



www.centralvalleynaturalists.org

Meetings are held the second
Wednesday of each month
(except July and August) at 7:30 p.m.
in the Seniors' Resource Centre
Michael Collins Room
2478 McCallum Road, Abbotsford

Mailing address: P.O. Box 612
Abbotsford, BC V2T 6Z8
Email: haroos@shaw.ca

NEWSLETTER

March 2007

*“To know nature
and to
keep it worth knowing”*

The objectives of the Central Valley Naturalists

- *To enjoy and interpret natural history*
- *To promote an understanding and an appreciation of natural ecosystems*
- *To promote the concept of stewardship of natural resources*
- *To participate as naturalists in public consultations related to questions of environment and development in the Fraser Valley*

Meeting Schedule



March 14, 2007

Members' Slide Night

Members will show natural history slides.

Science Fair Winners

William Jogia and Harleen Dhaliwal will also present their projects to us.



April 11, 2007
"What's so special about
Boundary Bay"
Naturalist and author, **Anne Murray**, will give a wonderfully illustrated talk on the wildlife and environment of Boundary Bay and the surrounding area from Robert's Bank to Langley. Anne's presentation will be based on her recent book "A Nature Guide to Boundary Bay".

May 9, 2007
McKee Peak stream mapping and wildlife inventory
Speaker to be confirmed

June 13, 2007
Annual Picnic

If you have any suggestions for a topic or speaker, please contact Wendy DaDalt at 604-856-2575 or Kathy Wilkinson at 604-854-3203

Don't forget to renew
your 2007 CVN
membership!!



FIELD TRIPS

The **FIELD TRIPS** could be of 2 to 4 hours in duration.

Please remember that all participation in field trips is at your own risk. For details on any of these Field Trips and carpooling, contact Jacqui Reznick at 604-557-1828

N.B. PLEASE CONTACT THE LEADER A DAY BEFORE THE FIELDTRIP OF YOUR INTENT.

This will greatly help in planning and carpooling, etc.

March 24 – Saturday

West Creek Wetlands – Langley

We will meet at **9:00 a.m.** at the corner of 264th & 72nd.

To get there take Highway #1 going west, exit at 264th and head north to 72nd Avenue.

Nathan Douglas will be our leader. Wear waterproof footwear as this is a wetland.



April 21 – Saturday

Earth Day Celebrations

More information available at the next general meeting.

PITCH-IN CANADA Week – April 23-29

Operation: Clean Sweep!

Do your part and clean up your street or your neighbourhood park.

April 28 – Saturday

Barnston Island - Surrey

Follow Highway 1 west to 176th head north on 176th until 104th and turn right and meet at **10:00 am** in the ferry parking lot. There is no parking on the island. Bring a lunch and bikes if you wish.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS



Sanctuary after the Winter Storms

Reifel Bird Sanctuary Field Trip January 21, 2007.

It was a beautiful sunny morning, and the group of 12 set off wading through the sea of Mallards that are trained to greet you as you enter the Sanctuary – especially if you are carrying a brown paper bag of bird seed! It is amusing to

watch young children, eye to eye with a Mallard drake, react. Some are excited to get so near, others want them to fly away, and others throw seed at them with all their might, while staying safely close to their own mothers. Reifel Bird Sanctuary is an interesting place for both young and old to see the wonders of nature.

Rock Pigeons controlled the sky over the shop, taking flight as people entered the sanctuary only to loop around and land back where they started from – on the roof overlooking the duck ponds. Nearby a bird feeder was busy with Black-capped Chickadees and House Finches. Red-winged Blackbirds singing in the bushes added to the tranquillity of the place.

We gathered further down the path to watch four Black-crowned Night Herons roosting in the trees beside the east pond. These birds are considered rare in BC. They are a medium-sized (approx 25”) stocky heron with a short neck. Their crown is black as well as their back, with grey wings and white under-parts.

American Wigeon, Northern Pintails and Mallards flew in overhead landing in various ponds in the sanctuary. They joined Buffleheads, Lesser Scaups and American Coots who are quite commonplace.

The hedgerows around the entrance were also a hive of activity – White-crowned Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, Spotted Towhees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Song Sparrows and Golden-crowned Sparrows kept the naturalists excited as they busily carried on foraging for insects and birdseed on this sunny day.

We continued leisurely along the NE path, eagerly looking for the Saw-whet Owl that some of us had the fortune to see on previous visits. Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadees would fly and land in your hand seeking sunflower seeds. These spoilt birds were not the least bit interested in boring millet seed!



Our stroll was interrupted by Wood Ducks skating on the frozen drains, their colours displayed beautifully by the morning sun. A Brown Creeper was spotted creeping up a Douglas fir tree, his slender brown body providing good camouflage. This bird is about 5”, and its long tail providing support as it searches for food while climbing the tree. And then we found the owl, this tiny Saw-whet Owl. Seven

inches, it is very small! It was tucked in under the branches of the tree, so much so that it took several of the group some time spot it in front of them when it was pointed out.

A flock of Canada Geese, more Mallards and American Wigeon could be seen in the fields to the east. They seemed quite content. There were a group of American Robins on the tops of some deciduous trees – sunning themselves. A Northwestern Crow called out as it passed by heading for a large tree in the distance.



The group split up for a while – some walking to a hide to see if there were any interesting birds on the NE pond, but it was frozen and quiet. Some of us found a Golden-crowned Kinglet and a Fox Sparrow. Another group saw a Woodpecker and a Cooper’s Hawk. The rest of the group just visited with other naturalists, just catching up on news and enjoying the day.

The inlet from the sea at the northern end of the sanctuary was patrolled by two Northern Harriers, effortlessly gliding above the rushes. The drainage ditch, full of water was home to Hooded Mergansers, a Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Shoveler, more Mallards and American Wigeons. An immature Bald Eagle surveyed the area from the top of a tree. In a neighbouring tree, a Rough-legged Hawk also surveyed the area. There were Trumpeter Swans near the shoreline, some sitting in the reeds, while others swam close-by.

Later we found ourselves observing from the top of the observation tower. On such a clear day, one could see the mountains of North Vancouver and across the sea to Victoria, as well as the western ponds of the sanctuary and the outer dyke. The Fraser River marine traffic was busy with barges and pleasure craft. Two Bald Eagles flew from the marshes to our right and followed the shoreline, no doubt looking for an opportunity to catch an early supper - but not this time. They lit on two poles out by the water’s edge. We were about to descend the stairs when we spotted a small hawk flying in front of us, it lit on a nesting box pole. Steve took a closer look through his scope – it was a Merlin.

We continued along the western dyke, stopping to look for snow geese, but unfortunately we were not in luck. We came along to find three Sandhill Cranes on the edge of the path. We got quite close and everyone was excited. Then as if by magic, we heard a strange call and looked around us to see four more Sandhill Cranes flying across the trees the other

side of the pond. They called and called and the three that were beside us started to call out too. The flying four, changed their course and landed on the path in the middle of our group almost crash landing on my mother-in-law and my wife! (No wonder Jackie insisted on us signing the waiver!). So the group stood within arms length of the Sandhill Cranes and had a great opportunity to get a close look.



On the return walk we saw a pair of Gadwalls, more Mallards and American Wigeons. The last section of path, we found another Saw-whet Owl. This time we had a great view as he was sitting at eye level in a deciduous tree.

Most of the group, hungry at this stage, relaxed in the warming hut and had lunch. Through the window, we were able to watch the pond and we saw a female Common Merganser, Ring-necked Ducks, and . . . (you’ve guessed it) more Mallards and American Wigeons! Nobody seemed to be in a hurry to leave after lunch, taking the opportunity to continue the lunchtime chat and watch the activity on the pond. There was a small duck on the little island beside the deck of the warming hut. What type of duck is it? Nobody could identify it with certainty. Everyone consulted their bird book, between us we probably had the entire collection of bird books published. But still nobody could identify. Then John Ireland came by with a group. It was a female Green-winged Teal. Of course, everybody then found it in their book!

Michael Manley



Wetlands on a Dry Day

*Silver Creek
Wetlands,
Mission
Fieldtrip
February 17,
2007.*

There was a good turnout for the afternoon's fieldtrip. **Silver Creek Wetlands** (incorrectly named on the signs) is a 112 acre conservation area which has been designated a wildlife sanctuary. Various partners came together to preserve this wetland which included Ducks Unlimited, the District of Mission and the Stave Valley Salmonid Enhancement Society.

We were met by Sharon Syrette and two friends, all active volunteers who gave us a talk on the wetlands. Deemed an extremely environmentally sensitive area, it is one of the few remnants of the historical Fraser River flood plain with intact ecosystem functions and productive foraging habitat for waterfowl. The Silver Creek Wetlands provide a rare combination of freshwater wetlands surrounded by agricultural land and forest.

Silver Creek, which runs through the property, is already designated by the Province as one of 15 sensitive streams due to its value for fish stocks, water flows, and restoration potential 1.

Our afternoon stroll took us along Silver Creek. Sharon told us that the new trees in the wetlands were planted by environmental education students and girl guides. One of the objectives of the volunteers has been the educational aspect of this important wetland and the beauty of nature. The Red-tailed Hawk perched on the top of the Cottonwood tree seemed to nod with approval.

The trailhead opens up to the first pond. There are three large poles standing in this pond, one of which has an eagle carving. There are a number of grass banks and then another pond just at the edge of the forest. There were two Hooded Mergansers and some Mallards swimming. The ponds are joined together by Silver Creek, and there is a larger pond down the path about half way cross the sanctuary. Here we saw Ring-necked Ducks, Gadwall, and Buffleheads. *The volunteers said that during the winter, otter were seen in this pond, a sight that really gave them a thrill.*

At the end of the trail is a concrete statue of a fish. It was made from the same mold as the bronze fish at the entrance to the Alexandria Bridge. The statue was erected by the environmental education program students to acknowledge the sites' significant environmental importance.



Future plans are to extend the walking path to the edge of the highway and to loop the trail back to the start. It would be great if the trail could somehow cross the road and link the dykes on the north bank of the Fraser River.

¹ "Flyway" Ducks Unlimited Canada, Volume 26, Number 4, 2005

On our way back we saw a Great-blue Heron perched in a tree. Passing by the ponds, we watched as a female Hooded Merganser struggled to swallow a fish that was quite the beak full. She almost lost it twice.

I would encourage you to pay the wetlands a visit. The directions are: - travel west on Lougheed Highway, turn right on Nelson and stay on the right side on Nelson and less than a kilometre is the parking area.

Many thanks to Sharon and friends for an enjoyable afternoon.

Michael Manley

Science Fair



First Prize - \$75.00 to William Jogia, a grade 5 student from Auguston Traditional School. His project called "**Thicket Link - The Game**" was, according to the judges, quite unique, well thought - out and well presented.

Second Prize - \$50.00 to Harleen Dhaliwal, a grade 8 student from Dashmesh Punjabi School. Her project on B.C.'s **Mountain Pine Beetle** problem was well done and she demonstrated a very good knowledge of the subject matter.



BC Nature (FBCN) Spring Conference & AGM May 3 to 6, 2007

North Okanagan: "Conserving our Watersheds and Grasslands"

Hosted by the North Okanagan naturalists Club
At Okanagan College, overlooking Kalamalka Lake in Vernon

For more information and schedule see the winter 2006 edition of BC Nature or go to www.naturalists.bc.ca

BC Nature Camps 2007

Join us now for springtime in the sunny **Okanagan** or late summer at **Bamfield**, on the Wild West Coast of Vancouver Island!

Okanagan

Leader: Pat Westheuser

The Okanagan Camp will take place May 6 to 11, right after BC Nature's Annual Conference and General Meeting at Vernon (May 3 to 6). The camp will focus on bird, wildflowers and hikes, in the spectacular scenery around Okanagan Lake. Accommodation is either in cabins or tents (your choice) and the cost is only \$450 for five days, which includes field trips and food – an amazing deal! This is an excellent chance to make friends and see a renowned nature destination in B.C. Register now by calling Pat Westheuser at 250-769-6605 or emailing hughwest@shaw.ca

Bamfield

Leader: Anne Murray and staff of the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre

The Bamfield Camp will be held at the Marine Sciences Centre on the shores of Barkley Sound, Vancouver Island. The date has been extended by a day: September 7 to 13. We go to Bamfield via the historic Lady Rose or Frances Barkley boat from Port Alberni, a four hour trip down the Sound. The Camp is a wonderful chance to learn more about the marine life of the rocky shoreline and ocean waters around the Broken Islands. There are also opportunities to learn more about the local Huu-ay-aht First Nations and the heritage stories of this remote area.

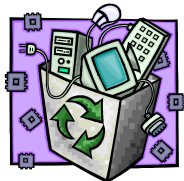
The cost, including meals, accommodation, field studies and labs, is \$900 per person. To register call Anne Murray 604-943-4460 or email sanderling@uniserve.com

These camps are for members only, but non-members need only pay an additional \$15 direct member fee to join in.

Electronic Waste Recycling

Advance Notice

In June you can recycle your used cartridges, cell phones, computers, printers, faxes, etc at the local recycling depot across from the transfer station. The



Food Bank sells the used cartridges to raise funds.



**Little crow foot prints in the snow
Marking a trail where ever you go
They swirl around on the sheets of white
Then freeze up hard in the dark of night**

**In the spring of the year with your
courtship dance
Making family ties when you get the
chance
Then showing your babes how to search
for food
While boisterous young ones play in the
woods**

**My early experience has set the stage
The First Nations herald your special traits
Some people think you're an awful bird
They can't see the wonder you bring to this
world**



**Your flashing eyes and your raspy voice
Make us all pay attention when you make
all that noise
It may be a possum or raccoon in a tree
But there is always a reason if you look
and see.**

**This is my ode to the crow on the street
He can't grocery shop and just takes what
he eats
So maybe next time when you look in the
tree
See a charming black bird and be glad he is
free**

(Written January 23, 2007 by Terry Broadworth)

CVN EXECUTIVE

President	Hank Roos	604-853-4283	haroos@shaw.ca
Vice President	Margaret Bunbury	604-852-2744	richard.bunbury@shaw.ca
FBCN Director	Margaret Bunbury		
Secretary	Herman Venema	604-826-6872	hcpvenema@uniserve.ca
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Hospitality	Kate Toth	604-859-4492	
Displays	Steve Howard	604-853-3495	s_howard@shaw.ca
Newsletter	Alice Roos	604-853-4283	haroos@shaw.ca

Membership Fees - Single \$25, Family \$30 which are due January 1 each year.
Membership provides the following benefits: 5 CVN newsletters per annum, automatic membership in the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, subscription to "The B.C. Naturalist" (4 issues per year)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Email: _____ Fax: _____

Particular nature interests? (optional) _____

Expertise which could benefit the CVN. (optional) _____

Additional donations gratefully accepted Amount \$ _____

Please mail to Central Valley Naturalists, P.O. Box 612, Abbotsford, BC V2T 6Z8, or give to Jacqui at the hospitality desk at the monthly meeting. Membership fees are due January 1st each year.

NEWSLETTER - the newsletter is published in September, November, January, March and May. Any news items and interesting articles can be sent to Alice Roos at haroos@shaw.ca or 604-853-4283

E-MAIL ADDRESSES In order to keep our costs down; the newsletter will be sent by e-mail to those that have an email address. Please provide your e-mail address to either Jacqie Reznick or Alice Roos. For those that cannot be reached by e-mail, copies will be available at the monthly meeting.



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