

# Nicola Naturalist Society

## Newsletter No. 3 July 2011

Our quarterly bulletins (spring, summer, fall and winter) feature nature news, society events and items of interest for the Merritt area.

**PLEASE CONTRIBUTE** – the newsletter is open to all members to contribute short articles, photos, artwork, book reviews, etc. We are also looking for material for our website (see next paragraph). See page 3 for contact information.

### NNS website up and running

The Nicola Naturalist Society website is now fully functional. Check it out at:

<http://www.nicolanaturalists.ca/>

There are links to upcoming meetings and events, club projects, membership information and more. We regularly post photos of local wildlife, flora, landscapes and other nature topics submitted by members.

### Logo contest – **Winner !**

We had 10 entries for our logo contest and the NNS directors were aided by local graphic artist Doug Strand in selecting a winner – all logos were judged anonymously.

NNS member and artist Debbie Mowat is the winner of our logo contest. Unfortunately we can't yet reveal the winning logo because Debbie is making some final adjustments to it before we start using it. Debbie wins a year's free membership to the NNS and a nature book – to be awarded at our AGM in October.

Congratulations Debbie! And thanks to all who submitted entries.

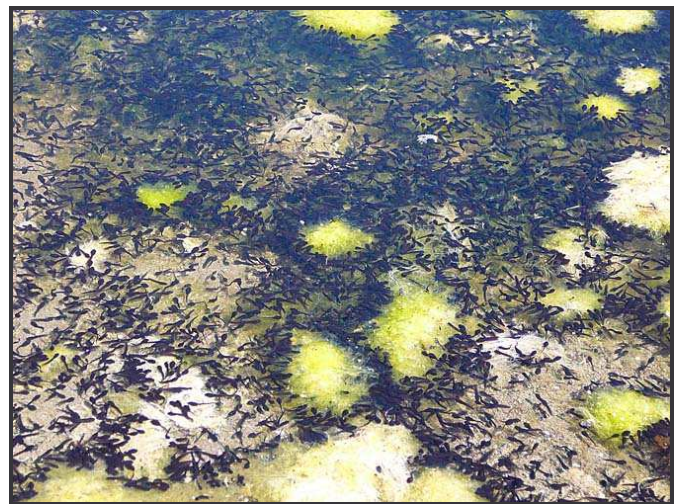
### A great summer of frogging

Our ambitious amphibian monitoring project is fully underway. Our collaborators from Biolinx Environmental Research Ltd. in Victoria have made three trips to Merritt to run a training workshop, train volunteers in the field and start reconnaissance and monitoring. About 20 volunteers from the NNS signed

up to participate and have been helping with all phases of the project.

We've found and are tracking breeding populations of four species of frogs (Western Toad, Pacific Chorus Frogs – formerly known as tree frogs, Columbia Spotted Frog and the rare Great Basin Spadefoot) as well as the Long-toed Salamander.

How this for a breeding bonanza!



A swarm of Western Toad tadpoles in one of the Kane Valley lakes.  
Photo: Christian Engelstoft.

During the late summer you can still contribute to the amphibian project – we are really keen to know where and when the swarms of toadlets leave the lakes in the Merritt area to become land dwellers. They do this *en mass* with hundreds or thousands emerging from the lakes at the same time. If you see or know of such an event please report it as soon as you can to the frogging e-mail address: [nicola.amphibians@gmail.com](mailto:nicola.amphibians@gmail.com)

There is a lot more information on the amphibian monitoring and great photos on the NNS website. Go to <http://www.nicolanaturalists.ca/> and click on Projects. Scroll down to see links to new and previous postings and photo pages.

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## Snake attack video!

While monitoring amphibians on one of their visits to our area, Biolinx biologists Lennart Sopuck and Christian Engelstoft came across this Western Garter Snake swimming among the swarms of Western Toad tadpoles. They managed to get some dramatic video of the snake attacking the tadpoles. You can view the video on our website at the latest amphibian posting: [www.nicolanaturalists.ca/2011/08/01/frog-monitoring-adventures-summer-2011/](http://www.nicolanaturalists.ca/2011/08/01/frog-monitoring-adventures-summer-2011/)



Western Garter Snake. Photo: Lennart Sopuck

## Help with species identification

There are many excellent field guides available for BC's flora and fauna, but the web also offers lots of identification and distribution information. Two sites run by the University of British Columbia provide good information on the species, identification and provincial distribution of plants and animals in BC. The sites also feature lots of photos and videos and you can contribute to this knowledge base by submitting photos and location details of wildlife and wild plants.

Here is the link to E-Fauna BC  
<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/efauna/>

Here is the link to E-Flora BC  
<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/eflora/index.shtml>

## Corvid casualty

Photos and text: Carol and Jack Madryga

On 16 June we stopped to get a coffee at McDonald's on our way out camping and saw this young raven with a severely deformed beak sitting on a fence post. We sent the photos to Paul Williams the animal care

supervisor at BC Wildlife Park outside Kamloops. Here is what he had to say about the young raven.

"The beak could have been damaged in an accident. When they are young the bill can be bent in half and creased if enough force is applied. This could have weakened the beak and made it more susceptible to further damage and breakage.

However if you look at the top picture and at the bird's left leg you can see a growth just above the foot. This may be a simple abscess from a wound of some kind but it looks more like avian pox to me. Avian pox is a viral infection that shows up in the form of large crusty wart like growths. This may have affected the bill also. There is no cure and it may just run its course and leave the bird or it may get worse.

Who knows how long he will survive with half a beak, poor guy."



If anyone in Merritt has seen this unfortunate bird or knows of its fate, please notify the NNS.

## Upcoming Events

Our monthly evening meetings are held at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) on Belshaw Rd, Merritt. Field outings are for members only (family membership includes dependent children). Guests of members can purchase special membership for a day to cover insurance.

### Thursday 20 October, 7 PM at NVIT: AGM and members nature photo night

This is our annual general meeting – required under the Societies Act. We will be electing or re-electing directors for the society. If you have the slightest inclination to be a director and contribute to running the society, please do! Contact one of the current directors – see the next column.

We will keep the business portion of the evening short and leave plenty of time for a members' photo show. Many of you have taken some interesting photos over the summer and we'd love to see them. National Geographic quality is not required – some of the most interesting pictures are taken with simple point-and-shoot cameras. Please send digital photos as e-mail attachments to Alan Burger and he will put them together for the show.



A male White-tailed Deer with budding antlers encountered in mid-June near the Boss & Davis lakes. Photo: Alan Burger

### Full fall and winter evening program planned

We are planning talks and events every month from October to May and have some great speakers lined up. Details will be sent out as we finalize the program.

### Interested in running a field outing this summer or fall?

Summer is not yet over and fall is also a great time for nature outings. If you could organize a simple outing in our area please contact one of the NNS directors.

### Thursday September 29 - Sunday 2 October: BC Nature Fall General Meeting in Tsawwassen - Nature on the Move ~ Fall Migration through the Delta. Hosted by the Delta Naturalists' Society.

NNS members are encouraged to attend this event which features lectures, field outings, photographic presentations and social events. It's a lot of fun and a good way to meet other naturalists and get to know BC's nature. For details visit [www.bcnature.ca](http://www.bcnature.ca) and click on Conferences and Field Camps.

The Tsawwassen area in early fall is one of the best places to experience the migratory movements of big flocks of shorebirds and arrival of wintering waterfowl. Take your binos and scopes.

#### Nicola Naturalist Society Contacts

President: Alan Burger  
 Vice-President & Secretary: Jack Madryga  
 Treasurer: Carol Madryga  
 Directors: Glen Carlson and Chris Lepsoe  
 Membership: Liis Jeffries  
 Amphibian monitoring project: Andrea Lawrence

**Our e-mail address:** [nicolanaturalists@gmail.com](mailto:nicolanaturalists@gmail.com)

**Mailing address:** Nicola Naturalist Society, c/o 2708 Grandview Heights Rd. Merritt, BC V1K 1R1.

#### Special thanks to:

NVIT for the use of their excellent lecture theatre and classrooms.  
 Interior Savings Credit Union (Merritt Branch) for providing a *community builders* savings account.  
 Newsletter contributors : Alan Burger; Christian Engelstoft; Liis Jeffries; Andrea Lawrence; Carol Madryga; Jack Madryga; Kristiina Ovaska; Lennart Sopuck.

#### Send newsletter contributions to:

Alan Burger – [aburger@uvic.ca](mailto:aburger@uvic.ca) or to the NNS contacts above.

## Feature Species

Each newsletter features one or more local wildlife or wildflower species. Please contribute photos and text!

### Saskatoon

(*Amelanchier alnifolia*)

by Liis Jeffries



Saskatoon flowers and berries  
(photos: Adolf Ceska; Saskatoon Berry Council)

Saskatoons, also known as serviceberries or juneberries, are 1 to 6 metre tall berry-producing shrubs growing widely across North America. They can be found throughout Canada, as far north as Alaska and as far south as New Mexico. Saskatoons are members of the Rose family, the berries are similar to those of the Mountain Ash, also a member of the Rose family.

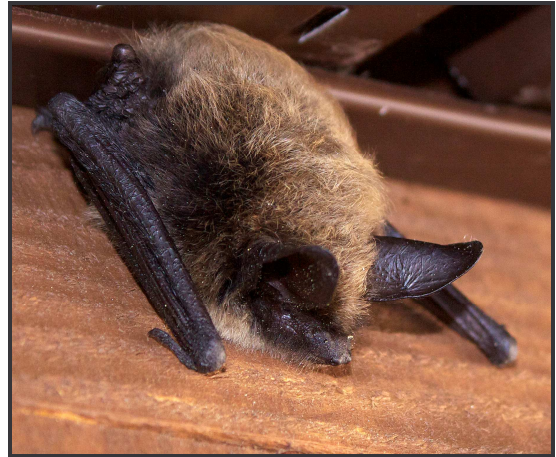
Saskatoons grow under a wide range of conditions but prefer the sunny, drier sites at low to mid elevations that are typical of grasslands or Ponderosa Pine forests. In British Columbia, they grow particularly well in the Interior. The shrubs bloom in April/May putting on a delightful show of long-petaled white flowers. The purple, seedy fruits ripen from July to August. The juiciness of the fruit depends on variety. In the autumn, the round to oval toothed leaves take on red and orange hues that brighten up the landscape.

Taxonomists recognize three subspecies but Interior First Nations distinguish at least six varieties based on blooming time, growth form and fruit quality. The wood of this shrub was also used by the First Nations for making arrows and digging sticks because it is very hard-grained, straight and tough. Among central and southern First Nations in BC, the berries were and are an important part of the diet. Large quantities were dried for winter use and were a major ingredient of pemmican. Today, they are preserved by freezing or canning.

There are also cultivated varieties available. Several have been developed for home garden and commercial production on the Prairies. Saskatoons have been shown to be a rich source of protein, minerals and vitamins. The berries are eaten by several chipmunks, bears and several species of birds, for example Cedar Waxwings. The stems and buds provide winter browse for ungulates.

### Western Long-eared Myotis

(*Myotis evotis*) text & photo: Alan Burger



This tiny bat appeared under the eaves of my garage on Kane Valley Road this month. Myotis (mouse-eared) bats are the most common bats in BC. Nine species of Myotis species occur in the province and most of them are notoriously difficult to identify. Three species of Myotis in BC have these ultra-large ears but this species is most likely to occur in our area (Keen's Long-eared Myotis is found on the coast and Northern Long-eared Myotis further north and east). Apart from the long ears, the brown fur and dark shoulder patch also help with identification.

This species is fairly widespread and common in the southern half of BC, living in a range of habitats from dry Ponderosa Pine forests and grasslands to moist coastal and montane forests. Like most small bats, flying insects, especially moths, are their main prey (they should be finding plenty of mosquitoes this summer!). This species also gleans insects and spiders off vegetation, which might give it a greater range of foraging opportunities and contribute to its success and wide habitat range. Like most bats in our area this species seems to occur only in summer, migrating south before winter. Maternal colonies usually involve up to 30 bats and can be found in various cavities, hollow trees and old buildings. During the day these bats roost in some readily available shelter, like my garage.

Very little is known about this species and further sightings and photos would be useful to record.

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