



STEWARDSHIP NEWS



Volume 17, Issue 1

Fall/Winter 2011

We're back! After a brief hiatus, the SOS Stewardship Program is back in business. We will welcome some new faces come January to the SOS Stewardship Team as Paula is busy being a mom to her beautiful daughter and Bianka has moved onto other ventures. If you have any questions or require assistance, please feel free to email Alyson at askinner@conservancy.bc.ca or give her a call at 250-809-8802. I hope you enjoy this issue of the SOS Stewardship News and look forward to working with you in the New Year.

New Years Resolutions for Wildlife

By Lisa Scott

The approaching New Year is a time to reflect on the changes we want (or need) to make and resolve to follow through on those changes. What if our local wildlife could submit resolutions on our behalf? Their list might read something like this:

Dear Okanagan-Similkameen residents,

Please consider adopting at least one of the following actions in 2012 to help ensure our future:

1. Learn which species are "at risk" in the Okanagan-Similkameen at the website: www.speciesatrisk.bc.ca
2. Create habitat for wildlife on your property. Plant a wildflower garden with native forbs, shrubs and trees; maintain brush piles; or participate in a local habitat restoration project. Speak to someone at a local native plant nursery or refer to www.naturescapebc.ca for ideas.
3. Learn about invasive plants and take action to limit their spread. For more information go to: www.sosips.ca
4. Leave dead or dying trees standing on your property, when it is safe to do so. This will provide food and shelter for a range of species from woodpeckers to owls and flying squirrels. Learn more through the Wildlife Tree Stewardship (WITS) program at www.wildlifetree.ca
5. Install nest boxes which can provide temporary nesting and roosting sites for cavity nesting birds or install a bat box for natural insect control. Speak with a local naturalist or biologist to decide what would be most suitable for your property.
6. Reduce energy use at home, at work and in your vehicles. This will help protect air quality for all of us. As an added bonus, you'll save money.
7. Watch out for wildlife on roads and waterways. If safe to do so, please move a turtle off the road and try to place it in the direction it was traveling.
8. Purchase paper products that are 100 per cent post consumer recycled content to help save our forests.
9. Keep your cat indoors especially when birds are nesting.

10. Consider making a donation to charitable organization that helps protect wildlife or their habitat.

Thanks, from your feathered, furred and finned friends!



Photo: Jared Hobbs

White-headed Woodpeckers need dead or dying trees for food and shelter.

Make a Resolution to Become a Wildlife Habitat Steward!

By Alyson Skinner

The SOS Stewardship Program recognizes private landowners that are making efforts to be responsible stewards of their land. Likely, you are already doing things on your property which are benefiting wildlife and species at risk.

We are encouraging landowners with wildlife habitat to make this year's New Years Resolution to become an official 'Wildlife Habitat Steward'. Examples of wildlife habitat are grasslands (with or without sagebrush or antelope brush), wetlands, water bodies with riparian areas, rocky bluffs, and open forests.

Becoming a Wildlife Habitat Steward is simple! It involves entering into a voluntary Stewardship Agreement with the SOS Stewardship Program. This agreement specifies the area on

the property that is being managed for the benefit of wildlife and how it is being stewarded.

In recognition, the landowner receives a 'Wildlife Habitat Steward' gate or entrance sign, and is promoted as being one of our partners. Stewards also receive extra assistance with wildlife surveys, habitat assessments, and wildlife enhancement projects.

To get more information, please call Alyson Skinner at 250-809-8802 or contact her by email at askinner@conservancy.bc.ca.



One third of the land and vital wildlife habitat in the South Okanagan-Similkameen area is privately owned. Landowners can make a difference.... become a Wildlife Habitat Steward!

Hung up on Bats!

By Margaret Holm

Fourteen species of bats live in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys out of eighteen species that occur in Canada. The diversity of bats here is due to the variety of habitats we have from rocky bluffs, to forests, lakes and grasslands. Each species has its favourite habitat and diet. The Pallid Bat hunts over sage and antelope-brush grasslands and the vineyards that have replaced this habitat. They feed on larger insects on the ground such as grasshoppers, June beetles, and even scorpions.

The Big Brown bat forages over forests, lakes and urban areas for moths, termites and flies, while the Little Brown Bat chases tiny midges and moths. Bats play a valuable role in controlling insects, including many agricultural pests. Some species glean insects off foliage while most catch insects in mid-air.

Several species of bats in the Okanagan are considered “at risk” because of their small populations. Finding roosting habitat and sites for maternal colonies are the factors that limit bat populations. Females roost in maternal colonies where they give birth to one young and feed them milk for a few weeks before the young learn to fly and feed on their own. Male bats roost alone or in small groups in rock crevices, trees or under eaves and other man-made structures. Some bats take a break to rest and digest their food at night and may visit a night roost for a short nap.

Winter is a good time to make repairs to houses and sheds if you want to prevent bats from getting into structures. Bats have gone to their winter quarters in caves and old mine shafts while other have migrated to warmer zones. If you are keeping bats out of places they used in the summer, please consider putting up a bat box to replace the habitat they have lost.



Photo: Ian Routley

Townsend's Big-eared bat.

Destroying a maternal colony can be a disaster to a local bat population so anyone who thinks they might be home to a larger colony should contact Aaron Reid at the Ministry of Environment aaron.reid@gov.bc.ca to get advice. Bats are protected by the BC Provincial Wildlife Act. For more information on building and locating bat boxes go to the Bat Conservation International web site www.batcon.org and click the bat house link or sign up for a March 31 bat box workshop at the Osoyoos Desert Centre.

Riparian Restoration

By Margaret Holm



Photo: TNT Staff

Riparian planting Event with Oliver Scout Troop and Nature Trust of British Columbia at the Ok Falls Biodiversity Ranch-Spring 2011

Riparian areas are those landscapes located next to a body of water or wetland. They are recognized as the most biologically diverse and productive of all temperate, terrestrial ecosystems. In the South Okanagan-Similkameen, most of the historic riparian vegetation has been lost to development or cultivation (estimated at 87% of riparian habitat lost), and the remainder is often degraded due to agricultural activities. These riparian areas are home to many Species at Risk (SAR), including

the Yellow-Breasted Chat, Western Screech Owl, and Tiger Salamander.

The primary recovery objective for restoring viable populations of Yellow-breasted Chats, Western Screech-owls, and Tiger Salamanders is the protection of known nesting/breeding habitat and recovery of riparian habitats that have been lost and degraded through human activity. Most of the recovery habitat lies in the valley bottom and is privately held or occurs on Reserves.

The Habitat Stewardship Program has been funding a Riparian Restoration Project in the South Okanagan -Similkameen for 10 years (eleventh year in progress), administered by The Nature Trust of British Columbia. This project provides the incentive for landowners to physically protect riparian areas on their lands, which will provide recovery habitat for these three focus species, in addition to many others.

To date, this project has been extremely successful. Over 416 hectares of critical riparian habitat has been protected by 57 km of fencing, at 52 project sites. For more information regarding Riparian Restoration Projects please contact The Nature Trust of British Columbia at 250-498-5474. Or visit www.naturetrust.bc.ca to find out more information about the Nature Trust of BC in your area.

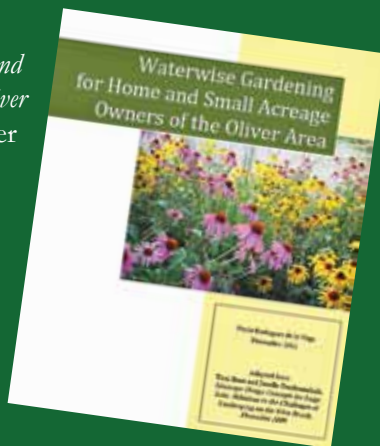
Waterwise Gardening Booklet Now Available for Free Download!

Waterwise Gardening for Home and Small Acreage Owners of the Oliver Area by ecologist and gardener Paula Rodriguez de la Vega.

A step by step 55 page booklet to learn about xeriscaping; beautiful water wise and easy care gardens suited for the South Okanagan's unique climate and landscape. Reduce your water bills by gardening and landscaping with drought tolerant plants. Learn about water conservation methods for your lawn.

Download your free copy at Town of Oliver (<http://oliver.fileprosite.com/Documents/DocumentList.aspx?ID=28370>), and RDOS www.rdos.bc.ca, or sign out a copy at the Okanagan Regional Library.

Brought to you by Oliver Communities in Bloom, Town of Oliver, and Area 'C' of the Regional District off Okanagan-Similkameen.



New Field Guide Book Available for Landowners

As a follow up to our "Field Guide to Wetland and Riparian Species at Risk" the South Okanagan-Similkameen Stewardship Program launched a new publication titled "Field Guide to Grassland Species at Risk of the South Okanagan & Similkameen Valleys". This 82 page, pocket sized booklet is designed to help private landowners identify some of the Species at Risk that live in grassland habitats. This booklet covers insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and plants at risk in those habitats.

Enjoy the full colour photos and descriptions of the species, and find out where they can be found. Learn about what threatens the species survival and what you can do on your land to help them.

This informational booklet is made possible thanks to collaborative work with many of our partners, the donation from photographers, and funding from Habitat Stewardship Program and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.

One free field guide is available to any landowner with grassland habitats. Please contact us at 250-809-8802



Salamander Stewards Unite!

Photo and article by the ECommunity Place team (Richard Armstrong, Chad Eneas, A. Michael Bezeener & Ellen Simmons)

With support from Environment Canada's Interdepartmental Recovery Fund, Aboriginal Funds for Species At Risk, and the Southern Interior Reptile and Amphibian Recovery Team, the En'owkin Centre's ECommunity Place staff are continuing exciting work to protect and recover critical habitat for the nationally Endangered Blotched Tiger Salamander, known as *nc̓ ac̓ ayna̓* to the Syilx (Okanagan people). Already home to Penticton's last remaining population of these declining salamanders, ECommunity Place will soon be home to several new shallow breeding ponds, designed and built by the En'owkin Centre's Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) keepers and conservation ecologists in an attempt to increase the local population as part of the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program's biodiversity conservation efforts.

Over the last 150 years, and particularly during the last 60 years, local amphibian populations have been heavily impacted by the destruction, degradation and fragmentation of breeding ponds and important foraging areas in adjacent grassland/shrubsteppe habitats. Many of the human developments we have added to



Photo: ECommunity Place

To find out more about the field trip at ECommunity Place, please contact the En'owkin Centre's ECommunity Place team at (250) 493-7181 ext. 2236, or via email at ecomunityplace@vip.net.

the landscape have benefitted us, but are driving other wildlife species to the brink of local extinction. Reversing this trend by changing the way we think, plan communities, and act, will be the focus of a special field trip event to be hosted at ECommunity Place in summer/fall 2012. Local landowners, land managers, conservation ecologists and TEK keepers are all invited to share their knowledge and wisdom about being good stewards of Blotched Tiger Salamanders and the habitats they share with us and other local species.

New Year's Resolutions...for Invasive Plant Society

By Lisa Scott, South Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Society

With the New Year just around the corner, here is a list of resolutions that you may wish to consider for 2012, and it has nothing to do with weight loss, more exercise or stopping smoking (not that those aren't good things to resolve to do). These resolutions will help to reduce invasive plants in the Okanagan-Similkameen region and improve the overall health of our natural habitats and agricultural areas. It will also help us save lots of money, because weeds in crops and pastures alone costs Canada approximately \$2.2 billion annually.

Whether you've battled bindweed in your back yard, picked hound's-tongue seeds off your pants or noticed the abundance of Siberian elm trees along our lakes and rivers, you've become aware of the spread of invasive plants. Invasive plants are a problem, but often the solutions are relatively straightforward. Take the time to read through these top twelve resolutions and chose the most suitable ones that you can strive to achieve in 2012.

1. Learn to identify invasive plants growing in the Okanagan-Similkameen region. Check out our website (www.sosips.ca), pick up some information sheets from the Regional District office in Penticton or peruse local or provincial websites such as www.weedsbc.ca or www.invasiveplantcouncilbc.ca
2. Report sightings of new invaders in our region or patches of common species in remote locations where they may go undetected.
3. When gardening, choose plants wisely. Be suspicious of plants promoted as "fast spreaders" or "vigorous self-seeders." Do not transplant aggressive species that are known to be invasive. Instead, select native plants that are adapted to our local ecosystems or non-invasive ornamental species.
4. Avoid using exotic wildflower seed mixes.
5. Be wary of wild birdseed mixes. Carefully select the seed mix or create the mix yourself. Put the seed mix on cookie sheets and bake to prevent germination. In the spring, remove any unusual plants growing under or near your bird feeder, before the plant goes to seed.
6. Dispose of invasive plants carefully. Do not 'recycle' garden debris or compost. Properly dispose in trash bags or by drying out any material to destroy remaining vegetative parts.
7. Avoid letting invasive plants fruit or set seed, as birds and animals can spread the plants to other areas. Deadhead flowers, seedpods and berries of known invasive plants.
8. Reduce soil disturbances and re-seed disturbed soils with a suitable seed mix.
9. Avoid picking plants from roadsides, gravel pits or other disturbed areas.
10. When exploring the great outdoors, check your vehicle, boat, bike, camping gear, shoes and pets for invasive plant seeds that may have hitched a ride. Dispose of any seeds carefully.
11. Encourage friends and neighbours to learn more about invasive plants, and share information that you have learned such as how to identify a certain species.
12. Get involved with local efforts to control invasive plants.



Photo Lisa Scott

Anchusa or Common bugloss was spotted for the first time in the Okanagan-Similkameen region in a gravel pit near Hedley in 2010; it is not known to occur elsewhere in the region.

For further information on invasive plants contact the Invasive Plant Program Coordinator for the Okanagan-Similkameen, Lisa Scott at 250-404-0115 or email her at sosips@shaw.ca

For more information, please contact:

South Okanagan-Similkameen
Stewardship Program/TLC The Land
Conservancy of BC
Box 22003
Penticton, BC, V2A 8L1
Phone: 250-809-8802
Web: conservancy.bc.ca

Thank you to our funders, supporters, and partners:
Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Habitat Stewardship
Program (Environment Canada), South Okanagan-
Similkameen Conservation Program, South-Okanagan-
Similkameen Invasive Plant Society, The Nature Trust of
BC, ECommunity Place, WiTS-OS, and last, but not least,
you, the Conservation Land Stewards.

Newsletter produced by The Land Conservancy's South
Okanagan-Similkameen Stewardship Program.

Compiled by Alyson Skinner. Edited by Heather Skydt.
Designed by Jennifer Hobson.

Acknowledgements: Richard Armstrong, Michael Bezener,
Nick Burdock, Chad Eneas, Margaret Holm, Paula
Rodriguez de la Vega, Lisa Scott and Ellen Simmons.