



Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee

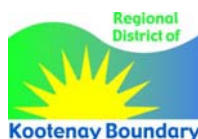
Summary of Activities, 2006



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee (CKIPC) formally established as a non-profit society in February 2005 with the goals of education and awareness, preventing further introduction and spread, promoting coordinated and collaborative management, working towards control/containment of highly invasive plants, providing a conduit of information, and developing and maintaining an inventory of invasive plants. Currently, the CKIPC pursues these goals by focusing on three program areas which are education and awareness, coordination, and inventory.

During 2006, the CKIPC provided 19 presentations, hosted the display booth at 14 events, hosted the popular 2nd Annual Weed Tour with an emphasis on hawkweed, and hosted a Biocontrol Workshop for Landowners. As well, the CKIPC coordinated community groups handpulling invasive plants in Fauquier and Bird Creek Marsh. The CKIPC also coordinated a training workshop for the Invasive Alien Plant Program with the Invasive Plant Council of BC and Ministry of Forests and Range, introducing local residents and land managers to this centralized database of invasive plants.

The CKIPC continued to develop and use outreach tools, including printing 15,000 brochures of *"Invasive Plants of the Central Kootenays"*, and 200 highway signs that identify an *"Invasive Plant"* on the roadside. The CKIPC maintained the website (www.kootenayweeds.com), and "Weed Hotline" (a dedicated phone line that received almost 200 calls) that were established in 2005. Six press releases were issued by the CKIPC in 2006, and an additional 6 articles were written by other journalists. Ten e-newsletters were also written and distributed by the CKIPC.

Coordination of weed management activities was another role of the CKIPC in 2006. One of the central activities is the development of a Regional Invasive Plant Strategy that has been initiated *"to provide a working framework for the coordination of invasive plant management through the prioritization of species and sites and to set objectives to assist land managers in delivering their weed management programs in the Central Kootenay"*. This report will be completed in March, 2007.

Other coordination activities including ongoing cross-border coordination with weed managers in Idaho and Washington, following up on reports of isolated invasive plants or new invaders to the area, and linking the CKIPC to the provincial Invasive Plant Council of BC. In addition, the CKIPC coordinated biocontrol at two high priority sites, and coordinated the Ministry of Transportation's Rest Area Rangers to handpull four species of invasive plants at 18 sites. To address coordination concerns in Creston, the CKIPC organized a meeting with concerned residents of the Creston Dyking District, and followed up on recommendations by providing a mail-out on invasive plants to residents (in conjunction with Ministry of Agriculture and Lands), identifying priority roads to mow in the area, and encouraging coordinated management activities.

The CKIPC did not conduct any specific inventories in 2006. However, we coordinated the mapping of the 2005 inventories with Selkirk College (who produced GIS maps), and ensured that all weed report information we collected was entered into the Invasive Alien Plant Program database.

One of the primary challenges for this year was the cash flow shortage that occurred from April to July. Although funding was confirmed, most of it was not received until summer, delaying the start of many of the program activities.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee (CKIPC) formally established as a non-profit society in February 2005 with the goals:

- To raise awareness and educate the public, government agencies, and other land managers about invasive plants and their impacts in the area;
- To prevent the further introduction and spread of invasive plants through education and awareness, early detection and control, and coordinated integrated weed management efforts;
- To promote coordinated and collaborative management of invasive plants between agencies and land occupiers;
- To work towards the control/containment of highly invasive non-native plant species;
- To provide a conduit for information and a source of expertise on invasive plants; and
- To develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of invasive plant species within the area of responsibility;

Currently, the CKIPC pursues these goals by focusing on three program areas which are education and awareness, coordination, and inventory. The CKIPC focuses on the Regional District of the Central Kootenay (RDCK) geographic area, as well as Areas A and B of the Regional District of the Kootenay Boundary (RDKB). The following report summarizes the activities of the CKIPC from January to December, 2006.

Board of Directors, Staff and Membership

The Board of Directors for 2006 (as elected at the Annual General Meeting and appointed throughout the year) include:

- Val Miller, Chair (Ministry of Forests and Range)
- John Gwilliam, Vice-Chair (Retired wildlife biologist)
- Rieva McCuaig, Secretary (Ministry of Agriculture and Lands) – until last October
- Terry Anderson, Treasurer (Ministry of Environment)
- Allan Freeborn (Kootenay Weed Control)
- Al Pollard (BC Timber Sales)
- Paul Peterson (Regional District of Central Kootenay)

The current Coordinator for the Committee is Juliet Craig. Other contractors were hired for specific activities including Dawn Wrangler, Petra Bauer, Valerie Huff and Brian Wikeem.

There is no formal process for membership to the CKIPC. To become a member, an individual informs the CKIPC of their interest and provides an email address for contact. There are currently 220 people on the CKIPC contact list, including representatives from NGO's, garden clubs, government agencies, utility companies, agricultural groups, and consultants.

Issues and Challenges in 2006

One of the primary challenges in 2006 was a cash flow shortage between April and July. Although the CKIPC was expecting funds from a number of sources, it was not received until the summer. Given the need to do planning and preparation for the busy season, the lack of funds during this time period impacted the program.

2.0 EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

One of the main program areas for the CKIPC is education and awareness. The key messages for education and awareness are that:

- 1) Invasive plants threaten our ecosystems and economy
- 2) People are the biggest source of spread of invasive plants
- 3) Prevention is the best control
- 4) The CKIPC promotes a collaborative and cooperative approach to invasive plant management in the Central Kootenay

A number of activities were undertaken in 2006 including presentations and events, and the development of outreach tools and publications.

Presentations and Events

Presentations

Nineteen talks were given to a variety of local government offices and community groups.

Table 1: Groups and locations of CKIPC presentations in 2006.

Group/Event	Location	Date	Audience
Castlegar Garden Club	Castlegar	03-Jan-06	30
Nelson University Women	Nelson	21-Jan-06	25
CKIPC AGM	Castlegar	31-Jan-06	28
Selkirk College	Castlegar	20-Mar-06	30
Knapweed Presentation	Vallican	30-Mar-06	40
Communities in Bloom Committee	Nelson	20-Apr-06	12
Nelson Garden Club	Nelson	26-Apr-06	25
CMI Forum	Nelson	28-Apr-06	60
BCGEU Retirees	Nelson	03-May-06	24
May Days	Kaslo	20-May-06	7
Biocontrol Across the Border	Idaho	10-Jun-06	35
Kootenay Coop Radio	Nelson & Area	12-Jun-2006	Unk
Shaw Cable	Nelson & Area	29-Jun-06	Unk
Mountain FM	Castlegar	04-Aug-06	Unk
Biocontrol Workshop for Landowners	Passmore	09-Aug-06	45
Tour with Politicians	Nelson & Area	29-Aug-06	3
Rotary Club	Trail	30-Aug-06	50
Selkirk College	Castlegar	07-Nov-06	30
Cariboo Chilcotin IP Forum	William's Lake	21-Nov-06	45
TOTAL			489 + unk

Display booth

During 2006, the CKIPC display booth was hosted at a variety of events, including fall fairs, home and garden shows, and BC Parks Interpretive Centre. Given the number of potential venues and the cost associated with transporting and staffing the booth, we developed a schedule of which years we will take the display booth to which events, to ensure that over a 3-5 year period, the display booth will be at all communities. The display booth and presentations were funded by the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, and Ministry of Environment.

Table 2: Events where the CKIPC display booth was hosted in 2006.

Date	Event	Place	# people
12-May-05	Nelson Garden Show	Nelson	179
11-Feb-06	Kootenay Organic Growers AGM	Nelson	40
01-Mar-06	Creston Agritourism Workshop	Creston	Unmanned
03-Mar-06	Castlegar Home & Garden Show	Castlegar	65
04-Mar-06	Castlegar Home & Garden Show	Castlegar	260
05-Mar-06	Castlegar Home & Garden Show	Castlegar	72
26-Apr-06	Columbia Mountains Institute Forum	Nelson	50
20-May-06	Kaslo May Days	Kaslo	30
27-May-06	Kokanee Creek Park Visitor's Centre (for several weeks)	Nelson	Unmanned
15-Jul-06	Yahk Kingsgate Centennial HomeComing	Yahk	158
22-Jul-06	Creston Garden Show	Creston	215
25-Jul-06	Communities in Bloom	Nelson	40
08-Sep-06	Creston Valley Fall Fair	Creston	188
09-Sep-06	Rossland Gold Days (Fall Fair)	Rossland	97
10-Sep-06	Hill's Garlic Festival	New Denver	275
24-Sep-06	Trail River's Day	Trail	193
		TOTAL	1862 + unmanned

Second Annual Weed Tour



The CKIPC hosted its Second Annual Weed Tour to follow up on the success of the event last year. The goals of the tour were to provide an opportunity for CKIPC members to meet and network, to share information and perspectives about invasive plants and their management, and to receive current information on invasive plants. This year Dr. Linda Wilson from the University of Idaho was a guest speaker, and she shared her knowledge about hawkweeds, their identification, and their impacts.

The tour was offered only to CKIPC members rather than publicly advertised. The 2006 tour began in Nelson and went to Kokanee Creek Park and back on the north shore. 38 people attended and feedback was excellent. This event was sponsored by BC Hydro.

Biocontrol Workshop for Landowners



Given the immense interest in biocontrol in the Central Kootenay, particularly as a form of management for spotted knapweed, the CKIPC offered a biocontrol workshop for landowners on August 9 in Passmore. The goals of the workshop were to provide information to residents about biocontrol, including the benefits and limitations, to show maps of releases in the area, and to teach residents how to identify bioagents on their own property. There were approximately 45 participants at the workshop, and we would like to offer similar events throughout the Central Kootenay next summer.

Bird Creek Marsh Handpull Day

Although the CKIPC didn't coordinate a public handpull day this year, we did coordinate events for particular groups and areas. The West Kootenay Naturalists expressed concern about the purple loosestrife infestation at Bird Creek Marsh (west of Nelson), so the CKIPC assisted with coordinating a handpull day for the West Kootenay Naturalists and the Young Naturalists.

We developed games and activities, supplied bags, and encouraged the Naturalists to participate. Unfortunately, the date chosen coincided with an extreme hot-spell in July, so few people came out for the event. However, the West Kootenay Naturalists came back in August to continue to clip and bag purple loosestrife seedheads. A contribution was provided to the West Kootenay Naturalists and Young Naturalists for their participation. The event was sponsored by FortisBC, and Ministry of Forests provided a staff person (Val Miller) to assist with developing a strategy for the site. We are currently seeking biocontrol agents, *Galerucella californiensis*, for the site.



Fauquier Handpull Day



Another site of concern to residents is the purple loosestrife infestation on Highway 6 in Fauquier. This patch represents an isolated infestation of a highly invasive species and residents are concerned about its spread into the Arrow Lakes system. In April, the CKIPC coordinated a meeting with staff from Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Environment, and Ministry of Agriculture along with concerned residents. The meeting was followed by a release of the bioagent *Galerucella californiensis* by resident Rob Shiell on the site. This was followed by a handpull day coordinated by the CKIPC in July, and then follow up mechanical treatment by the Rest Area Rangers (MoT program). Honoraria from the CKIPC

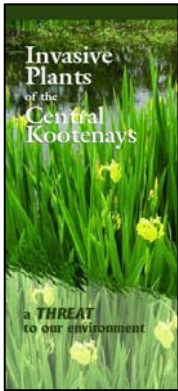
were provided to the Lower Arrow Lakes Conservation Association and Rob Shiell.

Invasive Alien Plant Program Training Workshop

The CKIPC coordinated and hosted a training workshop on the Invasive Alien Plant Program that was offered by the Invasive Plant Council of BC and Ministry of Forests and Range. The workshop was held on November 10 and had full registration (20 participants). The goals of the workshop were to introduce participants to the database and its structure, provide hands-on-learning to viewing maps, collecting data, entering data, and querying data, and to collect feedback and suggestions for database improvement. TeckCominco Metals Ltd. generously paid for the room rental, equipment and catering for the workshop.

Publications and Outreach Tools

Brochure



The CKIPC produced a brochure on Invasive Plants of the Central Kootenays in 2006. This brochure outlines what invasive plants are, why they are a problem, what people can do, and who the CKIPC is. The inside of the brochure opens to a poster featuring 11 of the invasive plant species in the area. The brochure also credits BC Hydro and their activities since they were the sole funders of the brochure and the contribution was based on sole credit in the brochure.

In March, 15,000 copies of the brochure were printed and already 10,000 have been distributed. The brochure was stocked at over 50 locations throughout the year, including garden centers, coffee shops, farmer supply stores, government offices, corporate offices, and hotels in the area. The brochure was also featured in a newsletter by the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program – Columbia Basin, which triggered numerous calls to receive a copy.

Highway Signs

A highway sign project was initiated this year with the goal of educating residents on their local invasive species and how to identify them. 200 Coroplast signs were developed and printed, and placed on road edges throughout the Central Kootenay at sites with obvious, bright, invasive plant species. Next year we will modify the signs to include the name of the featured species, and flagging tape on the plant itself, to assist residents with identification. This project was funded by Columbia Power Corporation.



Website

The website continued to be hosted in 2006. Little new information was added, but included current special features and new plant species. A complete update of the site is scheduled for early 2007. The site can be viewed at www.kootenayweeds.com.

Weed Hotline

The Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee “weed hotline” (1-250-352-1160) was well advertised in 2006 through the new brochure, posters of events, and the display booth. The CKIPC received approximately 177 phone calls and over 100 emails in 2006 to inquire about the group, request information, or voice a concern.

Press releases

Six press releases were done in 2006 (see Appendix A for examples). Feature press releases included:

- Scotch Broom an Alien Invader (15 May 2006)
- A Nasty Iris (19 June 2006)
- Second Annual Weed Tour a Success (1 July 2006)
- Purple Loosestrife Beautiful but Deadly (13 July 2006)
- Residents Pulling Weeds to Help Our Environment (24 July 2006)
- Biocontrol Workshop in Passmore (25 July 2006)

These were sent to (and printed by many) local papers including the Nelson Daily News, Kootenay Express, Trail Daily Times, Arrow Lakes News, Valley Voice, Creston Valley Advance, Castlegar News, East Shore Mainstreet, Kootenay Advertiser, and the Pennywise.

As well, the CKIPC was featured in articles by other journalists/writers including:

- Knapweed Night in the Vallican Whole (Rita Moir)
- Columbia Power Corporation Digs Up Funds for CKIPC (Audrey Repin)
- Invasive Weeds are a Growing Problem (CBFWCP newsletter)
- Alien Invaders in Your Backyard (Art Joyce)
- Discussing Bad Seeds (Deborah O’Keefe)
- Weed Clubs are a Good Idea (Larry Thomas for Canadian Cattlemen Magazine)

E-Newsletters

Ten e-newsletters to CKIPC membership were developed and emailed throughout the year. Each email included:

- Current CKIPC Projects (an update on what activities the CKIPC is involved in)
- What’s happening? (Calendar of Events)
- Did you know? (current information on invasive plants)
- Weed of the Week (a profile of an invasive plant species)

3.0 MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Strategy

One of the high priority activities for 2006 was the initiation of an Invasive Plant Strategy for the Central Kootenay Region. The development of the strategy began with a meeting of land managers on October 4. At this meeting the goal of the strategy was defined:

To provide a working framework for the coordination of invasive plant management through the prioritization of species and sites and to set objectives to assist land managers in delivering their weed management programs in the Central Kootenay.



Consultant, Brian Wikeem, has been hired to develop the strategy. The draft is due on 15 January 2007, and the final report is expected on 9 March 2007. We are hopeful that this strategy will significantly assist with coordinated and collaborative invasive plant management in the region. The Strategy is being funded by BC Timber Sales, Ministry of Forests and Range, Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, and the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary.

Creston Dyking District Coordination

In early spring, the CKIPC received a phone call from Ministry of Agriculture to explain that residents of Creston were concerned about the spread of weeds in the Creston Dyking district. The CKIPC coordinated a meeting with residents of the area, the Creston Valley Beef Growers, Lower Kootenay Band, Yaqaan Nuki Wetlands Society, and Ministry of Agriculture, to identify the issues and develop strategies to address them. The primary issues were: 1) Lack of mowing of MoT highways, 2) Private landowners not taking responsibility of their lands, 3) Lack of weed management on Lower Kootenay Band land, 4) Lack of support and involvement of the government, and 5) Lack of coordinated approach.



The CKIPC followed up this meeting by 1) Providing MoT with a list of high priority roads to mow early (developed with the Creston Valley Beef Growers), 2) Working with Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to write and mailout a letter and information package to the private residents in the dyking district, 3) Including the Lower Kootenay Band on the email list for CKIPC coordination activities, 4) Encouraging all people at the meeting to write to their RDCK representative and MLA about the issues of invasive plants, 5) Requesting an RDCK representative to the board of the CKIPC, and 6) Continuing to work towards a coordinated approach in the area. The Invasive Plant Council of BC is pursuing identifying funding for Federal land, and encouraging more involvement of Federal government in invasive plant management in BC.

Weed Reports

Another form of coordination was following up on reports of rare or isolated patches of invasive plants in the area. As well as doing an inventory for the report, we identified whose jurisdiction the infestation was on, and informed the appropriate person/agency. This follow-up to weed report is aimed to begin an Early Detection Rapid Response protocol.

Provincial Coordination

Juliet represented the CKIPC on a broader level (primarily Provincial) to ensure that current information is brought to the Central Kootenay, and that the concerns and issues of the Central Kootenay are brought to the Province. The CKIPC Coordinator participated in a number of meetings and conferences including:

- Invasive Plant Council of BC Forum (Richmond - February)
- Invasive Plants in Pacific Northwest Ecosystems Conference (Seattle – September)
- Cariboo Chilcotin Invasive Plant Committee Forum (William's Lake - November)
- Provincial Weed Coordinators meeting (Langley - December)
- Provincial Horticulture meeting (Langley - December)

As well, Juliet participates on a limited level with the Invasive Plant Council of BC's Communications Committee.

Cross-Border Coordination

Cross-border coordination has continued with the sharing of information between the CKIPC, Boundary County in Idaho, and Pend D'Oreille County in Washington. Juliet provided a presentation in Idaho on invasive plants and biocontrol across the border. As well, Duke Guthrie in Idaho passed on information about the locations of Eurasian Water Milfoil in Kootenay River to the CKIPC.

Biocontrol Releases

Given late funding for the CKIPC in 2006 (no cash flow between April and July), and staff changes at the Ministry of Forests and Range, biocontrol releases were not offered to private residents in 2006. However, one release of *Mogulones cruciger*, a root-attacking weevil for hound's tongue, was carried out in Fruitvale since no other releases for this insect had been done in the area. Bioagents were provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.



As well, the CKIPC coordinated the release of *Galerucella californiensis* for purple loosestrife in Fauquier. Resident, Rob Shiell, carried out the release and Ministry of Agriculture and Lands supplied the insects.

Rest Area Rangers Program

One strategy that was developed to address high priority sites on Ministry of Transportation rights-of-way was to engage youth involved in the Rest Area Rangers program. This program normally focuses on the maintenance and beautification of Rest Areas. Ministry of Transportation staff generously offered the services of the Rest Area Rangers towards handpulling high priority sites. These included field scabious in Salmo, blueweed in Nakusp, purple loosestrife in Fauquier, and rush skeletonweed in Krestova/Crescent Valley. The CKIPC provided instruction and training, including identification of the species, handpulling technique, and proper disposal of waste. All treatment data was entered into the Invasive Alien Plant Program.



Table 3: Species and area treated by Rest Area Rangers in the Central Kootenay in 2006.

Species	No. Sites Treated	Area Treated (handpulled)
Field scabious (Salmo)	2	.19 ha
Blueweed (Nakusp)	1	.3 ha
Purple loosestrife (Fauquier)	1	.25 ha
Rush skeletonweed (Crescent Valley)	14	12.85 ha
TOTAL	18	13.59 ha

Although this approach provided training for youth, and some site treatment, the limitations were that invasive plants were not the youth's primary priority so that some sites did not get treated, and others only received one pass.

4.0 INVENTORY AND MAPPING

The CKIPC did not conduct a specific weed inventory this year. However, time was spent on mapping the 2005 inventory data for hoary alyssum, rush skeletonweed, purple loosestrife, and field scabious. A contribution agreement was made with Selkirk College GIS program to develop the inventory maps. GIS maps in 1:20,000 and 1:80,000 were created and are housed with the CKIPC for these species.

Whenever the CKIPC followed up on weed reports, a *Site and Inventory Record* was completed, and the data was entered into the Provincial Invasive Alien Plant Program. Sites recorded include yellow flag iris in Meldeanna Pond, rush skeletonweed in Edgewood (false report), hound's tongue in Fruitvale, blueweed in Nakusp, Greater knapweed (Persian cornflower - *Centaurea dealbata*) in Castlegar and Nelson, and policemen's helmet near New Denver.

5.0 FUNDING

Funding for the 2006-07 fiscal year was graciously provided by numerous agencies (see Table 2). Some of this funding was project specific (e.g. Regional Strategy, road signs, weed tour) while other funding was for general committee activities. We are particularly grateful for these “general” funds, provided by Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Ministry of Environment, and TeckCominco Metals Ltd., since they allow the committee to continue to function and provide programs. Please see the attachment for a detailed financial statement.

Table 4: Weed Program Revenue Summary by Funding Agency 2006/07

Agency	Funding Contribution 2006-07	Funding Received in 2006	Type of Funding
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands	\$14,000	\$14,000	Seed
BC Timber Sales	\$10,000	-	Strategy
Columbia Basin Trust	\$10,000	\$9,000	Education
Ministry of Environment	\$ 8,340	\$8,340	General
Ministry of Forests and Range	\$ 8,000	-	Strategy
Fish & Wildlife Comp. Program – Columbia Basin	\$ 5,000	-	Strategy
Ministry of Transportation	\$ 4,000	\$4,000	Coordination
TeckCominco Metals Ltd.	\$ 3,240	\$2,500	General & IAPP workshop
BC Hydro	\$ 2,000	\$2,000	Weed Tour
Columbia Power Corporation	\$ 2,000	\$2,000	Highway Signs
Regional District of Kootenay Boundary	\$2,300	\$2,300	Education and Strategy
FortisBC	\$ 1,000	\$1,000	Handpull at Bird Creek
TOTAL FUNDS COMMITTED	\$69,880		\$24,740 not yet received
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE		\$45,140	

Note: Our application to the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program was successful for the 2006-07 fiscal year but as of December 2006, no funds have been received. We are awaiting \$45,000 from this program and have not included it in our 2006 finances.

In-Kind

A number of agencies and companies provided in-kind services this year, including:

- Ministry of Environment (Board member, use of meeting room, photocopies, use of PowerPoint Projector, colour printing, plotting inventory maps)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (Board member, bioagents for Fauquier, mailout of invasive plant package in Creston)
- Ministry of Forests and Range (Board member, use of PowerPoint projector, colour printing, photocopying, 1:20,000 TRIM maps, BEC maps)
- Ministry of Transportation (Rest Area Rangers)
- Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (Board member until March, use of meeting room)
- Kootenay Weed Control (Board member)
- Regional District of Central Kootenay (Board member)

- Columbia Power Corporation (use of meeting room, coffee and refreshments)
- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (storage of brochures)
- Dr. Linda Wilson (guest speaker for weed tour)

Table 5: Weed Program Expenditure Summary 2006/07 (from Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2006)

Activity	Expenditures
Education and Awareness	\$21,081.73
Management and Coordination	\$8,827.13
Inventory	\$3,392.90
Regional Strategy	\$5,770.71
Administration*	\$7,660.29
Total	\$46,732.76

* Administration includes answering emails (that may be related to education, coordination or inventory), writing grant proposals, writing reports, maintaining budget records, and participating and summarizing meetings. Some of these expenditures could be put into other categories.

**APPENDIX A: SAMPLES OF ARTICLES BY/ABOUT THE
CKIPC, 2006.**

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

DISCUSSING BAD SEEDS

By **DEBORAH O'KEEFFE**

Canadian Federation of University Women - Nelson Chapter

Although the skies are still gloomy, Kootenay gardeners know that the New Year means seed catalogues arriving in the mail and gardening books appearing on bookstore shelves, all in anticipation of the 2006 gardening season.

It was apropos, then, that Canadian Federation of University Women Nelson's first speaker of the New Year was Juliet Craig, Coordinator of the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee. CKIPC, which became a non-profit organization in February 2005, takes a coordinated approach to the growing invasive plant problem. The organization works to raise public awareness, takes annual inventory of the invaders in the region, and coordinates collaborative management of invasive plants between agencies and land occupiers.

"As tempting as it is in the spring, don't collect roadside or 'wild' plants for your garden," Juliet reminded the gathered CFUW members. "You may be surprised to find out that it's a noxious weed that could take over!"

Noxious weeds. The name calls to mind ugly, stinking plants, but noxious weeds are actually plants — plain, pretty or otherwise — which are recognized and legislated under the BC Weed Control Act as a problem to be controlled.

Twenty-eight per cent of the plants in Canada are non-native, and invasive intruders are a significant problem. Highly competitive with no natural predators, invasive non-native plant species can have huge economic impacts when they out-compete desirable agricultural crops.

Globally, these invaders are the second largest contributor to the loss of biodiversity (e.g. extinction of species), and the Kootenays have not escaped their impact. Spotted knapweed, purple loosestrife, rush skeletonweed, yellow flag iris...CKIPC's website www.kootenayweeds.com lists a number of local weeds to watch for.

How did these intruders get here in the first place? Some came to Canada and BC by accident, Juliet explained, but a surprising number of invasive plants arrive as ornamentals. Appealing-looking plants people originally wanted for their gar-

dens, these foreign invaders are proving ruinous to our native ecology. Juliet surprised CFUW's members when she stated that in every group she has spoken to in her capacity as Coordinator of CKIPC, at least one person has Japanese or giant knotweed in their garden, despite the fact that this aggressive plant escapes gardens to virtually take over creeks and destroy fish habitat!

Education of the public is an important factor in the fight to control noxious weeds. Point in fact: the popular "wildflower seed mixes" available at local gardening centers every spring are almost entirely made up of non-native plants. Such mixes, Juliet warned, often include a number of highly invasive plants, including the infamous orange hawkweed.

CKIPC's website provides information on what members of the public can do to identify and help control noxious weeds, as well as listing useful links and local resources. People are the largest spreader of non-native plants, and an educated public plays a large role in the solution to the invasive plant problem.

N

Aliens among us

DALE WEST
News Editor

Beware. Alien invaders are in our midst — in the midst of our forests and fields, along the sides of our roads, maybe in our backyards.

These aliens are non-native plants, brought to our area, sometimes accidentally, sometimes purposely. They have names like purple looestrife, common taneey and spotted knapweed. These invaders are highly competitive, producing large numbers of seeds, forming deep taproots or flowering early. With their natural predators back where they came from, they spread rapidly.

Invasive alien plants choke out native plant populations. Native animals don't eat them, so infestations of alien plants can impact wildlife habitat and rangeland. Agriculturally, they strike the farmer where it hurts most, in the pocketbook, competing with desirable crops.

Who ya gonna call? Where are the Men in Black when you need them?

No need to go Hollywood for help as the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee is much closer to home. Formed a year ago when a group of concerned local citizens, land managers and government agencies got together to see if the problem could be tackled with a co-ordinated collaborative approach. The idea took off, and now the group focuses on prevention, early detection and some eradication. "We don't actually do control, we co-ordinate the people who do," says Juliet Craig, committee co-ordinator.

See Aliens P. 4



dale west photo

WAR OF THE WEEDS — Juliet Craig, Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee co-ordinator, holds the problem, leafy spurge, dalmation toadflax, yellow star thistle and knapweed, while Audrey Repin, Columbia Power Corporation community relations director, hands her funds to help fight the problem. This summer those funds will be used to place small signs along roadways to identify various invasive plants growing in the area.

Aliens from P. 1

Prevention is the first course of action, says Craig. Don't let a plant into the area. Yellow star thistle is such a plant. It isn't in Canada, but it is near the border, Craig explains. "If it comes in it will take over agricultural areas in a flash."

The next step is to eradicate early, catch and stop it from spreading as soon as it arrives. Some invasive plants are presently only in small areas, like rush skeletonweed in Crescent Valley and field scabious is only in the Salmo area. "If we can keep those plants where they are, we will be miles ahead."

Public education is the

key to stopping the advance of invasive weeds. With the help of a \$2,000 donation from Columbia Power Corporation the CKIP committee will be alerting the public to the presence of invasive weeds over the summer with small temporary signs along roadways. "We're making small signs which say, 'Did you know this is invasive?' and we'll be putting them out throughout the summer on different plants that are in flower along the major roadways along the Castlegar-Salmo loop," says Craig.

"So when people see a flush of purple, and think to themselves, 'Look at these pretty wildflowers,' they'll know better."

March 15, 2006 The Valley Voice

COMMUNITY

Knapweed night at the Vallican Whole

by Rita Moir

Summer's coming and you'd like to get the knapweed under control, right? It's taking over the pasture and road allowance, and it's too widespread to pull by hand.

Juliet Craig, co-ordinator for the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee, will talk about mechanical and biological controls for knapweed and other noxious invasive plants on Thursday, March 30 at 7 p.m. at the Vallican Whole Community Centre.

Once established, spotted knapweed is very difficult to get rid of. Prevention is the best control, maintaining areas that are not infested as 'knapweed-free'. Mowing or otherwise controlling plants anywhere they can be easily spread, such as along a driveway or roadsides, is also important to reduce spread.

Biological control is another method of control. It's been used for spotted

knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) in the Kootenays since the 1980s. It involves the release of predators (usually insects) that attack knapweed to weaken the plants. These insects are carefully screened by Agriculture Canada to ensure that they only attack knapweed and no other plant species. Current biocontrol agents for knapweed include seedhead-attacking weevils and flies, and root-attacking weevils and moths.

These controls are already in use throughout the Shuswap Valley, and on March 30 we can learn how to assess our own property for possible biocontrol insects that have moved there on their own. In the past, these insects have only been available to government agencies and their partners. However, the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee is hoping to be able to provide these insects to residents, free of charge, for

their private property this summer. Pending funding, the CKIPC Co-ordinator will visit properties to assess potential for releasing insects, and then provide insects.

Spotted knapweed is the most prevalent non-native invasive plant species in the Central Kootenay. It covers thousands of hectares of land in BC, is highly competitive and degrades natural plant communities. The knapweed invasion has a negative effect on wildlife, including ungulate winter range habitat. An individual plant can produce up to 140,000 seeds per square metre, giving little opportunity for native plants to grow. Around the world,

invasive species are considered the second largest contributor to the loss of biodiversity (e.g. extinction of species), next to the loss of habitat. At the talk on March 30, sponsored by RARTS (Rural Alternatives Research and Training Society), Juliet Craig will also alert us to other kinds of noxious plants just beginning to invade the area.



A root-attacking weevil larva can help control knapweed.

WEEDS

Weed clubs are a good idea

Good enough that they should be spreading ... like weeds

By the time you realize an enemy is sneaking up on you it's likely too late. This is why weed specialists and ranchers are looking to local weed clubs to help them keep invading species in check around the country.

Weed clubs are mushrooming in rural America. Set up by stock groups, gardening clubs, 4-H, even Boy Scout troops, they act like sentries identifying local weed infestations and taking the point on control efforts to remove them.

One area where they've caught hold in Canada is B.C. and Dave Ralph is all for them. A provincial weed control technician with the B.C. ag ministry in Kamloops, Ralph says local weed club members are an increasingly valuable resource in his work.

"That knowledge is a real advantage in developing strategies and work plans that best fit the local needs and problems," he says. "Each area is different and who better to know the local problem species than those locals?"

And it just keeps getting better as clubs bring in specialists to help them ID weeds or give them instruction in selecting and applying herbicides and biocontrol solutions. When locals take the point, early detection and rapid response plans tend to become more effective as well. "When a new species of weed shows up and those locals on the lookout spot that problem, control efforts can jump into action more quickly," notes Ralph.

Anyone trying to get a little money or support from agencies and corporations to control invading weed species will also tell you doors open a little

easier when you have local residents driving the campaign. In his own work Ralph finds stockmen and farmers buy into a provincially sponsored weed control program with a lot more enthusiasm when local people are making some or all the decisions.

"Yes, experts are great for input and advice on weeds and control strategies, and sometimes to help local clubs access funding for weed control initiatives or demo trials, but by and large it's a better system if that local group is calling the shots."

Juliet Craig has seen what local input can do as co-ordinator of the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee based in Nelson, one of several locally driven weed committees in B.C.

"What we've found, in this area anyway, is that a farmer in one area may not know a new weed species has come into the area but someone else in another part has noticed it," she says. "Without a club or network of locals functioning to get the word out, the problem may go unattended for a few years. When it gets really noticeable the costs and challenges to control it are much greater."

Clubs also make it easier for ranchers and farmers to network with the sometimes confusing collection of government and private agencies and companies who deal with weed control on B.C.'s rangeland and forests.

When a club is formed the first thing members usually do is brush up on weed identification skills. Once that knowledge base has been established



within the community, Craig says members can move on and conduct a local weed inventory.

"If they see a new weed coming into the area but they're not sure how far it's spread and where it tends to creep in, we recommend these inventories start along roads and transportation corridors and rights-of-way under power lines and such," Craig notes. "The ranchers riding and covering ground often have the best knowledge of weed influx as anyone in the area. And we can help out in this capacity. We use a hand-held GPS unit to map the infestations and I think these are great tools for local clubs or groups. They are not that expensive for the value they give back."

Then there's always the chance an existing beef or forage club that has morphed into a weed action group might have enough buying power between them to get some good discounts from herbicide companies.

Lorne Ostendorf runs a commercial Black Angus cow-calf operation just a little west of Creston, B.C. He's one of about 20 active members of the Creston Valley Beef Growers (CVBG) which has been fighting knapweed and hound's tongue for 3 decades now, plus a few more in recent years. As an outgrowth of their interest in this field the group does contract weed control on Crown and private lands. There's enough work that they've hired a co-ordinator to look after this sideline.

Ostendorf, who was schooled at Olds College and gets to southern Alberta fairly regularly, believes weed clubs would thrive on the prairies. "In places like Alberta, where they have weed inspectors that can enforce the weed act, this kind of networking amongst beef ranchers and farmers would work well when they link to that weed inspector," he says. "Here it tends to be a little different story. We do have the legislation to control weeds but the government just has not wanted to enforce it, especially on private lands."

By way of example of what local clubs can do, Ostendorf says the CVBG, because of its commitment to weed control, was one of the first organizations involved in rearing and distributing a new weevil for biocontrol of hound's tongue. That tiny weevil has hit a biocontrol home run in their area.

More recently, the CVBG has been trying to stop the spread of knapweed and other weeds along roadways by trucks coming out of seed-laden private and public gravel pits. Without backing from government brass in Victoria for legal action to control weeds on these gravel sites and private land, Ostendorf admits it has been a frustrating fight. If they fail to hold the knapweed here he figures the hurt may be felt a lot farther away than Victoria.

"Basically, I think everyone across the west must realize that the weed problems we're having in B.C. are coming your way no matter what. I think forming a weed club will help guys get to know what they're looking for and get them talking to each other about the problems and with control agencies," he says. "Maybe then they can stop it before it gets away on them."

On his last trip to Alberta, Ostendorf noted blueweed had already become well established in the Crownsnest Pass region and east of there. He drove by entire pastures that were solid blue with flowering blueweed. "And it's dry enough in Alberta and Saskatchewan that if knapweed ever gets a foothold it will cover the whole region. We've seen it happen here and all you have to do is look to the south in Montana to see what's coming," he adds.

— Larry Thomas

Committee tacking area's noxious weeds

By Kate Skye
Times Staff

Weed committees are springing up all over the province as a way to educate people about the difference between a pesky garden weed and a highly aggressive invader.

"Our purpose is to help people identify noxious and other invasive plants," said Juliet Craig, coordinator for the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee.

"A weed is a plant that you don't want somewhere. A dandelion for example is a weed, but it's not an invasive non-native species."

Invasive weeds are those that are non-native to the area, she explained, often aggressive invaders that squeeze out native plants, degrading wildlife habitat and reducing crop quality and yield.

"Invasive weeds have a major impact on our local ecosystems," she said. "They are often strong competitors that tend to produce a lot of seeds. Nothing eats them and they are often free to expand, choking out the native plant species and anything that relies on it."

Noxious weeds are those non-native invaders that have been listed provincially or regionally under the Weed Act. Legally, people with noxious weeds growing on their property are responsible for making sure they don't spread.

"Technically, if they do let them spread, they could be fined," Craig said. But that only depends if there is a local government enforcing the Weed Act. Some residents of Creston, for example, are

advocating such enforcement.

The reason some plants have been designated invasive or noxious is that they have the potential to spread rapidly, affecting ecosystems and the economy.

"For example, weeds that spread into pastures or hay fields can severely impact the economy and lifestyle of the agriculture users by reducing the quality of the crops or the number of animals that can graze."

During her fieldwork, Craig said she was able to see, first-hand, places around the Kootenay-Boundary area where grasslands and wetlands had been taken over by invasive and noxious plants.

"Even though the flowers look beautiful, like yellow flag iris, blueweed or orange hawkweed, I could see the plants wreaking havoc on our natural landscapes," she said.

In the Beaver Valley and Pend D'Oreille area, hound's tongue is an example. The biennial plant can grow up to 1.2 metres tall.

The soft hairy rosette leaves resemble the shape of a dog's tongue and the stem leaves are shorter and stalkless.

Hound's tongue, as well as causing loss of pastureland, has the potential to poison domestic animals and wildlife that may graze on the plant. The toxic alkaloids can cause liver damage in animals.

The plant bears a dull red, purplish flower with four rounded, triangular nutlets, which are covered with hooked prickles.

"This plants spread easily by attaching their seeds to clothing and animal fur," Craig said.

See PLANTS, Page 2

Plants often added to gardens unknowingly: Craig

From Page 1

Around the Trail area, bristly locust (*Robinia hispida*) is an invasive plant that people should know about.

Once seen only in gardens, *Robinia* can now be seen spreading along the highway corridors and up into the mountains.

Robinia has rose-purple flowers that bloom in late spring. Another invader, Black locust, is a tree with long fragrant, white, grapelike

clusters of flowers that can be found throughout the hillsides of Trail.

The tree likes to inhabit woods, thickets and fence rows, and it is prohibited in some U.S. states like Massachusetts. California also has the plant on its exotic-plant pest list.

"People, because they don't know which plants to be looking out for, sometimes they plant them unknowingly," Craig added.

"One of the goals of our committee is to make more informa-

tion accessible."

A bright, colourful brochure, funded by B.C. Hydro, is one way to get the word out.

The brochure identifies top alien invaders in the Kootenays with photos and text.

Plants to particularly watch out for are: orange hawkweed, Dalmatian toadflax, common tansy, rush skeletonweed, hound's tongue, field scabious, Scotch broom, yellow flag iris, sulphur cinquefoil, purple loosestrife, policeman's helmet, giant and

Japanese knotweed, Canada thistle, hoary alyssum and spotted knapweed.

"We will be taking our brochure to local nurseries in the coming weeks," she said. "We believe education is one of the best strategies to deal with invasive plants and we want to encourage nurseries and the people who buy from them to choose alternative plants rather than invasive ones."

"Our job is certainly not to put nurseries out of business, but to encourage them not to stock these

non-native invaders."

And because some of the plants on B.C.'s invasive weed list look quite stunning, it is important for the public to be able to identify them.

"Once people can identify these plants like orange hawkweed, rather than mow around them because they look so pretty, we hope they will mow over them so their seeds don't spread," she said.

For more information contact www.kootenayweeds.com or 352-1160.



Submitted photo

LEARNING THE DIFFERENCE: Juliet Craig checks out some rush skeletonweed. She is hoping area gardeners will learn the difference between a garden ornamental and a bad weed, and her invasive plant committee is here to help.

AGGRESSIVE ALIEN INVADERS

Second annual Weed Tour a success

By JULIET CRAIG
Special to the Daily News

Did you know that mouse-ear hawkweed, an incredibly aggressive invader, is spreading throughout Kokanee Creek Park? Or that yellow flag iris planted in ponds can seriously impact our wetlands?

Over 40 members of the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee learned about these and other topics during the Second Annual Weed Tour held last week. A school bus filled with lively and interested members toured the north shore of Nelson, stopping at a few sites to check out some of the aggressive alien invaders in the area.

Topics included identifying yellow flag iris and purple loosestrife that are spreading from gardens into Kootenay Lake, looking for biological con-



Participants enjoying the Second Annual Weed Tour hosted by the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee.

trol agents used to control Dalmatian toadflax and knapweed, and discussions on issues of weed management in this area. Special guest, Dr. Linda

Wilson from Idaho, shared her expertise on yellow hawkweed and a new key to its identification.

The Central Kootenay

Invasive Plant Committee formed last year by local citizens, government representatives, utility companies, and non-profit groups who share a common concern about invasive plants.

Members of the CKIPC enthusiastically came together to share information about invasive plants, including perspectives on their impacts, control techniques, and specific management issues.

The tour was a great success in both providing information to CKIPC members, and raising awareness of the invasive plant issue in this area. For more information on the CKIPC, contact invasiveplants@uniserve.com or (250) 352-1160.

Juliet Craig is the Coordinator for the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee.

www.expressnews.ca express@expressnews.bc.ca

News

CPC helps Invasive Plant Committee



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Columbia Power Corporation has contributed \$2,000 in funding to the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee for the development of signage to educate the public in recognizing noxious weeds. This signage has been placed along roadsides throughout the West Kootenays where noxious weeds are growing, in the hope that they will assist the public in recognizing these invasive species.

"Because Columbia Power has to deal with noxious weeds along our transmission line, we are aware of the harm that they can inflict on the ecosystem," said Audrey Repin, Manager of Community Relations and Communications for Columbia Power Corporation. "We hope that the signage will help local residents recognize these invasive plant species that have such a negative impact on wildlife habitat and rangeland. Combating invasive plants requires that we all work together."

The Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee was formed in February 2005. Their main goals are to raise awareness at all levels about invasive plants and their impacts to this area, as well as to prevent the further introduction and spread of invasive plants through education and awareness.

"We are thrilled to receive funding from Columbia Power for this project," said Juliet Craig, Coordinator of the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee. "Many people do not realize how competitive these invasive weeds can be. They choke out native plants and can have a huge economic impact by competing with agricultural crops, as well as affect recreation and tourism."

In addition to the signage, the Committee has held many activities this year, including the Annual Weed Tour to highlight local weed species, and a purple loosestrife Hand-Pull Day to promote community involvement in weed management and land stewardship.

For more information on the Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Committee, or to find out how you can help control invasive plants, visit their website at: www.kootenayweeds.com.