



OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN STEWARDSHIP NEWS

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

Treading Lightly: Responsible Outdoor Recreation Tips

The Okanagan and Similkameen are exceptional places, known for spectacular landscapes, world-class wines, iconic wildlife, and amazing recreation opportunities. Unfortunately, many natural areas are threatened by impacts from the very things that make this such a desirable place for us to live and play. Using the outdoors responsibly ensures that our natural spaces persist to for years to come.

1) Get rid of 'hitchhikers' before you leave an area

Many invasive plants have sticky or hooked seeds that easily attach to boots, gear, pants, and pet fur. These plants can be devastating to local fragile ecosystems. Removing these seeds from clothes and pets and disposing of them in the garbage (not compost!) before you leave an area helps minimize the spread of these plants from place to place.



2) Clean. Drain. Dry.

If you have taken your boat out our area it is imperative that it is inspected for invasive mussels before re-launching in our waterways. These tiny, devastating mussels can survive out of water for weeks in the smallest of crevices and could destroy our cherished lakes and rivers. Learn more at dontmoveamussel.ca.



3) Stay on roads and paths, no matter what kind of recreation you are doing

Avoiding taking shortcuts and keeping your boots and wheels on the tracks and trails already cut through an area dramatically decreases habitat fragmentation and can even slow the spread of invasive species. Unsanctioned recreation in fragile ecosystems like wetlands and grasslands can take many decades to heal after being damaged.



4) Keep pets under control

Leashing pets while enjoying the outdoors is the best way to make sure both of you stay safe. Having them nearby ensures they will not accidentally lead to unwanted (or dangerous) wildlife back to you and allows you to make sure they are not unintentionally stressing local wildlife, whether in a playful manner or otherwise.



Become a member of Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship and support to support conservation in your community!

Membership is just \$10.00/year and available on our website at www.osstewardship.ca

From the Field...

It has been a busy spring here at OSS. Planting days, invasive plant removal, and site visits have kept us all hopping!



Taking a break during a planting and weeding day in Vernon

Radies & Paley Ponds, Vernon & Coldstream

Despite some pesky vole issues last year, our two wetland construction projects in Vernon are doing well and continuing to grow through the invasive plant management stage and we are seeing substantial growth in the native plants we put in. Some of the trees are almost 10 feet tall now!

These wetlands were dug in 2015 and 2016 in Vernon and Coldstream, respectively, and were our first major projects in the North Okanagan. There have been a combined total of over 2500 plants of 20 different species put into these projects so



The new flood-created seasonal side channel

Okanagan Crush Pad, Summerland

Our riparian restoration and wetland creation project with the Okanagan Crush Pad Winery took an interesting turn this spring when, for the 2nd year in a row, Eneas Creek breached its banks and created a small seasonal side channel right where the new ponds were going to be excavated! Since Mother Nature has done the job for us, there's no need to dig in more ponds. This has the added bonus of creating less soil disturbance, which will



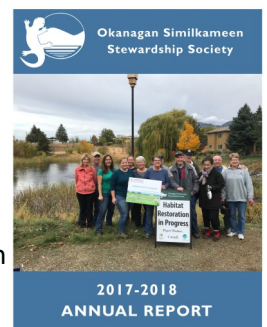
Volunteers helping plant native species at Riverside Park

Riverside Marsh, Penticton

At Riverside Marsh in Penticton, staff and volunteers finished planting the last stretch of the marsh perimeter this spring. Over the past few years, along with TD Bank and the City of Penticton, we have turned the damaged, weed-infested oxbow almost an acre and a half of wetland habitat! Although there are still several years of invasive plant management left, wildlife are already moving in! This year, wood ducks, beavers, muskrats, mallards, deer, tree frogs and songbirds have all been seen enjoying the marsh.

Annual Report

Want a more comprehensive look at the projects Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship carries out in your community? Our 2017-18 Annual Report is now available on our website at www.osstewardship.ca. You can request a print copy by emailing info@osstewardship.ca or phoning us at 250-770-1467.



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Are you a Weed Warrior?

While it's a rewarding experience to plant shrubs and trees, planting is only a small fraction of the job in any wildlife habitat restoration project. Invasive plants are one of the biggest threats to biodiversity in the Okanagan. They outcompete native species for light, space, nutrients and water and dramatically decrease habitat quality wherever they are found. When native species are just small and newly planted, there is added risk of invasive species choking them out.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES!

OSS staff and volunteers spend hundreds of hours each year removing these weeds from the restoration sites pictured here as well as many others.

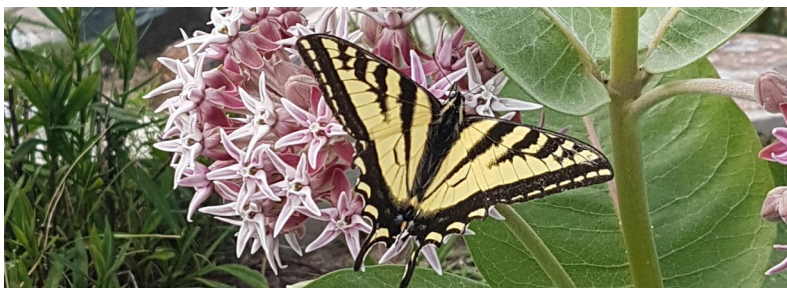


Conquering large areas of invasive plants can be really satisfying!

Why should you volunteer with us to remove invasive plants?

- It's a great way to get outdoors and get active — good for you and good for the environment!
- You get to play an active role in habitat restoration in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys.
- You learn to identify invasive vs native plants and can use that information to improve your garden for wildlife.
- There is a great sense of satisfaction that comes from watching a habitat thrive because of your help!

Sign up for our volunteer email list at:
www.osstewardship.ca/volunteer



A large Swallowtail butterfly on a native Milkweed species in Osoyoos

CARING FOR YOUR SHORELINE



CLEAN WATER



Healthy riparian areas help filter pollutants and sediment from runoff, thus cleaning the water.

REDUCE EROSION

Roots help to stabilize banks and decrease soil erosion and siltation.



FLOOD PROTECTION

Roots provide flood protection by slowing and dissipating high stream flows..

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Approximately 85% of Okanagan wildlife species rely on riparian habitats or use them regularly.



HABITAT IN PERIL

75%

3/4 of riparian areas in the Okanagan valley have been lost to agricultural and urban development..

osstewardship.ca

Spotlight on Species: *Northern Rubber Boa*

The Rubber Boa is the most northern species of boa and one of the smallest of the boa family. Their loose skin and small scales give them an almost alien appearance; pinkish-coloured juvenile snakes are often mistaken for giant earthworms. Adults are olive-green to brown in color with a lighter belly.

Rubber Boas are highly secretive and primarily nocturnal, which is why they are rarely spotted by people. During the day, they hide in burrows under rocks, leaf litter or logs.

Rubber Boas avoid hot, dry areas and prefer to live in woodlands, grasslands, forests, and riparian areas.

While boas hibernate with other boas, unlike in many other snakes, boas do not appear to share their dens with other species of snakes. Rubber Boas can live up to 30 years and females don't lay eggs and rather give birth to 1-8 live young every few years in August through November.

Preferred prey of the Rubber Boa are babies of small mammals like voles, shrews, and deer mice. Just like their larger cousins in South America, Rubber Boas wrap their bodies around their prey, constricting until the prey's heart stops. Being a constrictor means Rubber Boas are very docile and do not bite.

The Rubber Boa is also known as the two-headed snake; small eyes a blunt tail make it difficult to tell one end from the other. The rubber boa uses this to its advantage: when threatened it coils into a ball, hiding its head, and leaving its tail poking out. This draws the predator to attack the tail instead of more vital areas. Birds of prey, raccoons, coyotes, skunks, cats, and even other snakes have all been known to be predators of Rubber Boas.

Rubber Boas are threatened by many of the same things as other local snake species. Their habitat is continually lost to development for urbanization and agriculture. Because of their mild nature, individuals are sometimes illegally collected from the wild. While basking along roads in the evening, boas are killed by cars. Many people think about slowing for big wildlife like deer, elk and moose, but snakes need a brake too! To learn more about snakes, including the Rubber Boa, visit our website at www.osstewardship.ca/snakes.



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