



The Honker

Newsletter of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club

March 2022



The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug is a common invasive species in the Okanagan Valley which first showed up in BC in 2015. It is not the common native stink bug that you often see on your back deck. See the article on page 7 for more details.

Photo by **Lisa Scott**

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IT IS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

South Okanagan Naturalists' Club
193 Westview Drive
Penticton BC V2A 7W1
www.southokanagannature.com



Mission Statement:

To provide a dynamic local focus for experiencing the natural world of BC and for promoting its conservation.

Membership: Individual: \$32; Family: \$43 (membership year is Sept 1 to Aug 31)

Monthly meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of each month from September through May (except December) at 7PM in the basement hall of the Penticton United Church, 696 Main St. (corner of Main and Eckhardt). Please bring your own coffee mug. New members always welcome.

Board meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Please contact any Executive or director if you wish to add an item to the agenda.

Our birding, wildflower, geology, social group meets every Thursday in the north parking lot of Cherry Lane mall (northeast corner of Warren & Atkinson) at 9AM (hours may change in summer & winter). Be prepared to car pool. Trips range from 'car birding' to easy strolls to occasional more moderate hikes. Bring a lunch and dress for the weather. Everyone welcome. For more info contact Wendy Stewart or check out the birding page on the website.

Field Trips are generally held in the spring and fall and may be all day or occasionally overnight. Check the website for details. Please notify of the trip leader if you intend to participate. Dress for the prevailing weather conditions, wear appropriate footwear, bring a lunch and drinking water. Pets are not appropriate for field trips or Thursday outings.

SONC is a society under the BC Societies Act and a federated club of BC Nature

Executive Officers:

President: Alex Bodden a.bodden@shaw.ca

Vice-president: Wendy Stewart 250 487 1442 wendyastewart@shaw.ca

Treasurer: Colleen Simmons colleensimmons@live.ca

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Conservation Committee:

To be determined

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Refreshments: Jim Shaver

S Okanagan Habitat Garden: Marlene Hikichi (temporarily)

Thursday Birding: Wendy Stewart, Alex Bodden and Jim Shaver

Newsletter Submission Dates:

Please submit material for publication by the 15th of January, March, June, September and November. Any item relevant to the Club is welcome as are photos taken by club members.

Cover photo: Stink bugs are common in the South Okanagan but the one pictured on the cover is not the native species, Western Conifer Seed bug, but rather the invasive species. The surest way to tell them apart is the yellow stripes around the antenna of the invasive species as seen in our cover photo.

President's Message

It looks like we have finally returned to some degree of normal again, with the terrible exception of what is happening in the Ukraine. I have found it a strange, and a bit like I am doing something wrong, by not wearing a mask everywhere, but it is nice to see actual smiles again. It also looks like our weather has made it much more conducive to being outside enjoying nature again.

The big news is that we are going to be having our first regular club meeting as usual on the fourth Thursday of the month at the United church this month, so I look forward to seeing you all there. We have a few new members since we last met, and I am sure you all have at least one great observation over the last few months to share with us. Peter Maser is going to share a presentation with us on his trip to Costa Rica, a place on my dream list to visit.

We will be working to get our Thursday outings back into the old routine and I plan to set up a day trip to the Douglas Lake Important Bird and Biodiversity area in late April or early May. There is currently only Wendy and I who are setting up and leading the outings and it would be nice if those of you who have a favorite hike or route would take on the leader's role and share it with us. All you have to do is let Wendy or I know where you want to take us and we will get the messaging out. Hopefully we can startup our monthly dining out again soon as well.

There are a couple of things out there on the conservation side of things that some of our members have been involved in recently. The RDOS is currently reviewing the Sensitive Areas Development Permitting process. The goal seems to be excluding private properties within identified sensitive areas from the requirement to have a professional biologist review. A few of our members watched the committee and public information sessions and a letter was prepared and sent from our club in opposition to the changes as they are currently presented. Many other government or non-government agencies have expressed concerns as well and the matter has been deferred for further input.

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program, which has been in operation for over 20 years, is currently examining its purpose and organizational framework into the future. This organization has been working to coordinate over 50 different groups, societies and government agencies within the South Okanagan towards a common set of conservation outcomes. Two of its major accomplishments have been the development of the Sensitive Area permitting process and the Conservation Fund that is supported by a tax levy. We are part of this organization and two of our members have been involved in the review being done by a private consultant.

With the return of Spring on the horizon I have had a few firsts for the year already. I have seen several Say's Phoebes and Violet Green Swallows already. It does appear that some of the wintering waterfowl have started to move out already and the Great Blue Herons are working hard on the

nest in the heronry on the PIB property by the channel. The sagebrush buttercups are opening along Allendale Road and I also saw my first Mourning Cloak butterfly on Max Lake Road two days ago. I am anxiously awaiting my sign of Spring, the return of the Turkey vultures. Two were reported on e-bird on the West Bench on the 15th. Two Mountain Bluebirds were recorded on the same list. I also took advantage of the nice weather and took a walk downtown and was pleasantly surprised to find a wonderful collection of art inside the 200 block breezeway. Among those showing images of birds was one by our own amazingly talented Dianne Bersea. You all need to go and take a look.

Now that we are all going to see each other again perhaps it is time to think about whom we know that would enjoy being a member of SONC. Our membership numbers have dropped a bit over the last two years and I know from my chance meetings on the trails that there are many new people and friends and neighbors who would enjoy what SONC has to offer. All we need to do is ask.

This is SONC's 60th anniversary year and the board has been discussing how we want to celebrate that fact. I will be asking the membership if anyone would like to help planning and organizing some type of event in the fall to mark this great occasion. We do not have a lot of time to get this done.

The Central Okanagan Naturalists' club in Kelowna is hosting the Spring AGM for BC Nature on May 26-28. This is a great opportunity for us to participate without having to go a long way. I will be there as our club representative and our own Dick Cannings is scheduled to address the banquet. Even if you can only go for a day, it is a great chance to learn and enjoy an outing or two. You can get registration details at <https://okanagannature.org/bc-nature-agm-2022/>

Lets all get out there and enjoy a great year in Nature!

Don't forget about the Meadowlark Festival either.

Alex Bodden



Dianne Bersea's bird painting in the breezeway as photographed by Alex Bodden.

Coming Events

April 28th— SONC monthly meeting with speaker.

May 19th to 23rd—The Meadowlark Festival returns after a two year absence.

May 26th— SONC monthly meeting with speaker.

Nature and Well-being

As a member of the naturalist club, you can probably name many benefits from spending time outside. Sometimes you might feel a boost of energy after a brisk walk, or you may notice that you're happier, or feel better when you come in from being in the garden. Maybe you notice a deeper sense of peace after a walk in the woods.

Research has shown what we intuitively know, that nature has many healing qualities. While research is continuing to develop and more is always needed, preliminary studies strongly indicate that the health benefits of being outside in nature include: boosted immunity, reduced blood pressure, increased heart rate variability, mood stability and reduce impacts of Attention Deficit Disorder. These benefits come from different aspects of the natural world. For example, when we slow down and connect to our senses while we are in nature, our parasympathetic nervous system is activated, which can slow down our stress reactions, bringing us into a state where healing can occur. Naturally occurring chemicals from trees, called phytoncides, have been shown to act as a de-stressor, reducing cortisol levels and bringing us to a more relaxed state. They have also been shown to increase a type of white blood cell called NK cells, natural killer cells, and this can help boost immunity levels (Li et. Al 2009). Gentle, natural sounds from the forest can also help to lower blood pressure and increase heart-rate activity (Miyazaki 2018). While experiencing these elements individually is good, the greatest benefit occurs when the natural landscape is experienced as one. Studies suggests that the minimum time being outside for health benefits is 120 minutes, with increased benefits at three hours (White et. Al. 2019).

The experience of finding healing in the natural world has been part of many cultures and regions of the world for a long time. Recently, there has been a global movement of forest therapy, or forest bathing, inspired by shinrin-yoku, a Japanese practice of connecting with nature through all of our senses. Health bodies around the world have also begun to embrace the potential health benefits of being in nature with green prescription programs in countries such as New Zealand, Ireland and England and the United States. In November 2020, B.C. Parks Foundation started Canada's first national nature prescription program. In January 2022, Parks Canada signed on to the initiative. Now, health-care professionals can offer patients a Parks Canada Discovery Pass — free of charge.

The next time you are out in nature, take some time to intentionally slow down, connect to your senses and experience the gift of deep nature connection.

Joanne Scofield is a certified Forest Therapy Guide through GIFT (Global Institute for Forest Therapy and Nature Connection).

If you'd like to learn more, here are some suggestions for further reading:

Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness book by Quing Li

Nature Prescriptions: <https://www.parkprescriptions.ca>

Global Institute of Forest Therapy: <https://www.giftoftheforest.com>

Effects of Forest bathing trips on human immune function, Quing Li, Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793341/>

Ecopsychology: How Immersion in Nature Benefits your Health, Yale Environment 360 <https://e360.yale.edu/features/ecopsychology-how-immersion-in-nature-benefits-your-health>



Black-capped chickadee (top) and Mountain chickadee, the two most common chickadees in the South Okanagan. Both are frequent visitors to back yard feeders.

Photos by Alex Bodden

The Heavens

The main astronomical event for us over the next few months will be a total eclipse of the Moon in mid-May. Such a thing happens when the Moon passes through the shadow of the Earth, which it will do on the evening of May 15. The Moon can do that only at the time of full moon, so we'll be treated to a bright full moon on that night (with any luck from the weather!) when it's not in eclipse.

The timing of this eclipse is interesting for us in the western part of the country, in that the eclipse begins before the Moon rises. When the Moon does rise (sometime between 8:30 and

9:30 pm — I can't give you an accurate time for that, as it depends on what kind of horizon you have to the east, and on what mountain may or may not be in the way) it will be fully eclipsed, and should be quite a sight. The Moon does not completely disappear when it's in eclipse. Even though the Earth is right between the Moon and the Sun, blocking out the Sun's light for the lunar residents, some sunlight still gets through to the Moon, thanks to the Earth's atmosphere which acts as a kind of lens, and is reflected back to us. Not much sunlight gets through, and the Moon looks quite faint when it is eclipsed. It will not be obvious at all, with no preceding glow on the horizon showing where and when it's going to come up . . . not at all like watching the bright full moon rise. In the east between 8:30 and 9:30 pm is the best I can do for you. You could get a better idea of what to expect by checking on it a few days in advance as it builds up to full, keeping in mind that at that time of year it rises roughly an hour and a half later each night, and a little further to the south (i.e. to the right) each night.

Another feature of an eclipsed moon is its colour. The sunlight passing through the Earth's atmosphere to get to the eclipsed moon is reddened, much the same as sunlight is reddened in its longer passage through the atmosphere at sunset. The Moon in eclipse is often described as having a 'coppery' colour, but exactly what colour it has, or how faint it is, varies. It depends on how much dust there is in the Earth's atmosphere at the time. But regardless of the details, the sight of a ghostly pale reddish moon coming up from behind the mountains is something worth watching for, if you get a chance.

The Moon will start to come out of eclipse a few minutes before ten (9:54:11 pm PDT to be precise), and for an hour after that you can watch the Moon slowly extract itself from the Earth's shadow with more and more of the Moon bathing in bright sunlight as the edge of the Earth's shadow moves rightward across the Moon's face, and with more and more of the dark maria — the so-called 'seas' whose pattern makes up the face of the Man in the Moon — coming into view. It's worth watching, or at least checking on from time to time. The eclipse will end with the Moon moving completely out of the shadow at 10:54 .

As for planets over the next few months, there will be none in the evening sky at all. Zip. They will all be bunched in the morning sky, rising a short time before the Sun so appearing low in the east and southeast sky as it is getting light . . . an iffy sort of thing to see.

Taking the next step out into the Universe and considering the stars, the quintessential wintertime constellation, Orion, is making its exit, appearing low in the southwest sky as darkness falls. Taking his place is Leo, the Lion, the quintessential springtime constellation. When Leo makes his appearance high in the southeast sky as darkness falls, you know it is spring. The weather, with all its vagaries, may have just dumped several feet of snow on you but the presence of Leo reassures you that it really is spring nevertheless.

Chris Purton



Figure caption: The constellation of Leo, the Lion, whose appearance high in the evening sky tells you that spring is here, no matter what the weather is doing. The bright star at the bottom of the sickle shape is Regulus, meaning Rex, from an ancient belief that it ruled the affairs of the heavens. Credit: A.Fujii.

New members

A warm welcome to new members :

Judy Jansen and Don Dunbar

Patricia Chitrenky and John Van Lierop

Species Identification Contest

It turns out, to my surprise, that SONC members are not interested in entering contests that require identification of plant and animal species, even when a prize is offered. Our first contest in November drew exactly zero entries and the second, in January, had only a few more. Needless to say, there will be no future contests of this sort.

The winner of the January contest was Janna Leslie but it was very close and no one had them all correct.

The correct id's are:

1. Long-tailed jaeger (not native to Okanagan but this found was in Kelowna a few years back).
2. Great Basin spadefoot
3. Eastern Kingbird
4. Scarlet gilia
5. Yellow-pine chipmunk
6. Wood nymph

Roadside Trash

For some years, I have picked up roadside trash along Hwy 97 in Penticton, just south of Ellis Creek Bridge No. 2. This year, I expanded operations to Willow Brook Road where it passes White Lake in order to compare the roadside trash in both places. This note presents the qualitative results of this study. SONC members may recall that the Club once did an occasional roadside pick-up along Willow Brook Road at White Lake, by arrangement with the Regional District (RDOS). Regardless, roadside trash in this study is essentially the same, varying chiefly in the proportions of such items as tin cans, coffee cups, glass containers, and plastic straws, lids and bags; also, cardboard and Styrofoam containers. It is worth noting, too, I have never found money along the roadside at either study site.

One significant find at Willow Brook Road, however, was a plastic tray placed upright in the ditch, containing what I think was ground meat with bait pellets. This discovery is concerning because animal tracks in fresh snow along the roadside at both sites include meadow vole and coyote. Both of these animals are important to a biodiverse, well-functioning ecosystem. My roadside study will continue, to be sure, but now that spring is here I will spend more time watching the plants, the birds, and the bees. If anyone wishes to join me, they are more than welcome. - Allan Garland

The length of time spent on each of the two roads is very unequal, i.e., years on the Channel vs. only weeks on the WB Road. The point is, the variety of trash is virtually the same.

Also, pedestrian and bike traffic occur on both roads.

Allan Garland

Editor's note: Allan's observation that the roadside trash is pretty much the same in the two localities is surprising to me. I live in Kaleden where the roadside trash, in my limited observations, seems to have a higher proportion of beer cans. Since White Lake Rd is a fair distance from any fast food outlets, I would have guessed that beer cans would be a higher percentage of the trash and fast food containers a lower percentage. Goes to show that guessing is not a good substitute for field observations!



Members of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club take a break while cleaning up trash along White Lake Road, where four large bags of garbage were collected on October 11.

Photo contributed

Naturalists' club cleans up road

The roadside cleanup carried out by the Club was apparently last done in 2012. It did generate good publicity for the Club with a photo and news article in The Herald.



Alex Bodden took this photo of a Common Redpoll back in January. These birds are fairly common visitors to the valley in winter.

Invasive Insects

Invasive insects may be the smallest of the invaders but they can pose a huge threat to both our environment and our economy

Invasive insects pose one of the greatest threats to natural and managed ecosystems. Global trade and the movement of people and goods have caused massive shifts in insect populations, introducing species to areas where they have no natural predators. Without predators, parasites and pathogens to keep them in check, invasive insect populations increase exponentially.

The Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health estimates there are over 470 introduced insect species in North America! It is challenging to put a dollar amount on the damage invasive insects inflict on wetlands, grasslands, forests and agricultural lands, but there is no question that non-native insects are having a devastating impact. In a changing climate, agricultural losses from insect pests are expected to increase.

What are some examples of invasive insects found in the Okanagan-Similkameen?

The **Brown Marmorated Stink Bug** (BMSB) has been detected in most regions of BC's southern interior, but remains at relatively low population levels. The greatest concentration is in downtown Kelowna. This insect is shield-shaped with a brown marbled appearance. It is sometimes mistaken for native stink bugs but can be distinguished by the two white bands on its antennae. The adults overwinter inside buildings, making them an annoyance to homeowners. However, they pose a serious economic threat to fruit crops, garden vegetables and many ornamentals. There are more than 100 different plant species on their menu, including apricot, Asian pear, berries, grape, hazelnut, wild chokecherry and the invasive tree-of-heaven. Their presence on grapes could lead to contamination issues if they are accidentally crushed while making wine. If you suspect that you have seen BMSB, collect a sample specimen and contact [Susan-na.Acheampong@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Susan.Acheampong@gov.bc.ca) or call the BC Ministry of Agriculture in Kelowna at 1-888-332-3352.

A much more abundant species in our region is the **Elm Seed Bug**. This insect is black and rectangular-shaped with a rusty-red triangle mark on its back. In the spring, juveniles feed on the invasive Siberian elm trees. Although these bugs do not bite, nor do they affect crops, they will readily invade your home and become a nuisance. As winter approaches, they search for a warm place to stay. This means that they may seek refuge in your home. These bugs leave fecal droppings and will release a foul odour if crushed.

Are there any invasive insects that are not here yet that I should watch for? Although not yet known to exist in Canada, the **Spotted Lanternfly** could have drastic implications for the grape, fruit tree and forestry industries. The adults have light brown front wings covered in black spots with dark speckled bands on

the tips. The rear wings are black and white on the tips, and red with black spots on the main section of the wing. The abdomen is yellow with horizontal black stripes. This colourful insect feeds on more than 70 different plant species. Some examples of their host plants include grape, apple, pine, willow, stone fruit and the invasive tree-of-heaven. Build-up of their egg masses and secretions can also cause damage to patio furniture, garden ornaments and cars. If you suspect that you have seen a spotted lanternfly, collect a specimen in a sealed container and report your sighting immediately to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) at 1-800-422-2342 or www.inspection.gc.ca/pests

What can I do to help? [Familiarize yourself with these invasive species and report any suspect sightings of BMSB or lanternfly. Invasive trees, particularly tree-of-heaven and Siberian elm, act as hosts for invasive insects. By removing these trees and replacing with indigenous species, you can help to slow the spread of these insects. If you are interested in learning more about these species and other invasive insects, visit Okanagan Invasive Species Online \[www.oiso.ca\]\(http://www.oiso.ca\).](#)

Lisa Scott

Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS)



A native of Europe, the Elm Seed Bug was first found in western North America in Idaho in 2012. It was first identified in BC in 2016. Photo credit: Utah State University Extension



This is the Spotted Lanternfly mentioned in Lisa's article about invasive insects. Photo credit: Dr. Ward Strong



Green-winged teal are much less common and are usually seen in the warmer months rather than winter. Photo by R. McKelvey



This poor Bluebird must be asking himself why he didn't go south with his friends this winter. Photographed in our January cold spell by R. McKelvey



The teddy bear cholla is anything but soft and cuddly. It is a common cactus in southern AZ. Photo by Bob Handfield



American widgeons are common winter visitors to the Penticton area. Photo by R. McKelvey



This big fella was standing right by the interpretative signs near the entrance to Grasslands NP in Saskatchewan. Photo by Bob Handfield

Narratives of a Naturalist - Bob & Maggie Handfield

Since starting this feature in January of 2020 we have profiled 11 club members (some single, some couples). Of course at this rate we will never run out of members to feature.

I have been reluctant to profile myself and Maggie but I have finally been talked into it.

Bob's parents were ardent fisher folk (mostly, but not entirely, saltwater fishing) and enjoyed camping so Bob was into outdoorsy stuff from an early age. It was his love of the outdoors that led him to geology. Maggie's family was not an outdoor family but after we started dating she soon was an avid camper and fisherman. Bob's summers as a geology student in the Yukon and NWT heightened his interest in nature. While interested in birds, neither of them could be called "birders". When grad school and then employment took them to New Jersey and North Carolina for a combined total of 10 years it certainly brought a lot of new birds into their life, but alas, we weren't sufficiently keen to visit the world famous birding sites such as Cap May in NJ and others on the east coast. Such wasted opportunities! Other birding opportunities lost were the year of grad school spent in Paris France. While there, Bob was invited to visit the Paleontological Institutes in Moscow and Novosibirsk to visit the Russian experts in his field of study. Alas, the days there were so busy, no time was "wasted" watching birds. All those Siberian specialities would look pretty impressive on his life list now.

Bob's geological employment led to Bob and Maggie living in many different places from Oklahoma and Colorado to Toronto and Vancouver and finally, Australia. Camping was always a part of their lives but birding grew more important as they moved about, culminating in becoming "real" birders in Australia. After retiring in late 1999 and moving to Penticton in early 2000, they remodelled an old farmhouse and opened a B&B. One day while buying birdfeed at Tumbleweed Store they met Doreen Olson who introduced them to SONC, the Meadowlark Festival and the naturalist community in the South Okanagan. In those days, the Meadowlark Festival was still a totally volunteer affair and both Bob and Maggie played significant roles in helping put together the festival for several years.

They have both been involved with SONC for over twenty years, with Maggie serving as treasurer for a period and Bob being involved in several roles.

In 2006 they started serving as State Park volunteers at Patagonia Lake State Park in southern Arizona, one of the famous birding spots of the American southwest. Their last volunteer session was in the fall of 2014.

Bob has also served on the Board of the BC Naturalists' Foundation since 2013 and served as its president for four years.

They would like to see the Clun get more involved in "hands on" projects that would energize the membership to be more

active. Adopting a section of highway or walking trail to keep litter free might be a start.

Together they enjoy travelling in Canada, Mexico and Costa Rica although that has been severely crimped by Covid.



Volunteering at PLSP, Arizona.



Don't ever tell Maggie she's not a keen birder. On one Aussie trip she got too close to the sewage lagoon and sank through the crust! Yuck.

www.southokanaganature.com

If you haven't checked out our Club's website recently, you should do so. Our site has all the latest information on monthly meetings, etc. Glenda has been working on changing the photographs, both on the home page and in the photography section. She is always looking for new photos so why not send her a few of your Okanagan Valley nature photos and let other Club members have a look at your work.



No matter what the calendar says or what the weather is doing, you know that spring is here (or very near) when the Sage Buttercups appear. This one was found in the White Lake area on March 10 by Rick McKelvey.

Membership Application / Renewal Form

Mail form to SONC, 193 Westview Drive, Penticton BC V2A 7W1

Individual.....\$32 per year

Family\$43 per year

Date:.....

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email address: _____

Do you wish to receive The Honker by email? _____

The membership year is Sept. to August; if joining after February 1st please contact the membership secretary first.