

## Nature Festival Organizer a Volunteer Turned Pro

When Verena Blasy moved to Revelstoke in 2006, the first thing she sought out was a natural history group. A dedicated botanist, her idea of a good time was discovering the natural characteristics of her new home and the people who shared that slant on life. As luck would have it, her first week in town, the Chickadee Nature Festival laid it out for her like a banquet.

The Chickadee Nature Festival is Revelstoke's premier nature event, this year taking place from May 25 to May 31. "It's a full week of nature based presentations and activities that brings people out to celebrate and learn about the wonders of their own backyard," according to chief organizer Verena Blasy. Of course in this instance "backyard" means the Columbia Mountains.

As a volunteer, Verena took over the reins of the festival in 2007 and approached the Friends of Mt. Revelstoke and Glacier to become partners with the festival's organizing committee, an informal group of volunteers that launched the first such event in 2005. The Friends of MRG were a natural fit, having a history of offering nature based activities through the year.

Verena has since become a Parks Canada employee delivering environment education programs—a case where volunteer aptitude morphed into employment, not an uncommon outcome in the world of volunteerism.

Like Verena, the presenters at the festival do it because they are excited about their subject and want to share their passion, providing an experience that is bound to stretch the mind and spirit. Lining up these professionals begins months in advance. Most are Revelstoke residents, experts ready to contribute. A few regional specialists with research links to this area are added to offer uniqueness to each festival.

Something different this year is an event that will occur in the dark. *Creatures of the Night* will seek out the elusive Coeur d'Alene Salamander with lead researcher Lisa Larson, and Mandy Kellner will demonstrate an instrument that detects the sonic vibrations of how bats hunt insects.



The kid focussed events, which include Aboriginal culture, bear awareness, bird research, and nature crafts, will occur on the Saturday morning at the Mount Revelstoke Chalet.

Also, the Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology and the North Columbia Environmental Society have events contributing to the festival schedule. For a complete list of the week's topics, times, and places, or to volunteer for the festival, see [www.friendsrevglacier.com](http://www.friendsrevglacier.com), or contact Verena at 837-7531, [verena.blasy@pc.gc.ca](mailto:verena.blasy@pc.gc.ca).

There is no charge for anything. What the festival organizers want is your participation and your ideas. Spread the word.

For more information about volunteering in Revelstoke, contact the Community Centre at 250-837-9351 or visit <http://www.revelstokecf.com/volunteers>

Article & Photo submitted by Michael Morris, Volunteer Writer for the CFDC Volunteer Committee