds and other endangered wildlife inhabit the park.

Walkers and joggers on the trails don't really disturb the natural ecology. A few hiking trails and the existing gravel roadway should be enough to let people experience and enjoy this special park without wrecking it. Why over develop this precious

wilderness? It's a wonderful place to visit! But, dogs off leash spread havoc! They can spread destructive, noxious weed seeds, frighten and sometimes kill wildlife. Thank goodness many of our members and others are involved in invasive weed pull parties there.

Make sure you read the interpretive signs at the parking lots and at Juniper Beach; they're very interesting. When you're at a viewpoint, stop and look towards Vernon, then look around and think about how lucky we are to have this park to remind us how this whole valley bottom once looked and functioned.

Some great resources:



A Guide to the Natural History of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park - 1986 by past members Joan Heriot, James Grant and Malcolm Martin (all in the NONC Book of Honor) can be purchased from **nonc.ca** - choose membership. It lists the park's wildflowers and their bloom times and has drawings and information on its wildlife. Our library has it too.



Friends of Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park have a wonderful brochure, Facebook site and **kalamalkapark.ca**



BCParks.ca

Possibly the oldest tree in the Okanagan. A twisted ancient Juniper. Maybe 350-400 years old. Past fires in the area wouldn't have reached it. Roseanne Van Ee photo



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Western Grebe Count on the North Arm of Okanagan Lake, July 2024

by Margaret Mackenzie and Chris Siddle

WESTERN Grebes are an at-risk species in British Columbia with only three nesting colonies known. Of an estimated 100,000 individuals in its North American range, about 30% of the world's population breeds in Canada, primarily in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba; however, a few hundred nest around 3 or 4 medium to large sized British Columbia lakes (Environment and Climate Change Canada 2021.) The best documented BC colony is at Salmon Arm where local naturalists hold an annual grebe count in August to count the number of adult and young Western Grebes. The Salmon Arm colony has benefitted from conservationists' attention (British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks 1999).



A large chick struggling to hoist itself further up the back of an adult. (photo by Chris Siddle)

Western Grebes are also known to nest along the North Arm of Okanagan Lake, northwest of Vernon, B.C. but the population and exact location of the North Arm nesting area is poorly known due to historic accessibility issues. A third colony at Duck Lake, Creston, is said to be dwindling. In the twentieth century the Western Grebe suffered complete colony extirpation at Williams Lake and Swan Lake, Vernon, leaving the species perilously exposed to further losses in BC and even eventual extirpation as a breeding species in British Columbia.

The number of nesting Western Grebes at the North Arm of Okanagan Lake is not well known. Previous recent counts of Western Grebes included a June 2021 count that found 221 adults and no chicks, likely because of the time of year. A second count that year was not possible because of prolonged wildfires in the area. In 2022 Jacobson by himself counted 67 adults and 1 chick. During the summer of

2023 Jacobson, who is interested in the grebes searched for grebe chicks on the lake in the three areas of the arm where they have been traditionally seen each summer. He was alarmed to find only adults during August and alerted local birder Margaret Mackenzie. Mackenzie kayaked east across the Arm near Naswito Creek and north to Head of the Lake during the second week of August and spotted 152 adults but no chicks in spite of the advanced date. As a result of two members of the team finding no grebe chicks, during the early autumn of 2023 Siddle published a brief note in BC Birding suggesting that it was likely that the North Arm Western Grebe experienced a complete reproductive

failure that year.

continued on page 6

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Western Grebes continued

On 30 July 2024 Margaret Mackenzie, Al Jacobson, and Chris Siddle ran three transects of the North Arm of Okanagan Lake in Jacobson's Larsen powerboat covering a total length of 25 kilometres from 1300 to 1530 hours. Jacobson piloted the boat at a slow speed south from Head of the Lake to the mouth of Naswito Creek across the lake from west to east and north back to Head of the Lake. When grebes were seen, Jacobson would slow the boat to an idle and

Photo below: A large chick securely on the back of an adult, giving the pair the look of a two-headed waterfowl.

Western Grebes nest in colonies in stands of emergent vegetation. The anchored or floating nest will contain about three white eggs that become discoloured as they are incubated by both sexes. The adults become the centre of the chicks' world. Chicks follow their parents everywhere. Chicks commonly climb onto the backs of their parents for warmth, protection and transportation.



the observers would count the number of adults and the chicks that accompanied them. Efforts were made to disturb the families of grebes as little as possible and to move on as soon as the team had an accurate count.

Beginning about 1300 hrs. the adult Western Grebes and their chicks swam out toward the centre of the arm, a pattern of movement observed daily by Jacobson in mid-summer. Although there were grebes scattered over this portion of the lake, Al

continued on page 7

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Western Grebes continued

Jacobson's observation that the Westerns congregated in three areas of the Arm north of Naswito Creek proved to be accurate. It was obvious that the majority of Western Grebes favour the mostly undeveloped eastern shore rather than the western shore which is lined with houses and summer homes. Western Grebes do occur (and likely nest) south of Naswito Creek, but our time was limited on the 30th so we left those birds to be counted by AI sometime in the future.

The results of the 2024 count were 198 adults and 82 chicks. All chicks were accompanied by at least one adult. Most were accompanied by two adults. Brood size on the water ranged from 1 to 3 chicks.

Our survey shows that the North Arm of Okanagan Lake remains an important breeding area for the Western Grebe in British Columbia despite the apparent nesting failure of 2023. However, the colonies along the North Arm remain the most poorly known in the province. We recommend that a North Arm count of Western Grebes be carried out annually to establish a base-line population estimate.

According to AI Jacobson who has watched the North Arm Western Grebes for several years, the best time to survey the area for adults and chicks would be in late July. Afternoon appears to be the prime time when Western Grebes families move towards the centre of the arm.

The authors wish to acknowledge AI Jacobson for the use and operation of his boat and his local expertise. Without AI's assistance, the survey would not have been possible. 🌿

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Photo below by Brent Wellander at Atlas link above.



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Watermilfoil Harvesting

compiled by Harold Sellers, Editor

<https://www.obwb.ca/milfoil/about-urasian-watermilfoil/>

EURASIAN watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) is a rooted submersed plant inhabiting the shallow waters of lakes in British Columbia and other parts of North America. The species is said to have been introduced from Eurasia in the late nineteenth century, likely in ship ballast, though the first documented occurrence was in 1942 in a pond in Washington, D.C.

Eurasian watermilfoil is very aggressive and once introduced to a waterbody will displace native aquatic vegetation in a couple of years. In the Okanagan, Eurasian watermilfoil was first identified in the Vernon Arm of Okanagan Lake in 1970. By 1974, the plant was well established in all of the mainstem lakes of the Okanagan (see photo from 1974).

The plants form thick underwater stands and dense mats on water surfaces. Colonization of new sites occurs by vegetative fragmentation as the plant develops auxiliary buds that separate at the node. Some auxiliary buds have root development even before detaching from the parent plant, allowing new plants to establish quickly. In the summer, stem fragments break off,

assisted by natural or man-made wave action. Once established, eradication of the plant is almost impossible.

The maximum depth where rooted plants are found will vary with the depth of light penetration; for Eurasian watermilfoil in the Okanagan this is typically about 5 to 6 metres deep, with some plants found up to 8 metres deep. Eurasian watermilfoil is well adapted to rooting in a variety of substrates, from sandy bottom to very silty substrate. Gravel substrates are not preferred. The plant will flourish in habitats enriched with nutrients, though it is often also found in oligotrophic environments similar to



the Okanagan lakes system.

Unlike many other aquatic plants, the limiting nutrient for Eurasian watermilfoil is nitrogen, not phosphorus. It is tolerant of low water temperatures, though most growth occurs in water temperatures 15°C and above.

continued on page 9

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Watermilfoil continued

The current Eurasian watermilfoil control program, methods, machinery and techniques were developed by the BC Ministry of Environment in cooperation with OBWB staff.

Several factors were considered during program development, including environmental concerns, public acceptability of control methods, effectiveness of control methods, weed re-growth densities, financial constraints, and local government needs and priorities.



Watermilfoil control is undertaken (or may be undertaken) at Okanagan Lake, Osoyoos Lake, Kalamalka Lake and Wood Lake



The current program includes **rototilling** in the late fall and winter and **harvesting** in the summer. Rototilling is a mechanical control method whereby rototiller blades physically remove the roots of the plant from the bottom sediments of the lake. It is also referred to as de-rooting.

Harvesting involves cutting the Eurasian watermilfoil plants at a depth of two metres below the surface. Harvesting takes place in the height of growing season when plant growth has reached the surface and is much faster than rototilling, but can interfere with recreation and requires disposal of the cut plant material. 🌱

In the Summer of 2024 the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) unveiled this new, German-engineered, \$680,000 machine.



The new machine will replace one of the OBWB's two old harvesters that were built in 1978 (pictured below).

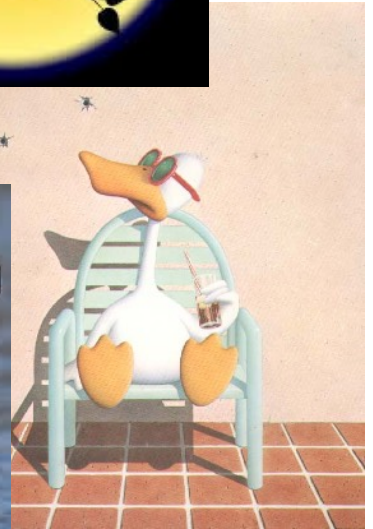
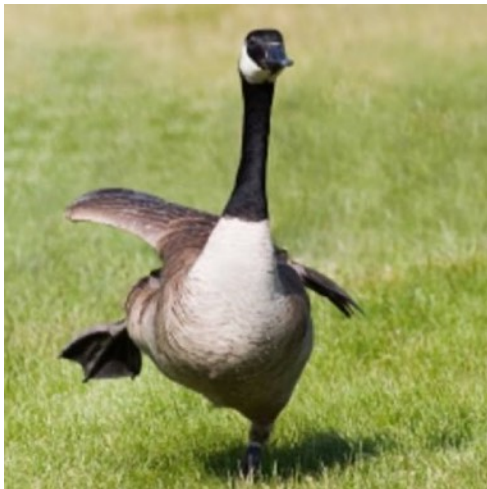


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Bird Idiom Quiz

by Harold Sellers, Editor

IDENTIFY these “familiar” birds, clockwise from bottom left. Answers are in the lower right.



- Clay Pigeon
- Stool Pigeon
- Hummer Bird
- Night Owl
- Sitting Duck
- Swan Song
- Eating Crow
- Silly Goose

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Upper BX Creek Trail

by Harold Sellers, Editor

This new trail was opened this summer. It is accessed from Silver Star Road (across from Sovereign Lake Road) and at Forsberg Road (right).



There is a 540 meter elevation change over its 5.8 km length. The top part is the steepest and challenging. It is well-used by mountain bikers but also used by hikers.

There is ample parking at the top end parking lot, but limited roadside parking at Forsberg Road.



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NONC CALENDAR

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 4: Our speaker will be Jerry Fochler, author of "Plants of the north Westside (after the fires)"

October 2: Henry James and Abby Godden on "Monitoring the Marshes at Swan Lake".

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. Also at www.nonc.ca.

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.

Sept 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. Contact Lynn at j-lsmith@telus.net

Sept 14 - 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk on the Grey Canal from Blue Jay to Turtle Mountain. Meet at the parking lot at the end of Blue Jay Road (Old Kamloops Road to Goose Lake Road then left on Blue Jay Rd). Contact Harold at hikerharold@gmail.com

Sept 21 - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk from Marshall Field to Vernon Creek to Kin Beach, Okanagan Landing. Meet in the Marshall Field parking lot near the tennis courts and ball diamond. Contact Rod/Ruth at rdrennan@shaw.ca

Sept 28 - 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a walk. Meet in the Kekuli Bay Parking Day Use lot. Moderate 1 km uphill, total walk 8 km, approx. 3 hours. We will walk along the Kal Crystal Waters Trail, heading south toward a connection with Rail Trail near Crystal Waters. Return on Rail Trail. Contact Karen at reczuchkm@gmail.com

Oct 5 - 9am DR 2

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 Marnie/Paul at mpw660@telus.net

If you have any questions about the walk, please contact the leader or the club.