

# NEWSPACKET

## Hummingbirds of North America



**May 2024**  
Journal of the  
North Okanagan Naturalists' Club

The birds are shown at approximately 85% life size and were painted by artist Megan Grochow ([www.meganartstudio.com](http://www.meganartstudio.com)).



**North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC)**

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



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### Miner's-lettuce

story and photos by Harold Sellers

**IN THE** Spring this small plant is an early arrival. As the name implies, it was used by prospectors, explorers and traders as a salad green. No doubt they adopted the practice from our First Nations. All parts of the plant are edible and a source of vitamins A and C.

Miner's-lettuce grows at low to mid elevations locally,

favouring moist soils in partially to fully shaded forested areas. It is also found well beyond the

Interior of BC, in other parts of the province. It has even been transplanted in Europe and other parts of the Americas.

A single plant is small in size, generally ranging from 2 to 10 cm across.

Many individual plants are often found in a cluster or patch.

The underside of the leaves is a lovely purple colour, while the topside is green. A plant will have several flowers that are small and usually white in colour. Below the flower head is a single disk-like leaf.

If you come across this plant while exploring our forests and trails, enjoy a refreshing snack, but leave most of the plants for continuing growth. 🌱





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## Okanagan Bats

by *Roseanne VanEe*

illustrations courtesy of *Bat Conservation International*

**BATS** are in the news these days, with white-nose syndrome and because of climate change. The Okanagan's low to mid elevation ecosystems have the greatest variety and population of bats in all of Canada because of its warm climate and diversity of terrain. Our warm summer nights allow young bats to fatten up before hibernation while insect prey is abundant.

Of the 15 BC bat species these 14 species live in the Okanagan:


\* Endangered or Threatened bats

- Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)
- Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)
- Silver-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*)
- Yuma Myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*)
- Californian Myotis (*Myotis californicus*)
- Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*)
- Long-legged Myotis (*Myotis volans*)
- Townsend's Big-eared Bat \*
- (*Corynorhinus townsendii* a.k.a. *Plecotus townsendii*)
- Western Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*)
- Fringed Myotis \* (*Myotis thysanodes*)
- Western Red Bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*)
- Spotted Bat \* (*Euderma maculatum*)
- Western Small-footed Myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)
- Pallid Bat \* (*Antrozous pallidus*)


Myotis means "mouse-eared". These are our smaller, brown fur bats.

Bats are ecologically important for controlling insect populations. Yet despite their importance to our ecosystems, there's more misinformation than fact, and more fear than respect, for these fascinating night guardians. We need to appreciate them.

Here are some amazing bat facts:


 Even though bats look like flying mice, they are more **closely related to humans** than they are to rodents.

 Bats are the **longest living** (~20-40 years) and **slowest reproducing small mammals on Earth**.

 Like humans, **young bats loose their "baby" or "milk" teeth** before their adult teeth grow in.



above: *Little Brown Myotis*

 Bats are very clean animals, and **groom themselves almost constantly** (when not eating or sleeping).


 Our bats have small eyes but are **not blind**.


*continued on page 5*


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## *Bats continued*


Their eyesight is good and they have excellent echolocation so they **do not become entangled in human hair.**


 A single Little Brown Myotis can eat up to **600 mosquitoes/hour.** And a nursing mother can **eat more than her body weight nightly** (up to 4,500 insects).

 While hibernating Little Brown Myotis heart rate reduces to **10 beats/minute (from 100-200 beats/min resting or 1,000 beats/min flying)** and can take **1 breath/hr.**

 Our bats can **squeeze into tiny crevices** like behind pieces of bark to roost.

 **Bat droppings (guano) in caves support whole ecosystems of unique organisms** including bacteria useful in detoxifying wastes, improving detergents, and producing gasohol and antibiotics.

 The **Pallid Bat** is **immune to the stings of the scorpions and centipedes,** upon which it feeds.

 In an attempt to escape moths sometimes **plummet to the ground when they hear the echolocation calls of bats.**

If you're curious about bats read [Bats of British Columbia](#) by David Nagorsen et al, 2022. This totally updated book is full of interesting information with numerous amazing colour photos throughout of bats close up and in action, and describes each bat species. Our library has it.

If you have bats check out [bcbats.ca](http://bcbats.ca) for details on safely removing bats from your house and properly placing bat boxes for them to move into. They'll keep mosquitoes down in your yard. Bat houses provide places for roosting and raising young, replacing the dwindling natural sites available to them. Installing bat houses can help build valuable bat species populations that eat crop and forest damaging insects.

### **Watching bats**

On hot summer days: roosting under eaves, in umbrellas, roll down shades, and shrubs, or under bridges, in crevices in cliffs, trees and abandoned buildings.

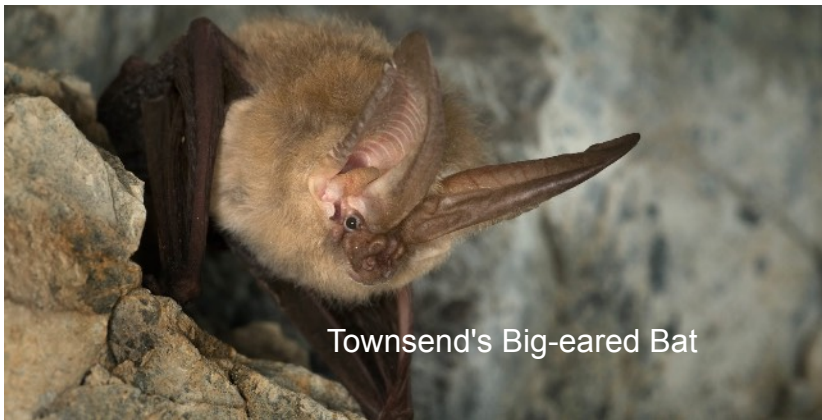
At dusk: catching insects above lakes, ponds, large puddles, slow moving creeks and rivers. Leaving bat boxes and maternity colonies.

### **Major threats to bats**

Habitat destruction - especially forests,

wetlands and wildlife trees (snags)

Pesticides, vehicle collisions, domestic cats, night sound pollution (road traffic, mining, etc), bat exterminations, wind turbines, solid mine closures, disease (white-nose syndrome), and now climate change. 🌱



Townsend's Big-eared Bat



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### Kestrel Love

story & photos by Margaret MacKenzie

ON Sunday, April 14th I watched a pair of American Kestrels that appear to have a nesting hole in an old house.



left: male with vole  
above: passing the vole bill to bill  
below: female now has the vole

more photos on page 7

I've seen them at this same spot other years too, and as I was focussed on the female, the male flew in with a vole and sat above her on a wire. He then quickly flew down beside her and they both bent over, chattered back and forth with each other so that for a moment I thought they might be feeding babies. However, he was giving her the vole!

This gift transfer is part of their courting behaviour and it appears the way his head is turned to her that the transfer was with their bills. They both





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*Kestrels continued:*



*above: female with the vole*



*above: male in front, female in rear*



*left: female with the vole*

Kestrel

Derived from Old French *crecelle*

"rattle", which refers to the sound of its cry. (source: Behind the Name)





## Swan Lake Nature Reserve Park

by Harold Sellers

the location where numerous concrete pipes rested for many years.

At the bottom left you can see the pipes in the process of removal. NONC arranged for this last December.

The fencing was constructed from salvaged fence posts and fence boards left behind from the days when the park was used for agriculture. Now new plants, such as clematis and rose, have been and will be placed here and will grow onto and around the fence. More projects are on the way! 🌿



Swan Lake continues to be a place of much activity.

The Ospreys have returned for the third year on the nest platform. The viewing tower provides great views.

On April 23rd five NONC members created two sections of wood fence at





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## Editorial from the Past: Musings on Turtle Earth

*Reprinted from the January 2000 Newpacket  
Article and illustration by Malcolm Martin*

**BALANCED** at this vantage point at the start of a special year, millennial or not, it is possible to look back over the 100 years or so since European settlement of the Okanagan began, and forward across another 1000 years of the same to the next similar landmark in time. Different people will see different things. To some the past has been a century of glorious achievement, a boon to human progress and prosperity. To others it may appear to have been a race for acquisition and gain without thought for the consequences.

Whichever you prefer, both visions are characterized by an ever increasing tempo of change and to project this acceleration forward for as much as another 100 years, let alone 1000, is a sobering experience,

Yet the negative consequences of such insatiable expansion here and throughout the world are entirely predictable - the fouling of our living space by pollution, unbalancing of climate, new and invidious diseases, uncounted extinctions, aberrant behaviours,

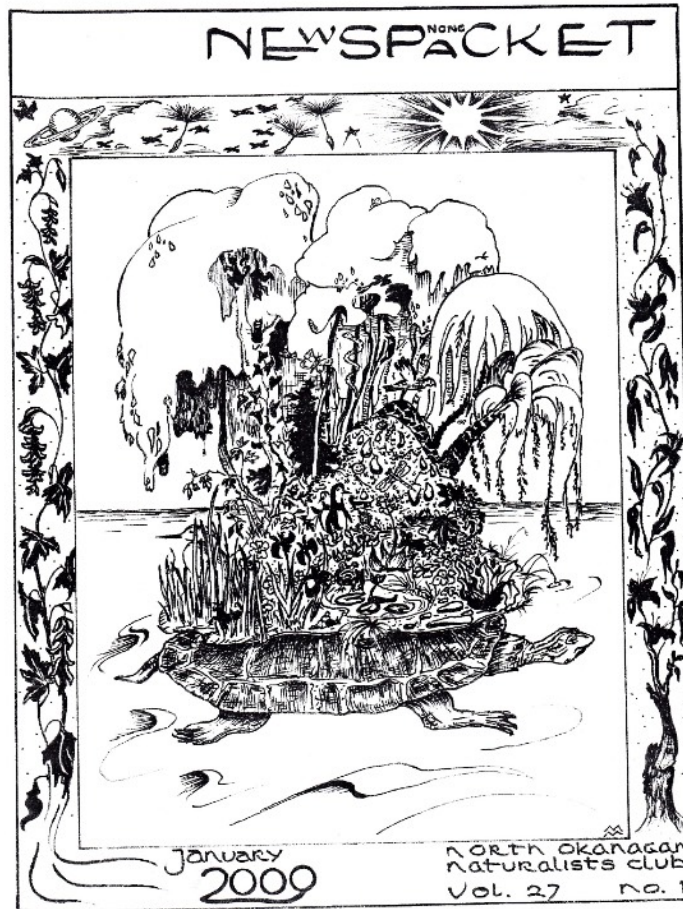
hunger and environmental distress to marginal populations - all these things occur when a species temporarily evades its natural checks and balances. This is true whether greenfly, rabbits or humans.

We may have learned that the world is not an island carried on the back of the Great Turtle but often seem to have little more wisdom beyond that. Of one thing, though, we can be sure and that is eventually Nature will strike a now balance, for good or for bad, there is no way to know.

But what, meanwhile, is a well-intentioned naturalist to do? There is no one answer. If you believe education can ever hope to overcome self-interest, then that is the course to take; if you believe people in high places can really be influenced by solicitation and entreaty, that must be pursued; if there is the possibility enough land to make a difference can ever be taken out of the hand of

humans and away from their covetousness, and placed under land-preservation charities, there is your route; and if you think only direct action is the answer, then that too must be undertaken. Only doing nothing is not good enough.

With a course and a cause many small people may be able to make a difference - the future might not be so bad after all. 🌱







## Grey Canal Trail Extension

by *Harold Sellers*

Coldstream Ranch still runs cattle on the Crown land above the trail and have retained rights to close gates



**THIS** Spring a new extension of the Grey Canal Trail was opened between Warren Road and Becker Creek ravine in Coldstream.

The ravine was the previous end of the trail, where users starting out from Cypress Drive had to turn back or turn north towards the access from Ranchlands Place.

Now the trail has been built across the ravine and follows the original water canal route to Warren Road. It is fenced on both sides.

At Warren Road there is limited parking with an entrance through a pole fence beside a cattle corral. When parking here, users need to be careful not to block private driveways or park in a private turn-around.

and access points when moving their cattle.

The distance between Cypress Drive and Warren Road is about 5 km. The trail is flat, except for the ravine. 🌿





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**Scotch Thistle — Get it now!**

*by Harold Sellers*

**SCOTCH** thistle (Cotton thistle) is a biennial or perennial, native to Europe and Asia, that reproduces through thousands of seeds that can survive in the soil for over 30 years. The seeds need moisture to germinate. Seeds can spread with the wind, but also in hay and water, and by attaching to clothing or animal fur. The plant creates dense stands that are extremely difficult for humans and animals to walk through. Scotch thistle is designated as a Regional Noxious Weed by the BC Weed Control Act, as well as a Management species by the BC Provincial Priority Invasive Species List.

Mowing has limited effectiveness for controlling Scotch thistle, usually only preventing seed production. Mow too early and plants can recover



and flower. Flowerheads that are cut when already in bloom may still release seed if left on the ground - so bag up and trash cut flowerheads. Make sure to mow before flowering to prevent seeds development. Repeated mowing may be needed on moist sites. 🌿



Small infestations can be dug out. Dig out rosettes (above) by severing the plant's taproot with a shovel or dandelion tool below the soil's surface. Flip the rosette over and leave it to die (above right photo).





## 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 : WEDNESDAY, May 1st, 7:00 pm.**  
Our speaker will be Megan Buers on Screech Owls.

### 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 4 - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk at the Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary in Coldstream. Meet in the parking lot of Sovereign Park on Kidston Road.

Contact Margaret at [Mhubble@telus.net](mailto:Mhubble@telus.net)

#### May 11 - 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk 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](mailto:nmaer10s@gmail.com)

#### May 18 - 9am DR 2

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk on the Grey Canal Trail between Warren Road and Cypress Drive, 4.5 km, flat. Park on (starting location to come from Marnie; watch your e-news or the website)

Contact Marnie at [mpw660@telus.net](mailto:mpw660@telus.net)

#### May 25 - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk on the BX Ranch Trail. 2.35km one way then return. Meet at the parking lot on East Vernon Rd. Harold at [hikerharold@gmail.com](mailto:hikerharold@gmail.com)

#### June 1 - 9am DR 1

Join the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for a Nature Walk on the Longacre Trail, Okanagan Landing. Meet at the small parking lot at east end of trail on Apollo Rd near Longacre Dr. Take Apollo Rd south off Okanagan Landing Rd.

Contact Rod/Ruth at [rdrennan@shaw.ca](mailto:rdrennan@shaw.ca)

#### WANTED:

Reports of Western Painted Turtles at Swan Lake

If you see turtles at Swan Lake — in the water, on the shore, in the nature reserve or anywhere on the lake — please let the club know. Sightings are being sought by the BC Wildlife Federation and NONC. E-mail location, date, time and quantity to [<naturevernon@gmail.com>](mailto:naturevernon@gmail.com) or [<hikerharold@gmail.com>](mailto:hikerharold@gmail.com).