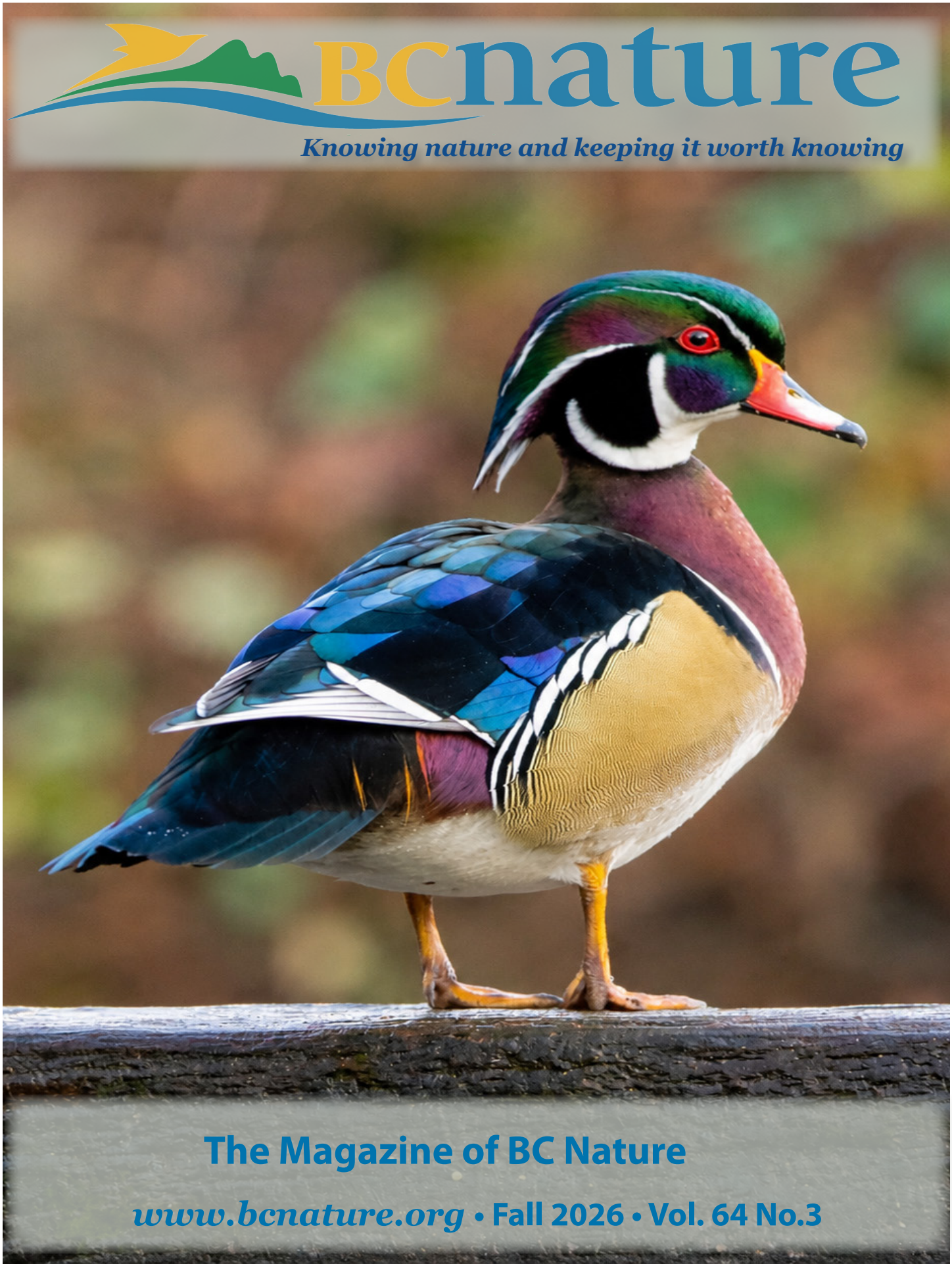
BCnature

Knowing nature and keeping it worth knowing



The Magazine of BC Nature

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BCnature

Volume 64 No. 3

In This Issue:

Regular Columns

President's Report 7
Conservation Committee Updates 8
KBA Update: BC Field Ornithologists: A Partnership Built on Birds and Conservation 20
Back to Basics: What Grows on Tree Trunks? 25
BC Naturalists' Foundation Update 25
Natural Justice 27
Naturalist Mentor 36

Features

Advocacy is Easy 10
Designing Sustainable Birdhouses 13
BC Nature Supports Science Fairs Throughout B.C. 13
The Quiet Conservationist 15
Featured Key Biodiversity Areas: Cowichan, Mesachie, and Bear Lakes 16
From Communications to Conservation: My Work as a BC Nature Summer Student 18
BC Nature AGM Recap - Kamloops 19
How to Reduce Bird-kill at Windows 20
An Insight into the Temperature of Western Purple Martin Nest Boxes 21
Geese in the Meadow 23
Congratulations 2026 Scholarship Recipients 27
Letter to the Editor 30
Fireweed: A Familiar Sign of Renewal 30
BC Nature 2026 Awards 31
NatureKids BC Update 33
Expanding Hummingbird Conservation in the Okanagan South Okanagan Naturalists' Club 34
Did You Know? The Wood Duck 35

Notices

Upcoming Dates of Note 2
2026 Photo Contest 29

Upcoming Days of Note

September 27, 2026 - BC Rivers Day October 15, 2026 - BC Nature and HCTF Photo Contest closes
November 1, 2026 - Deadline for Winter *BCnature* Magazine
December 1, 2026 - Giving Tuesday
January 1, 2027 - AGM Registration opens

Correction from Fall 2026 *BCnature* Edition
In our book review of *Plants of the Pacific Coast* (page 24), The correct publisher is CanScience Books, not Lone Pine.

CanScience Books is a new publisher based in Victoria: *https://cansciencebooks.ca*

Objectives of BC Nature (Federation of BC Naturalists)

- To provide naturalists and nature clubs of BC with a collective voice on conservation and environmental issues.
- To foster an awareness, appreciation, and understanding of our natural environment, that it may be wisely used and maintained for future generations.
- To encourage the formation and cooperation of nature clubs throughout BC.
- To provide a means of communication among naturalists in BC.

We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, style, and clarity.

Articles and advertising in *BCnature* magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of all BC Nature members.
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We welcome your articles, photos, and letters. Please email them to *communications@bcnature.ca*

Cover photograph: Liam Ragan - Wood Duck - See page 33

Advertising and article submission deadline for the Winter Edition - November 1, 2026

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Full Colour, PDF or e-version of *BCnature* is available online at *www.bcnature.org*

All references that were submitted with the articles can be found in the e-version edition.

BC Nature 1620 Mount Seymour Road
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Nature needs people who care—and people who act

Each of us has something to give. For some, it is time. For others, it is financial support. Many of us contribute both.

Every volunteer hour, membership, donation, and monthly gift strengthens BC Nature's ability to protect nature and biodiversity throughout British Columbia.

Let's keep our impact strong





Investing in Meaningful Projects, Action, Conservation, and Tomorrow.

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Your support helps BC Nature:



- **Connect and support naturalists across the province.**
- **Promote the appreciation and stewardship of nature.**
- **Speak up for wildlife, habitats, and biodiversity.**
- **Share knowledge through education, publications, and public outreach.**
- **Encourage people of all ages to become involved in conservation.**

Monthly giving makes a lasting difference

A small monthly gift provides dependable support throughout the year.

$5 a month is only $60 a year—but together, those gifts add up to meaningful action for nature.

Monthly donations help BC Nature plan ahead, respond to emerging conservation concerns, and continue the programs and communications that connect British Columbia's naturalist community.

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Give monthly. Volunteer when you can. Help nature whenever you can.





YOUR GIFT HELPS TURN LOCAL ACTION INTO PROVINCIAL IMPACT

Through the BC Naturalists' Foundation Club Support Grants, local naturalist clubs receive funding to carry out practical conservation, education, research, and stewardship projects in communities across British Columbia.

THESE GRANTS TURN GOOD IDEAS INTO ACTION.

They may help a club purchase monitoring equipment, restore habitat, involve young people in nature, conduct wildlife surveys, train volunteers, create educational resources, or expand a successful community conservation program.

A GRANT DOES MORE THAN FUND A PROJECT, IT:

- Gives volunteers the tools and encouragement to take part.
- Strengthens the knowledge and capacity of local clubs.
- Brings people together around a shared commitment to nature.

Most importantly, it creates measurable benefits for habitats, wildlife, and communities.

YOUR DONATION CAN HELP MAKE THE NEXT PROJECT POSSIBLE

The Club Support Grants are only possible because people choose to invest in the BC Naturalists' Foundation.

Your donation helps ensure that the next good idea—a monitoring project, a habitat restoration effort, a volunteer training program, or a new conservation initiative—has a chance to become action.



At Rocky Point Bird Observatory, a 2026 Club Support Grant is turning one such idea into action: Building Volunteer Skills and Abilities for Migration and Monitoring Projects

IMPACT: Foundation funding is helping RPBO train volunteers in bird handling, monitoring, identification, and data collection—building the skills and capacity needed to sustain long-term bird monitoring.



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When we are gone, a gift in a will can continue that support for generations.

Nature will outlast every one of us. Those who follow will inherit the responsibility of protecting it—and they will need strong organizations, committed volunteers, and dependable resources behind them.

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President's Report

Submitted by Harold Sellers

When you've been around for as long as BC Nature has (since 1969), you accumulate a lot of documentation. In BC Nature's case, that means magazines, letters, minutes, and other documents, both in print and digital forms.

Being able to access these records is often important for BC Nature staff, board, and can be for our members too.

Back issues of *BCnature* magazine, currently available from 2010, are on the BC Nature website, Member Login page. Browsing the back issues is like visiting a library; we have covered so many topics over the years. Minutes and other documents, including some on conservation issues, and AGM reports, are also in the Members area.

The correspondences (mostly to government) are available for anyone to view. Clubs could certainly use them as examples or when researching an issue. View *https://bcnature.org/advocacy_for_nature/*

Every BC Nature member is entitled to have access to all these resources and history, so if you've never obtained the login details for the Members area, simply request them from our office manager, Mish Stone, at *info@bcnature.ca*.

Also on the BC Nature website, under About > History, is a written history of BC Nature from 1969 to 2019. It was produced and collated thanks to a grant and the efforts of Sheila Byers and Bev Ramey. More great reading!

Next let me remind you that coming up on Saturday, October 17th will be the municipal elections here in B.C. There is a saying of "Every Vote Counts". How it counts could be debated, but we naturalists should be amongst those citizens most keen to exercise our right to vote. We want to make an impact for nature, and politicians will make decisions that affect nature. We give them the power to do so, so we should participate in the election of politicians who reflect our values. There are many issues facing us today, and many of them affect nature either directly or indirectly.

We have a better chance of personally knowing some of our municipal politicians than we do of knowing our provincial or federal politicians. That gives us an opportunity to vote with impact. Such a relationship makes it easier to communicate with our local elected officials throughout their term.

In this magazine you will see our Fall campaign for giving to BC Nature. Donations are critical to the sustainability of BC Nature, particularly for the services from our office on behalf of you and the 65+ clubs and organizations that now belong to BC Nature. One message that I personally want to give emphasis to is monthly giving. It is so easy to donate $10 or $25 or more to BC Nature automatically every month. I started doing it myself last year. It is effortless and I know every bit counts.

As I wrap up this President's Report, I'm excited and delighted to share with you that the 2027 BC Nature AGM and Conference will be held in Victoria next May 13-15. Preparations are underway by the Rocky Point Bird Observatory and Nature Victoria. We welcome you all to attend. Details to follow in the Winter Edition. ✿



Conservation Committee

Updates from the Conservation Chair

In this Edition:

- **Updates from the Conservation Chair – Jennifer Dowd**
- **Updates from Conservation Committee Member – Ben van Drimmelen**
- **Coastal Marine Strategy - Peter Ballin**
- **Cougars, Wolves, and Bears - Jacqueline Sherk**



Photo: J. McIntosh
Serpentine Fen

Updates from the Conservation Chair – by Jennifer Dowd

The Conservation Lens -- a new video series coming soon on the BC Nature YouTube Channel. This new series explores current conservation issues through an educational and accessible lens. Members and supporters are encouraged to subscribe, it's free to stay informed and engaged. Subscribe to *https://www.youtube.com/@BCNature1969* and you will be notified when updated videos are posted. We are currently working with the Municipal Protected Areas (MPAP) team to develop a series of YouTube Shorts on MPAP.

Upcoming BC Nature Webinars

- Effective Conservation Advocacy Webinar
- How We Threaten Western Painted Turtles and What We Can Do About It
- Cooling our Neighborhoods - iCoolKit

Information on dates/times will be sent out in upcoming "Nature's Voice" enews.

Limited Edition Coastal Themed Merchandise Coming Soon! We are working on creating some new apparel, so stay tuned as it will be launching Fall 2026.

Editorial Clarification: In the Spring 2026 issue of BC Nature, the Roberts Bank Committee report included a comment by Conservation Committee member Ben van Drimmelen regarding the possible effects of existing terminal development on the formation of mudflats used by shorebirds. The comment was intended as a point of curiosity arising from discussions with experts and was not presented as a scientific conclusion. BC Nature encourages thoughtful scientific inquiry and discussion within its Conservation Committees. Committee members are encouraged to ask questions and explore emerging ideas; however, those discussions do not represent BC Nature's official positions, which are established through the organization's Board-approved governance processes. BC Nature's position on Roberts Bank Terminal 2 has not changed and continues to be reflected in the organization's Board-approved advocacy, submissions, and public communications. More can be found here: *https://bcnature.org/advocacy_for_nature/* and *https://bcnature.org/roberts-bank-3/*

Continued page 9

Conservation report continued from page 8

Updates from Conservation Committee Member – by Ben van Drimmelen

Most of my time was spent on working on drafts for BC Nature webinars, including reviewing and providing comments on the draft climate change webinar and developing an advocacy webinar.

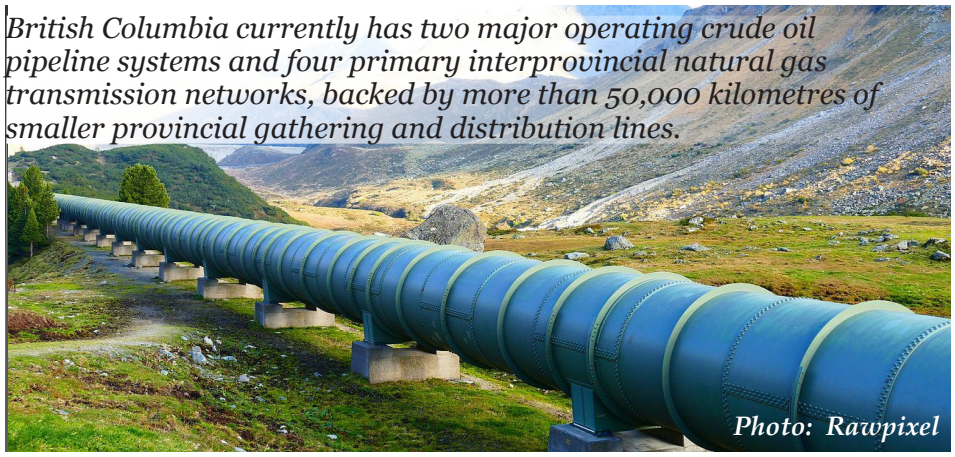
I also provided comments on several potential conservation issues, including:

- A petition regarding goshawk habitat protection in central coastal BC;
- The West Coast Oil Pipeline project;
- Sewage pump-out stations in the Salish Sea; and
- The extension of B.C.'s wolf cull.

Coastal Marine Strategy - by Peter Ballin

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society convened a meeting of a coalition of B.C. ENGOs on July 23 to discuss progress and futures of this provincial policy. Due to technical difficulties I was unable to join the meeting of 13 participants, but here is a summary:

Various organizations are working on restoration, pollution prevention, regulatory barriers



British Columbia currently has two major operating crude oil pipeline systems and four primary interprovincial natural gas transmission networks, backed by more than 50,000 kilometres of smaller provincial gathering and distribution lines.

Photo: Rawpixel

to restoration projects, derelict vessels, the Tilbury Liquified Natural Gas Project, and outreach to MLAs by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and West Coast Environmental Law. The MLA outreach spreadsheet and Tilbury comment toolkit were shared.

What BC Nature needs from our members on the coast are summaries of any club marine activities, so that we may better contribute to the coalition and collective action. Send them to me at *pjballin@mac.com*

Cougars, Wolves, and Bears – by Jacqueline Sherk

Cougars: A recent court case has wildlife advocates in both British Columbia and Alberta calling for stronger oversight and tougher penalties for individuals and guide outfitters who exploit the vast, remote border region between our two provinces. They argue that the area's rugged terrain and limited enforcement presence can create opportunities for illegal wildlife trafficking and poaching, and a recent court case illustrates the scale of such operations.

Following a two-year investigation involving law enforcement agencies in both provinces, multiple individuals and guide-outfitter companies pleaded guilty to wildlife offences. According to police, the linked operations were highly organized and catered to international clients. Evidence seized during the investigation included 11 Cougar skins and skulls, along with five Canada Lynx skins.



Evidence seized during an investigation into wildlife trafficking and poaching included 11 Cougar skins and skulls, along with five Canada Lynx skins.

Photo: C. Keen

Poaching is a serious wildlife crime in Canada. In this case, the offenders received a combined $135,000 in fines and more than 18 years of hunting prohibitions. Their offences included hunting outside legal seasons, hunting without licences, using prohibited electronic calling devices, and possessing illegally killed wildlife.

Beyond breaking the law, poaching can have lasting ecological consequences. Wildlife managers establish hunting quotas using population models that estimate how many animals can be sustainably removed while maintaining healthy populations. Those models consider the number and distribution of males, females, and juveniles. Animals

Continued page 10

Conservation report continued from page 9



Sea wolves, more commonly called coastal wolves, are Grey Wolves (Canis lupus) *that have adapted to life along the Pacific coast.*

Photo: C. Fortin

killed illegally are never included in those calculations, creating what biologists refer to as unreported mortality. Even relatively small numbers of unreported deaths can undermine management decisions intended to maintain healthy wildlife populations.

Illegal hunters often target the largest animals for trophies, particularly mature males. From a conservation perspective, the illegal loss of any cougar matters because it can alter population structure and may reduce genetic diversity over time. Selectively removing prime breeding males is particularly detrimental. Equally important are breeding females, called 'the engines of population recovery'. Female cougars spend most of their lives producing and raising young, so the loss of any reproductive female can have consequences that extend well beyond the death of any one animal.

Wolves: At the time of writing, the province has sought public and partner input on a proposed five-year continuation of predator reduction to support caribou recovery. To date, more than ten years have passed since the province began systematically killing wolves. The program is commonly referred to as 'the wolf cull', particularly by opponents and conservation advocates. The province instead uses the term 'predator reduction' to describe the

Advocacy is Easy!

Advocacy for the natural world is something we can all do on our own quite easily regardless of our age, mobility, financial status, and busy lives. BC Nature has a fantastic and active Conservation Committee and Board that write letters and position papers, creating a resource that anybody can draw upon for help with their own advocacy work. Just navigate to: *https://bcnature.org/advocacy_for_nature/* to see the list. So far this year, the BC Nature Board has sent letters on the following subjects - and that doesn't even include responses and follow-ups. Just another benefit we receive from BC Nature for free!

- **Woodfibre LNG Issue**
- **Alberta West Coast Oil Pipeline Project**
- **Letter of Support – American Goshawk (Ts'ek) Habitat Protection**
- **Wolf Cull and Caribou Recovery in BC**
- **Getting Major Projects Built**
- **Nicola Wind Project**
- **Letter SRKW 1000 m**
- **Wind Energy Development**
- **BC Nature Response to 3.8 B in Nature Investment**
- **Expedited Env. Assessment Process**
- **Nature Network BC Nature Sign On to Prime Minister Mark Carney**
- **August Bear Hunt**

Imagine if 1/10th of the membership of BC Nature (700 people) - wrote and sent one hard copy letter per month using these resources. Or perhaps two or three folks might gather over tea to accomplish this task. Doing so would ease their conscience, keep their minds active, and helps protect and ensure their grandchildren's future in and with nature - all for the price of a stamp!
Submitted by Bruce Coates, Regional Coordinator, Vancouver Island

Continued page 11

Conservation report continued from page 10



In British Columbia, hundreds of Black Bears are killed in human-wildlife conflicts in some years. Bears that become food-conditioned and habituated to people faced an increased risk of being killed, as repeated access to human food can lead to escalating conflict and public-safety concerns.

Photo: J. Tayes

targeted removal of wolves from designated caribou ranges. The wolves that are being targeted under the program are those that inhabit designated areas of the province where government seeks to reduce predation on at-risk caribou herds. The program is being applied in selected caribou ranges, including ranges in northeastern and east-central B.C. and portions of the Columbia Mountains. It should be noted that other caribou predators, notably cougars, are also targeted under the program.

Wolves and caribou have shared landscapes for thousands of years, as predators and prey naturally do. Historically, caribou avoided predators by foraging at higher elevations in mature forests where wolves were less likely to encounter them while hunting their primary prey of deer and moose. However, as human populations have increased, accompanied by all manner of forestry, gas, oil, and recreation development, the landscapes that once enabled caribou to avoid wolves have been altered. Disturbed landscapes and younger forests can provide favourable conditions for deer and moose. Greater availability of this alternate prey can support more wolves and therefore increase the likelihood of wolves entering caribou ranges.

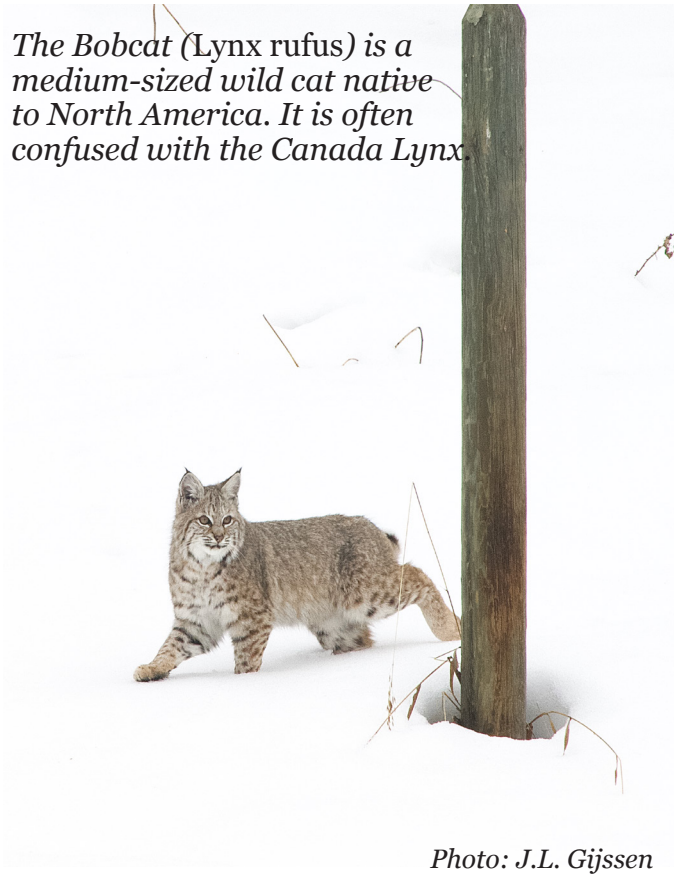
Since the Predator Reduction Program began in 2015, more than 2,800 wolves have been killed at a cost of $13 million to taxpayers, according to provincial records obtained through Freedom of Information requests and the province's annual Predator Reduction Reports. We can acknowledge that in some herds where wolf numbers have been greatly reduced, along with other measures including maternal penning, more adult caribou and calves have survived. We've also learned from researchers and conservationists studying the issue that predator reduction alone cannot restore caribou if habitat loss and land fragmentation continues to create conditions that invite wolves into caribou territory. And from that, we can therefore conclude that caribou recovery is ultimately much more than a predator management issue, it is ultimately a landscape management issue, and that appears to be the important difference that our provincial leaders will eventually need to come to terms with.

Bears - Last winter, in the deep cold of a Dawson Creek day, a person out walking noticed what appeared to be an animal curled up at the base of a tree almost completely covered in snow. As the person drew closer, he realized he was looking at a small bear. Realizing that the animal might still be alive, he contacted The Fur-Bearers advocacy group in Vancouver for advice. Thanks to quick action on the part of the passerby and The Fur-Bearers, a rescue was coordinated and the cub was transported to the Northern Lights Wildlife Society in Smithers. At first, veterinarians believed her injuries were frostbite, but they soon discovered that she had experienced severe burns as well. Against daunting odds, the little black bear, a female, has survived. They named her 'Valkyrie', a Norse word for a courageous female. When strong enough, Valkyrie will be released back into her Dawson Creek area home.

Veterinarians believed her injuries were consistent with burns sustained in a logging slash pile. Slash piles are large accumulations of branches, treetops,

Continued page 12

Conservation report continued from page 11



*The Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is a medium-sized wild cat native to North America. It is often confused with the Canada Lynx.*

Photo: J.L. Gijssen

and other woody debris left behind after logging. In winter and colder months of the year, they are commonly burned to reduce wildfire risk during the following fire season. Winter is also the time when wild animals seek shelter from the cold. For hibernating animals such as bears, they appear to offer a dry and secure place to den. But when slash piles are burned without inspection, the result can be tragic for the animals in them, and, in fact, there have been reports of animal remains being found in burned slash piles.

In addition to the threat posed to wildlife, there is much to be made known about these giant piles of wood waste left behind from logging – how they generate significant greenhouse gas emissions, toxic smoke, a potential for escalating wildfires, and the waste of millions of cubic metres of usable wood fibre. Wildlife organizations have recommended measures such as training forestry workers for evaluating potential wildlife habitation before ignition especially during denning season; avoiding winter burning altogether, and also, considering what has been taken away from the inhabitants of the forest, leaving some of the woody debris for what could become permanent wildlife habitat for them. ✿

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Offered in partnership with the School of Environmental Studies.

University of Victoria

continuingstudies.uvic.ca/ecology

Designing Sustainable Birdhouses

Submitted by Brenden Crowley and Tahirah Soles

We are Brenden Crowley and Tahirah Soles — in September, we're heading into Grade 10 at Fort St. James Secondary School as winners of the Prince George Central Interior Science Fair, BC Nature Award.
During the heat dome of 2021, we observed a nest of swallow chicks that died in our area. This inspired us to help find solutions to real world problems that exist due to climate change. Over three years, we designed and deployed convection-cooled birdhouses and compared the inside temperature of these to conventional birdhouses. We found that convection boxes kept a steadier temperature during temperature fluctuations over a 24-hour period. The convection boxes were also cooler compared to standard boxes with an average reduction of 1.54° C We found a 56.1% decrease in the number of days the temperature was above 30° C. Finally, minimum daily temperatures saw a decrease in how often the temperature dropped under 5° C, with a reduction of 28.9%.
Inspired by these results, we are planning to make a few engineering modifications to the entry and scalability of the boxes during our grade 10 year. We are hoping that once we have made our modifications, they will be deployed locally and monitored during the 2027 nesting season. We then hope to patent the convection boxes. For the 2028 nesting season, we would like to recruit bird banding stations across Canada to collect additional data on convection boxes through citizen science.

Prince George's Central Interior Science Fair (CISF) is an amazing event that celebrates young scientists and the work they do. We believe that CISF is a great opportunity for both new and returning science projects, while also being a great way to improve public speaking and presentation skills. We were fortunate to be selected for the Canada-Wide Science Fair, an experience we wouldn't trade for anything. We had so much fun making new friends and being inspired by all their hard work.



Photo above by Brenden and Tahirah, featuring their experimental birdhouses

We hope to continue to make many more lasting memories through science fair participation and encourage others to join us. If you think you want to participate in a science fair, find something that ignites your passion or find a real-world problem that you would like to help solve. Get involved in citizen science in your community. Have fun with it. If it feels like a chore, it's probably not the right scientific field for you. Thank you to BC Nature for everything you have done to help us on our scientific journey! ✿

BC Nature Supports Science Fairs Throughout B.C.

BC Nature provides $3,100 – $3,600 annually to the Science Fair Foundation of British Columbia for distribution of awards of the following amounts in each of the participating 11 – 13 regions:

- $100 Cash Award to be split between Grades Kindergarten through Grade 3 and Grades 4 through 6 students per region
- $100 Cash Award to a Junior (Grades 7 through 9) student per region.
- $100 Cash Award to a Senior (Grades 10 through 12) student per region.

These awards will be awarded at each British Columbia Regional Science Fair, to the best natural history project done by a student(s). This includes studies of any aspect of natural history, conservation of natural habitats, and/or natural species, or outdoor nature monitoring and conservation projects.

On the following page are the School Regions and in which areas they are located in. Many clubs are already supporting the judging and mentoring in their regions, but there are many locations that could use your mentoring and judging skills.

For further information on how you or your club can participate and help our budding scientists, please contact Dave Leman - *educationchair@bcnature.ca*

Spring and Science Fair season will be here before we know it. ✿

Continued page 14

Science Fair continued from page 13

Region	Major Cities
Cariboo Mainline	Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, Bella Coola, Merritt, Princeton, Kamloops, Barriere, Ashcroft, Lillooet
Central Interior	Quesnel, Prince George, Valemount, Mackenzie, Vanderhoof, Fort St. James
Central Okanagan	Revelstoke, Vernon, Kelowna, West Kelowna, Peachland, Oliver, Osoyoos, Kermeos, Penticton, Summerland, Salmon Arm, Enderby, Armstrong
East Kootenay	Cranbrook, Fernie, Invermere, Golden
Fraser Valley	Chilliwack, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Mission, Hope, Boston Bar
Greater Vancouver	Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Whistler, Squamish, Powell River
Northern B.C>	Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fort Nelson
Northern Vancouver Island	Port McNeill, Port Hardy, Gold River
Pacific Northwest	Queen Charlotte City, Masset, Prince Rupert, Smithers, Terrace, Kitimat, Gitlaxt'aamiks
South Fraser	Surrey, White Rock, Delta, Ladner, Tsawwassen
Vancouver Island	Victoria, Sooke, Langford, Nanaimo, Ladysmith, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Port Alberni, Tofino, Ucluelet, Comox, Courtenay, Campbell River, Duncan
West Kootenay	Nelson, Creston, Nakusp, Castlegar, Trail, Grand Forks
Yukon-Stikine	Whitehorse, Dease Lake

Thank you Abbotsford-Mission Nature Club for being involved in the Fraser Valley Regional Science Fair.

Below are the project names and student winners. Congratulations to all! For a full list of all winners of BC Nature Regional Science Fair awards, please visit: *https://bcnature.org/science-fair-awards/*



Grade K-6 - Balraj Harry
Project: Water purification system



Grade 7-9 - Kartar Sidhu
Project: Plants on the Move!



Grade 10-12 - Avery Abbott
Project: From the Land to the Lab:
Effects of Indigenous Plant Medicine on Yeast



Grade K-6 - Komalpreet Kaur Cheema
Project: Invisible Shield: How Earth's Magnetic Field Protects Life and Shapes Our Future

The Quiet Conservationist

Submitted by Jennifer Dowd

What Made You Care?

When someone says the word conservation, what comes to mind?

For many people, it's images of protests, rallies, or people standing in front of bulldozers to protect places they love. Those moments have their place, and history shows they've helped win important battles for nature. Many of the landscapes and species we treasure today have benefitted because people were willing to stand up and make their voices heard.

But that isn't the only face of conservation. It's certainly not mine.

I care deeply about nature, but I don't feel called to spend my days protesting or arguing. Instead, I try to make a difference in quieter ways—supporting local conservation efforts, making thoughtful choices in my everyday life, volunteering when I can, sharing what I learn, and encouraging others to notice and care about the natural world.

I suspect there are many people like me.

The challenge is that conservation has become a word that some people find intimidating. If the only stories we tell are stories of conflict, people who care deeply about nature may not see themselves reflected in them. They may quietly conclude that conservation is something other people do.

But conservation belongs to all of us. So, what does conservation mean? For me, it isn't about trying to preserve the world exactly as it is. Nature has never stood still. Ecosystems change. Species adapt. Landscapes evolve. We evolve too.

To me, conservation is about ensuring that as our communities grow and change, nature can grow and change with us. It's about living in partnership with nature—making room for wildlife to thrive alongside us, rather than being pushed aside by us.

Imagine waking one spring morning to complete silence: no robin greeting the dawn, no chickadee calling from the trees, no chorus of songbirds welcoming another day.

The world would still function, but it would be immeasurably poorer. We'd have lost something that enriches our lives in ways we often don't appreciate until it's gone.

That, to me, is what conservation is about.

Science helps us understand why that silence might happen. It measures population trends, identifies threats, and provides the evidence we need to make informed decisions.

But science alone rarely moves people. Stories do. Science provides evidence. Stories create emotional connections. Together, they inspire action.

There is a reason I care so deeply about conservation, and it has very little to do with statistics.

Nature has become the place where I heal.

Like many people, I've experienced immense grief. There



Hiking at Iron Mountain

are days when the weight of it feels overwhelming. Yet when I step into a forest or wander along a shoreline, something changes. My breathing slows. My mind quiets. The world becomes still.

Photography has become part of that healing. When I'm photographing wildlife, nothing else exists. It's just me and that animal sharing a single moment in time. Somehow, no matter how quietly I approach, there is often a moment when it pauses and looks directly at me. For that brief instant, the rest of the world disappears. There is only the two of us. It is difficult to explain, but those moments fill me with a profound sense of peace, connection, and joy.

Science can tell us why spending time in nature improves our mental and physical well-being. It can measure reduced stress, lower blood pressure, improved mental health, and countless other benefits.

But no scientific paper can truly describe what it feels like to hear the first robin of spring after a long winter. Or to watch an owl glide silently through the trees at dusk. Or to lock eyes with a deer that seems just as curious about you as you are about it. That's what stories can do. They help us understand not just what we are trying to conserve, but why it matters.

A graph can show a declining bird population, but hearing someone describe how the morning chorus outside their window has slowly faded over the years transforms information into something personal. Suddenly it isn't just data. It is memory. It is loss. It is something we can all imagine.

And when we feel connected, we're far more likely to act.

Continued page 16

Continued from page 15

Whether that action is restoring habitat, joining a local nature club, planting native species, participating in a bird count, supporting a conservation initiative, speaking up for a local wetland, or simply introducing a child to the wonder of nature, it often begins with a story.

Stories remind us why nature matters. Stories remind us that there are many ways to care. Stories remind us that each of us belongs.

So, I'd like to ask you one simple question. What made you care? Was it a grandparent who taught you the names of birds? A childhood camping trip? The first time you saw an Orca surface beside a kayak?A favourite trail that always helped you find your way through difficult times? Or perhaps, like me, you discovered that nature has an extraordinary ability to heal.

Whatever your story is, we'd love to hear it. At BC Nature, we'd like to begin sharing more of these stories, through our website, our magazine, and our community. Not because every story is extraordinary, but because together they remind us why conservation matters. Reach out to me at *conservationchair@bcnature.ca* to share your stories.

The science will always provide the evidence.

But it is our stories that help people care.

And when people care, they act.

Perhaps your story will inspire someone else to discover what made them care too. ✿

Featured Key Biodiversity Areas:

Cowichan, Mesachie, and Bear Lakes

Featured species: Vancouver Lamprey, *Entosphenus macrostoma*

This site is within the traditional territory of the ditidaqiic̓aq disiba?k (Ditidaht) First Nation and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples.

Submitted by Ian Adams

Mother Nature's Public Relations department tends to focus on cute and cuddly. Think fuzzy, warm, friendly, and good family values. As naturalists, we know that biodiversity goes well beyond that. Mother Nature, it turns out, has a rather odd sense of humour.

As much as we may try to avoid applying our human social values to wildlife, the "ick factor" regularly raises its biased head, and we involuntarily look away. Parasites, drawn-out predation, and other realities of nature can get quite uncomfortable.

I offer you Exhibit A of the misunderstood: the lamprey. Lampreys are part of a group of vertebrates called Agnatha, meaning "without a jaw." Modern jawless fishes have changed little for over 350 million years, so clearly this is a lifeform that works. Natural selection is a powerful force. A biological version of plate tectonics, it is (usually) a slow, blind process.



Vancouver Lamprey female

That the lamprey body template has remained largely unchanged for that long, through two mass extinctions and countless smaller global changes, speaks to the efficiency of its form. Rather than being squeamish, we should look at the lamprey as a wonder of evolution and appreciate them for their unique natural history.

Information on lampreys often focuses on those that are parasitic to fish. However, most species are non-parasitic. Those that are parasitic feed on blood, a rich and easily digested food source. No need for a long, convoluted digestive system here. They have a highly modified "mouth," or oral hood that attaches suction to the outside of the fish. They then rasp a shallow wound into their host to access blood and other tissues. Like most blood feeders, they use anticoagulant to keep the wound open. This does not kill the fish and the wound heals afterwards.

Cowichan Lake, and smaller adjacent lakes Mesachie and Bear, on south-central Vancouver Island, support Vancouver Lamprey (*Entosphenus macrostoma*). Endemic to these lakes and the lower reaches of their tributaries, this lamprey species is found nowhere else in the world. It is also a species at risk. Federally endangered, both the lamprey and their habitat are protected under the *Species at Risk Act*.

Lampreys have a sleek, scaleless, eel-like body with no paired fins. Like sharks and rays, their skeleton is cartilaginous. Vancouver Lampreys are dark blue to black on their backs and lighter underneath, with adults averaging 20 cm in length. The adults are semelparous, meaning that they spawn once in their lifetime and then die, laying their eggs in the alluvial

Continued page 17

Continued from page 16
fans of streams entering Cowichan Lake.

When the eggs hatch, the larvae, called ammocoetes, burrow into silt and sand where they filter feed on plant and animal material before metamorphosing into the adult form. How long this process takes is unknown, but can be up to six years in other lamprey species. As adults, Vancouver Lampreys primarily feed on Cutthroat Trout. Anglers on Cowichan Lake have found that up to 90% of cutthroat have lamprey scars and usually more than one. This is further evidence that Vancouver Lampreys do not kill fish.

There are many threats to the continued persistence of this species at risk. One threat within our control, is the loss of wetted nearshore areas and connectivity with inflowing streams and alluvial fans. This habitat is essential for lamprey spawning and early rearing. This can be achieved by maintaining and enhancing water storage with the weir at the outlet of Cowichan Lake. Under our new climate regime, the current weir does not allow for sufficient storage to consistently meet all the goals of this watershed both in Cowichan Lake and downstream. Work is underway to construct a new weir with more storage capacity, but time is of the essence.

Another threat to the species within our control is increased sedimentation in rivers and alluvial fans caused by upstream activities. This sediment deposition in nearshore areas causes little river flow to remain above the substrate during the summer months and exacerbates the drying out of spawning habitat. In-stream and riparian remediation to increase complexity, combined with gravel removal, can ensure that these areas of critical habitat for lamprey remain accessible for spawning and early rearing. This enhancement also benefits juvenile salmonids which are becoming trapped in pools near the confluence of the lake.

All three lakes and the lower reaches of the tributaries are recognized as Key Biodiversity Areas. While KBAs protect a species' life history, anglers at Cowichan Lake don't always share this objectivity. They are known to kill lampreys that are attached to the fish they catch, an additional threat to this unique species, as killing a protected species is illegal.

Whether they make you squeamish or curious, the Vancouver Lamprey is a fascinating example of evolution and Cowichan Lake holds a special place in Canada's biodiversity. ✿

British Columbia is home to four main native species of lamprey: Pacific Lamprey, River Lamprey, Western Brook Lamprey, and Vancouver Lamprey, as well as the unique Morrison Creek population of Western Brook Lamprey.



From Communications to Conservation: My Work as a BC Nature Summer Student

Submitted by Hayley Maskell

My interest in conservation and restoration developed from a lifelong appreciation of the natural world and was shaped by my academic and professional experiences. I completed my Bachelor of Environmental Studies in Environment, Resources, and Sustainability at the University of Waterloo (2022), along with Diplomas in Environmental Assessment and Ecological Restoration and Rehabilitation. I am currently completing a Master of Science in Ecological Restoration at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT), beginning my final year this September. My education and early career opportunities have given me an understanding of ecological processes, environmental policy, and collaboration with Indigenous communities and conservation partners. My time at BC Nature as a Summer Education and Research Assistant has played an important role in my career development, demonstrating that successful conservation requires integrating technical skills with social and community dimensions.

BC Nature's mission, Knowing Nature and Keeping it Worth Knowing, reflects the values that influenced my education and my aspiration to become a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner. To me, BC Nature's work emphasizes that conservation is more than protecting landscapes; it is also about fostering informed, proactive communities that care for them. Through education, stewardship, and community engagement, BC Nature provided a setting where I could connect with nature and encourage others to become active champions for conservation.

Education and effective communication were central to my work managing BC Nature's digital presence and serving on the *BCnature* editorial team. BC Nature's digital platforms provide naturalists and the public with access to environmental research, educational opportunities, conservation initiatives, and events hosted by BC Nature Clubs. *BCnature* also connects naturalists across the province and highlights the importance of sharing local knowledge and experience. Translating complex environmental issues into accessible and engaging content has taught me how to communicate environmental information to a broad audience. This skill will be invaluable in my restoration work, where public understanding and support are essential to achieving conservation and management goals

My work digitizing and preserving archival records for the BC Naturalists' Foundation supported conservation and stewardship by improving access to historical environmental and organizational



resources. These records introduced me to many conservation, education, and research projects completed by BC Nature Clubs with Foundation support. They demonstrated that conservation and restoration are long-term processes and that historical information provides valuable context for understanding changing environmental priorities. This project reinforced the importance of research, documentation, and understanding historical and cultural implications when making environmental decisions

Working with BC Nature and the Foundation this summer also provided opportunities to participate in the collaborative side of conservation. Networking experiences, including touring the Nature Trust of BC's Squamish Estuary Conservation Area, allowed me to connect with individuals and organizations with similar goals and see the interdisciplinary nature of the environmental field. These experiences helped me appreciate that conservation is rarely a standalone effort but part of a broader network of initiatives and organizations.

Overall, my experience with BC Nature, the Foundation, and Elders Council for Parks BC this summer has broadened my understanding of the role of an ecological restoration practitioner. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow with these organizations. My experience taught me that conservation is not simply about preserving an ecosystem; it is about creating relationships with people and places and fostering knowledge and stewardship to preserve natural environments for future generations.

Thank you to Canada Summer Jobs, BC Naturalists' Foundation, and BC Nature for this opportunity. ✿

2026 BC Nature AGM Recap - Kamloops

Submitted by Nancy Flood, Past President, BC Nature

The 2026 BC Nature (BCN) AGM was held in Kamloops, on the campus of Thompson Rivers University on Saturday, May 23, 2026. Given that we were unable to secure a club to host a full conference, and that both the Outdoor Recreation Club of BC and the BC Parks Research Forum were being held in Kamloops just prior to the AGM, the Kamloops Naturalist Club (KNC) volunteered to host a "mini" meeting to connect with BCN members who might already be attending one or both of those events. It was planned as a scaled down AGM, with only the meetings required by our bylaws being scheduled: the Council of Club Reps meeting and the AGM itself (no committee meetings and no BC Naturalists' Foundation (BCNF) meetings were held). It was also designed to be hybrid and the room selected for both meetings was specially set up for this purpose. Thus, those present in the room could clearly hear those online and vice versa (an issue sometimes); for example, the treasurer was able to share a PowerPoint presentation, was audible to all in attendance, and was able to take and answer questions at both meetings. Michelle Parry, President of the BCNF and Rebecca Clapperton Law, Executive Director of NatureKids BC were present and spoke briefly at both meetings.



Jesse Ritcey describes a natural regeneration project being undertaken on Tranquille Creek in the Kamloops area

There were approximately 25 people in the room for the meeting of club reps (although only 12 people were registered for the AGM as club reps) and 12 attended online. The meeting lasted 2 hours and 5 minutes, and there was a lot of fruitful discussion. There were approximately the same number present in person for the AGM, whereas 24 people attended online. The AGM lasted 1 hour and 7 minutes, since it was more restricted to actual business and involved less discussion.

In addition to the meetings, six relatively short field trips were held—on Friday evening, and on Saturday and Sunday mornings. They focused on diverse topics, including bats, birds, plants, and restoration projects being undertaken by KNC. Most were almost too popular (i.e., we were not good at limiting numbers), but were enjoyed, nonetheless. Additionally, there was a banquet, which approximately 50 people attended; it included a full meal, a bar, a silent auction, and the traditional giving out of the BCN awards.

Although I'm sure that some missed the diversity of field trips and events at a full conference—or didn't attend because it was a mini-version—we got a lot of positive comments about the shortened format; it was more affordable—both in terms of money and time. We also got positive comments on the time for socializing at the banquet. Because there was no speaker, this was interrupted only by the awards. Prior to the meeting, several had asked who the speaker would be and doubtless missed having one; conversely, several commented that it was pleasant to have a more relaxed evening. There were the usual complaints about the awards—their number and the length of the citations (although these were edited and awards were given out only if people or their proxies were present at the event). A suggestion might be to only give out only the "higher level" awards (i.e., not club service awards) at the banquet and/or to have awards and/or the speaker at some other time during the full-length AGM. Ideas to think about!



Desert Gaillardia in bloom near Kamloops

Although we were concerned that there might be a loss, the presence of a few KNC members at the

Continued page 20

Continued from page 19

banquet helped with costs. In addition, people were sufficiently thirsty that we didn't have to pay an extra fee for the bartender and were sufficiently generous at the silent auction (perhaps the two are related?!) that there was a small profit of $1,700.17, which will be split between BCN and KNC. We're looking forward to next year's AGM in Victoria! ✿

KBA Update

BC Field Ornithologists: A Partnership Built on Birds and Conservation

Submitted by Liam Ragan

BC Field Ornithologists (BCFO) has been on the frontline of helping to implement Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) and Important Bird Areas (IBA) in B.C. since their inception. From helping to identify IBAs in 1996 to supporting the creation of North America's first IBA Caretaker program in 2007 to stepping up to help expand IBAs into KBAs in 2016, BCFO has been at the forefront of this global conservation movement from the beginning. This has included everything from providing expertise for bird surveys, lending volunteers to help monitor bird populations, and funding surveys through research grants. In the six years I've managed the IBA/KBA program in B.C., BCFO jave supported six surveys:

2021 - Chopaka Customs - Sage Thrasher & Lewis's Woodpecker
2022 - Osoyoos Oxbows - Yellow-breasted Chat
2022 - Hesquiat Peninsula - Marbled Murrelet
2023 - Hesquiat Peninsula - Surf Scoter, Brandt's Cormorant, Iceland Gull
2024 - Douglas Lake Plateau - Sandhill Crane
2025 - Fraser Lake - Trumpeter Swan

In recognition of the role BCFO has played in the program, and after discussing with Editor Clive Keen at BCFO's AGM in Lillooet, we've decided to create the "Bigger Than Birds – KBAs in BC" column for the *BC Birds* magazine. Through it, we and our network of KBA Caretakers will provide quarterly articles highlighting KBAs, ongoing stewardship efforts, monitoring results, and opportunities to volunteer. These will be like the articles you've read here in the *BCnature* magazine but will be different from those that we write for *BCnature*. The purpose is to expand outreach on KBAs through our key partners.

What can you do? As a BC Nature member, you've seen first-hand the power that comes from building community. Our clubs



Common Poorwill seen at the 2026 BCFO AGM in Lillooet

are setting new precedents every month on everything from amphibian surveys to mitigating bird collisions with powerlines to getting kids out in nature. If the passion that brought you to BC Nature leans towards the avian world as mine does, consider joining both organizations. You'll get to hear new voices on everything from paleo ornithology to the latest in bird listing in B.C. to birding field trips and events (not to mention the "Bigger Than Birds" column).✿

How to Reduce Bird-kill at Windows

Submitted by John B. Sprague, Salt Spring Island
Updated from an article published in 2021

Birds collide with towers, glass skyscrapers, power lines, and wind turbines. Collisions are second only to habitat destruction as a cause of dwindling numbers and species of birds. Houses also contribute. Dr. Daniel Klem studied this in the U.S.A. for 34 years. He concluded that at least 800,000 birds were killed per day by house windows in North America. Assuming about 81 million houses, that works out to 3.6 birds per year by the average house.

A thorough study by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology confirmed a median kill of 3.6 birds per U.S. residence every year, with an estimated upper limit of 6 birds. Median estimates were 22 birds per year at low-rise buildings, and 25 at high-rises.

About half the birds that collide with windows die quickly, usually from head trauma and internal bleeding. Of those that fly away, studies show that half die later of internal injury.

Although birds are accustomed to zooming through narrow openings in the woods, glass can be invisible.

Continued page 21

Continued from page 20



Roll of "dots" available through Lee Valley

There might be something attractive inside, corner windows might seem like a short-cut, or windows on opposite sides might look like a "tunnel". A second problem can be reflection of sky or trees so that birds attempt to fly into the apparent habitat.

The only remedy is to make glass visible to birds. There are several ways, and it depends on how much decoration you can tolerate and how much money you think birds are worth. At least, identify windows with the greatest problems, and apply remedies.

Some supposed remedies fail or have limited success. Those black silhouettes of hawks sold by stores and inside drawings with a marking pen, just don't work. Cloth drapes or blinds can help, but they must be closed. Anything on the inside of the window does not remedy the outside reflections. Demonstrated failures on the outside are single hanging plants, wind chimes, and owl decoys. An effective outside deterrent must encompass the whole window.

"Dots" on the window. An elegant Canadian solution is easily available from Lee Valley (*www.leevalley.com*) or the online store of BC SPCA (*https://bit.ly/4gHKfLE*) They sell rolls of tape to apply across the window at two-inch vertical intervals. The tape is peeled off, leaving a series of little 5-millimetre white squares. These outside "dots" are visible from inside, but they are not very obtrusive. The only collision that I know of was on the lower part of a sliding glass door, where I ran out of tape. This solution has some expense (about $12 for a good-sized window) -- it depends on how much you value birds. Our dots have lasted over the 15 years, so the cost per year can be small.

An inexpensive alternative would be lines drawn down the window with a glass-marking pen, available at art stores such as Michaels. Bird experts recommend lines every two inches. BC Nature member June Ryder used streaks from a bar of soap for similar effect.

Netting outside the glass is an inexpensive remedy that is 100% effective. Black plastic garden net (one-inch squares) is available at hardware stores and lumber yards. It should be held out from the windows, perhaps by long screws with bamboo collars. It is visible to people, but we have tolerated it on the glass railings of our deck for over two decades. Even if there were an unwary bird, it would bounce off the netting like a trampoline and continue flying.

The glass panels that are often used for deck or balcony railings are as dangerous for birds as windows, or more so. The rows of stick-on dots could be used but would be rather costly. At our place, we have stretched thin-thread black garden netting on the deck glass (3/4-inch or one-inch mesh). It has lasted since 2020, is not very obstructive, and has been completely successful as far as I know. Corners can be lifted to clean the glass.

Outside the house, don't plant a lot of trees or bushes close to big areas of glass. If you have bird feeders, baths or nestboxes, research shows that they should be at least 10 metres away or else within a metre of the window (birds will not build up enough momentum for injury).

More details of collisions and remedies are given by the Toronto organization FLAP (*www.flap.org*) or the American Bird Conservancy (*https://abcbirds.org/solutions*). There are several other remedies available in the U.S.A. such as film on the outside of the window, but most are rather costly.✿

An Insight into the Temperature of Western Purple Martin Nest Boxes

Submitted by Claudia Cridge, Nature Squamish

The Western Purple Martin is a blue-listed, secondary cavity nester found in British Columbia. Blue-listed means that this bird is declining in numbers and is at risk of becoming an endangered species. Secondary cavity nester means that, in nature, the Purple Martin will only choose to nest within holes in trees which have already been carved out and previously nested in by birds such as the Hairy Woodpecker or the Red-breasted Sapsucker.

The problem is that due to factors such as habitat loss, the number of secondary cavities available to these birds is dwindling. This has led to the Purple Martin almost exclusively nesting in artificial housing (nestboxes created by humans).

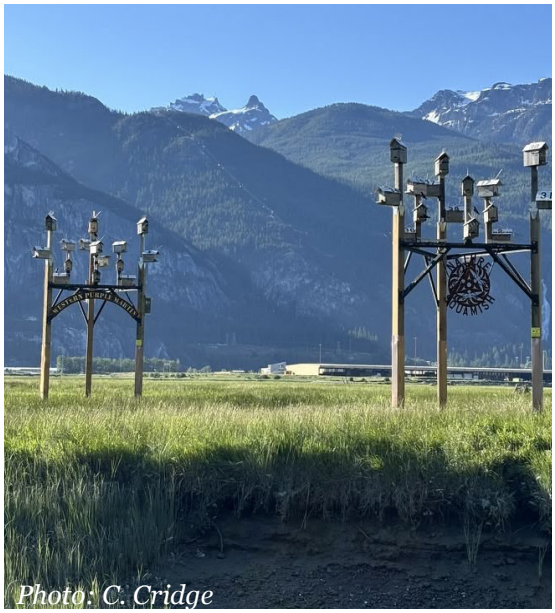
Previous research points to identifying the ideal dimensions, entrance size and shape, building materials and proximity to other structures and

Continued page 22

Continued from page 21
habitats. What hasn't been widely studied is the internal microclimate of the artificial nest boxes. So how do we know that they are suitable?

What did we do?

The long-running Western Purple Martin Recovery Project by Nature Squamish, currently led by Davina Dubé, provided an excellent opportunity to test our question. Before the 2025 breeding season, we headed to the Squamish Estuary to install temperature loggers in seven different types of nest boxes. Most of the nest boxes were already present on the existing structures in the Squamish Estuary (see photo on the right). The "Aluminum Condo" was erected next to the existing structures, and the two "Snags" are dead trees with existing nest cavities found nearby. Two of the seven box designs we installed are popular with Purple Martin "landlords" (people who put nest boxes up in their yard for this species) and have become widely available for purchase: the "Aluminum Condo" and the "Gourd". The "Control Box" is a design by Darren Copley from 1997, related to Nature Victoria's project with the Ministry of Environment. The remaining four box designs are by our dedicated volunteer and conservationist, John Buchanan.



Purple Martin nest structures

What did we find?

We found that maintaining temperature stability may be an important factor in the ideal nest structure. The larger, more insulated of the two natural cavities demonstrated internal temperatures that rose and cooled slowly. This could reduce the nesting birds' energy expenditure in comparison to a less-insulated nest, because the birds would not have to spend as much time tending to their young or dealing with temperature-stress.

What about the temperature extremes?

It was interesting to observe conditions in the nest boxes during times of temperature extremes. During 24-hour periods with lower-than-average temperatures, some boxes maintained a warmer internal temperature than the "Aluminum Condo" and "Gourd". In slightly higher than average temperatures, those same boxes remained cooler inside than the others. However, when external temperatures increased, the ability for the nest boxes to remain cool inside was pushed to the limit, and the temperature in most boxes increased to almost the ambient external temperature.



Temperature logger location

This year, we plan to do all this again, taking what we've learned last year and testing out a revised nest box design as well as another commonly used nest box. Check out the full report here: *https://bit.ly/4y9mv9m* ✿

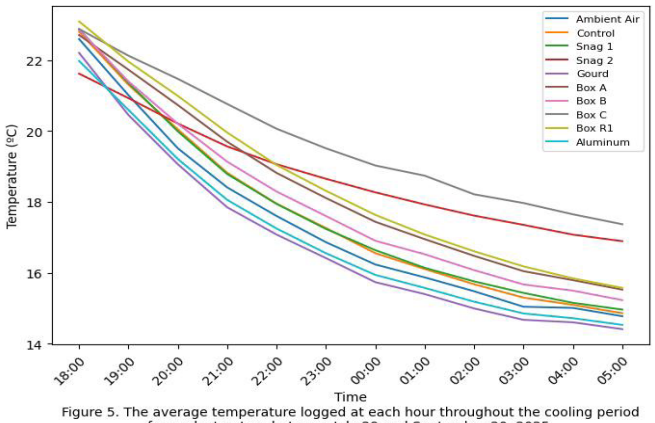


Figure 5. The average temperature logged at each hour throughout the cooling period for each structure between July 29 and September 20, 2025.

Average-Temp-Cooling-period-29-Jul-20-Sept

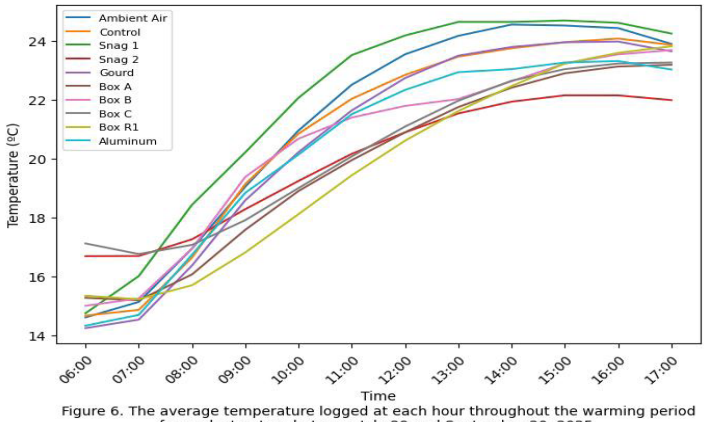


Figure 6. The average temperature logged at each hour throughout the warming period for each structure between July 29 and September 20, 2025.

Average-Temp-Warming-period-29-Jul-20-Sept

Geese in the Meadow

Submitted by Margo Hearne

More than 6,000 Greater White-fronted Geese landed in Delkatla Wildlife Sanctuary, Haida Gwaii in mid-April of this year. They had spent their winter in California and Oregon and were travelling north to their nesting grounds. However, after a dry spring, the sanctuary was a little too dry, so approximately 3,000 moved into the Village of Masset and made themselves at home. They strayed over sports fields, lawns, sidewalks, and streets. Fresh green grass and an open view suited them. The majority seemed to be American White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*) but mixed with them were Tule Geese (*A. a. elgasi*) that nest on the northern part of Cook Inlet, Alaska. Each year, White-fronted Geese spend the month of May in Delkatla Wildlife Sanctuary, so it was not such a big surprise to see them; they had simply never come to town before. As the days went on, the northwest wind continued to blow, and the birds were reluctant to waste their energy fighting their way north against it.

Things got a little untidy; the geese often sat in the middle of the highway and slowed down traffic. Everyone was careful where they trod, as goose droppings were all over the sidewalks, and school kids, understandably, were reluctant to play in the sports field because of the rich, black goose-poop everywhere. Overall, however, most folks were patient and tolerated their presence. They wondered why they were here, where they had come from, where they were going and, particularly, when they might leave. Some viewed their presence as a gift from the wild world. That they should choose to remain and almost take over the town was seen as special; there were more geese than humans. Others thought them beautiful and watched the geese feed and rest calmly in the green grass surrounded, as they were, by a very active small town.



Just a few of the White-fronted Geese that took over Masset



A stopover before continuing their journey

As the weeks went on goose numbers dwindled; serious nesters hustled on north when the wind switched to the southeast for a few days. Around 300 stayed on, possibly non-nesters, being either too old or too young and not in a hurry to leave the lush pasture they had found. However, by the end of May they all took flight to the wild and frozen north. ✿



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Photos: Mike Ashbee

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Back to Basics
What Grows on Tree Trunks?

Submitted by Terry Taylor

What grows on a tree trunk? The most common organisms are mosses and lichens. Which mosses and lichens, however, and where on the trunks they grow can tell you quite a bit, if you know what to look for. It is a common, but erroneous belief, that mosses can tell you where north is located if you become lost in a forest. They enable you to see what side of the trunk receives the most moisture, but not what direction that it faces. If a tree is leaning to the north, more rainwater will run down the south, upper side. If there is an opening to the north, but dense tree cover to the south there could be more evaporation on the north side.

Where various species grow on a tree can vary significantly. At the base of the tree, there is likely to be more moss cover than at higher levels, for two basic reasons. Stem flow (water running down the trunk) accumulates at the base. The other reason is air movement. Near the ground, there is often a layer of moist still air. But higher up there is more air flow and increased evaporation. In a coastal forest, this is most apparent on the stems of shrubs. The dense moss cover on the low parts of the stems stops abruptly. Above this boundary level the air flow is too dry for moss cover.

In a coastal forest the Bigleaf Maple is a good tree to illustrate the zones on a tree. It has more moss cover and more moss species than any other tree. On the lower trunk, you are likely to see a dense carpet of creeping mosses. These are the ones that require the most moisture. In the canopy and on branches, they are replaced by mosses in little, dense, upright clumps. They grow like this to conserve water. Higher still, on the dry side of the trunk is the domain of the lichens. Maple bark is also nutrient rich.

The type of bark is also a factor for what grows there. Maples have thick bark that holds moisture, and the rough bark allows spores as well as moss and lichen fragments to lodge in crevices. The smooth bark of alders and young Douglas-firs is the home of crust lichens. They are the simplest growth form of lichens and form a thin coating across the surface. Sometimes when you look at such trees, you do not see much of the bark at all, just a continuous coating of lichen.



Crust Lichen (Pertusaria subambigens) *on Douglas-fir*

On the trunks of trees in the Southern Interior and boreal forest, the trees can be festooned with lichens that hang down as long streamers. They are sometimes called Old Man's Beard. In subalpine forests these beard lichens can be used to ascertain in the summer what the snow depth is in the winter. They die if buried by snow. Therefore, the beard lichen cover stops at a zone at the highest snow depth.

Fungi also live on trees. The most obvious of these are bracket fungi. Their presence usually indicates that there is considerable wood rot inside the trunk, a serious problem for the tree and for the economy. For the forest ecosystem, however, they are important for recycling wood back into soil for future trees and for cavity-nesting birds.

These are the things we can see, but also of great importance are the things we cannot see. There are myriads of bacteria species that are still unknown to science, as well as other micro-organisms. They are what really run the world. ✿

BC Naturalists' Foundation Update
Building Conservation Capacity Across British Columbia

Submitted by Gaylia Lassner

Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) is proud to be one of 17 BC Nature clubs receiving a 2026 Club Support Grant from the BC Naturalists' Foundation. Our grant, Building Volunteer Skills and Abilities for Migration and Monitoring Projects, is helping us strengthen the training and skills of the volunteers who make our bird monitoring programs possible. Volunteers are at the heart of RPBO's work. Every year, they contribute thousands of hours to bird monitoring, banding, species identification, data collection, visitor engagement, and education.

Continued page 26

Continued from page 25

Developing these skills takes time, experienced mentors, training resources, and opportunities for hands-on learning. Foundation support allows us to invest in that capacity.

For RPBO, this means stronger training in bird handling, mist-net operations, identification, and data collection. As volunteers gain experience, they become more confident contributors—and many go on to share their knowledge with others. The impact extends well beyond one volunteer: a trained volunteer can monitor more birds, contribute high-quality data, mentor others, and return year after year to strengthen the program.

Investing in volunteers is an investment in long-term conservation capacity.

RPBO is just one example of what the Foundation makes possible. In 2026, nearly $43,000 in Club Support Grants was awarded to 17 of BC Nature's 65+ clubs. Across British Columbia, grants are supporting insect surveys, Great Basin Spadefoot monitoring, Connecticut Warbler research, Garry Oak restoration, hummingbird monitoring, native bee education, community outreach, and other local conservation initiatives.

Each project responds to the needs of a particular community or ecosystem. Together, these local projects create provincial impact.

That is the strength of the BC Naturalists' Foundation. A donation to the Foundation does not support just one project or one community. It helps build the financial capacity to support naturalists across British Columbia as they gather knowledge, restore habitat, engage their communities, and develop the skills needed to care for nature.



Volunteer training during nocturnal owl monitoring

Your donation helps make the next good idea possible. It could help a club to train volunteers, monitor a species, restore habitat, involve young people, or undertake research that would otherwise remain out of reach.

The Foundation's impact grows through every volunteer trained, every species monitored, every habitat restored, every child introduced to nature, and every community engaged. ✿



Natural Justice

If a Tree Falls in the Forest



Submitted by Ben van Drimmelen

Naturalists frequently spend time enjoying nature in parks. Who is responsible if someone in the group is injured during a birding walk, for instance? This general issue came up in a recent case.
A seventeen-year-old lad and a couple of friends went into a municipal park. Boys being boys, their teenage horsing around included trying to push over a dead alder. Part of the snag broke off and hit the youth in the back, breaking his neck and leaving him a quadriplegic.

In these very tragic circumstances, could the town's parks department be liable for failing to remove the hazard or at least warn about the dangers of old, decaying alders? What factors help to determine negligence around public safety in our parks?

The Occupiers Liability Act requires that the town, as owner of the park, was obliged to take enough care that, in all circumstances, people would be reasonably safe in using the park. Reasonably safe, not safe; the town just had to have used reasonable care to prevent injury or harm from danger that ought to have been known.

Determining how much care was reasonable considered the local circumstances. This was a "naturally forested" park, one that was not developed with public facilities but did contain graveled or mulched trails. Municipal policy recognized the ecological value of leaving dead trees in such parks but allowed their removal if they were an immediate hazard to park users. A staff members carried out monthly safety inspections along the maintained trails, but nowhere else; he did not inspect smaller trails into the forest to assess tree hazards there. From time to time, the town also hired professionals to assess the risk of trees leaning toward trails and facilities.

The friends were not on a maintained trail when the accident happened. Their plan was to follow the main trail and then cut off into the woods to share some liquor. They did not want others to see them drinking in the park, so they went along a small side-path. While standing around, they decided to try to knock down a few old snags by throwing rocks and pushing on them. That caused the accident.

The court considered how the town managed potentially dangerous trees. The standard practice requires identification of a "target" that such a tree could hit, but there was no target where the accident occurred. Unlike benches along the maintained trails, nothing had been provided by the town to the visiting public to help them safely enjoy the park at the accident site. Thus, the town had not assessed danger trees there; the court decided that it was enough to do those assessments along the maintained trails. By doing such assessments along the main trails, it was reasonable for the town to not restrict access to areas of the park or post warning signs. The court concluded that the town had, in all circumstances, satisfied its duty to take reasonable care to see that the public would be reasonably safe in using the park. However, even if reasonableness had required the town to do more, the town would not automatically have been liable. The next question would have been whether the town's failure actually caused the injury. If the town had restricted access or posted warnings, would that have prevented accidents and injuries from occurring? The group went into the forest to get out of the public eye. Even without a separate hazard warning sign, a reasonable person would know that branches, limbs, and pieces falling from a dead tree could cause real damage. The court concluded that in this case no warning signs or barriers would have deterred the group from pushing the dead tree. The injuries and damage sustained were not caused by anything not done by the town.

None of this, of course, changes the very serious consequences for the victim. Now 30 years old and living with paralysis, he continues to face significant medical challenges that have affected his long-term health. At the same time, the circumstances indicate that responsibility could not reasonably be attributed to the town.✿

Congratulations 2026 Scholarship Recipients

Submitted by the Scholarship Committee

The BC Nature Scholarship Committee has reviewed the applicants for both the Rene Savenye undergraduate scholarship and the Bert Brink post-graduate scholarship. Reviewers found many of the applicants are working hard, with excellent grades to achieve the goals set out by the BC Nature scholarships. Competition was stiff and what can often make a difference for those additional points is the volunteer participation in nature and relationships to nature organizations.

Please join us in congratulating this years' scholarship winners Megan Hannah Tsai (Rene Savenye Scholarship) and Blaire Smith (Bert Brink Scholarship).

Continued page 28

Continued from page 27

René Savenye Scholarship

Megan Hannah Tsai is currently studying Forest Sciences at the University of British Columbia with a specialization in forest entomology, she has built an impressive record of academic achievement, conservation experience, and environmental education. Inspired by a lifelong fascination with insects, birds, plants, and wildlife, she is pursuing a career combining ecological research, ecosystem management, and public engagement. This summer, she worked as a research assistant in the Hamelin Forest Pathology Lab.

Megan's studies focus on how environmental change affects forest health and ecosystem resilience. As an undergraduate research assistant in UBC's Forest Insect Disturbance Ecology Lab, she contributes to research on forest health and insect-pathogen interactions that will form the basis of her honours thesis.

Her commitment to connecting people with nature is equally strong. As an educator with the Vancouver Aquarium and Beaty Biodiversity Museum, and through education programming and wildlife monitoring with the Kootenay Columbia Discovery Centre Society, she has helped visitors and students better understand the natural world. She has also served as a UBC teaching assistant and orientation leader.
Her achievements include an NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award, Dean's Scholar standing, the August and Christina Crucil Scholarship in Forestry, and the John Worrall



Managing habitat in the Creston Valley Watershed

"Tree Enthusiast" Prize. Megan embodies the curiosity, stewardship, and conservation the René Savenye Scholarship was created to encourage. BC Nature congratulates Megan on this well-deserved honour and wishes her continued success. ✿

Bert Brink Scholarship

Blaire Smith is Currently pursuing a Master of Science in Environmental Science at Thompson Rivers University, and is researching the endangered Rocky Mountain population of Northern Leopard Frogs—the last remaining population in British Columbia. Her work focuses on movement patterns, habitat selection, and health to support species recovery and conservation management.

Inspired by a childhood exploring the forests and wetlands of the Kootenays, Blaire has dedicated her education and career to protecting British Columbia's biodiversity. Following graduation, she plans to become a Registered Professional Biologist and work as a Species-at-Risk Biologist for the Province of British Columbia, where she hopes to lead conservation initiatives, mentor young biologists, and support the recovery of vulnerable wildlife.

Like the late Bert Brink, whose commitment to conservation inspired this scholarship, Blaire believes scientific research should support practical conservation outcomes. Her research is conducted with government agencies, conservation organizations, and recovery teams, reflecting the collaborative approach Dr. Brink championed throughout his career.

Beyond her graduate research, Blaire serves on the BC Northern Leopard Frog Recovery Team, previously sat on the Board of Directors of the Prince George Naturalists Club, and has contributed to bird monitoring programs with Birds Canada and Wildsight for nearly a decade. She completed her Bachelor of Science with Honours, has published peer-reviewed research, received a Mitacs Accelerate Fellowship, and earned the Top Poster Award at the 2026 Thompson Rivers University MSc Showcase.



Blaire in the field

BC Nature congratulates Blaire Smith on this well-deserved recognition and looks forward to her future contributions to wildlife conservation in British Columbia. ✿



Capture the Beauty of British Columbia – Enter the 2026 BC Nature & Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) Photo Contest!

Do you love capturing nature through your camera or phone? Whether you're hiking mountain trails, bird-watching, exploring tide pools, or photographing the remarkable plants and wildlife of British Columbia, we'd love to see the natural world through your lens.

The 2026 BC Nature and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) Photo Contest celebrates the remarkable biodiversity and breathtaking landscapes that make British Columbia unique. From spectacular scenery to intimate wildlife encounters, every photograph tells a story—and yours could be a winner!

Submission Portal is now open (see link below)

Entry Deadline: Midnight (PDT), October 15, 2026

Photo categories at a glance

- Botany and B.C. Landscapes
- Birds and Insects
- Wildlife (excluding birds)
- Conservation Lands and Wildlife Management Areas (Designated Conservation Lands, in honour of Karen Wipond) (*https://bit.ly/4iHhNeh*
- Youth (17 and under) – photographs may feature any of the above categories.



Please visit *https://bcnature.org/2026-photo-contest/* for all rules and regulations, the upload portal, and a list of prizes!

Photograph Nature Responsibly

A great nature photograph should never come at the expense of its subject.

Keep a respectful distance from wildlife and avoid disturbing nests, dens, feeding areas, or sensitive habitat.

Use established trails where possible, and never move, handle, or bait an animal to create a better photograph. Be especially mindful during breeding and nesting seasons, when even brief disturbances can have consequences.

Take only photographs, leave only footprints — and let wildlife remain wild.



Letters to the Editor

Having served previously for six years or more as BC Nature's special representative for Roberts Bank and being very familiar with the proposed Roberts Bank Terminal 2 (RBT2) project, it came as total surprise to see the following in the Conservation Committee report published in the *BCnature* 2026 Summer edition: "suggested that the (essential for shorebirds) mudflats around Roberts Bank Terminal and the B.C. Ferries Terminal may have been created by those developments disrupting inshore tidal currents, meaning that expansion of the Roberts Bank terminal might not be all negative for shorebirds". And amazingly this written by a Conservation Committee member and someone who was until recently on the board.

How does Ben van Drimmelen's unscientific opinion, lacking any facts or evidence, further the aims and credibility of BC Nature?

How can Ben's opinion not be seen as undermining the BC Nature position on Robert Bank and that of all the major environmental NGOs in Canada?

Why is the magazine now a forum for people to give personal opinions on environmental topics and issues that have no scientific or evidence-based foundations?

We all know the rigorously established scientific evidence tells us that the Roberts Bank Container Terminal 2 artificial island will alter water salinity dynamics and destroy the quality of intertidal biofilm on Roberts Bank.

I look forward to BC Nature retracting this "suggestion" and reaffirming their staunch opposition to the RBT2 project. ✿

Sincerely
R. Emsley

Fireweed: A Familiar Sign of Renewal

Submitted by Betty Davison

After a wildfire passes through a B.C. landscape, one of the most noticeable plants to appear may be Fireweed (*Chamaenerion*). Its bright pink flowers can cover open slopes and burned forest edges, sometimes creating striking displays only a few years after a fire.

Fireweed is widespread in British Columbia and is particularly well adapted to disturbed habitats. It commonly grows in forest openings, roadsides, logged areas, avalanche tracks, and other places affected by wildfire.

Fireweed can return or establish quickly after a fire in two ways. If it was already growing at the site, its underground stems, called rhizomes, may survive beneath the soil and produce new shoots after the vegetation above ground has burned. Fireweed can also colonize a burned area from seed, even where it was not previously present. Each plant produces many lightweight seeds with silky hairs that allow them to be carried considerable distances by the wind.

Fire can create favourable conditions for their establishment. Removal of trees, shrubs and ground vegetation allows more sunlight to reach the soil and reduces competition from other plants. Exposed soil can also provide suitable sites for seeds to germinate, provided adequate moisture is available.

Fireweed does not, however, appear everywhere following wildfire. Its abundance depends on factors such as fire severity, soil moisture, elevation, local growing conditions, and whether surviving rhizomes or wind-blown seeds are present.

As other vegetation gradually returns and shrubs and trees begin creating more shade, Fireweed often becomes less prominent.

Its appearance is part of ecological succession—the gradual change in plant communities following disturbance. In many burned landscapes, fireweed is an early and colourful indication that vegetation is beginning to recover. ✿



Nature's renewal is very colourful

BC Nature 2026 Awards

Each year at BC Nature's Annual General Meeting and Conference, we celebrate the dedication, passion, and achievements of outstanding naturalists from across British Columbia. In 2026, ten exceptional individuals were recognized for their contributions to conservation, natural history, citizen science, education, and stewardship.

In our Summer issue, we introduced four of this year's award recipients. In this Fall edition, we are pleased to continue that recognition by featuring the remaining seven honourees. Please join us in congratulating and thanking all of our 2026 award recipients for their remarkable commitment to Knowing Nature and Keeping it Worth Knowing.

Liam Steele
BC Nature Barbara Chapman Award

Liam has made an exceptional contribution to community science and naturalist education through his leadership in BioBlitz events and use of the iNaturalist platform. At age 11, Liam became the top contributor to the first four-day BioBlitz organized by the Yellow Point Ecological Society (2021), submitting observations including a pre-dawn photograph of an American Mink. In subsequent BioBlitzes, Liam continued to rank among the top contributors while growing as a naturalist and species identifier.
Liam assisted with organization, poster distribution, and teaching youth and adults to use *iNaturalist*. He also supported his Outdoor Education teacher in enabling student participation. Liam is now among the top *iNaturalist* contributors on Vancouver Island, alongside professional conservationists, and his observations provide valuable biodiversity data for monitoring Holland Creek.

Since the Friends of Holland Creek became a BC Nature club in 2024, Liam has continued to support workshops, BioBlitzes, and community science initiatives. As co-facilitator for *iNaturalist* workshops, he is valued for troubleshooting technical issues on Android and iPhone platforms and providing ongoing support to participants. His enthusiasm, leadership, and commitment to stewardship demonstrate exceptional promise as a future conservation leader. ✿



Liam Steele (L) with Nikki Toxopeus (R)

Carmen Prang
BC Nature Education Award

When Delta Naturalists Society member Carmen Prang volunteered to distribute the club's "Garter Snakes in Boundary Bay" educational pamphlets, she did not expect to become a dedicated advocate for the protection of the area's garter snake hibernaculum. Repeated visits revealed that many visitors continued disturbing the snakes, with children handling, throwing, and placing them in buckets despite posted warnings.

Carmen spent countless hours at the site educating the public about the importance of leaving the snakes undisturbed in a stress-free environment. Calmly and respectfully, she encouraged children and adults to observe without touching, even when faced with occasional hostility from members of the public. Undeterred, she continued her stewardship work, lobbying for improved signage, transporting injured snakes to wildlife rescue organizations, and deepening her own knowledge of snake ecology.

Carmen also prepared detailed reports for the Delta Naturalists and Metro Vancouver Parks on public use of the dyke trail and the impacts on the hibernaculum. She shared her work through presentations to the club in 2025, with additional educational outreach planned for 2026. Through her persistence and dedication, Carmen significantly improved public awareness and protection of these often-misunderstood reptiles. ✿



Bruce Taylor (R) presenting to Carmen Prang (L)

Know someone in your club who deserves recognition for their dedication to nature, conservation, education, or stewardship?

Nominate them for a 2027 BC Nature Award. Nomination deadline: March 12, 2027 *https://bcnature.org/bc-nature-awards/*

Continued page 32

Continued from page 31

Elizabeth Perrin
BC Nature Club Service

Elizabeth has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to promoting the appreciation, understanding, and conservation of the natural history of British Columbia, particularly within the Fraser Delta. A member of the Delta Naturalists Society for the past 14 years, Elizabeth has held several important leadership roles, including two terms as Vice President, and currently serves as a director on the club's executive committee.

Elizabeth's most significant contribution has been as co-editor of the "Nature Notes" column in the *Delta Optimist*. Through this widely anticipated monthly feature, Elizabeth has helped highlight local wildlife, environmental stewardship, and conservation issues affecting the Fraser Delta.

As the driving force behind "Nature Notes", Elizabeth has built strong partnerships with organizations such as Birds Canada, George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, BC Community Bat Program, and Delta Farmland & Wildlife Trust, encouraging regular collaboration and community participation.

Through her leadership, organizational skills, and passion for nature education, Elizabeth has strengthened community awareness of local conservation issues and inspired greater public appreciation for the natural world. ✿



Elizabeth Perrin

Rod Drennan
BC Nature Club Service Award

Rod has been an active volunteer with the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club for approximately two decades. During much of that time he has been on the club board, holding several positions, especially as secretary for more than 10 years. This is a particularly outstanding contribution because a good, long-term Board Secretary is hard to find.

His other outstanding contributions have been as an organizer of special projects, including a club Book of Honour (recognizing notable members), newsletter indexing, and chairing our 75th Anniversary Celebration committee. Rod has always brought organizational skill, wisdom, and enthusiasm to every task that he has taken on. He has made us better! ✿



Harold Sellers (L) presenting to Rod Drennan (R)



Mike Howard, 2015

Mike Howard
BC Nature Club Service Award

Mike Howard has made outstanding contributions to the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club, particularly in supporting and expanding birding activities within the club and community. Serving as Birding Director until retiring from the role in 2026, Mike organized year-round Monday and Thursday birding trips, along with monthly Saturday outings, helping connect countless members with birding opportunities.

Mike has also encouraged the use of eBird to document sightings and contribute valuable citizen science data. He supports major regional birding initiatives, including the Kelowna Christmas Bird Count and the January Sweagle (Rick Howie BC Interior Swan and Eagle) Count.

His volunteer work extends to conservation monitoring and habitat stewardship. Mike has participated in species censuses at Okanagan Mountain Provincial Park and Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park, monitored bluebird trails, and

Continued page 33

Continued from page 32

designed and built nesting boxes for the Mission Creek Greenway bluebird trail. Drawing on his engineering background, he also contributed to studies assessing the viability of the Sibell Maude-Roxby Wetlands bird sanctuary.

Among his most significant accomplishments was leading the 2023–2025 project to build a birding platform at Thomson Marsh Park, a major conservation and public engagement initiative that required years of dedication and leadership. ✿

Jim Sims
BC Nature Club Service

Jim has been a dedicated and active member of the Williams Lake Field Naturalists Club since 1980, contributing decades of leadership, stewardship, and community service. Over the years, he has served as both Treasurer and Vice President and has led countless field trips to important natural areas.

Jim has organized the club's annual spring birding trip to Chilanko Marsh since the early 1980s, maintaining long-term bird observation records that document ecological changes following habitat restoration work by Ducks Unlimited Canada.

A skilled woodworker, Jim has helped build bridges and boardwalks and, alongside Fred McMechan, designed and constructed hundreds of bluebird nest boxes used on club monitoring routes. He also maintained his own bluebird trail for many years and later mentored others to continue the work. His interest in technology led him to install observation cameras in bird nests long before such projects became common.

Jim has also contributed significantly to the development and maintenance of Scout Island Nature Centre. However, perhaps his greatest contribution has been serving as editor of the club's Muskrat Express newsletter for nearly 30 years. Through his writing, photography, and encouragement of contributors, Jim has helped connect and inspire generations of naturalists and community members. ✿

Wayne Ray
BC Nature Key Biodiversity Area (KBA/IBA) Caretaker of the Year

You might think the bigger the bird the easier it is to monitor, but in northern B.C. where ice sporadically spreads and retracts, creating a mosaic of suitable habitat across all manner of river, creek, and lake with no consideration for how one might access said body of water, keeping tabs on Trumpeter Swans can be a herculean task.

Thankfully for BC Nature (and for swans!), Wayne Ray is there at Fraser Lake to carry the torch. In the Fall of 2025, he worked tirelessly to secure access to private property, rally local volunteers, and liaise with the town, and Stellat'en and Nadleh Whut'en First Nations.

Although it would be criminally remiss not recognizing Dave Leman and the Prince George Naturalists Club for their contribution, and BC Field Ornithologists for funding support, all that effort would be for naught if not for the guiding wisdom of Wayne. If we had a Wayne for every lake in B.C., this province would be a fundamentally different place for both its human and natural communities. In the meantime, we present Wayne with the KBA Caretaker of the Year award and sincerely look forward to more swan surveys to come. ✿

NatureKids BC Update

Submitted by NatureKids BC Team

From Summer Adventures to Fall Opportunities

NatureKids BC volunteers have been busy connecting children and families with nature across the province this year. Many of our volunteers are naturalists themselves, sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with a new generation of nature lovers.

As summer winds down, we're pleased to share one recent NatureKids moment from the Sunshine Coast.



Club leader Lana Brandt, Executive Director of the Loon Foundation, was joined by Michelle Evelyn and David Stiles from Coast Wildlife.

A Bat Walk on the Sunshine Coast - Our new Sunshine Coast NatureKids Club launched its first Explorer Day in May with a bat walk! Young participants had the chance to use bat detectors to identify local species, including Yuma Myotis and Silver-haired Bats, while learning about the important role bats play in healthy ecosystems.

Share What You Know - As we head into fall, we're always looking for people who enjoy sharing their

Continued page 34

Continued from page 33

knowledge of nature with children and families.

Our NatureKids Explorer Days benefit from what we call Nature Mentors — naturalists, artists, educators, researchers, and others who bring their interests and expertise to a local outing. Mentors can choose a topic they know and love, and we'll help connect them with a NatureKids club in their community.

We're also looking for Club Leaders who can help organize local Explorer Days and build connections among families, volunteers, and Nature Mentors. NatureKids BC provides training and support for both roles.

Interested in getting involved? Visit our Join Our Team page or contact *coordinator@naturekidsbc.ca*.

We're grateful to BC Nature members who share their knowledge, curiosity, and love of the natural world with the next generation. ✿

Expanding Hummingbird Conservation in the Okanagan – South Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Submitted by Doreen Olson

With support from a BC Nature and the BC Naturalist's Foundation Club Support Grant, the Okanagan Hummingbird Project 2025 has expanded its efforts to monitor hummingbird populations, engage volunteers, and raise public awareness about these remarkable birds.

The project, led by a dedicated team of volunteer banders, focuses on monitoring local hummingbird populations through regular banding activities. Banding provides valuable information about migration, longevity, site fidelity, and population trends, helping researchers better understand and conserve hummingbird species in the region.

Grant funding enabled the continuation of bi-weekly banding at a long-established monitoring site while also supporting the development of a second banding location in a lower-elevation area with a high concentration of hummingbirds. The additional site has expanded opportunities for research and data collection, providing a broader picture of hummingbird activity across the South Okanagan.

A key component of the project is volunteer development. The grant helped provide training and materials for new volunteers, including banders, scribers, and trappers. Becoming a qualified hummingbird bander requires extensive hands-on experience and mentorship. Trainees must band 100 hummingbirds under the supervision of an experienced mentor before they can become certified, a process that can take up to two years.

The funding also supported the purchase of field equipment, including nectar feeders, ant moats, and wasp traps, which are essential tools for effective banding and monitoring activities. Additional support helped cover travel between banding sites, outreach efforts, and accommodation expenses associated with project activities. An honorarium was provided to an experienced assistant bander in recognition of her valuable contributions to the program.



Calliope male

Beyond research, the project places a strong emphasis on education and citizen science. Grant funding supported the creation of educational materials, public information displays, and outreach activities, including a newspaper article and invitations for members of the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club to observe banding operations firsthand.

The project achieved several important outcomes during the grant period. Bi-weekly monitoring was successfully maintained at two sites, improving the quality and quantity of data collected on local hummingbird populations. Four club members participated in trapping and scribing activities, while one member began training to become a bander. Outreach efforts engaged more than 100 community members and helped foster greater awareness and stewardship of hummingbirds and their habitats.

The support of both BC Nature and the BC Naturalists' Foundation has strengthened both the scientific and educational goals of the Okanagan Hummingbird Project, ensuring that monitoring, conservation, and public engagement efforts can continue to benefit hummingbirds for years to come. ✿



Photo: P. Fleming

The Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) is the smallest bird in Canada, measuring only about 8 cm (3 inches) long and weighing between 2 and 3 grams. In British Columbia, they arrive in early April and breed in the dry, open mountain woodlands and shrublands of the Southern and Central Interior.

Identifying the Calliope: Telling these tiny flyers apart from other hummingbirds takes a keen eye.

Size: They are roughly the size of a ping-pong ball. (more like a Brazil nut with wings).

Males: Feature a white throat with brilliant, elongated magenta streaks (gorget).

Females & Juveniles: Green backs with a pale belly and a notable peachy-buff wash on the flanks.

Tail vs. Wing: When perched, their wingtips extend to or slightly past the end of their tail. ✿

Did You Know? The Wood Duck

This edition's cover features the colourful Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), one of North America's most striking waterfowl.

The male is instantly recognizable by his iridescent green and purple head, bold white markings, red eyes, and rich chestnut breast. The female is more subdued, with grey-brown plumage, a distinctive white eye-ring, and flashes of blue on her wings.

In British Columbia, Wood Ducks are found mainly in the southern part of the province. Breeding populations occur on southern Vancouver Island, in the Fraser Lowlands, and through parts of the Southern Interior, including the Creston area and north to around Williams Lake.

Unlike most ducks, Wood Ducks nest in tree cavities, often in mature deciduous trees near ponds, sloughs, marshes, and slow-moving rivers. Where natural cavities are scarce, they will readily use properly designed nest boxes. A typical clutch contains about 10 to 12 eggs.

Soon after hatching, the ducklings face a remarkable first adventure. Encouraged by their mother, they climb to the cavity entrance and leap to the ground below. Their tiny bodies are light and cushioned by down, helping them survive the drop before following her to nearby water.

The Wood Duck is currently on B.C.'s Yellow List, meaning it is not considered at risk provincially. Even so, protecting wetlands and mature riparian forests remains important to its long-term success. ✿

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Naturalist Mentor - Ruth des Cotes

Submitted by Rick Faw and Paul Simonin

Ruth has led a small team of Environmental Educators for 23 years with A Rocha Canada (a non-profit conservation organization with a centre in Surrey). In that time, she has led thousands of students to experience the wonders of wild creatures in and around the Tatalu River (aka the Little Campbell River) in South Surrey. Year after year, she and her team have introduced children and adults of all ages to encounter and appreciate pond invertebrates, migrating birds, towering Douglas-firs, salmon, salamanders, slugs, and salal. In one memorable moment while studying detritivores in a program on composting, the group of 10–12-year-olds digging in the dirt unearthed some earthworms! When she invited a young boy to hold one, he responded by asking, "Do worms bite?" The fact that children could grow up without ever having discovered that these common backyard animals don't bite, illustrates the need for this work. Having a hands-on, direct engagement with creatures exemplifies the sort of encounters that have a chance to turn all people, young and old, into budding naturalists. Teaching environmental education experientially is something that Ruth has done deliberately and doggedly for decades despite the whims of weather and education fads.



Ruth educating our future naturalists

On countless occasions, Ruth has facilitated experiences in a forest or by a stream where children are instructed to find a spot to sit in silence for a time in order to better observe and take in the sounds and smells, textures, and movement of the non-human inhabitants of the place. It is remarkable, and telling, how often even the most rambunctious and energetic children find the experience to be satisfying. After 15 minutes of quiet, undistracted drawing, or journalling, a common refrain goes something like "Are we going to get to do that again tomorrow?"

Ruth's influence extends beyond the forest or pond or river. Over the years, she has led dozens and dozens of professional development workshops aimed at helping teachers incorporate nature appreciation activities into their classrooms and curriculum.

Lastly, Ruth has mentored hundreds of young adults in the joys and challenges of environmental education. The practical experience gained, along with Ruth's hard-won guidance and wisdom, has equipped, motivated, and encouraged young adults to grow to be environmental scientists, schoolteachers, professional biologists, professors, farmers, entrepreneurs, youth workers, faith leaders, and so on. In fact, this may be among her most lasting legacies. One young woman describes how inspiring it is to learn from someone who, "can make any sort of child become curious about nature" because she herself embodies this quality so consistently. Similarly, another former mentee writes, "Ruth taught me that you don't have to be the loudest person in the room to get a child's attention. There's something magnetically resilient about her and her quiet voice that draws a child in, whether it's talking about plants in the forest or invertebrates in the wetland." And that same inviting posture extends when leading young adults. "When we have our one-to-one check-ins, we would sometimes go for a walk and talk about work and life and family while weaving through forest trails. Other times she would offer to make me a cup of tea from her always well-stocked pantry cupboard. I learn so much by talking, working, and walking with her." ✿

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