

NATURE BAY NEWS

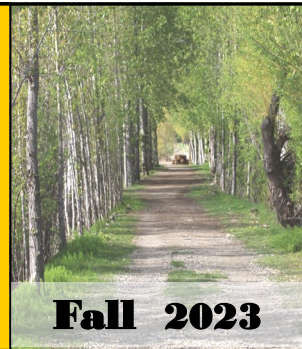
Newsletter of the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society

PO Box 27, Salmon Arm, B.C. Canada V1E 4N2

Email: sabnes.org@gmail.com

Website: www.sabnes.org

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



Fall 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another year has rolled around again. The time span between January and December seems to be shorter every year. As an organization, I believe we are making strides in the right direction. We welcomed two new members to our Board this year, Dennis Lowe and Matthew Pyper.

SABNES has been working on building a new bird viewing platform for a number of years. We have determined that we will replace the old beaver board walk and create a teaching, listening space large enough for a classroom at the end of the board walk. This location is far enough away from the trains that you can hear the birds and not the trains. There will be benches around the perimeter and railings to allow spotting scopes to peer through. We are in the process of modifying our existing plans to suit this location.

In order to create or change anything on the foreshore, we must strictly adhere to the government's guidelines and time lines to provide minimal environmental impact. Each year we stop all work for the nesting season. This leaves an ideal time each fall to do the work. Hopefully, this year, we will receive the permission from the Water Branch in a timely manner to proceed with our plans.

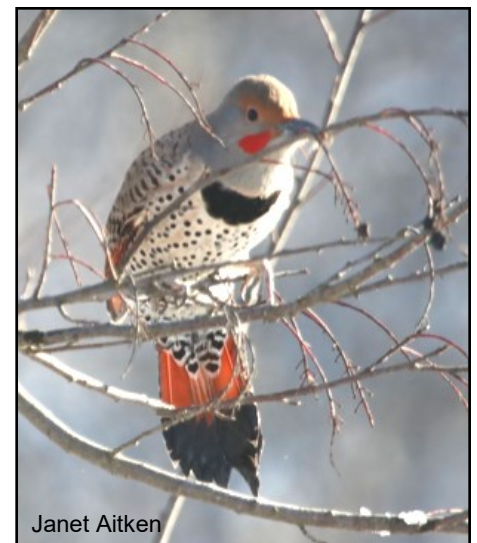
We received news this fall, that we were the recipients of over **\$45,000** left to **SABNES** in the estate of **John Staniforth Miller**. Combined with our generous \$20,000 Grant from the Shuswap Community Foundation and a grant of \$10,000 from the Shuswap Rotary Club we are ready to move forward with the next phase of our bird viewing platform as soon as we receive final approval from the Ministry of Forests.

Harold Noakes has spent a great many hours figuring out what lumber we will need and has received several quotes on the lumber. Thank you, Harold for all your time and expertise on this.

We are hoping to use a local company to help dismantle and rebuild the platform in conjunction with volunteer help.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Directors for their expertise, time and wisdom as we move forward. As I've said before, they are a wonderful group to work with!

Thank you all for your interest in the foreshore and wildlife in the Bay. It is indeed a local treasure that we all value.



Janet Aitken

BIRDING ON THE BAY – 2023 Ted Hillary, Shuswap Naturalists

The effects of our changing climate are becoming increasingly noticeable as they present new challenges to birds struggling to survive. Some of the difficulties in the Salmon Arm Bay area include record low lake levels, arid mudflats, rapid changes in water levels and smoke. Although 203 species have been seen in 2023, which is about average, the total numbers of birds was lower than usual, and migrants did not stay and feed as long as expected.

As a result of low lake levels in April, the number of spring migrating shorebirds was low and brief. Fall migration was better, even though the total number was down. Over this year, 26 species of shorebirds were seen, which is average. There were some rarities: a **Ruff** spent a few days in mid-August feeding near the wharf, only the second time one has been spotted here. Other notables were a **Marbled Godwit** and a **Short-Billed dowitcher**, both seen in the Wharf area in late August.



In May, a **White-faced Ibis** was spotted feeding west of the Wharf, the first sighting ever for here. In recent years there have been several sightings of Ibises in the southern interior. Towards the end of August, a never-before recorded **Long-tailed Jaeger** flew and fed west of the Wharf, along with the **Parasitic Jaeger**, a fairly regular species to be spotted here, and an **Arctic Tern**, only recorded once previously.

Thirty-nine species of waterfowl were seen over the year, about our average, including **White-winged Scoters** and a **Black Scoter** swimming in the middle of the lake. The numbers of nesting waterfowl have been way down, except for **Canada Geese** and **Mallards**.



Although in mid-May just under 300 adult **Western Grebes** were present, at the end of the summer under 20 young birds were counted, a frighteningly low number, perhaps due to nests being washed out by the

sudden lake rise or left high and dry when the water level dropped quickly or because smoky conditions upset the adults. Whatever the reason, it is a cause of concern and will be carefully monitored in future years.

Nine gull species were seen this year, about average. **Ring-billed Gulls** nesting on Christmas Island were successful with 800 nests, each of which contained 1-5 eggs.

American Bald Eagles nesting at West Harbour Village were successful in raising at least one young. Both pairs of **Osprey** nesting in the Wharf area raised two young. Only one family of **Coots** appeared this year, instead of the usual 4-5 families. Numbers of young **Killdeers** and **Spotted Sandpipers** were also down. Another sign of changing climate was the premature arrival of **Tree Swallows** before frosts ended in late March. Because insects were still inactive, these insect eating birds would have been short of food. The **Violet-green** and **Tree Swallows** raised broods in most of the nesting boxes around the Bay. On a building at the end of the Wharf, at least 17 **Cliff Swallows** nested, while over 20 pairs of **Barn Swallows** nested beneath the Wharf. A few **American White Pelicans** feeding in the Bay increased to 55 by late summer. An errant **Snow Goose** spent summer with Canada geese feeding west of the Wharf. Only a few **Swans** appeared in spring and fall, perhaps due to low water and dry conditions that curtailed growth of milfoil, their preferred diet.

Smoke and drought conditions did not affect most of the smaller birds. Fourteen species of **Warblers**, including the **Common Yellow**, **Nashville** and **American Redstart**, were spotted but fewer than usual of the **Tennessee** and **Magnolia Warblers**. The **Yellow-breasted Chat**, a regular in Peter Jannink Nature

Park, probably nested there. While **Robins** and **Blackbirds** were common, only one family of **Orioles** was observed. **Flycatchers** and **Vireos** nested all around the foreshore.

Our birdlife will continue to be affected by increased residential development (habitat destruction) and Climate Change. We have seen some changes already, not so much a decrease in species but in the actual numbers of birds.

Ted Hillary, Shuswap Naturalists



Return of the Beavers

If you've been for a walk along the foreshore in recent weeks, you will have noticed the magical transformation taking place at the beaver pond. In June there were a few subtle signs of activity, not noticeable to the general public. By mid-July it was clear beavers had moved in and intended to stay.

No single species does more for biodiversity than this amazing semi-aquatic mammal. Often described as Nature's engineers, they create wetlands that provide habitat for a variety of animals including muskrats, moose, insects, fish, amphibians, waterfowl and songbirds. These wetlands filter pollutants from water and combat drought, two particularly valuable features in



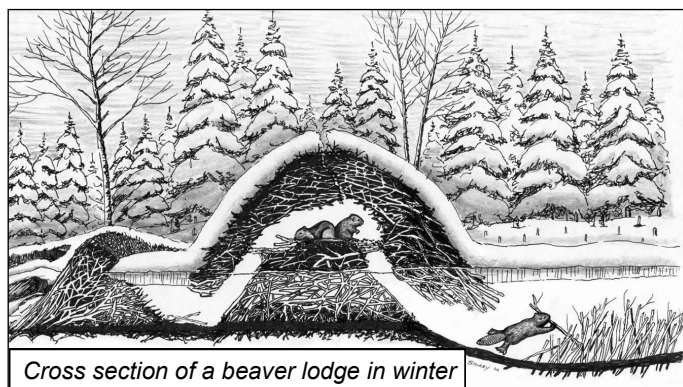
these troubled times. Beaver habitat has even been shown to mitigate flooding by slowing and containing raging water.

Since June, the old lodge has changed a lot. It was dense with vegetation and slowly collapsing but now it's a renovated mud hut with room for both beavers and muskrats. Although the two species are both rodents, they are not closely related. Muskrats can and do build their own homes – called pushups – but they will also tunnel into the wall of a beaver lodge where the two species co-habit quite well.

Since the beavers returned, the water level in the pond has risen a foot or so and there are clear deep pools where overgrown cattails have been eaten and thinned. Mud has been scoured from the pond bottom and from side-channels for use in construction of the lodge and the dam on the northwest side. The result is an increase in water depth and clarity. If the pool isn't deep enough, it will freeze all the way to the bottom in winter, trapping beavers inside the lodge.

Beavers don't hibernate. Their luxurious coat has two layers that keep them insulated in all weather. However, venturing overland across ice and snow is risky which is why they do the bulk of their work during the warmer months. It's safer to perfect the pond and stockpile food when they can do so in or near open water.

These great swimmers are incredibly powerful. A mature adult weighs 20-30 kilograms with some older individuals approaching 40 kilograms. Imagine having the strength to log and relocate a grown tree with nothing more than sharp teeth, bulging masseter muscles and a stout body!



Although they are shy, they will defend their home and their young from predators. There are several documented cases of off-leash dogs pursuing a beaver into the water. The outcome isn't good for either animal but the beaver has the decided advantage.

Beaver kits are born in January and stay with their parents for two years. We're not sure if our new residents will give birth next month but if they do, we can keep an eye out for the young in May or June. Come summer, we may have to remove wire from a few more trees if we want to keep the family around. Such trees will be carefully chosen, with an eye towards benefiting habitat while keeping human safety in mind.

Di Wittner

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, Dennis Lowe, Matthew Pyper

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 cheque or 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 : _____

Please Check

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

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

FOR THE BIRDS

A pink house finch pecks at my window
where I'm trying to type this poem.
"What do you want now?" I moan,
but I well know. I've fed him before
only to have his discards blow
all over my patio.

A mixture of wild bird seed, I vow
to stop buying. Black oil seed
and suet are my favourite picks
for fastidious chickadees
and red-shafted flickers
who are neat.

Now my poem's complete.

Judith Benson, December 2023

Why are dogs not allowed on Christmas Island and the Foreshore any time of the year?

Christmas Island is a unique, thriving eco-system. During winter when things look dormant, it is still not safe for wildlife to have dogs around. If you spend time there and quietly watch, you will discover all sorts of life. The voles and mice are active under the snow, and the resident Northern Harrier (a hawk) and the Northern Shrikes often seek them out. There are also resident Barn Owls and migrating Short-eared Owls that hunt in this area. Deer, coyotes, and racoons also live along the foreshore and on Christmas Island. Members of the local naturalist and birding groups have documented a long list of birds including some rare visitors.

Scientific studies have proven that dogs have a negative and long lasting impact on some wild species. Even days after a dog has passed through an area, wild animals will give it a wide berth due to their keen sense of smell. Ironically, humans do not have the same impact as we are not viewed as predators.

If the water is open, which it sometimes is, you may see a flock of Trumpeter Swans in the shallows near Christmas Island. Waterfowl of every description, Great Blue Herons and Ospreys all use this area to find their food year round. The Pelicans also congregate around Christmas Island when the water is open. Most of these birds are naturally wary of the sight of dogs, which may remind them of one of their main predators, the coyote. Some birds will not be disturbed by the dogs, but the feeding of others will be impacted. The scent of dogs may be enough to chase some species away.

Nature Trust owns the property on the lake side of the Foreshore Trail, including the Boardwalks around the old beaver pond. The Nature Trust of British Columbia is dedicated to conserving BC's biodiversity through securement, restoration and management of ecologically significant lands. They lease the land to the Ministry of Forests, and Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society (**SABNES**) manages the land and is responsible for protecting the wildlife in the Bay.

Dogs may disturb wildlife, even at a distance, so we appreciate dog walkers staying off the ice and foreshore of Salmon Arm Bay year round.

Janet Aitken