

Nature Wise, December 2016

Trying to decide on a topic for this monthly column sometimes becomes a difficult task – not because there is nothing to write about but because there are so many things to write about. There are so many issues – at the local level, at the provincial level and at the national level - that I and my fellow writers could do a column a week and not run out of topics. However, since it is the Christmas season I think I'll focus on a variety of things you can give as gifts.

The **Nature Conservancy of Canada** has protected almost 980,000 acres of important habitat in BC since starting work here. Their goal is to reach 1 million acres by Earth Day 2020. You can help by giving a loved one a gift of Canadian habitat with a minimum donation of \$40 to NCC. Your recipient will receive a full colour NCC 2017 calendar, an 8 ½ x 11 certificate and an 8 page species booklet and you will receive a tax receipt and some important habitat will be preserved. That is called a win-win-win situation!

If you have a younger recipient who is into animals you can give a symbolic gift of a grizzly bear, wolf or other iconic Canadian species. Your recipient gets the same things as above, you get the tax receipt and everyone wins again. (go to [www.giftsofnature.ca](http://www.giftsofnature.ca))

The **Wilderness Committee** is another great organization with similar opportunities to help the environment while gifting family and friends. Their adopt-a-species at risk program requires a minimum \$30 donation, gives your recipient a personalized certificate and you a tax receipt. Shop at [wildernesscommittee.org/store](http://wildernesscommittee.org/store)

There are a number of locally written books that would be perfect gifts for anyone on your list interested in nature. If there is only one book you read in the next year make it **Crossing Home Ground** by David Pitt-Brooke. The sub-title sums it up nicely – *A grassland odyssey through southern interior British Columbia*. While he does not live in the Okanagan, the author did grow up in the Vernon area. This book is the story of his recent 1,000 km walk from the headwaters of the Ashnola River near Keremeos to the northernmost grasslands near Williams Lake. He chronicles all that is beautiful and important about our grasslands and all that is sad and heartbreaking as well. It will almost certainly inspire you to do a bit of walking yourself. A superbly well written work that should be read by everyone in the valley.

Of course it is impossible to mention locally written nature books and not include our very own Member of Parliament Richard Cannings. Dick's numerous nature books include several about the Okanagan: for those of you not so much into walking **Roadside Nature Tours through the Okanagan** will get you acquainted with the incredible diversity of nature and scenery in our beautiful region. Just browse through the nature section of any of our local bookstores and you will find this and many others by Dick Cannings.

If you have a budding young bird watcher on your gift list then you can't do much better than getting a copy of Jordyn Emshay's book **Can you Name That Bird – A Field Guide For Young Birders in the South Okanagan**. Jordyn was only 10 years old when she wrote this book and she has decided that all the net proceeds from sales of the book are donated to the South Okanagan Rehabilitation Center for Owls. You can purchase this book on our Club's website: [www.southokangannature.com](http://www.southokangannature.com). Dick Cannings gives the book high praise and said "I hope it gets onto every book shelf in the valley".

The South Okanagan Naturalists' Club usually meets the fourth Thursday of each month but there is no December meeting. Keep up to date with us at [www.southokanagannature.com](http://www.southokanagannature.com)

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