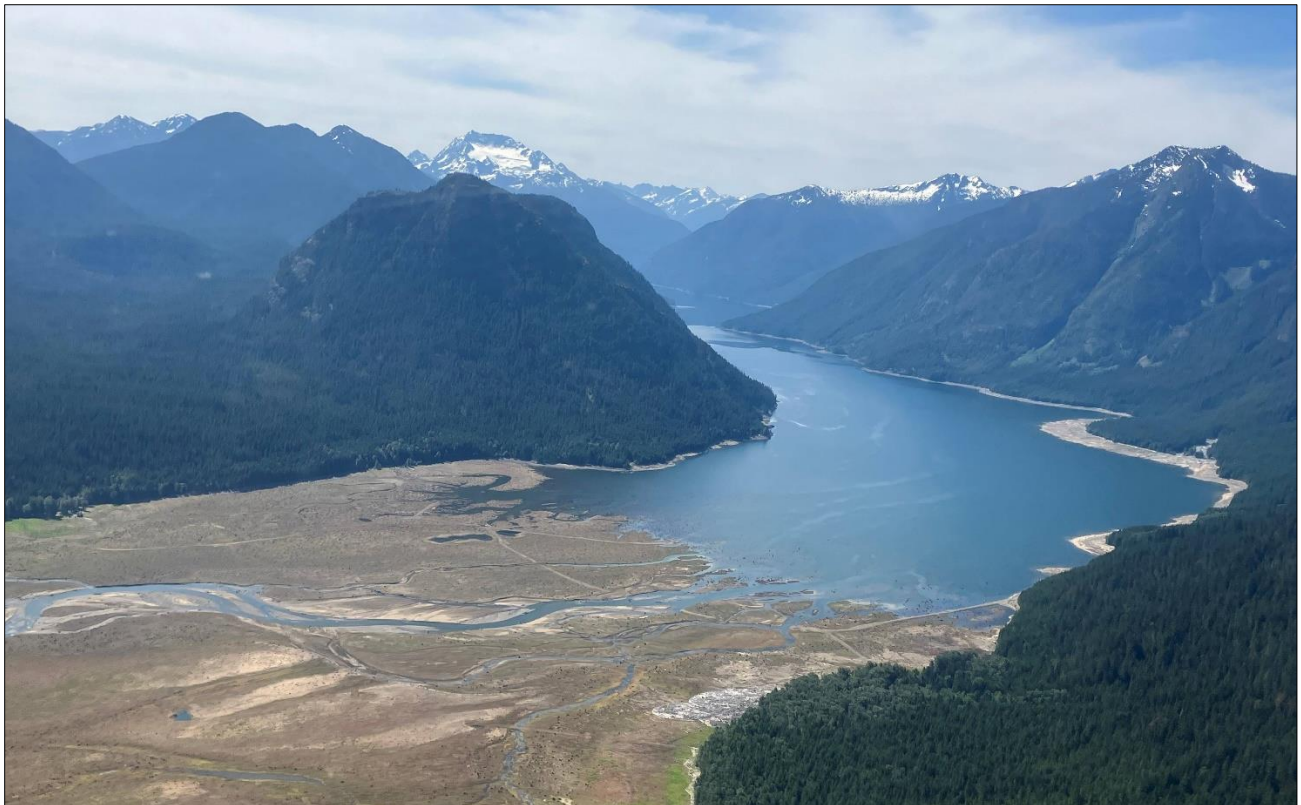


# International Interpretation Program BC Parks Annual Overview 2023

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*Ross Lake from helicopter, June 2023*

The International Interpretation Program (IIP) is a partnership between Skagit Valley Provincial Park (SVPP) and North Cascades National Park Service Complex (NOCA). Supported by the Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission (SEEC), the IIP promotes the ideas of transboundary conservation, wilderness values, and engagement with public lands, and strives to inspire stewardship of this unique watershed.

The IIP has been strongly impacted by climate-related events, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other challenges over the past six seasons. Public road access to SVPP and the adjoining area of NOCA remained closed during 2023 to allow for ongoing major repairs from the storm damage of November 2021. As a result, there was no on-site interpretation this year and NOCA did not fill their IIP position. The BC Parks interpreter worked on several behind-the-scenes projects and sought other opportunities to make meaningful connections with people in the watershed and surrounding area in BC.

### Conditions Affecting Visitation

- **Silver Skagit Road:** The Silver Skagit Road provides the only Road access to SVPP and the Hozomeen area of NOCA. In November of 2021, an extreme “atmospheric river” caused severe flooding, landslides, and infrastructure damage across southwestern BC, including significant damage to the Silver Skagit Rd. Public road access to SVPP and the Hozomeen area of NOCA has not been available since the storm. Contractors are continuing to work on repairing and upgrading the road and associated infrastructure. Road access was available to stakeholders for most of 2023 by making arrangements with the contractors to pass through the construction sites on the road. Various BC Parks and NPS staff used this opportunity to complete occasional projects.



*Silver Creek cutting across Silver Skagit Road, March 2022*

- **Campgrounds:**
  - All campgrounds in SVPP were closed due to the lack of vehicle access.
  - Silvertip Campground (SVPP) lost several sites and part of the campground road to the Skagit River during the storm event in 2021. It is also still waiting for hazard tree removal from the 2018 fire that burned 6000 ha (15,000 acres) of SVPP. The work to rehabilitate this campground will be a long-term project.

- **Other Conditions:** other conditions that usually influence visitation to SVPP such as weather, mosquitoes, fire bans, and water levels in Ross Lake had no effect since visitors could not drive into the park regardless of these conditions.

**IIP Staff – BC Parks**

- AJ Fedoruk returned to the IIP for her eighteenth season from April until early November.

**Programs**

- Due to the Silver Skagit Road closure, the IIP did not deliver any campground programs in SVPP/NOCA during 2023, however the SVPP interpreter found several other ways of connecting with the public on the Canadian side of the Skagit watershed and the surrounding area.
- **School Visits:** During May and June, the SVPP interpreter was busy arranging and delivering classroom presentations to elementary and high school students in Chilliwack and Hope. AJ adapted several more Jerry’s/Junior Ranger campground programs for classroom presentations this year. In mid-May, she also managed to arrange access to the IIP materials stored at Hozomeen, so she had a good selection of wildlife props to take along for most classroom visits. In addition to the spring presentations, AJ had two visits with the Chilliwack Secondary outdoor education class in the fall.

- In total, AJ visited:
  - 12 schools
  - 52 classes
  - 1,228 students and teachers
  - classes included kindergarten to grade seven and three grade eleven classes.



*AJ delivering a program at Silver Lake Provincial Park*



*AJ visiting Little Mountain Elementary School*

- **Special Events:** The SVPP interpreter connected with the Manning Provincial Park interpretive team on several occasions this season to help them bring the story of the Skagit watershed to park visitors. AJ took part in three special events at Manning over the summer – Parks Day on July 15, the Lantern Festival on August 5 (BC Day weekend), and the Kite Festival on September 2 (Labour Day weekend). For each of these events, she set up a drop-in touch table with various wildlife props

and a game to match tracks to the appropriate pelt/skull/antlers/etc. The table was very popular, with approximately 627 people stopping by over the three events. This led to some good conversations about species at risk in the North Cascades, Skagit Valley Provincial Park, “nature knows no borders,” and the effects of climate change.



*Kite Festival, Manning Provincial Park*

- **Evening Programs:** AJ also presented three evening amphitheatre programs as a guest presenter for the Manning Park interpretation program. She created a new program using a choose-your-own-adventure story about a wolverine to illustrate the importance of transboundary protected areas, and how the connected protected areas of the North Cascades make these mountains a special place.
- **Talks at Silver Lake Provincial Park:** On most weekends throughout the summer, AJ set up a table to do prop talks at Silver Lake Provincial Park, located near the beginning of the Silver Skagit Rd. While Silver Lake is not quite in the Skagit watershed, it is along the corridor that is considered the “gateway to the Skagit” and within the North Cascades ecosystem. AJ usually delivered talks on Saturdays except when this conflicted with special events. On these occasions, she set up at Silver Lake on Sundays.
- **North Cascades Institute (NCI):** The SVPP interpreter collaborated with the North Cascades Institute (NCI) to deliver an online presentation about transboundary conservation as part of NCI’s family and adult programming schedule in October. This dive into the realm of online presentations was new for the IIP and for AJ. It was a great learning experience on both the technical and style aspects of online presentations, as well as a good opportunity to re-establish the relationship between the IIP and NCI that had been diminished by the myriad challenges both NCI and the IIP have faced in recent years.
- **Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning (HMCOL):** Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning (HMCOL) is another SEEC partner the IIP regularly collaborated with in the past. While there were no joint presentations or other direct collaborations between the programs this year, and has not been since before COVID, AJ continued to have background conversations with HMCOL, become acquainted with new staff, and maintain communication for possible work together in the future.

- **Statistics:** The chart below summarizes the program statistics for the 2023 interpretive season.

Total attendance:

- School programs: 1,228
- Prop talks: 344
- Evening programs: 370
- Special events: 639
- Roving: 635

Total Contacts: 3,216

| <b>International Interpretation Program Statistics - 2023 (BC Parks only)</b> |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |             |                          |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
|   | May/June           |                        |                    | July               |                        |                    | August             |                        |                    | September/October  |                        |                    | Total       | Total Average Attendance |
|   | Number of Programs | Participants /Contacts | Average Attendance | Number of Programs | Participants /Contacts | Average Attendance | Number of Programs | Participants /Contacts | Average Attendance | Number of Programs | Participants /Contacts | Average Attendance |             |                          |
| <b>Informal Contacts:</b>   |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |             |                          |
| Roving  |                    |                        |                    | 2                  | 96                     | 48                 | 6                  | 383                    | 64                 | 3                  | 156                    | 52                 | 635         | 58                       |
| <b>Interpretive Programs:</b>   |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    |             |                          |
| School Programs   | 50                 | 1185                   | 24                 |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    | 2                  | 43                     | 22                 | 1228        | 24                       |
| Prop Talks  |                    |                        |                    | 2                  | 105                    | 53                 | 4                  | 158                    | 40                 | 2                  | 81                     | 41                 | 344         | 43                       |
| Evening Programs  |                    |                        |                    |                    |                        |                    | 2                  | 255                    | 128                | 1                  | 115                    | 115                | 370         | 123                      |
| Special Events  |                    |                        |                    | 1                  | 215                    | 215                | 1                  | 250                    | 250                | 2                  | 174                    | 87                 | 639         | 160                      |
| <b>Total Contacts</b>   | <b>50</b>          | <b>1185</b>            |                    | <b>5</b>           | <b>416</b>             |                    | <b>13</b>          | <b>1046</b>            |                    | <b>10</b>          | <b>569</b>             |                    | <b>3216</b> |                          |

### Other Project Highlights:

- **Chittenden Meadow Prescribed Burn Film Project:** BC Parks collaborated with BC Wildfire Service to complete a prescribed burn of Chittenden Meadow in the spring of 2021. A filmmaker was onsite during the burn to capture footage for a short film about why such burns are important. To complete the project, the filmmaker needed additional footage of the rejuvenating meadow and interviews with project partners about their involvement and/or perspective on the importance of this burn. AJ prepared a contract for the completion of the project and organized a flight into Chittenden Meadow with several partners during the wildflower bloom this spring, including representatives from Nlaka’pamux Nation Tribal Council, SEEC and BC Parks. Another filming day was arranged in July for partners who weren’t able to join the trip to the meadow. The completed short film is anticipated in late 2023 or early 2024.
- **Interpretation Shelter Mosquito Curtains:** After encountering an example of an interpretation shelter with curtains during the winter of 2023, the SVPP interpreter explored this idea for mosquito exclusion for the new International Point interpretation shelter. AJ worked with ranger staff to adapt the design for the

International Point shelter and researched businesses who would be able to manufacture mosquito curtains to meet this design. After collecting quotes, a contract was awarded to a company in the Metro Vancouver area. Delivery of the curtains is expected in January 2024. The curtains will need to be installed after SVPP is accessible in the spring.

- **Engagement, Education and Enhancement (EEE) Section:** AJ continued to foster her connection with the BC Parks Engagement, Education and Enhancement (EEE) Section. EEE is based in Victoria and works on new education and outreach initiatives for BC Parks. The EEE section also works closely with the BC Parks Foundation, the official charitable partner of BC Parks, which delivers interpretation in a selection of parks across the province.

### Other Notes

It's anticipated that the Silver Skagit Road will be open to public traffic during the 2024 camping season. This would allow for the IIP to return to regular programming (and the chance to finally use the new interpretation shelter!). However, if recent years have shown anything, it's that nothing is certain. The IIP will attempt to provide the best interpretive experiences possible with whatever situation unfolds next season and in future years.



*Shawatum Mountain, July 2023*