

NATURE BAY NEWS

Newsletter of the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society
PO Box 27, Salmon Arm, B.C. Canada V1E 4N2
Email: sabnes@jetstream.net

Fall
2013



SABNES President
Janet Aitken

President's Message

This November marks the 25th Anniversary of the formation of the Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society - S.A.B.N.E.S. I remember, as I'm sure many of you do, the dredging of the marina and the many truckloads of sediment that went into the creation of Christmas Island. Looking down on it from our home in Raven, we were concerned about the 'square-ness' of the island in its barren

state. It was around this time that SABNES was created and was entrusted with the daunting task of protecting the wetlands and wildlife in the Salmon Arm Bay.

Today, 25 years later, it is important to look back and see how Salmon Arm Bay has developed. This is a credit to the founders of S.A.B.N.E.S., and the countless hours of work by dedicated individuals over the years. The volunteer work continues as the structures built in the past are decaying and need replacing. The signs erected a number of years ago need to be replaced. In particular, the nearly submerged sign at the Beaver Pond with the title "The Drier Marsh Habitat". We hope to erect some new signs in the near future.

It is obvious that the citizens of Salmon Arm and area care very much about the Bay and its valuable wetlands.



Relaxing After Working on the Foreshore Trail

The thank yous are hearty and numerous:-

- To the trail stewards who put in hours of volunteer time to maintain the foreshore trails.
- To the **Shuswap Community Foundation** for a \$3,000 grant towards new signage for the trail and wharf.
- To **Steve Genn** and the **Shuswap Rotary** for the materials and the help with the construction of the Christmas Island bridge; **Hugo Rampen** of **Shuswap Materials Placement** for trucking and placing the gravel; **Jim Zapponne** for donating the gravel; **Rona** for supplying the use of a crane and **Hyde Sawmill** for supplying the lumber at a reduced rate.
- To **Stella-Jones** for the donation of the poles for supporting the new Osprey nests.
- To **Frank Piche** for his \$1000 donation for the bridge in honor of Joe Lawrence. We will add a plaque later.
- To the **Prestige Hotel** for their support with brochures, sign design and the donation of the Osprey sign.
- To **Reah Delisle** for her brochure and sign design. Beautiful work!
- To **Karen Bentley** for her donation for a sign about the beaver in memory of her father, **Russell Bentley**.
- To the **City of Salmon Arm** for financial support for our summer student Interpreter at the **Brighthouse Nature Centre**.
- To **Rob Niewenhuizen** and the **CSA** staff for work they do to maintain the Marine Park at the wharf.
- To **Phil MacIntyre-Paul** and the **Trail Alliance** for their support and help with the **Roots and Blues** initiative.
- To **Salmon Arm Observer** staff for their ongoing coverage.
- To **Lorne Reimer** and **Friday AM** for coverage and support.

*A special thanks to the current Directors of **SABNES**. It is such a pleasure to work with you! We all appreciate your special expertise and the many hours of your time that you give.*



Heavy Equipment Being Used to Rebuild the Bridge on Christmas Island

Western Grebe Report for 2013 - *Good News* from Monica and Ed Dahl

On Thursday morning, July 25th, visibility was great and boaters were not unduly disturbing the birds. We counted 212 adult Western Grebes and 191 young. Many parent birds still had young riding on their backs, and some of the young had obviously hatched a few weeks before as they had grown to half the size of an adult. Because families don't always swim together, it is difficult to count exact numbers. We counted what we thought were likely 114 families.

Our count of young was higher than before for any year since records have been kept for the Salmon Arm population. The number of adults was about usual.

The nesting areas were not obvious, possibly because the reed canary grass had been rearranged in 2012 by high water. This year even the Red-winged Blackbirds seemed to have difficulty finding last year's dead cattails to support their early nesting in order to supply habitat for their first clutch of young. Soon thereafter, the cattails shot up to remarkable heights.

Several of the trees around the beaver pond are showing vigorous new growth from the stumps, a natural phenomenon. The beavers won't have to go far this fall to find their winter food supply.



Eager Beavers Work



North American Beaver (Castor Canadensis)



A Canadian Icon

Beavers are most often observed here early in the morning or in the evening before dusk. They are the largest rodents in North America and were nearly made extinct 300 years ago by trappers who sold their pelts to Europeans for making hats. Beavers are superb swimmers and have a large paddle-shaped tail for steering and propulsion in water and for balance on land. They operate like a submarine and can remain under water for as long as 15 minutes.

Beavers have sharp buck teeth which overhang their lips. If they didn't use them to cut and chew wood, they would grow too long. Beavers feed on the leaves, buds and inner bark of growing trees, as well as water lilies, cattails and other aquatic plants.





The Beaver Family

Beavers mate for life. The family has an average of 3 kits, but the number can range from 2 to 8. They are born in May or early June. Offspring are allowed to stay only 2 years in their parents' lodge. The new-born may be tended by their 1 yr old siblings. During their second year the young beavers learn how to repair the lodge and dam and also to find their own food.



The Beaver Lodge

You will find a lodge where there is fresh water and trees which are used for building. Often the lodge forms a dam which provides deeper water for protection from predators such as wolves, coyotes, bears and otters. The beavers enter their lodge through an underwater passage. The feeding area and other dry areas are inside above the waterline. A hole in the top of the lodge admits fresh air. Mud binds the branches together and helps keep the lodge warm in winter. They do not hibernate, and during the fall collect food for the winter months.

Nature's Engineers Respond to Climate Change

Beavers contribute to water conservation. They are known for their expertise and industry in cutting down trees to build and maintain dams and lodges. You see signs of this before you. Many of the felled trees affected are too big for the beavers to drag to the lodge, but nature ensures that willows and other trees will rapidly regenerate and grow. The presence of large numbers of small beaver dams in rivers and wetlands slows the rate of flow during spring runoff and also helps maintain the wetland balance during periods of drought.

Compliments of: Karen Bentley
in memory of her father
Russell Bentley

S.A.B.N.E.S.
Salmon Arm Bay Nature Enhancement Society



One of the new signs to be placed on the trail next Spring



Thanks to a **\$3,000 Grants-in-Aid from the City of Salmon Arm** and from donations by SABNES members, we were able to hire a student for **13 weeks** this summer. **Janell Bawtree** did a fine job of managing the **Brighthouse Nature Centre**. Janell particularly enjoyed engaging with people on the wharf. An estimated **1800** people made contact with the **BNC** over the summer. Thanks also to members and helpers who also volunteered to staff the centre.



Birding in the Salmon Arm Bay in 2013 - Ted Hillary's Highlights

It was another eventful year for birding in the Salmon Arm Bay in 2013. In total there were 196 species reported seen, underlying the importance of this Bay as an important birding area. During fall migration many long distance migrants feed on the mudflats and the foreshore. Because of public attention to foreshore conservation, nesting habitat for birds remains intact.

I consider the prime highlight for 2013 to be the outstanding success of Western Grebes. This year's count of 191 young is the highest number ever recorded, a sure indicator of the health of our bay. In addition, there were three families of Clark's grebes with seven young. This is the only place in B.C. where Clark's grebes nest successfully.

Forty species of waterfowl were recorded in the Bay this year. Rarities include a yellow-billed loon in March, and a Ross's goose in September. We also had up to a dozen American white pelicans visiting over the summer, often close to the wharf, much to the delight of many tourists. Although many of the waterfowl nest along the foreshore, many more are migrants. As an example, with the warmer winters and the absence of ice on the Bay trumpeter swans can usually be seen



feeding on the milfoil as late as January and February.

In late summer and early fall, the Bay is the best

place in the B.C. interior to see shorebirds as they stop over on their long flights to southern climes. This year 26 different species were recorded. Rarities include an Uplands Sandpiper seen on Christmas Island in August and just west of the wharf in September. Another rarity was a juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, seen in September feeding with its close relative the Pectoral Sandpiper, which breeds

in Siberia and winters on the Indian Ocean in Western Australia. Each year we are fortunate to see one or two, usually near the wharf.

This year 10 species of gulls were seen, including a Sabine's and a Franklin's. The Ring-billed Gull colony on Christmas Island was successful again despite the fact that people walked their dogs through the nesting area. Of the 550 nests counted the day before water covered the path, I estimate that at least 100 nests survived the high water. The gulls may be slow learners but many are now smart enough not to build their nests where they are sure to be flooded out !!!

I saw only two common nighthawks, considerably down from what I usually see. This may be because I was always in the wrong place when they showed up, but it may also reflect the continent-wide decline of insect eating birds.

This year, Cliff Swallows did not nest on the buildings at the end of the wharf, probably due to the smell of fresh paint. Making up for this shortage were at

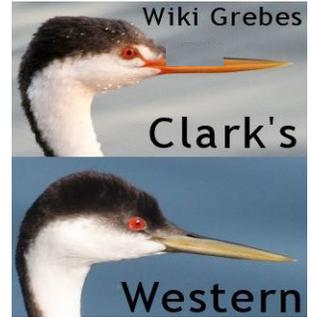


least 10 Barn Swallow nests located under the end of the wharf. Most were used for two broods.

The Eurasian Collared-dove provides a sharp contrast to the decline of insect eating species. This European introduction was first recorded in Florida in 1985. Since then it has colonized the entire continent. It starts nesting in February and may have four broods a year. It is now commonly seen most months of the year along the Bay.

Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds had difficulty finding nesting habitat this year. The cattails and bull rushes they depend upon were flooded out last year and were slow to regenerate this year. Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a constant source of comment from tourists, were especially missed.

Every season makes me realize the wealth of birds in the Salmon Arm Bay area, both resident and migrant. It is always an outing of anticipation, wondering what I will see and hear each time.



Barn Swallows over-winter in Mexico and migrate here via Washington State and the Pacific Flyway. Canadian Bird Breeding Bird Survey data suggests Barn Swallows have experienced a 2.9% annual decline over the past 30 years, a decline that has steepened in the last decade to 7.6% annually. It is now a Blue-listed species

Elected Directors
 Janet Aitken, President; Geoff Benson, Treasurer; Ed Dahl; Hanne MacKay; Janet Aitken; Pamela Dettwiler; Mike Saul; Gary Lomax; Kathy Atkins

Appointed Directors
 Pat Mearns, **Shuswap Naturalist Society** ; Cllr. Ken Jamieson, **CSA**; Elaine Gustafson, **MOE** ; Hank Shelley, **FishNGame** ; Gale-Paule Davison, **DIA**

Non-voting Directors
 Georgia McLeod, Secretary
 Tom Brighthouse, Advisor

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 Gentech Engineering Inc.
 Shuswap Acupuncture and Laser Therapy Clinic
 Terratech Consulting Ltd
 Dr Lyle H Martin

GRANTING AGENCIES
 City of Salmon Arm

Salmon Arm Rotary Club
 Shuswap Community Foundation

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

Membership Form

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



I welcome your comments, ideas, articles, poems and photographs for **your** future newsletters. Please e-mail them to me at sabnes.org@gmail.com, or mail them to the **SABNES** postal address on the back sheet.

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Many thanks,
 Geoff Benson