



The Honker

Newsletter of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club

June 2023



SONC Creston Valley Field Trip Participants, May 2023

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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: \$35; Family: \$45 (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, wendyastewart@shaw.ca

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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.

Coordinators/Representatives:

Archivist: Jim Ginns 250 492 9610; ginnsj@shaw.ca

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To be determined

BC Nature Rep: Alex Bodden; a.bodden@shaw.ca

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Meeting programs: Doreen Olson threegates@telus.net and Bob Handfield

Publicity: Chris Anderson

Refreshments: Jim Shaver

S Okanagan Habitat Garden: Marlene Hikichi (temporarily)

Thursday Birding: Wendy Stewart, Alex Bodden and Jim Shaver

Cover photo: See elsewhere in this issue for a full report on SONC's first multi-day field trip since pre-Covid days.

President's Message

I hope that you have all enjoyed the great spring that we have had. The wildflowers have been great and there are lots of bugs, birds and other animals about. Bobbi even saw a cow moose in our yard that I have been told had a calf in a yard across the valley from us. I have run across a few of you while I was out and about and we have had several great club outings over the last couple of months. Migration is pretty well over; we saw the Bobolinks at Road 22 last week and I am just waiting for the Common Nighthawks to show up so I can do my annual survey for Birds Canada. It will have to wait of course until we get back from Scotland.

We did two club trips in May. The first a four-day trip to Creston that Rod and Elaine Malcolm organised had 20 club members participate. It turned out to be a great deal of fun, even if the highway washed out and the trip home was much longer. Under the enthusiastic guidance of Marc Andre Beaucher from the Creston Valley Wildlife Management area <https://crestonwildlife.ca/> we saw about 95 species of birds and had a great many individual experiences.

The second was a trip to the Douglas Lake IBA that we have not done for a few years. We had 15 club members go on this day trip. It was a couple of weeks later than we normally do this outing, so some things were not there, especially the shore birds, however there were lots of sparrows and other song birds that we usually do not see.

Amazingly enough, the last birds of the 72 species seen were Northern Flickers and Turkey Vultures. A Clay-coloured sparrow with its distinct buzzy call was a first for most of the participants. All of our checklists were forwarded to the Merritt club, who are the caretakers of this IBA. I am exploring a day trip up to the Sage and Sparrows grasslands for later this summer and a trip to Salmon Arm for early fall.

OSCA celebrated another successful Meadowlark festival and many of our club members led, or volunteered, on many of the tours. Thank you to the members of our club who were quick to step up when a couple of volunteers could not make it.

Dick Cannings did his annual Okanagan Big Bird Day challenge as part of Birds Canada's Great Canadian Birdathon with two others in what turned out to be a rainy Sunday. Over the course of this long e-bike ride, starting very early in the morning, they counted 120 species of birds. This is a fundraiser for the Vaseux Lake bird Observatory and I thank all of the club members who made online donations to his team, "A Parliament of Owls." The club made a \$200 donation and there is still lots of time to donate if you wish.

Rick McKelvey stood in for me as the club representative at the BC Nature AGM, which he reported to have been well organized by the Langley Field Naturalists. BC Nature has had a significant change in its staff and will be engaging in some strategic planning over the course of the next few months to set a clearer direction.

The final decision has been made and the United church is

going to close its doors in early October. We have had a long history with the church and I do not know how long we have met there. The board has already been exploring our options and right now it looks like the Penticton Senior's Drop-in Centre is going to be our new meeting place in September. Val Fenn will be putting her recommendation to the board once all the details are worked out.

The membership level in our club is still very good and we have picked up a couple of new members over the last little while. Hopefully we will continue to have good participation in our Thursday and longer outings. We are still a bit challenged with a few people leading most of the trips, so if you know of a great spot to see wildflowers, unique geography, birds etc. please put up your hand to lead. Thank you to Ed Steltman and Ralph Morgan for leading the club recently.

The board has been planning to do a club survey for some time and it should be ready to go in September. Please give some thought to what you feel the club should be focusing on and tell us of your interests so we can make it more meaningful for everyone. The need to bring back a functional conservation committee is one of the concerns of the board if we are to remain a voice for the advocacy of nature in the Okanagan. We are also still looking for someone to take over as the editor of "The Honker" if you wish to see it continue into the future.

You all should have received notice of the club picnic on June 25th and I look forward to seeing some of you there.

Alex

Coming Events

September 28—regular monthly meeting but please note that the meeting may be in a new location. Check the website and watch for emails confirming the location.

October 26—SONC Annual General Meeting



Invasive Species and Climate Change

Climate change is in the news more than ever before. Climate change and biological invasions are among the greatest threats to biodiversity and some experts warn that their impacts might increase by the end of this century.

Climate change will not only affect the mean global temperature, but also the extremes, namely variability and seasonality. Heat waves are predicted to occur with a higher frequency and with longer duration. Climate change will also modify the patterns and variability of rainfall and the frequency of extreme events such as floods, droughts, storms and fires. Such environmental changes will affect all levels of biodiversity, from single organisms to whole biomes.

Consideration of invasive species management in relation to climate change is extremely important. Both climate change and invasive species pose extraordinary ecological challenges to the world today. The impact of climate change and rising average world temperatures can have a profound influence on species' geographical ranges. Changes in temperature, atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and available nutrients factors will most likely stress the ecosystems and increase the chances of invasions. Many scientists agree that climate change will increase vulnerability to invasion because of a scarcity of resources and increased competition among native plants and animals.

One species that is predicted to move into B.C. is **yellow starthistle**. This spiny member of the knapweed family occurs in 41 U.S. states, but is most concentrated in California, where the plant infests nearly 12 million acres of rangeland, cultivated fields and natural areas. Yellow starthistle is currently not known to occur in B.C. In the U.S. it is reported as being “an innocuous looking basal rosette of leaves and morphs into a spiny, tough, dominating weed that creates a fire hazard and interferes with vineyard operations.” Needless to say, this is not a plant we want to move into one of Canada's prime grape growing areas.

Expanded growing seasons will undoubtedly help invasive plants more quickly push aside native species and transform ecosystems. Research conducted through the Biodiversity Research Centre at the University of B.C. found that many non-native species are changing their flowering schedule in concert with the longer growing season. For example, **purple loosestrife**—a European import widely planted in the 19th century for medicinal use—blooms 24 days earlier in Massachusetts than it did a century ago. By contrast, indigenous species have been, on average, much slower to react to the new conditions.

Invasive species are, by nature, highly flexible, and respond to unusual environments more quickly than native species. And now, with the help of climate change, the invasive species also reap the benefits that come with early blooming, such as shading out competitors and capturing a larger share of nutrients, water or pollinators. As well, certain invasive plants that have previously been killed off by low winter temperatures are set to thrive as global temperatures increase.

Climate change may also alter the effectiveness of our current treatment approaches, such as biological control (the use of natural insect enemies). Successful biocontrol agents are highly specific to the invasive species they are targeted to control, and changes in climatic factors may alter these inter-specific interactions.

It will take more research to understand how specific invasive species may behave under an altered climate and which new species will emerge as invasive. However, one thing is certain: new vigilance will be required. There will be a need for increased monitoring and more interagency and cross-jurisdictional coordination. So let's continue to work cooperatively to be part of the solution to this imminent challenge.

Lisa Scott



Yellow starthistle



Purple loosestrife

The Heavens

Currently, there are two planets visible in the evening as the sky gets dark. Venus appears low in the west, very bright (very!) with Mars a short distance to its left, a bit more modest, looking like a bright star with a reddish hue. A short distance to the left of Mars is Regulus, which is a bright star. That's a neat little lineup of those three objects. Regulus is the brightest star of Leo, the Lion, and the backwards question mark of stars that so distinctively outlines his head and mane streams upward from Regulus, arcing over the two planets. The large right-angle triangle outlining the hindquarters of the beast sits some distance to the left of all that.

Venus, being so incredibly bright, is visible some time before the stars are, while the sky is still light. The earlier time puts it higher in the sky and much more obvious. Its orbit is bringing it around to come between us and the Sun and we see it now as half a disc, like the Moon at first quarter but much smaller . . . about 1/60 the size. A spotting 'scope should reveal the shape.

A month from now that entire assemblage will be lower in the sky, with Mars and Leo gone from our view for the season. Venus will be visible then, while the sky is still light, but closer to the horizon than we see it now, and it will have slimmed down to a thin crescent.

Currently, there are also two planets visible in the morning sky before the sky gets light. Jupiter appears low-ish in the eastern sky, bright enough to get your attention, and Saturn midway up the sky in the south, looking more like an ordinary bright star.

With the very short nights at this time of year I thought it best to concentrate on the Moon rather than the stars and other faint objects . . .

The Moon will be at first quarter on June 26, looking like half a disc despite the name. It's called a first quarter Moon because it is 1/4 the way around its orbit since it was new (between us and the Sun). That means it will be 1/4 the way around the sky from where the Sun appears on that date, hence highest in the sky in the south at sunset.

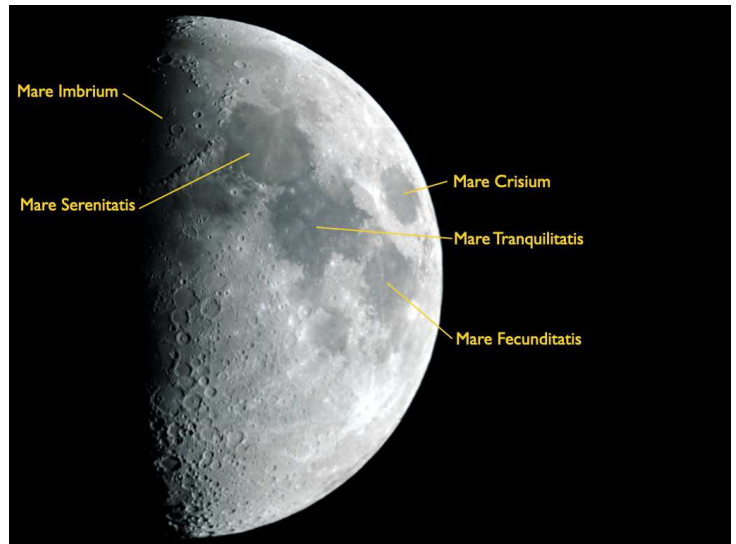
The picture of the first-quarter Moon shows the large dark markings that are visible to the naked eye, known as 'Mare', which is Latin for 'Sea'. The Latin names for the most prominent mare are given on the picture, and translate (going from left to right) as the Seas of Rains (that's Imbrium), Serenity, Tranquility, Crises, and Fertility. Those so-called seas are actually lakes of cooled lava that flowed into huge craters created by the impact of asteroids that crashed into the Moon during an era known as the 'Late Heavy Bombardment', early in the Moon's history.

First quarter is the best lunar phase for viewing details on the Moon with binoculars or a telescope. The left edge of the Moon in the picture is a slightly curved line along the Moon's surface known as the 'terminator', a line separating the sunlit side of the Moon from the dark side. That line is where the Sun is rising, as seen by the lunar inhabitants, and near there the shadows are long, serving to accentuate features like craters

and mountains.

The full Moon, which will happen on July 3, is more dramatic and gives us those beautiful moonlit nights, but is not as interesting as a first-quarter Moon. When full, the Moon is 1/2 way around its orbit since it was new, which means, following the same logic as above, it rises at sunset time and is highest in the sky in the south at midnight. But it also means the sunlight landing on surface features of the Moon has streamed in from your direction, and does not provide you with any visible shadows, giving the full Moon a washed-out appearance.

Chris Purton



Moon as it appears when at first quarter. Note the mountains, known as the Appenine Mountains, along the edge of Mare Imbrium. Credit: Purton collection.

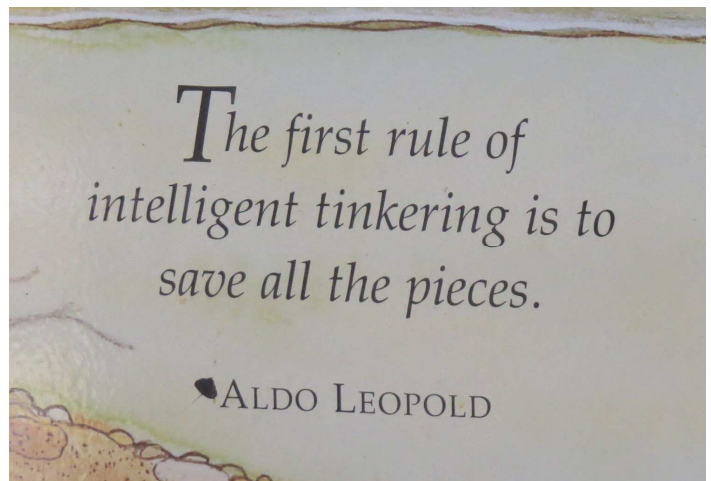


Photo by Bob Handfield

SONC Creston Field Trip 2023

Our destination, the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA), encompasses approximately 7,000 hectares (20 km x 3.5 km) of valley-bottom conservation lands positioned between the Selkirk and Purcell Mountain ranges. These lands project southward from Kootenay Lake to Corn Creek Marsh (near the US border) in the Creston Valley. The CVWMA encompasses diverse habitat, micro-climate features (dry warm variant of Interior Cedar-Hemlock biogeoclimatic subzone), multi-faceted wetlands (17 marshes, 1,500-hectare Duck Lake, Kootenay River, Kootenay Lake) and adjacent mountain slopes, providing a rich environment for naturalists to observe exceptional wildlife diversity. Our SONC Board's intention was to plan and facilitate a three-day outdoor experience in a beautiful and accessible British Columbia location

Monday May 1,

20 members of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club travelled 400 km to Creston BC. After a beautiful drive through the Selkirk mountains, we gathered on the Valley View Motel grounds for an outdoor BBQ and lawn games, accompanied by mountain and valley vistas, a glorious sunset over the Selkirks, and soft jazz music in the background. Our evening culminated with wonderful socializing around the campfire and star gazing under a clear night sky, before heading off to our cozy, summer-cottage-style accommodations.



SONC campfire at Valley View Motel Photo credit: P. Parenteau

Tuesday May 2:

Marc-André Beaucher (CVWMA Head of Conservation Programs) met us at the Valley View Motel to chat about CVWMA's current highlights prior to the group setting off on our guided excursion. We traversed central and western sectors of the vast conservation lands via the Summit Creek access point. This area is normally inaccessible to vehicles, however Marc-André arranged for our car-pooling group to proceed beyond the locked gates, enhancing the ease of our Summit Creek – Leach Lake sector exploration (8 km each direction). We had numerous stops of interest,

exploratory walks, and information sessions thanks to our expert guide, who knows the CVWMA lands intimately.

Our initial stop was in a majestic mature cedar-hemlock forest sector of lower Summit Creek, followed by a pause at the Summit Creek Bailey bridge. Here, we were treated to a pair of Harlequin ducks.



Harlequin ducks, Photo Credit P. Parenteau

Marc-André's comment that the lower Summit Creek area is frequented by grizzly sows and cubs piqued our interest (no bears were observed during our time on the CVWMA lands). Next, we stopped in a transitional area where the contrast between mature cedar forest and wide-open wetlands was remarkable. At a bend overlooking Summit Creek, highlights included Belted Kingfishers, American Dippers, Northern Rough-winged Swallows and Tree Swallows. A side note for this location: In retrospect, it was disconcerting to have enjoyed perfect weather and scenery during our time within the CVWMA, only to discover upon our return to the Okanagan, that climate events and freshet activity completely eroded the internal road curve along Summit Creek, where we stood just four days prior.

We proceeded through the wetlands to "Swallow Corner" where the sky was filled with Tree and Northern Rough-winged swallows. The adjacent slough also included Western Painted Turtle habitat and sightings. As we continued north through the Leach Lake sector, we observed a mass nesting colony of Double-crested Cormorants, adjacent to a smaller colony of Great Blue Herons. Using spotting scopes and binoculars we were able to view this distant site set in mature deciduous forest adjacent to the Kootenay River.



Summit Creek - Leach Lake access erosion. Photo credit Marc-Andre Beaucher

Tuesday's field outing extended to the north end of the Leach Lake dykes, where we enjoyed lunch in the open wetlands, surrounded by beautiful habitat. The afternoon turned hot on our return along the dykes, where sharp eyes spotted a Horned Lark as we drove south. Our group returned to the cool, shaded grounds of the Valley View Motel for relaxation, however a few hardy souls set out in the afternoon heat to explore Corn Creek Marsh (southerly portion of CVWMA).

Late in the day, the group gathered for an open evening enjoying the sunset, vistas, campfire, star gazing and wonderful conversations along with pizza and other local sustenance.

Wednesday May 3:

Our second scheduled field outing, guided by Marc-André Beaucher, headed to the Duck Lake area and surrounding conservation lands (northeast sector of CVWMA). We drove along Channel Road, west of Wynndel, and paused at a slough full of ducks and turtles. As we proceeded north, we observed an abundance of swallows (Tree, Barn, Cliff and Northern Rough-winged), a stalwart Killdeer that stood its ground despite all 20 of us viewing from a close distance, and a spotting of a Sandhill Crane along the eastern slough. Numerous stops were made in the vicinity of Duck Lake. During a pause to observe swallow nests under construction, three American White Pelicans flew out of the wetlands, then circled back quickly for a flight over our heads. As they took flight, Marc-André mentioned that they are curious birds, so it was no surprise when they flew directly over us at low elevation.

Ducks observed in the nutrient rich waters of Duck Lake included Wood, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Redhead, Ring-necked, Bufflehead, Common Golden Eye, Hooded Merganser, American Widgeon, Mallard and Cinnamon Teal.

As we approached the north end of Duck Lake, we gathered to share observations. A distant movement caught our collective attention, and we determined that a "wedge" of approximately

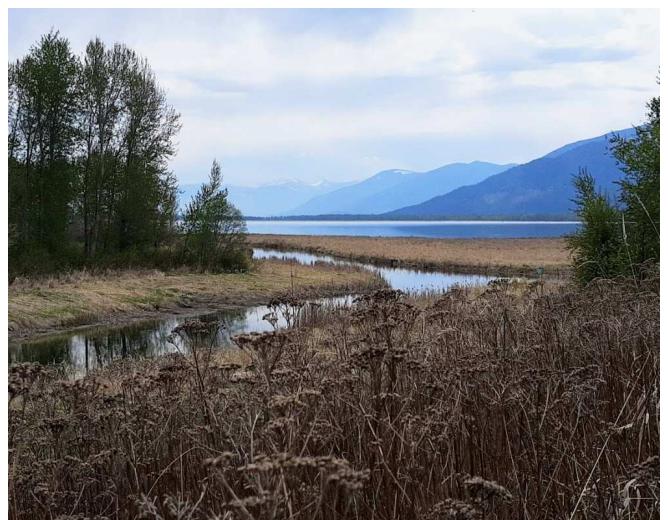
66 Tundra swans was in flight across the south sector of Duck Lake. We were able to view them for about three minutes as they flew towards their destination in the central east shore shallows.

We learned from Marc- André Beaucher about the Frog-Bear Conservation Corridor that bisects the north half of the CVWMA. This sector serves as a protected connective corridor between the Selkirk and Purcell Mountain ranges, for an at-risk population of grizzly bears to roam their preferred habitat on both sides of the Creston Valley. It also encompasses the only known breeding location in British Columbia for the endangered Northern Leopard Frog.

Some of our group continued along the dyke road between the north end of Duck Lake and the southerly Kootenay Lake wetlands into the northeast corner of the CVWMA. This area, bisected by the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and trestles is comprised of marsh lands and mature deciduous forest. The panoramic view looking south over Duck Lake and the vast CVWMA lands was spectacular.

After our second day exploring CVWMA conservation lands, absorbing insight provided by our knowledgeable guide, we enjoyed a few detours in the Six Mile Slough vicinity southwest of Duck Lake. The hot weather and dry, dusty conditions made us appreciative of the cool, green oasis at the Valley View Motel upon our return.

On Wednesday evening we reserved the patio at Jimmy's Pub (Creston Hotel) for a fun get-together of camaraderie, good food and bebies. We invited Marc- André Beaucher and his wife Gillian to join, allowing us to express our deep appreciation for his time and expertise regarding the CVWMA and Creston. We could not have asked for a friendlier biology professional to guide us, respond to questions, and generously provide his insight.



South view of Duck Lake and CVWMA from NE sector. Photo by Rod Malcolm

The evening wound up around the Valley View Motel campfire again. In addition to stargazing after our third sunset, we were treated to some local acoustic music talent (Rick Brown and "Carl") who entertained us with tunes ranging from sentimental to humorous. They were aware of our visit to the Creston Valley and asked if they could entertain us that evening. We felt privileged to be acknowledged and accepted by these nice local folks. It was discovered that Rick Brown performs "in the buff"! He did a song that comedically acknowledges his singing stints at the "Buff" alo Trails Coffee House in downtown Creston. It seemed fitting, as we gathered around the campfire for our third and final evening, that a Barred Owl was spotted sitting on a hydro pole at the edge of the Valley View Motel. It sat for about 5 minutes, then took off over the motel grounds, flying right over our campfire towards the surrounding tall cedars.

Thursday May 4:

Our folks packed up and were ready to depart on another warm day in the Creston valley. Unfortunately, we discovered that the Highway 3 direct route over the Kootenay Pass was blocked by landslides. An alternative route was quickly determined (Highway 3A north up the east side of Kootenay Lake; cross Kootenay Lake on M.V. Osprey ferry; drive west through Nelson and reunite with Highway 3 at Castlegar). This made for a longer return drive to the south Okanagan, but I am told everyone enjoyed the beautiful scenery.

Our field trip was made special by the genuinely nice people who operate the Valley View Motel. We cannot say enough positive things about Gillian Kemle and her team (Glendon, Tracy and Pam). They went above and beyond to welcome us to their lovely view gardens, summer kitchen, outdoor socializing environment (picnic area, group gathering area around the firepit) and cozy accommodations. After our group departed (Elaine and I lingered for an additional day) Gillian passed me a card for the "SONC gang". It stated: "Thank you so very much from our whole hearts! You were [absolutely amazing](#) to [have](#) here. We learned, laughed and loved every moment you were with us. Hope you all have a remarkable summer. xoxo".

Twenty SONC members ventured out on this field trip. Although a five-hour, 400 km drive seems a considerable distance for a naturalist outing, our members enjoyed the Kootenay scenery, Creston Valley biogeoclimatic subzone along with its flora and fauna, renewed friendships, and good camaraderie. The CVWMA conservation lands are unique and, for me, were the highlight of the trip. 97 bird species were recorded, and numerous insects/plants observed. Having an expert guide who lives and breathes the biology of the CVWMA felt like icing on the cake. In summary, this trip was special thanks to the wonderful SONC participants who were always willing to share personal expertise or a few moments of quiet conversation in a majestic environment. I would like to thank everyone involved for their enthusiasm, kindness and friendship, including our CVWMA guide, Marc- André Beaucher, our hostess, Gillian Kemle, and our great SONC participants.

Rod Malcolm



Cinnamon Teal on Duck Lake. Photo credit: Robyn DeYoung and Matthew Lowery

Remembering Colleen

You are invited to attend a special time to

Remember Colleen Schneider

Sunday, August 20th at 3 p.m.

At the Penticton Golf and Country Club

600 Comox Street (off Eckhardt Ave. West)

Penticton BC



BLACK CHOKEBERRY (*Aronia melanocarpa*) A VERSATILE SHRUB

At Christmas one Penticton supermarket orders in a table of fruitcakes. Mostly they sit there unsold until early January when they are marked down to what we few remaining fruitcake lovers consider a bargain.

Each November I bake a large dark fruitcake which ripens in a tin until early in the New Year. In '22 it was hard to find all the dried and preserved fruits required due to supply issues and prices also increased so a \$7.00 500 g cake marked down to \$3 was a bargain. I bought 2 for the freezer and was surprised to find they were made in the UK and even more surprised to find that "aronia concentrate" was listed as an ingredient.

I know Aronia as a bush native to Eastern North America known as chokeberry which I purchased for my garden here 8 years ago. It has clusters of small white flowers in early spring which attract bees and butterflies. Once pollinated small blueberry-like fruits form. They ripen almost black and usually disappear rather quickly. Only once did I notice they remained all winter. Despite their being "chokeberries", I found them edible but never thought of them as "people" food. How wrong I was. They are popular as herbal remedies and are found in juices, purees, jams, jellies, syrups, teas and wine.

Chokeberries are field grown commercially, preferring slightly damp conditions in sun or semi-shade. "Autumn Magic", is a UBC introduction with spectacular fall foliage colors of orange, red and magenta.

Anne Ginns

Glaciers and Grizzlies

Neither glaciers nor grizzly bears are uncommon in British Columbia but both are in danger of becoming less common in the not so distant future, glaciers perhaps much sooner than grizzlies. However, there is an area where it is easy to see both and I recommend you try to do so before it is too late. I'm talking about the Stewart BC—Hyder Alaska area. Stewart is about 1,400 km by road from Penticton so 3 days of driving. We visited this area in 2010 and again in 2017 and believe me, some of the glaciers were notably smaller in that time frame. There is a US Forest Service board walk at Fish Creek near Hyder which provides for real close-up viewing of grizzlies. Technically, these bears are in Alaska but given the large range of grizzlies, these bears probably spend most of their time in BC. There are glaciers pretty well everywhere, mostly in BC. Well worth a visit. All photos taken by me.

Bob Handfield



Salmon glacier, the fifth largest in Canada. A 37 km drive from Stewart but passing through Alaska to get there so a passport is necessary.



Nothing beats fresh caught salmon!



Hanging glaciers above Highway 37A approaching Stewart BC.

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.



Northwest sector of Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area; SONC group viewing Leach Lake wetlands with Selkirk Mountains in background. Photo by Marc-Andre Beaucher, CVWMA

Membership Application / Renewal Form

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

Individual.....\$35 per year

Family\$45 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.