



# the Wetlander

Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area

SPRING 2008



## Our Mission

*We exist to manage the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, a 17,000 acre wetland of international significance, for conservation and natural species diversity through active habitat and wildlife management, research, education and public support.*

## INSIDE

- Donors in the Spotlight **2**
- Wildlife Centre Repairs and Walkway Project
- Wildlife Sightings **3**
- Why is it so important to conserve wetlands?
- Education and Stewardship **4**
- ◆ Wildlife Centre
- ◆ Wetland Experiences
- ◆ Jr. Naturalists
- ◆ Special Events
- Conservation Corner **5**
- New Vision, con't
- Quiz—Ducks 101
- 1 % for the Planet
- Burning Question **6**
- The Answers...

## New CEO, New Vision

*From Richard Dalon, CEO, CVWMA*

The opportunity to work for the CVWMA and with the staff has proven to be a rewarding experience. I have been here only a short time, almost 4 months, but I am impressed by the dedication and hard work of our staff who have had to work under rather stressful financial and other constraints.

For 40 years, the CVWMA has worked hard to conserve and manage the Area to promote biodiversity and ensure a healthy, productive wetland ecosystem. The continued future of this organization is filled with huge potential and exciting directions.

We are proposing a new vision for the management area that will allow us to become a Centre of Excellence for the study of environmental issues such as climate change, carbon sequestration, ungulates, plant ecology and species at risk. This will be a thriving, self-sustaining, environmentally-friendly, world-class Centre of Excellence, supporting scholars and visitors from around the world, the larger community and stewardship of these outstanding natural resources of the Creston Valley.

This would represent an expansion of our current responsibilities and involve creating public and private partnerships with colleges, universities and the private sector.

We would need to have a small research laboratory, accommodations for professors and students and the public at large. There would be a requirement for a small and environmentally-friendly conference facility

as part of the accommodations to ensure that small conferences could be held throughout the year by various government and non-government organizations as well as visiting scholars.

This is a long-term vision requiring extensive study and the formation of public and private partnerships to secure a financially self-sustaining project. But it is a vision that is attainable if enough people can agree to work together for a common purpose.

It is a vision that would provide an economic benefit – not only to Creston – but to the entire East and Central Kootenay Region. It could increase tourism as well as eco-friendly industries such as bird watching and help the service industry of Creston and surrounding towns.

To realize this vision there are many issues that need to be resolved before we can expect to reach this final goal. We need to secure a funding arrangement that will guarantee financial stability for the short and medium term. Without this financial stability it will be impossible to move forward and we will not be able to continue to manage this area in any significant way.

In addition, because of the complexity and confusing aspects of our legislation and governance model we will need to change our legislation. The 1968 Creston Wildlife Act, which is the piece of Provincial Legislation that regulates us, is now 40 years old and does not allow us to function in 2008.

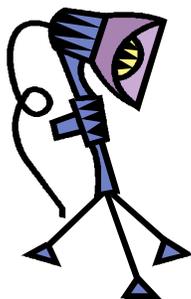
Send questions and comments to...  
Carla Haegele, Editor  
[wetlander@crestonwildlife.ca](mailto:wetlander@crestonwildlife.ca)  
(250) 402 6905

The good news is that we have

...con't on page 5...

If you would like to receive the Wetlander by email as opposed to a paper copy by mail, just let us know.

# Donors in the Spotlight...



*"Donors in the Spotlight" highlights one of our donors in each Wetlander issue. This time, let's hear from Terasen Gas!*

Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

After 40 years of hard work, the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA) continues to be one of the largest wildlife management areas in BC. This amazing area not only provides important habitat for over 286 species of birds, 57 species of mammal and 29 fish, amphibian and reptile species plus thousands of invertebrate and plant species, but it also provides people with the opportunity to explore and study these species and their ecosystems.

Terasen Gas is proud to be one of the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area's Principal Partners. Terasen Gas has been involved with the CVWMA since 1999 and in 2000, the Southern Crossing Pipeline Project installed a natural gas pipeline through the southern portion of the CVWMA. Throughout this project, Terasen Gas worked closely with CVWMA staff to ensure the pipeline had

minimal impact on the environment and improved water management features within the CVWMA. In addition to the pipeline works undertaken, the BC Gas (now Terasen Gas) Wood Duck Trail was created along the pipeline route to improve recreation opportunities.

Terasen Gas continues to support the work and philosophies of the CVWMA and believes that conserving and managing areas for wildlife is integral to the future of both communities and wildlife in the Creston Valley. Through the continuous work of the CVWMA's dedicated staff and volunteers, this area acts as a refuge for wildlife and a place of enjoyment, recreation and education for over 35,000 visitors each year.

The Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area is truly a unique area within our beautiful province of BC, and Terasen Gas is proud to be involved in such a fantastic legacy for future generations.



Leslie Kristoff  
*Environmental Program Manager, Terasen Gas*



# Wildlife Centre Repairs and Walkway Project

The Wildlife Interpretation Centre structural repairs are complete. Rot was identified in some of the support beams underneath the building in 2005. After embarking on a fundraising campaign, we were able to raise the money necessary to fix the building and we hired a contractor in the fall of 2007. Steel beams were placed on the existing beams to strengthen them and epoxy was injected into the beams to stabilize and keep them from deteriorating further. New roof extensions were added on the front and back of the building to inhibit snow accumulation and rain from penetrating the deck and beams. It now provides outdoor teaching and wildlife viewing space that is sheltered from the elements. The building is ready to open on May 13th!



**View of new walkway approach to the Centre.**



**View of the new roof extension on the front (west side) of the building.**

The Walkway Project is also complete and it looks amazing. It provides a wheelchair and stroller accessible route from the parking lot to the Centre. Planks were sold (1,195 as of the end of April) to raise money for the project and plaques will be installed in September as part of our 40th Anniversary Celebration. Stay Tuned for more information!

## A BIG thank you to our Wildlife Interpretation Centre Structural Repairs funding partners

Ministry of Environment  
Columbia Basin Trust

Habitat Conservation Trust Fund  
Kootenay Lake Freshwater Society  
Kootenai Rivers Network

Creston Rod and Gun Club  
CVWMA Donors

# Wildlife Sightings

From Marc-André Beaucher

No need to convince anyone that it has been a long winter with lots of snow. It seemed like the birds were somewhat sparse this winter, but there were many interesting birds to see. The most interesting birds I encountered during the months of November and December of 2007 were a few Northern Pygmy-Owls, several Northern Shrikes, two Killdeers, two Western Grebes, several Rough-legged Hawks and a flock of approximately 20 Red Crossbills eating grit on the highway.



**Close to 100 Bald Eagles were seen at Duck Lake!**

In January, I encountered one more Northern Pygmy-Owl, a few more Northern Shrikes, and a few American Dippers in various locations. On January 28th, 2008, I had the surprise to see a nice furry bobcat feeding on a dead deer along Highway 3A near Wynndel. In early February, nearly three dozen Tundra Swans showed up on Duck Lake. The numbers steadily increased through February

and March; on March 21st, I counted up to 350 Tundra Swans. I encountered a Eurasian Wigeon at Duck Lake on March 10th, one Pied-billed Grebe in Leach Lake on March 18th and one Double-crested Cormorant in the same location on March 25th; I also spotted 5 bright adult male Mountain Bluebirds that same day in Leach Lake. Finally, a day later, 50 Greater-white Fronted Geese flew over while I was checking water levels in Corn Creek.

While all these birds (and mammal) were a treat to see, the most incredible "birding" time I had was on March 20th and 21st at Duck Lake when I counted close to 100 Bald Eagles through my spotting scope. I had never seen large numbers like those in over a decade in this valley. Many of the eagles were immatures and seemed to be feeding on dead fish on the melting ice. I was back there on March 25th and there were still several dozens perched in the trees and flying overhead.



## Support the CVWMA

Yes! I would like to contribute. Enclosed is my gift for:

\$250  \$100  \$50  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

A tax receipt can be issued for donations over \$20  
To find out other ways to donate, please visit our website

### Become a Member

Family  \$35 Grandparent  \$35  
Individual  \$25 Student/Senior  \$20

Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

Members receive Wetlander newsletter, Member's pass and reduced program fees

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Province/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Send cheque, money order or Credit Card information to:  
CVWMA PO Box 640, Creston BC V0B 1G0

## Why is it so important to conserve wetlands such as the CVWMA?

- ◆ Wetlands are **nature's kidneys**, filtering out sediment and chemicals, including nutrients, pollutants and toxic materials from the water.

"We are currently cutting out our kidneys to enlarge our stomachs"

*Eric Freyfogle, Illinois law professor, on the destruction of wetlands, Baltimore Evening Sun, September 12, 1991*

- ◆ Wetland **plants purify** the water as they absorb excess nutrients and cycle them through the food chain.
- ◆ Wetlands act as **giant sponges**, reducing the impacts of floods by slowing and storing flood water. Wetlands absorb water and then gradually release it over a periods of weeks to months as the surrounding area dries out.
- ◆ Wetlands **store carbon** within their plant communities and soils.
- ◆ Wetlands are **breeding, nesting, nursery and feeding grounds** for a wide range of species.

# Education and Stewardship

## Wildlife Interpretation Centre

The exciting world of insects swarms the Gallery this year.

- ◆ Our science lab will intrigue you with the wonders of the wetland world in close detail
- ◆ Look through our spotting scopes at a variety of wild-life species frolicking in the wetland
- ◆ Delight in our Gift Shop as you find treasures and treats for all (Santa shops here!!)
- ◆ Naturalists are on site to answer questions and provide trail maps, information and tours

### Centre Hours

May 13 to June 30 Tues-Sat 9am to 4pm  
 July 1 to Aug 30 7 days a week 9am to 4pm  
 Sept 2 to Oct 11 Tues-Sat 10am to 4pm

Your admission supports this wetland



**Join a Naturalist on an hour long guided canoe tour. Learn more about the wetland as you paddle the pond; and channels; in search of wildlife.**

**Depart: daily at 9:30am, 10:30am, 1pm and 2pm**

To book a tour, program or for more information, please call the Centre at (250) 402 6908

## Wetland Experiences (School Programs)

### Elementary School

Back by popular demand...the exciting world of bugs!! Join us for our exciting Tasty Treats Program. Explore the Gallery, pond and lab to discover Insect Table Manners or sample the Bird Buffet.

### Nocturnal Adventures

We invite you to discover our wetland site at night. Students bring sleeping bags, foamies and flashlights and we provide the exciting nocturnal adventure. A perfect solution for classes traveling great distances to visit.

### Stewardship

The Stewardship Program is open to high school students, community groups and individuals who are interested in taking part in an initiative that helps to improve environmental quality and achieve sustainable outcomes within the wetland. Participants perform hands-on habitat management and enhancement activities such as removing invasive species, erecting and monitoring nesting boxes and shoreline cleanups.

## Junior Naturalists

These curious young creatures investigate the wetland by canoeing, hiking, dip-netting... Hands-on activities and games fill the week with excitement and adventure. Please call (250) 402 6908 to register.

### Little Larvae

For ages 6&7  
Sessions: July 7-11 & July 14-18 (9-1pm)

### Mischievous Muskrats

For ages 8&9  
Sessions: July 14-18 & July 21-25 (9-3pm)

### Coyote Howlers

For ages 10&11  
Sessions: July 21-25 & July 28-Aug 1 (9-3pm)  
 ...with a sleepover on Thursday

### Wildlife Drama

Art and drama combine to create a week of creative fun!  
 For ages 8-10  
Session: July 28-Aug 1 (9-1 pm)

### Mallard Mornings

An invitation for parents to bring curious Ducklings, ages 3-5 years old, on a Naturalist-led outdoor adventure of discovery and fun every Tuesday.  
Sessions: May 20-June 24 (10-1130 am or 1-230pm)



## Special events

### Father's Day Sleepover

Share the evening with bats, beavers and owls as you and your Dad prowl the wetland. Sleep over at the Wildlife Centre and join the birds for a morning walk and breakfast.  
Date: June 14-15 Time: 7pm till...

### Roots and Shoots

Explore the wetland this spring and fall in search of tall shoots and deep & twisted roots. An ethno botanist will share with you wildlife and human uses of wetland plants. Bring your lunch and sample our cattail stir-fry cook-up!  
 For ages 8 and up.  
Dates: June 21st & Sept 27th Time: 10am-1pm

### Full Moon Paddle

Dip your paddle into the moonlit water on this evening venture. The wetland comes alive at night!  
Dates: July 18 & Aug 15 - Family (age 6 & up) Time: 730pm  
Dates: July 19 & Aug 16 - Adult (age 12 & up) Time: 8pm

**Make sure you check out our GIFT SHOP where you can browse through nature inspired educational gifts and treasures**

## Conservation Corner

Grade nine woodworking students at JL Crowe Secondary School in Trail, BC are busy building swallow and wood duck nesting boxes for the CVWMA. As part of the Stewardship Program, JL Crowe students will help to enhance nesting habitat for bird species by replacing old, deteriorating nesting boxes with new ones. Students will come out in May to erect the boxes they made along the trails in Corn Creek Marsh near the Wildlife Centre. Thanks to Mike Vanness, the woodworking teacher at JL Crowe and his students for participating in the project. Lumber for the boxes was donated by Kalesnikoff Lumber Company in Castlegar, BC.



**Students at JL Crowe Secondary School cut out pieces to make nesting boxes**

## New Vision... con't from page 1

managed to convince the provincial government that there is a problem with our legislation, governance, and financial structure that hinders our ability to meet our current legislative obligations and they now want to fix it.

As a result, they have agreed to embark on a government led mandate review process that will culminate in a cabinet document submission with several options and, I hope, with some recommendations outlining how to fix the problems to which I have referred earlier.

The exact nature of the mandate review process will be explained to us by the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment at our next Board meeting in mid May. The Mandate Review process for crown agencies is under the direction of the Crown Agencies Secretariat and they have a process that we will have to follow.

I am excited about this process; it is the first time in many years that the government has shown a serious interest in trying to solve some of the many frustrating issues that we have to deal with. I look forward to the process and I am confident that it will result in a more stable financial situation and a governance model that will match the needs and aspirations of whatever new entity arises out of the ashes of the past.

It is both a pleasure and an honor to lead our organization during this transitional period. None of this, of course, could be accomplished without the hard work and dedication of the staff, volunteers and supporters.

*Richard comes to us with a diverse and interesting background and significant senior management experience in both the government and private sector.*

## Quiz... Ducks 101 (answers on page 6)

Dabbler ducks have legs that are located where on their body?

- a center b towards the front
- c towards the back d at the tail

Of the following ducks, which is NOT a cavity nester?

- a Bufflehead b Barrow's Goldeneye
- c Hooded Merganser d Canvasback

Ducks use the least amount of energy when they fly at what speed?

- a very slow b very fast c at medium speed
- d use the same amount of energy at all speeds

To save weight and remain as light as possible, waterfowl

- a have light, hollow bones b grow bones together instead of using muscle
- c turn food into energy very quickly
- d all of the above

Which of the following is North America's smallest dabbler duck?

- a Cinnamon Teal b Green-winged Teal
- c Gadwall d Pintail

Unlike most other ducks, this species has sharp claws to perch on trees

- a Wood Duck b Mallard
- c Pintail d Common Merganser



1% For the Planet is a growing global movement of 847 companies that donate 1% of their sales to a network of over 1,500 environmental organizations. We are proud to be a member!! Log onto their website at [www.onepercentfortheplanet.org](http://www.onepercentfortheplanet.org) for more information. A hand goes out to all the companies involved for recognizing that sustainability of the natural resources is fundamental to the sustainability of business.

## A Burning Question!

Send your questions to [wetlander@crestonwildlife.ca](mailto:wetlander@crestonwildlife.ca)

**Q:** What exactly is a gall?

**A:** Galls are abnormal outgrowths of plant tissues found on many plants. They are produced by the host plant in response to an irritation (chemical secretion) caused by an invading organism such as fungi, bacteria, insects and mites. Galls look like berries, fuzzy balls, spiny balls or tiny pimples; the size, shape, and form is determined by the organism and the plant it selects.

Gall-inducing insects include gall wasps, gall midges, beetles, flies, aphids and moths. Insect galls can be found on the leaf, stem, stalks, branches, buds, roots and even flowers and fruits, but the insects are usually species specific and sometimes tissue specific on the plants they gall.

There are, in general, two types of galls - open and closed. Open galls are produced by insects with sucking mouthparts and mites. The gall always has an opening which is tightly sealed when the young are developing. However, when the insects or mites mature, the gall dries and the opening is enlarged sufficiently for the pests to escape. Closed galls are produced by gall wasps and beetles that have chewing mouthparts. Either the larva or the new adult chews a hole through the gall tissues to exit.

See if you can find galls in your neighbourhood. Willows have many galls caused by midges, mites and sawflies. The gall caused by the tiny wasp-like insect called the sawfly looks like a berry and it even turns red. The Rose-king or Robin's Pincushion Gall occurs on some roses and is caused by a wasp-like insect whose larvae live in chambers inside the gall and it looks

like a great fuzzy ball. The Poplar or Cottonwood Leaf Gall is pea-sized and located on the leaf stem of the cottonwood tree and is caused by an aphid.

In general, galls are not a serious threat to the plant. They are beneficial to the agent that caused it, providing habitat for the lifecycle of the organism.

Galls are rich in resins and tannic acid and have been used in the manufacture of permanent inks and astringent ointments, in dyeing, and in tanning. The larvae in the galls are food for many birds and other animal species. Woodpeckers and chickadees eat the Thimbleberry Knot Galls. Squirrels will eat a "ripe" Lodgepole pine gall caused by a fungus. It is "ripe" when it discharges powdery spores. Yum.

If you are keen to find out more about galls check out the *Field Guide to Plants Galls of California and other Western States* published by University of California Press in 2007. It is really good!

## The Answers... from Ducks 101 Quiz (page 5)

Dabbling ducks, such as mallards and teals, have legs that are **centrally located** on their bodies. Centrally located legs make walking easier, allowing for greater mobility while feeding on terrestrial vegetation and agricultural grains, but are not efficient for powerful swimming. But that's fine because dabblers eat food that is on or just below the surface. In contrast, diver ducks such as mergansers and scaups have legs positioned towards the rear of their bodies. They stand more vertically than dabblers and can appear awkward while walking, but are better suited for diving under water to chase fish and other aquatic animals.

Cavity nesting birds found at the CVWMA include: **Bufflehead, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Common Goldeneye and Wood Ducks**. These are secondary cavity nesting birds, relying on nest sites created by primary cavity nesters such as Pileated Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers or by decay or damage to the tree. The cavities provide protection from weather and predators and are located in close proximity to suitable brood habitat. Human disturbance and destruction of cavity trees or snags are common threats to these species.

Birds use more energy when they fly very slow or very fast, so they try to fly at **medium speeds** to use the least amount of energy. Waterfowl make tremendously long migratory flights, traversing thousands of kilometers from their breeding grounds to their wintering grounds. During migration, waterfowl often fly continuously and land only when they are exhausted or weather conditions make flying difficult. Most fly at 60 to 100 kilometers per hour and fly from a few feet above the water to over 20,000 feet above sea level. Wouldn't you want to conserve as much energy as possible if you had to go such great distances?

To remain light in weight, waterfowl have **light, hollow bones**. Also, many bones **grow together** to form one bone instead of two. That way, extra muscle, which would add more weight, isn't needed to hold the bones together. Waterfowl also **turn food into energy very quickly** so that it doesn't weigh them down. Whatever is left over after digestion passes through their body right away.

The **Green-winged Teal** wins the prize for the smallest dabbling duck in North America at 31-39 cm long with a wingspan of 52-59 cm and a weight of 140-500 g. They prefer shallow points with lots of emergent vegetation, so the CVWMA has great habitat!

**Wood Ducks** are also called perching ducks. They have sharp claws on their webbed feet that are used for perching in trees. Wood Ducks live along river and creek bottoms of hardwood forests and nest in the cavities of dead trees or use artificial nest boxes.



**Reach us at:** CVWMA Box 640 Creston, BC V0B 1G0 Phone: (250) 402 6900  
Fax: (250) 402 6910 Email: [askus@crestonwildlife.ca](mailto:askus@crestonwildlife.ca) [www.crestonwildlife.ca](http://www.crestonwildlife.ca)

