

Wandering the Swan Lake wetlands

November 25, 2016 · Updated 6:03 AM

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The Swan Lake Nature Reserve provides visitors with an opportunity to take in the environment. / HAROLD SELLERS PHOTO

DAVE SMITH

Special To The Morning Star

Thanks to Ducks Unlimited, and further development by the Regional District of North Okanagan, we have a park close by the wetlands at the south end of Swan Lake.

These wetlands form the delta where BX Creek enters the lake and Swan Lake Creek leaves to flow through town.

Friendly to birds and people alike, the Swan Lake Nature Reserve has two aspects, as a shorter 20 to 30-minute walking loop, and as a longer and quieter trail best suited for bird watchers.

To find the parking lot, drive north on Old Kamloops Road 2.3 kilometres from the intersection of 43rd Avenue and Alexis Park Drive. You'll see a park sign to turn right at Stawn's Honey, then follow the dirt road.

The short loop is relatively flat, open to the skies, and has good interpretive signs for birds, grasses,

and history of the area. With luck, you will see a hawk, red tail or harrier, scanning the grasses, or flocks of geese and ducks coming into the quiet breeding grounds. Along the route, you'll walk beside bulrushes which grow along Swan Lake Creek.

To find the longer birding trail, walk five minutes along the main loop, heading east, until you see the broad but more rustic trail heading off to the right through the bulrushes. Give yourselves an extra 45 minutes for a return trip.

This trail does follow close by the highway for about 15 minutes before entering the trees, and can be muddy, especially in the spring (so wear boots).

After reaching the woods, a single track follows BX Creek away from highway, and you are now in a quiet and majestic canopy of willows, with the stream flowing beside. The trail leads to a bird blind on stilts at the edge of the lake.

On my last trip I saw an osprey patrolling the shore while flocks of ducks sat uneasily further out on water.

Note that dogs and motorized vehicles are not permitted anywhere inside the nature reserve to protect this important bird nesting area. With open skies, this trail is a favourite of mine in the cool days of fall, when the flocks are gathering.

Dave Smith is with the Ribbons of Green Trails Society. (<http://www.vernonmorningstar.com/community/374051211.html?mobile=true>)

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