



www.centralvalleynaturalists.org

NEWSLETTER

May 2009

*“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

Our monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of the month will be in the Conference room of the **Legacy Sportscentre** on the east side of the track at Rotary



*Don't forget to
renew your
2009 CVN
membership!!*

Meetings are held the second
Wednesday of each month
(except July and August) at 7:30 p.m.

In the Legacy Sportcentre
Conference Room
#4 3270 Trethewey
Abbotsford B.C.
Mailing address: P.O. Box 612
Abbotsford, BC V2T 6Z8
Email: haroos@shaw.ca

Stadium.
Please bring your own mugs.

May 13, 2009

“Natural History of Princeton”

Madelon Schouten, a long-time naturalist, keen birder, and hiker will be showing her slides on the natural history of Princeton at our May 13 meeting. Madelon founded both the White Rock and Surrey Naturalists club, and later the Vermillion Forks Naturalist Club in Princeton. A birding course at UBC in 1962 sparked her interest and she now monitors 6 Breeding Bird Survey areas, including one in Chilliwack, and also teaches bird identification courses.

NOTE: Elections for the executive will also take place.

June 10, 2009 - Annual Picnic

Aldergrove Lake Regional Park @ 6:30 pm

It will be a “potluck picnic”. **Bring a main dish or salad enough**

to share. Potlucks seem to attract big appetites.

Bring your own cutlery, dishes and chairs.



The park is located on the Abbotsford-Langley border on 8th Avenue between Lefeuvre and 272nd Street. Take the 8th Avenue entrance and meet at the picnic shelter.

We hope to have a guided walk after the meal to a special area of the park.

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

FIELD TRIPS **And Community Events**



Who is your Neighbour?

Spring Event and Native Plant Sale

Monday, May 18th - 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

A Rocha's biggest event of the year! Live music. Refreshments. Family friendly activities. Native plant sale at The River Tree store. Come and discover the living things that make the neighbourhood special...birds, plants, bugs and more! Take home a native plant to 'grow' in your neighbourhood!

Presentation: "Naturescape, Caring for Wildlife Habitat at Home" - Sylvia Pincott
Gardening Advice by "Gardens by Nature"

Dress for the weather - the event will be rain or shine.

For more information contact british.columbia@arocha.org.

The Birdwatch is for beginner and expert birders alike. This year Lower Mainland residents can join us at five locations in the Little Campbell River Watershed. Meet at the A Rocha Field Study Centre, at 8:30 am, Monday, May 18th. Bring a bag lunch. Dessert and drinks will be provided.

A Rocha Field Study Centre
512 172nd Street, Surrey
(south of 8th Ave close to the Pacific Highway Border crossing)

Getting there: From Hwy 99, take Exit 2A (8th Ave exit EAST) and turn right (south) on 172nd St. Look for the A Rocha sign on the left-hand side of the road.

For more information contact british.columbia@arocha.org

For information on upcoming events link to <http://www.arocha.org/ca-en/g3/3136-DSY.html> or contact A Rocha at 604-542-9006

May 30, 2009 - Saturday

Glen Valley Bird Count

Meet 6:00 am at the Fort Winery Co., 26151 84th Avenue, Langley (just west of 264th Street). Everyone is welcome to join the annual bird count for an invigorating day of birding.

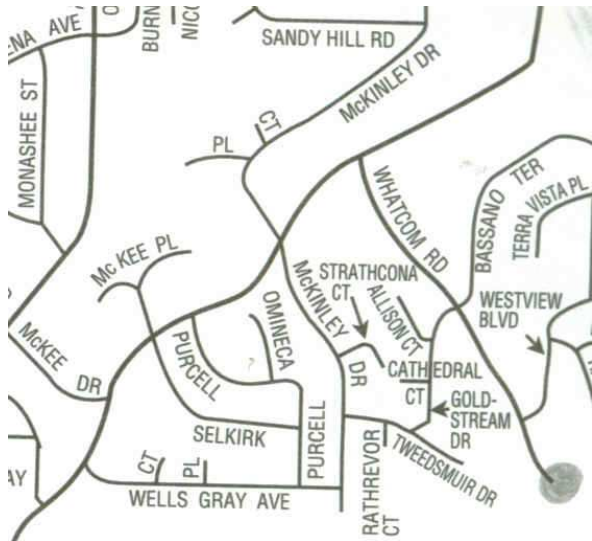
June 13, 2009 - Saturday

Abbotsford's McKee Peak

Meet at the end of Whatcom Road off McKee Road (see map) at 9 a.m. and park in front of the concrete road dividers. We will hike up to a viewpoint near the top of McKee Peak, looking for wildflowers and wildlife along the way. This trail is not difficult but is mostly a steady uphill climb, with some level areas, for about 1 hr. The entire trip should take from 2-3 hr. return. Bring water and a snack. Please call Kathy at 854-3203 to confirm by Friday evening, May 12.



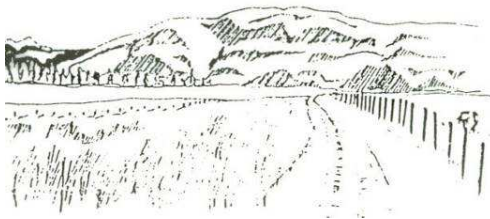
2009 Birdwatch



June 19, 2009 - Friday - 8:45 a.m.
Skagit Valley Provincial Park
with Al and Jude Grass.

Birds and wildflowers should be at their best including the beautiful pink Rhododendron which should be in bloom. This is a full day trip, so please bring lunch, snacks, water, (sunscreen and bug repellent) and a variety of clothing and footwear for the weather. Meet at the junction of the Hope Flood Road and the Silver Skagit Road at 8:45am. The Hope Flood Road exit is # 168 from Highway #1 heading east.

Note: please make sure you have enough gas as it is 130 km round trip to Ross Lake and back to the highway. For information contact Anne Gosse at 604 538 8774.



FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Field Trip to Old Growth Stand Sumas Mountain

On April 18 a large group of naturalists, 26 in number, from the CVN and the Chilliwack Field Naturalists joined for a walk onto Sumas Mt. to view a stand of old growth coniferous and deciduous

trees. John Vissers lead the expedition and noted that the old growth stand on the northern slope of Sumas Mt. It was a beautiful day and a perfect opportunity to view the forest before the large maple deciduous trees leafed out to block the sun that filters through the forest canopy. As soon as the group entered the old growth area, it was clear that this forest was somehow quite different than in second growth areas. Ferns covered much of the forest floor, and moss covered many of the trees. It was also much more open than you would see in a rather immature forest. Although some of the trail followed the old Centennial Trail it was necessary to deviate from this trail and do some bushwhacking through the forest to reach the old growth area. We observed several very large trees including Douglas fir, cedar and maple. On one of the Douglas fir trees we measured the circumference to be more than 30 feet. I took the time to calculate the weight of a tree this size.



Assuming the tree was approximately 200 feet tall, which is relatively conservative considering that old growth Douglas Firs can grow to much higher than 300 feet; I calculated that the volume of that tree was probably in excess of 10,000 cubic feet. Thus the weight of that single tree was likely somewhere between 500,000 to 1 million pounds. Can you imagine?

It was very obvious that the old growth area had been marked off for eventual logging, because several of the trees were marked with numbers, and fresh blazes were on some of the maple trees. Thankfully, it is not likely that this area will be logged in the short term, because the present economics are poor for Douglas fir.

Several politicians were in the group including Councilors Ross, Gibson, and Harris, along with BC Provincial candidate Randy Hawes. It is the desire

of the Sumas Mt. Conservation Association to convert this area into park so that two existing sections of the Sumas Mt. Provincial Park can be connected by way of a wildlife corridor. Some brainstorming was done while in the presence of these giant trees on how this might be achieved. One idea was to see if it is possible to trade this cut block with another more accessible cut block.

There are very few of these old growth forest areas left on the Lower Mainland of BC. This one in particular is large enough to be a fully functioning old growth forest, and over the next number of months the Sumas Mt. Conservation group is trying to establish that a number of endangered species are present in this area. This will strengthen their case for saving this area. John Vissers and his group are trying to raise the public profile of this valuable piece of forest, and it is likely that a trail will be built into this area in the future. This is certainly a project that the CVN can get behind. It still amazes me that the general public places relatively little importance on areas of this type that exist right on our back door. But, that is usually a result of ignorance, and creates an opening for us as CVN to live out our mandate to create greater awareness within our wider community of the importance of conserving areas of this nature. Thanks to John for not only a great field trip, but also a challenge that we can all be a part of.

Jack Van Dyke



Pemberton Hill Gets a Clean Start

Nine hardy CVN members showed up on Saturday morning, April 25, to tackle years of accumulated garbage on Pemberton Hill at the north end of Bradner Road. In two hours the hardworking crew filled nearly 40 large garbage bags and created several piles of bigger waste! Much of the debris was stripped wire and grow-up tubing and organics but a bed, back car seat, and tires were also hauled up the steep slope! City of Abbotsford staff will

pick this up soon. The McDonalds in Gloucester provided free coffee to the work party.

While the task to cleanup the entire hillside is daunting the work party made a big difference and removed enough surface garbage in one large area that it will now be able to regenerate a natural vegetation cover. Invasive lamium and ivy were also removed from this site.

Pemberton Hill is a picturesque forested area with great views over Glen Valley and to the Fraser River, owned by the City. The winding gravel road that joined the north end of Bradner Road to the River was closed permanently two years ago when a landslide took out one travel lane. While a lovely road it had a notorious past with a history of domestic and grow-op dumping, burnt cars and body dumping.



Its remote location at the far corners of both Langley and Abbotsford created a low risk spot for illegal disposals. Residents are happy to report that this behavior has largely ended. The old road is growing-in to create a great trail enjoyed by walkers, cyclists and equestrians.

This cleanup was organized to support Pitch-in Canada week when citizens are encouraged to organize events to cleanup their communities.

CLEANUP CREW --, Wendy, Paul and Lawren DaDalt, Jacquie Reznick, Herman Venema, Kathy Wilkinson, Alice Roos, Alanna Dean and George Duffy.

April 26 - May 7, 2009
Return of the Vaux's Swifts



Approximately 300+ Vaux's swifts could be seen entering the old Sumas customs building again.

Arbour Day May 1, 2009

This was the Tenth Arbour Day for the City of Abbotsford and the C.V.N.

Since moving the event to Friday it has become the day many, many school busses descent upon a park, disgorging many, many youngsters.

This year about 2200 kindergarten to grade five students, their teachers and about 400 parents arrived at Mill Lake in bright sunshine at about 9.30. We and quite a number of other exhibitors were ready for them! The C.V.N. had one of the bigger tents with the most displays and events, which took a lot of planning!

We were lucky that **Gerry Powers** was available to come with his displays - 15 of the 16 Owls we have in B.C. (only one missing is the Spotted Owl) Owl pellets, etc.



Stan and Marijke Olson came with two scopes aimed at the active Eagle's nest, and **Lisa Ferris** from Metro Vancouver Parks, brought 3 activities which included art and an aquarium with insects to which we added ours with Sticklebacks and tadpoles. **Steve Howard** provided us with marvellous objects which kids can admire and TOUCH! They include an Owl and Golden Eagle wing, so it can be shown why the Owl flies silently, and other birds do not! Beaver pelt, teeth and tail; talons; the huge wing of the trumpeter Swan and its "filter beak" and more (hard to keep track of all these wonders when kids want to pass them to their friends!)

We had planned two tree activities, **Jeanne Hughes** hoped to get youngsters involved in a game involving wildlife trees, but unfortunately her childcare person called in sick!

Jeanne could stay long enough to help me, **Heather Washburn, Daniel van der Kroon, Henk and Gerry** to "set up" (which was fortunate!) we still had lots of activities - match the branch to its tree; our nests and which bird built it; surprise boxes; and an animal track sandbox. In fact we started out with more activities than volunteers! Heather Washburn, Lisa Ferris, Gerry Powers, two Olsons, two Saaltinks!

That makes 9 stations and 7 volunteers and 2200 kids! Happily **Gerda Peachy** and **Jacqui Reznick** arrived later, and **Herman and Joyce Venema** came early afternoon.

Let's hope this was the only time Arbour Day coincides with the B.C. Nature A.G.M. In the end of course, it all worked out and a good time was had by all, including the children, and that was the purpose of it all!

By 1:45 when the school busses were leaving we had packed up and were all lingering over the last pizza (courtesy of Abby.) reviewing a hectic, happy day. The magnificent weather contributed greatly to the success of the event. A day in the Park- good for body and soul!

Johann Saaltink

CONSERVATION & EDUCATION

Environmental Communication and Development of an Outreach Strategy

As mentioned at our last general meeting the CVN has received funding from BC Nature to produce a series of articles profiling some local and regional environmental groups and describing some City of Abbotsford environmental initiatives.

Watch for these articles in a "special feature" of the **Abbotsford News** on **May 28** to kick off **Environment Week!**

Thank you very much to all who have completed the questionnaires! There was a great variety of excellent suggestions and we are now eager to compile the responses and "produce a communication/outreach strategy and action plan" that will work for our club. We would like to have as many members as possible take part in a short (~2 hr.) workshop to brainstorm possibilities in early June. Please let Hank haroos@shaw.ca (853-4283) or Kathy kwilkins2@shaw.ca (854-3203) know if you are interested in participating and we will then arrange a date and place.

Climate Change

A lot of people, hearing about the preparations for Arbour day said "Wow, that's a big job", and it was, but luckily I had lots of help. Since last Fall I have another job, much bigger, and so far only one helper. I'm referring here to my membership on the **Citizens' Conservation Council on Climate Action**. It has been a great experience, meeting committed volunteers and getting exposure to new perspectives and ideas, lots of ideas! I'm learning all the time. And what I learned is that climate change is getting a lot of publicity as you know, if you have looked at the Earth Day editions of The Vancouver Sun and MacLean's Magazine. There seems to be a wider acceptance of the fact we humans are spewing too much CO₂ into the atmosphere and that "something should be done". And that generally most people have an uneasy feeling about the wastefulness of our way of life and what that does to our beautiful and bountiful planet, which is getting more mouths to feed every day! It is easy to get overwhelmed by the size of the problem for which nobody has an easy solution at hand. It is therefore very heartening to know that in the past and right now there are people who have paid attention to the changes in our environment and decreasing resources and have put tremendous efforts into showing the way to a truly sustainable life style. In Chris Turner's "Geography of Hope" you can read how Samso, a Danish Island, in less than 10 years has reduced its CO₂ emissions to effectively less than zero! In Germany there is an architect, Rolf Disch, who builds plus- energy houses: the house as power plant. "It's not a question of technology - but it's a question of the mind. We have a problem to do it". In Thailand Dr. Soontorn is

building Bio-solar homes which produce more power than they need.

Chris Turner's book and Thomas Freedman's book "Hot, Flat and Crowded" give many more examples of innovative solutions to our energy consumption excesses including examples from India, China the U.S., but so far none from Abbotsford. Our City did sign the B.C. Climate Action Charter, committing it to carbon neutrality by 2012. The latest report I read states that we might come to a quarter of the target. Abbotsford is also supposed to encourage its citizens to become carbon neutral by 2012. So am I, as member of the Citizens' Council. For one person an awfully big project! So far the only other person committed to action on climate change is Dr. Tim Cooper, Head of the Physics Department of U.F.V. He is the one that brought Andrew Weaver, author of "Keeping our Cool" out to a public meeting here, has given a presentation with B.C. Hydro at the Chilliwack campus and has addressed some local groups. There are some local green businesses, e.g. "Streamline design", Thiesen's Down-to-Earth Kitchen Compost Pickup, and the LiveSmart B.C. award winners Barrett Brothers Rain barrels. All companies, I note, are run by young people. Green buildings are not in great evidence. One of our friends heats his swimming pool with solar panels. Other than that I know of one passive solar house with triple glazed doors and windows and a heat pump - the home Henk and I occupy and built 31 years ago! The conclusion one comes to is that it will be a while before Abbotsford will be proclaimed a model Green community.



I take great comfort in the fact that Thomas Friedman states that what is needed now is a Clean Energy System (and more Research and Development for same), Energy efficiency, and an Ethic of Conservation!

An Ethic of Conservation! : "A sense of responsibility, a sense of stewardship for the natural world". "It is an ethic of restraint that says

we have a responsibility to preserve the earth's resources and natural wonders in and of themselves, because they constitute the very web of life on which all living creatures on this planet depend". That, as Naturalists, we promote and live: To know nature and to keep it worth knowing. Our whole Arbour day effort was to connect youngsters, teachers, and parents with nature, to promote an appreciation of the natural world, its beauty, diversity, and connectedness. Plus the joy of a day in the Park! That part of building a greener community comes easy.

Let's keep doing it! Johanna



"Loss of Words"

I've often wondered about the intense interest that children find in dinosaurs (me too!), considering the fact that these amazing creatures have been extinct for millions of years. Could it happen that many other wonders of nature could become a mere virtual reality as extinction follows extinction, while their "reality" remains on the screen?

An increasingly urban population, with its resultant disassociation from the natural world, recognizes less and less the intricacy and precious nature of intact ecosystems. Without that caring connection, we stand to lose the life systems upon which we all depend. For our planet, as with all things, to know something is to care, and caring leads to "caring for".

The disconnect of young people from the natural world was underlined recently with the removal of many "countryside" words from the new edition of the 10,000 word Oxford Junior Dictionary. These words have been replaced with new techno (is that a word?) jargon such as blog, broadband, MP3 player, voicemail. The electronic Blackberry replaced our

delicious blackberry, and other banished words include:

Beaver, canary, colt, doe, goldfish, guinea pig, hamster, heron, herring, kingfisher, lark, leopard, lobster, magpie, minnow, mussel, newt, otter, oyster, panther, pelican, piglet, poodle, porcupine, porpoise, raven, spaniel, starling, stork, thrush, weasel, wren.

Acorn, almond, apricot, beetroot, bloom, bluebell, bramble, bran, brook, buttercup, carnation, catkin, cauliflower, chestnut, clover, crocus, dandelion, fern, fungus, gooseberry, gorse, hazel, hazelnut, heather, holly, ivy, lavender, leek, marzipan, melon, minnow, mint, nectar, nectarine, oats, pansy, parsnip, pasture, poppy, porridge, poultry, primrose, prune, radish, rhubarb, spinach, tulip, turnip, vine, violet, walnut, willow.

Many other words of British heritage and Christianity were extracted as well - even "sin" is no more!

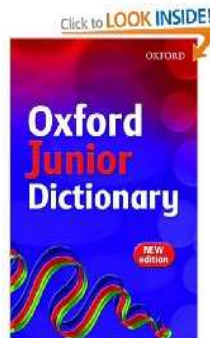
Of the animals and plants listed above, many seem part of our every day life on Pender Island (even though we would like to see the last of the invasive "gorse" and "ivy"). With a narrowing recognition of the natural world, the incentive for conservation of natural systems will surely diminish.

Banishing the word "fungus", for example, ignores the vast significance of fungal networks beneath the ground in maintaining the health of the plant life above (the photosynthetic lungs of the planet), to say nothing of the essential invertebrate life with associations reaching out to all creatures beyond, both great and small.

Quoting Robert Bateman from a Canadian Press article, "This is another nail in the coffin of human beings being acquainted with nature. If you can't name things, how can you love them?"

For a further loss of words, Google "Oxford Junior Dictionary".

Not to lose hope entirely, there are some wonderful programs taking place within the Gulf Islands and on Vancouver



Island to reconnect children with nature. Resulting from these efforts, a second international NatureChild Reunion forum was held March 5-8 in Victoria at Royal Rhodes University. This initiative of the Kesho Trust aims to re-enchant children with a direct experience of nature and an understanding of the web of life. Parents, grandparents, teachers, group leaders - all those who are motivators and facilitators of children's activities - can have a role in fostering a closer connection between children and the natural world. Learn more at <http://www.naturechildreunion.ca>

Sylvia Pincott

Membership Fees - Single \$30, Family \$35 which are due January 1 each year.
Membership provides the following benefits: 5 CVN newsletters per annum, automatic membership in BC Nature (FBCN), subscription to "BC nature" (4 issues per year)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____ Fax: _____

Particular nature interests? (optional) _____

Expertise which could benefit the CVN. (optional) _____

Occupation (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.

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