



Wild Days 2018

Program Report

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SLSS Education & Communication Team

August 2018



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 2018, three *Wild Days!* engaged families, community members, and visitors 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.

Our 2018 *Wild Days!* funders included the Regional District of Central Kootenay Area H, Recreation Commission #6, Hills Recreation Society and Columbia Basin Trust; and co-sponsoring organizations included the North Slocan Trail Society, Kootenay Community Bat Project and the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Okanagan Centre.

Event Highlights

Saturday, August 4 from 9:00AM - 12:00PM *Hosts of Valley of the Ghosts, Sandon*

We explored the Valley of the Ghosts from old saloons in Sandon to recovering forests with saskatoons along the K&S Rail Trail. We started with a walking tour through history led by Hal Wright and Vida Turok that included spellbinding stories of the mining heydays and natural, political and economic events that led up to the present. Historical photos were passed around to inform participants and spark their imagination along the way. Both adults and kids enjoyed seeing the restored train engine, the kids especially loved ringing the train's bell while adults listened to tales about the competition between CPR and Great Northern to see which would be the first to establish rail service to Sandon. The group made a quick visit to the Silversmith Hydro Power Generating Plant (still operating after 120 years!) before heading across Carpenter Creek to the old Kaslo & Sandon rail line, now a popular recreation trail. On the trail, painted cardboard cut-outs of common leaf patterns were given to four teams of kids looking for plants with alternating, opposite, lance-shaped and maple leaf-shaped leaves that they collected in bags as samples of the variety of different types of plants with similar leaf patterns found along the trail. A treasure hunt booklet helped everyone identify the "Top 12 common plants" in the Sandon forest to encourage learning about the plant species that comprise the recovering forests around Sandon. Everyone enjoyed eating saskatoon berries and wild cherries along the trail. Local experts on Sandon history were Hal Wright and Vida Turok; and local botanists were Marcy Mahr and Jim Moore. This program was co-sponsored by the North Slocan Trail Society which provided a wonderful, nutritious snack for everyone at our turnaround point.

Participants: 52

Saturday, August 11 from 9:00AM - 12:00PM *Toads & Bats Take to the Trails, Summit Lake*

The tour began with Elodie Kuhnert leading a bat treasure hunt along the trail to encourage discovery of the variety of bats in our region, the habitats they prefer, and why some are listed as species at risk. Along our route, the children enjoyed finding models and photos of a dozen or so different types of bats. One of the finds was a net that is used by researchers to capture bats so they can be weighed, measured, and tagged. Then Kat McGlynn took over leading as the group encountered wet areas on the trail that had a migration of baby toads (toadlets). This

provided a great hands-on learning opportunity for why their migration at Summit Lake is so special and important to this area's toad population. The children each held a toadlet after scrubbing their hands with gravel and water to remove any residue from sunscreen, food, or other materials that might be harmful to the toadlets. As a bonus, beavers treated participants to wonderful examples of their dams constructed along the edge of the trail this year! Mud dams along the length of a section of trail created a high enough water table that participants could look right across and into the ponds, and where a few toadlets were spotted swimming. Local experts were wildlife biologists Elodie Kuhnert from the Kootenay Community Bat Project and Kat McGlynn from the Summit Lake Western Toad Research Project. This program was co-sponsored by the Hills Recreation Society and Kootenay Community Bat Project. (We had special permission from FLNRORD as a "guided exception" to walk along the rail trail at Summit Lake since public access had been closed to protect the annual Western Toad migration.)

Participants: 33

Saturday, August 18, 8 pm-10 pm. *An Evening with the Stars, New Denver*

Experts Colleen O'Hare and Guy Mackie delivered an interactive presentation that took participants on an exciting tour of our universe describing planets, stars, galaxies and black holes; and revealed interesting recent discoveries as well as many of the mysteries still to be explained. In addition to the slide show, a spectrograph instrument was used to demonstrate how different elements have different wavelengths, and how this is used to determine the elements present in the universe. There were many "oohs" and "aahs" as participants looked through special glasses to view the variety of distinct patterns of colors generated by hydrogen, helium, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, oxygen and water vapor. The low lying smoke from wild fires obscured actual night viewing of any stars or the moon so the program ended earlier than scheduled. Also, the smokiness is likely the reason for lower attendance that expected. Having it at the campground gazebo was a good location and encouraged campers to attend (and also made getting an accurate count of participants challenging).

Experts were Colleen O'Hare, Guy Mackie and Olaf Lutz. This tour was co-sponsored by Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Okanagan Centre.

Participants: 25

Program Stats

A combination of nine experts led the tours this year: Hal Wright, Vida Turok, Marcy Mahr, Jim Moore, Elodie Kuhnert, Kat McGlynn, Colleen O'Hare, Guy Mackie and Olaf Lutz. They represented a broad range of disciplines from history buffs to botany, wildlife biology and astronomy, all of which infused into each event interesting hands-on experiences and facts about our cultural and natural world.

This year a total of 110 people attended Wild Days!

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

	08/04/18	08/11/18	08/18/18
Adult	32	13	15 (8 signed in / 7 joined later)
Child	14	15	5 (3 signed in / 2 joined later)
Expert	4	2	3
Staff	2	3	2
Total	52	33	25

There were several adults and children that attended 2 of the 3 field trips, including three generations of the Buchanan family who have become *Wild Days* regulars.

At the end of each 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 2018 prize winners were:

- August 5: Luc Austin and Sam Freed each won a commemorative coin & postcard; Haizley Buchanan and Catherine Austin each won a \$20 gift certificate from Prospector's Pick store; Priscilla Smart won a video about Sandon; and Heather Buchanan won a book about Sandon.
- August 11: Mia Shoblom won a magnifier; Haizley Buchanan won a bat calendar; Arlo Jacks won a bat book; Luke Buchanan and Soren Jacks each won a bat sticker; and all children received a bat pencil, eraser and tattoos.
- August 18: All participants received education materials, a moon gazer's guide, and a starfinder from the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Okanagan Centre.

Communication Highlights

Print Media: Ads, articles and announcements

- *Wild Days!* colour ad with photos and dates – July 26
- *Wild Days!* article published - July 26

Marketing Collateral

- Posters - 15 8.5 x 14" colour posters were printed to be distributed in New Denver, Silverton, Crescent Valley, Slokan, Hills, Rosebery, and Nakusp.
- Leaflets: 160 Save-the-Dates leaflets printed to advertise *Wild Days* at the New Denver
- Friday Market July 6 to August 17.
- Nature Treasure Hunt worksheets (50 printed): The worksheets were distributed during the nature walk on K&S portion of the Sandon event. This engaged kids to work together as a

team in a nature treasure hunt. Worksheets can also be used as an educational piece to give out at the Friday Market booth as well as any future SLSS events.

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 users beyond members of the New Denver & Area Community Bulletin Board.

Websites

- Slokan 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.

WILD DAYS!
Fun and FREE nature walks for everyone!

This August, come on out for a fun, outdoor field trip and learn about the Slokan Lake watershed from local naturalists and scientists! Bring the whole family!
Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

<p>4 AUGUST Hosts of Valley of the Ghosts 9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p> <p>Explore the Valley of the Ghosts from old saloons in Sandon to recovering forests with saskatoons along the K&S Rail Trail. Meet at the Prospector's Pick store in Sandon. Leaders: Hal Wright, Vida Turok, Marcy Mahr & Jim Moore. Co-sponsored by North Slokan Trails Society.</p>	<p>11 AUGUST Toads & Bats Take to the Trails 9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p> <p>Discover how adult and baby toads along with elusive bats are using the Rail Trail along Summit Lake. Meet at the Rail Trail at the SE end of Summit Lake and park on Summit Road. Leaders: Kat McGlynn & Elodie Kuhner. Co-sponsored by Hills Recreation Society & Kootenay Community Bat Project.</p>	<p>18 AUGUST An Evening with the Stars 8:00 pm - 11:00 pm</p> <p>Take a tour of the universe and enjoy an intergalactic experience of star-gazing. Meet at Centennial Park gazebo in New Denver. Bring a lawn chair. Leaders: Colleen O'Hare, Guy Mackie, & Olaf Lutz. Co-sponsored by Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Okanagan Centre.</p>
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Thanks to our sponsors!

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Participant Feedback

- In terms of advertising, SLSS's Friday Market table continues to be a good way to publicize the Wild Days event. Facebook posts were quick and easy to remind locals about the events. Not everyone is on social media so display ads are always a good way to advertise. For instance, a couple from Summit Lake were thrilled to see the Valley Voice ad and relieved to see that Wild Days was happening again this year. A parent also said they saved the newspaper ad and pinned it to their kitchen message board to remind them of the dates.
- A parent at the Sandon event commented that she appreciated having the Nature Treasure Hunt booklet because it was fun to re-discover these plants herself as she helped her child. Focusing on the most common ones was a great idea.
- Another parent who went on the Sandon and Summit Lake tours said she thinks they are great but for her 4 year old who likes to move around a lot there is too much talking.
- Another parent staying at the campground said he appreciated that the presentation at the astronomy night had so much science because his son is very interested in stars and usually watches programs on Discover Channel that are very sensational but lack this kind of depth.
- A note from Hills resident Evelyn Goodell who attended the Sandon event:
I enjoyed Wild Days in Sandon very much, and it seemed like all the participants did. I have lived in this area for 47 years, and I learned a great deal about the history of Sandon. Hal Wright was an excellent presenter, and he even included the fun activity of ringing the train engine's bell, which the children loved. The morning was well paced. Visiting Sandon and then walking across the foot bridge (which I had never done, and didn't even know the bridge existed) and then taking the nature walk along the trail was well planned and a good mix of activities. Marcy's introduction to leaf patterns was excellent, and having Jim along to help with plant identification was a good idea. Also, Mike's snack was a bonus. Wild Days is one of the best activities offered for families in our area and serves locals and visitors. Many thanks indeed!

Recommendations

Logistics

- Recommend organizing 3 days again in 2019 – 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.
- Given the past two summer's smoky conditions in mid-late August, consider scheduling Wild Days for the last Saturday of July and first two Saturdays of August.
- 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.).
- More effort to anticipate weather and footwear recommendations so folks come prepared for each of the tours.
- This year was particularly challenging for logistics however we managed without any major glitches. The season started with the cancellation of any tour at Snk'mip which created a big

gap but then led to a fabulous tour in Sandon. The next issue was the rail trail closure at Summit Lake a few days before the event which was luckily remedied by a biologist at FLNRORD recognizing Marcy and Kat as qualified biologists and granting access to Wild Days as a “guided exception”. Lastly, low-lying smoke completely obscured any hope of star or moon gazing with the astronomers. However, Colleen, Guy and Olaf rallied and did a great job developing an interesting program and seemed keen to return next year.

Registration & Group Size

- At 50+ participants, the first event in Sandon was 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. The history part of Sandon was interesting but perhaps took a little longer than planned, leaving less time for the nature walk portion on the K&S. It was great to have Mike Koolen from the North Slokan Trail Society to bring snacks to the participants, who were very appreciative of his efforts.

Education Materials

- At the Sandon event, painted cardboard cut-outs of common leaf patterns were given to four teams of kids looking for plants with alternating, opposite, lance-shaped and maple leaf-shaped leaves that they collected in bags as samples of the variety of different types of plants with similar leaf patterns found along the trail. The children had a lot of fun; it worked well for them to team up and engage with other kids and proudly shared with the larger group all they collected.
- New for this year, a Nature Treasure Hunt booklet was developed and distributed to all children and several adults at the Sandon event. The booklet contained descriptions and illustrations of common deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs with a checkbox next to the illustrations. The booklet was well-received; and helped everyone identify the “Top 12 common plants” in the Sandon forest to encourage learning about the plant species that comprise the recovering forests around Sandon. The children were keen to tick off all of the plants or leaves that they found along the trail. If we use this sort of booklet again next year, consider having a stamp or sticker of completion to give kids a sense of accomplishment at the end.

Promotional Materials

- “Save-the-Date” leaflets were printed and to give out at the New Denver Friday Markets. The leaflets were valuable in terms of reminding everyone about the event as well as heightening the impact of the posters and ads.

Potential Locations for 2019 *Wild Days*

- Soliciting ideas and pre-planning for 2019 locations to visit would be ideal, for example some potential ideas: invite back the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada’s Okanagan Centre for late July; tour Bannock Point (need to sort out access); design a tour in Slokan along the Slokan Valley Rail Trail and below the Bluffs north of the village (need to consider themes, access, and how to boost attendance).



Photos from *Wild Days!* in Sandon on August 4, 2018. (Credit: Theresa Tremaine).