



# OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN STEWARDSHIP NEWS

Spring 2022

## Calling all citizen scientists and amphibian aficionados!

The Okanagan and Similkameen valleys are home to a small Threatened amphibian called a Great Basin Spadefoot. They breed in ephemeral (temporary) spring ponds and after they have grown up, they burrow into the ground using two small "spades" on their hind feet.

We are looking for volunteers to quietly observe their neighbourhood ponds, ephemeral wetlands, and even ditches for 10-15 minutes and listen for spadefoots. While you're probably familiar with the pacific chorus frog's distinct "ribbit" call, spadefoots make a distinctive call that sounds like a snore! Head over to <https://www.osstewardship.ca/amphibians> to listen to and learn their call before surveying. Once you've listened for spadefoots, we ask that you fill out our wildlife survey form here: [www.bit.ly/spadefoot-oss](http://www.bit.ly/spadefoot-oss)

If you hear spadefoots while you are surveying, try to take a recording so you can attach it to the form and we can hear it too!



## Are you a Bat Enthusiast?

Although bats used to have a bad reputation, we have learned so much about them in recent decades and know now that bats are amazing creatures that do so much for us in terms of insect control. Conducting bat counts and helping to monitor bat colonies can give us a better idea of how bats are doing from year to year.

Ideally, the Bat Count includes four counts during the summer:

- two between June 1 and 21 (before pups can fly) and,
- two more between July 11 and August 5 (when pups are learning to fly and are exiting the roost with their mothers).



For more information and instructions, visit BCBats website: [www.bit.ly/count-bats](http://www.bit.ly/count-bats)

# Skaha Park Green Up

## Wildlife Habitat Enhancement at Urban Pond

Have you noticed some planting activity at the ponds on the east side of Penticton's Skaha Lake park?

With the help of Allison Dietrich's Skaha Lake Middle School Grade 8 class, and in partnership with the City of Penticton, there's work underway to enhance the pond-side vegetation. According to Executive Director, Alyson Skinner of Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society, the students made quick work of adding 250 native trees, shrubs and flowering plants. Among the new additions, look for red osier dogwood, native roses, showy milkweed and snowberry. Once grown, these plants will not only provide habitat for wildlife, but will help filter pollutants from runoff into the pond.

"Stewardship of our natural environment is a shared responsibility and we are so appreciative that OSSS provided the opportunity for our class to participate in this project" Dietrich says, "Helping students understand that parks are more than just recreational areas, and provide habitat for plants and animals really hits home with experiences like this."

This initiative is funded by South Okanagan Conservation Fund, Community Foundation of the South Okanagan-Similkameen, and TD Friends of the Environment Fund.



## Skaha Lake Park Workshop Series

Planting with Skaha Lake Middle School students is just the start of our work at the pond at Skaha Lake Park. In addition to more planting, OSS will be hosting a number of workshops this year. Beginner Birding was the first workshop, held on May 8. Twenty-five local residents learned the basics of how to identify birds without getting overwhelmed by their bird guide. Highlights of the workshop included seeing a flock of White-crowned Sparrows, several Yellow-rumped Warblers, and watching a whole flock of tiny Mallard ducklings attempt to climb the banks of the creek!

Later on in the summer, keep an eye out for talks and workshops on snakes, amphibians, and native plants and pollinators! To ensure you don't miss out, look for announcements on our Facebook or Instagram pages (@OSSStewardship), or sign up for our monthly e-newsletter on our website - [www.osstewardship.ca/news](http://www.osstewardship.ca/news)

Become a member at [www.osstewardship.ca/membership](http://www.osstewardship.ca/membership) and receive advance sign up privileges for our workshops



# Habitat Enhancement at Sun-Oka Provincial Park

## Wildlife Habitat Enhancement at Urban Pond

In a partnership with BC Parks, and the Environmental Sciences class from Summerland Secondary School, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship further enhanced natural areas at Sun-Oka Provincial Park in Trout Creek.

Chad Eneas opened our planting day by offering an Indigenous perspective on habitat restoration and thanking the students for helping to give back and restore the environment. The students were also shown pictures of Indigenous artifacts such as arrowheads so they would know what to do if they found one during the planting day. Afterwards, the students got to work planting 250 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers to enhance previously naturalized sites in the park. They worked very hard, completing the planting project in less than two hours, including spreading some mulch to assist with weed suppression and moisture retention around the plants.

Species planted include rabbitbrush, waxy currant, showy milkweed, Canada goldenrod, snowberry and native wild rose species. If you find yourself at Sun-Oka Park this summer, head over to the naturalized areas to have a look and see if you can observe any wildlife starting to use these planting areas!



## Stewardship is a shared responsibility

Tips for being a great steward of your local park.

- Keep pets under control so they don't disturb ground nesting birds, ducks, or other animals.
- Clean up after pets. Pet waste can get into our lakes and rivers via water runoff where it can contribute to smelly algal blooms, and make water unsafe to drink or swim in.
- Dispose of litter appropriately. Garbage and cigarette butts may be eaten by birds and they also dirty our lakes and rivers. Leftover dropped food can attract rats and mice.
- Don't let it loose! Released pet turtles & goldfish can take over a pond and they have a huge impact on the native turtles, frogs, salamanders, or other wildlife already living there.
- If you want to feed ducks, leave the bread at home! Feed them things like peas, birdseed, or greens as this more like what they eat in the wild.
- If you are out watching or photographing wildlife make sure to give them lots of space. Even if animals don't look stressed they may be watching you instead of eating or taking care of their young.



# Big, beautiful blooms

Right in our backyard!

The Okanagan and Similkameen valleys put on an impressive show of wildflowers each year. Some of them are familiar, like the big, yellow Arrow-leaf Balsamroot that carpets the hills each spring but there are so many more. If you want some wildflower beauty in your home, avoid picking them in the wild and leave them there for wildlife. Instead, grow them in your garden- Sagebrush Nursery in Oliver and Xeriscape Endemic Nursery in West Kelowna are great sources for Indigenous plants! All of the flowers below also do wonderfully in backyard gardens. Native plants are drought-tolerant, require less maintenance, and native pollinators tend to prefer them to other flowers!



Many of these flowers will be at your local native plant nursery but you can also find seeds online. Sometimes, different flowers have the same common name, so it's best to note the Latin name as well before you go shopping.

1. Showy Fleabane (*Erigeron speciosus*) - Grows to 1' tall to 2" wide and likes sun. Great for pollinators
2. Mock Orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*) - Medium sized shrub about 6-10' tall. Beautiful fragrance.
3. White Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) - Is also found in different colours. Can be mowed, great for a lawn.
4. Heartleaf Arnica (*Arnica cordifolia*) - Grows 1-2' tall. Prefers more water than others, especially if in full sun.
5. Red Columbine *Aquilegia canadensis* - Grows 1-2' tall and is loved by butterflies and hummingbirds
6. Shrubby Penstemon (*Penstemon fruticosus*) - Needs dry, well-drained, sandy soils. Grows to 1.5' tall and wide.

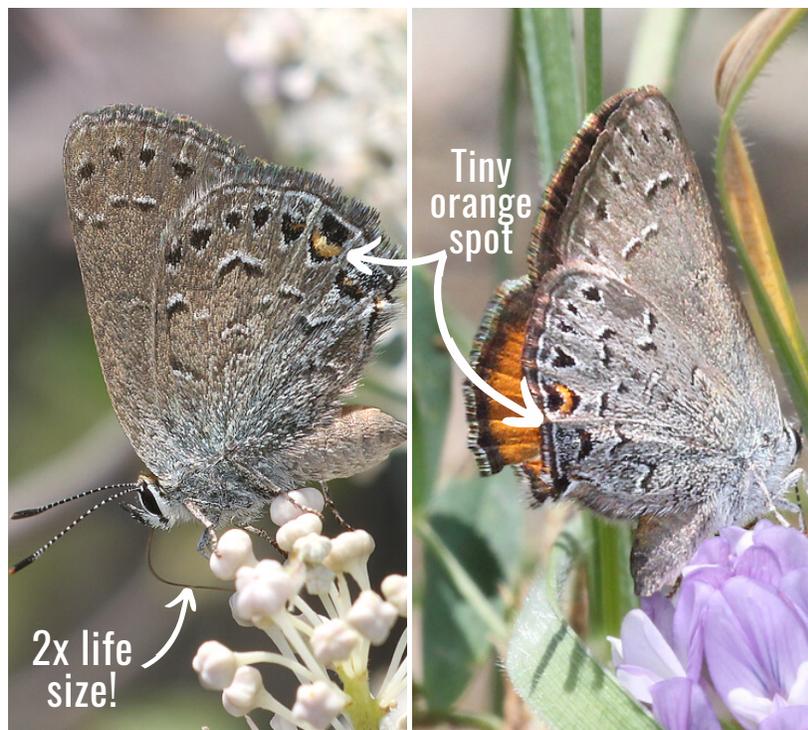
# Behr's Blitz

## Behr's Hairstreaks and lookalikes

Do you have antelope-brush on your property? It may be home to an endangered butterfly! Behr's Hairstreaks only live around antelope-brush, as it is the only plant on which they will lay eggs. As much of the antelope-brush grasslands in our area have been destroyed, these butterflies have become critically endangered in Canada.

Behr's Hairstreaks are small (1-1.5") and mostly grey with scattered black and white bars and spots along the edge of their wings. There are one or two tiny orange spots at the bottom corner of each wing. The upper side of the wing is orange with a grey border.

The adults fly around in mid-to-late June, so keep an eye out in the next month or so. If you think you see one, try to take a photo and send it to us!



## Similar-looking butterflies

There are a few other butterflies that look a lot like the Behr's Hairstreak. Remember, Behr's Hairstreaks have just the tiniest bit of orange at the corner of the underside of their wing and the upperside is orange.

Some of these similar butterflies are pictured here:

- 1. California Hairstreak:** Has many orange spots on its underwing. The top side of the wing is light grey
- 2. Grey Hairstreak:** Has lots of orange spots and the top side of the wing is dark grey. Also has "tails" off the wing's edge.
- 3. Some Elfin species:** Are usually brown, not grey
- 4. Half-Moon Hairstreak** - Has no orange spots at all. It's top side is all grey. This butterfly species is also endangered and lives near lupine flowers so if you see it, report it to us as well!



## A case of mistaken identity

As they both are large and striped, Monarch butterflies and various Swallowtail butterflies are often mistaken for one another. Once you know the difference, telling them apart is simple! While both species have bold black stripes the background colour on a Swallowtail will be a shade of yellow or cream, while Monarchs are only bright orange. Swallowtails have a "tail" on the bottom of each wing but Monarchs don't have tails. Lastly, Swallowtails are common in the Okanagan and Similkameen, whereas Monarchs are fairly rare, with only a handful of sightings each year.





# Eneas Creek Corridor

Following our very successful restoration project with Okanagan Crush Pad along Eneas Creek in Summerland, we have begun building a community of stewards along the creek corridor. In 2020-2021 we worked with 5 different land stewards to protect and enhance over 1.5km of Eneas Creek the shoreline. Projects included helping landowners with invasive plant management plans, fencing livestock out of the creek, replanting native vegetation in priority areas, and managing invasive plants within our planted areas to give our native plants a chance to thrive.

Eneas Creek provides habitat for at least 5 species at risk; Lewis's Woodpeckers, Great Basin Gophersnakes, Tiger Salamanders, and Great Basin Spadefoots. An endangered Yellow-breasted Chat was even observed on one of the stewarded properties!

This spring and summer, OSS will be reaching out to residents along the creek to take on the shared responsibility of Yellow-flag Iris management. Yellow-flag Iris was introduced as a garden plant and invades ditches, wetlands, streams, lake shorelines, and shallow ponds. This plant reproduces through seed dispersal, horizontal roots, and when pieces of the roots break off, which can form new plants. The seeds float on the water in spring and fall, causing them to spread quickly.

We will be working with Dr. Catherine Tarasoff to implement her "benthic barrier method" of Yellow-flag Iris control along the creek. If you live in the Garnet Valley and are interested in being a part of this habitat improvement project, please contact us at [info@osstewardship.ca](mailto:info@osstewardship.ca) or 250-770-1764.

## For more information, contact OSS at:

E: [info@osstewardship.ca](mailto:info@osstewardship.ca) P: 250.770.1467  
W: [www.osstewardship.ca](http://www.osstewardship.ca)   @osstewardship

*We gratefully acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional, unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan people.*

**We are excited to announce that our Wildlife Habitat Stewards initiative is a finalist of the Real Estate Foundation of BC's Land Awards for 2022!**

## Partners in stewardship and conservation

Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation  
Greater Vernon Natural Areas and Trails Grant  
RDNO | North Okanagan Conservation Fund  
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Okanagan Basin Water Board  
Forest Enhancement Society of BC  
Central Okanagan Foundation  
BC Community Gaming Grant  
Highstreet Ventures

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