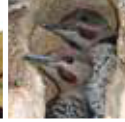
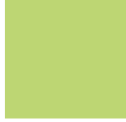




# THE WOODLOT COMMUNICATOR



www.woodlot.bc.ca

Spring 2022



George Delisle speaking with Boundary Central Secondary School's Environmental Science class about "wildlife trees" – vital to 'excavator birds' like the Williamson's Sapsucker, which is on the Endangered Species list. George's woodlot licence in Rock Creek boasts the largest population of this rare bird in the region.

## The Benefits of Outdoor Education and Woodlot Licence Contributions

By SARA GRADY

Teachers have known for decades about the benefits of outdoor education. Studies have shown that when you turn nature into a classroom great things happen: retention and engagement increase, especially in students who don't thrive in a traditional classroom setting; students who might have been apathetic towards science develop greater curiosity; and, they tend to be more mindful of issues around conservation and sustainability in their day-to-day lives. These are just a few of the benefits.

And they're one of the many reasons Heidi

Christison – *a Science teacher at Boundary Central Secondary School in Midway, BC – has partnered with the Boundary Woodlot Association and turned the woodlot into a classroom for her Grade 11/12 Environmental Science students.*

She began the semester by tasking her pupils with their own "passion project". Students were challenged to explore an environmental issue in-depth: food waste, landfills, acid rain, water use, etc. While they studied the core curriculum, they launched their own personal research,

tapping into Heidi's guidance during the five regular, one-on-one consultations throughout the semester.

She challenged her students to seek out experts and conduct interviews, giving them transferable skills, and creating networking opportunities, while broadening their understanding of environmental issues.

Heidi's students have enjoyed a wide range of outdoor experiences over the course of their time in her "classrooms". For example, they've gotten an ecological perspective on the Kettle River with local biologist Barb Stewart, who discussed the importance of stable riparian zones, and their impact on endangered species



George Delisle measuring the circumference of stumps, an indicator to determine a tree's age and size.

like the Lewis Woodpecker. They also gained a supply-chain perspective during a tour of Vaagen Fibre with Dan McMaster.

The Boundary Woodlot Association has played an important role in the curriculum this year, hosting three field trips under the supervision of George Delisle, long-time licensee and advocate for proactive forest management.

Students were given an opportunity to tour his Woodlot Licence (W0041) in Rock Creek and get hands-on experience taking bore samples, measuring the circumference of stumps and counting new and old growth in mapped-out sections of his woodlot. They were taught about leaving behind "wildlife trees" – vital to 'excavator' birds like the Williamson's Sapsucker, which is on the Endangered Species list. George's woodlot boasts the largest population of this rare bird in the region, a feat that was accomplished by design, not by accident.

A second day-trip to Bridesville took the classroom past the Lehmann Springs Conservancy Area – an unmanaged federal reserve. George took an opportunity to talk about the merits of managing forests for wildfire and overall stand health, pointing out that the lack of thinning has created what he calls a "replacement block" in the event of a wildfire:

the entire block will be engulfed and have to be replanted. The stand included trees as old as 600+ years, as well as multiple snags pocked with holes made by nuthatches, chickadees and several varieties of woodpecker.

Farther up the road George and crew toured a block of Crown land adjacent to Heidi's property, a part of the forest that hasn't yet been logged, and which covers two distinct ecosystems. As the students ascended the path they were taught how to estimate the age of a tree based on its whorls, and saw examples of blocks recovering from wildfire and evidence of Douglas Fir beetle infestation. And, much to their chagrin, found themselves hiking in snow!

One of the key points George made regarding old growth was focussing less on the number of trees on any given block that might be classified as "old growth", rather looking at the attributes of an old growth forest as a whole.

***He made the case that strategic thinning and logging of certain blocks would actually enhance the resilience and productivity of a forest – not just for its economic value, but for its value as a living ecosystem that sustains wildlife.***

When asked what her students have taken away from their time with George, Heidi explained that they came to understand forestry as another form of farming. She's confident that it opened their eyes to the complexity of managing a forest for timber, but also for its environmental benefits.

The woodlot program has grown and thrived since the late 1970s, however many of the early adopters are looking towards retirement. A new generation of forest stewards are needed to take their place. Perhaps one of Heidi's students will be inspired to do just that after their time spent in the woodlot classroom.

## 2021 Woodlot Licence Program Report

The report looks at what sets the 'Woodlot Licence' apart from other forest tenures in BC. It highlights the social, environmental and economic contributions woodlot licences provide to local communities throughout BC.



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