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COMING BVN PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Enjoy the summer! BVN's evening speaker series continues on October 22, 2019. Admission is free. Donations at the door. Mark your calendar and join us for conversation and natural history presentations.

Until then click the titles that interest you...

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LET THEM KNOW YOUR MIND...



Who knows what made this patch of yellow in the snow? Find the answer below. *Matthew Clay photo.*

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Our October to April program of free presentations occurs on the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Banff Seniors Centre starting at 7:30 pm. Watch the “[Events](#)” tab on the BVN website for updates and the beautiful posters advertising these special social and informative evenings. Admission is free. Donations at the door. Mark your calendar and join us for the next season of natural history presentations starting October 22, 2019.

NEWS AND ISSUES

BVN is following a number of issues as we head into summer. Members are encouraged to follow these topics and wherever possible speak up to land managers about protecting ecosystems.

E-BIKES

Jasper National park is running a trial that allows bicycles with electronic assist to be used in certain backcountry areas. It can be argued that these bikes allow a wider range of people to gain access to the backcountry but there is also no doubt that this technology simply allows more people into wild and natural areas and will eventually lead to the backcountry version of the increasing infrastructure costs, crowding and wildlife conflicts we currently see with ever increasing use of front country areas.

LAKE LOUISE SKI AREA LONG RANGE PLAN

BVN remains engaged as the draft environmental assessment of Lake Louise ski area long range plan is developed and reviewed. Contact us if you wish more information on the status of this review or wish some background information to help you comment to park managers.

BANFF NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

BVN continues to interact with park planners as the process of developing a new management plan by the end of 2020 develops. This is a critical planning process that will set the tone for park management until 2030. That's a long time and it is important that this plan speaks strongly for ecosystem protection as the first priority in decision making. Of key importance is ensuring this plan questions the concept of continued visitor growth. The concept of growth is not well suited to a protected ecosystem subjected to threats to its integrity both from within its boundaries and beyond. As input to the scoping phase of the planning process BVN has drafted an initial list of directions on growth and other topics we think the plan should address. Let us know if you would like to receive a copy.

LIRICON PARKING PROJECTS

As many will be aware Liricon developments has begun construction of a large new parking area adjacent to the Banff train station. Development of this parking area has been scraped into the sand dunes of the ancient glacial lake that is part of the Towns natural history heritage. Further parking and gondola proposals suggest that the subtle ridges that mark the receding shoreline of this ancient lake adjacent to the Fenlands Centre should be destroyed to create yet a bigger parking lot. While these parking lots may get private vehicles out of downtown will they simply facilitate more parking and overcrowding? If we had a comprehensive and integrated transportation plan in place would these parking lots be needed? Are these parking proposals simply band aids that avoid addressing the very real challenge of recognizing limits to growth in Banff National Park? Please visit the Liricon website and get informed about their proposals.

WILDLIFE IN MORTALITY CANMORE

Several elk were killed recently in one highway incident that was attributed to human interactions. One bear has been already killed in Canmore already this year due to habituation to human food sources. Bears feeding on highway grain spills. Enough is enough. How much worse does this season's list of wildlife tragedies east of the Banff Park gate need to get before elected officials will take firm actions to manage human behavior and install mitigative infrastructure? Please let your elected municipal and provincial officials know that you want action to be sure these tragedies come to an end.

OF WILD THINGS

COVER PAGE BACKGROUND

The layers of sedimentary rock in the Canadian Rockies are the chapters and pages that record the landscape processes and evolution of life over 1.5 billion years. Our cover page background of fossils preserved in limestone along the Vermilion Lakes Road was taken by Diane McIvor. We welcome those with more geo-knowledge to send more details of the fossils shown here. Corals of the Carboniferous or perhaps Permian period?

GOLD IN THE B.C. SNOW!

Lynda Pelosi

In late March, I was perusing through a popular hiking Facebook group, and one of the members had posted a picture of a clump of yellow bugs sitting on top of the snow. The photographer, Matthew Clay, had been hiking on the south ridge of Wedge Mountain, north of Crowsnest Pass, and he had reached out to the group to see if anyone could identify the bugs. As you can well imagine, there were all sorts of suggestions, some very entertaining, but most were obviously incorrect. There were however a few serious suggestions that this was a clump of yellow snow fleas.



Golden Snowflea colony (*Family Onychiuridae, possibly Hymenaphorura cocklei*). Matthew Clay Photo

I was only aware of black springtails, but I'm not a biologist or entomologist, so of course, I searched yellow springtails and found out that the "The *O. cocklei* (Folsom), is the most famous B.C. springtail -- otherwise known as the Golden Snowflea, it swarms on the snow in masses of yellow." and they were first collected by "T.J.W.Cockle of Kaslo, .B.C., a dynamic amateur entomologist and hotelier" (The families of Springtails (*Collembola*) of British Columbia, R.A. Canings and G.G. E.Scudder. E-Fauna BC website)

Crowsnest Pass is in the southwest corner of Alberta bordering British Columbia and it appears insects don't know where the provincial boundaries are so these yellow springtails had no idea about the questions they had initiated. Yellow and black are not their only colours, as purple, red and green springtails also exist.

Spring Tail Facts:

- Some entomologists consider springtails to be separated from insects and have elevated them to the class *Collembola* ("the largest of the three lineages of modern hexapods").

- They don't jump like a flea but have a furcula, a tail-like appendage that catapults them, nearly 100 x's the length of their own body.
- Unlike a flea, they are not a parasite.
- They eat organic matter in the soil, which greatly helps with decomposition.
- Require moist conditions for survival.
- They have a "glycine-rich antifreeze protein" that helps them withstand bitterly cold temperatures.
- They mate in the spring, and a female can lay upwards of 400 eggs.
- There are approximately 700 species in North America and more than 6,000 worldwide.
- Some species can live without food for up to three years by recycling their own waste, while others can also go into a form of dormancy.
- Species of the Springtails can be found above 21,000 feet on Mount Everest.
- They develop by shedding their exoskeleton as their body size is growing.
- Populations can reach huge numbers, up to 50,000 per cubic foot of forest litter, up to 2,800 per square foot in planted fields.

Sources:

<https://www.esa.org/esablog/research/snow-fleas-helpful-winter-critters2/>

E-Fauna BC website and an article called The families of Springtails (Collembola) of British Columbia, by R.A. Canings and G.G. E.Scudder, copyright 2005,

(Editors Note: A number of pest control services can be found with information about "Spring Tails" on their websites. These have not been included here to avoid promotion of any business or endorsement of their approaches to controlling insects.)

BEING CAREFUL WITH BIRDS

Spring is such a wonderful time of year as the silence of the snows is replaced by the music of migratory birds. At this time of year we are all getting out early or taking advantage of evening light to get close to the composer so of this music and even catch a glimpse of them.

BVN would like to remind everyone that the point of appreciation is protection and not disturbance. BVN knows all too well from our own bird banding project, operated under special permits and licences, that these little animals lead very precarious existences. Even a little disturbance in their territories can be harmful.

At any time, but especially in this sensitive breeding season, please enjoy your birding from a distance. Never linger in an area very long and be careful how widely you share your special observations. With the eyes, cameras and binoculars of the world pointed at our special place it is easy for nature watching, especially for birds, to get out of control and become part of the problem instead of a solution. If a technical reason to be careful with your birding is required be aware that going out of our way to find birds in their natural habitats could be considered as "hunting" under the Migratory Birds Convention Act or as "harassment" under the National Parks Act. Leading others to do the same wanders into the realm of guided activities which are also regulated in national parks.



Watching birds with scopes and binoculars from a safe distance is important - especially in breeding season.

Photo: P. Duck.

NATURE NEEDS HALF

Courtney Burk

BVN members are encouraged to explore the Nature Needs Half initiative. It is an international movement to give nature the space it needs to thrive and benefit all life on earth. The goal is to protect 50% of the planet, on both land and at sea, by 2030 to save biodiversity and earth's life support systems. But it's not just about protecting half. It's about reshaping our relationship with nature and taking care of nature needs, so it can keep taking care of ours. NNH invites you to take a deep dive into what is happening in our world. They've partnered with experts from around the globe to talk about everything from how elephants help plant forests, to how our relationship with nature needs to change, to what we can do to save life on earth. It's not about doom and gloom, it's about doom and solutions!

WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE READING

We often think of biodiversity in terms of the number of species present in an ecosystem. Biodiversity is also important in the context of habitat diversity and genetic diversity. Bob Milko came across this interesting research relating to climate change, marmots and genetic diversity.

Val Clark sends us articles from time to time. We thought you might find both of these interesting and timely given alpine development proposals in our region and recent news about declining global biodiversity that makes the mountain parks ever more important as protected ecosystems.

Do you have your own interesting nature photo or a note you would like to share with BVN members? Send it to us at info@bowvalleynaturalists.org and we will try to work it into our next issue.

WHO DO YOU CALL?

You may come across situations or observations that you want to tell the authorities about. We recommend you have these phone numbers handy. Remember, cell phone coverage is spotty in the mountains so take notes if you need to move on to make a call.

Ambulance, Fire Department, Police (RCMP): 911

Banff Dispatch: 403-762-4506 for Park-related emergency only (avalanche, forest fire, mountain rescue, etc.)

Banff Dispatch: 403-762-1470 for Park non-emergency (e.g. bear or large carnivore sightings, human-wildlife conflicts, injured animal, illegal park activities such as fire, camping, drones)

Kananaskis Emergency Services 403-591-7755 for emergencies, bear, cougar and problem wildlife sightings, illegal activities. This is also the number to report a poacher. If you wish to remain anonymous while reporting a crime, phone 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).

CONTACTS

(Please let us know if you find any of these contacts need to be updated)

CANADA

You may send letters to Members of Parliament postage-free, by addressing them:
% House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Environment Minister
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Chief of Staff to Minister McKenna
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Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
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ALBERTA

If your call to your MLA, or any Alberta government office, is long distance then please dial 310-0000 then the area code and the phone number for toll free access.

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