



NATURE BAY NEWS

Newsletter of the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society

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Acknowledgement: Nature Bay lies on the unceded and traditional territory of the Secwepemc peoples



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

I am writing this from the Palermo Airport in Sicily. We are most fortunate to live in the Shuswap, surrounded by an abundance of wildlife. After a month of traveling and hiking around the island, I have seen little wildlife other than the odd snake, lizard, cheerful european robin, starling and a few warblers, doves and sea faring birds. The tide pools along the shore are devoid of life. The Salmon Arm foreshore, in contrast, has

250 bird species plus deer, beaver, muskrat, weasels, voles, otters to name a few.

The other asset of our community is the willingness of volunteers to step up to help with **SABNES** projects. We owe thanks to the City of Salmon Arm, Shuswap Trail Alliance, Shuswap Naturalist Club, Shuswap Community Foundation, Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, Rotary Clubs and especially our own **SABNES** board. We collectively value nature and strive to protect it.

SABNES Board members contribute in many different ways. If you would be interested in joining the board, please let us know. You'll have an enjoyable experience.

Janet Aitken, President

NEST BOXES ON THE FORESHORE

By the time the worst of the summer heat was upon us, most cavity nesters on the foreshore had fledged. We had two incidents of vandalism requiring replacements and repairs and two boxes impacted by floodwaters. All four have now been restored. Overall, it was a very successful year with 62 broods, comprising eight species: tree swallows, violet-green swallows, black-capped chickadees, western bluebirds, northern



flickers, wood ducks, common goldeneyes and barn owls. The increase in species diversity was very encouraging.

To find barn owls in a duck box (see photos) was a wonderful surprise, but the box they chose to nest in was not great for their young so we've made plans to fix that. We also noted the owls attracted a lot of attention, with people walking 'off trail' to have a look. This was bad news for the grassland and even worse for the owls. Occasionally, we have to go off trail for maintenance purposes such as cleaning or repairing a nest boxes, but it's important to keep disturbance to a minimum. There is clear evidence people are walking where they shouldn't. It's also obvious that dogs are being allowed to run loose through sensitive habitat. We hope **SABNES** members will take a moment to gently remind people that dogs must be kept on leash at all times and that everyone should stay on the trail unless they have authorization to be there.

BIRDING ON THE BAY – 2022 Ted Hillary, Shuswap Naturalists

It has been another productive year for birding around the Bay with 202 species recorded since January 1. Thirty-nine species of waterfowl were sighted, 27 species of shorebirds, eight species of gulls and nine warbler species. Each day could be approached in eager anticipation of seeing something new. The wet spring led to higher-than-average lake levels, however, and by the end of June drought conditions had prevailed, lowering lake levels to below average. This affected the numbers of shorebirds feeding on the mudflats during both spring and fall migrations. Conditions also limited the numbers of birds,



American Avocet

such as **coots**, from nesting along the foreshore. A bonus was the showing of **american avocets** feeding west of the Wharf. Fortunately, **western grebes** did very well, producing about 200 young. **Ring-billed gulls** on Christmas Island may not have been so fortunate. Many of the 1000 nests, counted in late May and each with 2-5 eggs, were washed out by rising waters. We



Ring-billed Gull on Christmas Island

had many fewer **swans** than usual, likely due to a shortage of milfoil, in both spring and late fall. To some degree **american pelicans** made up for them. Arrival began in mid-spring and up to 55 spent the summer with us, some staying until near the end of October. Two pairs of resident **bald eagles** were successful in fledging young. The nest east of the Wharf yielded three, and the nest at West Harbour Village, two. **Ospreys** nesting near the railroad tracks at the Wharf raised three young, and the pair on the highway at the A & W, two. Swallows appeared successful, including approximately 30 **barn swallows** nesting under the end of the Wharf, and 15 **cliff swallows** that attached their nests to Wharf build-



Northern Rough-winged Swallow



Great Egret

ings. In addition, most nesting boxes around the Bay housed either **tree** or **violet green swallows**. Six or seven **northern rough-winged swallows** nested in the cracks in the barriers near Christmas Island. Some rare sightings included a **great egret** that fed around the Wharf area for about a week, only the second recorded sighting here. Over the summer a pair of **barn owls** successfully raised two young in one of the nesting boxes. Three or four times over the year, a **rusty**



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

blackbird was seen amidst red-winged blackbirds. On September 1 a **yellow-breasted chat** was seen in the **Peter Jannink Nature Park**. Last, but not least, a

rare-to-us **sharp-tailed sandpiper** was spotted beside the Wharf feeding with its near relatives, **pectoral sandpipers**. This long-distance migrant normally nests in Siberia and winters in Western Australia!

On the whole, there were fewer birds than expected—fewer **hummingbirds**, **orioles**, **nighthawks**, **cormorants** and **terns**, notably **caspian terns**. Because of fluctuating lake levels, fewer shorebirds appeared, although waterfowl numbers rated about average. Flycatchers, especially the **willow flycatcher**, proved abundant.

Whatever the time of year, persons birding around the Bay will always find something interesting to view including the possibility of seeing something new. Enjoy your birding.



Willow Flycatcher

WESTERN GREBES IN 2022

We can't say for sure what the factors were, but the grebes did well this year with the highest population we've seen in the past decade. At the end of August, we counted 485, which included both adults and young.

SABNES volunteers care about grebe conservation. We place buoys to keep boaters outside of sensitive nesting areas, and every year those buoys have to be adjusted manually. We have also placed signage along the foreshore that advocates for their protection and we keep an assortment of educational material for public use in the **Brighthouse Nature Centre**. Keeping grebes in the bay is a community effort, however. Every year these birds must contend with natural hazards such as flooding and predation, as well as having to combat unnecessary human-caused hazards. Once the young have hatched and leave the nest, they head to deeper water where there is no protection from boats. Contaminants in the water also pose a threat, affecting the food chain, feather condition and physical fitness. Such toxins also cause shell-thinning which results in broken shells that never produce chicks.

Scientists have shown that grebes in BC carry various levels of organochlorines (pesticides), industrial chemicals and heavy metals in their tissues, often resulting in reduced fitness or increased mortality. Grebes are also susceptible to toxic algal blooms and oil spills. Even an oil sheen can have harmful impacts on them, and who among us can say we've never seen that in the Bay? As a migratory species,

they pick up poisons throughout their journey. Add Avian flu (H5N1) to the mix and it's a miracle we had good numbers this year. It is worth mentioning that the spread of H5N1 is largely facilitated by humans as well.

Shuswap Lake is critical to the survival of western grebes in our province. Although 485 may sound like a high number, it's not. This is their last nesting colony in BC, so every healthy grebe is valuable against extirpation. We can do little to protect them when they leave the relatively clean waters of our Bay. We must take great care for the few short months they are here.

PEACE OUTSIDE MY WINDOW

Rain, shine, blow, blizzard

There's always peace outside my window

In SPRING, the mallards pair up, swimming, flying, nesting together

The geese, herons, pheasants do the same

Song sparrows call sweetly for partners

Male house finches don hot pink boas, their mates' favourite

Black-capped chickadees scold rivals until they all succeed

LATE SPRING, EARLY SUMMER delivers all quiet on the Lake Front

Nesting, feeding one another and their young keeps the bird world busy

Once done, the water birds train their young to survive, to enjoy a future

They parade around the marsh, learning from their elders

Once grown, they continue meeting in groups,

Playing follow the leader as they grow strong together

Come AUTUMN the herons, labeled as loners in bird guides,

Stand tall or rest in groups among the watery reeds

Neighbours infringe, but the herons don't lift a feather

WINTER after a drought brings moisture

The marsh stream fills with mallard couples and groups.

Families of geese; herons fringe the edges

Sharing territory, shelter, water

Living in reverence to Nature.

Defining for humankind, peace on earth

Judith Benson



Clive Bryson

SABNES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elected Directors

Janet Aitken, President.
Geoff Benson, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor.
Mona Broad, Hanne MacKay, Carla Kirkpatrick,
Debbie Noakes, Di Wittner, Mitch Olineck, Don
Derby, Jon Mills

Appointed Directors

Councillor Sylvia Lindgren, **City of Salmon Arm;**
Fish and Game Club and **Downtown Salmon
Arm Improvement Association:** No appointed
representatives.

Non-voting Directors

Georgia McLeod, Secretary
Tom Brighthouse, Advisor

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

LIFE CORPORATE MEMBERS

Askews Foods
Royal Bank

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Browne Johnson Land Surveyors
Dr Lyle A Martin
Gentech Engineering Inc.
Shuswap Lady Striders
Lakeside Health
Prestige Harbourfront Resort

GRANTING AGENCIES

City of Salmon Arm
Salmon Arm Rotary Club
Shuswap Community Foundation
Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
BC Nature Trust

Annual Membership 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
* All but \$5 is tax-deductible

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Pay your SABNES membership or
make your
donation by e-mail transfer to :
sabnes.org@gmail.com

Membership Form

(If you **have been a member**, we only need you to enter **new** information
If you are **sending your subscription by e-transfer and you are a new member**,
please separately e-mail us the contact information asked for below)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail Address _____

Amount Paid: _____ Date : _____

I would like to give **SABNES** my time
to help staff the nature centre
(June, July and August)

Please Check

to help with trail clean-up and maintenance

Nature Bay Society (**SABNES**) is a Charitable Organization.
Most of the Annual Fee is tax-deductible.
Receipts for Income Tax purposes will be issued.

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

website : www.sabnes.org

Email: sabnes.org@gmail.com

Make an Everlasting Contribution to SABNES

Please consider making a donation to **SABNES** via the **Shuswap Community Foundation (c/o SABNES Endowment Fund)**. Your donation will remain in perpetuity in the fund and generate income, which will be used to help keep the **SABNES** lands in their natural state for the foreseeable future. Please send your cheque payable to **Shuswap Community Foundation, PO Box #624, 450 Lakeshore Drive, Salmon Arm, BC V1E 4N7**. Please mark on your cheque that you wish to place the donation in the **SABNES ENDOWMENT FUND**. The **Shuswap Community Foundation** will send you a tax receipt.



The Young Crow and a Corn Brush

'Twas around 11 AM one day in early May, I believe, that a deafening noise caught my attention. Zeroing into my patio, which overlooks the walkway alongside the Prestige Hotel, at least 40 crows wheeled close and more were flying in from afar. Then I noticed a young crow hopping around on our patio floor, obviously in distress as it squawked for help and banged against the surrounding plexiglass. It tried to fly up to perch on the railing but hadn't yet mastered the art of flying vertically in a confined space. As I moved closer, the raucousness increased and the surrounding rescue party flew ever closer, threatening to dive-bomb me. Was I destined to be a victim of a murder? What to do?

First, I tried to slide a tray under its feathery rump, but it was reluctant to cooperate. I needed to operate from a distance... Judith, the bird lover, to the rescue! There she was, tiptoeing forward with a corn broom. I grasped the handle. Eventually I engineered the youngster into a corner and scooped it up, holding the broom end horizontally. As I cautiously inched the broom upward, the young crow would stay on but only for a short while, and I would try again. During this time, the more belligerent crows were pacified to a degree, having realized I was trying to help. On the third try, the youngster stayed on the brush for enough time to be able to jump onto the railing, after which he quickly launched itself towards the Lake. After only a few seconds the strident chorus of the rescue squad quietened to mezzo piano.

Without missing a beat, a group of onlookers on the walkway applauded and shouted, "Bravo!"

Geoff Benson