



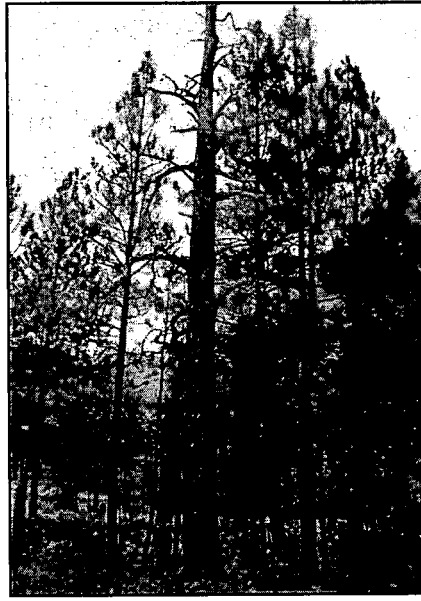
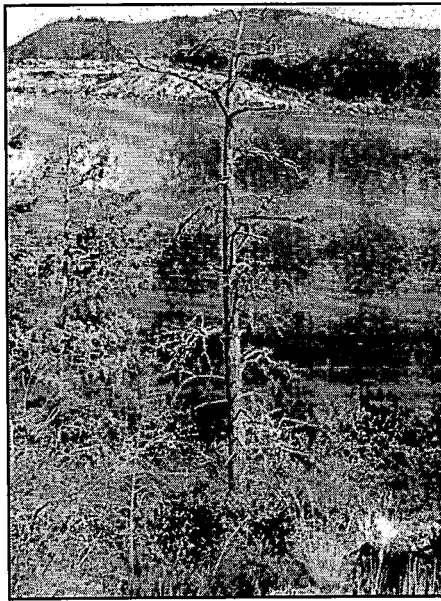
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Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program - Okanagan Needs Assessment Study

JANUARY 2006

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Prepared for:
Federation of BC Naturalists and
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Wildlife tree stewardship
program-Okanagan: needs
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1.0 PURPOSE

To determine the necessity and potential for implementing the Wildlife Tree Stewardship (WiTS) Program in the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) area, which includes Summerland south to Osoyoos, and the Similkameen Valley between Osoyoos and Hedley (Figure 1).

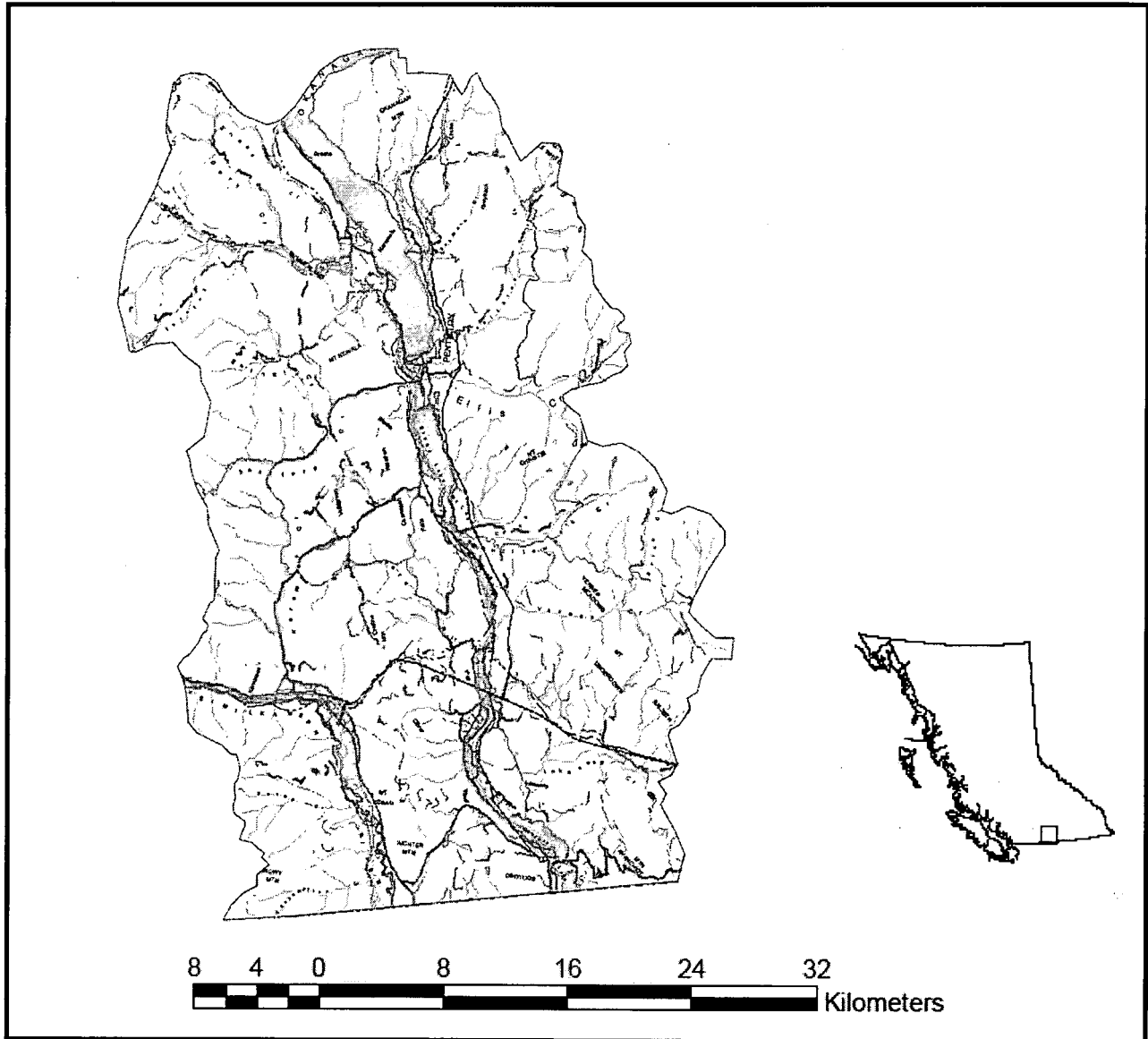


Figure 1 A map of the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program area.

2.0 BACKGROUND

In 2005, the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund recommended that the Federation of BC Naturalists expand the existing WiTS program to the Okanagan region and the Lower Mainland. Consequently, the Federation of BC Naturalists and the Canadian Wildlife Service approached the South Okanagan-Similkameen Stewardship Program (SOS Stewardship) with the idea, which resulted in the following meetings.

March 2005

The initial meeting included representatives from the SOS Stewardship team and a representative from the advisory committee for WiTS. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss WiTS and the Community Mapping Network and determine the need/potential for embarking on a similar program in the SOSCP area. As a result of the meeting, the following actions were identified: production of a needs assessment study; outline of objectives; identification of an administrative lead; and consultation with potential partners. Complete notes on this meeting are provided in Appendix A.

July 2005

Representatives from SOS Stewardship, Canadian Wildlife Service, Federation of BC Naturalists, local Naturalists' Clubs and the Ministry of Environment were in attendance. The meeting was held to receive input from potential partners. Some potential project partners and data gaps/ needs for WiTS – Okanagan were identified. Discussion from this meeting provided a starting point for developing the Needs Assessment Study. It was clearly evident that a WiTS-O project should be more of an ecosystem-based sightings program, with an emphasis on increasing sightings of bird species at risk that are dependent on wildlife trees. Participants agreed that the Okanagan-Similkameen needs a small, specialized local program with clear goals to facilitate protection at the municipal/regional level. Complete notes on this meeting are provided in Appendix B.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Potential partners and key individuals that were identified during the March and July consultation meetings were contacted during October 2005 to January 2006. These individuals and additional contributing participants identified during the consultation period are listed in the acknowledgement section of this document. Input from these individuals is incorporated through the document. Questions posed to these individuals focused on: identified needs and information gaps as they relate to bird species that nest in wildlife trees; background information on existing programs/organizations that may be able to partner with WiTS-O; suggestions for target species; and ideas on program structure.

4.0 IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND INFORMATION GAPS

The following section outlines the needs and information gaps that were identified during the two meetings held in 2005 and also through the one-on-one consultation process. The potential role of WiTS-O is also presented in each section, as a means of illustrating how such a program could address these deficiencies.

4.1 *Coordination*

There is currently a lack of ongoing connection or interaction of relevant groups within the Okanagan-Similkameen region, with respect to a potential WiTS-O program. Many projects are occurring for individual cavity-nesting birds - particularly Species at Risk - without a connection between the facilitating groups. This lack of coordination creates confusion for volunteer monitors, reduces the efficiency of individual programs and also results in gaps of information. WiTS-O could provide this linkage by acting as a central repository for information and facilitating coordination amongst groups through a structured approach.

4.2 *Species Records*

Records of the target species for WiTS-O is variable, with an abundance of sightings for some species and very limited information for others. There is also information lacking on specific habitat requirements of many of the target species; these knowledge gaps may potentially impede the successful recovery of Species at Risk. WiTS-O may assist in improving the species' knowledge base by recording consistent, quality data. WiTS-O can also assist with the recovery of Species at Risk by supporting and encouraging habitat protection. The data collected through the program may help to identify specific restoration objectives for each of the target Species at Risk.

4.3 *Data*

Multiple individuals throughout the consultation period repeatedly identified the need for a centralized database. Currently, there is no one person or agency that receives and records information for new sightings of Species at Risk or occupied nest sites. At present, sightings are reported to local specialists (e.g. owls are typically reported to Dick Cannings), government biologists or may simply be retained in note form in someone's personal journal. The actual data collected is also variable, with such details as land ownership, tree species, habitat type, condition of habitat and GPS coordinates not consistently recorded. Some participants - principally those who actively record bird sightings - also expressed concern as to what becomes of the data and also a desire to obtain access to this data.

WiTS-O should be structured so that data is consistently reported to delegated Area Supervisors, who subsequently report to the Regional Coordinator. Data may be entered by the Regional Coordinator or forwarded to a summer student working on behalf of all the BC WiTS initiatives. All records should be entered into a digital database, preferably the WiTS Atlas on the Community Mapping Network. This Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping (SHIM) database is user friendly, allowing information collected by local volunteers to be efficiently incorporated with government databases. A WiTS-O Atlas section should be created to ensure consistent collection of the data recorded for target species and provide a centralized repository of information. Record forms for WiTS-O will differ from the Vancouver Island program due to the different target species and the existing data gaps.

As the Atlas is interactive, this would allow wildlife tree stewards, *select* naturalists, *select* local governments and agencies, and *select* researchers to place and receive information directly online (it is a secured website with four levels of access). Therefore, volunteers would be allowed access to a basic level of data so that they may see the results of their contribution to the program and recognize that they are part of a much larger, well-coordinated initiative. Public access should be filtered to exclude private land sightings where the landowner has chosen to maintain confidentiality.

Entry into one database will also assist in guiding the Regional Coordinator to focus on geographical areas where data is lacking or identify trends in species' use of a particular area or habitat.

4.4 *Training*

Some of the participants expressed concern about volunteers being properly trained. Training is necessary to ensure that volunteers have the knowledge to correctly identify and monitor priority species and their nest cavities. Training workshops should include information on species identification, habitat types and how to properly complete the record forms. Safety training is also required for volunteers entering backcountry sites, including topics on precautions, first aid and appropriate gear.

4.5 Education and Outreach

For WiTS-O to be successful in the long-term, it will be necessary to engage targeted sectors of the general public (e.g. youth, recreationalists, naturalists), First Nations as well as private landowners. Although WiTS Vancouver Island functions effectively through volunteer monitors from local naturalist clubs, it will be necessary to expand the composition of volunteers in the Okanagan beyond local naturalist clubs; this message was clearly relayed by those naturalist club members present at the July meeting and reiterated during subsequent discussions. WiTS-O will require a greater time commitment from volunteers, as the program focuses on several species with a significantly larger geographical range. Extensive outreach will be necessary to obtain a functioning base of volunteers. WiTS-O will need to produce a brochure with local contact information, emphasizing the importance of the program to the Okanagan. This would also help to create consistent messaging. Clarification of terminology, such as snag versus wildlife tree, was identified as an area that would benefit from increased education.

Education for groups engaged in fire-hazard reduction or firewood cutting is required to incorporate Species at Risk considerations into these practices. Specifically, tree thinning could be employed in a manner that would reduce fire hazard risks and improve habitat quality for certain Species at Risk and Identified Wildlife Species. This education would benefit both organizations and individual private landowners within the urban-wilderness interface.

4.6 Policies

Certain policies that currently exist in the Okanagan-Similkameen are potentially hindering the survival or establishment of cavity-nesting birds. For example, firewood permits could be written in a way that assists habitat restoration through thinning. WiTS-O should work with local governments or provincial staff to amend such policies and to create bylaws or modify existing bylaws to establish no-build buffer zones and legally protect occupied nest-cavities and nest sites, and the habitat immediately surrounding wildlife trees (*size of buffer zone to be determined based on species of bird*).

5.0 POTENTIAL FORMATION OF WITS OKANAGAN

Input from key individuals has culminated in the following section, which outlines the tentative goal, objectives, target species and initial actions of WiTS Okanagan, if it comes to fruition. The programs and agencies operating in the Okanagan-Similkameen region that could potentially partner or link with WiTS are also identified

5.1 Goal

The overall goal of the Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program Okanagan is:

To identify, protect and conserve wildlife trees and adjacent natural habitat, and increase records of target bird species nesting in wildlife trees, particularly Species at Risk, by implementing a voluntary Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program and cooperatively coordinating with user groups and stakeholders actively participating in bird conservation, monitoring, research and outreach within the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program area.

5.2 Objectives

- Identify the location of wildlife trees with nests or nest cavities occupied by the target bird species;
- Increase the sightings database for three federally Endangered birds that rely on nest cavities;
- Monitor nest sites to determine productivity;
- Provide a centralized information exchange through the Community Mapping Network – WiTS Atlas;
- Improve on the understanding of habitat needs of target species;
- Assist with the protection and recovery of those target species that are classified as ‘at risk’;
- Partner with and assist groups involved in bird conservation, monitoring, research and outreach; and
- Increase community awareness of cavity-nesting birds and their specialized habitat requirements (i.e. raise awareness of the importance of wildlife trees).

5.3 Target Bird Species

The significant number of Species at Risk in the Okanagan-Similkameen necessitates a WiTS program that targets cavity-nesting bird species or birds that construct nests in wildlife trees and are classified as provincially and/or federally at risk. A list of three owls, three woodpeckers and one buteo that fit these criteria is provided in Table 1. Records of nest sites for all of these species are immensely important, while sightings records are also highly valuable information for the three federally Endangered species.

Table 1 A list of provincially and/or federally birds that are associated with wildlife trees.

Common Name	Latin Name	Provincial Status ¹	Federal Status (COSEWIC) ²
Western Screech-Owl	<i>Otus kennicottii</i>	Red	Endangered
Flammulated Owl ³	<i>Otus flammeolus</i>	Blue	Special Concern
Northern Saw-whet Owl	<i>Aegolius acadicus brooksi</i>	Blue	-
White-headed Woodpecker ³	<i>Picoides albolarvatus</i>	Red	Endangered
Lewis's Woodpecker ³	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	Blue	Special Concern
Williamson's Sapsucker ³	<i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i>	-	Endangered
Swainson's Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Red	-

It would also be valuable for volunteers to record the nest sites only of the additional fourteen species listed in Table 2, which includes owls, accipiters, buteos, eagles and falcons that all nest in wildlife trees⁴. While some of these birds are secondary cavity nesters (e.g. kestrel), other species construct their nests in wildlife trees (e.g. osprey) or use old nests of other large birds (e.g. Long-eared Owl).

Table 2 A list of 'not at risk' birds that are associated with wildlife trees.

Common Name	Latin Name
Great-horned Owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>
Northern Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium gnoma</i>
Barred Owl	<i>Strix varia</i>
Boreal Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaelos</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>
Northern Goshawk ³	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>

¹**Provincial Conservation Status**

Red-listed includes any indigenous species, subspecies or plant community that is **extirpated, endangered, or threatened** in British Columbia..

Blue-listed includes any species, subspecies or community considered to be **vulnerable** (special concern) in British Columbia.

Yellow-listed includes indigenous species or subspecies **not-at-risk** in British Columbia.

²**Committee on the Status of Endangered Species in Canada**

Endangered: A species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.

Threatened: A species that is likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.

Special Concern: A species of special concern because of characteristics that make it is particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events.

Not-at-Risk: A species that has been evaluated and found to be not at risk.

³ Classified as an Identified Wildlife Species; Identified Wildlife are species at risk which have been designated as requiring special management attention under the provincial Forest and Range Practices Act

⁴ Species list recommended by Dick Canning, Consulting Biologist with Bird Studies Canada.

5.4 Potential Partners

There are multiple programs and agencies operating in the Okanagan-Similkameen region that could potentially partner or link with a WiTS program. The following summarizes the involvement, mandate and structure of these programs/organizations as they relate to WiTS-O.

Canadian Wildlife Service

Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) administers the Partners in Flight program. They are also one of the founders of WiTS. CWS manages habitat that hosts the WiTS Okanagan target species.

Local Government

The proposed geographical area of WiTS-O is located entirely within the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). The RDOS will be hiring an Environmental Coordinator in 2006; this individual will be working with the planning department. Currently, Rural Areas C (Oliver) and D (Okanagan Falls/Kaleden) incorporate the Okanagan-Similkameen Habitat Atlas into official community planning. WiTS should work with the planning department and the Environmental Coordinator to apply wildlife tree mapping (from WiTS Okanagan records) in the same manner as the Habitat Atlas to identify areas requiring protection. This would include a designated buffer zone surrounding the identified wildlife tree. As Official Community Plans within the SOSCP area are amended, the Habitat Atlas and WiTS mapping could continue to be adopted and incorporated into the land use planning process.

The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen also hosts the Hike and Bike Trail Network, which is available online at the RDOS website and includes a searchable database of existing trails. This forum may be used to promote the WiTS-O program and encourage volunteer participation in select areas.

WiTS-O should also link with the Union of BC Municipalities through the application of Best Management Practices.

Ministry of Environment

Ministry of Environment has applied for BC Conservation Corps Funding to inventory Lewis's Woodpecker, Flammulated Owl and Williamson's Sapsucker in the Princeton, North Okanagan, South Okanagan and Kettle-Granby regions. WiTS-O should link with MOE to ensure consistent data is recorded between the two programs and that data is compiled. Additionally, MoE can assist WiTS-O by providing maps of known occurrences for the target species.

Naturalist Clubs

The local naturalist clubs are voluntary groups of individuals, often with many years of birding experience. However, there are a limited number of members that would be able to participate in WiTS-O, given the travel requirements and site accessibility of potential survey locations in the Okanagan-Similkameen. The WiTS-O Program could be promoted through the Naturalist Groups monthly meetings. There are two naturalist clubs operating in the Okanagan-Similkameen, the Oliver/Osoyoos Naturalists' Club and the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club. Representatives from both clubs have indicated willingness in becoming involved in WiTS-O.

Partners in Flight

Partners in Flight (PIF) is a coalition of countries, government agencies, conservation groups, academic institutions, First Nations, industry, and other citizens who share a common vision: to maintain the health of bird populations and their habitats. PIF operates under Canada's Great Basin Land Bird Conservation Plan. With respect to the Okanagan, PIF is planning to set up a community leaders program focusing on regions outside of the SOSCP area, predominately the North Okanagan, Thompson-Nicola, Kamloops and Princeton areas. They are investigating the potential to set up a citizen-based monitoring program for focal cavity nesting birds, including Lewis's Woodpecker, White-headed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker and Western Screech-owl.

Partners in Flight and WiTS-O could cooperate and coordinate on the following activities:

- Improving consistency of data by requesting the same information on record forms;
- Reporting data to the same location - PIF indicated they may link with the Community Mapping Network via the WiTS website link; and
- Coordinating outreach actions, potentially through SOSCP Outreach.

Partners in Flight is also able to promote WiTS-O on their website: <http://www.pifbcyukon.org/>

South Okanagan Rehabilitation Centre for Owls

The South Okanagan Rehabilitation Centre for Owls (SORCO) has been operating since 1987 as a non-profit registered society. SORCO is a clinic and rehabilitation facility for injured and orphaned birds of prey, with a purpose of treating and releasing all birds of prey. Their area of operation includes much of southern BC, from Manning Park to the Alberta border. SORCO receives birds directly from individuals or through the SPCA. The following information is recorded for each bird: mailing address of individual that located bird, general location of pick-up, GPS pick up site, GPS release site and gender (based on colors and/or weight). Much of this information is unknown for birds transferred from the SPCA.

SORCO provides an excellent reference point for information on target species, as volunteers can search areas surrounding pick-up locations. SORCO could contact the appropriate WiTS-O Area Supervisor when birds are located. The Area Supervisor should then visit the site and determine if the nesting area is nearby and complete the record form. If the site occurs on private lands, the Area Supervisor should notify the SOS Stewardship group, who could initiate landowner contact. Area Supervisors may also assist by tracking down missing record information for birds transferred from the SPCA.

This linkage would be most applicable for the Western Screech-owl; however, nest sites should be recorded and monitored for the remaining target species if the occupied wildlife trees are located during pick-up.

SOSCP Outreach

SOSCP Outreach is responsible for fostering increased conservation awareness, involvement and commitment of residents and visitors to the South Okanagan-Similkameen area. Outreach has planned many activities for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, however they are dependent on approval of funding proposals. Descriptions of current outreach activities have been included to illustrate areas of potential linkage; however, given the funding dependency of these activities, they may not be permanent components of the program.

Outreach is planning to conduct a riparian areas project targeting the whole community with youth activities centered on enhancement and awareness of focal riparian plant species (e.g. cottonwoods). Presentations will be conducted for private landowners with riparian habitat to assist in identifying dominant plant species and outlining enhancement/protection opportunities. Training will also be provided to teach individuals how to monitor and record information in riparian areas. Record forms will be available on the SOSCP website. Outreach and WiTS-O can link training workshops. Keen individuals attending the monitoring presentations may be interested in the WiTS training workshops for volunteer monitors. Private landowners with riparian habitat may also become Wildlife Tree Stewards on their own lands.

Western Screech-owl, Lewis's Woodpecker and White-headed Woodpecker are focal species for the Outreach program's activities in 2006-07.

SOSCP and the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance websites contain a citizen science project page, which promote existing projects in the Okanagan. Individuals can download forms, project information and contact details to become involved in the projects that interest them. This forum provides an excellent site to promote and facilitate involvement in the WiTS-O program.

South Okanagan-Similkameen Stewardship Program

The South Okanagan-Similkameen (SOS) Stewardship Program works with private landowners to help conserve and enhance natural areas on their property, and has been in existence since 1994. In 2002, SOS Stewardship embarked on the White-headed Woodpecker (WHWO) Suet Feeding Project in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment (MOE). This project was based on the Penticton MOE sightings database for WHWO and included only relatively recent records (i.e. for the previous 10 years). With assistance from the MOE biologist, approximately 30 landowners living in close proximity to the known occurrences of WHWO were identified. Participants were provided with a suet feeder, literature on WHWO and tips on proper identification of this target species. Landowners were provided with a contact number to report any observations of WHWO. During the past 3 years, the number of landowners who have participated in the program has increased to approximately 50. To date, this 3-year project has not resulted in any new sightings of WHWO; however it has successfully raised community awareness of this endangered woodpecker and reinforced the importance of retaining wildlife trees for this endangered bird and other wildlife species.

During the next phase of the project, SOS Stewardship is currently in the process of mapping all the existing suet-feeder contacts and overlaying this data on a WHWO suitability map⁵, which includes a cadastral layer⁶ of information. This phase of the project aims to identify any gaps in landowner contact and ensure that SOS Stewardship has approached the target properties. A new fact sheet on WHWO and habitat requirements is also being prepared, and will be available for distribution in the upcoming fiscal year.

WiTS-O should link volunteer monitors with the SOS Stewardship team when survey locations occur on private lands. Landowners often have many habitat values on their property, which may potentially support multiple species. Without control of landowner contact, individuals may be contacted on

⁵ Recent advances in computer generated mapping, such as Geographic Information Systems, have made it possible to model habitat use patterns of wildlife species. Detailed ecosystem maps are combined with data on an animal's breeding, nesting, feeding, migration and hibernation requirements to produce Habitat Suitability Maps. Habitat suitability is the ability of the habitat in its current condition to provide for the habitat requirements of a species.

⁶ Cadastral maps display the spatial or geometric descriptions of land parcel boundaries. They define the location, shape and size of a land parcel, within the context of a regional geodetic reference system.

multiple occasions, which could be detrimental to the program. SOS Stewardship biologists can assist WiTS-O by distributing information on wildlife trees and setting up voluntary stewardship agreements.

Species at Risk Recovery Teams

Species at Risk Recovery Teams can help to develop WiTS-O by providing guidance on the necessary field data to be collected, in an effort to bridge knowledge gaps. Collection fields for these data gaps should be included in the monitoring forms. Recovery teams have been established for Western Screech-owl and White-headed Woodpecker and recovery strategies have been drafted. A draft management plan has been prepared for Lewis's Woodpecker. Williamson's Sapsucker has been recently updated to federally Endangered status and a recovery team/strategy is under development.

Weyerhaeuser Canada Ltd.

Weyerhaeuser identifies known nest sites and Species at Risk occurrences at the planning stage of their timber harvesting operations. Their regional ecologist incorporates multiple species values and needs in their forest regeneration plans. This predominately includes maintaining various levels of forest structure to provide habitat for a variety of species. If a nest site is encountered during tree harvesting, the area is flagged and allotted structure is maintained around that patch of trees. However, given the operational requirements of logging, it is extremely difficult to identify nest cavities while actively harvesting and species may go unnoticed. WiTS-O can assist by updating Weyerhaeuser of the presence of occupied wildlife tree nest sites recorded on proposed cut blocks between the planning and logging stages. Weyerhaeuser can reciprocally provide WiTS-O with information on known nest sites and sighting data collected during the planning and harvesting stages, for incorporation into a centralized database.

Under the BC Forest and Range Practices Act, all Species at Risk are protected. Specific "Accounts and Measures for Managing Identified Wildlife" have been produced with detailed recommendations for managing around occurrences. Target species with these guidelines have been identified in Tables 1 and 2 of this document.

Recreation Groups

There are five recreation clubs that exist in the project area. Members of these groups are actively recreating in natural forested areas that support the target species. Therefore, these groups may provide an additional source for volunteer monitors. Bird identification training will be necessary for these groups. Groups are listed below:

- Penticton Cycling Club
- South Okanagan Horse Association
- Outdoors Club
- Adventurers Club

Youth Groups

There are several youth groups in the project area that could potentially volunteer in the WiTS-O program. In the future, WiTS-O could support a mentorship program with high school students, whereby interested students are linked with volunteer monitors. Existing youth groups include:

- Girl Guides
- Boy Scouts
- Young Naturalist Club (*currently the SONC-YNC members are too young to assist, but the age range of participants may change over time*)
- High school Environmental Clubs

5.5 *Structure of WiTS Okanagan*

WiTS-O should have a working group of partners, including representatives from many of the agencies and organizations listed in Section 5.4. This group would meet quarterly and provide direction for the Regional Coordinator. Similar to WiTS-Vancouver Island, the Regional Coordinator should be a paid position (\$3000 - \$5000/ year). This person should be responsible for: biannual communications (e.g. newsletters); coordinating the working group meetings; identifying locations to conduct survey work in consultation with the working group and Area Supervisors; reporting to WiTS-O Regional Director; linking Area Supervisors; sending data to the WiTS summer student for entry onto the Community Mapping Network; organizing and facilitating presentations and workshops; and liaising with partners. Area Supervisors would be voluntary positions, with individuals being compensated for mileage and expenses. They would be responsible for: collecting information from volunteer monitors; recruiting volunteer monitors; scheduling meetings with volunteer monitors; and coordinating with SOS Stewardship to facilitate private land access. Volunteer Monitors would also be compensated for mileage. Their responsibilities would include: recording new, active nest sites located in wildlife trees; recording sightings of the three federally Endangered species; monitoring of nest sites to determine productivity (up to 3 times per year). Consistent with WiTS-Vancouver Island, a contractor (Registered Professional Biologist) could be hired to ground truth all nest trees to provide verification, and ensure quality control/assurance of data.

While the confines of the WiTS-O Program have been limited to the approximate boundaries of the SOSCP area, it is important that the area be divided into smaller management units. Each of these units would be assigned an Area Supervisor. The Area Supervisor would then assign survey/monitoring locations to each of their volunteers. An interested volunteer may then define their involvement by the number of locations they are committed to monitoring. One possible scenario for the region would be as follows:

Area A: Peachland-Summerland (Westside of valley)
Area B: Penticton (includes Naramata/Chute Lake)
Area C: Kaleden/Okanagan Falls/East Vaseux /White Lake
Area D: Skaha Estates/Okanagan Falls/West Vaseux
Area E: Oliver/Willowbrook/Fairview/Black Sage
Area F: Osoyoos/Anarchist/ Richter Pass
Area G: Twin Lakes/Cawston/Keremeos/Hedley

5.6 *Actions for 2006-07*

Proposed activities will be accomplished through the WiTS-O partners, Regional Coordinator, Area Supervisors and Volunteer Monitors. Obligated activities (identified by asterisk) were outlined in the Federation of BC Naturalists proposal to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (2006-07).

- Circulate Needs Assessment Study (Jan-Feb);
- Confirm interest of potential working group members through core group meeting (March), then follow-up with quarterly meetings and four conference calls*;
- Coordinate with government biologists, species specialists and Recovery Team members to confirm data collection needs, and produce an appropriate WiTS-O record form;
- Coordinate with MOE to produce maps required for planning purposes;
- Initiate volunteer recruitment campaign in cooperation with SOSCP Outreach and SOS Stewardship programs (April onwards);

- Host two workshops/training sessions for volunteer stewards and interested community members* (May);
- Link with RDOS/municipal governments to determine potential of incorporating habitat protection into legislation i.e. new bylaws, strengthen existing bylaws (ongoing);
- Produce WiTS Okanagan brochure with information on target species and their habitats, and distribute alongside other relevant extension materials such as SOS Stewardship's WHWO brochure* (ongoing);
- Promote WiTS-O on applicable websites – CMN, PIF, SOSCP Outreach;
- Provide a display/presentation at a minimum of three community events* (April-September);
- Through the SOS Stewardship Program, meet with landowners (community stewardship approach) to educate on co-existing with cavity nesters – e.g. Regal Ridge, subdivisions with large community parks (Willowbrook) * (April – October);
- Embark on first year pilot program to determine effectiveness of approach; and
- Enter data into the WiTS online database – Community Mapping Network ATLAS.

5.7 *Maintaining Interest of Volunteers: Incentives*

As with any volunteer-based program, it is imperative to maintain the active interest of participants. This was an important discussion item during the July meeting and also as part of the one-on-one consultation. The following ideas were provided:

- Guest speakers
- Winter series of lectures (connect with the Osoyoos Desert Centre)
- Provide monthly meetings with coordinator and volunteers for updates, information sharing
- Reimburse volunteers for mileage when monitoring forms are completed
- Post photographs and journal notes on website
- Acknowledge contributions in newsletters
- Set up information and monitoring forms at kiosks for visiting birders
- Justify what is done with data and the values of the project to volunteers (from a science and protection value) – big sell
- Simplify monitoring forms and number of required time to monitor (reduce time commitment)
- Provide training – including species identification; GPS training; backcountry safety

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Notes on Meeting with Gretchen Harlow on March 16 to discuss Wildlife Tree Steward Program (WiTS) and Community Mapping Network (CMN)

Prepared by Lisa Scott, March 21, 2005

Attendees: Anthea Bryan, Janna Foster Willfong, Lisa Scott and Gretchen Harlow (Environment Canada, Advisory Committee for WiTS)

Purpose of meeting: to discuss WiTS & CMN and determine the need/potential for embarking on a similar program in the SOSCP area

Discussion (background):

- WiTS involves CWS, WLAP, the Federation of BC Naturalists, BC Hydro, with funding from such groups as HCTF, Eco-Action; it has been underway for 3 years
- The program started on Vancouver Island, expanded onto some of the Gulf Islands and is now extending into the Lower Mainland and possibly the Southern Interior via SOS Stewardship
- WiTS is based on Section 34(b) of the BC Wildlife Act, which extends year round protection to a select group of birds' nests that include those of bald eagles, ospreys and great blue herons.
- The [current] goal of WiTS is to assist a network of community stewards committed to conserving coastal wildlife tree habitats through volunteer monitoring, landowner agreements and community education along the Strait of Georgia.
- The FBCN has a significant role, acting as the administrator of the program, and also have club members assist 2/3 times per year monitoring nest sites
- WiTS has a Wildlife Tree Atlas on the web-based Community Mapping Network; the atlas is an online database of known Wildlife Trees on Vancouver Island showing locations, observations, and productivity; the Atlas is interactive allowing Wildlife Tree Stewards, *select* naturalists, *select* local governments and agencies, and *select* researchers to place and receive information directly online (it is a secured website with four levels of access)
- WiTS works with local governments on wildlife trees and community planning. Through the Local Government Act, local governments can write legislation to protect buffer areas around wildlife trees. WiTS offers to share data on known wildlife nest trees.
- For more detailed info on WiTS, check out <http://www.wildlifetree.org/#>

Discussion (applicability to SOSCP):

- With the foundation and protocols already in place for wildlife tree stewardship and the atlas, the program can now benefit SAR birds in the SOSCP area, such as WESO and WHWO (also secondarily LEWO, GBHE); the atlas designer could add the necessary components to accommodate our needs (i.e. current mapping records nest sites as opposed to species occurrences or "patches" of wildlife trees)
- Benefits: builds on an existing program; ties existing components together; synchronizes efforts among interested participants and potentially gives a key role to local naturalists clubs; great opportunity to link with local government
- **What do we need to do?** (1) prepare scoping (discussion) paper to identify what is in place, options for connecting with potential partners and needs (e.g. products); (2) develop clear objectives; (3) determine who would be administrative lead (e.g. FBCN); (4) contact potential partners, interview and organize meeting to discuss potential for program.
- Target dates:

- 2nd-3rd week of April – prepare draft discussion paper;
- early May – schedule meeting with interested participants (possibly week of May 9-13 when Anthea back from UK)
- Gretchen hopeful to provide some seed funding (\$5000) to go towards flushing out the discussion paper; contacting participants and organizing meeting; applying social marketing to the program – *once funding is confirmed, the SOS Stewardship team needs to determine who will take the lead on this*
- Gretchen encouraged us to send a representative to an upcoming workshop in Vancouver, April 4, which provides some background on WiTS and outlines the Wildlife Tree Atlas – *Lisa has offered to attend this workshop*

APPENDIX B

Meeting on Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS)
Ministry of Environment, Penticton office
22 July 2005

Attendees:

Lisa Scott, SOS Stewardship Program
Alyson Pulhum, SOS Stewardship Program
Gretchen Harlow, Canadian Wildlife Service
Doug Brown, Oliver Osoyoos Naturalists Club
Jim Ginns, South Okanagan Naturalists Club
Frank Sigurdson, South Okanagan Naturalists Club (President)
Orville Dyer, Ministry of Environment
Jim Shaver, South Okanagan Naturalists Club
Ron Speller, FBCN (via conference call)

Unable to Attend:

Peter Ord, SOSCP Outreach Coordinator
Bryn White, Species at Risk Recovery Coordinator
Shawn Black, SOS Stewardship Program

Canadian Wildlife Service - Gretchen

CWS was one of the founding partners of WiTS

Ministry of Environment - Orville

MoE is affiliated with Partners in Flight and the Canadian Inter-ministry Joint Venture. MoE wants to see an ongoing connection or interaction with other groups. It is very important to involve media, and maintain good records. WiTS should link with UBCM through the application of Best Management Practices (BMPs). He feels it is very important to link with schools. MoE can assist WiTS program by providing maps of known occurrences for following species. Naturalist groups provide long term monitoring which is so important, but there are a lot of gaps and this information is not necessarily being incorporated into the government databases.

Lewis' Woodpecker is COSEWIC special concern; risk rating is close to threatened. A management plan is under development. A monitoring component is missing. Information is not getting to the recovery team; it needs to be on the record.

Williamson's sapsucker (higher elevations – larch) is potentially impacted by firewood cutters. WiTS could improve communication with MoF/foresters. A good example is on Browning Creek Road (east Vaseux).

White Headed Woodpecker – could connect with SOS Stewardship suet feeder program.

Western Screech Owl is commonly located within municipal and regional parks.

Great Blue Heron records are very poor. The species is low on the priority as its not federally listed.

If WiTS comes to fruition, need to link with these programs and plans:

- Partners In Flight (PIF) – from border to Kamloops
- Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture – to border and beyond, east to Kootenays.

Ron – On Vancouver Island, keynote speakers were brought in to each area to generate enthusiasm and increase the number of volunteers. There are 200+ volunteers on the island.

Gretchen - Program starts with scientists and known locations. Government can provide technical component; develop research needs. Contractor (Registered Professional Biologist) has been hired to ground truth all nest trees, provide the verification – quality control/assurance of data. Raises quality of data and learning that goes around that.

CURRENT WiTS PROGRAM

Levels/Structure

- Ground level – monitors (foundation) and area coordinator
- Verified at technical level
- Regional coordinator
- Working group meets monthly

Communications

- Quarterly meeting
- Annual meeting
- Training

Biggest connection will be around funding and data, and getting information on the atlas

GENERAL DISCUSSION

South Okanagan Naturalist Club and Oliver Osoyoos Naturalist Club support the program but are concerned about not having enough volunteers. Willing to cooperate in whatever way possible. WiTS could invite a guest speaker to stimulate volunteer interest or possible install a winter series of lectures at the Desert Centre. Club members are traveling greater distances than what occurs on Van Is.; therefore, there is a greater time component. Information and forms could be provided at kiosks to reach out to visiting birders and naturalists. We could also hook the public through initial interest in more visible species such as Osprey.

Schools are a natural outgrowth of the program. On Vancouver Island schools are coming to WiTS. They could link with Eco-Studies. The target is 14-15 year olds who are interested and have time if there is limited travel.

What data is required in the South Okanagan? Where do we go from here?

- A sightings program is required. The ultimate GOAL could be to increase sightings of Species at Risk (SAR)
- The South Okanagan needs a small, specialized local program and goals to facilitate protection at the municipal level.
- We need to look at SAR and speak with recovery teams.

Others to Involve

- Willowbrook group
- Provincial parks
- Interior BC Bird-Line
- Weyco
- Harold King
- City of Penticton
- First Nations
- Community leaders
- People already inhabiting or recreating

What needs to be done?

- New developments
- Contact new landowners, eg. Regal Ridge, firewood cutters or larger community parks (Willowbrook)
- Species hotline
- Monitoring of woodpecker nests
- Sightings of other species
- Schools

ACTION ITEM: Lisa to meet with Orville regarding nest stewardship, monitoring the habitat not just the species. What are the data gaps? What are the species needs? How can volunteers assist?

ACTION ITEM: Product fact sheets on each species.

Next Meeting – mid-late September, 2005

Need focus and approaches. Need maps at next meeting.