



HALL ROAD HERALD

Winter 2026

From the Editor -- On the Hall Road Trail

By Don Plant

The cool, quiet days of January are upon us but there's plenty of neighbourhood chatter about a developer's application to rezone a large property at the north end of the Hall Road area.

A Kelowna firm has applied to build a 28-lot subdivision at the end of O'Reilly Road behind the Mission Creek Landing care home. To make it happen, developer Bob Bennett has agreed to extend sewer service from the sewer line installed recently along Wildwood and Hall roads to the care home. But first, he needs approval from city council to change the zoning from large-lot rural residential to small-lot rural residential. If he gets it, the smallest lots would be 0.4 of an acre.

Subdividing the 16-acre property requires council's consent because the Hall Road area is currently outside the city's Permanent Growth Boundary (PGB). The area within the boundary is where most of Kelowna's new housing is now concentrated; no additional development is encouraged outside the PGB. To green-light Bennett's application, a majority of city council would have to be convinced the subdivision is in Kelowna's best interest.

Planning staff oppose the application. They'll present a report to city council on Feb. 2 or 9. For the application to reach the next step, council must agree to give it initial consideration. You can attend the meeting but can't speak to council publicly. To find out when the meeting is and to follow the discussion live online, visit kelowna.ca/city-hall/council/council-meetings-public-hearings

With more and more people moving to Kelowna, the pressure to develop new housing in the Hall Road area is mounting. That's one reason the Hall Road Neighbourhood Association started three years ago – to have a say in what that growth will look like in our area.

We're holding an election of board members at our annual general meeting in May. This is your chance to dip your toe in the Hall Road water and contribute ideas. Start thinking of how you can represent the voices of the neighbourhood. To be nominated, you just have to be an adult and a resident of the Hall Road area.

If you have questions or want to pitch a story idea for the Hall Road Herald, write us at herald@hallroad.ca. We'd love to hear from you.

How our Neighbourhood Painted Turtles Survive the Winter

by Chip Monk



As winter settles in and the neighborhood ponds start to freeze, one of our most familiar warm-weather residents quietly slips out of sight. The painted turtle—often seen sunning itself on logs in spring and summer—undergoes one of nature’s most unusual transitions: winter hibernation beneath the ice.

Unlike mammals that curl up in dens, painted turtles spend the winter submerged at the bottom of ponds, where the water is cold but unfrozen. As the temperature drops in late fall, their metabolism slows dramatically. Heart rates can fall to a few beats a minute, and the turtles stop breathing air altogether.

Instead, they rely on **cutaneous respiration**, an adaptation that allows them to absorb small amounts of oxygen through the skin, the lining of their throat and even the surfaces inside their cloaca. Yes, turtles really do breathe through their butts during winter. This low-oxygen living is possible because their bodies enter a state of extreme energy conservation.

As ice covers the surface of the ponds, the turtles remain motionless in the mud, protected from predators and insulated by the underwater environment. Even though oxygen levels may drop, painted turtles can tolerate conditions that would kill most animals. They mitigate the buildup of lactic acid—produced by the lack of oxygen—by drawing minerals from their shell, a natural system that helps them survive until spring.

When the ice starts to thaw and the water slowly warms, the turtles wake up. Their metabolism escalates and they rise to the surface for their first breaths of fresh air in months. Before long, they return to basking on logs, feeding and exploring the shallows.

So, while the ponds may appear quiet and still through the winter, remember: these resilient reptiles are resting just under the surface, waiting motionless for the sunshine to return. They typically live for 20 to 30 years.

Hall Road History – Naming O'Reilly and Packers Roads

by Ken Buhler

James Neid and his brother cleared his Hall Road farm property, bordered by the black lines, in the 1920s. James later sold it to Jack and Betty O'Reilly. Years later, "Blackie" Blackford developed much of the property that surrounds O'Reilly and Packers roads.



Around 1920, 10 property owners had land in the Hall Road area. James Neid purchased more than 40 acres -- a large acreage that includes what we know today as Packers Court, O'Reilly Court, Packers Road, O'Reilly Road, Fairhall and the tip of today's James Road.

James's brother Larry Neid bought land on the bench above, off McCulloch Road. Together the brothers logged most of the lower area to create a farm and orchard on James's property. They built Neid Road from East Kelowna Road to give them access along a gulley to the Neid farm below.

The original Neid house still stands at 3297 Hall Rd. near Wildwood -- one of the oldest houses in the Hall Road area. The property still shows a root cellar dug into the hillside. Look for the little cave.

James later built his second home on the portion between Hall Road and what's now Jackson Court. Today it's Jo-Anne Jacobsen's house at 3354 Hall Rd., where the flying witch hits the pole during Halloween at Packers Road. James subdivided the rest of that portion into 15 lots and built the first 150 feet of James Road, which he named after himself. Years later, a developer kept the name when he developed the Jackson property.

James Neid eventually sold the orchard land to Jack and Betty O'Reilly. Jack was a successful coach of the Kelowna Packers hockey team in the 1950s. Jack and Betty built their home on what's now 3321 Hall Rd., where Moni Schiller lives. They also built the farm-workers' house, now 2410 O'Reilly Rd., and other farm buildings.

In the 1970s, the O'Reillys sold a large portion of the property to "Blackie" Blackford, a developer who created the Packers/O'Reilly subdivision. Blackford named O'Reilly Road and Packers Road in honour of the coach and hockey team. The O'Reillys kept some land adjoining the property, where they built a smaller house for their retirement.

Blackford's son Ian built the subdivision's first house at 2635 Packers Rd. With its gorgeous landscaping, it made the cover of Better Homes and Gardens Magazine in the 1980s. The adjoining Fairhall portion became the second phase of the development, which included the hidden play area/park in the middle (lot 22 on the map).

Check out the next Herald issue for more interesting Hall Road History.

Need a Book? Check out These Neighbourhood Mini-libraries

by Justin Enns



Mariposa's Dr. Who
Book Library



Woodland Book Library

When days are short and activities turn indoors, there is little better than curling up with a good book.

But where do you go when you've finished that book you got for Christmas? In our neighbourhood, not too far. I'm sure you've seen both the little libraries we have on Mariposa and Woodland. I want to introduce you to the man who built the former.

"It was a birthday present for my wife," said Jack Blarowski. "We were really into Dr. Who at the time."

The Tardis, the name of Dr. Who's time-travelling spaceship, inspired Jack to build the library on Mariposa. From the construction, you can tell he used to work as a machinist at a woodshop. He added ventilation so the books won't warp and a roof so they don't get wet.

Jack is also restoring the school bus parked in his driveway nearby and renovating the couple's house by himself. Adding more arrows to his quiver, he also worked as a registered nurse and has now taken up stock trading. "It gives me more time to work on my garden."

Even if you haven't noticed the Tardis, you've definitely seen Jack's garden at the corner of Hall and Mariposa. Almost every square foot is taken up by some flourishing organic matter. But you won't find many gardening books in the Tardis.

"Kids books are very popular," said his wife Zoe, who manages the library. Novels, particularly mysteries, are also big on the list. Rounding out the top three are books that engage Hall Roaders' spiritual sides. And if reading isn't your thing, there are kids' toys and puzzles.

About once a week, Zoe checks in on the Tardis and removes the books that don't move. The slowest movers, she said, are the encyclopedias and other fact books. One slow-poke was *Learn to Speak Maori*, which I don't think made it past the first edition. These are then donated to the public library because surely someone in Kelowna needs to learn obscure languages from the other side of the globe.

So if you ever need a book or puzzle, or you just want to admire Jack's handiwork and bountiful garden, take a stroll by Mariposa Court. It's close to your house.

A Verdant Valhalla Faces Population Growth

By Don Plant

Moose sometimes migrate through the Hall Road neighbourhood.

Roxanne Bisset captured this one in a warmer season.



Living close to Mission Creek has many benefits for Cliff and Lois Serwa, not least of them the frequent wildlife encounters they enjoy.

The couple have a den of coyotes living close by and have witnessed bears, deer and bobcats ambling across their Hall Road property. Cliff once spotted a family of river otters in his pond and watched a moose pass by in 2024 – sights that typify the rich variety of animals and vegetation in the neighbourhood close to Mission Creek Park.

“It's an oasis for wildlife in the middle of a desert,” he said. “The Mission Creek corridor is a big asset . . . It incorporates a whole number of features that we're losing as the community develops. So it's important to try to retain.”

Mission Creek Park is central to the environment that the Serwas and others would like to preserve. A former B.C. environment minister, Cliff believes that most developed properties nearby have maintained the landscape the way he likes to see it.

“It's still a haven for animals,” said Cliff, now 90. “It’s habitat, certainly for small animals and birds, and it keeps the complexion of the area.”

The Serwas moved to the Hall Road area in the early 1970s because it was a “great place to raise kids.” It has “a lot of elbow room” and a country feel, partly due to Hall Road’s winding curves, Cliff said. Large lots were standard because homeowners had to provide their own water and manage their effluent.

Our neighbourhood today is outside the city’s Permanent Growth Boundary, which means development is still controlled. A community-wide sewer system will eventually trigger zoning changes that allow landowners to build secondary homes and subdivide, inducing a boost in housing that will accommodate more people and increase traffic.

Given the continuing growth in Kelowna’s population, we need more housing, Serwa says. How that affects the nature that surrounds us – the wetlands, the habitat and wildlife -- is up in the air.

“We’ve lost a lot of fir trees,” he said. Even so, the Central Okanagan is still a “verdant Valhalla,” and the Hall Road area remains one of its gems.

“It still is a utopia. I really believe that . . . If we didn't live on Hall Road, I wouldn't care to live in Kelowna. I would move north.”

Electrical Service Upgrades

by Greg Fjetland



Contractors hired by FortisBC have been busy in the neighbourhood updating electrical services.

This first phase focused primarily on upper Packers and O'Reilly Road and Court. The work wrapped up for the time being in December.

FortisBC says it's replacing underground power conduits that are at the end of their service life. It has been a considerable undertaking with crews trenching across driveways, lawns and front yards, and excavating service pits with the powerful and noisy hydro-vac trucks.

So far, they have done a great job and the crew has been friendly and professional. No contract has been assigned yet for the second phase of the project.

Birds Overwintering in our Yards

by Bruce Hedmann



Black-capped Chickadee (Photo credit: ebird)

I've been asked 'what do birds do to survive the winter months?'

The fact is there are fewer birds around these days. Overwintering birds look to us filling our backyard feeders to help provide some of the food they need to survive until the warmer spring.

I mentioned in my last article that black oil seeds are a good high-energy food. They're easy to crack open for large and small birds, and inexpensive. It's important to maintain the feeders with seeds and keep them clean. And position the feeders beyond the reach of predators ... cat owners please take notice!

Trees and bushes with nuts and seeds are staples for birds in winter. Pine cone seeds are important for birds year-round, but in years when seeds counts are low, they rely more on our backyard feeders. Some species cache foods for tougher days. You might be tempted to clean up fallen seeds, nuts and berries in autumn, but they provide crucial natural food sources as well as cover in winter. So if possible, wait to clean up in spring.

With snow flying, some birds take shelter in tree cavities. Many fluff up their feathers while some huddle together and share body heat. Others, like California quail, take shelter in evergreens and bushes.

Birds such as chickadees, juncos, finches, sparrows and nuthatches have a few other winter survival skills. Some can enter a torpor or hibernation state at night, lowering their metabolism to prevent hypothermia. Birds grow an extra insulation layer of down feathers that they can fluff. Some bury themselves in snow at night to keep warm.

So during these cold months, please help feed the birds so we can reap the pleasure of their presence all year long.