

# CENTRAL OKANAGAN LAND TRUST



*Mountain Bluebird*

## COLT & CONC help bluebirds recover

by Judie Steeves

In the first year of monitoring the 37 bluebird boxes built and installed in the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park, a total of 352 volunteer hours were logged.

The boxes were built and/or restored on the initiative of Mike Howard, an avid birder with the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club and Hugh Westheuser, who recently retired as a board member of the Central Okanagan Land Trust. They were put up in the fall of 2021, all ready for eager-to-nest bluebirds in the spring of last year.

Since the first couple settled into their new home, COLT board member Eve Wegscheidler and Howard and his wife Lisa Rae visit the boxes weekly to log how everything is going.

"I never realized how much fun it would turn out to be. It feels really good to help out like this in the park," comments Eve, who is the board member responsible for that COLT property.

The park is owned by the land trust, but managed by the Central Okanagan Regional District, as part of its park holdings, but in collaboration with COLT.

She says she's always loved bluebirds, with their beautiful colouring and has found she's learned more about them than she ever thought she would.

"I look forward every week to heading up into the park to check on each box," she adds.

The boxes were designed by Mike specifically for Mountain and Western Bluebirds, uniquely oversized to help prevent overheating inside during hot spells and some have an experimental predator guard to keep magpies out.

Funds for construction materials came from a CORD Regional Parks Capacity-building Grant of \$1,040, but they were built and installed by the volunteers.

Eve explains that they include a plexiglass side so monitors can look in without disturbing the chicks and keep track of when eggs are laid, when they hatch and how all is going, until they fledge and leave the

# Legacy

...a newsletter of the Central Okanagan Land Trust

box. They were all fledged by mid-August last year.

Eve admits she is into record-keeping and data collection, and she's loved learning about the bright little birds. Data is shared with the B.C. Bluebird Society and is recorded in e-Bird and in the annual critter counts.

Nesting began in May last year, but it may depend on weather, so she has no idea what 2023 will hold. It will be the second year of a five-year project to monitor the boxes.

Last year, there was one successful nest of Western Bluebirds and one of Mountain Bluebirds, with each producing fully-fledged birds: five in one family. As well, there were numerous House Wrens who used the other boxes, with success.

Unfortunately, Eve says the wrens populate the nest boxes with sticks and will peck holes in the eggs of the bluebirds, so boxes have been located in pairs to encourage the wrens to use one, and leave the other for bluebirds.

Otherwise, the boxes are not located within sight of each other as bluebirds tend to be territorial. Some of them can be seen from the Elk Trail in the park.

Bluebirds were once much more numerous in the Central Okanagan, but in the past 50 years their numbers have diminished, due to a number of factors.

Invasive species have moved in and out-compete the bluebirds for tree cavity nesting sites; tree cavities are reduced due to wildfires removing those standing and dead wildlife trees from the landscape; and man is constantly expanding his housing into the natural habitat of bluebirds, destroying it in the process. Pesticides have also taken their toll.

Luckily, the Johns family's legacy of this parkland provides ideal habitat for both species of these nesting bluebirds.



*Western Bluebird*

## President's Report

Gord Savage



Spring in the Okanagan is a good time to reflect on the past year and look ahead to all the things we would like to accomplish this year. Up here in Southeast Kelowna the ground is still covered with a bit of snow. It's nearly time to hang up the skis but in another couple of weeks spring flowers will be in full bloom.

Since last spring we were able to start meeting in person again which was a pleasant relief after two full years of meeting via our computers on Zoom. It is so good to be through the worst of the pandemic and be able to enjoy our monthly gatherings. Regardless of the drawbacks of meeting remotely for two years we were able

to remain productive and engaged in our business of promoting conservation and managing the protected areas under our stewardship.

You may have seen our booth set up at last fall's Kokanee Festival at Mission Creek Park or if you happen to follow us on Facebook and/or Instagram, seen the many postings and photographs highlighting our activities, conservation areas, and board member profiles.

Last year we were actively engaged in dealing with the reduction of invasive plant species at both Munson Pond and the Benvoulin Woodland adjacent to Mission Creek. Both Yellow Flag Iris and Purple Loosestrife were targeted.

We are currently working with three separate landowners who wish to donate their lands to the Land Trust. These properties have tremendous conservation value and will be important for preserving more natural habitat in our ever-growing community. Hopefully this year we can make a public announcement on at least two of these. We are also actively engaged with the City of Kelowna and the Regional District of Central Okanagan in our attempts to secure more lands that can be protected from development and secure natural corridors for the healthy movement of wildlife, along with important natural features.

We were pleased to bring on two new board members in the fall. Brenda Gendron has agreed to be our new treasurer and Kim Inglis is our new director-at-large. We are fortunate to have a dedicated and active board of directors to see us into the coming years.

Our work in the community is of great value and I want to thank our community partners, the Regional District and the City of Kelowna for their continued support. I would like to thank all of our board, past and present, for their dedication to what we do and to all of our donors for their valuable support in our conservation efforts.

Gord Savage  
President – Central Okanagan Land Trust

## Executive Director Report

Wayne Wilson



There is always something new as we work on our own projects and on those in partnership with the Regional District Central Okanagan (RDCO), other local governments, and our collegial environment groups in the Central Okanagan. That was certainly the case in 2022, and as we move more strongly into 2023 we see similar collaborations on the horizon.

COLT is currently working with two landowners on the donation of lands in the Lake Country area and in the Okanagan Mission. These donations, as you can imagine, take some time to unfold in terms of land appraisals and valuations, biophysical inventories, site planning works etc. We hope to make announcements during the year - so keep your eyes peeled to that media coverage.

Last year, COLT led an important initiative to address the invasive Yellow Flag Iris at Munson Pond. Dr. Catherine Tarasoff led that workshop for COLT Board members as well as for staff from the City of Kelowna and the RDCO. This year we are planning to work with

Dr. Tarasoff again on another similar workshop. This time we will promote the program valley wide in hopes of attracting staff from other local government and collegial environment groups.

For some time now we have been meeting with local governments to determine if there are lands of mutual interest. We continue to meet and identify specific properties that hold environmental values that support the COLT mandate and, at the same time, address the strengthening local government interest and need to meet public expectation for the securement of such lands. To this end, we have identified a number of properties that hold such mutual values. Over the next months, we hope to be able to announce a strong partnership amongst the various regional environmental groups and local government to secure some of these lands. When that time comes, I hope you will join us in supporting the fundraising campaigns that will be needed to achieve the important environmental and community goals.

Stay tuned for lots more news from COLT over the coming year. Please don't forget to follow us on Facebook at Central Okanagan Land Trust and on Instagram at colt.landtrust

Wayne Wilson  
Executive Director



## Feral goldfish in local ponds

by Laura Hooker

Most people are aware that dumping unwanted pets into the wild can lead to a multitude of problems for natural ecosystems, and there are many keen-eyed individuals who report potentially invasive species. Despite this, hundreds of goldfish (*Carrassius auratus*) are 'liberated' from their bowls into waterways in B.C. each year. Goldfish are remarkably tough fish. They can cope with a wide range of temperatures,



very low oxygen levels, and can tolerate high levels of many chemical contaminants. (hence being able to live in a stagnant bowl on top of bedroom chests-of-drawers). They also have high reproductive rates. As a result, when released into a new, suitable habitat they can become invasive: they will disperse out from that introduction and establish new populations, often disturbing native biota in the process.

Goldfish are native to southern China. In North America, they are thought to have arrived in the early 1800s. They established self-sustaining populations throughout the eastern portions of the continent, but interestingly, this has not happened to the same degree in the west. *continues...*

## Kim Inglis – New Board Member

Kelowna, BC



Kim has long declared herself to be Kelowna's biggest fan and is proud to finally call it home. She is the founder of Inglis Private Investment Counsel, a financial advisory practice within Raymond James Ltd where she collaborates with families to achieve their financial goals. Kim is regularly requested for interviews as a media commentator with appearances on BNN Bloomberg, CBC and CTV News. Kim is also a financial columnist and her work has been featured in most of the country's major newspapers including the Financial Post and The Globe and Mail. Kim is a board member with the Central Okanagan Foundation and is involved with numerous charitable groups and non-profits. In her spare time, Kim can be found enjoying all the great trails that Kelowna has to offer with her horse and dog.

Create a legacy  
CENTRAL OKANAGAN  
**LAND TRUST**

### Our Mission

...to protect land for wildlife and parks so biodiversity and natural features are preserved for future generations.

### Board of Directors

Gord Savage - President  
Tanis Gieselman - Vice President  
Brenda Gendron - Treasurer  
Steve Thomson - Secretary  
Judie Steeves - Recording Secretary  
Bill de Bosch Kemper - Director  
Laura Hooker - Director  
Don Knox - Director  
Bob Groves - Director  
Angela Cormano - Director  
Eve Wegscheidler - Director  
Leah Schurian - Director  
Kim Inglis - Director

Ex Officio – Wayne Wilson, Executive Director

Ex Officio – Representative, Regional District Central Okanagan

Central Okanagan Land Trust  
306-1726 Dolphin Ave.  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 9R9  
Email: [info@coltrust.ca](mailto:info@coltrust.ca)  
[www.coltrust.ca](http://www.coltrust.ca)

Charitable Corporation Number: 13695 7198 RR001

The Central Okanagan Land Trust is a member of the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia  
Legacy is copyright 2021 by the Central Okanagan Land Trust

Printed on recycled paper

'Goldfish' continued from overleaf...

In B.C., there are only a few documented scattered self-sustaining populations, mostly in the Lower Mainland. Instead, the population seems to increase for a couple of years, and then the sightings and the population seems to disappear.

In the Central Okanagan, iNaturalist reports sightings in 2012 for Blair Pond on Clifton Road, in 2018 for the pond on the Kelowna Golf Course, and Rose Valley Pond in 2020. About 15 years ago, McKinley Reservoir had a large population, but it disappeared after a couple of years. In Munson Pond, goldfish showed up in 2021 and established a high population density, but this winter there was large kill with many goldfish (and not other species) frozen into the ice at the surface of the pond. So, given the large number of introductions over the years, it appears that goldfish have not been invasive in the Central Okanagan.

In B.C. the species appears to be more feral than invasive, unlike Australia or the Eastern U.S. Why? There are a few things to consider. First, after a few generations in the wild, fish colour regresses to a drab green-grey and the lovely 'flashes of gold' that catch people's eye disappear, so recorded sightings decrease. Second, goldfish require temperatures of 15-25°C to breed successfully which limits their spread. Third, the fish do not cope well with fast-moving water, so B.C.'s topography limits suitable corridors for dispersal.

There's uncertainty why the fish haven't spread through the more-amenable waterways of the Central Okanagan, and as to what caused the fish kill in Munson Pond this winter (unless ice cover resulted in the complete lack of oxygen, or there was an unreported chemical control measure).

Even if not invasive, we should still be concerned about localized self-sustaining populations. Goldfish feeding habits stir mud up into the water column, which reduces light penetration and releases nutrients, decreasing aesthetics. The fish provide an excellent food source for other animals, but they compete with, and can prey on, native species, leading to their decline. Munson Pond is man-made

and doesn't have a straightforward connection with other water bodies.

Nonetheless, when the park was established, the pond did have sculpin, maybe some carp, and a dense redbreasted shiner population that supported a broad diversity of fish-eating birds. The birds continued to visit the pond even when goldfish began to dominate. However, with the fish kill this winter, there might be only a few fish at all in the pond, resulting in fewer piscivorous bird visits.

Once established, goldfish can be very difficult to eradicate without the use of chemical control measures such as rotenone. This pesticide also kills other fish species along with the aquatic insects. This disrupts the ecosystem feeding relationships as well as leading to loss of the beautiful dragonflies and damselflies which adorn our local ponds so liberally.

Waterbodies that become part of parks are particularly vulnerable to introductions of goldfish because their existence is widely advertised, and access to their shorelines have been enhanced. The public needs to be constantly reminded, and the waterbodies need to be clearly signed, about the dangers of pet releases. As far as Munson Pond and other local waterbodies go, it would also be beneficial to engage in some goldfish mapping and monitoring efforts to facilitate management plans.

Sources:

Ford, T. and T.L. Beiting. 2005. Temperature tolerance in the goldfish, *Carassius auratus*. *J. Therm. Biol.* 30:147-152.

McPhail, J.D. 2007. *The Freshwater Fishes of British Columbia*. University of Alberta Press. 620pp.



Follow us on Facebook at Central Okanagan Land Trust



and Instagram @colt.landtrust

## Partners

The Central Okanagan Land Trust is fortunate to enjoy the financial, operational and/or development support of individuals, companies, local government, and other agencies. These partnerships help build a stronger network of parklands and conservation areas for wildlife – and we are the collective and individual beneficiaries of those healthy natural spaces. We thank all of them for their continuing support of our work and for their faith in our land stewardship practices.



## Named Endowment Funds

- Central Okanagan Land Trust Fund
- COLT Johns Family Conservation Area Fund
- COLT Munson Pond Fund
- Bootle Family Fund
- COLT Cynthia Hunter Fund
- Dick & Jean Hall Fund #1
- Hobson Family Fund for COLT
- Bernice Mabee Memorial Fund
- Charles & Kay Pettman Family Fund
- J.W. & M.E. Scott Family Fund
- Trinity Fund
- Westheuser Family Fund
- Ruth Nuyens Whitson Fund
- John & Monica Shantz Fund
- Wilson Family Fund