



# Wild Days 2017

## Program Report

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SLSS Education & Communication Team

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**Wild Days!** sponsored by the Slocan Lake Stewardship Society (SLSS) are free family nature walks held at various locations throughout the Slocan Lake watershed. In August 2017, three *Wild Days!* took families and community members out in the watershed for fun outdoor adventure and environmental learning. The 3-hour long programs encourage participants to explore and make sense of some of the small, wondrous creatures as well as large, spectacular features that surround our communities in the north Slocan Valley.

2017 Sponsors included the Slocan Valley Legacy Fund, Columbia Basin Trust, Hills Recreation Society and Regional District of Central Kootenay.

## Event Highlights

### **Saturday, August 5, 9 am-12 pm. *Time Travelling, New Denver***

Took place at the Bosun Ranch located above Slocan Lake between New Denver and Silverton with a scenic walk through geologic time and over 100 years of local history while exploring the diversity of nature with local experts Richard Johnson, Daniel Hellyer and Marcy Mahr.

**Participants: 56**

### **Saturday, August 12, 9 am-12 pm. *Fenominal Fen, Hills***

Explored rare wetlands full of carnivorous plants and cool insects reminiscent of the northern Boreal forest with local experts Marcy Mahr, Daniel Hellyer and Richard Johnson. Co-sponsored with Slocan Wetlands Assessment & Monitoring Project (SWAMP).

**Participants: 38**

### **Saturday, August 19, 9 am-12 pm. *Toads & Bears: Strange Bedfellows, Fish Lake Rest Area***

Discovered the fascinating and similar habits of bears and toads from local experts Wayne McCrory and Marcy Mahr. Co-sponsored with Valhalla Wilderness Society.

**Participants: 34**

## Program Stats

Four local naturalists and scientists led the tours: Richard Johnson, Daniel Hellyer, Marcy Mahr, and Wayne McCrory. They represented a broad range of scientific disciplines (e.g., geology, soils, insects, plants, amphibians, and bears) that infused interesting hands-on experiences and facts about nature into each event.

***This year a total of 128 people attended Wild Days!***

**Table 1. Participants attending each *Wild Days* program.**

	<b>08/05/16</b>	<b>08/12/16</b>	<b>08/19/16</b>
Adult	36	22	19
Child	15	11	11
Expert	2	2	1
Staff	2	2	2
Volunteer	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>34</b>

There were several adults and a youth who came to all 3 field trips; and several adults and children that attended 2 of the 3 field trips. One family traveled from Vernon so they could attend again because they enjoyed it so much last year.

At the end of program, there was a prize draw. This is fun for participants, and a good incentive for everyone to stay for the duration of the walk. Our 2017 prize winners were:

- August 5: Luke Buchanan and Winston Buchanan each won a bug viewer.
- August 12: Luke Buchanan won solar print paper; Amelie Tremaine won a lens/compass tool; and Jane Murphy, won a book about the history of Bosun Ranch.
- August 19: Ashlyn Merrifield won a bug viewer; Dalhia Merrifield won a lens/compass tool; Finn Murphy won solar print paper; and Alex Wood, won a book about the history of Japanese internment at Bosun Ranch.

## Communication Highlights

### Print Media: Ads, articles and announcements

- *Wild Days!* colour ad with photos and dates – July 27
- *Wild Days!* article published - July 27

### Marketing Collateral

- Posters - 15 8.5 x 14" colour posters were printed to be distributed in New Denver, Silverton, Crescent Valley, Slocan, Hills, Rosebery, and Nakusp.
- Leaflets: 210 Save-the-Dates leaflets printed to advertise *Wild Days* at the New Denver Friday Market June 30 to August 18.
- Field Journals: 2 journals: Wetlands and Mountains were created. We were fortunate to have local artist Ronnie Jurgensen sketch beautiful illustrations for centre-fold of the Field Journal, and front covers to highlight different flora and fauna around the Slocan Lake watershed. Ronnie's drawings updated the journal from last year's version. We also in-

corporated word searches that included *Wild Days* terminology along with an answer key. 50 Wetlands journals, and 25 Mountains journals were printed.

### Social Media

- FaceBook: 4 posts – 1 Save-the-Dates and 3 reminders before each event. These posts were shared to other FaceBook accounts/groups, which reached other people beyond members of the New Denver & Area Community Bulletin Board (1000+ members) and the Nakusp Communicator (3100+ members).
- The Slovan Valley Legacy Fund also posted the *Wild Days* poster on its FaceBook timeline (280+ followers) and was shared 22 times to other FaceBook users and their variety of networks!

### Websites

- Slovan Lake Stewardship Society - Details about *Wild Days* and the poster were available on the front page of the SLSS website.
- Village of New Denver - The Village posted our article and poster on their website and online community calendar.

### Participant Feedback

- A few repeat families from last year attended two of three *Wild Days*. One family said the reason they didn't go to all three this year was because they attended the Toads & Bears at Fish Lake program last year.
- A parent of one the repeating families grew up here and is a teacher in the Okanagan. He'd love to see this sort of experience brought into Professional Development for teachers to get kids outside. And, he was wondering how he could bus his class here for these kinds of environmental education programs.
- In terms of advertising, quite a few people we surveyed heard about *Wild Days* at SLSS's Friday Market table. For instance, two families from Calgary learned about Wild Days that way. One participant said her son asked about the wildlife tree display, and that was how they found out about *Wild Days*. SLSS having a presence at the Friday Market has been an important way to advertise. Also, FaceBook posts were quick and easy to remind locals about the events. Only one person (from Kaslo) saw the display ad in the paper, although ads are a good way to reiterate and remind everyone about *Wild Days*.
- One comment on FaceBook from a local resident whose grandkids visit every summer posted: "*My grandkids sure enjoy the nature walks...your time and energy are greatly appreciated...thanks so much...*"
- Most kids like hands-on activities, and running around and discovering new things. One parent liked the idea of doing a scavenger hunt for the kids at one of the *Wild Days*. Something similar to what was done at Springer Creek last year when flora and fauna cards were hidden in the forest. Perhaps *Wild Days* leaders can "plant" a few relevant items as well or have the kids find some items during the walk.

## Recommendations

### Logistics

- Recommend organizing 3 days again in August 2018 – the combination of locations / themes / and timing worked out really well.
- Recommend keeping the 9 am to 12 pm schedule on Saturday mornings – with time and tradition we hope this will become known as *Wild Days* time.
- Co-sponsorship with other local organizations helped spread the word and deepen collaboration for building local capacity for community-based environmental education.
- Include in each day's introductory comments that participants should check with Marcy before removing anything they find on the walk (plants, skeletons, rocks, etc.).
- Bring a jug of cold water and some cups when the day is expected to be hot (over 30 degrees) in case people's water bottles run out.

### Registration & Group Size

- At 56 participants, the first event at Bosun Ranch was the most well-attended and most diverse in terms of ages and interests. Because of the larger group, it was a little difficult for everyone to hear some of the information.
- Also, the logistics of walking in single file through the fen posed a problem for those in the back to hear the experts.
  - Possible solutions:
    - Form smaller groups and have experts in different “stations” and each group have 15-20 minutes in each station before they walk to the next one. This can be arranged by the Education Specialist as Plan B for any programs that we think could be >45 people.
    - Pre-registration and capping events might be desirable if in 2018 we see the popularity of *Wild Days* continues to grow. Given the appeal for parents of young families, it seems problematic in the summer for families to make commitments. This could mean pre-registration numbers might not be accurate and by enforcing a limit we may unnecessarily exclude people. (Something to keep pondering).

### Education Materials

- In previous years the Field Journal was a great learning tool. It was re-designed for 2017 and featured new illustrations by Roni Jurgensen with the themes of Mountains and Wetlands. This summer, however, there was not as much interest by the children during the snack breaks to use the journal. Possible reasons are that a majority of the children were repeat participants and did not take journals when they were offered as they felt they have done them already. Most kids preferred to eat and explore during snack time (checking out the cows at the Bosun Ranch, mucking around in the fen, and talking about bear foods was more entertaining). For 2018, it would help to incorporate them as part of the talk or perhaps consider a different way to use journals. The Education Specialist can make more of a point of distributing the journal and posing questions that encourage the kids to answer on the back.
- Continue to have Field Journals because some were distributed and taken home. Also, they are a nice resource on SLSS Friday Market table.

### Promotional Materials

- Print “Save-the-Date” leaflets right away to give out at the very first New Denver Friday Markets (this worked well in 2017). The leaflets were valuable in terms of reminding everyone about the event as well as heightening the impact of the posters and ads. With permission from Valhalla Fine Arts, we could also try handing some out to families during SVI and VSSM weeks next year.
- Add “no dogs” to our advertising so it is clear.
- Include info about what to bring (water bottle, snacks) and to dress for the weather and wear appropriate footwear.

### Potential Locations for 2018 *Wild Days*

- Soliciting ideas and pre-planning for 2018 locations to visit would be ideal, for example, tours to Bonanza Marsh, Idaho Peak, Bannock Point (need to sort out access) and below the Bluffs north of Slocan, are some interesting places that come to mind.
- Explore the idea of a night hike to see what nocturnal animals (bats, flying squirrels, insects) inhabit a place. Would be good to have an astronomy expert on-tap for learning about stars and space.

