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# One Hundred Years of Parks

There was some very good news for the users of provincial parks over this spring. Premier Christy Clark announced in April that the fees for parking vehicles in parks, instituted in an ill advised move a few years ago, were being removed in order to encourage equal access to the parks for all users. The premier and her environment / parks minister, Terrance Lake, are to be congratulated for this act of fairness which they revealed would not be very costly as the actual net revenue from parking fees was nowhere near the estimates made when the fees were implemented.

2011

It is important to note that 2011 is the one hundredth anniversary of British Columbia's first provincial park, Strathcona Provincial Park. It would be easy to attribute the reversal of the parking fee policy to a program of celebration for this anniversary were it not for the obvious disregard in which the provincial parks are held by government. The cuts to programs and services that were evident in the parks, of the southern interior over past decade, are in dire need of a policy reversal akin to that of the parking fees, in order to support any notion, of a celebratory nature, concerning the provincial parks jubilee.

It is estimated that for every dollar invested in provincial parks, or forestry campsites for that matter, the return through tourism, festivals and other celebrations, is about ten dollars. From a determinates of health standpoint natural parks, such as we tend to have in British Columbia, contribute to the general feelings of wellness and positive mental health and save health care resources correspondingly. Of course the vegetation of the parks do their part and more, as carbon sinks and water filtration systems. Obviously the parks have intrinsic value but they must be maintained and guarded to preserve the wealth that is inherent within them. Education programs must be present to teach, and review, the importance of the parks, and their flora and fauna, to all of us.

This is the one hundredth anniversary of provincial parks in British Columbia and we have many things to be thankful for, not the least the foresight of some of the citizens that went before us. However we must continue to build our parks system so that it can continue to support the needs of the users, the economic bases that rely on them, their natural environments and the health of current generations and those of the future. These are big expectations and in order to fulfill them there must be an allocation of resources proportioned to the challenge.

## OSPS AGM MARCH 25, 2011 Heritage Trail Update

regretfully could not attend the AGM but I know Bill will suffice in my absence! 2010 & 2011 were exciting years for trail rehabilitation in the Northern Cascades. Here are some of the trail project highlights to date.

#### Hudson Bay Company (1849) Brigade Trail (Peers Creek to Tulameen)

• GPS information on entire section has been entered in the provincial registry and is once again protected under Section 13 of the Heritage Conservation Act and now as well under Section 56 of the Forest Recreation Act. Some sections of the trail were missing in the files. • Peers Creek logging road will be completely deactivated and turned into a self-propelled (non-motorized) trail that will access the trail.

• Peers Creek and Sowaqua Creek camping & parking areas have been constructed at intersections along the trail. Users can now drive to both these locations off the Coquihalla Highway to access different sections of the trail. Over 1000 volunteer hours through Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning are credited for these improvements.

• New and colourful metal kilometer tags now adorn the trail; they are a combination

Please used the enclosed membership form on the back page to help us carry out our mission.

of a HBC flag intertwined with a First Nation bear paw symbol. They start at the Peers Creek trailhead at zero kilometers and work their way east.

• Wooden posts with directional signs have been placed at all intersections. New fog posts have been replaced along the trail where the old fog posts OSPS put up long ago stood. Non-motorized signage at all vehicular access points is also up and so far we have seen very minimal motorized damage. We have made it extremely difficult to access with large boulders and minimal clearing of large diameter windfall close to these access points.

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• A Heritage Context Study and an Archaeological Overview Assessment has been completed on the trail along with a public information meeting held in February 2011.

David Gregory attended this meeting. This was a requirement of the Heritage and Archaeology Branches before a issuing a management agreement for long term maintenance to Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning. This agreement will finally see continued preservation and maintenance on the trail.

#### Owl's Head Trail (part of the original HBC to Otter Lake) Access: 11.5 km on the Blakeburn Forest Service Road

• 6 kilometers of trail were cut out in September of last year thanks to the lady hikers of Tulameen... actually it was their husbands that did the work after the gals came home from hiking it and complained about climbing over the windfall

• Logging to remove the beetle killed pine has taken place along the south end of the trail. Brenda Gould, Archaeologist for the Upper Similkameen Indian Band has supervised the removal and protected the trail portion. Many culturally modified trees were discovered and flagged to only remove the tops, leaving the stems with the blazes standing.

• Last fall I finally got to see the actual "Owl's Head" on bluffs above the trail, something I have been searching for years!

## Collins Gulch (another spur of the HBC to Otter Lake)

Access: Walt Smart's Road or 9.5 km Collins Gulch logging road

• Sad news of Walt Smart's passing in 2010; he assisted Harley and others in locating & preserving these ancient routes.





#### The old Alexandra Bridge

This BC Heritage site will hopefully see restoration in the near future

• 5 km of trail were cut out by the Back Country Horsemen of BC last August on their ride into Princeton's 150th Birthday Celebration.

• Damage to the original trail tread in the area of the Coal Mine is set to be rehabilitated thanks to Brenda Gould of the upper Similkameen Indian Band. She is working on a project that will hopefully see the trail and trailhead area cleaned up.

#### **Dewdney & Hope Pass Trails**

• Work is required on both these routes. Dewdney is in better shape due to the Back Country Horsemen of BC doing annual maintenance. Hope Pass remains closed to horses until dilapidated bridges get replaced due to safety concerns.

• Hope Mountain Centre in conjunction with BC Parks will be leading a hike on August 13th, 2011 to celebrate the Parks 100th and the Dewdney Trail's 150th anniversary.

• A new information kiosk and map were erected at the Dewdney Recreation Site as part of Princeton's 150th birthday celebrations last summer. The site is 6 kilometers east of Princeton on the Old Hedley Road. Across the road there is a short section of original Dewdney Trail with hand built dry rock walls still visible and in good condition.

First Nations/First Brigade Trail -Alexandra Lodge in the Fraser Canyon to Anderson River drainage



The First Nations/First Brigade Trail 12.7 kms of this trail is being rehabilitated in 2011

• I am currently working on this trail with Hope Mountain Centre under funding from New Pathways to Gold Society.

• This trail was used for only 3 brigade trips from 1847-1848.

• When initially assessing the trail it became evident it was much more of a First Nation's trail then a brigade trail. The area along the trail is lined with culturally modified trees and all sorts of traditional use plants. It was a highly valued gathering area for food and materials for the neighboring aboriginal communities.

• With assistance and co-operation from the Archaeology Branch the trail has been finally protected under the Heritage Act. This was a goal of the late Bob Harris of Vancouver, he worked tirelessly to get this trail acknowledged and protected for over thirty years!

• The local First Nations Bands are supporting our efforts to rehabilitate the trail and use it as an interpretive trail that will educate the public on First nation's traditional use of the forests.

• This has been a very educational and insightful project to be involved in. I am looking forward to this spring when I will accompany an archaeologist and traditional use specialist to do an overview and field study along the trail.

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# **Region Addresses Growth**

KRISTI PATTON, PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS, APRIL 15, 2011

big picture approach to planning in the South Okanagan has been adopted by the regional district.

The 30-page Regional Growth Strategy document is in the initial stages of implementation and over the coming months and years the RDOS plans on engaging South Okanagan communities and rural areas to further implement the plan. The long-term planning project deals with growth management issues over a 20-year period.

"The RDOS is committed to the vision and the principles contained in the RGS," said RDOS board chair Dan Ashton. "Monitoring key indicators allows us the measure our progress over the long term."

Working for the past five years in a collaborative process with the public, First Nations, local, regional, provincial and federal governments, The Regional District of South Okanagan has developed the strategy. The RGS examines issues such as air quality, water quality and supply, economic development, housing, transportation, parks and natural areas and infrastructure planning, A progress report on the growth strategy is to be prepared annually, and at least every five years the RDOS is to consider reviewing the RGS for possible amendments.

"I think it is important because it is a guidance document for the future," said Ashton. "I think it is important that boards in the future dust off that document and have a look as things change."

The growth strategy expresses a vision for the South Okanagan that is rooted in sustainability defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The document outlines current trends in the RDOS that are showing an increasing number of residents settling outside of urban areas. The document projects population growth in 2012 to be 90,640 people, jumping to 108,266 people by 2031. This gives more reason to why the strategy was created to protect the unique qualities of the South Okanagan.

Ashton said more and more regional districts are ending up with regional growth strategies, it is not a requirement but he said it is strongly recommended by the province.

The Regional Snapshot, Volume 1, 2008/2009, is now complete and ready for distribution. The Snapshot forms one part of the ongoing monitoring required as part of implementing RGS. The document is available on the RDOS website (www.rdos.bc.ca) and hard copies are available at the RDOS Penticton office.

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• Re-opening of this 12.7 kilometer trail and campsite will hopefully take place in the fall of 2011

#### Alexandra Bridge Provincial Park and sections of the Old Cariboo Wagon Road Fraser Canyon

• New Pathways to Gold Society is funding many heritage projects along the Fraser River corridor. They are promoting the Gold Rush trails with BC150 funds awarded in 2008.

• One project intends to see the historic Alexandra Bridge restored and connecting segments of the Cariboo Wagon Trail & Road rehabilitated.

• I am currently involved in the trail enhancement and will report on any new developments once the project is complete.

#### In closing...

Following the footsteps of the late Harley

Hatfield and other members of the OSPS has been challenging but very rewarding. I constantly read through files that are filled with letters, maps and reports from your organization that were written by members who dedicated much of their lives to the location and preservation of these historical routes. Our generation can never thank you enough.

Recently, I have been in contact with people in the Chilcotin who are working on re-establishing some heritage trails in their area. I am offering any assistance I can to them and looks like I might get the opportunity to be involved this summer.

My goal for the years ahead is to have all these as well many other historically significant trails in the province rehabilitated and infrastructure replaced by 2017. This will coincide with the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada. It seems like a long time away but it has taken three year just to accomplish improvements to the HBC (1849) Trail. So far, I have collected and accumulated most of the GPS and historical data needed to write proposals to both Federal and Provincial Government programs. The work done in the past by the OSPS and OHS has assisted greatly with this and with your continued support and that of many new volunteers, along with all the great folks at Hope Mountain Centre and other organizations; I truly believe this goal is attainable.

Next time you are through Princeton, stop by and check out our heritage map mural on the side of the Legion downtown. It is one of our 150th anniversary legacy projects from last summer.

If you have seen Jeff & Sue's (or should this time I say Jeff & Logan's) latest file "The Last Grizzlies of Paradise Valley" you will most surely want to visit our beautiful little town.

Happy trails, Kelley Cook

# off-road vehicles in the okanagan A Complex Equation

PENTICTON HERALD - FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2011

he recent charge of a Kaleden man for mud bogging in Oliver serves as a reminder that finding a solution to off-road vehicle (or ORV) use in the Okanagan is a complex equation.

ORVs include mountain bikes, off-road motorbikes, ATVs and 4X4s.

The man was charged under forestry laws that make it illegal to damage Crown land ecosystems. If charged individuals can be subject to fines ranging up to \$100,000, up to one year in jail, or both. In this case, the man admitted his wrongdoing and accepted the \$575.00 ticket.

Regular followers of this column are aware that there are many sensitive ecosystems in the Okanagan, which include but are not limited to, alpine, grasslands, and wetlands and waterways.

Our hot, dry climate makes it tough for plants to grow over even the slightest tire marks.

Off-roading in wetlands changes the soil structure by removing air and nutrients needed for plant growth. The activity can also kill fish, birds and amphibians. The damaged ecosystems may affect many generation of wildlife because of lack of clean water and damage to their habitat.

If you see someone damaging ecosystems on Crown land, there's no need to confront them.

You can act by getting their licence and reporting them on the Report a Poacher or Polluter (R.A.P.P.) hotline 1-877-952-7277.

But really, no one who likes the outdoors willingly wants to damage the wilderness they enjoy.

Many ORV clubs encourage and train their members to ride in environmentally responsible ways. Yet as gentle as we think we are riding, we are still damaging many Okanagan ecosystems. So it is important that we carefully select where we ride.

Many times mountain bikes and motorbikes are attracted to the challenge or riding game trails.

Next ATVs use and widen the bike trails. Then 4X4s use and widen the ATV trails. Within a few years a narrow game trail can become a major thoroughfare. These trails may be unstable and at risk of erosion and slope failure.

In next week's column, I'll add provincial government policy and legislation, and multiple stakeholder needs to the equation. I'll also discuss the pros and cons of a model that is being showcased as a possible solution.

Help local endangered species: If you have ever wanted to help local endangered species, now is your chance!

Join conservation biologist Michael Bezener and other friends of Okanagan wildlife to help vital habitat in our communities for local species including the endangered Western Screech-Owl and Yellow-breasted Chat.

Learn what these species at-risk need to survive and thrive, and plant native trees and shrubs to restore their stream-side habitats.

For details contact Michael Bezener (250-492-4422 or amb.aic@telus.net)

Chandra Wong works for OSCA, the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, one of 50 organizations in the South Okanagan Similkameen conservation Program.

## Walkway along lake proposed

BY JOHN ARENDT Summerland Review – March 3, 2011

walkway connecting the lakefront area of Summerland with Trout Creek has the support of Mayor Janice Perrino – if such a project can be done without taxpayer dollars.

Perrino said the preliminary cost of getting a path in place along the lake would be around \$800,000.

"It's well worth pursuing at this point," she said.

The proposed trail would run parallel to Highway 97.

On the lake side of the highway, there is a gravel bed which could accommodate such a trail, although work would be needed to bring it up to the condition required.

For this year, Perrino would like to see the mapping for this project completed.

While this cost is much less than other municipal projects in recent years, Perrino said she would like to see the work done with grant funding and donations.

"It's just that our funds are so tight," she said.

Recent municipal projects include the Rosedale Avenue and Prairie Valley Road upgrade at a cost of \$5 million, the upcoming police detachment at a cost of \$19 million and the expansion of Thirsk Lake, with improvements to the dam, at a cost of \$10 million.

While those projects have all received some funding from other levels of government, the municipality has had to pay a portion of the costs each time.

# Projects tap into water board funding

PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS STAFF, APRIL 15, 2011

he Okanagan Basin Water Board has directed funding to a number of projects in the South Okanagan.

There was \$300,000 available in the grant program that was split between the three Okanagan regional districts, based on their contributions to the program. Six projects were funded in the South Okanagan worth a total of \$65,700. OBWB grant administrator Melissa Tesche said the projects focus in a valley-wide benefit, promote collaboration and share best practices. There were a total of 35 local applications seeking a total amount of \$703,331.

The Town of Osoyoos was awarded funds to map and inventory the shoreline of Osoyoos Lake and develop an aquatic habitat listing that will be included as part of an Okanaganwide mapping network.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance will identify water licenses with intakes on the Okanagan Rover and connecting oxbows to determine which intakes would be negatively impacted if mid-summer flows were reduced, which would aid with water management for sockeye.

The Regional District Okanagan Similkameen is hiring a summer student to work in Naramata to promote water conservation methods and install cattle fencing at Hart's Pond.

A park beautification and water conservation project will take place in Okanagan Falls to convert flower beds and gardens to xeriscape demonstration gardens.

Summerland will be doing an inventory and map unconfirmed watercourses within Summerland, which are currently not included in the district's watercourse development permit area.

### Wildfire Tree Stewardship Program Reaches New Heights in the Okanagan-Similkameen

by Lisa Scott & Allison Black – BCNature Spring 2011

avity nesting birds have lots to tweet about in the Okanagan-Similkameen. The loss of suitable habitat for nesting and foraging, including the lack of wildlife trees, presents a serious threat to many species. Fortunately, the Wildlife Tree Stewardship (WiTS) Program for the Okanagan-Similkameen has been able to continue for a fourth season thanks to the dedication of many volunteer monitors and also due to financial support from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk.

The WiTS Program in the Okanagan-Similkameen focuses on cavity nesting species at risk. Trained volunteers monitor breeding areas and record nesting activity. Most of the monitors are affiliated with one of four naturalists' clubs: South Okanagan Naturalist club, Oliver-Osoyoos Naturalists, Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists and the Central Okanagan Naturalist Club.

For season 2011, monitoring will hopefully expand to the Vernon area and involve the North Okanagan Naturalists Club.

In 2010, we focused on Lewis' Woodpeckers, with the team surveying 113 nest trees throughout the two valleys. Most of the trees were located along the Similkameen River between Hedley and Keremeos. Additional trees located in the Anarchist Mountain, West Chopaka and Vaseux Lake areas. Forty-one percent of the trees were re-occupied, while 27 percent had visual sightings of birds in the area but entrance into a cavity was not observed. Four of the nests were re-occupied by nest competitors such as American Kestrels and European Starlings. Approximately 51% of the nest trees were ponderosa pine, while 28% were black cottonwood. Douglar fir, waterbirch and utility poles also provided nest sites. One nesting tree had blown over and three had been cut down.

This field season, WiTS did not survey Williamson's Sapsucker as extensively as 2009 due to the fact that the Ministry of Environment commissioned a survey completed by an independent ecological consulting company. Due to the risk of confounding evidence or of harassing the birds by oversampling, WiTS only looked at the re-occupancy of nest sites in a benchmark area above Okanagan Falls. Local researcher and WiTS volunteer Les Gyug, found two re-occupied nests, one new nest tree and two incidental bird sightings.

The surveys for Western Screech-Owl proved challenging due to wetter and stormier conditions than in previous years. A late summer survey in the Central Okanagan proved very successful with confirmation of at least two owls in a regional park that only had historical sightings. WiTS intends to conduct additional screech-owl surveys during the breeding season in 2011.

The past year has been very exciting with the discovery of a pair of Whiteheaded woodpeckers in the McCuddy Creek area. A WiTS volunteer regularly surveyed the Crown lands in the area and sighted a WHWO on three occasions in March. WiTS is actively working with the private landowners in this area, and hopes to gain important information on this elusive species in the coming year.

In addition to field monitoring, WiTS conducts school and community outreach programs that highlight the importance of wildlife trees. These events provide an opportunity to educate people and the role of wildlife trees and the various species that depend on these habitat features, as well as the importance of wildlife tree conservation.

WiTS could not have accomplished all the surveying this year without the contributions of many private landowners and the dedication of numerous volunteers. We look forward to working with our many volunteer monitors in the coming years, and hope to see some new faces in 2011!

To join this exciting team or to learn more about WiTS, check our our website: www. wildlifetree.org or contact Lisa Scott, WiTS Regional Coordinator, at witsos@shaw.ca or 250.404.0115.

# Myth of Abundance

TONI BOOT - WATER WISDOM - PENTICTON HERALD, APRIL 5, 2011

ast weekend I previewed a DVD, directed by Canadian Liz Marshall, that follows the work of Maude Barlow. This award-winning documentary, "Water on the Table," examines the question: should clean, potable water be declared a human right, or should it be a marketable commodity like lumber, grain or oil?

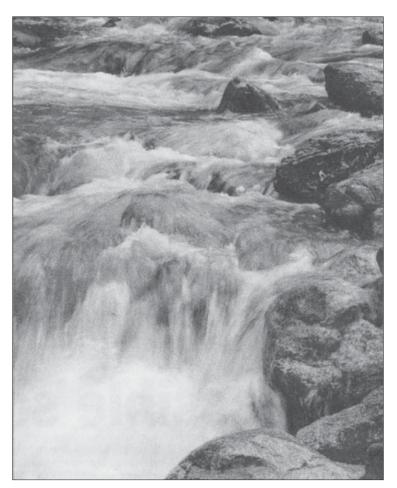
A number of people, both Canadians and Americans, are interviewed at various times throughout the documentary: some with views similar to Ms. Barlow's, others with opposing thoughts.

At one point during the DVD, Ms. Barlowstates there is a "Myth of Abundance" when it comes to Canadian water resources. In other words people, including Canadian (perhaps especially Canadians), believe we have an abundant supply of clean water. We don't.

In 2006, a number of groups collaborated and produced a poster called "Okanagan Basin Waterscape." The poster, available through the Geological Survey of Canada (Natural Resources Canada), is subtitled: "Water - the myth of abundance." Sound familiar?

The Okanagan basin Waterscape poster has 'an abundance' of good information specifically directed to the Okanagan Valley. It's not just human water needs, conveyed primarily by Okanagan municipalities, to take into account when considering the need for water.

Aquatic life and wildlife need healthy steams. Recreation and industry need water. The Okanagan produces 25 per cent of the total value of British Columbia's agricultural products, so those sector needs its share of water



as well.

With the yearly watering restrictions placed on Okanagan residents each year, we do have enough water resources to meet the many demands. Today. What about 10 or 15 years from now?

While the net amount of water remains relatively constant, demands on the resource are increasing. The two principle areas of rising demand lie in population growth and climate change.

According to Collier International's report "Economic Overview and Population Stats," average population growth of just over 1.6 per cent over each of the next 15 years is forecasted for Kelowna. If this growth means additional 'sprawl' with lots of roofs and roads that direct runoff flows directly to sewers and then into streams, population growth exacerbates the issue.

However, if the development is compact and runoff is captured and filtered naturally before it flows into groundwater, population growth can be sustained.

Climate change affect water demand more subtly. Longer, warmer and drier summers increase outdoor water demand and more water evaporates from Okanagan Lake; a longer growing season leads to an increased demand for irrigation and our forests dry out more quickly, increasing the potential for forest fires.

Fortunately, Okanagan residents have two ways to counter the inevitability of population growth and climate change. One, capture rainwater and allow it to slowly infiltrate the soil, and

two, remove or reduce lawn areas and select low-water plants for the landscape.

Both of these solutions are 'doable' and they both dramatically reduce the amount of water use out-of-doors.

For our sake and for the sake of future generations, I encourage you to think seriously about how you can reduce your outdoor water use.

Toni Boot is the founder and owner of Grasslands Nursery in Summerland, a nursery specializing in sustainable gardening. Comments and suggestions for future Water Wisdom columns may be directed to her at grassnursery@telus.net or through www.glasslandsnursery.ca

### Grants awarded for water quality improvement

Penticton Herald Staff, April 18, 2011

he Town of Osoyoos has received more than \$27,000 for Osoyoos Lake and the Aquatic Habitat project as part of the \$300,000 associated with the Okanagan Basic Water Board's 2011 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant program.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance Fisheries was given \$12,000 for a feasibility study of the Okanagan River Water Intake, the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) received \$10,000 funding towards a water ambassador, Okanagan Falls Parks/Rec was given \$8,500 for park beautification and water conservation, the District of Summerland received \$4,000 for stream assessment and Hart's Pond in the RDOS received \$3,750 for fencing

# **Evidence of Wildlife**

spring or summer hike or stroll in anyone of the parks of the Okanagan Similkameen will bring you into contact with wildlife of some description. Often it is the song, chirp or cry of a bird, an insect or a small mammal. However, it is just as often the evidence that the fauna of the area have left behind that alerts us to their presence.

On a recent trek along the path beside Okanagan River between Oliver and Osoyoos, we spent a couple of hours marvelling at the number of creatures that we could detect. While some ducks and geese were present on the water, there was evidence of an array of other animals in the area as well. Bird and coyote tracks could be located in the dried mud beside the trail, numerous and various birds' nests were positioned in surrounding trees, burrows and holes abounded and there was even an example each of anthills and beaver dams.

In other parks, we have recently come across a very large wasps' nest dangling from a limb very near to the top of a large willow, a very diverse array of the scat of mammals and birds and the lairs of muskrats and marmots. Large piles of refuse, remaining from deconstructed pine cones and located on a stump, have been the clues to expect the scolding chatter of the ubiquitous chipmunk in almost any park in our region, save the very dry desert locations. Of particular delight is the rustling of leaves and branches, along the edges of marshy areas, as the quail flocks retreat to a safer locale as the dusk descends and the frogs begin their chorus.

Of course as the summer progresses some of the characteristics of our parks are altered and trails that once were muddy enough to preserve animal tracks become sunning areas for snakes. Insects that aid in the pollination of the flora retreat to cooler shady locations and the level of the creeks and waterways drops forcing some birds, mammals and reptiles to adapt their daily routines.

Enjoy our parks and have a very good time when visiting, but remember that you are also travelling through the home of other creatures. Whether large or tiny, predator or prey, the wildlife of our parks are implicit in what they are. In parks of all descriptions, from the largest multi-hectare National Park that we soon hope to enjoy to the fringe of marsh along the fences at the local recreation field, animals and birds find a way to exist. We need to appreciate the role that they play in making the ecology of our parks work and the right that they have to live there, let alone add to the enjoyment of the parks for us and our families.











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www.OkanaganSimilkameenParksSociety.ca

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**OSPS Newsletter**