

Nature Wise April 2016 Good Things Happening

There are many times when it seems like trying to save Earth and its species from human indifference and stupidity is a losing battle so it is nice to occasionally take time to help celebrate some of the good things that are happening. Here are three events you might want to participate in that will give you an opportunity to experience some of the really interesting things going on in the South Okanagan.

April 26, Invasive Species Forum

North America has been fighting invasive species for well over 100 years. Some species have been introduced on purpose (starlings) while others have come accidentally (zebra mussels). They all pose a serious problem to native species and generally cause a great deal of economic damage as well. In the South Okanagan, the battle against invasive species got seriously underway twenty years ago when a biology consultant (Lisa Scott) was hired to “encourage and facilitate coordination amongst agencies responsible for weed management”. From that small start, we now have an official society (Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society) trying to control the baddies already here and working hard to keep out further undesirables. To celebrate their first twenty years a free public forum is being held at Okanagan College on April 26 from 9AM to 3:30PM. Learn about the successes of the past two decades, how things have changed, and what the future holds.

For more information, go to: www.oasiss.ca

May 1, SORCO and Burrowing Owl Conservation Society Open house

For nearly thirty years, injured and sick owls and other birds of prey have been cared for at the South Okanagan Rehabilitation Centre for Owls. In that time, numerous owls, eagles and hawks have been cared for and released back into the wild. The provincial licence required to run a wildlife rehabilitation centre does not allow public access to the Centre; once a year however they can host an open house and you can get in to see what they do close up and meet some of the residents. Their 28th annual open house is being held on May 1 – you can tour the facility, take part in interactive education centres and the Kiddies Corner, support the organization through a Silent Auction and help celebrate Houdini's 17th birthday. The Open House runs from 10 am to 3 pm and admission is by donation.

Since 2010 The Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC has been breeding and releasing burrowing owls in the south Okanagan in an attempt to bring back these once native owls to the grasslands of the south central Interior. In the early part of the century they occurred from Osoyoos as far north as Coldstream and west to Kamloops and a few nested on Lulu Island at the coast. The owls were listed as extinct in BC in 1980. Located next door to SORCO, you can tour their facilities at the same time as you visit SORCO's open house.

May 19-23—The 19th Annual Meadowlark Festival.

This highly successful nature festival offers nearly 80 events over the May long weekend and many of them are free. The events cover such diverse activities as bird watching, learning about bats, seeing Okanagan geology up close, Okanagan scenery from horseback, biking the KVR, canoeing on Vaseux Lake and a host of other topics. This is a great opportunity to see your local Okanagan Valley through the eyes of knowledgeable naturalists. For the past 18 years, thousands of residents and tourists have learned what makes our home such a great place and why so many are working hard to keep it a great place.

The next meeting of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club will be April 28. The public is always welcome. Check out our website (southokanagannature.com) for details about our monthly speaker.

Bob Handfield is president of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club but the views expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Club.