



# flyway

## Potholes demonstrate wildlife-friendly practices in Peace region

The Fort St. John Potholes are the waterfowl hot spot in British Columbia's Peace Region. Mallard, all three species of teal, lesser scaup, wigeon, ring-necked duck and northern pintails breed in the wetlands that dot the rolling hills of the region. The region is also used for oil and gas production and over the last 70 years, many of the wetlands have been either partially or completely drained for grain, oilseed, forage and cattle production.

"Almost all of the wetlands have been affected, in one way or another, by agricultural or other industrial practices," says Murray Clark, manager of habitat programs in the B.C. Peace Region.

In collaboration with Imperial Oil Foundation, Petro-Canada Oil and Gas and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada is turning a 64.7-hectare DUC property in the Fort St. John Potholes landscape into a demonstration site for wildlife-friendly agricultural and industrial practices.

The Jackson Property Project is located 16 kilometres northeast of Fort St. John. Next year, youth groups such as Greenwings, 4-H, Scouts, Girl Guides, school classes as well as local ranchers will be able to walk trails through the

property. Signs will explain the wildlife-friendly techniques being used on the property – rotational grazing, gravity-fed and solar-powered stock watering troughs, and riparian exclusion fencing. On one riparian area, cattle will be allowed short-term access to forage around a wetland in late August, when they will least affect wildlife.

"There are some important agricultural benefits to these techniques," says Clark. "With rotational grazing the total production of forage for livestock is actually higher than if they are allowed to run in one continuous pasture. And with clean trough water, livestock gain weight faster and are more disease free."

A small building on the site will display additional agricultural techniques, as well as techniques that the oil and gas industry can use to protect wetlands near well sites. For example, berms around well sites can contain accidental spills and, ideally, berms should be planted to grasses for nesting birds and other wildlife.

Clark expects that he or DUC biologist Bruce Harrison will lead local ranchers on tours of the site. He says, "We're hoping to influence landowners in the area to start thinking about using some of these practices on their places."



Imperial Oil Foundation's Reg Wisener (l) and Bob Irvine (r) of Petro-Canada present DUC's Murray Clark with a fifty thousand dollar cheque for the Jackson Property Project.

# B.C.'s Wetland Working Group

In the fall of 2002, a Wetland Working Group (WWG) was formed to address wetland loss and conservation in BC. Ducks Unlimited Canada is a strong supporter of the WWG and sits as its chair. Comprised of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), and industry, the WWG has prepared a 12-point "Wetland Action Plan" to help prioritize and direct wetland conservation efforts throughout the province.

The Action Plan calls for members to work more closely with local governments to provide economic incentives for wetland conservation. Of these 12 priorities or strategies, the WWG has determined that they should initially tackle four: (1) creating and adopting principles by which all levels of government, NGO's, and industry will decide which wetlands should be conserved; (2) writing, reviewing and adopting best management practices to guide development on urban and agricultural land; (3) assisting with education and stewardship programs to

encourage individuals to conserve wetlands; and (4) developing a wetland inventory in B.C. to catalogue productive wetlands so that we can monitor positive or negative changes to wetlands over time.

A mid-to-late 1990's version of the WWG was primarily a government initiative. With the reduction in government services, and the increasing recognition of the efficiency and effectiveness of NGO's, government and DUC agreed that the "new and improved" WWG would consist mostly of nongovernmental groups. These groups will work closely with all levels of governments and make recommendations for improvements to wetland conservation policies.

This concept fits closely with DUC's regional and national conservation visions, whereby we would try to implement conservation on a broader scale by becoming



more involved in larger policy programs. Over the years we have undertaken many very important "on the ground" projects, but now we feel that long-term conservation will also have to incorporate

policy initiatives.

Although the policy arena is new to DUC, we are pleased with the reception that we are receiving. This is likely a result of our very successful volunteer support and the conservation and science track record that we have earned over the years.

We anticipate that the WWG and other such policy programs will save DUC significant dollars by shifting conservation from capital works to public policy. Taxpayers will also save, through the conservation of ecological and economic benefits of healthy wetlands.

# Wings Over Canada sealed bid auction soars

Every third Monday, Ducks Unlimited Canada volunteer, Daniel Shnitka does his rounds. He drives from his Saanich Peninsula home to six public locations - grocery stores, cold beer and wine stores, Thrifty's, fishing lodges. At each is a framed DUC print on an easel, bidding forms and a sealed box. Shnitka opens the box, phones the highest bidder and replaces the print with a different one. He repeats the ritual at each stop. Every three weeks, Shnitka makes about \$2,000 for DUC.

"I wish I had thought of the sealed bid auction," says Shnitka. "If you do the math, it's pretty clear that there's a significant amount of fundraising that can accrue to Ducks Unlimited."

Shnitka and the Saanich Peninsula Chapter have run a Wings over Canada Sealed Bid Auction (SBA) route for a year.

DUC provides them with easels and framed prints and they choose locations to display the prints, ideally public places with lots of traffic flow. People view the prints and, if they want to bid, they fill out a form and put it into the box. The highest bidder buys the print.

"It's clear profit dollars," says Rory Brown, fundraising manager, Vancouver Island and Kootenay Region. "The nice thing about this program is that it's simple compared to what the volunteers normally do - put on banquets and auctions."

In the last year, Vancouver Island and Kootenay Region SBA's raised between \$70,000 and \$80,000. Brown thinks they can do much more.

"The program is just starting to explode," says Brown. "I don't think we've touched the number of places we could do this. This has the potential to make more money than banquets."

DUC doesn't just raise money with the SBAs. Interested bidders can check boxes on the form to become DUC volunteers or make cash donations. Brown estimates that one in every 25 or 30 forms has a check in at least one box.

"The SBA is especially applicable in urban areas - places like Vancouver or Toronto where there's lots and lots of people, but we don't necessarily have access to them through the normal banquet program," says Brown.

Shnitka also likes the exposure DUC gains by displaying prints in public places.

"That's a big benefit," he says. "We get Ducks Unlimited in the public eye on a regular basis and that does nothing but good for Ducks Unlimited and for wetlands."



# Reclaiming Chemainus Estuary mud flats

When TimberWest forestry company was looking to improve fish habitat in the Chemainus River Estuary, company biologist Dave Lindsay went looking for partners.

"DU became involved and said 'You're not only enhancing fish, you're enhancing waterfowl if you create bigger channels,'" says Lindsay. "It turned out to be a bigger and better project - the partnership really benefited the product that we were able to put on the ground."

The Chemainus Estuary is on the east coast of Vancouver Island, 12 kilometres north of Duncan. It is one of a series of coastal mud flats - including the Cowichan, Ladysmith, Nanaimo and Comox estuary mud flats—used by migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. In a 1982 survey, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and the B.C. Ministry of Environment ranked the Chemainus Estuary as one of the top six estuaries in importance for wildlife on Vancouver Island.

"There's not many areas that you can restore left on the island, mainly because most of it has been diked and converted to urban, agricultural and industrial uses," says Dan Buffett, DUC biologist, B.C.

Coastal Region. "This is one of the few chances you get to return it to more natural ecological processes."

The project will restore 10.5 hectares of marginal pasture owned by forestry company Norske Skog Canada Limited back to productive intertidal habitat. The land has been diked for 30 or 40 years. Although there is some flooding now, by breaching the dike and constructing channels, the area will inundate with tidal salt water for longer periods.

Natural erosion and a change in the salt balance will allow native species, whose seeds have lain dormant in the mud, to germinate. In two or three years, Buffett expects the project will be reclaimed by species such as common and Arctic rush, beaked sedge, sea arrow grass, seashore saltgrass and perennial saltwort.

The new habitat will increase the availability of native plants, seeds and invertebrates

for migrating and wintering waterfowl, as well as algae, phytoplankton, zooplankton for sea-run cutthroat, chum, pink, Chinook and coho salmon.

DUC has worked with TimberWest in other projects, but this is the first time DUC has partnered with Norske.

"Often forestry companies are involved in estuary habitat on the east coast of the island where there are significant amounts of intertidal habitat," says Buffett. "The Chemainus Estuary project increases our

ability to develop future partnerships with the forestry companies."

Lindsay agrees. "TimberWest has extensive private lands on the east coast of Vancouver Island," he says. "I think we've got lots of other opportunities for partnerships throughout our private forest lands."



## Cariboo cattlemen partner for Cows and Fish

Stewardship programs work best when landowners and communities make their own decisions. So, when the Cariboo Cattlemen's Association (CCA) looked for partners to deliver a riparian stewardship program, they found them.

"CCA wanted to take a proactive approach to opportunities available for riparian management," says King Campbell, DUC's Cariboo-Chilcotin agrologist.

The CCA, in collaboration with Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Land and Water British Columbia Inc. and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, formed the Cariboo Cattlemen's Water Stewardship Council (CCWSC).

The CCWSC is based on the Cows and Fish program that has been running successfully in Alberta for 10 years - so successfully that it won

the 2003 Canadian Environment Award for Environmental Learning.

Like Cows and Fish, CCWSC will use presentations, workshops and field days to help farm and ranch families assess the health of their wetlands and streams. The Council will share techniques on ways to improve water quality for fish, wildlife and waterfowl and people, while improving ranch productivity and providing economic benefits.

Campbell anticipates having the program running by the spring of 2004. He says, "Right now, we are seeking additional funding from the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and the B.C. Agriculture Council to assist with the delivery of the program."

CCWSC hopes to deliver 20 field days, and reach 300 producers with written educational materials, and complete a minimum of \$100,000 worth of riparian stewardship projects by March 31, 2005.



### Lignum and DUC Conserve Key Bird Habitat

Lignum Ltd. and Ducks Unlimited Canada have signed an agreement that will encourage the conservation of bird habitat and encourage a higher level of forest management to enhance bird populations in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. Lignum's 610,000-hectare forest management area in the Cariboo-Chilcotin is a key site in the Canadian Intermountain Region.

Lignum and Ducks Unlimited Canada have agreed to collaborate on specific projects that will achieve commonly held conservation and sustainable resource management objectives. Both organizations will contribute technical and scientific expertise, and both will work to attract participation from governments, First Nations and other community organizations.

### Conservation Partnership Secures Vancouver Island Highway Courtenay Wetlands

A conservation partnership among the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection and DU Canada is ensuring a secure future for six properties containing fish and wildlife habitats that border the recently constructed Vancouver Island Highway. Each of the properties contain wetland habitat that are a mix of open water, riparian areas and streams.

### Cadets Lend a Hand at Rithet's Bog

Victoria-based cadets were out in force helping remove willow debris from Rithet's Bog. The removal of the debris is important, as it prevents regrowth of willow trees and maintains the areas of open water in the wetland surrounding the bog, providing important habitat for waterfowl and wildlife. The improvements build on the work completed in 2002 that was funded by Ducks Unlimited Canada, the District of Saanich, B.C. Hydro and the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.

### Thank you Weyerhaeuser!

This past summer the Kamloops office was the recipient of a \$2500 grant from Weyerhaeuser Canada. The grant was made available through Weyerhaeuser's Jobs for Youth Program and three students were the benefactors of this terrific program. Each student was employed for a brief period and garnered valuable first-time work experience in a real workplace, as is the mandate of the Weyerhaeuser program. The students were all very appreciative of the opportunity to attain work experience and of course, make some money too!

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