

Spectacular 2019 Niut Lakes Camp a Smashing Success

by Stephen Partington

WHAT AN AMAZING SETTING for a Nature Vancouver camp!

Twelve minutes or so in the helicopter was all it took to hop overtop of the imposing mountains towering above Bluff Lake south of Tatla Lake and to be deposited near the treeline about 1000 m higher than the chopper launch pad.

Instant wilderness!

And there we were—on a small plateau forested with patches of low pines at about 2000 m elevation and tucked among a series of small lakes and ponds. The rugged Niut Range peaks of the Coast Mountains

loomed large to the west and south while the vast Chilcotin Plateau stretched invisibly to the east.

From here, the Nature Vancouver 2019 campsite offered a stunningly gorgeous 360-degree view free from any signs of humans. Nature was at our doorstep. The quiet was delicious. No-one needed to hike anywhere—we were already there!

Helicopter delivery of all goods and personnel was key to the comfortable establishment of our near-alpine occupation. Not many who attended this camp would have been happy to make the hike to such a place. Our flight was fleetingly short



View of lakes, Goat Ridge, glacier and Niut Peak from Snow Patch Peak. *Photo: Caroline Penn*

at a little more than 10 km, but the terrain that we flew over was rugged, rocky, steep and trackless.

Geology of the Niut Range

The Niut Range is a place where immense geological events have unfolded. Tectonic peregrinations of crustal fragments in ancient times brought the location of the 2019 Nature Vancouver camp close to the contact edge between the ancient Peri-Laurentian terrane of North America and some curiously far-roving Arctic terranes that crashed into the continent from the west. This Arctic terrane complex was what built up most of the Coast Mountains of present-day B.C.

The eastern side of this Arctic terrane complex underwent a transformation during subduction of plates colliding with North America from the Pacific during an interval 175 to 45 million years ago. The melting rock and volcanism caused by these tectonic events resulted in a huge coalescent igneous batholith of granite that formed a great belt of metamorphic rock stretching through the Coast Mountains north from Vancouver to Prince Rupert and beyond. The granitic mountains thus formed towered high enough to create a rain shadow and dry conditions eastward.

After the mountain-building subduction ceased 45 million years ago, these mountains were subjected to weathering that reduced their height to mere hills. After 40 million years of erosion, the greater mass of the granitic Coastal Mountain batholith resided largely beneath ground

level as a root embedded within the mantle of the earth.

The geologic conditions changed radically, however, about 5 million years ago when a shift in the offshore plate subduction zones resulted in the appearance of the Cascade Volcanic Arc. From these changes came fresh subduction-induced volcanic activity accompanying a heating and expansion of the batholith. These events triggered a 2000 m uplifting of the batholithic mass of granite and the rebuilding of the Coast Mountains that continues today. The Niut Range took part in this re-elevation and, like the rest of the Coast Mountains, was still on the rise beneath the Nature Vancouver camp this past summer.

Overlaid upon these incomprehensively long geo-tectonic sculptings of the Earth's crust beneath our campsite was an even more recent surface etching of the landscape by glacial advances and retreats. The whole Niut Range terrain is currently a jumble of ice age features: moraines, cirques, tarns, kettle lakes, glacier lakes, hanging valleys, remnant glaciers and broken rock-covered slopes. The relative flatness of the area hosting the Nature Vancouver camp may well have been due to the location being a glacial kame terrace—a glacial landform usually shaped like an irregular hill, which is formed when sediment accumulates in ponds or lakes trapped between glacier ice.

Geographic Setting

An unnamed pond that's the Homathko River headwaters is located fairly near the camp setting. Despite all of the camp participants

having traveled up the Fraser River watershed to get to the staging area at Bluff Lake, the Niut Range drainage flows westward through the Coast Mountains to enter the Pacific Ocean at the head of Bute Inlet fjord.

The Niut Range nestles in the angle between the two arms of a “Y” configuration delineated by the Homathko River and Mosley Creek, its major tributary. These two valleys are the primary lowland corridors between the Pacific Ocean and Chilcotin Plateau. These routes have facilitated the passage of wildlife and people between the coast and the interior since the last ice age waned. Although, by map, the Homathko can be traced up through Tatlayoko Lake and the Mosley up through Bluff Lake to origins apparently very close to Tatla Lake, which drains into the Fraser River, there is, in fact, a clear watershed and no shared source between the Homathko and Fraser watersheds.

Industrial Development

Great industrial schemes to utilize the Homathko-Mosley corridors for transportation or hydroelectric generation have been floated or actually launched since the Cariboo Gold Rush.

The first venture began in 1861 when Alfred Waddington set about building a road to access the gold fields. A townsite was surveyed at the head of Bute Inlet and 50 km of crude road was built nearly to the confluence of Homathko River with Mosley Creek. At this point, in 1864, the construction came to an abrupt halt when people were

killed during a series of events often referred to as the Chilcotin War. No town was subsequently built on the surveyed plot and very little of the road lasted long afterward because of the erosive power stemming from heavy coastal precipitation.

Next came the prospect, in the 1890s, of running the first Canadian transcontinental railway by way of the Homathko River drainage to link the Pacific seaboard of B.C. with the rest of the country that the crown colony had been induced to join. The Canadian Pacific Railway did some preliminary surveys, but these were abandoned when Burrard Inlet was selected as the logical destination for the rail link.

The most comprehensive and compromising plan for industrial use of the Homathko and Mosley corridors came as grandiose hydroelectric ventures first proposed in the mid-20th Century that would have seen a series of dams built on the Homathko and its tributaries. Diversion via Tatlayoko Lake of the waters of the Taseko Lakes and Chilco Lake from the Fraser River drainage was suggested in order to enhance the turbine spinning potential of the waterhead above these dams.

Protection of the Niut Range Area

The hydroelectric development scheme described above was stopped in the 1990s for a variety of reasons after much review and considerable controversy. The Cariboo Land Use Plan process as well as the successful implementation of several long-standing park proposals starting in the 1990s established a basis for



My favourite Niut view. *Photo: Phil Edgell*

protection against regional industrial development. In 1994, Ts'il'os Provincial Park that encompassed Chilco Lake at the head of Nemiah Valley was established. Bishop Creek Provincial Park was added to the south side of Ts'il'os in 1995. The same year, Big Creek Provincial Park was created east of Taseko Lakes. This holding was expanded by the southern addition of South Chilcotin Mountains Provincial Park in 2001.

The Homathko River-Tatlayoko Protected Area was proclaimed on February 14, 1996.

Nature Vancouver Campsite and Nearby Hiking

Our actual camp setting contained scattered scrubby pine trees but was relatively flat with lakeside views and very easy access to an endless water supply. This water was clear of the glacial flour that makes some

other nearby lakes appear blue due to the refraction of light. Our local watershed was without a glacier in its cirque and therefore had been flushed clean of this fine silt. Despite the rocky substrate, the biffies proved diggable, and everyone managed to secure their tents sufficiently to weather the fierce winds and pelting rain that, at times, challenged our security and comfort.

Exciting first impressions included finding an abundance of inky gentian and roseroot around the campsite and the discovery of a family of Spotted Sandpipers nearby, which entertained campers for several days.

There were no trails visibly radiating from camp despite there being an active fire pit and deposits of horse dung nearly adjacent to the cook tent. Therefore, one task of Week One campers was to

bushwhack and flag hiking routes through the patchy low forest of lodgepole and whitebark pines.

Easy trails were soon established near the camp. These led to a number of small lakes and bogs scattered among the moraines and glacial churnings on the level terrace. Intermediate trails were also established in short order to provide upstream

access into the cirque area with its complex of little lakes.

For hikers who wanted more elevation gain, there were two challenging but readily accessible peaks north of camp. These provided rigorous scrambles across tricky slopes covered with broken rock. The rewards for enduring the somewhat treacherous passage were the stellar views from



Hiking in the clouds. *Photo: Kris Andrews*



The crossing. *Photo: Caroline Penn*

the heights of what became known as Ridge Peak and Snow Patch Peak. From these vantages, hikers could spot Tatla Lake and the hills of Itcha Ilgachuz Provincial Park to the north and gaze east across the seemingly endless Chilcotin Plateau. Westward, the 180-degree Coast Mountain panorama featured the readily identifiable peaks of Niut Mountain (2,153 m) and Razorback Mountain (3,183 m). Hikers who made it to Snow Patch Peak (2,600 m) had a chance to view the absolutely monstrous Mount Waddington (4,019 m), B.C.'s tallest peak, 40 km to the southwest.

Looking south and east from Snow Patch Peak, the mountains beyond Tatlayoko Lake marked an arc over Chilco Lake in the Nemiah Valley, the Taseko Lakes to the South Chilcotin Range peaks of Ts'il'os, and the South Chilcotin Mountains Provincial Parks.

Slightly Further Afield

Another challenge for the adventurous hiker was the ridge of high cliffs south of camp. This feature was dubbed Goat Ridge when a moving white dot was spotted on it from a great distance. The cliffs were obviously unassailable no matter how hard we stared at them, so it was decided to skirt around the eastern toe of the ridge and take a run up from there.

The first attempt to do this led to a rather large group of hikers turning back after encountering steep scree of unstable broken rock.

A second try by a smaller group led to successfully flagging a route across the broken rock up to what

turned out to be a sloping plateau or terrace. Lovely views of the camp from the top of the cliffs were enjoyed triumphantly that day. The vegetation on the terrace was a mix of sod and patches of scrubby willow and birch that appeared to have been uniformly browsed to about waist height. Ungulate droppings were in abundance. One strange human feature that day was the discovery of what we thought was a hunting blind. This was constructed by excavating stones on the hillside to form a pit with a rock-wall screen. It was later learned that this blind was actually constructed by an expedition member during the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of British Columbia* project some years ago.

On the far western side of the plateau, a view of a small glacier along with its subtending blue lake was awesome. The problem of the scree, however, remained outstanding and the descent was uncomfortable down the horrible broken rock.

The next ascent of Goat Ridge masochistically traversed the broken rocks once again. After a good ramble about on the plateau, during which three small inukshuks were found and all the fine views were reviewed, it was decided to try and follow the wildlife access trail for the descent. This way the entire scree was avoided and the hikers found themselves below the rocks on a fairly clear trail with tiny rock cairns. This

Reference

Sydney Cannings, et al. 2011. *Geology of British Columbia*. Greystone Books. Vancouver. 144 pp.



Elly Brok shows her painting. *Photo: Sabina Harpe*

series of cairns led along the contour towards camp and merged with our own flagged route exactly at the point at which we had turned to ascend the scree slope three times. Bingo! Our new, safer route to the top of Goat Ridge had been found.

Camp Entertainment

Aside from the usual after-supper hike reports, during Week One we enjoyed a couple of social nights, a talent show and an evening of games.

Janet Rozanski played ukulele for sing-alongs and organized the Niut NightinGals, who sang an admirable rendition of Joni Mitchell's "Circle Game". We all sang the chorus of the following, which was written by the Dohan sisters to the tune of the Everly Brothers' "Bye Bye Love":

Bye bye Camp Niut
Bye bye Nature V

Hello Highway 3
We think we're gonna cry
Bye bye dear camp goodbye

We've cleaned the biffies,
we've cleaned the pots
We've walked in meadows,
we've walked on rocks
We've made great friendships
and lived our dreams
As we jumped over
the babbling streams

We love our Nigel and Elly too
Paul, Janet, Sally, the wonderful crew
We stretched our muscles and
trimmed our thighs
Challenged the mountains
with many sighs

We also enjoyed a lovely series of readings by Jane Srivastava of excerpts from Chris Czajkowski's book, *A Mountain Year—Nature Diary of a*



Nightingals sing Circle Game. *Photo: Denis Laplante*

Wilderness Dweller. It describes the area surrounding her ecotourism site, Nuk Tesli, northwest of the Nature Vancouver camp near Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. Selections coincided with the dates in 2019 when we were at camp. Jane also recited “I Go Down to the Shore”, a poem by Mary Oliver.

Denis Laplante sang “There’s a Wild Boar in These Woods”; Teresa Gagné recited “The Cremation of Sam McGee”; and Stephen Partington read “Portrait From Memory” from *Beyond the Fringe*.

Margaret Dohan finished us off with her “Limerick for Nigel”:

There was a camp manager Peck
Whose job it was to recheck
A stepladder on table

“Don’t do this, I’m able
I know it’s unsafe, what the heck?”

Now Nigel is one who is trusted
His camping skills have not rusted
He works and he works
Despite having no perks
And he fixes all things
that are busted

So to Nigel we show our gratitude
For his always positive attitude
Our camp is such fun
It’s not yet all done
Our Nigel is one really great dude

*Stephen has been a member of VHNS/
Nature Vancouver since 1987 and has
attended a smattering of Nature Van-
couver camps.*

Species Lists—Niut Lakes Camp

July 21 to August 4, 2019

Plant and Insect Lists compiled by Teresa Gagné, Judith Holm and Denis Laplante

TREES

Family PINACEAE, (pine family)

Abies lasiocarpa, subalpine fir
Picea englemannii, Englemann spruce
Pinus contorta var. *latifolia*,
lodgepole pine
Pinus albicaulis, whitebark pine

SHRUBS

Family BETULACEAE, (birch family)

Betula glandulosa, scrub birch

Family CUPRESSACEAE, (cedar family)

Juniperus communis, common juniper

Family ELAEAGNACEAE, (oleaster family)

Shepherdia canadensis,
soopolallie/soapberry

Family ERICACEAE, (heath family)

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi,
bearberry/kinnikinnik
Cassiope mertensiana,
white mountain-heather
Chimophylla umbellata, pipsissewa
Empetrum nigrum, crowberry
Kalmia microphylla (syn. *polifolia*),
small bog-laurel
Phyllodoce empetriformis,
pink mountain-heather
Phyllodoce glanduliflora,
yellow mountain-heather
Phyllodoce x media, hybrid pink/
yellow mountain heather
Rhododendron albiflorum,
white rhododendron
Rhododendron groenlandicum,

Labrador tea

Vaccinium caespitosum,
dwarf huckleberry
Vaccinium membranaceum,
black huckleberry
Vaccinium scoparium, grouseberry
Vaccinium uliginosum, bog blueberry

Family SALICACEAE, (willow family)

Salix arctica, arctic willow
Salix barclayi, Barclay's willow
Salix brachycarpa, short-fruited willow
Salix commutata, under-green willow
Salix nivalis, dwarf snow willow
Salix stolonifera, creeping willow

Family SANTALACEAE, (sandalwood family)

Arceuthobium americanum,
American dwarf mistletoe

HERBACEOUS

Family ASTERACEAE, (aster family)

Achillea millefolium, yarrow
Agoseris aurantiaca (var.
aurantiaca?), orange false-dandelion
Agoseris glauca var. *dasycephala*,
short-beaked agoseris
Antennaria alpina, alpine pussytoes
Antennaria microphylla (*rosea*),
rosy pussytoes
Antennaria pulcherrima,
showy pussytoes
Antennaria racemosa,
racemose pussytoes
Antennaria umbrinella,
umber pussytoes
Arnica angustifolia ssp. *tomentosa*,



Whitebark pine and lodgepole pine scrub. Photo: Caroline Penn

alpine arnica

Arnica cordifolia, heart-leaved arnica

Arnica lanceolata ssp prima,

clasping arnica

Arnica mollis, hairy arnica

Arnica rydbergii, Rydberg's arnica

Artemisia norvegica,

mountain sagewort

Crepis nana, alpine hawksbeard

Erigeron aureus, golden fleabane

Erigeron compositus var. glabrus,

cut-leaved fleabane

Erigeron glacialis var. glacialis,

subalpine fleabane

Erigeron humilis, arctic daisy

Erigeron peregrinus, subalpine fleabane

Hieracium albiflorum, white hawkweed

Hieracium gracile, slender hawkweed

Hieracium triste, wooly hawkweed

Packera cana, wooly packera

Packera pauciflora,

alpine rayless butterweed

Petasites frigidus var nivalis,

arctic sweet coltsfoot

Senecio triangularis,

arrow-leaved groundsel

Solidago multiradiata,

mountain goldenrod

Tonestus lyallii, Lyall's serpentweed

Family BORAGINACEAE,

(borage family)

Myosotis alpestris ssp. asiatica,

mountain forget-me-not

Family BRASSICACEAE,

(mustard family)

Boechea stricta, uptight suncress

Draba aurea, golden draba

Draba novolympica, leeward draba

Family CAMPANULACEAE,

(harebell family)

Campanula lasiocarpa,

mountain harebell



Raindrops on lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*). Photo: Gail Newell

**Family CAPRIFOLIACEAE,
(valerian family)**

Linnaea borealis, twinflower
Valeriana sitchensis, Sitka valerian

**Family CARYOPHYLLACEAE,
(pink family)**

Eremogone capillaris,
thread-leaved sandwort
Silene douglasii, Douglas' campion
Silene noctiflora,
night-flowering catchfly
Silene parryii, Parry's campion
Silene acaulis, moss campion
Stellaria longipes,
long-stalked starwort

**Family CELASTRACEAE,
(bittersweet family)**

Parnassia fimbriata, fringed
grass-of-Parnassus

**Family CORNACEAE,
(dogwood family)**

Cornus unalaschkensis,
dwarf dogwood

**Family CRASSULACEAE,
(stonecrop family)**

Rhodiola integrifolia ssp. integrifolia,
western roseroot
Sedum divergens, spreading stonecrop
Sedum lanceolatum var. lanceolatum,
lance-leaved stonecrop
Sedum lanceolatum var. nesioticum,
lance-leaved stonecrop

**Family CYPERACEAE,
(sedge family)**

Carex aquatilis, water sedge
Carex lenticularis var. dolia,
tarn sedge
Carex nigricans, black alpine sedge
Carex phaeocephala, dunhead sedge
Eriophorum angustifolium,
narrow-leaved cotton-grass

Family ERICACEAE, (heath family)

Orthilia secunda,
one-sided wintergreen
Pyrola asarifolia,
pink-flowered wintergreen

Family FABACEAE, (pea family)

Lupinus arcticus, arctic lupine

**Family GENTIANACEAE,
(gentian family)**

Gentiana glauca, inky gentian

Gentianella amarella,

northern gentian

Gentianella propinqua,

four-part gentian

**Family HYDROPHYLLACEAE,
(waterleaf family)**

Phacelia sericea, silky phacelia

Family JUNCACEAE, (rush family)

Juncus drummondii, Drummond's rush

Juncus mertensianus, Merten's rush

Luzula parviflora,

small-flowered woodrush

**Family MELIANTHIACEAE, (false
hellebore family) ex Liliaceae**

Veratrum viride, false hellebore

**Family ONOGRACEAE,
(evening primrose family)**

Chamerion (Epilobium)

angustifolium, common fireweed

Chamerion latifolium, river beauty

**Family ORCHIDACEAE,
(orchid family)**

Platanthera dilatata,

fragrant white bog orchid

**Family OROBANCHACEAE,
(broomrape family)**

Castilleja miniata,

common red paintbrush

Castilleja rhexifolia,

alpine/rosy paintbrush

Castilleja parviflora var. albida,

white small-flowered paintbrush

Pedicularis bracteosa,

bracted lousewort

Pedicularis langsdorffii ssp. arctica,

Langsdorff's lousewort



Bird's beak lousewort (*Pedicularis ornithorhyncha*). Photo: Gail Newell

Pedicularis ornithorhyncha,
bird's beak lousewort

**Family PLANTAGINACEAE, (plantain
family) ex Scrophularaceae**

Penstemon procerus,

small-flowered penstemon

Veronica beccabunga (syn.

americana), American brooklime

Veronica wormskjoldii (syn. alpina),

alpine speedwell

Family POACEAE, (grass family)

Elymus trachycaulus,

slender wheatgrass

Festuca brachyphylla, alpine fescue

Festuca saximontana,

Rocky Mountain fescue

Phleum alpinum, alpine timothy

Poa arctica, Arctic bluegrass
Trisetum spicatum, spike trisetum

**Family POLEMONIACEAE,
(phlox family)**

Phlox diffusa, spreading phlox
Polemonium pulcherrimum,
showy Jacob's-ladder

**Family POLYGONACEAE,
(buckwheat family)**

Bistorta vivipara, alpine bistort
Oxyria digyna, mountain sorrel
Rumex acetosella, sheep sorrel
Rumex lapponicus,
Lapland mountain sorrel
Rumex paucifolius, alpine sorrel

**Family PORTULACACEAE,
(purslane family)**

Claytonia lanceolata,
western spring-beauty

**Family RANUNCULACEAE,
(buttercup family)**

Anemone drummondii,
Drummond's anemone
Anemone multifida,
cut-leaved anemone
Anemone occidentalis,
western anemone
Aquilegia formosa, red columbine
Caltha leptosepala,
white marsh-marigold
Ranunculus escholtzii,
mountain buttercup
Ranunculus flammula,
lesser spearwort
Ranunculus pygmaeus,
pygmy buttercup
Thalictrum occidentale,
western meadow-rue
Trollius albiflorus, globeflower

Family ROSACEAE, (rose family)

Dryas octopetala,
white mountain-avens

Luetkea pectinata, partridge-foot
Potentilla glaucophylla,
vari-leaved cinquefoil
Potentilla flabellifolia,
fan-leaved cinquefoil
Potentilla gracilis, graceful cinquefoil
Potentilla nivea, snow cinquefoil
Potentilla palustris, marsh cinquefoil
Potentilla uniflora group,
one-flowered cinquefoil
Rosa acicularis, prickly rose
Rubus arcticus ssp. *acaulis*,
dwarf nagoonberry
Sanguisorba stipulata, Sitka burnet
Sibbaldia procumbens,
creeping Sibbaldia

**Family SAXIFRAGACEAE,
(saxifrage family)**

Leptarrhena pyrolifolia,
leatherleaf saxifrage
Saxifraga bronchialis ssp
austromontane, spotted saxifrage
Saxifraga tricuspidata,
three toothed saxifrage
Micranthes lyallii, Lyall's saxifrage

**Family TOFIELDIACEAE, (false-
asphodel family) ex Liliaceae**

Tofieldia pusilla,
common false asphodel
Triantha (Tofieldia) glutinosa,
sticky false-asphodel

Family VIOLACEAE, (violet family)

Viola adunca, early blue violet

FERNS

Family WOODSIACEAE, (cliff ferns)

Cystopteris fragilis, fragile fern

HORSETAILS

Family EQUISETACEA (horsetails)

Equisetum arvense, common horsetail

CLUBMOSES

Family LYCOPODIACEAE

Diaphasiastrum sitchense,
Sitka clubmoss
Selaginella wallacei,
Wallace's spikemoss

BRYOPHYTES

Family Polytrichaceae, (haircap mosses)

Polytrichum juniperinum,
juniper haircap moss

Family Sphagnaceae, (peatmoss)

Sphagnum magellanicum,
Magellan's peatmoss

LICHENS

Family CLADONIAACEAE

Cladina sp., reindeer lichen sp.
Cladonia spp., club lichen species

Family LECANORALES

Lepraria neglecta, grey dust lichen

Family PARMELIACEAE

Letharia vulpina, common wolf lichen

Family PELTIGERACEAE

Peltigera sp., pelt lichen

Family RHIZOCARPACEAE

Rhizocarpon geographicum,
map lichen

Family ICMADOPHILACEAE

Thamnolia sp., whiteworm lichen

Family UMBILICAIACEAE

Umbilicaria hyperborea,
blistered rocktripe
Umbilicaria torrefacta,
punctured rocktripe

Family TELOSCHISTACEAE

Xanthoria sp., orange leaf lichen

FUNGI

Family BOLETACEAE

Leccinum scabrum
(brown birch-bolete)

Family CORTINARIACEAE

Cortinarius sp.

Family SUILLACEAE

Leccinium sp., slippery jacks

BUTTERFLIES

Family LYCAENIDAE

(gossamer-winged butterflies)

Plebejus idas, northern blue
Callophrys polios ssp. obscura,
hoary elfin

Family NYMPHALIDAE

(brush-footed butterflies)

Chlosyne whitneyi, rockslide
checkerspot
Erebia vidleri, Vidler's alpine

Family PAPILONIDAE (swallowtails and parnassians)

Parnassius smintheus,
Rocky Mtn parnassian

OTHER INSECTS

Order Orthoptera

Caelifera sp., grasshopper

Family CHRYSOMELIDAE

(leaf beetles)

Chrysomela sp., leaf beetle

Family PROPHALANGOSIDAE

(grigs)

Cyphoderris monstrosa, great grig

Family TENTHREDINIDAE

(common sawflies)

Pontania sp., willow gall sawfly

BIRDS

Compiled by Gail Kenner

Taxonomic order and nomenclature follow the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds, 7th edition.

Family Anatidae

Bucephala islandica, Barrow's Goldeneye

Family Phasianidae

Falcipennis canadensis, Spruce Grouse

Lagopus leucura,

White-tailed Ptarmigan

Dendragapus obscurus, Dusky Grouse

Family Trochilidae

Selasphorus rufus, Rufous Hummingbird

Selasphorus calliope,

Calliope Hummingbird

Family Scolopacidae

Actitis macularius, Spotted Sandpiper

Tringa melanoleuca, Greater Yellowlegs

Family Laridae

Larus sp., Gull sp.

Family Gaviidae

Gavia immer, Common Loon

Family Accipitridae

Aquila chrysaetos, Golden Eagle

Circus hudsonicus, Northern Harrier

Haliaeetus leucocephalus, Bald Eagle

Buteo swainsoni, Swainson's Hawk

Family Tyrannidae

Contopus cooperi,

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Family Corvidae

Perisoreus canadensis, Canada Jay



Spruce Grouse, female. Photo: Kris Andrews

Nucifraga Columbiana,
Clark's Nutcracker
Corvus corax, Common Raven

Family Alaudidae

Eremophila alpestris, Horned Lark

Family Hirundinidae

Tachycineta thalassina,
Violet-green Swallow

Family Paridae

Poecile gambeli, Mountain Chickadee

Family Sittidae

Sitta canadensis,
Red-breasted Nuthatch

Family Regulidae

Regulus calendula,
Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Family Turdidae

Myadestes townsendi,
Townsend's Solitaire
Catharus guttatus, Hermit Thrush
Turdus migratorius, American Robin

Family Motacillidae

Anthus rubescens, American Pipit

Family Fringillidae

Leucosticte tephrocotis,
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch

Family Passerellidae

Spizella passerine, Chipping Sparrow
Junco hyemalis, Dark-eyed Junco
Zonotrichia leucophrys,
White-crowned Sparrow
Zonotrichia atricapilla,
Golden-crowned Sparrow
Zonotrichia albicollis, White-throated
Sparrow (rare for this area)

Passerculus sandwichensis,
Savannah Sparrow
Melospiza lincolni, Lincoln's Sparrow

Family Parulidae

Parkesia noveboracensis,
Northern Waterthrush
Geothlypis tolmiei,
MacGillivray's Warbler
Setophaga petechia, Yellow Warbler
Setophaga coronata,
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Cardellina pusilla, Wilson's Warbler

MAMMALS

Compiled by Gail Kenner
Taxonomic order and nomenclature
follow E-Fauna BC.

Family Bovidae

Oreamnos americanus, Mountain Goat

Family Cervidae

Odocoileus hemionus, Mule Deer
Oreamnos americanus,
mountain goat

Family Mustelidae

Mustela frenata, Long-tailed Weasel
Neovison vison, American Mink

Family Ochotonidae

Ochotona princeps, American Pika

Family Sciuridae

Marmota caligata, Hoary Marmot heard
Neotamias amoenus,
Yellow-pine Chipmunk
Tamiasciurus hudsonicus, Red squirrel

Family ZAPODIDAE

Zapus princeps,
western jumping-mouse

Birdwatcher as Landscape

Don't mind me I'm just part of the furniture

by Gail Kenner

THERE IS MUCH to be said for sitting quietly beside a stretch of stream and becoming “landscape”.

At Niut Lakes camp this summer, the short riffle connecting the Swim and Water lakes was ideal—I could sit on the edge with sun and wind at my back and a panoply of life spread before me.

Once I settled in, it took, at most, a half-hour for me to be accepted by the birds as and generally ignored. Mammals also lost any concern for me as a yellow-pine chipmunk scampered just in front of me and across the stream, bouncing from rock to rock.

Spotted Sandpipers, American Pipits, Mountain Chickadees, Yellow-rumped Warblers (predominantly Audubon's), Savannah Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos were all breeding in the camp area, with the last two species especially abundant. Just-fledged chickadees, warblers and

juncos bumbled around me, trying out their wings and following adults in a largely futile attempt to get fed.

Rufous Hummingbirds buzzed through occasionally. Yellow-rumped Warblers of all ages and plumages were constantly fly-catching.

The highlight of the streamside site was the family of Spotted Sandpipers — one vigilant adult and three fluffy/scruffy chicks sporting spiky dark crown feathers like punk hairdos. At times, they fed quite close by. During Week One Camp sandpiper chicks morphed into two sleek fledglings; the third chick fledged, and all four birds were gone before the end of Week Two Camp.

Other notable streamside encounters: a Northern Waterthrush, a Hermit Thrush, a Greater Yellowlegs, a White-throated Sparrow (unusual), a few Lincoln's Sparrows and a flock of Chipping Sparrows.



Niut lakes Spotted Sandpiper. Photo: Melanie Marchand

After Supper at Camp: Meet the Kafers

by Cathy Walker

WEEK TWO SUMMER CAMPERS in the Niut Range were privileged to hear Esther Kafer describe her mountaineering expeditions with her husband, Martin.

Martin and Esther helped to organize three climbing trips in the area of our summer camp, the Niut Range, in August 1967, July 1972 and July–August, 1980. Each time their goal was to find the best routes and get to the top of mountains, most of which were first ascents.

Martin organized the logistics and approaches and Esther organized the food for the groups. She described going around the wonderful food floor at Woodward's with the manager to choose the food which was then put into special boxes to be sent north. The boxes had to fit through the drop hole in the Beaver airplane to be dropped onto glaciers for pickup by the mountaineers.

The first trip in 1967 was with nine people, two of whom were a local couple from the Chilcotin, whose canoe was used to cross Mosley Creek. After a two-day bush-whack they finally got up to the Rusty Glacier where they found the food boxes had landed safely. Esther would later use a rock-walled cooking area to prepare their meals. They climbed the 10,000-foot peaks of Mt. Rusty and Trident and the east peak of Pagoda, which at that time was the highest unclimbed peak in the Coast Range and was later named "Plummer Peak". Another part of the trip was the exploration of

the Camel Mountains. They climbed the main peak and the very difficult "Camel Tower".

Another goal was Royal Peak but it proved to be too difficult to reach on this trip. On the way, wading over Five Finger Creek the team took their pants off to keep them dry as it was hip deep, fast and cold. One climber was from New Zealand and this was evidently their normal technique. On the return there was a big rain storm overnight which made the planned route over a steep glacier too dangerous because of the falling rocks loosened by the downpour. The New Zealander put in a piton and they rappelled down using a (thankfully former) rappelling technique with a rope over the shoulder and between the legs, called "Duelfer Sitz" (no harnesses back then). Esther, already soaking wet, wound up upside down, swinging back and forth over swirling water. Fortunately, she lived to tell us this account.

In 1972, this time a group of only three, they made another attempt to climb Royal Peak. The daring Wilderness Airlines pilot flew them from Horn Lake and, after the airdrop, managed to land them on Mosley Creek, while the plane was tied to a tree, and then successfully took off again. Using a compass and a lot of hard effort, the group found the airdrop of the food boxes on the glacier. Unfortunately, there was a big snow storm that lasted three days so the group holed up. Esther managed to read a 700-page book. They then



Esther and Martin Kafer at Niut Camp. *Photo: Kris Andrews*

walked in extremely deep snow and finally managed the first ascent of Royal Peak (9,500 ft). Moving camp down, they found beautiful meadows full of wild flowers and then climbed Success Mountain. That wasn't enough, of course, so their next challenge was Hanging Peak, a long way from their air drop camp. Walking across deep snow on glaciers full of crevasses they reached the summit over some rocks, the last first ascent of this trip. At three am after a 21-hour hike they were finally back at their tents.

On the long walk-out they had to lower the heavy packs by rope over a crevasse and the pack of their fellow climber came loose and fell deep

down into the slot. Using his flashlight he roped up, climbed down and retrieved it.

Getting back from climbing these peaks was extremely taxing as the hike out took three long days (no plane to pick them up of course).

For both trips, the people of the Chilcotin were very helpful and friendly, letting the climbers park their cars on their properties, unlocking gates for them, repairing bridges, putting them up in their houses, letting them shower and feeding them dinner.

The third trip in 1980 was organized by the camp committee of the BC Mountaineering Club. This was a similar set-up to the Nature



Niut Camp Week One participants. *Photo: Phil Edgell*

Vancouver summer camp, flying in from Tatlayoko Lake using White Saddle, 37 climbers, 2 cooks, a cook tent and a dining tent. Going in on the first flight, Martin found a beautiful spot to be used as base camp. Martin and Esther did three more first ascents.

A grizzly bear was spotted on a glacier, having a grand old time, sliding down the glacier on his behind and jumping over small crevasses. When confronted with a crevasse too wide to jump across, the grizzly did what any sensible mountaineer would do, he thought about it, turned aside and found a way around.

In addition to seeing much snow, ice and rock and beautiful meadows with flowers on their trips, the Kafers saw many mountain goats on these three trips. Sadly, during our Week Two summer camp with Nature Vancouver we saw none, though evidence was found in the form of hoof prints and hair.

Over the three expeditions, the Kafers did thirteen first ascents.

Full reports of the first two expeditions are available in the Canadian Alpine Club Journal and the third trip is reported in the BC Mountaineering Club Report. The Kafers brought with them these reports and a number of fascinating photographs from these expeditions, including one of the climbers crossing a raging Mosley Creek with their backpacks on and in their underpants.

Oh, did Martin and Esther ever climb Niut Mountain which we saw from near our summer camp? “No,” they said, “it was too far from our base and had already been climbed”.

In December Esther and Martin gave their son, Tom, and their daughter, Kathy, a nice Christmas present of the trip with them to this summer’s Nature Vancouver summer camp. It was a pleasure meeting them as well.

(More information on the achievements of Esther and Martin Kafer is available through website search by their names.)

Ode to Parnassus

by Sabina Harpe

Ode to Parnassus
Queen of the high,
unobtrusive and radiant
lining rivulets and filling mossy dips.

Named after sacred mountain in Greece
So distant from this new world mountain path.

Fringed grass of Parnassus
Proudly offering gifts
From a bowl of heart shaped leaves
Each stem straight and strong,
Shooting five petals
Laced, and delicate
Around an oval mound.

Ode to you, Queen of the heights
I tower above with giant foot
Pausing,
I am
touched
by your wild and beauty-filled being.



Fringed grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia fimbriata*). Photo: Gail Newell