



# *Friends of the Oxbows*

## **NEWSLETTER**

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Friends of the Oxbows was formed and first met in the fall of 2008 with the goal “for the oxbows to be returned to a more natural state...”. Since that first meeting, we have formed a Steering Committee currently consisting of Chair and Biologist Ray Halladay, Secretary Bob Anderson, Biologist Rick McKelvey, Historian Randy Manuel, Agrologist Allan Garland, and Nutritionist Jacquie Bird. We meet regularly to discuss strategies and progress in our quest.

We have published an Oxbow Management Plan and other information about our group which you can see on our website at:

<http://members.shaw.ca/pentictonoxbows/>

### **Open House**

We welcome you to our second Open House. Drop by between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> where you will have an opportunity to learn more about our Penticton Oxbows, their history and the efforts of the members of Friends of the Oxbows to enhance and preserve this valuable wetland. This open house will be held at 313 Brandon Avenue. We are at the west end of Brandon, the street on the north side of Walmart. Yes, there will be refreshments.

### **Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) continuing support of Friends of the Oxbows (FOTO)**

Over the past year, Brad Arner, Operations Manager, DUC, has met with and recommitted support for the efforts of FOTO to encourage the protection and, where possible, the enhancement of the Penticton oxbows. Part of that encouragement led to FOTO preparing the

recently completed oxbow Management Plan authored by biologist and FOTO steering committee member Rick McKelvey. DUC is now preparing and sharing an electronic version of a map showing the best information available for land ownership adjoining all oxbows that was drafted by Glenda Paul and edited by former FOTO Chair Ted Makar. In the interest of sharing information with government representatives and other persons who are aware of the work of FOTO, copies of the original of that map along with copies of the oxbow management plan have been provided to Penticton’s Chief Executive Officer and City Manager Eric Sorensen, Penticton Indian Band Chief Jonathon Kruger, and Penticton Indian Band land representative Greg Gabriel. Copies of the Plan have also been sent to Brad Arner of DUC in Kamloops, and to Okanagan Nation Alliance contacts Al Peatt and Alexis Friesen.



***Western painted turtles sunning themselves at the Kinney Avenue oxbow***

## Meadowlark Tour

Friends of the Oxbows participated again this year in the Meadowlark Nature Festival with a tour of the Penticton Oxbows. Nine souls and two intrepid guides travelled to all the oxbows south of Okanagan Avenue, visiting each one in turn, learning about the management challenges of each, and observing the vegetation and wildlife present. This year, with spring run-off starting early and being somewhat protracted, the water levels in all oxbows were quite high, and vegetation well advanced. Turtles were numerous, and not shy! The weather cooperated, starting off somewhat looking like it might rain, but remaining just overcast, and not too hot, so everyone was happy. Several participants also took the opportunity of joining our email membership list, so the number of people keeping themselves informed about the oxbows continues to grow. Thanks to all those who participated this year, and we look forward to more tours in the future.



***Our 2016 Meadowlark tour members led by Rick McKelvey***

## Data Collection

Friends of the Oxbows now has one complete year of data on bird and turtle use of our oxbows, thanks to the efforts of our friends at the South Okanagan Naturalists Club, and is in the process of gathering a second year of data, also through the Naturalists Club. We hope to use these data to measure improvements over time as we attempt to rejuvenate the oxbows, by looking for increases in

species diversity for birds, and to actual increases in turtle numbers. Thanks to our partners at SONC! FOTO also has over a complete year of data on water quality for most oxbows, and six months of similar data on Okanagan and Skaha lakes, and the Channel. This includes data on pH, temperature, and conductivity, and some data on nitrite, nitrate, iron and copper levels on the oxbows. So far, the data indicate that the water quality in our oxbows is at least satisfactory, with no notable forms of pollution being found. This is good news as we continue to work to improve habitat quality, because it's one less area of concern that might be impacting habitat overall.

Finally, after an appeal to our email membership, we have begun a study of invertebrate diversity and abundance in selected oxbows. More about this project in a future Newsletter, but suffice it to say these data will also be very important in helping us measure the success of our efforts to improve the oxbows.

## Oxbows Weed Control

There are four weeds that people should watch for along paths and walkways on account of their seeds/burs, or prickly leaves. These are Puncturevine, Hound's Tongue, Burdock, and Bull Thistle. All of these plants are present in Penticton, particularly west of Chatham Place off Okanagan Avenue West. Last year, we removed many Puncturevine plants and Burdock seed heads along the undeveloped path and walkway there. This season, we plan to continue monitoring in that area for all four of these weeds. To learn more about these and other noxious plants and animals visit

<http://bcinvasives.ca/resources/publications/field-guide-to-noxious-weeds-and-other-selected-invasive-plants-of-BC>

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