

Growing Forward Together



We want your input! If you operate or work on a farm, let us know what kinds of workshops and information you want! Help us grow workshops from the ground-up!

www.osstewardship.ca/agsurvey

Ethical Photography

Catching that magic moment

Springtime means an abundance of wildflowers and the return of many birds to the Okanagan and you may want to pack up your camera to get a few photos of local wildlife. Here are 6 simple rules to ensure you don't accidentally do more harm than good while on your next photo walk.



1. Don't disturb wildlife. If the animal is moving away from you, it is feeling uncomfortable in your presence and you are too close.
2. Use a long lens to get close up photos. Like a private eye, you'll get better pictures if your subject doesn't know you're there!
3. Don't wear out your welcome. Even if the animal seems to be relaxed in your presence, it may be keeping a eye on your movements instead of eating or returning to its nest.
4. Stay on trails. Too many people insisting on the "perfect photo" can lead to trampled wildflower meadows and stressed out wildlife.
5. Don't use lures or call playbacks. Baiting or feeding wild animals is illegal in many places. Call playbacks lead an animal to believe that a rival is in their territory. They will waste time and energy looking for their rival, often for hours after you have left.
6. Respect other people's private property. Even if that amazing Lewis's Woodpecker is perching juuust over the fence line, you must get permission from a landowner to access their property.



OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN STEWARDSHIP NEWS

May 2023

Spotlight on Stewards: Caravan Farm Theatre Celebrating our 125th Stewards

We are so excited to announce that we have signed on our 125th Wildlife Habitat Steward, Caravan Farm Theatre. Not only does Caravan Farm Theatre host an amazing selection outdoor plays and guided land walks, they are also committed to keeping most of their 80 acre property wild and sharing it with a wide range of wildlife.

Through the Wildlife Habitat Stewardship program, OSS has been able to support the conservation of 6276 acres of critical wildlife habitat in our region. This program is rooted in partnership, empowering individuals and organizations to take action in their own communities and make a real difference for wildlife.

Caravan Farm Theatre recently signed on as OSS's 125th Wildlife Habitat Steward. This new partnership builds on Caravan Farm's existing conservation commitment to the five acres around Coyote Rock in their "back 40", and their ongoing partnership with local bee farmers.

We hope our partnership with Caravan Farms inspires audiences to protect both pollinators and indigenous plant species.



In this issue:

Steward Spotlight

Being safe with wildlife - Bears, cougars, and more!

Ethical Wildlife Photography

Growing forward together - a survey for Agriculturalists

We gratefully acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx and Secwépemc people.

Partners in stewardship and conservation

For more information please contact OSS at:

E: info@osstewardship.ca
P: 250.770.1467
W: www.osstewardship.ca
@osstewardship

- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
- Okanagan Basin Water Board
- BC Conservation & Biodiversity Award
- RDNO | North Okanagan Conservation Fund
- RDOS | South Okanagan Conservation Fund
- Wildlife Habitat Canada
- Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen
- BC Community Gaming Grant
- Canada Summer Jobs

Board of Directors

- Dianne Bersea, Chair
- Jennifer Miles, Vice-Chair
- Jillian Bisaro, Secretary-Treasurer
- Margaret Holm
- Amanda Miller
- Melanie Piorecky



Join us at Caravan Farm Theatre for a Bioblitz!

Saturday, June 17 | 10:00am-12:00pm
4886 Salmon River Rd, Armstrong, BC
Please RSVP by contacting:
info@osstewardship.ca | 250-770-1467

Navigating Nature: Coexisting with Wildlife

Bears

Local bears have now woken up from their long winter sleep and they are hungry. While looking for food, their keen sense of smell can lead them astray, and they may travel large distances towards human-created attractants.

Important things to remember about being Bear Safe:

- Limit the amount of time your garbage is outside
- Remove fallen fruit from under trees and bushes
- Keep barbeques clean
- Electric fencing is effective for protecting chickens and honey bees
- Keep dogs leashed in bear habitat
- Make your presence known - Be noisy!

If you encounter a bear:

- Make lots of noise ("Whoa Bear!" is a good phrase to yell)
- Extend arms to make yourself big
- Move slowly and calmly
- Use bear spray if it approaches



Cougars

Unlike bears, cougars are active year-round and more likely to hunt at dawn and dusk, but have been observed at any time of day. Oftentimes when these large felines enter populated areas they are drawn to livestock and urban wildlife like deer and raccoons.

To avoid cougar encounters:

- Keep animal feed and shelters secure
- Watch for signs like scat, caches (a kill covered in dirt or plants), or tracks
- Be aware of your surroundings. Remember, cougars are stalking animals and often approach from behind.
- Keep dogs leashed in cougar habitat
- Limit human attractants that may lure cougar prey species

If you encounter a cougar:

- Stay calm as best you can
- Do not approach or corner a cougar
- Do not turn your back, run or make sudden movements
- Extend arms to make yourself big
- Utilize bear spray if it approaches

If you are unfamiliar with bear spray and how to use it safely:

Bear spray can potentially save your life in the case of an unavoidable wildlife encounter. It is recommended that mountain bikers carry bear spray holstered on their body instead of their bike. While trail running and hiking, avoid headphones and going out alone. Be vigilant and make noise! Be cautious when travelling downwind or near moving water- if animals cannot smell or hear you, they may be surprised and this can lead to a defensive attack. Learn how to safely deploy bear spray on the WildSafeBC website: www.wildsafebc.com/bear-spray.

Deer and fawns

Urban deer are a common sight in many communities in the Okanagan. Although deer are usually more of a menace to gardens than to people, they can still pose a threat. Deer are more likely to be aggressive at two separate times in the year. In late spring, female deer (does) will become very protective of their fawns. Does often see dogs as predators and may attack if they feel the dog has come too close. Keeping dogs leashed and under control and giving deer plenty of space can help keep both you and your dog safe. In the fall, bucks can be more aggressive as they are competing for females.

Fawns are born in spring and spend their first few weeks alone hidden in tall grass or shrubs. Mothers return several times a day to let them nurse and to thoroughly clean them, before leaving the fawns on their own again. If you see a fawn hidden in the grass or bushes, please leave it alone. Its mother will be back soon!



Clockwise from top left: Great Basin Gophersnake, Western (Northern Pacific) Rattlesnake, Terrestrial Gartersnake, Common Gartersnake

Snakes

Springtime and warm weather means that snake encounters will be on the rise. Seven different snake species can be found in the Okanagan and Similkameen, and sometimes it can sometimes be hard to tell them apart. There are even some non-venomous species like gophersnakes that mimic rattlesnakes intentionally so predators will leave them alone.

The only venomous snake in our region is the Western Rattlesnake. None of our snakes are aggressive, and all would rather hide or flee when encountered, but they will bite if they feel threatened. If you encounter a snake, the best thing to do is leave it alone and give it space. While Western Rattlesnakes have a few look-alikes, they can be identified as having a triangular head, halo markings around their "spots", banded tail, and a rattle. Sometimes, however the rattle can fall off and appear as a button, so it is valuable to know other telltale characteristics.

To avoid snake encounters:

- Wear protective footwear like tall boots when working in tall grass or cluttered areas.
- Never put your hands or feet somewhere you can't see if you are somewhere snakes may be present
- Never harass a snake. Not only is this stressful to the snake, but it greatly increases the chance of being bitten.
- Keep pets under control to make sure they don't harm a snake and they aren't harmed by a snake.

If you encounter a snake:

- Calmly and carefully back away from the snake and give it space (3 metres/10 feet).

If you are bitten by a rattlesnake, have someone else drive you to the hospital right away. While bites are rarely fatal, it is still important to seek medical attention quickly to avoid any long-term effects.

For more on snakes, visit our website at www.osstewardship.ca/snakes where we have snake ID cards, factsheets, and safety videos.