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Message from the Coordinator

It's hard to believe it is already December and a new year is just around the corner! With a new year comes change, and for me that means moving to the Columbia Valley. Although I am excited that I will be living next to the Columbia Valley wetlands, I am sad to be leaving the Okanagan. I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with some fabulous people here, and to help push forward the mandate of the OCCP to coordinate and facilitate conservation and stewardship. In particular, I've enjoyed helping to strengthen the Partnership's coordinated effort to realize biodiversity conservation in the region.



With the support of OCCP Partners and several funding organizations, the OCCP now has the capacity to have a Program Manager and a Projects Coordinator to further deliver on its mandate. I'd like to welcome the OCCP's new Program Manager, Scott Boswell, and the new Project Coordinator, Tanis Gieselmann. They will be continuing to build on existing projects as well as implementing new and exciting initiatives and leveraging capacity to help us all "Keep Nature in Our Future".

Wishing you all a safe and happy holidays, and I hope that during this holiday season you are all able to take some time to appreciate the nature and beauty in the Okanagan.

Regards,
Carol

Introducing the new OCCP team!

Scott Boswell starts this month as OCCP's new Program Manager. He is a community development specialist with over 15 years experience working with local government and non-profit organizations. Scott has successfully completed a broad range of initiatives that include: creating and implementing a regional economic transition strategy, establishing an interpretive trails network, coordinating soil conservation and agro-forestry projects and spearheading a provincial social enterprise program for youth entrepreneurship.



Scott has an undergraduate degree in Environment Studies and Geography from the University of Victoria and a Master of Environmental Design in planning from the University of Calgary. Scott enjoys hiking and fly fishing and has been an avid environmentalists from a young age where he spent his youth helping out on his family's wilderness resort on Bonaparte Lake north of Kamloops.

Contact Scott: occp123@gmail.com

Tanis Gieselman is the new Projects Coordinator for OCCP. She moved to the Okanagan in 1989 and grew up in the West Kelowna wilderness. After completing a BSc. in Ecology at Okanagan University College in 2005, she became very aware of conservation issues in the Okanagan, and began studying seed-saving technologies as a means for conserving native biodiversity outside of parks and protected areas. She moved to Vancouver to complete an MSc. in Botany at UBC, and stayed for the last five years to be a science educator at UBC's Beaty Biodiversity Museum, while continuing to develop her seed-saving strategy in Kelowna. She is looking forward to returning to Kelowna and working with the OCCP partners toward a sustainable Okanagan.



Contact Tanis: occp333@gmail.com

Partner & Conservation News

Private Landowners Protecting Habitat!

Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship

Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship promotes voluntary conservation, stewardship and enhancement of important habitats on private land and within communities in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys. Stewardship is proud to introduce several new Wildlife Habitat Stewards in the North and Central Okanagan. Find out more in Stewardship's bi-annual newsletter [here](#).



New Stewardship Technician for the North Okanagan

Mariko McDougall is excited to be a part of the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship team in the North Okanagan. She will be carrying out landowner contact and community stewardship for important wildlife habitats in the North Okanagan as well as supporting local Wildlife Habitat Stewards. Her background in education and stewardship stems from a childhood of roaming the region's mountains

and valleys. Mariko recently graduated from McGill, where she studied Biology with a focus in Ecology. She is currently also the Education Coordinator at the Allan Brooks Nature Centre. Mariko can be contacted by email at mariko@osstewardship.ca.

Planning for wildlife corridors in the Okanagan

The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, in collaboration with the Regional District of the Central Okanagan, the Complex Environmental Systems Lab at UBC-Okanagan, and the Washington-BC Transboundary Connectivity Working Group, hosted a workshop in November on ecosystem connectivity. Over 30 participants came to share their expertise, including members of the public, land trust and stewardship organizations, Okanagan Nation Alliance, and representatives from all levels of government.



Participants from all backgrounds working together to plan for local wildlife corridors.

The goal of the workshop was to introduce new mapping initiatives and ecosystem connectivity planning tools, and use these resources to identify and prioritize important wildlife habitat corridors in the Central Okanagan. The feedback collected at this workshop is being compiled by the OCCP, and will be used to create an actionable strategy for on-the ground implementation of restoration/protection of corridors.

If you have feedback for the wildlife corridor project, please send it to: occp333@gmail.com

Ten years of water funding in the Okanagan celebrated!

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP), and the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) co-hosted “Celebrating Collective Impact” in November to recognize ten years of water funding in the Okanagan. This amazing event showcased the enormous amount of work that can come from working together. It was great to see so many OCCP partners present at this event!



Participants observing the showcase of 197 projects funded by the Okanagan Basin Water Board's WCQI grant program over the last 10 years.

Grantees shared results from past and ongoing projects that received funding through the OBWB Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program (WCQI), such as the [Drought Communication Project](#) in the Regional District of North Okanagan, Xeriscape initiatives by the [Okanagan Xeriscape Association](#), and restoration initiatives on [Mission Creek](#), and the [Okanagan River Restoration Initiative \(ORRI\)](#). Presentations were also given by funding partners like the Real Estate Foundation of BC, the Royal Bank of Canada, and the National Wetland Conservation Fund. The OBWB also announced the Call for Applications to this year's [WCQI grant program](#). This grant program was established in 2006 as a way to collaboratively address water issues and develop best practices. OBWB has awarded \$3.2 million to 55 organizations and 197 projects, which has allowed grantees to deliver projects worth more than \$20 million to help conserve and protect water in our region.



Nathan Gayton demonstrates how to control Russian Olives using a variant of the "hack and squirt" method.

experimental trial will be effective on a tree that is rapidly colonizing wetlands in the Okanagan and Thompson River valleys. Gayton also hopes to convince local nurseries to stop selling this noxious tree.

Taking Out The Olives

This fall, as part of their Wetland Strategy, the Okanagan Basin Water Board took on an aggressive invader: the [Russian Olive tree](#). Focussing on the Ducks Unlimited property in the the Osoyoos Oxbows, Don and Nathan Gayton, along with Arlin Baptiste of the Osoyoos Indian Band, spent a couple of days doing a variant of the "hack and squirt" method of tree control, using a brush saw and herbicide. Describing how the method works, Don says "you cut the tree down right at the base, and then immediately paint on a small amount of concentrated glyphosate on the stump. By doing this in the fall, when the tree is exporting nutrients downward, the herbicide gets a free ride into the root system."

Anyone who has cut down a Russian olive knows that the tree is a prolific "sucker," sending up new shoots almost immediately. Gayton and his crew are hoping this

Bring nature to the classroom!

Allan Brooks Nature Centre

The **Allan Brooks Nature Trailer** is now available for school bookings through March 2016! The trailer's current educational theme is Grassland Habitat Connectivity, which looks at how grassland animals survive and find resources in grassland ecosystems. The hands-on activities provide an interactive way for all-ages to learn about wildlife corridors, and how everyday choices and chance both influence local biodiversity, and our own water supply. Learning about Keeping Nature in Our Future extends the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy of the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program and OCCP partners.



The outside of the Nature Trailer draws people in to discover the wonders of local biodiversity.

The new trailer has already been hosted at numerous events, from Armstrong all the way to Penticton. Over 16 organizations provided either funding or in-kind support for the Nature Trailer. Coordinated in partnership with the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, the Okanagan-Similkameen Stewardship Society and the Allan Brooks Nature Centre, the Nature Trailer is currently receiving funding from Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Grant program, Telus, the Vancouver Foundation, and the Honda Canada Foundation, among others.

If you would like to book the trailer, or would like more info please see: www.abnc.ca or send an email to: education "at" abnc.ca.



The exhibit "How Do We Get From Here to There" is now at the EECO Centre in Kelowna.

gopher snake through the seasons!

The EECO is the second stop for the OCCP public education exhibit on "Keeping Nature in Our Future, A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region" about how communities can protect habitat for the benefit of local residents as well as wildlife. The exhibit is funded by Environment Canada's EcoAction Program, TELUS, Okanagan Basin Water Board and Vancouver Foundation with in-kind support from several education centres.

The EECO is located in [Mission Creek Regional Park](#)(Springfield and Durnin Roads). The EECO is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, and will be closed December 24th through December 28th, and on January 1st.

For more information visit the [Regional District website](#) or contact the EECO at 250-469-6140, email eeco@cord.bc.ca or drop into the [Centre](#).

How Do We Get From Here to There? Traveling the Green Highway

RDCO Regional Parks

Our new exhibit inside the [Environmental Education Centre for the Okanagan](#)(EECO) focuses on connections between animals and their environment. '**How Do We Get From Here to There? Traveling the Green Highway**' promotes the importance of preserving habitat corridors in our environment. Come follow the lives of a badger, a bighorn sheep, a spade-foot and a

A new Strategic Plan and 20 years of Wild BC

Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation

The latest [HCTF newsletter](#) reveals their new [Strategic Plan](#), which will provide a clear vision of what HCTF stands for and how they will achieve their goals over the next five years. The plan was jointly developed by HCTF Board and Staff members to provide guidance towards their vision of a future where fish, wildlife and habitats are healthy and valued by all British Columbians.

HCTF's latest newsletter also celebrates 20 years of environmental education programming with its WildBC program.

Beginning in 1995 with 20 facilitators,

WildBC has grown to a team of 75 facilitators across BC who inspire, lead, and support environmental learning. Their workshops, school programs, projects, and outdoor nature studies are thoughtfully designed to connect students with nature. Find out more about HCTF Education programs and resources [here](#).

Enter the HCTF BC photo Contest!

The Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation's Second Annual Photo Contest is coming to a close soon! They are still looking for spectacular images of BC's fish, wildlife and habitats, specifically:

- Freshwater fish (species native to BC)
- BC Wildlife (excluding marine mammals and those in captivity)
- Landscape photos of freshwater fish and wildlife habitats, including lakes, rivers, wetlands, forests, and grasslands.
- People engaged in activities that connect them with BC's fish, wildlife and habitats.

Entry deadline is December 31st, 2015. This year's grand prize is a \$500 VISA gift card, and there are two \$250 runner-up gift card prizes. For full contest rules and digital entry forms, visit [here](#).



HABITAT CONSERVATION TRUST FOUNDATION

The Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) provides money for fish, wildlife and habitat projects in BC. Funding for these projects primarily comes from conservation surcharges on angling, hunting, trapping and guide outfitting licences sold in BC.



A degraded riparian area and a culvert along the creek.

Coldstream Creek Water Quality Land Use Assessment: Phase I completed.

Society for the Protection of Kalamalka Lake (SPrKL)

Phase I of SPrKL's Coldstream Creek Water Quality Land Use Study will be available on the [SPrKL website](#) by December 15th 2015. The study was made possible by a \$20,000 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant from the Okanagan Basin Water Board and in-kind funding from Western Water Associates Ltd, SPrKL, Caro Analytical, the District of Coldstream, the Regional District of the North Okanagan, Interior Health and the Ministry of Environment. The project also includes the Cattleman's Association and the Coldstream Ranch. This project will assist regional governments in identifying areas along the creek that are vulnerable to land

use impacts.

The study's first phase involved sampling over 150 surface and groundwater locations along the creek to characterize land use impacts during low flow conditions and identify 90 high priority sample locations for a more in-depth analysis in Phase II. The purpose of Phase II will be to further characterize how land use is impacting the creek by completing a more detailed chemical analysis of 90 high priority locations and mapping the results into impact or vulnerability zones along the creek.

A new hydrometric monitoring station installed on Cherry Creek

Cherry Ridge Management Committee

A hydrometric station is scheduled to be installed just below the Sugar Lake Road bridge this week. The station is a generous donation from Claude Labine, and will measure real-time volume in Cherry Creek throughout the year. The sample site was selected by Dr. Natasha Neumann of UBCO, and is part of a larger Watershed Study sponsored by WVPRAC Community Works (Federal Gas Tax) and the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program

(thanks to funding from Environment Canada, the National Conservation Plan and the Real Estate Foundation of BC). The OCCP also supported Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping (SHIM) of Cherry Creek by Ecoscape, with assistance from Natalie Ford, and the Cherry Creek Management Committee. The SHIM helps identify priority areas for mitigation and restoration.



Rob Wagner from Ecoscape conducting Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping on Cherry Creek to support the Cherry Creek Watershed Study.

Conferences & Workshops

Science Delivery: Approaches and Influences on Success

GNLCC Rocky Mountain Partner Forum

Webinar on Wednesday, Dec 9, 2015 at 11 am Pacific / 12 pm Mountain

Presenter: Vita Wright, PI, Northern Rockies Fire Science Network

Using fire and fuels management as an example, this two pronged webinar will cover current best practices for science delivery and report the results of a study designed to improve future science delivery by understanding potential science users. A survey of 500 fire managers and decision makers in the United States Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management was used to assess individual and organizational Influences on the use of science. Influences included demographics, experience with scientists, beliefs about research usefulness, and work unit and agency culture. Results of a follow-up study assessing informal fire science communication networks will also be presented. The webinar will conclude with recommendations for improving the effectiveness of science delivery and ask for feedback from attendees on whether these results match their experiences. [More information](#).

Webinar space is limited to 100 people. If you miss the webinar, a recording will be available on the Great Northern LCC [webinar webpage](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance AGM

December 9, 2015 from 4 to 6 pm,
Shatford Centre, 760 Main Street, Penticton.

At the upcoming Annual General Meeting reports on OSCA's Ecostudies and Habitat Stewardship Programs (Salmon programs, Riparian Awareness Program, and Off-Road Vehicle Outreach), the 2015 Meadowlark Nature Festival, SOSCP's proposed Conservation Fund and the Vaseux Lake Migratory Bird will be heard.

Predator-Prey Dynamics: From Theory to Management Conference

Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology

Deadline for abstracts: December 15, 2015

Conference: April 5-7, 2016 in Revelstoke, BC

Anyone interested in presenting at the upcoming Predator-Prey Dynamics: From Theory to Management Conference you are invited to send title, abstract (max 300 words), a short bio, and full contact information to the Columbia Mountains Institute by Tuesday, December 15, 2015. See more information [here](#).

Funding Opportunities

Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)

Environment Canada

Expressions of Interest due December 18, 2015.

Proposal Deadline: January 15, 2016.

The HSP provides funding to help Canadians protect species at risk and their habitats and to proactively prevent other species from becoming a conservation concern. The program fosters land, water and resource use practices that maintain the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of species at risk, enhancing existing conservation activities and encouraging new ones. For more information on the program and to obtain the 2016-2017 application guidelines, please visit [Environment Canada – Funding Programs](#). You are encouraged to contact the Habitat Stewardship Program Coordinator before submitting an application to discuss your proposed project.

Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk (AFSAR)

Environment Canada

Expressions of Interest due December 18, 2015.

Proposal Deadline: January 15, 2016.

[AFSAR](#) provides funding to support projects aimed at developing Aboriginal capacity for participation in the recovery of species at risk, protection of their habitat, and preventing species from becoming a conservation concern. For more information on the program and to obtain the 2016-2017 application guidelines, please visit [Environment Canada – Funding Programs](#). You are encouraged to contact the Program Coordinator before submitting an application to discuss your proposed project.

National Wetland Conservation Fund (NWCF)

Environment Canada

Expressions of Interest due December 18, 2015.
Proposal Deadline: January 15, 2016.

The NWCF supports Canadians in undertaking on-the-ground activities to restore and enhance wetlands in Canada. For more information on the program and to obtain the 2016-2017 application guidelines, please visit [Environment Canada – Funding Programs](#). You are encouraged to contact the Program Coordinator before submitting an application to discuss your proposed project.

2016 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant program

Okanagan Basin Water Board

Deadline: 4 p.m. Friday, February 12, 2016.

Eligible recipients include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts. This year's themes include source drinking water protection, drought planning, water flow monitoring, groundwater studies, irrigation improvement, and water metering. Even with the increased focus on specific types of projects, the Water Board will consider all eligible applications.

Successful applicants can receive up to \$30,000 for their project. There is \$300,000 in total available, with \$56,820 to be awarded in the North Okanagan, \$180,660 in the Central Okanagan, and \$62,520 in the South Okanagan (figures based on percentage of tax each region contributes to the program.) Projects must have valley-wide benefit, recognizing that we are all part of 'One valley. One water.'

The complete program guide and application forms can be found [here](#).

Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation

Regular Grants deadline: December 15, 2015
Small Grants Deadline: January 15, 2016
Student Research Award Deadline: February 15, 2016

The Baillie Fund provides grants to individuals, groups and organizations for projects that advance the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. The Regular Grants range up to \$5000, Small Grants up to \$1000, and the Student Research Award is \$1000. Details [here](#).

Get Outdoors (GO) Grant

Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation

Deadline: February 15th, 2016

BC educators and schools are invited to apply for a [Get Outdoors \(GO\) Grant](#). These grants provide funding for activities that connect K-12 students with the outdoors and support hands-on learning experiences about the environment. GO Grants have helped over 20,000 students to get outdoors since the program began in 2012. For more information on grant criteria and how to apply, click [here](#).

RBC Bluewater Project Community Action Grant

Royal Bank of Canada

Deadline: February 18, 2016

These grants range from \$1,000 to \$10,000, and are awarded to local or community-based organizations in Canada, the United States or the Caribbean for water related projects. For more information, visit their [webpage](#).

South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program Conservation Fund

South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP)

SOSCP is looking for feedback about a proposed Conservation Fund Please visit the [SOSCP Conservation Fund webpage](#) to learn more about what is being proposed, and provide your comments.

Volunteer Opportunities

Nature Kids

NatureKids of BC

This wonderful program to introduce children to nature has been operating strongly in the North Okanagan for a number of years. Recently, one of the leaders has decided to step down, and a new co-leader is needed, or the program might cease! There are about eight outings per year, plus a few planning meetings, so the time commitment is not great. If you have a passion for nature and enjoy working with children, you could make a life long impact upon a child.

If you are willing to join as a co-leader, please contact the [NatureKids BC - North Okanagan](#).

Request to add squirrels to your Christmas Bird Count

Dr. Karl Larsen, a wildlife ecology and management professor at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops is asking people to keep watch for introduced squirrels during the Christmas period, and include them in the upcoming Christmas Bird Count. For a look at the four squirrels that could be encountered in the Okanagan click [here](#). Please report all sightings to Dr. Larsen at klarsen@tru.ca.

Least Weasel Survey

Are you interested in participating in a least weasel census in your area? Larry Davis, RPBio from Davis Environmental Ltd. is supplying traps and procedures to monitor for least weasel DNA to volunteers who will look for the critters in their local area. Least weasels are the smallest carnivore in North America and we know almost nothing about them, including their distribution in BC. If we find locations that seem to have adequate densities, they could form the basis of future research on least weasel ecology.

He is planning on getting the project going in early December. This years sampling is meant to be small scale but widespread. Volunteers will put out 2 - 1km long transects of 10 traps each. The traps would be removed 2-3 weeks later and any hair samples collected. Hair samples would be stored in envelopes supplied by me and shipped to me COD at the end of the winter. The time requirement to set out/pick up is estimated at 1/2 day. This would happen 2 or more times over the winter. He is hoping that people can piggy back this work on normal winter recreational activities. Least weasels generally inhabit open forest, farmland, and riparian areas. These areas can generally be found close to towns and transportation corridors making the project more feasible. Volunteers would get a stipend to help cover fuel costs.

If you would like to participate or need more information, please feel free to e-mail or call:

Larry Davis, RPBio
Davis Environmental Ltd.
250-267-3090
rldavis1961@gmail.com

Happy Holidays from OCCP!

Please note that this newsletter covers news for December and January, and the next newsletter will come in February. We look forward to more collaborations in the New Year.

Please visit the OCCP website at www.okcp.ca and 'Like' the OCCP Facebook Page.



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