



The Honker

Newsletter of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club

June 2022



Thursday birding group - see story on page 4

Photo by **Jodi Forster**

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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

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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: The Thursday birding group on a recent outing. See full story on page 4.

President's Report

I am sure that the spring has been a very busy and enjoyable time for all of the SONC members. There has been a lot to see in the natural world as everything springs back to life and the cool damp weather this year has made for some great opportunities to enjoy the wildflowers.

We are still working towards normal club operations; however, our regular meetings have had lower than expected attendance and lots of conflicting activities that have kept some members away. We are now in our summer hiatus for meetings and our first meeting in September will be a **celebration of the club's 60th anniversary** to be held at the Penticton Golf Club on September 30th. Val Fenn is leading the committee to organize this event and I hope that many of you will attend. If you have old pictures or other items of memorabilia from any club activity over the last 60 years, please share them with Patrick Parenteau. He is going to produce a presentation for viewing at this gala event. If you know any past members of the club who may want to come and celebrate with us, please let them know. There has been a large number of great naturalists who have been in our club and moved on over time. Further details will be coming.

Our club membership has been steadily increasing and we have had several new members join over the last few months. Many of them are participating in our weekly outings, which regularly have 15 to 20 participants. Our "monthly dining outs" have restarted and many club members have enjoyed the company of friends at local eateries. Watch your e-mails for details.

We have been working through our club membership list and found that with all of the unknowns of the last year, there are a few people have not updated their membership. We have reached out to some, but if you have forgotten, please renew. Every time that I go out, I run across people with a strong interest in nature and I always take the time to talk about the club with the hope that they will join. I am sure that you all know people who have a similar interest, so please, introduce them to what our club does. As a reminder, the annual membership expires at the end of August.

The Meadowlark Nature Festival took place this May long weekend and by all reports it went very well. Thank you to all of the club members who led or volunteered to make this happen. I volunteered on one tour to enjoy the botany of the White Lake area and had a great time. I went back up three days later to redo the route to study and photograph the plants more closely. The Big Bird Day challenge was led by Dick Cannings again and all of the funds they raised go to the Baille foundation which will ultimately return to the Vaseux Lake banding operation. SONC donated \$200. You can still donate by going to the Birds Canada at <https://www.birdscanada.org/you-can-help/birdathon/>. Search for Dick Cannings or Tanya Luszcz who led two of the teams and add a comment that you would like the donation to go to the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory. Next year's MNF event promises to be bigger and better and it is my hope that our club can contribute a bit more by putting together one or two tours.

I attended the BC Nature AGM as the club representative at the end of May and the Central Okanagan Naturalists club put on a very good program. I attended one presentation from the Kelowna municipal staff member responsible for managing their urban forest.. It was encouraging to see the various programs that the municipality has in place to keep natural areas and encourage tree protection and replacement. Kelowna is under great pressures to control development since it has become the fastest growing municipality in North America.

I also spoke with some students hired by the Regional District of Central Okanagan to run nature programs through the parks system. These included several programs for adults. We all need to think of these issues during the upcoming municipal elections and look for ways that SONC may be able to encourage and help the local governments to create a similar interest in nature and conservation.

There was not too much of consequence that arose out of the club representatives meeting or the AGM. Most of it was house cleaning issues and a discussion around getting people interested in leadership positions. The biggest change to how BC Nature works is the acquisition of enough funds to hire a full-time executive director which will greatly reduce the work load on the board and manager. They have also contracted a professional fund raiser and hired a part time conservation Coordinator. These additions will make BC Nature a lot more effective organization. For those of you who may not be aware, you are automatically a member of BC Nature when you join SONC, and a significant part of your membership fees go there. They also coordinate the insurance coverage for all of the federated clubs in the province and produce the BC Nature magazine that you receive. Go to bcnature.org to see everything that you are part of.

Our club received a great surprise from BC Nature when we were advised that an anonymous donor has given our club \$5,000 towards the development of a viewing platform in Okanagan Falls. This project is still in very early development stages and this was a great boost. SONC also gave \$500 to The Nature Trust of BC towards the purchase of the Park Rill infill near White Lake. This piece of property was literally the hole in the donut of the properties already owned by NTBC in the area.

SONC is in a very good position in terms of membership and finances as we go into the summer and we all can work to make it even better. We have a very engaged and effective board right now; however, we do anticipate a couple of vacancies in the near future. We have over 100 individuals in the club now, so I am sure we can find some great people to fill these leadership positions. We also need to get our conservation and advocacy committee re-established if we wish to work effectively towards conserving what we have in the South Okanagan.

There are also challenges arising with the production of "The Honker" newsletter. Bob Handfield has been the editor for a long time and puts a lot of work into it. The newsletter can only happen with input from club members, so if you have had an interesting experience, taken a special photograph, read a good book that you can write a review about, or anything that you feel will be of interest, please help Bob by sending it to him.

Alex Bodden

Coming Events

July 10th - Club summer picnic at Summerland Ornamental Gardens. After a Covid imposed hiatus, we hope to renew our summer get together. Details have been emailed to all members.

September 22nd - the monthly meeting is cancelled.

September 30th - SONC's 60th anniversary celebration. Join fellow members at the Penticton Golf and Country Club to celebrate SONC's founding in 1962. Further details to follow.

October 27th—October monthly meeting.

Bouncing back to birding after COVID break

It was a common theme of the pandemic: giving up groups and regular activities was the worst part.

Sure we went for walks in nature on our own and marvelled at the birds and seasonal sightings. But it wasn't the same.

Amazingly, once we cautiously resumed our SONC outings on October 5, 2021, we have been moved and delighted to welcome so many new club members along with existing members back to the birding trail.

There have been several outings with upwards of 20 participants and even on less than ideal weather days, we've been a group of a dozen or more. People enjoy the company, the information sharing, the learning and the wonderful stroll we have to see what's happening in nature.

Since the pandemic, the participation levels in our Thursday walks have exceeded anything we've had before. Members are connecting with one another, introducing friends who have become club members and staying in touch while indoor club meetings remain sporadic.

Our weekly outing reports are proving popular with club members who are unable to get out on Thursdays and send appreciative messages saying they feel like they were there.

As we all seem to age a bit more, especially each winter, your outing leaders like to offer a mix of destinations, hoping that those with sore knees and hips will be helped by the flatter terrain of the KVR while on other occasions, we might like to lace up our hiking boots and venture over rockier ground at someplace like White Lake.

With gas prices at record highs, we're reluctant to venture too far afield but hope that fuel prices will moderate soon and we will be able to do a few day trips as we have in the past.

In the past, long-time club members packed up their cars, hooked up their motorhomes and headed to places like Moses Lake and Soap Lake in Washington State, Scotch Lake in the Shuswap, Revelstoke, and numerous other destinations in BC.

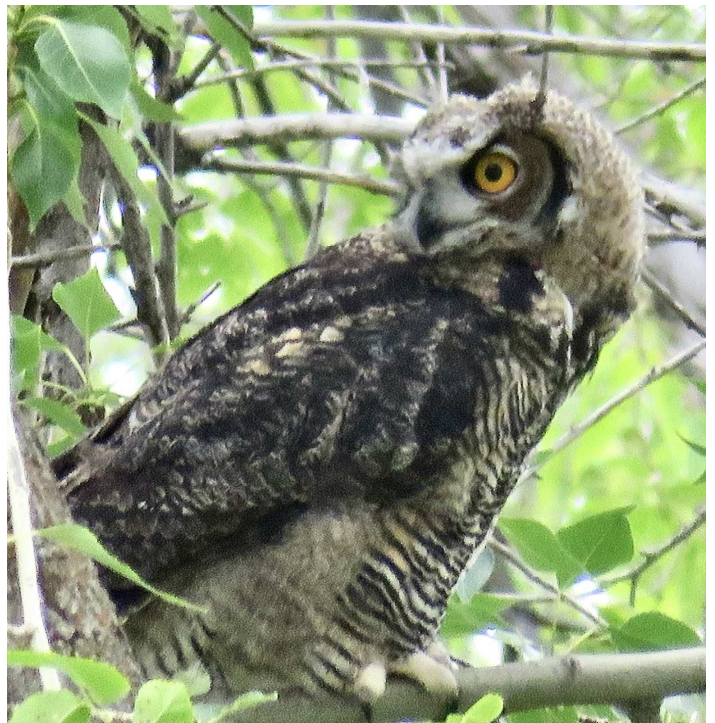
Let's look ahead to returning to day trips to Manning Park, perhaps up to Vernon and points around there, over to the

Boundary country, or wouldn't it be wonderful to imagine a few days in the Creston Valley and the amazing Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area.

Thank you to everyone who makes our Thursday birding outings so enjoyable. Your social chit chat on the trail, your delight at seeing something special and your commitment to nature and all it has to offer is integral to the mission and purpose of our club.

You have said with your feet that you love being on the birding trail. We love being on that journey with you. Now next week, we're off to

Wendy Stewart



Young Great Horned Owl seen on a recent Thursday birding outing. Photo by Jodi Forster

New Members

A very warm welcome to:

Susan Bigue, Okanagan Falls

Lyse Deselliers, Penticton

Andrew and Mavis Holder, Summerland

The Heavens

The planets will be making their way back into the evening sky this coming season, although they are certainly not in any rush to do so. Saturn leads the way, coming into opposition (appearing opposite to the Sun) on August 14, rising in the south east as the Sun sets in the north west. For us that means it will come up from behind the mountains in the south east around 9:00 or 9:30, just as the sky is getting dark enough for it to be visible.

Checking out "the heavens" at this time of year is a rather forlorn exercise, what with the late evenings and early mornings and just a little bit of darkness squeezed in between . . . hardly the best time to enjoy the wonders of a starlit sky. That makes it a good time to pay more attention to the Sun, often neglected in this context even though it is far and away the most important heavenly body for us all, seeing as how our lives depend on it.

Everybody generally *does* pay a lot of attention to the Sun, as in whether or not it's shining, but that is concerned more with weather than with the Sun itself. Concentrating on the Sun as a celestial body that one can enjoy as part of nature is not easy to do on a casual basis, noting what gigantic storms are raging on its surface, for example, or how the sunspot cycle is coming along. What I'd like to direct your attention to is the pattern of how it moves on the sky.

So . . . the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west. But where, exactly? A sense of where the Sun comes up, or goes down, at different times of the year is probably buried in your subconscious, and what I'm suggesting is that you consciously give it some attention. The range along the western horizon of where the Sun sets through the year, from south west at midwinter to north west at midsummer, is quite impressive, a phenomenon illustrated by Pen Henge, an array of stones (shown in the picture) atop Munson Mountain in Penticton.

The daily path that the Sun takes across the sky, and how that varies through the year, is also of interest. To check that out it's best to **not** look at the Sun directly, but to watch a shadow whose motion along the ground is a rendering of the Sun's motion across the sky. Virtually any object can serve as a gnomon (the central stick in a sundial) for this purpose, but Fortis has kindly provided us with a large number, in the form of power poles, that work particularly well.

The Sun follows the equivalent of a parallel of latitude across the sky each day, and the top end of a power pole's shadow traces out a rendering of that path along the ground very nicely. The resulting curve is in the shape of a hyperbola. By noting where that shadow falls at various times through the day you can see the hyperbola for yourself, and by visually projecting it back through the top of the power pole onto the sky you get a good idea of the path the Sun actually took. Our ancestors were doing this kind of thing many thousands of years ago, with the help of a gnomon — which is the oldest scientific instrument used by humans.

To be even more esoteric, you could note on different days

where the top end of the pole's shadow falls at noon. During the course of a year it will trace out a figure-8 sort of curve known as the analemma, a wonderful example of which is shown by the sundial at Skaha Beach.

The main message here is that paying a little attention to the world of shadows, an aspect of nature that any artist will tell you is fascinating in its own right, will give you a better feeling for what good old Sol is doing up there as he roams the sky each day.

Chris Purton



Figure caption: the Pen Henge stone array on Munson Mountain, heel stone in foreground. The background stone on the left lines up with where the Sun sets at winter solstice, the one on the right at summer solstice. During the year the sunset point moves along the horizon between those two extremes. Direction to where the sun sets at both spring and fall equinox is looked after by the single stone in the middle.

Photo by Chris Purton



Yellow-breasted Chat seen in the Penticton area. Jodi Forster

American Badgers

The subspecies of badger found in BC (*Taxidea taxus jeffersonii*) is considered endangered. Badgers range throughout the drier areas of southern BC including the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys, Thompson River and Nicola Valleys and in the drier forest of the Kootenays. They have also been seen in the South Caribou and Chilcotin regions of BC.

Badgers were historically common in these regions but a combination of persecution by ranchers, loss of habitat and mortality from cars and trains has severely impacted their numbers. Best estimates now is that there are between 200 and 350 badgers in all of BC.

Given this situation, it was extremely encouraging that one of our members, Diane Andiel, recently saw two badgers near Skaha Lake. Here is her report:

On Monday June the 6th I was driving home from dragon boat practice at 830 pm on east side road when I spotted 2 badgers opposite the lake side of the road. Since they are a solitary animal I knew I was looking at cubs. Adults weigh between 8 and 10 kg and I would guess that they were half that size. By fall they are adult size. Pulled over and got a few pictures on my iPhone. Posted on the club's Facebook page and on the south Okanagan wildlife page. Club members let me know that I should report the sighting since they are listed endangered which I did. It included details and location and my pictures. Local reporter is also trying to contact me. Between the 2 sites on Facebook I had dozens of comments and a couple hundred likes. A friend of mine that lived for many years off of south Main Street said they use to be a common sight in south Penticton in the 90s. Amazing what can happen to a species in 30 years. Cubs are usually born in February and start venturing out on their own anywhere from 15 weeks on. Females can breed at 4 months and males at 2 years. Of course i did some research after seeing them.

Editor's note: Diane's photos are adequate quality for displaying on websites but not in print so no photos here. However they are on the South Okanagan Naturalists' Facebook page and on our website.



Another Thursday Morning Outing

(Editor's note: Not all Thursday outings involve birds. Here's a brief description of a visit to the ONA fish hatchery.)

Salmon are integral to the history of our Okanagan waterways, cultures and communities so it was a wonderful experience to visit the Okanagan Nation Alliance fish hatchery on En'owkin Trail Thursday morning.

Newly promoted Assistant Manager Tyson Marsel enthusiastically welcomed 17 keen SONC members to the facility and guided them through the painstaking steps to harvest, fertilize and incubate salmon eggs.

The resulting young fish are being used to restore salmon numbers in the Okanagan River system and by extension, the Columbia River and into the Pacific Ocean.

Tyson spoke movingly of salmon returning to Shingle Creek near the hatchery and the emotion Penticton Indian Band members felt at seeing the abundance of salmon they recalled seeing when they were young – fish so dense you could walk across the creek.

The 25,000 square foot hatchery facility was opened in 2014 and currently has the capacity to rear 8 million eggs.

SONC member Shirl Sobkow noted the large outdoor fish tanks at the local facility are surrounded by chain-link fencing. At a hatchery she visited in Arizona, Shirl observed the tanks were not protected so the Kingfishers had easy meals from the fish tanks. No meals for birds here!

Wendy Stewart



Assistant Manager Tyson Marsel explaining the waterways the salmon travel - from the Pacific through the Columbia River system, into the Okanagan River and back.

Left— SONC member Allan Garland looking at the stages of a salmon's development.

Photos by W. Stewart

Everyone's Favorite Greens

For multiple generations, our mothers have told us to eat our greens. Mom's advice is clearly supported by facts. Green leafy vegetables are among the most nutrient dense foods available - high in calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, phosphorous, zinc and vitamins A, C, E and K. Each one is packed with fiber, folic acid, chlorophyll and many other phytochemicals and micronutrients. When eaten raw, you get the added benefit of live enzymes needed for improved digestion and nutrient absorption.

So, why not carry forward this concept to our unwanted garden greens? There's a plethora of edible weeds growing on our properties, so I recommend we eat 'em to beat 'em. Just words of caution that you only consume those plants you can identify and know are safe to eat.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is an edible plant that is native to India and the Middle East. It is a low growing succulent annual with reddish stems and alternate leaves clustered at stem joints and ends. It contains more omega-3 fatty acids than any other leafy vegetable plant. It also contains vitamin C, vitamin B and carotenoids, as well as dietary minerals, such as magnesium, calcium, potassium and iron. The whole plant is edible and it may be eaten raw, steamed or stir-fried. It has a slightly sour and salty taste and is eaten throughout much of Europe and Asia.

Lamb's quarters (*Chenopodium album*) is a European native that can be found almost anywhere the soil has been disturbed. The seedling of this weed has grey mealy particles and its flowers are green, inconspicuous and crowd in leaf axils or the end of the stems. When the plant matures, the undersides of the leaves receive a chalk-like covering. Both the leaves and the shoot of lamb's quarters are edible. Young leaves are delicious in salads and contain more calcium than lettuce. The plant can also be cooked and used like spinach.

Everyone's favourite, the dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), is also edible. Native to Europe and Asia, dandelion is a good source of vitamin A and carotenes. It also stimulates liver function and improves digestion.

Every part of this plant can be eaten. Roasted roots can serve as a coffee substitute, but beware of the diuretic effects. The young leaves go well in salads or steamed. Some like to cook the leaves into dandelion gravy and serve it over mashed potatoes. Young flowers can be dipped in egg, then cornmeal and finally fried for a tasty treat. The flowers can even be used to make dandelion wine.

Mallow (*Malva neglecta*) is an invasive species from Europe. It has clover-like leaves and button-like fruit. This mat-forming weed invades lawns and gardens. Both the leaves and fruit can be eaten in salads. The fruit has an okra-like flavour.

If you're looking for seasoning, shepherd's-purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*) is a great option. This European annual is quite evident in gardens right now, noticeable by its small, white flowers. Its name comes from the triangular or heart-shaped seedpod, which looks similar to an old-fashioned European shepherd's bag. The seedpods have a peppery flavour so are a

great addition to many dishes. The leaves of shepherd's-purse can also be eaten raw or blanched and sautéed with olive oil, garlic and chili.

Prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*) is another edible Eurasian weed named for the sharp spines on the backside of the midrib of the leaves. While this plant becomes bitter tasting as it ages, the young leaves and shoots are tasty. Young, tender leaves go well in salads and the young shoots can be cooked and used as a substitute for asparagus. One caution for this plant is that an excess of consumption can cause an upset stomach. Pricklylettuce also has medicinal qualities related to the milky fluid that exists within the plant.

For anyone feeling inspired, here is a recipe you may want to try!

Recipe for Weed Salad:

- 3 cups mixed greens (lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard)
 - 1 cup mixed weeds such as:
 - lamb's quarters leaves
 - dandelion leaves
 - mallow leaves
 - shepherd's-purse leaves
 - prickly lettuce leaves
 - purslane leaves and stems
 - sprinkle with dandelion petals and mallow fruits
 - add a handful of berries and nuts (dried cranberries, roasted almonds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds)
- Toss all the ingredients together in a large bowl with a dressing made of olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper.

Remember to use only young leaves of the weeds, as older plants tend to increase in bitterness.

Lisa Scott, Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society



Purslane

Photo by Lisa Scott

Narratives of a Naturalist - Christine Anderson

I was born and raised in Calgary and was fortunate to always live in close proximity to three beautiful and diverse natural areas: Nose Hill Nature Reserve, Fish Creek Provincial Park, and the Bow River valley. Growing up my family also had a cabin on an island in the Highwood River, so most of my childhood was spent playing outdoors, lazing away the hours and soaking up the sun. My Dad was deeply connected to the outdoors and fostered a love and respect for the natural world in all of us at an early age.

Eventually I found myself teaching my own two children about the joys of being outdoors. I vividly remember one evening in particular. My kids and I had hiked down to the beaver dam in Fish Creek Park and were sitting quietly beside the lodge, observing the beavers working away, unaware of our presence. The silence was suddenly broken by a chorus of gentle mewling, much like an infant's cry. It was the beaver kits, snuggled inside the lodge, calling for their mama's attention. It was a magical moment.

I worked for 35 years as an Early Childhood Educator, teaching playschool until 1993 when I was employed by GRIT, an organization that provides educational assistance to preschool children with special needs. Throughout my career I always incorporated nature into my daily planned activities - from large sensory bins full of dirt and rocks, to seashells in the water table, to hatching goose eggs, to observing the cycle of a butterfly with a butterfly kit. The highlight would always be the field trips to places like Fish Creek Park or the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. We would look for nests, birds, bugs and then share a picnic beside the creek. The hands down favorite (no pun intended) was feeding the chickadees out of our hands... even the three year olds would stand still and quiet for this! Young children truly are "naturalists" at heart. I think the greatest gift we can offer our world going forward is the continued nurturing of love and respect in our children and grandchildren for this planet earth.

In 2013 I retired and relocated to Summerland. I joined SONC that fall and was introduced to the Thursday birding group. I have learned so much from fellow members, and have discovered the beauty of the land surrounding Penticton. SONC has also blessed me with many new friendships. For several years I served as the Club's membership secretary and also as publicity coordinator. Bob Handfield and I also handle all the Birding Trail guide website sales.

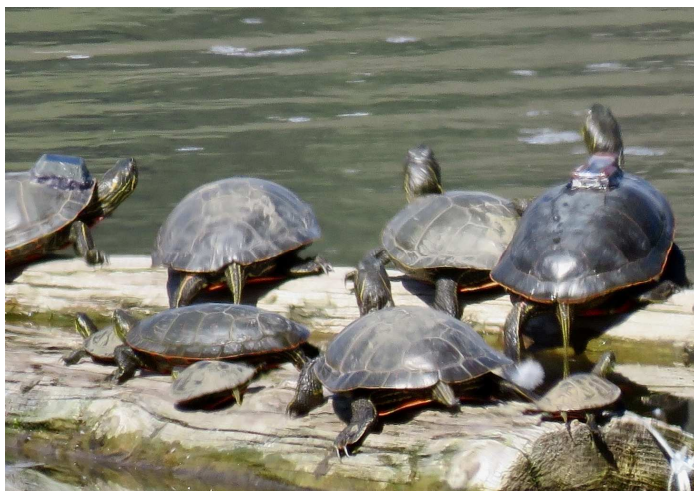
The fact that we are celebrating the Club's 60th anniversary this year is testament to the tremendous value SONC offers to its members and the community at large.

Christine Anderson

Top—Chris in a Calgary park, Middle is Chris's granddaughter and bottom is Chris on a SONC outing near Oliver



Solar powered Painted Turtles



Jodi Forster took this photo of Western Painted turtles sunning in one of the oxbows near the airport and south of the Nissan dealership. She noticed some were wearing packs and made some inquiries. Thanks to a reply to her from David DeRosa, a biologist with the Okanagan Nation Alliance, she learned that the packs are tracking devices being used to study the turtles because the airport is proposing some expansion and these endangered turtles have often been found crossing the runway and tarmac. The solar powered GPS devices will be removed upon completion of the two year study.

Mountain Goats in the Summerland Area

I'm sure most of our SONC members are aware of the small population of Mountain Goats (*Oreamnos americanus*) residing near Summerland, but just in case you aren't, here's a short note about Mountain Goats and the current status of our local population.

The Mountain Goat is an even-toed ungulate, related to antelope, gazelle and cattle. It has been placed in the subfamily Caprinae, which includes sheep, chamois, muskox, and true goats. This latter point means that Mountain Goats are related to domestic goats, but not very closely. In fact, they are more closely related to the Chamois. It is believed that Mountain Goats diverged from their ancestors between 11M and 7M years ago, and their most likely point of origin is thought to have been in what is now Tibet and Mongolia. Many other species of Caprinae seem to have emerged from this general area - the eastern Himalaya. Ancestral Mountain Goats likely migrated to North America via the Bering land bridge before the last glaciation, subsequently evolving into the species we see today.

Mountain Goats are primarily alpine and subalpine dwelling creatures, which makes their presence in our area all the more interesting. Our local mountains really don't have much true alpine habitat, but what there is, or that which closely resembles alpine habitat, the goats have been able to find. Mountain Goats typically feed on grasses and other plants which are characteristic of our dry environs wherever there are no trees. Mountain Goats also require steep, cliffy areas, for escape from potential predators. Where their preferred foods and steep terrain can be found together, it seems likely there might be a

goat or two there as well.

The Summerland population of Mountain Goats has only been recorded from that area since 1992 and as a result there are no data available from any aerial surveys in the recent past. The current population has grown from an original three or four animals, to perhaps as many as 25 now (pers. obs.). They can frequently be seen and counted from Highway 97. The habitat that they frequent in the Summerland area is quite limited in extent with an estimated total of only 17 ha of terrain of greater than 90% slope (escape terrain is obviously a population limiting factor).

What makes this small population of goats even more vulnerable to my mind is the relative ease of access to the area, the growing human population on the south end of their range with the new large residential development known as Hunters Hill, and the fact that there are no specific protective measures in place for that habitat. It's all provincial crownland, and one can do pretty much as one pleases on such areas, without anyone really being aware of what impacts are being imposed on the goats. The Summerland Mountain Goat habitat was identified as such in the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan, and objectives were set for improving knowledge of habitat use and condition and population status of Mountain Goats. It appears however that nothing overt has actually been done for that herd beyond recommending that the herd is too small to support a harvest. Maybe learning more about the habitat and population status of that herd is something South Okanagan Naturalists' Club should take on as a project! Interestingly, there are no population data available for any Mountain Goat populations in the South Okanagan more recent than 2000 that I have been able to find, and to access even those old data a request must be made to the government explaining why one needs it. One might surmise that Mountain Goats are not a very high priority for our Provincial Government, unfortunately.

There are other small populations of Mountain Goats in our area, notably Okanagan Mountain Park, and Penticton and Ellis creek canyons. The first has the advantage of secured habitat, and the latter two reside in areas not readily amenable to human access, so presumably disturbance is minimal for those herds.

I'll end with a short story about the Summerland goats from personal experience. Did you know that members of that herd can fly?? A few years ago, while travelling to Kelowna on a more or less daily basis, I became quite familiar with where to look for goats as I drove the highway. On this particular instance, just as I glanced up at where the goats had been seen only the day before (one shouldn't really try to spot wildlife whilst driving, incidentally), a small herd of goats took off and rose into the air. As this was spring migration, what I had actually seen was a small flock of pelicans, rising on a thermal in exactly the same location as the goats were normally to be seen. Luckily my brain figured out what I had actually seen before it told me I needed to take a second look! Only passengers should do goat surveys from the Hwy 97!

Rick McKelvey

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.



One of the Rattlesnake Mountain goat population. Photo 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.