

NATURE BAY



SALMON ARM BAY  
**NATURE  
ENHANCEMENT  
SOCIETY**

# NATURE BAY NEWS

Newsletter of the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society

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**Fall  
2010**

## President's Message - Gary Lomax

This has been a busy and eventful year. Our accomplishments are many. Thanks to the various granting agencies mentioned in our treasurer's report, we were able to hire a student to manage the Brighthouse Nature Centre over the summer. We've also begun some much-needed maintenance work on our trails and boardwalks. Earlier in the year with great efforts from the board (most notably Ed Dahl and Elaine Gustafson) and collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the City of Salmon Arm, we replaced the toilet near the West Gate. We will also be purchasing some buoys to help protect the sanctuary on its northern perimeter. (Thanks to Hanne and Doug MacKay for looking after this.) A special thank you to Ron Wedman for his time and commitment to SABNES over an eight-year term on the Board with the last four years as president. I appreciate the manner in which Ron took the time to help me in assuming the presidency.

Given the existing situation here and elsewhere, it becomes even more important us all to maintain and enhance this very special area of the Bay. Please make sure your memberships are current and encourage others to join and support our organisation.



John MacVicar doing maintenance on the Tower Boardwalk

G. Benson 29/11/2010

### Note from your newsletter editor

I have taken over this task from Ron Wedman. Please send me comments and also ideas, articles and photographs for future newsletters. Thank you - **Geoff Benson** [benson.geoff137@gmail.com](mailto:benson.geoff137@gmail.com)

## Birds in the Salmon Arm Bay 2020 - Ted Hilliary

The Salmon Arm Bay and area was an exciting place to bird in 2010. Up to the end of October I saw 179 species and recorded over 400,000 birds. Not only is the Bay and area important for nesting birds, but also it is a resting and feeding area for tens of thousands of migratory birds.

Some of the highlights for me this year include 24 species of shore birds. Of particular interest are the Ruddy Turnstone, Hudsonian Godwit and Buff-breasted Sandpiper-all of which are rare visitors. Although not a shorebird, the Sandhill Crane feeding just west of the wharf in October was a thrill to see.

Another family of birds to note are the gulls, which are often dismissed as being just "seagulls". This fall I saw 10 species, from the small Sabine's Gull-a very rare species here-to the large Glaucous-winged Gull usually seen on the Coast. A first sighting for me was the Lesser Black-backed Gull, which was near the mouth of the river in October. Other gulls uncommon to this area, which were here this fall, were the Franklin's, Mew, and Thayer's Gulls. Perhaps all the fish at the mouth of the river brought them here to feed.

Related to the gulls are the terns, which are usually not very common visitors here. Seeing an adult and a juvenile Arctic Tern a couple of times in September was a real surprise and a first for me.

The Salmon Arm Bay has 14 or so different species of raptors - hawks and eagles - feeding along the fore-shore. Another new one for me this year was a Broad-winged Hawk perched in a tree above Christmas Island. This species is fairly common east of the Rockies, but is very seldom seen in B.C.

We are so very fortunate to have such a wide variety of birds in the Salmon Arm Bay and area, this despite all the development and increased urbanization.



G Benson

### Looking For Fine Dining Opportunities ? Osprey at the Wharf

## Western Grebe Report 2010 upto August 21/10 - Ed and Monica Dahl

History has seemed to repeat itself as this year's Shuswap Lake water levels have been similar to last year. The grebes did not build their nests where we could count them and the reed canary grass thrived, probably due to lack of flooding, but, the Western Grebes have done well in spite of our concerns.

On May 9, 2010, 243 Western Grebes were counted on the bay, along with 26 Greater White-fronted Geese, 2 American Pelicans, 6 American Avocets and a Ruddy Duck seen from Peter Jannink Park. From then until June 23 the counts decreased almost weekly down to 75 adult grebes. Monica and I were away for a few days, so the grebes were not counted again until July 14. We saw 19 young riding about on their parents' backs, and counted 201 adults. That many adults suggested to us that maybe "new" adults had arrived on the lake. There were still dancing grebes courting near the suspected nesting sites, so we may have some young showing up even into September. Our counts of adults and young have continued with some fluctuations, making me think I may have counted some birds twice, or missed them altogether, because it is really difficult to say for sure that the "markers" I am using allow me to accurately prevent duplications, etc.. Anyway, on Aug. 13th we counted 200 adult Western Grebes, 104 young from 68 families. That's not as many as last year, but I suspect the count may yet increase. Last year the count was 185 adults and 131 young.



G. Benson

### Great Blue Heron ( Off Christmas Island )



Ron Wedman

## Goodbye, Good Luck and Thanks a Bundle, Ron

At the October board meeting the directors said farewell to Past President Ron Wedman who has moved to Victoria. Ron was presented with a framed Gabi Klein photograph of the nature trail as a show of appreciation for his hard work and dedication over the last eight years. Ron joined the SABNES Board early in 2002. He took over the newsletter in 2004 and became President in 2006. Among the projects which he helped to move forward are new roof on Brighthouse Nature Centre, the banner and the new footings and bearers for the building. His engineering knowledge and skills will be missed. We wish Ron & Verna all the best in their new location in home.

Mike Saul

## Salmon in the Salmon River

Since 1984, Gene Puetz, who has a farm on the Salmon River near the Silver Creek store, has been employed by the Department of Fisheries to look after the fish counting gate on his farm. He counts Chinook, Coho and Sockeye and carefully regulates the flow of water through the gate. The number of salmon varies from year to year. The numbers were higher in the 80s and early 90s before the fishing agreement with the US was signed. Other factors influencing the health of the salmon run include the number of fish caught in the ocean. One year no fishing was allowed in Georgia Straits until the first of August. By then the fish coming to the Shuswap had already passed into the Fraser, so the numbers of salmon here showed an increase of 50%

from the previous year. Another factor is the number of mackerel, which come to eat the salmon fry. In the El Niño years, when the warm currents from the south raised the ocean temperature, there was an increase in the mackerel population in the Fraser River system. In 1989 there were 930 Coho counted in one day, 2100 for the season. So far this year the highest count in one day has been 160 with 1069 being the total count, an increase from the brood year number of 1007. The term brood year refers to 3 years ago when the eggs were laid. A few years ago the total adult Coho count was 58. The hatchery in Merritt collects brood stock of both Coho and Chinook at Gene's farm, never more than 1/3 of the run. In the hatchery the eggs are fertilized and set, then hatch Jan to March, depending on how much river and well water has been used; the fry are fed then released on the down side of high water, when the water is murky, into the Salmon River. The hatchery clips the adipose fin and places a steel pin in each fry's nose. Gene reports that about 25% of the fish he counts show these markings. The fry spend a year in the small rivers flowing into the Salmon River, then head to the ocean. The Coho return in 1 year, weighing eight to ten pounds, the Chinook in 2 years, weighing about 10 to 12 pounds. Gene has seen a few 25 pound ones. The Coho have a three year cycle. The Chinook and Sockeye have a four year cycle. The Chinook population now seems to be fairly stable: 618 four years ago, 645 this year. In the past, during a dry year, the lowest count was 160. The Sockeye are the surprise this year with 322 to date, 300 more than the amount that usually come through. Last year there were no Sockeye. Sockeye tend to spawn in the lower part of the river, including in the river gravel right near the counting gate. Chinook and Coho tend to spawn farther along the river all the way to Westwold. Restoration of the Salmon River has benefitted the salmon. Planting many trees has resulted in sufficient shade along the river bank to lower water temperatures which are now lower than they were in the '80s.

**Joyce Henderson**

Many thanks to Gene Puetz for his help and information

## Gene Puetz at work at the fish counting gate on his farm the Salmon River



**Pauline Waelti**



G.Benson

## Nature Calls

I'm past the gate on the trail by the shore,  
eager to sample what delights are in store.  
I hear the faint calls of gulls, ravens' cries too.  
I see a kestrel diving down from the blue.  
Then, all of a sudden, nature invades my elation!  
I make a quick bee-line for the comfort station.  
I'm happily back on the trail in a jiffy.  
Thanks to SABNES for that spiffy new biffy.

**Definitely Anon**

P.S. Thank goodness I hadn't yet reached Christmas Island !

**Elected Directors**  
 Gary Lomax, President; Mike Saul, Treasurer; Ed Dahl; Hanne MacKay; Joyce Henderson; Geoff Benson

**Appointed Directors**  
 Don Parks, Shuswap Naturalist Society ; Cllr. Ken Jamieson, CSA; Elaine Gustafson, MOE ; Hank Shelley, FishNGame ;Cyril Sukare, Chamber of Commerce

**Non-voting Directors**  
 Georgia McLeod, Sec  
 Tom Brighthouse, Advisor

**We greatly appreciate the financial and service support from the following companies**

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City of Salmon Arm  
 Human Resources Developmt Canada  
 Salmar Community Association  
 Salmon Arm Rotary Club  
 Salmon Arm Savings and Credit Union  
 Shuswap Community Foundation  
 TD Friends of the Environment  
 Vancouver Foundation

**Treasurer's Report—Mike Saul** Finances have gone fairly well this year with many members renewing at above the basic rates. In fact, life memberships have increased by 5 which is remarkable and very much appreciated. The society received \$2000 from the City of Salmon Arm to help with the operation of the Brighthouse Nature Centre, and we very much appreciate the continued support. A grant from the Federal Govt under the Student Summer Jobs to the amount of \$4,397 helped us hire a local university student for the job of Interpreter to staff the BNC, which is really critical to our operations. In September we were awarded \$5,000 by the Shuswap Community Foundation which will provide funds for signage and allow us to make necessary repairs to walkways, the viewing tower and platforms. Work is already underway and we expect this will enable us to extend the life of these structures. This generous grant will also cover the purchase of more buoys to be placed in the bay to protect nesting sites. The Board of Directors work hard to preserve and enhance our Nature Trust Lands for all to enjoy., and are very much encouraged by the wonderful support received.

**Membership Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ \

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Nature Bay Society is a Charitable Organization.  
 Receipts for Income Tax purposes will be issued

**Nature Bay Society, P.O. Box 27, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 4N2**

**Annual Fees**

Individual.....	\$ 15
Family.....	\$ 25
Sustaining Individual.....	\$ 50
Sustaining Family.....	\$ 100
Life Membership.....	\$ 500

Corporate or Organization

1-4 Employees....	\$ 50
5-10 Employees.....	\$ 100
+ 10 Employees.....	\$ 150
Life Membership.....	\$ 2,500

**!! Thanks for joining !!**