



PRESS RELEASE

September 8, 2020

The Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, along with our partners, Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Valley Naturalists, are pleased to announce that this year's 11th annual WildWings Nature & Arts Festival will go ahead as planned this coming October. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 social distancing and safety measures, we have scaled the festival down to three outdoor events, two reception-free art shows, and one small indoor workshop.

The first outdoor event is our popular Celebrate Somenos event, where visitors tour the S'amuna'/Somenos Marsh Open Air Classroom and meet presenters at different stations. The Raptors will be on hand, a Cowichan Tribes member talking about the history of S'amuna', a bird expert, a bird photographer and tables with interesting displays and crafts for the kids. Youngsters can complete a passport of visits and enter their name for nature prizes.

The second outdoor event is the 'Afloat in your own Boat' canoe and kayak tour of Somenos Lake with guides providing interesting information about the history, wildlife and politics of Somenos. The final outdoor event is the 'Cowichan Make a Difference Day', an annual event that we are launching in conjunction with WildWings where we focus our community efforts on an aspect of our local environment. This year we will be cleaning up Bings and Menzies Creeks to prepare them for upcoming restoration work.

Meanwhile, Just Jakes restaurant in downtown Duncan will play host to the 11th annual WildWings art show featuring south island nature artists' artworks and around the corner, at The Ainslie restaurant, there will be a display of 'The Nature of Cowichan' photo contest entries. These will be voted on by restaurant guests and local gift certificates awarded to the most popular photos. Both shows run the full month of October.

Along with our WildWings friend, the Cowichan Green Community, we are hosting the 6th annual WildWeaving Workshop. Now presented by Jan MacKirdy, this hands-on workshop providing all tools and materials, will lead participants to make their own Scotch broom basket. The instructor will also share her knowledge of using other invasive plants for basket making.

According to Paul Fletcher, the festival coordinator, "This year's events are just a small prelude to the exciting lineup of events, workshops and cultural activities that we have already confirmed for next year."

Cowichan Tribes' Chief Seymour says, "We are pleased to be a partner for the WildWings Festival again this year to bring awareness to our history and the importance of the Somenos marsh to everyone. Given our shared concerns with COVID-19, Cowichan Tribes appreciates all efforts by the Marsh Society to support social distancing at the WildWings events."

The Cowichan Valley Naturalists co-chair, Bruce Coates comments that, "With artwork featuring nature, a walk and a boat trip at the Marsh within nature, a workshop learning to weave with natural materials and a watershed cleanup to restore nature, this year's greatly reduced number of WildWing's events still cover all the bases of the Valley Naturalist's new motto: "With Nature, For Nature".

We are hoping that the public will consider attending our safe, free and family fun outdoor events or having a meal at Just Jakes and The Ainslie while admiring the art and voting for your favourite photograph.

To learn more about WildWings and all the event details please visit www.wildwingsfestival.com or contact Paul at paul@fletcherfoto.ca or 250 732-0462.

The artwork featured above is by Jennifer Lawson, 2018 Artist of the Somenos