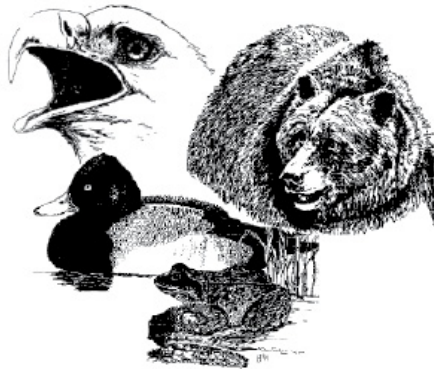




and other free nature walks,
talks and wildlife viewing!



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by:
Scott Cameron



January 2016

**WILD DISCOVERIES:
WILDLIFE VIEWING PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT ON
NATURE INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES,
2015**

**Yukon Department of Environment
Fish and Wildlife Branch
PR-16-01**

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Summary

Wild Discoveries is a wildlife interpretation and nature appreciation program that provides opportunities for Yukoners to learn about the natural world. The 2015 program was popular, with 27 different events attended by 641 people. Through these events, we are reaching more people on a greater variety of wildlife topics than in the past. The *Knee High Nature* children's series of events remains popular; more than 200 people attended in 2015. The entire staff of the Wildlife Viewing Program look forward to building on the successes of the 2015 season as we plan for next year. This report provides an overview of programs that were offered from January to December 2015.

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Introduction

Wildlife Viewing Program events are delivered through interpretive walks, talks, and public presentations that focus on a specific wildlife topic. Most events are organised within the annual *Wild Discoveries* summer/fall series, and focus on a variety of issues related to wildlife, biology, wildlife management, and wildlife appreciation. The *Wild Discoveries* series is an ideal venue for Environment Yukon biologists and other scientists to share research findings and knowledge of Yukon's wildlife with the public. The public is directly engaged with experts in the field who are able to answer questions and better inform Yukoners on specific wildlife topics.

Scope

This report describes the *Wild Discoveries* interpretive series offered through the Wildlife Viewing Program from January through December, 2015. It includes *Wild Discoveries* series events, as well as additional interpretive opportunities that were hosted in the off-season under different banners, including Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month (YBAM).

Program Delivery

Wildlife Viewing Biologist: The Wildlife Viewing (WV) biologist assists in the planning and delivery of the interpretive programs. She supervises the WV technician and Biodiversity

Programs Assistant (STEP student position), as well as delivering select programs to the public.

Wildlife Viewing Technician:

The WV technician begins booking speakers, planning the summer calendar, and laying out the calendar of events in April. He supervises the Biodiversity Programs assistant as they finalize the summer events and organize how each event will run. The WV technician also delivers select programs to the public.

Biodiversity Programs Assistant:

When available, a STEP position brings one student into the Wildlife Viewing Program to assist with the delivery of summer interpretive programs. The student hosts guest speakers, assists in designing and delivering programs with the biologist and technician, and delivers interpretive programs. The Biodiversity Programs Assistant is an integral part in the success of the *Wild Discoveries* program.

Guest Presenters: Most events are led by paid staff members. In 2015, two guest presenters from outside Environment Yukon were given honouraria for their time and expertise (*Mount Decoeli Hike* and *Mushroom Power Up*).

Events

We delivered 27 events in 2015 (Table 1). We had planned to conduct an event to see the Fortymile Caribou herd during their fall migration, but the herd did not travel close enough to major roads for this to be possible.

Table 1. Interpretive events hosted by the Wildlife Viewing Program

| Count | Event | Date | Location | Description | Attendance |
|-------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|---|------------|
| 1 | Paddling the Lewes | 31-May-15 | Marsh Lake | A guided canoe day-trip through the M'Clintock mud flats to look for birds. | 8 |
| 2 | You're Kidding! | 02-Jun-15 | Jake's Corner | A walk up the White Mountain interpretive trail to look for goat kids at a distance. | 10 |
| 3 | Orchid Acres | 07-Jun-15 | Dawson | A walk through the orchid patch in West Dawson. | 3 |
| 4 | Say Cheese! | 11-Jun-15 | Whitehorse | A walk and presentation on using remote cameras in wildlife management. | 9 |
| 5 | Mt Decoeli Hike | 13-Jun-15 | Haines Junction | A guided hike to look for alpine wildlife. | 15 |
| 6 | Eagles New Home | 23-Jun-15 | Whitehorse | A trailside interpretive station describing Bald Eagles and their nesting behaviour. | 39 |
| 7 | Knee High Nature #1 Public | 23-Jun-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for children aged four to six years. | 18 |
| 8 | Knee High Nature #2 Public | 30-Jun-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for children aged four to six years. | 40 |
| 9 | Carcross Dune Walk | 02-Jul-15 | Carcross | A guided walk with Bruce Bennett about the dune systems around Carcross. | 18 |
| 10 | Keno Hill Alpine Adventure | 05-Jul-15 | Mayo, Keno | Guided interpretive walk with regional biologist Mark O'Donoghue about alpine wildlife. | 11 |
| 11 | Knee High Nature #3 Public | 07-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for children aged four to six years. | 49 |
| 12 | Knee High Nature #3 Day Care | 07-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for daycare groups with children aged four to six years. | 16 |
| 13 | Anyone home? Cavity-nesters | 08-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | A guided walk with habitat biologist Heather Clarke about wildlife that nests in tree cavities. | 1 |
| 14 | Knee High Nature #4 Public | 14-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for children aged four to six years. | 30 |
| 15 | Knee High Nature #4 Day Care | 14-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for daycare groups with children aged four to six years. | 35 |
| 16 | Wandering for Wolves | 14-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Guided walk to an abandoned den site to talk about wolf ecology with wolf management program coordinator Peter Knamiller. | 21 |
| 17 | Knee High Nature #5 Public | 21-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for children aged four to six years. | 30 |
| 18 | Knee High Nature #5 Day Care | 21-Jul-15 | Whitehorse | Nature appreciation activities for daycare groups with children aged four to six years. | 25 |
| 19 | Going Batty | 07-Aug-15 | Whitehorse | Talk and bat trapping/banding demonstration. | 31 |
| 20 | Ahhhhh Nuts! | 11-Aug-15 | Whitehorse | Walk and talk with Meghan Larivee about Red Squirrels. | 33 |
| 21 | Real Raptors I | 21-Aug-15 | Whitehorse | Presentation by American Bald Eagle Foundation including live birds of prey. | 21 |

| | | | | | |
|------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|--|------------|
| 22 | Real Raptors II | 22-Aug-15 | Whitehorse | Presentation by American Bald Eagle Foundation including live birds of prey. | 34 |
| 23 | Yukon's Great Salt Lake | 25-Aug-15 | Ibex Valley | A walk to the Takhini Salt Flats with biologist Bruce Bennett to talk about this unique ecosystem. | 13 |
| 24 | Mushroom Power Up | 27-Aug-15 | Whitehorse | Mushroom walk and talk. | 100 |
| 25 | Red Fish, Blue Fish! | 01-Sep-15 | Ibex Valley | Short walk with fisheries biologist Aaron Foss to talk about Kokanee Salmon and stocked lakes program. | 6 |
| 26 | Yukon Deer Day | 12-Sep-15 | Whitehorse | A walk and talk in and around the Yukon Wildlife Preserve about Mule Deer. | 7 |
| 27 | Elk Bugling | 25-Sep-15 | Whitehorse | A guided walk to listen for the Takhini Elk herd and bugle for them. | 18 |
| Sum | | | | | 641 |

Advertising

Wild Discoveries events are advertised in numerous ways depending on the timing and location of the event.

Calendar of Events: This publication is released at the beginning of June and mailed to all Yukon households, as well as Atlin, British Columbia (Appendix 1). Households that have signed up with Canada Post to block all non-addressed mail (flyers) do not receive a *Wild Discoveries* calendar. The calendar is also made available at Environment Yukon offices, the main YG building, rest stops, Visitor Information Centre and museums/visitor attractions across the territory. Events that are held in April and May are included in the spring calendar of events, available at the end of March each year.

Online calendar: The most up-to-date information is available on the Wildlife Viewing webpage in a Google calendar (Appendix 2). Events are posted as soon as they are confirmed and updates can be made in real time (such as change of location or

cancellations). The public can also sign up for the calendar so that updates will be directly imported into their own Google calendars.

Posters: A *Wild Discoveries* poster template is used to advertise all events (Appendix 3). Approximately 20 posters are printed and posted around Whitehorse in popular locations such as Main Street, coffee shops, Visitor Information Centres, and community notice boards. Posters are also printed and sent ahead of time to the community where an event will be held.

Paid advertisement: Facebook ads were used this year (June 3 and August 3) along with print ads in *What's Up Yukon* (June 11 and August 6; Appendix 4). We also put an ad in the City of Whitehorse Summer and Fall Active Living Guides.

Twitter and Facebook: Facebook continues to be an effective tool for promoting our program. As of December 11 we have 1,157 "Likes" on our Facebook page. Each event was also promoted via the Environment Yukon's Twitter account. The Communications

branch maintains overall control and responsibility of the Environment Yukon’s Twitter account and we consult with their staff to ensure compliance with our department policy regarding Twitter use.

Partners

Many individuals and organizations offered time, resources, staff, or a location to host a *Wild Discoveries* event (Table 2). We often call on experts from these areas to offer variety and new programs.

Table 2. Contributing individuals and organizations.

| Organization | Contribution |
|--|---|
| American Bald Eagle Foundation | Brought birds from Haines, Alaska for Real Raptors. |
| Sam Skinner | Led Mushroom Power Up. |
| Animal Health Unit, Environment Yukon | Led Ahhhhh Nuts! |
| Biodiversity Programs, Environment Yukon | Led Yukon Deer Day and Elk Bugling. |
| Habitat Programs, Environment Yukon | Led Anyone home? Cavity-nesters. |
| Regional Programs (Mayo), Environment Yukon | Led Keno Hill Alpine Adventure. |
| Species Programs, Environment Yukon | Led Wandering for Wolves and Red Fish, Blue Fish! |
| Yukon Conservation Data Centre, Environment Yukon | Led Carcross Dune Walk and Yukon’s Great Salt Lake. |
| Lorne Laroque | Led Mount Decoeli Hike |

Discussion

The 2015 *Wild Discoveries* program was well-delivered. Total event attendance was 641 participants—42 per cent above average. We hosted 27 events, with an average audience size of 23.7 people (Figure 1). Given our typical event style (one presenter, no microphone or sound system) 20 is generally an appropriate audience size.

Our children’s program, *Knee High Nature*, continues to be popular. A total of 243 people participated in five events this summer. We again offered two sessions of each event: one for the public and one for daycare

programs. This approach worked well and was popular with daycare providers, once they built the event into their daily program. Given the size and popularity of *Knee High Nature* this year, two staff members should be available to lead the events in 2016.

In general, event attendance can be predicted by several factors (Figure 2).

As described above, events which have a high probability of actually seeing wildlife tend to have higher attendance. Bat programs, live-bird displays, and elk bugling walks produce consistently high attendance.

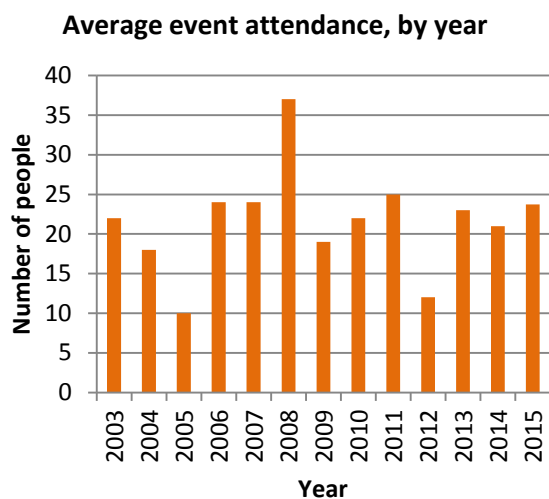
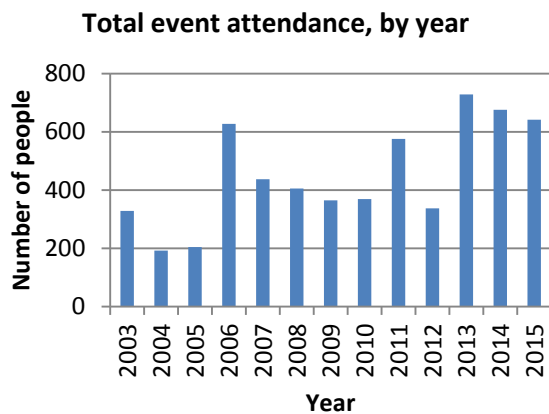
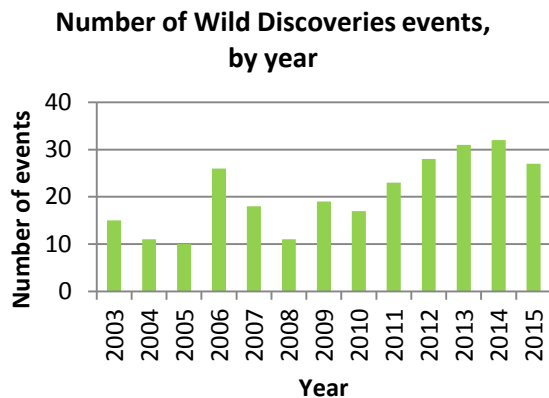


Figure 1. Number of *Wild Discoveries* events and attendance, 2003-2015.

Our advertising approach has been broad and diverse to attract a wide range of participants. Yukon residents usually cite the annual hardcopy events calendar and posters around town as the way they found out about an event. Visitors often mention seeing posters in Visitor Information Centres or ads in *What's Up Yukon*. Currently, the impact of social media advertising and promotion is not well understood. However, with increasing traffic to the Wildlife Viewing Facebook page, we think there is positive exposure and promotion occurring.

Generally, the farther the travel distance to an event, the lower the attendance. We try to balance the distance traveled with the opportunity to see wildlife. Exceptional viewing opportunities (e.g., Fortymile caribou, October 2013) can lessen the importance of distance. People are willing to travel for these types of events.

We attempt to schedule wildlife viewing events around other popular community events in Yukon. This is relatively manageable in spring, but summer is a busy time for festivals and events in the territory. We are inevitably competing for attendance, especially on weekends.

Weather can have an interesting effect on attendance. Not surprisingly cold, wet weather tends to decrease attendance. However, hot, sunny weather can have the same result as people chose traditional summer activities over wildlife viewing.

Knee High Nature, as a recurring children's program, is not well described by the above equation. Parents and caregivers came to rely on the program as a weekly activity,

occurring at the same time and place. Poor weather did not tend to deter the participants.

This year we continued using an Access database to track event details. This has created a more reliable data set on which to base programming decisions. We also continued tracking the residency of our participants (Yukon vs. non-

Yukon). In 2015, 83 per cent of *Wild Discoveries* participants lived in Yukon.

We will continue to fine-tune the *Wild Discoveries* program to provide meaningful, enjoyable wildlife viewing opportunities for Yukoners and visitors.

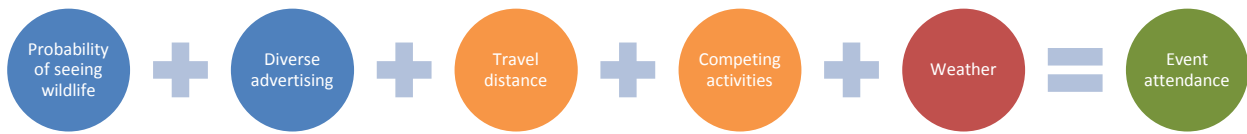


Figure 2. Factors affecting event attendance.

APPENDIX 1 WILD DISCOVERIES CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Spring Events Calendar 2015



Wildlife Viewing

Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month

April is Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month (YBAM)

Many Yukoners recognise the importance of maintaining biodiversity both here and around the world.

With the participation of:

- Association franco-yukonnaise
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- CBC Yukon
- City of Whitehorse
- CKRW The Rush
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Environment Canada
- Girl Guides of Canada
- Kluane First Nation
- Marsh Lake Community Association
- Nikon Canada
- Society of Yukon Bird Observatories
- Town of Faro
- What's Up Yukon
- Whitehorse Star
- Whitehorse United Church
- Yukon College
- Yukon Energy
- Yukon News
- Yukon Wildlife Preserve



www.wildlifeviewing.gov.yk.ca



Above: Enjoying Family Weekend activities at Swan Haven in 2014.

Cover photo: Arctic Grayling spawn in spring, shortly after the ice melts on creeks and streams. (Peter Mather Photography)

Yukoners can celebrate spring in so many ways!

A Celebration of Swans

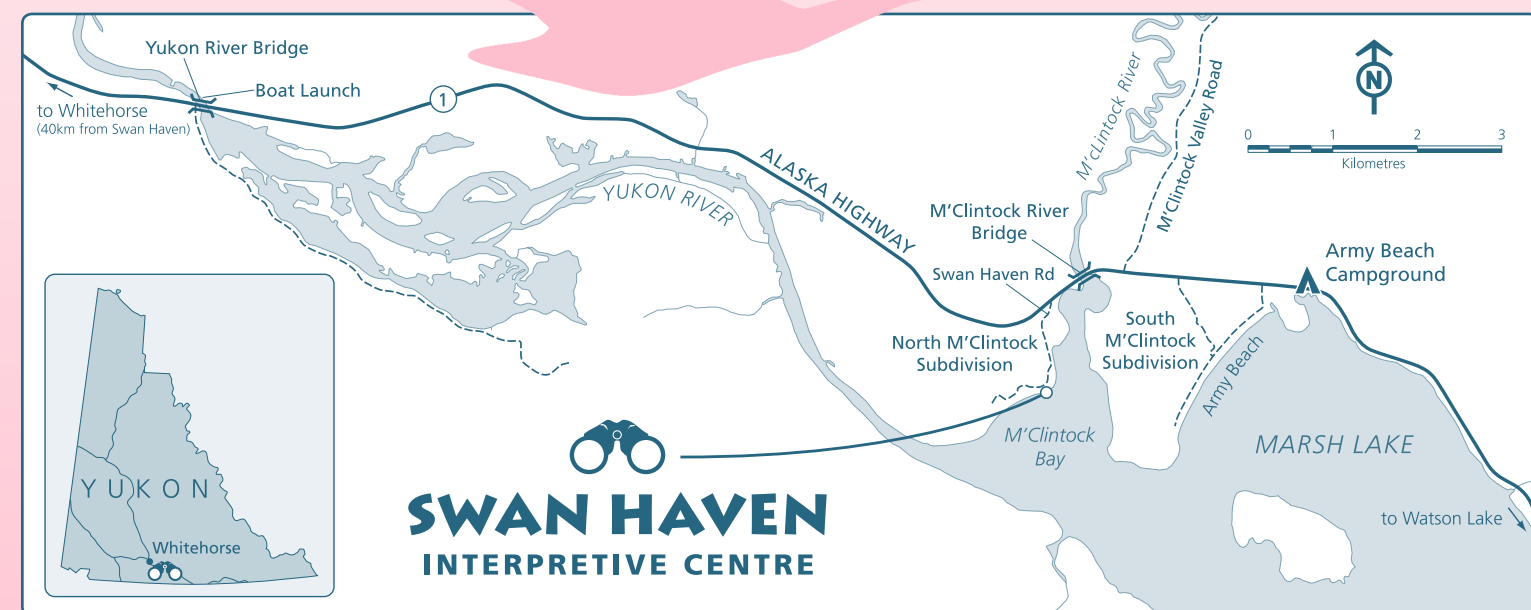
Yukon's premier birding festival brings residents and visitors alike out to great swan viewing areas to welcome spring to the North. The shallow open waters of M'Clintock Bay, Tagish Lake, Teslin Lake, Kluane Lake, and Lake Laberge are critical stopovers on the swans' long migration to northern nesting grounds. These lakes provide access to food, good visibility, and little disturbance. In return for a safe place to stay, we are given the chance to experience a spring spectacle of birds not to be missed.



Faro's Annual Crane and Sheep Festival May 1 to 3

In spring, tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes darken the skies above Faro as they migrate to their breeding grounds in northern Yukon and Alaska. Come and enjoy a weekend of wildlife appreciation at Faro's annual Crane and Sheep Festival. The awe-inspiring number of cranes continues to

attract and inspire visitors. Catch a glimpse of the Fannin's sheep that are unique to the area in the hillsides surrounding the town. Festival events include the ever popular early morning bird walks, crane and Fannin's sheep viewing tours, art displays and BBQ.



www.env.gov.yk.ca/events

APPENDIX 2 GOOGLE CALENDAR SCREEN SHOT

Wildlife Viewing Events

 Find us on Facebook

Check out the calendar listings below for the most up-to-date information on our free walks and talks.

Google Maps (linked to from events below) does not always recognise Yukon place names and therefore is sometimes inaccurate. Don't trust the automatic map that is provided. If you need directions, please contact Wildlife Viewing and we'd be happy to help you get there.

[Summer/Fall Events Calendar 2015](#)  1.5MB



Today  

 Print [Week](#) [Month](#) [Agenda](#)

Thursday, 2 July 2015

- 14:00 Carcross Dune Walk
- 19:00 Yukon Spotter's Network Workshop

Saturday, 4 July 2015

McIntyre Creek BioBlitz

Sunday, 5 July 2015

- McIntyre Creek BioBlitz
- 10:00 Keno Hill Alpine Adventure

Tuesday, 7 July 2015

- 10:30 Knee High Nature #3
- 13:30 Birds of Summer – an illustrated presentation with Ione Christie

Wednesday, 8 July 2015

- 12:30 Weekly Kids Ed-Venture Program
- 19:00 Anyone Home? Cavity-nesters

Thursday, 9 July 2015

- 16:30 Yukon Conservation Society Weed Pull

Saturday, 11 July 2015

- 14:00 Invasive Species Hike with Yukon Conservation Society

Tuesday, 14 July 2015

- 10:30 Knee High Nature #4
- 18:30 Wandering for Wolves

APPENDIX 3 WILD DISCOVERIES POSTER SAMPLE

Red Fish, Blue Fish!

Environment Yukon fisheries biologist Aaron Foos will be leading an evening walk to check out Kokanee Salmon in their spawning colours.

We will carpool to Scout Lake (Alaska Highway, north of Whitehorse).



When:

**Tuesday, September 1
6:30 - 9:30 PM**

Where:

**Meet at Takhini arena
parking lot, Whitehorse**

Details:

outside | short walk and talk | carpooling encouraged | free



APPENDIX 4 NEWSPRINT AD



and other free nature walks,
talks and wildlife viewing!



Hawks and mushrooms and salmon and deer and elk and...

Our series of free wildlife viewing events continues through summer and fall. Call us for details: 667-8291 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8291.

August

See live birds of prey on the 21st and 22nd. Wander the curious salt flats on the 25th and learn about Yukon's mushrooms on the 27th.

September

Stroll for salmon on the 1st. Search for deer on the 12th and Elk on the 25th.

Join us for exciting Wild Discoveries.

For more information, visit: www.env.gov.yk.ca/events

Yukon
Environment

