



the Wetlander

Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area

SUMMER 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.

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Banrock Station Wines and Ducks Unlimited Canada visit our wetland

The Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area was honored to welcome Tony Sharley, Manager of Banrock Station Wines at Kingston-on-Murray in Australia, to our wetland on August 13th.

Banrock Station Wine is committed to helping wetlands throughout the world and has formed important partnerships with other conservation organizations in 10 other countries besides their native Australia. Yearly donations are made to help preserve nature, the wildlife and the people it supports for the future.

In Canada, one of the organisations that Banrock Station works with is Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). Through DUC, Banrock Station is helping to support infrastructure reconstruction at the CVWMA with a \$50,000 contribution.

At the event, we learned of Banrock's conservation efforts at home and around the world while enjoying an Aussie BBQ paired with a selection of Banrock Station's fine wines. The event was covered on Global National news, providing amazing national media coverage for the CVWMA.

Banrock Station property has been transformed with the restoration of wetlands, woodlands and wildlife. They face similar management challenges as the CVWMA related to seasonal water fluctuations and changing environmental impacts. It will be exciting to develop a relationship with Banrock where we can learn for each other and share ideas, strategies and information. We look forward to working on future projects with both DUC and Banrock Station. Visit www.banrockstation.com for more details on their conservation efforts.



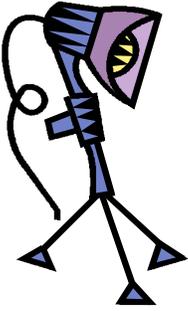
At left: Richard Dalon, CEO of CVWMA; Anne de Jager, Director of Development and EA to CEO of CVWMA; Tony Sharley, Banrock Station Manager; and Bettylou Christenson, DUC Creston Chapter Volunteer enjoy the fine food and wine at the event. At right: Guests socialized under tents set up in the wetland, offering a picturesque view of the valley.



Send questions and comments to...Carla Haegele, Editor
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Donors in the Spotlight...



"Donors in the Spotlight" is a series in the Wetlander that highlights one of our donors in each issue. This time, let's hear from the Columbia Basin Trust!

Congratulations on the completion of the Wildlife Centre repairs and Walkway Project!

The Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA) has been a source of pride in nature preservation in the Kootenays (and beyond!) since its inception 40 years ago – the first of its kind in British Columbia. Over that time, the CVWMA has cleared some incredible hurdles thanks to the efforts of staff, volunteers, and the support of community groups and organizations.

Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) is proud to support the CVWMA in their efforts to manage and conserve this internationally renowned wetland and ensure natural species

diversity through research, education and public support. From helping to restore the Wildlife Centre to dyke brushing at Duck Lake to upgrading the Leach Lake water control system to the recovery and reintroduction of the Northern Leopard Frog, CBT has committed \$165,000 to help CVWMA achieve their mandate.

As an organization created by Columbia Basin residents, the CBT is here to work with Basin residents and organizations to support their efforts in creating a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being and to achieve greater self-sufficiency for present and future generations. Thanks to the efforts of staff and volunteers, CVWMA is helping CBT achieve our mandate.

We look forward to continuing to support the efforts of the CVWMA in protecting this vital wetland.

Neil Muth
President and CEO
Columbia Basin Trust



2009 Rand McNally Best of the Road® Editor's Pick!



The Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA) was chosen as a 2009 Rand McNally Best of the Road® Editor's Pick.

Rand McNally editors combed through hundreds of scenic drives and visited thousands of attractions along the way to come up with five trips that offer a variety of interesting roadside stops for the 2009 Rand McNally Best of the Road®. The International Selkirk

Loop, a scenic drive encircling the spectacular Selkirk Mountains in northeast Washington, northern Idaho and southeast British Columbia, along which the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area is a destination stop, was chosen as one of the five featured road trips highlighted in the 2009 Rand McNally Road Atlas, America's #1 road atlas for 85 years.

The CVWMA was chosen as one of six very special recommended stops to be named a 2009 Rand McNally Best of the Road® Editor's Pick along the International Selkirk Loop. Travel writers for Rand McNally visited and toured the 17,000-acre wetland habitat, located in the heart of the Kootenay Region in southeastern BC. They paddled through the ponds and channels on a guided canoe tour, viewing wildlife and the spectacular scenery of the Area. They explored the trails and viewing towers and toured the Wildlife Interpretation Centre, getting a true taste of what

the Area is all about.

As part of the International Selkirk Loop and the Two Nation Birding Vacation, a birding and ecotourism experience, the CVWMA is a major destination and attraction for people traveling through southeastern BC. With an amazing diversity of wildlife, spectacular scenery, a bounty of recreational opportunities and a Wildlife Interpretation Centre offering educational programming and special events, the CVWMA is a truly unique and magical place to visit. Rand McNally thinks so too!



The Wildlife Interpretation Centre, seen above, offers guided canoe tours and access to scenic boardwalk trails and was highlighted in the atlas.

Wildlife Sightings

From Marc-André Beaucher

The following are some interesting sightings at the CVWMA this Spring and Summer

- 2 Apr: 1 Osprey by Wildlife Centre
 9 Apr: 70 Greater White-fronted Geese over Corn Creek pond 2a
 14 Apr: 9 Black-necked Stilts on Duck Lake southwest mudflats
 24 Apr: Trumpeter Swan with red bird band in Corn Creek 1
 25 Apr: Several Horned Grebes on Duck Lake near Sirdar
 28 Apr: 4 Black-necked Stilts, 2 Greater Yellowlegs on Duck Lake southwest mudflats
 3 May: 1 Whimbrel on Duck Lake southwest mudflats
 6 May: 2 Semi-palmated Sandpipers, 15 Least Sandpipers on Duck Lake southwest mudflats
 13 May: 11 American Avocets on Duck Lake southwest mudflats, 1 Short-eared Owl southwest of Duck Lake
 21 May: 1 young grizzly on Duck Lake west dyke
 22 May: 1 cow moose with 2 calves near Wildlife Centre and 1 cow with 1 calf in Corn Creek 2b



This photo of twin moose calves was taken by Montana Cull, our Gift Shop Coordinator. The female and her two young were seen along the boardwalk trail in May and June.

- 29 May: Lark Sparrow on Duck Lake southwest
 1 June: Western Grebes courtship dances on Duck Lake
 8 June: 1 pair of Sandhill Cranes on Duck Lake nesting area islands – as if they had chicks
 19 June: 1 female Common Goldeneye with 23 young in Leach Lake 4, 1 Lark Sparrow in Leach Lake 1
 26 June: 2 Caspian Terns on Duck Lake, 1 Clark's Grebe on Duck Lake and 40 Western Grebes building nests on Duck Lake
 27 June: 2 adult male Clay-colored Sparrows in Leach Lake 1
 4 July: 5 coyote pups on Duck Lake west dyke

BC Breeding Bird Atlas

Mapping birds is quickly becoming a worldwide phenomenon. The BC Breeding Bird Atlas is a five-year project, launched in 2008, to determine the distribution and relative abundance of birds across British Columbia.

The BC Breeding Bird Atlas is a partnership between government, private sector and conservation organizations. The project forms a foundation in the conservation strategies for issues such as species at risk, environmental assessment, incidental take and habitat management by the federal and provincial governments. It will be a valuable source of information for everyone interested in birds.



Clockwise from top left: robins eggs, young chicks looking for food, goose eggs with one just hatching and waterfowl eggs all found in the CVWMA!

Over 300 species of birds breed each year in British Columbia - more than any other province in Canada. Sixty-five species breed nowhere else in Canada and for several other species, British Columbia holds the majority of the world population. For these reasons, British Columbia plays a pivotal role in Canada's bird conservation efforts.

Volunteers with the project choose a 10km² plot in their region and record information such as where they saw breeding birds and how many birds they saw. You need to be able to identify birds correctly but you do not need to be expert - all records are welcome.

The project has a Coordination Office supporting a network of volunteer Regional Coordinators who will oversee the atlas duties in their regions. For more information visit www.birdatlas.bc.ca.

At the Wildlife Centre...

Our Summer Naturalist Staff

Our Naturalists had an amazing season working with school kids and budding young Naturalists, paddling visitors through the wetland, counting birds and tantalizing guests with snazzy nature giftware! A special thanks to our granting partners who helped to fund these positions: Julie Fletcher, Craig Sandvig and Stephanie McDowell (Canadian Museum Association's Young Canada Works in Heritage Organizations Program) and Sheena Fowler (Creston Kootenay Foundation). Montana Cull ran our Nature Gift Shop.



From left: Craig, Montana, Stephanie, Sheena, Julie and Gillian (Manager)

Sciensational Sssnakes!

This travelling program came to the Centre on August 12th, brought to us by the Reptiles at Risk on the Road Project.



Interpreters taught us all about reptiles; their biology and impacts on different species. Live specimens were used to show identifying features and some of our brave audience members got to touch and hold them. Thanks to the team for sharing their love and knowledge with the over 60 people who came to watch. To learn more, please go to www.reptilesatrisk.org.

BCFO AGM



On May 23-24, the BC Field Ornithologists (BCFO) held their AGM at the CVWMA. Participants take a break and enjoy a walk along the boardwalk trail and do what they do best...birding!

Quiz... Ribbit! (Answers on page 6)

Of the over 6,300 species of amphibians, approximately how many are frogs & toads?
a 1,000 b 2,800 c 4,100 d 5,600

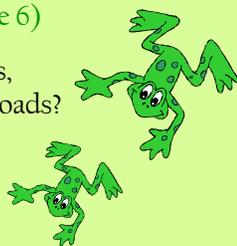
Frogs use their eyeballs to swallow.
a true b false

Frogs use their teeth to...
a chew their prey b secure their prey c both a and b
d frogs don't have teeth!

A school of fish, a gaggle of geese, a(n) _____ of frogs!
a pack b knot c army d swarm

Why do frogs sing?
a to attract a mate b in response to weather changes
c to establish territory d all of the above

The term frog can also be used to describe
a an attachment to a belt for holding a sword or weapon
b hoarseness or phlegm in the throat c a nut on a violin bow
d the v-shaped pad of soft horn between the bars on the sole of the horse's hoof e all of the above



40th Anniversary & Boardwalk Celebration Event

Join us on Saturday, October 4th from 10am to 4pm



We turned 40 this year and it's time to celebrate!



Come and see our newly completed walkway... If you purchased a walkway plank, then come and see your name or that of a friend or family member because the plaques will be in place!

Refreshments and snacks all day!
Cake cutting and candle blowing at 2pm

Gift Shop Sale!!!
Spend \$40 and receive a special birthday gift!

2008 is the Year of the Frog

Northern Leopard Frog



Columbia Spotted Frog



Western Toad



After thriving for over 360 million years, a third to a half of the world's more than 6,300 known amphibian species could go extinct in our lifetime. This would be the single largest mass extinction since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. The urgent danger is chytrid fungus, but other causes include habitat loss, pollution, pesticides, and climate change. Amphibians have long been referred to as the "canaries in the coal mine" as they are among the first species to be affected by environmental stresses, so when they show declines in the wild, it serves as a warning to other species, including humans.

Life on earth relies on the interdependent relationships between living things and their environments. Amphibians play a critical role in a healthy ecosystem: they are important part of the food web as both predator and prey; they eat pest insects, benefiting successful agriculture and minimizing the spread of disease; and the skin of amphibians contains substances that offer possible medical cures for a variety of human diseases.

Coeur d'Alene Salamander



Pacific Chorus Frog



Long-toed Salamander



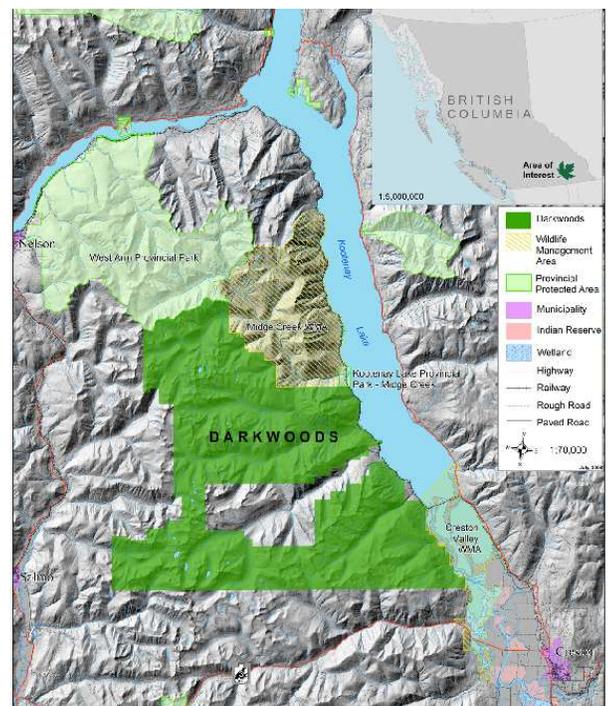
The CVWMA has 6 amphibian species: Long-toed and Coeur d'Alene Salamander, Western Toad, Pacific Chorus Frog, Columbia Spotted Frog and Northern Leopard Frog. In this vast and biologically diverse wetland, amphibians are not immune to harmful impacts. The Northern Leopard Frog, once widespread throughout southern BC, is now an endangered species in BC and restricted to the Creston Valley. In 2001, the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program initiated a Recovery Project involving a captive rearing program until 2005 and continues to include population monitoring.

What can we do help...When it comes to the health and well being of the environment and those that rely on it for their survival, the answers are complicated and intimately connected to how we live our day-to-day lives and the choices that we make as individuals and as a society. We can be aware by learning, asking questions and seeking answers, and by supporting those who are working hard to find answers and solutions.

Welcome to our New Neighbors

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has acquired an exceptional property known as Darkwoods that is situated between the towns of Nelson, Creston and Salmo in the West Kootenay region of BC. The property is 550 square kilometers or 136,000 acres (55,000 ha), representing the largest, single private conservation project ever undertaken by a Canadian non-profit organization. The property directly connects to an existing network of protected lands and wildlife management areas, creating a contiguous protected area of more than 250,000 acres (100,000 ha). The CVWMA is located directly adjacent to the properties southern limits. We are very excited that the land is being protected. Like the CVWMA, Darkwoods property is a rich and biologically diverse area, supporting a large number of species, including some provincially listed species such as the caribou, western screech owl and bull trout. We look forward to working with and supporting the NCC in the future. For more information, check out www.natureconservancy.ca/darkwoods.

The NCC is a private, non-profit Canadian organization dedicated to protecting our country's most ecologically significant lands.



Swallow Nest Box Checks

This spring, forty new tree swallow nesting boxes were put up thanks to the talents of JL Crowe grade 9 woodworking students in Trail and the generosity of Kalesnikoff Lumber in Castlegar. The old nesting boxes will be taken down at the end of the nesting season as they are starting to rot and deteriorate.

From May to August, about every 2 weeks, Pat Huet, one of our fantastic volunteers, and I performed nest box checks for both the old and new boxes – 75 in total! Tree swallows are common birds of marshes and open fields that readily inhabit nest boxes or make nests in tree cavities. Our nest box checks allow us to monitor the birds to find out when they are nesting, how many eggs they are laying, how many chicks hatch out and if they survive to fledge (leave the nest).

The old boxes showed evidence of being occupied in mid May when we did our first check: grasses and feathers were stuffed into the bottom of the boxes. The tree swallow uses many feathers from other birds in its nest. The feathers help keep the nestlings warm and the levels of ectoparasites, like mites, low. More than half of the boxes had eggs in the nest at this time. For tree swallows, the clutch size (number of eggs laid in a single nesting) range in size from 2-8.

The Answers... from Ribbit Quiz (page 4)



Amphibians (class Amphibia) are cold-blooded animals that metamorphose from a juvenile, water-breathing form to an adult, air-breathing form. They are divided into three main orders: Anura (frogs and toads), Caudata (salamanders and newts) and Gymnophiona (caecilians). Anura (meaning "tail-less", from Greek an-, without + oura, tail) is comprised of over 5,600 frog and toad species. So, approximately 88% of amphibian species are frogs and toads.

True! Frogs' eyes bulge out allowing them to see in almost any direction. They also help the frog swallow. When the frog catches a mouthful of food its eyes sink through an opening in the skull and force food down its throat. Gulp!

Most frogs do have teeth of a sort. They have a ridge of very small cone teeth around the upper edge of the jaw called maxillary teeth. These are used to secure struggling prey so they cannot escape. Frogs also have vomerine teeth on the roof of their mouth that function in holding and capturing prey as well as crushing insects so that they can be more easily digested. Frogs do not chew their food, but swallow it whole. Toads, however, do not have any teeth.

It is an army of frogs and a knot of toads!

Some frog calls are so loud they can be heard up to a mile away. The call of a frog is unique to its species. Frogs call by passing air through the larynx in the throat. In most calling frogs, the sound is amplified by one or more vocal sacs, membranes of skin under the throat or on the corner of the mouth that distend during the amplification of the call. The main reason for calling is to allow males to attract a mate. Males call either individually or in a group called a chorus. Tropical species also have a rain call that they make on the basis of weather changes (humidity cues prior to a rain shower). Many species also have a territorial call that is used to chase away other males. All of these calls are emitted with the mouth of the frog closed.

My imagination was stumped by the real possibilities of what the word frog can mean! The answer is all of the above!

On our third visit to the boxes on June 27th, there were lots of newly hatched chicks and evidence that the older chicks had fledged from the nest (lots of feces inside the boxes, but no individuals). At one of the boxes, two young were perched on the grasses close to the box, looking as if they just took their first flight out. There were also some newly laid eggs and chicks that had just hatched.

On a hot and sunny afternoon on July 11th, we again checked all of the 75 boxes. By now, only a few boxes had eggs and the majority of the boxes had live young in various stages of development, ranging from blind and naked to eyes open and fully feathered. There was also evidence that more young had fledged from the nest boxes.

On July 23rd we found more full feathered young that were nearing fledge stage and a few naked blind young. On our last visit on August 7th, all the boxes but one were empty of birds.

Overall, approximately 125 tree swallows successfully fledged from the nest boxes. Hopefully, we will see them again next year!



Clockwise from top: Pat Huet checks one of the new swallow boxes. A young swallow peeks its head out of the box. Four full feathered young ready to fledge from the box.



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