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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We request submission of typed, double-spaced copy in an IBM compatible word processing file on diskette, or by e-mail. Photos and slides, and diskettes submitted will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material. Digital images are welcome, but they need to be high resolution: a minimum of 1200 x 1550 pixels, or 300 dpi at the size of photos in the magazine.

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COVER PHOTO:

Painted lady butterfly by James Miskelly

I was under the assumption that I was at full capacity in terms of how I spent my time. It turns out I was wrong, and the addition of one activity was the proverbial straw. Thanks to my new Editorial Support Team, I’m able to bend rather than break! *The Naturalist* magazine now comes to you after it has had a “content” editor, James Miskelly, and a “technical” editor, Penelope Edwards, each take a turn with it. My role is solely that of a clearing house: Thank you Team!

Speaking of “thank yous”... The VNHS Schools Project continues with the help of many. Phase I of the resource kits are now in the libraries of every single school in the district. This portion of the kit includes a book on mammals, bugs, marine life, plants, dragonflies and a *Naturescape* kit. By April there will be two other resources published: a museum handbook on the herptiles (p. 8) and an urban stewards manual, so we’ll add in a bird guide, a bird checklist, a mushroom guide and our very own *Naturalist’s Guide* and complete Phase II. Thank you Darren Copley for ordering the books at a great price and delivering them to my kitchen. Thank you James Miskelly and Allison Roberts for helping to collate the kits and stamp each book, “Donated by the Victoria Natural History Society,” and our address. Eight hundred stamps later, because *Naturescape* consists of three booklets, that small job was done! Thank you to John Defayette for getting 800 books out of my kitchen and to each school district office (see p. 28 for the letters of thanks from the schools and photos of the deliveries). Ann Nightingale assisted with the delivery, and has since met with administrative staff to talk more about our donation. Thank you, David Newell, for facilitating the delivery by preparing the administrative staff at each office for the arrival of hundreds of books!

And more thanks...

Thanks to a grant from the Federation of BC Naturalists’ Foundation Fund (p. 15), we are hosting a series of Field Trip Leader Training Workshops – designed to provide current and would-be field trip leaders/co-leaders with the skills they need to lead a successful walk. Please see the Bulletin Board and Calendar for more information (pp.29-31).

Claudia

President's Message

When I realized that this is my last President's Message for the Victoria Natural History Society, I went through my previous messages and found a recurring theme. During the last three years, I have often prodded, encouraged, cajoled and otherwise tormented people to get involved. I am sure to many of you this just sounds like the "same old same old", but I hope you will give me a minute of your time to explain why this has been so important to me.

In natural history, community projects or employment, I have found that one person really *can* make a difference. In fact, it is always *one person* who does make a difference. The person who champions a cause, or offers their support to keep a project going or inspires others is the only means by which anything gets accomplished in this world.

My involvement with VNHS has left me surprised at how little we really know about the natural world around us and about the effect, positive or negative, that we have on it.

I suppose I had always assumed that "somebody" knew or had the answers. But I have found out that for the most part, "they" don't.

Every contribution you make in support of natural history, whether it is through participating in events such as the butterfly counts, PlantWatch, our Annual Bird Report or the like, or by sharing your experience with a friend, child or grandchild increases the world's knowledge by a little bit. That one observation you decide to write about may someday be the keystone that holds an ecosystem together. I know it's a cliché, but mighty oaks really do grow from tiny acorns!

If one message I have delivered stays with you, I hope it is this: Enjoy nature, but don't enjoy it quietly. Talk about what you have seen, share what you know, help others learn, and you will leave your legacy in nature. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President for the last three years.

Ann Nightingale

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River Otters at Risk in the Greater Victoria Area?

By Colleen Smith and Daniel Guertin

Playful, smart, and just a little bit ornery, river otters are unique inhabitants of our marine waters. Often confused with their cousin, the sea otter, the river otter is actually the aquatic mammal you see on docks and in the water around the Greater Victoria area, for there are very few sea otters inhabiting the eastern waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In a collaborative study between Simon Fraser University and Environment Canada, scientists aim to examine the health, distribution, and relative abundance of coastal river otters living in the Capital Regional District.

River and sea otters are in the family Mustelidae, whose members include the mink, skunk, badger, and wolverine. There are several differences between the river and sea otter, however. Physically, the animals differ in size – adult sea otters can be up to 36 kg while the adult river otter is about

10 kg. River otters also have webbed feet, not the flipper-like feet of sea otters.

A river otter's diet is made up of a mixture of fish, marine invertebrates (crabs, shrimp, etc.), and occasionally, birds. Sea otter diet, however, consists mainly of invertebrates, which they eat while floating on their back. Sea otters and river otters also differ in how they obtain water. Sea otters, similar to whales and seals, do not require a fresh water source, as they get their required amount of water by metabolizing fat. River otters, on the other hand, must visit a source for their fresh water, which they obtain from ponds, streams, and puddles on land.

The most significant difference between the two animals is that while sea otters never leave the water (even for giving birth), river otters use both land and sea more than any other



Photo provided by authors

species in this area. River otters can dive to a depth of 18 meters in the water, swim upwards of 20 km along the coast, and scamper 5 km by land. River otters don't have fat on them the way seals do, and their fur coat is essential to staying warm, so they keep it clean and well groomed.

River otters have been in the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin area since the last glacial period – about 10,000 years ago. The marine foraging river otter we have here is the same species found throughout North America.

River otters eat 20 percent of their body weight each day, which is the reason for their frequent bathroom stops, sometimes on docks. Although it can be a nuisance for humans, river otter “latrine” sites are actually ways for them to communicate with each other. Through the scent of their scat (feces) they send messages to each other like “This is my territory” or “I was just here.” Although some sites are inland, they tend to pick prominent marine locations such as large coastal bedrock and docks, which are perfect for eating fish, sunning, and removing waste.

Locally, river otters do not have many predators, and premature mortality is thought to be related to pollution and disease. Environment Canada has been studying river otters and pollution since the year 2000. Previous research in the Victoria area has revealed that otter scat samples from some sites contain dangerously high levels of industry-produced chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). PCBs are highly toxic compounds that were originally produced in 1929 and used as a coolant and lubricant in transformers and capacitors. They were found to be highly toxic to humans and animals; therefore the manufacturing of PCBs was banned in both Canada and the U.S. in 1977. These chemicals tend to collect in the oceans, are resistant to breakdown, accumulate in fat tissue, and increase in concentrations as they are transferred up the food chain. Marine species feeding at the top of the food web, such as river otters, are therefore very vulnerable to the effects of these toxins. In fact, some otter scat samples collected and analyzed from Victoria Harbour had levels of PCBs that exceed the developed criteria for deleterious effects in these species, indicating that their health and reproductive capabilities may be impaired.

This is alarming given that the population status of river otters in this region is unknown. There is little current information on the distribution and abundance of river otters throughout the coastal zones of British Columbia, and the impacts of human disturbance such as persistent contaminants, development pressures, and marine and shore-based industries on river otter populations in this area are poorly understood.

This study will help answer some of the unknowns surrounding coastal river otters in the Greater Victoria area. First, it will provide significant information on the status of river otters living in this region. Second, it will help develop an important indicator for contaminant monitoring in our ecosystem. Finally, it will provide scientists with a way of determining if toxic clean up efforts are actually benefiting the region's wildlife.

River otters are an indicator species, meaning they are sensitive to pollution and degradation in the environment. Pollution is widely accepted as the driving force behind the drastic reduction in river otter numbers throughout their historic range of central and eastern North America. By 1998, 21 U.S. states and the province of Alberta implemented costly river otter reintroduction projects to areas where they once thrived.

Monitoring river otter populations can provide a window into the health of the ecosystem. If river otters are thriving, it is a good sign that other wildlife species in the region are also healthy. It is therefore imperative to protect them and their habitat. It goes without saying that “sometimes you don't appreciate what you have until it is gone.”

*Some components of this article were originally printed in *The Islands' Weekly*. August 2005. Vol. 23, No. 34.

- Do you regularly see river otters in the Greater Victoria area?
- Do you know of certain locations where otters like to play?

If you answered “YES” to one of the above questions, you can help with a study that has been undertaken jointly by Simon Fraser University and Environment Canada.

Contact: Daniel Guertin, M.Sc. Candidate, SFU

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The Red-backed Salamander

(*Plethodon vehiculum*)

By Gavin Hanke, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Royal BC Museum

Can you imagine a life without lungs? The western red-backed salamander (*Plethodon vehiculum*) is one of British Columbia's most colourful amphibians, and is a member of the Family Plethodontidae (Lungless Salamanders). You can recognise a lungless salamander without a pocket X-Ray machine, MRI, or Tricorder, because all plethodontids have a groove from the nostril to the mouth (called a nasolabial groove). This single feature distinguishes lungless salamanders from our giant salamander, all mole salamanders, and the rough-skinned newt. Plethodontids rely on their skin and the lining of the mouth and throat for gas exchange. The throat pumps up and down to force air through the nostrils, but this "inhaled" air goes no farther than the mouth and throat. Lungless salamanders also breathe through their skin, but their skin must be kept moist to act as a respiratory organ; because of this restriction, lungless salamanders can only inhabit cool, damp environments. Most lungless salamanders are terrestrial, and drown if they are trapped in water (Green & Campbell, 1984).

The western red-backed salamander (*Plethodon vehiculum*) ranges from 7 to 11 cm total length; the tail is about

half of the total length. They have a wide dorsal stripe that ranges from brick-red, orange, to pale yellow, tan, grey, or even a greenish colour, and the dorsal stripe has straight, well-defined edges (Green & Campbell, 1984, Behler & King, 1979, Cook, 1984, Stebbins, 1985). Some individuals lack the stripe and are uniformly dark, and others lack dark pigment and are almost entirely the colour of the dorsal stripe. The dorsal stripe has dark peppering forward of the hind legs, and the stripe fades on the head. Similar bright colouration along the back of the Eastern Red-backed Salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*) has been suggested to mimic the red-eft stage of the toxic Eastern Newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*) (Brodie & Brodie, 1980, Duellman & Trueb, 1986, Zug, 1993). However, even though the bright dorsal stripe seems showy (i.e., possible aposematic/warning colouration), it blends surprisingly well with twigs, pine needles, and other forest floor debris. The sides and belly usually are dusky to blue-grey and have a varying amount of fine grey peppering. The body usually has 15-16 costal grooves, but this may vary from 14 to 18 grooves (Green & Campbell, 1984, Behler & King, 1979, Stebbins, 1985). The thighs, and



Red-backed salamander. *Photo:* Gavin Hanke

in some cases, forearms also have patches of colour matching that of the dorsal stripe.

In British Columbia, western red-backed salamanders can be found on Vancouver Island, and on the lower mainland as far east as Hope (Green & Campbell, 1984, Cook, 1984, Stebbins, 1985, Leonard *et al.*, 1993, Corkan & Thoms, 1996). They inhabit damp rockslides, mossy, leaf-littered forest floor, large rotting logs, wet areas where ground water emerges, and in moist areas near river banks and lake shores. They are active on the forest floor after rainfall, and perhaps at night, but otherwise are found under cover of debris, in logs, or buried in the leaf litter on the forest floor. The first western red-backed salamander I caught was about 4 metres from the shore of Matheson Lake, under a large piece of bark (December 31st, 2004). Since I had recently moved from Winnipeg to Vancouver Island, finding amphibians in winter was (and still is) a real treat. Red-backed salamanders have well-defined territories marked by scent/pheromones, and may spend their entire life in a fairly restricted area (Zug, 1993). This explains why I have recaptured that individual at Matheson Lake several times in the last year, each time under the same chunk of bark. Territories are defended during most of the year, but not during the breeding season. Western red-backed salamander may be very abundant but rarely are seen due to their secretive behaviour. Western red-backed salamanders eat termites, springtails and other small arthropods (Green & Campbell, 1984, Leonard *et al.*, 1993, Corkan & Thoms, 1996).

Male western red-backed salamanders mate with females that hold adjacent territories. The species name *vehiculum* refers to the fact that the female straddles the male's tail and appears to be carried around during courtship (Corkan & Thoms, 1996). Female western red-backed salamanders mate every other year in autumn to early spring depending on local climate, and up to 15 eggs are deposited (Green & Campbell, 1984, Behler & King, 1979). Males deposit a spermatophore and guide the attending female to the sperm packet. Females store sperm until eggs are deposited in the spring; eggs are 4-5 mm in diameter and placed in a cluster, suspended from the roof or sides of cavities under stones, logs, bark, moss, woody debris. Eggs are guarded by the female for about 60 days (Duellman & Trueb, 1986, Corkan & Thoms, 1996, Carl, 1996). Red-backed salamanders produce large, yolk-filled eggs, and developing young pass through the "tadpole" stage within the egg, hatching as miniature, but fully formed, salamanders in autumn (Green & Campbell, 1984, Cook, 1984, Zug, 1993). Young western red-backed salamanders are about 2.2 cm when they hatch and emerge from shelter when autumn rains begin (Behler & King, 1979, Leonard *et al.*, 1993). They mature in about three years (on average) depending on gender, with males maturing earlier than females (Duellman & Trueb, 1986).

Some lungless salamanders are known to urinate on their eggs, and this coupled with skin secretions may help keep eggs debris-free and moist, and may even prevent fungal growth (Pickwell, 1972). Female lungless salamanders also are known to eat eggs with fungal infection, thereby protecting the remaining healthy eggs (Duellman & Trueb,

1986). Brooding behaviour in the western red-backed salamander is largely unknown (Leonard *et al.*, 1993); it is ironic how common species are overlooked by biologists. Any information and photographs detailing feeding behaviour, courtship, and brood care by western red-backed salamanders in British Columbia, are noteworthy.

Why would "lunglessness" evolve? Some researchers think that the reduction of lungs in plethodontid salamanders is related to the evolution of energetically "cheap" terrestrial mating behaviours (Zug, 1993). Instead, I suggest (and I am probably not the first to do so) that the reduction of lungs in the ancestor of plethodontid salamanders correlates with the evolution of large, energetically costly eggs, which are required for terrestrial development. Because the respiratory demands of these small salamanders could be met with cutaneous (skin) respiration, lungs were redundant. Females that had smaller lungs relative to their ancestors (i.e., put less energy into lung tissue growth, tissue maintenance, and active "breathing") had more abdominal space and energy available to produce larger eggs. Assuming larger eggs are better at resisting desiccation and perhaps also produce larger, more successful hatchlings, then the trade-off between lungs versus larger, more successful offspring makes energetic sense. Lungs were not "required" for survival, but increasing reproductive output has definite advantages.

For more information, keep a lookout for the new handbook on amphibians and reptiles of British Columbia, in the Royal British Columbia Museum Handbook Series, which is due out on the shelves this spring, just in time for some fun summer "herping".

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Botany Adventures 2005

By Agnes Lynn, Botany Trip Organizer

We climbed hill after hill in the Victoria area in search of wildflowers at their peak this past spring. To have some fun, we decided to play the same game as the birders who count every species of bird they see on an outing and we compared several local areas this way. The rules were that the plant had to be in flower and had to be a native plant, no weeds allowed.

We started the season with Joy Finlay showing us around Mill Hill on April 19. One of the highlights of this area was the pink fairy slipper (*Calypso bulbosa*). This is a plant that we only see a very few of at any time and this is one of the best areas for them. Despite being early in the season, the count at Mill Hill was a respectable 43 species. Horth Hill was looking perfect when Sharon Godkin led us around on April 16 but we were too early for the rare phantom orchid (*Cephalanthera austiniiae*). This is one of the few areas where

it can be found reliably. Flower count for Horth Hill was 37. On that day, we had time to visit both Horth Hill and Bear Hill as they are not that far apart. We counted 39 species at Bear Hill, many the same as Horth Hill but a few different ones such as the delicate sierra sanicle (*Sanicula graveolens*).

Camas Day at Beacon Hill Park is an annual event co-sponsored by the VNHS and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society. The expert leaders Adolf Ceska and Brenda Beckwith pointed out such rarities as the prairie violet (*Viola praemorsa*) and the single remaining plant of the uncommon purple sanicle (*Sanicula bipinnatifida*) along with the millions of both species of camas (*Camassia quamash* and *leichtlinii*) covering the wild areas in the park. Despite the large area, only 29 species were found. This lack of diversity is partly related to the mowing of a lot of the areas. An example of a plant that probably was lost due to the early mowing is the



Mt. Arrowsmith, Saddle Route. Photos: Dave Lynn

rare yellow paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*). The next outing was at Lone Tree Hill on April 24 with Moralea Milne. It was the peak of the season and we counted a respectable total of 55 flowering plants. One highlight was a beautiful albino shooting star (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*). We also enjoyed the orange-crowned warbler who sang his little heart out for us at the start of the trail. On May 14, Chris Gilbert led us on the trip up Mount Wells. This unspoiled area is a new addition to the CRD Parks system and has vast expanses of wildflowers that unfolded as we climbed out of the forest into the sunny meadows. A little oddity near the start of the trail was the Vancouver ground cone (*Boschniakia hookeri*). As we climbed higher, we were treated to massive carpets of flowers, reminiscent of high sub-alpine meadows. Mount Wells was the winner for most flowers in bloom at 74.

The next stop of the season on May 22 was Uplands Park. Because of the lateness of the season, Uplands only yielded 36 flowering plants but this area definitely had the most rare plants. Matt Fairbarns showed us several plants that make this area so special. They included water-plantain buttercup (*Ranunculus alismifolius*), kellogg's rush (*Juncus kelloggii*), bearded owl-clover (*Triphysaria versicolor* ssp. *versicolor*), muhlenberg's centaury (*Centaureum Muhlenbergii*), coastal silverpuffs (*Microseris bigelowii*) and snake-root sanicle (*Sanicula arctopoides*). Matt detailed what he is doing in conjunction with the municipality to protect these rarities. May 29 was the last local sea level outing for the spring wildflowers. This was part of the VNHS Picnic. Joy Finlay helped identify some special plants in the Tower Point area of Witty's Lagoon Park. We were fortunate to see the three related species together in bloom of Howell's triteleia (*Triteleia howellii*), harvest brodiaea (*Brodiaea coronaria*) and fool's onion (*Triteleia hyacinthina*).

Then we had to increase our altitude to start re-living springtime. We went up above Shawnigan Lake to the Eagle Heights area with Hans Roemer on June 5. This area is currently not protected and we hope that the Nature Conservancy is successful at getting it some protection. The most significant features of this area are the native grasses which Hans described to us along with the late flowering plants such as farewell-to-spring (*Clarkia amoena*) and ferns such as the Indian dream fern (*Aspidotis densa*). In the nearby wooded area, we saw two wintergreens (*Chimaphila menziesii* and *Chimaphila umbellata*) and an amazing candy stick (*Allotropia virgata*). People had to jockey for position to take pictures of this plant. On June 18, Hans Roemer again led the trip into the San Juan Ridge area above Jordan River. We visited the rich bogs and the higher sub-alpine areas. The bogs included the false azalea (*Menziesia ferruginea*) plus the bog cranberry (*Oxycoccus oxycoccos*) as well as the delicate common butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and bog orchids (*Platanthera dilatata* and *Platanthera stricta*). In the higher sub-alpine meadows we saw the last of the avalanche lilies (*Erythronium montanum*) and the beginning of the flowering of the white rhododendron (*Rhododendron albiflorum*) plus many other meadow plants such as pink mountain heather (*Phyllodoce empetriformis*).



False bugbane (*Trautvetteria caroliniensis*) at San Juan Ridge.

In a previous issue of *The Naturalist*, you have already had a description of another attempt to recreate spring with our trip to the Olympics in Washington on July 17. This was a fabulous time to visit there. Then we squeaked in another local trip to the unique habitat inside the centre of Rithet's Bog with a very small group of people on July 24. This was led by Sharon Hartwell of the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society. The outing had to be so late in the season because the ground had to dry out enough for people to get into the area. We saw the small amounts of sphagnum gradually re-growing after years of fluctuating water levels and other complications. On the long August weekend, we were back to the high country with Hans Roemer for a three-day trip to both Mount Washington and Mount Arrowsmith. This trip needs a complete article unto itself as there were so many fascinating plants to enjoy.

Fall brought us to a repeat trip to the Jordan River bog for a sample of the bog cranberries for Thanksgiving on September 25; a repeat trip to Beacon Hill Park to enjoy the Heritage trees and the fall birds on October 16; an excellent field workshop on mosses and lichens on October 29 prepared by Gerry Ansell; a mushroom trip to Royal Roads and Lester Pearson College on November 12 with Adolf and Oluna Ceska and a final trip to enjoy the big trees in Royal Roads on November 27 with Hans Roemer.

It was a very full year. I'd like to thank the volunteer leaders for their time and expertise. We have already had part of the review of the season in pictures at January's Botany Night where Sharon Godkin's excellent slides were shown and we will have the second half at March's Botany Night on Tuesday March 21 at Swan Lake at 7:30. This will include images from other participants at the outings. What I need now from you are ideas for outings for the coming year. Please contact me with your thoughts of where you might wish to take us or where you might wish to go. It is best to send me email (thelynns@shaw.ca) but telephone if necessary (721-0634) or talk to me at a meeting or an outing. Hope to see you soon!

2005 Butterfly Count Report

By James Miskelly

The 2005 butterfly season started early, thanks to warm weather in February and early March. Satyr anglewings appeared on February 2, and by the end of March an unprecedented ten species had been recorded in our area. However, the March that came in like a lamb went out like a cool, wet sea lion, and reached a flipper deep into April, resulting in unspectacular results on our first count weekend.

As the spring developed, the big story appeared to be mourning cloaks. They were everywhere, and many people were reporting them from areas where they had never seen them before. What caused the apparent increase is a mystery, but mourning cloaks do belong to a group of butterflies famous for wild fluctuations in numbers and varying degrees of migratory or dispersive behaviour. Surprisingly, for all the excitement and all the great sightings, the final tally did not approach a high count, and was merely average by the standards of the 1990's. Nevertheless, it was nice to see one or two at nearly every park in our area.

As the days of spring continued to lengthen, newspapers began carrying stories of great clouds of painted ladies emigrating from the southern U.S. Our most common migratory butterfly, painted ladies breed continuously in the arid lands of the southern U.S. and northern Mexico, and expand across the continent every summer. The winter

of 2004-2005 saw record rainfall in the southern deserts, resulting in record plant growth. All this caterpillar food meant huge numbers of painted ladies ready to head our way in the spring. By mid summer, painted ladies were ubiquitous in parks and gardens all over Victoria. Hardly a thistle, sunflower, artichoke, or borage plant was free of the spiny caterpillars or the silken chambers that they construct. The final count of 586 dwarfed the previous high count of 214.

Not all the stories of 2005 were positive. Propertius duskywings (a species of conservation concern in B.C.) had one of their poorest showings. While any wild population can be expected to fluctuate, we cannot ignore the effects of the destruction of this butterfly's rocky Garry oak habitat that is happening daily in the western communities. Likewise, the Btk spraying of Mount Douglas in 2004 may have eliminated the propertius duskywing from that park. Also undetected on Mount Douglas this year were moss' elfin and Sara's orangetip, both present in 2004. Time will tell whether these species were actually eliminated, or just reduced sufficiently to escape detection.

Other butterfly species continued on their usual trends. As always, the introduced cabbage white was the most abundant butterfly in 2005. European skippers, also introduced, continue to be found in new areas every year. Likewise, the



Mourning cloak butterfly. *Photo: James Miskelly*

common woodnymph has become a regular species on our list. A few turn up every year, usually as singletons. Eventually they are sure to found new populations like the one at Rocky Point, which has been well documented thanks to the birding community. This is a happy note, as our island subspecies of common woodnymph is a species of conservation concern in BC. Another happy note is the presence of

the Clodius Apollo on our 2005 list. This species appears on VNHS Butterfly Counts rarely, and always as singletons from the western limits of our zone. Many areas in our count zone, including the western boundaries, are underrepresented in our counts. If you would like to volunteer to help fill in the gaps, please write jmiskelly@telus.net or call 477-0490.

Species	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Total
Propertius Duskywing	6	10	6	0	0	0	22
Two-banded Checkered Skipper	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
European Skipper	0	0	104	248	8	0	360
Woodland Skipper	0	0	0	137	1965	22	2124
Clodius Apollo	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Anise Swallowtail	24	57	42	63	20	3	209
Western Tiger Swallowtail	1	58	127	127	23	0	336
Pale Swallowtail	0	48	23	8	7	0	86
Pine White	0	0	0	109	88	3	200
Cabbage White	228	435	354	911	669	143	2740
Sara's Orangetip	53	6	3	0	0	0	62
Purplish Copper	1	27	22	37	58	15	160
Cedar Hairstreak	0	10	1	3	0	0	14
Brown Elfin	27	9	0	0	0	0	36
Moss' Elfin	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Western Pine Elfin	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Grey Hairstreak	0	6	0	3	0	1	10
Western Spring Azure	264	241	8	1	0	0	514
Silvery Blue	1	15	0	0	0	0	16
Satyr Anglewing	32	21	4	9	0	0	66
Green Comma	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Mourning Cloak	26	21	3	3	0	0	53
California Tortoiseshell	3	0	1	1	0	0	5
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	0	4	3	1	1	1	10
Painted Lady	11	70	61	255	165	24	586
Westcoast Lady	0	2	0	4	3	0	9
Red Admiral	0	1	1	9	4	1	16
Mylitta Crescent	6	8	2	41	2	2	61
Lorquin's Admiral	3	2	163	207	28	2	405
Common Ringlet	0	92	52	1	73	3	221
Common Woodnymph	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total	693	1148	982	2180	3114	220	8337

Pollination

By John Defayette, Member of the Capital Region Beekeepers Association

Pollen transfer from plants and trees is necessary for fertilization in order to set seeds, thereby producing fruit, nuts and most vegetables. The transfer may occur naturally by wind, water (rain), birds, insects, or mammals. If adequate pollination does not occur, some crops may fail to produce a good harvest. Last year there were many comments of a poor crop in around Victoria where I live. The problem may be caused by environmental conditions, especially the weather, and perhaps insecticides.

In Japan, orchard bees (*Osmia* spp) are used for apple pollination, and in California, honeybees are used for almonds. In Canada, many cultivate the blue orchard bee (*Osmia lignaria propinqua*) by constructing a bee house using a 4 x 4 drilled wood block or with a plastic soft drink bottle filled with drinking straws. The queen will lay eggs in the spring of the year, covering the entrance with mud to keep out light and pests.

There are approximately 30 species of bumble bees (genus *Bombus*) active from April to October that pollinate flowers, blueberries, cranberries and tomatoes. But pesticide is taking its toll, and there seem to be fewer. Bumble bees do not store food for more than a few days, hence they need a good season. Other insect pollinators include blueberry bees, leaf cutting bees (*Megachile rotundata*) important for alfalfa, squash bees, various flies, and butterflies. However, the most important of the group is probably the imported domestic honey bee (*Apis mellifera*). There may also be a few wild honey bees, as a result of swarms from the domestic hives.

Bees are relatively easy to manage and transport to a large number of crop species for pollination purposes. A single colony may contain on average 40,000 bees, of which 10,000 would be foragers that seek nectar and pollen depending on the needs of the hive (queen). As they are social insects, the nurse bees feed the brood larvae. A beekeepers goal then is to have a colony survive the winter, then have them at a peak when the plants are producing nectar and pollen. It is a simple task to encourage pollinators to your garden: have a variety of things blooming all year.

There are certain commercial crops that are attractive to bees such as some apples, berries, cherries, canola and soy. Other tree fruits such as apricots, peaches, plums are also important. Among the legumes, some beans, lentils and peas benefit from bees, and in vegetables asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, melons, onions, parsnip and radish. Cross-pollination is important for peanuts, and in California the almond crop has suffered low yields when there is a scarcity of bees.



Honeybees killed due to the use of pesticides. Photo: John Defayette

The use of pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, fungicides etc.) creates a problem for insect pollinators. This is especially true for honey bees, as they seem to be more susceptible to poisoning, perhaps because they fly long distances (3-5 km or more) from their hive, and therefore encounter aerosols or spraying in their path. They may also walk on surfaces that have toxins or find nectar that has been exposed to toxins. Pesticides and pollinators don't mix!

Reference:

McGregor, S.E. 1976. *Insect Pollination of Cultivated Crop Plants*. USDA Agricultural Handbook 496. 411 pp.

BC Naturalists' Foundation

By David Hutchings

In the past few years, naturalists' clubs have discovered that the BC Naturalists' Foundation can play an important role in providing vital financial support for conservation and nature education projects. At the same time, naturalists wishing to leave a legacy for the environment have found that charitable organizations such as the Foundation can be valuable partners when the time comes to plan their estates. However, the mission and operation of the BC Naturalists' Foundation still remains somewhat of a mystery for many FBCN members, despite its fifteen-year existence.

As a result of a very generous bequest from Katherine Sherman – a long-time member of the Victoria Natural History Society – the Foundation was established as the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists' Foundation, an independent charitable organization. The Foundation's mission was to receive bequests and donations to "promote the preservation of the natural environment for future generations through conservation, research and education projects" (Paragraph 2[a], Constitution). The generosity of both Katherine Sherman and other naturalists enabled the formation of a significant Endowment Fund, which was placed with the Vancouver Foundation. With the benefit of timely additions, this Endowment Fund has grown so that it now yields a consistent level of income, providing a yearly source of grants from the Foundation to the FBCN. Within the FBCN, these annual grants are held in the FBCN Foundation Fund, which is dedicated for use in projects related to conservation and natural history education. Other investments administered by the Foundation's Board of Directors-under professional advice – provide sufficient revenue to cover the Foundation's operating costs. In 2003, the Foundation changed its name to the more user-friendly "BC Naturalists' Foundation".

Occasionally, the FBCN receives funds through bequests or donations directly, which can provide a source of funds for club projects. But, relying solely on this type of funding could mean that the ability of the FBCN to support the work of naturalists could vary significantly from year to year. On the other hand, gifts directed to, and invested in, the BC Naturalists' Foundation's Endowment Fund provide an annual income and allow the Foundation to make an annual grant to the FBCN's Foundation Fund. Rather than the Foundation providing grants for projects directly, it has been felt that the FBCN has a keener sense of, and is better able to balance the needs of, naturalists province-wide. Since 1990, the Foundation has provided more than \$50,000 for the work of naturalists. For example, a grant from the FBCN, using funds from the Foundation, enabled the Squa-

mish Estuary Conservation Society to convince government to establish the Squamish Estuary Wildlife Management Area. A more recent grant saw \$2,000 given to the Comox Valley Naturalists' Society for the 2005 phase of its major wetland restoration project.

We all can appreciate that a stable source of support, such as the BC Naturalists' Foundation, is invaluable as we seek to conserve and help people to better understand and appreciate the natural world. And we are increasingly coming to understand that planned charitable bequests and donations can significantly reduce taxes. Charitable donations such as legacies, life insurance policies and other assets can provide on-going tax benefits while we are living, and also ensure that our heirs lose less of their inheritance to estate taxes. Planned giving to a charity such as the Foundation, then, can benefit not only our heirs but also can benefit and sustain the work of naturalists for years to come as they come "to know nature and keep it worth knowing".

For more information about the BC Naturalists' Foundation and how you can contribute, contact your local FBCN club or the FBCN's Vancouver office. In the Vancouver Island region, please contact either Hubert King (250-537-2615 or e-mail annking@island.net) for the region south of Ladysmith, or David Hutchings (250-752-1613 or e-mail dhutchings@telus.net) for the northern portion of the region.

For information and advice about the benefits of planned giving for both you and your heirs, contact a registered financial planning professional.



Jim Farrell 477-7291 jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca

A Request for Help with a New Educational CD-ROM Seashores of Vancouver Island

By Bryce Kendrick



Photo by author

I am in the process of building a CD-ROM on seashore life around Vancouver Island. As an undergraduate more than 50 years ago, I was fascinated by marine biology, and made my first collection of 100 named seaweeds at the Port Erin marine biology station on the Isle of Man. Though life guided me into a research and teaching career in mycology, I have never lost my interest in marine life. Since I moved to the Island in 1994, I have been taking pictures of everything I see along our shores, first on film and later with digital cameras. Three factors played roles in the initiation of the CD-ROM project: (1) spare time following retirement from a teaching position at the University of Waterloo; (2) the development of inexpensive technology allowing people to produce their own CDs; (3) the appearance of

my five grandchildren, for whom I decided to build the CD-ROM, and to whom I decided I must dedicate it.

I had used *FrontPage* (a Microsoft program) to build a website about fungi (www.mycolog.com) and then used it again to build a detailed companion CD-ROM for my mycological textbook, *The Fifth Kingdom*. Once that was more or less complete (it is constantly being updated), the way lay open for me to begin the next project.

A new book, *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest* by Andy Lamb and Bernard Hanby has just been published, as many VNHS members will be aware, and it is a fine piece of work, with 1,700 colour photos of 1,400 species. It has only one disadvantage – it costs \$70.

A CD-ROM has a number of advantages over a book: (1) it is cheap to produce; (2) there is almost no limit to the number of pictures that can be incorporated – and one can even have animations and movie sequences (my fungal CD-ROM has about 5,000 pictures); (3) hotlinks in HTML make it simple to jump to any desired place in the text; (4) it is easy to insert corrections and updates.

You may say that it's not likely you will carry a digital display onto the beach (though that is becoming more practicable every month). I would rejoin that you are almost equally unlikely to carry a 400-page, 1.5 kg book onto the beach, where its pristine pages could be easily splashed with seawater. Ideally, I'd like to see people using both the printed and the digital tools to identify what they see out there.

I intend to make this new tool available for little more than the cost of production – certainly not more than about \$10-12.

Now we come to my request. I know that I have not obtained pictures of everything that is out there (unlike Lamb and Hanby, I haven't been doing this for 25 years!). For example, I am trying to cover the birds of the coast (something Lamb and Hanby didn't do), but I don't have *good* pictures of some species such as the Long-tailed Duck, and I don't have *any* pictures of quite a few other species. So, I would like to ask the members of VNHS if they would be willing to let me use some of their images in this non-profit venture. I would give full credit with each picture used, and the membership can make it possible for me to complete this magnum opus in short order (or at least before I succumb to Alzheimer's).

You can reach me at (250) 655-5051, or by e-mail at bryce@mycolog.com. I look forward to a generous response. Let's get this thing on the road...



Bird Watchers Digest reviewers put the Eagle Optics Ranger Platinum Class binoculars on both their "Best Buy" and "Favorites" lists.

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Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS) Report for 2005

By Marie O'Shaughnessy and Gwen Greenwood

This past year saw a low level of productivity for Bald Eagles in the Victoria area. Not only did monitoring figures confirm this within the CRD area, it also reflected the same disappointing statistics further north on the Island. Here, spring windstorms and the possibility of poor quality nesting trees probably contributed to the loss of two functional nests. In both these fallen nests, the eaglets succumbed. Sadly, the eaglets in one nest were a month old, and in the other, 24 hours. Fortunately, we were able to secure these four dead eaglets within hours of their demise. The VNHS kindly provided the funding for one of each age group for taxidermy. They are now on display for the general public at the Goldstream Nature House. The remaining two will be donated to the Royal BC Museum for research.

Life as an eagle is certainly not without drama and peril. In another situation of loss this past year, a parent eagle became entangled in fishing line while securing a fish. The line was attached to a piece of wood and made it extremely difficult for the eagle not only to come ashore, but to return to the active nest encumbered. The injured eagle was later declared missing-in-action. A "fly-by" trip was made by a small aircraft to assess the injured eagle's whereabouts. It had disappeared.

Life at the nest carried on for the growing eaglet, which eventually fledged. The remaining parent continued to provide for its young despite the loss of its mate. This same nest site provided some interesting speculation for local nature enthusiasts regarding raccoons. The remaining adult eagle made a foray and snatched a baby raccoon. The young raccoon was on the beach with its family. This activity reduced the mother raccoon to a "screaming frenzy" and she proceeded to follow the eagle to the nest tree. The next morning a rather dead female raccoon lay at the bottom of the tree. Meanwhile, good has come from misfortune in this community. Fifty percent of the neighbourhood residents now keep a close eye on the eagles and report any worthwhile observations to the assigned monitor. This is a caring community at its best!

We are left with many questions about the number of failed nests and fewer fledglings this past breeding season. Could a possible lack of fish during the winter season have contributed to poor breeding fitness in the eagles in 2005? Darren Copley and Adam Taylor have kindly supplied some salmon run figures from Goldstream Provincial Park. During the winter of 2004/2005, it was estimated that there were 21,000 Chum salmon and 600 Coho. Normally the run would produce 30,000 Chum and 1,000-3,000 Coho.

Fifty percent of the neighbourhood residents now keep a close eye on the eagles and report any worthwhile observations to the assigned monitor. This is a caring community at its best!

The Chinook salmon have stayed fairly consistent at around 100. This winter the numbers of Chum were about 5,500 (and a few hundred each of Coho and Chinook). They were expecting possibly as many as 50,000-60,000 Chum. These numbers have resulted in far fewer eagles. The maximum counted at one time last winter was 54 and this winter, 25 eagles. Most winters more than 200 could be expected. It will be interesting to see how the breeding success for eagles in 2006 evolves.

A territory for a breeding pair of eagles may contain two to three nests. These nests can be used alternately. Depending on availability of food, the territories between nesting pairs can be as little as 500 meters or 1 km apart.

The observations for the past breeding season are as follows:

Bald Eagles: There are 29 possible territories of which only 23 were active in 2005. Ten of the 23 nests failed. Sixteen young fledged from the remaining 13 nests and three new territories were established.

Osprey: Six active nests. Two failed. A total of seven young fledged from four nests.

Red-tailed hawk: Two active nests. One failed. One young fledged.

Great Horned Owl: Two active nests, four young fledged (two from each nest)

Pileated Woodpecker: One active nest with young but unknown how many fledged.

Many thanks to ALL our dedicated monitors, to the Federation of BC Naturalists, the Ministry of Environment, BC Hydro, and to the many others whose support keeps this valuable program "flying".

Results of the 2005 Christmas Bird Count

By Ann Nightingale

Another Christmas, and another Christmas Bird Count, (well, more than one, if you are a keener!) have come and gone. After last year's record setting count of 154 species, things were a bit more sedate on the December 18, 2005 count. Perhaps the most surprising thing was the third consecutive year of decent weather! Two boats were able to get out on the water, and although some teams reported wind, most had quite a pleasant day, weather-wise. 180 counters were in the field, tallying 133 species and 65,001 individual birds.

These numbers are really both the good news and the bad news for our count. One hundred eighty is an impressive number of counters. In fact, Victoria is typically one of the top 10 circles in North America for field participants, a standing I hope we can keep for the foreseeable future. I would love it if everyone could find one new participant to join them on the count next year. That would really be something!

On the other hand, 65,001 individuals is our second lowest count in the last 10 years. To give some perspective, our average from 1995-2004 was more than 85,000, with two years recording over 100,000 individual birds. Our low count of just over 53,987 birds was on a truly miserable day with rain and wind keeping the birds under cover while the counters got drenched. The low count is especially disconcerting when we know that we have a lot of participants out there looking for birds. Where have they gone? When you look at the table of results, compare this year's numbers with the high counts for the species. While the numbers are down almost across the board, the greatest differences are in the species that we are used to seeing in huge flocks or rafts. The seabirds, including ducks, grebes, cormorants, and even the gulls, all seem to have taken a major hit. A lot of the common landbirds, including the abundant American Robins and European Starlings are also showing significant decreases from their maximum numbers. While the Christmas Bird Count can't identify the causes of these changes, thanks to the work of all of the volunteer counters, these records will be available for researchers who just may be able to find a cause and recommend mitigation.

As in 2004, when a Heerman's Gull escaped the glares of our counters, we had another rare bird elude us in 2005. A Snowy Owl, reported along the Dallas Road waterfront about two weeks before our count, apparently was seen almost every day for at least four weeks. Unfortunately, "almost" did not include our count day!

Despite the lower numbers overall, a few species did



Barred Owl. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

produce record highs: Wood Ducks continue to prosper at Mystic Pond, Anna's Hummingbirds are spreading throughout the region, Turkey Vultures and Barred Owls are becoming regular entries on our lists, and Hermit Thrushes also hit a new high count. Cackling Geese also had a record year, thanks to the AOU reclassification to a species in 2004.

Another important record of note is Barbro Baker's continued support of our Christmas Bird Count by providing much needed sustenance at the post-count gathering. I honestly don't know how long she has been doing this, but ever since I became involved, Barbro has been there, making sure the coffee and tea is hot and that there are goodies on the table. For this, I am extremely grateful!

This year also saw a new Christmas Bird Count added to the official count circle listing. A Saltspring Island/Sidney (with a slice of Cobble Hill) circle now ensures that the Saanich Peninsula birds get counted, too! This brings the number of CBCs within an hour's drive to four: Victoria, Sooke, Duncan and Saltspring/Sidney. I know that some intrepid birders participated in all four in 2005.

If you are interested in reviewing Christmas Bird Count data, historical information and trends for any of these areas, they can be seen online at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>.

Since you all have your 2006 calendars, now would be a great time to mark down the next Christmas Bird Count: Saturday, December 16. Thanks again to all of the participants!

Guide for Sending in Records for the Annual Bird Report

By Jeremy Tatum

Most birdwatchers by now are aware that we are planning to publish an Annual Bird Report (ABR), starting with a Report for 2005. This was described in an article on page 12 of the *Victoria Naturalist* 61.5 (March – April 2005). In brief, birdwatchers are asked to send in their bird records, either quarterly or at the end of each year, to me at 205-1680 Poplar Avenue, Victoria, V8P 4K7, email jtatum@uvic.ca. Records should be in taxonomic order (either the new or the old), and should include the name of the bird in full (no four-letter codes, please!), the date when seen, the locality, the number, and in the case of uncommon or difficult birds, a brief description of the features seen on the bird. Further details, which I shall not repeat here, are to be found in the aforementioned article.

Work on the 2005 ABR is now well underway and is proving to be a really enjoyable and exciting project. Interest in the project is obviously very high, though a few people still haven't sent in their records for 2005. I can probably still include a few records if you hurry them in soon, depending on how far we have got by the time you read this. And if you are too late for the 2005 Report, please remember for 2006!

One useful tool that has been produced since the publication of the article mentioned is Ann Nightingale's "calendar" which enables you to record easily the dates (especially the first and last dates) when you see each migratory species. This is available on the Society's Web Site, and I strongly recommend each birder acquire one – if for no other reason than that it is great fun putting the dots in! Apart from this "fun" though, it promises to be an invaluable tool for the ABR.

One of the questions that birders are asking is how we intend to deal with unusual species. There is a wide range of experience among local birdwatchers, from those who are new to the hobby to the skilled observer of many years' experience. Not everyone is in the top rank, and it is an unavoidable part of birdwatching that reports of misidentified birds are almost a daily occurrence! Everyone would like the ABR to be recognized as a reliable publication in which the published records are regarded as fully trustworthy, and would like it to attain the highest standards. One or two questionable records, and the entire project is questionable. We need, therefore, to adopt some policy that will help us all to achieve this standard.

It has sometimes been suggested that we "know" who the good birders are and whose records can be accepted. But I certainly do not "know", and it would put any editor in a

We ask *all* observers, without exception and at all levels of experience, when sending in records of rare or difficult birds to accompany their reports with field notes describing what features they were able to see on the bird that they were looking at that enabled them to make their identification.

quite impossible position to expect them to make any sort of a judgment about how "good" this or that birdwatcher is. That is certainly not how it is done. Instead, we ask *all* observers, without exception and at all levels of experience, when sending in records of rare or difficult birds (I discuss below what species we have in mind), to accompany their reports with field notes describing what features they were able to see on the bird that they were looking at that enabled them to make their identification.

It is understandable (though a pity) that a few observers are hesitant to do this, because they feel somehow that, in being asked to supply such details, their competence or even their honesty is being questioned. This is not the case at all – all that is being asked is to be told what features they were able to see on the bird they observed. Most of the most experienced observers understand this and don't hesitate to include such details, and there is no cause to imagine that anyone is going to doubt that they saw the features they describe. All that has to be done is then to ensure that the reported features are indeed that of the species reported.

For the extremely rare birds, such as new species for the area, or species that are very rarely seen, there is a Bird Records Committee (BRC), which has a well-established procedure for dealing with them. Those few expert birders who are fortunate or skilful enough to find the occasional rarity of this calibre are aware of how to submit reports to the BRC, and they will be published in the ABR when they have been accepted by the BRC. More of a problem from the

perspective of the ABR is how to deal with fairly rare birds (not rare enough to merit the full formality of the BRC), species that are seen out-of-season, and some common birds (such as dowitchers, scaups and terns) which are very difficult to distinguish. When a record of such a bird, complete with field notes, is received by the editor of the ABR, how is it dealt with? Do I take a quick glance at it, note who the observer is and whether I like them or not, and make a hasty decision as to whether to publish the record? Heavens, no! That is not the job of the editor, and I would not feel remotely competent (or brave or nasty enough!) to take on a task like that! What happens is that I send the record, with the field notes, to two or three of the more experienced birders (and I would welcome any offers of help in this regard), but without revealing the name of the observer, thus avoiding any perceptions of a personal nature. The referees are merely asked: "Do the details supplied by the observer suffice to identify unambiguously the species claimed, or could they possibly apply to some similar species? If they do not, please explain why." I then take the advice of the referees. Only in cases where the identification is very obviously either correct or very obviously mistaken will the editor make a decision alone. Otherwise, the editor merely acts as an editor!

I have been asked from time to time: For what species do you require field notes? "Require" is rather a strong word, but I think I can give some guidance about what species I would find field notes helpful. Far be it for me to discourage field notes about *any* species, but I don't really need field notes on every Spotted Towhee or Northwestern Crow that you see! I think there are three classes of bird for which notes would be useful: rare and uncommon birds that are not sufficiently rare to merit the full formality of the BRC; birds that are seen out of season; birds that are not easy to identify.

With that in mind, I offer below a list of birds for which I think some details would be very helpful when you are submitting your records. Probably an observer should assume that reports accompanied by no details at all of these birds will not be published. The list below deals mostly with birds that are judged to be hard to identify. Of course any bird that is rare or which is seen out of season, should also be described.

Geese. The only problems likely to arise are with the **Cackling Goose**, which has only recently been promoted to the status of full species and which therefore requires special care and more detail than merely writing "small".

Swans. Full and detailed notes will be needed for all records of **Tundra Swan**.

Ducks. There are not likely to be many problems with these. If you report a *female Eurasian Wigeon*, please share your expertise with us and let us know what features you saw on the bird you reported that enabled you to identify it. Summer and breeding records of **Pintail**, **Shoveller** and **Gadwall** will be welcomed. **Redheads** are uncommon and

probably merit a word or two of notes. *Summer* records of **Red-breasted Mergansers** and breeding records of them, or records of immature birds, will require very convincing and detailed notes, and are unlikely to be published without. **Scaup**, of course, are awfully difficult, and can be identified correctly only if you make a special effort to do so.

Loons. **Yellow-billed Loon** requires full and careful details. "Pale, upturned bill" won't pass muster! **Grebes.** Some details for sightings of **Eared Grebe** would be appreciated. Reports of **Clark's Grebe** will be referred to the BRC. **Shearwaters**, **Petrels**, **Fulmars**. Obviously careful field notes will be needed for any of these. **Cormorants** – breeding records would be welcome. **Great Blue Heron** – reports from heronries would be welcome. Reports of **American Bittern** will be referred to the BRC.

Owls. **Short-eared**, **Great Horned**, **Barred** and **Snowy** probably don't need field notes, but I think all other species do. The **Northern Pygmy Owl** is a potential problem, and I suspect it is reported rather more often than it actually occurs. I would be cautious of records of birds that were heard only.

Plovers. All records of any species of **Golden-Plover** will require the provision of careful details.

Sandpipers and relatives. Common or readily identified species are **Marbled Godwit**, **Whimbrel**, **Greater Yellow-legs**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Black Turnstone**, **Surfbird**, **Dunlin**, **Sanderling**, **Western Sandpiper**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper**. Anything other than these is sufficiently uncommon or tricky to identify that it should require field notes. There are two problems of particular concern. One is the **Dowitchers**. Other than in exceptional circumstances, it is *very hard indeed* for most observers to identify these birds accurately, and, if not in breeding plumage, it is, under many circumstances, impossible. I am concerned with the apparent ease and confidence with which specific identifications of these birds are made as if there were not the slightest difficulty. Some observers believe they can distinguish between them by voice – but this is controversial, and in any case often the birds do not call. The second problem is the **Semipalmated Sandpiper**. This bird is notoriously difficult to distinguish from our two common peeps, and it must also be regarded as a very rare bird indeed in this area. Yet they are regularly reported, sometimes in surprising numbers, every year, without comment, as though they were so common and so easy to identify as to occasion no surprise. This species requires very careful and detailed documentation before records can be published.

Jaegers. Anything other than a **Parasitic Jaeger** obviously needs justification.

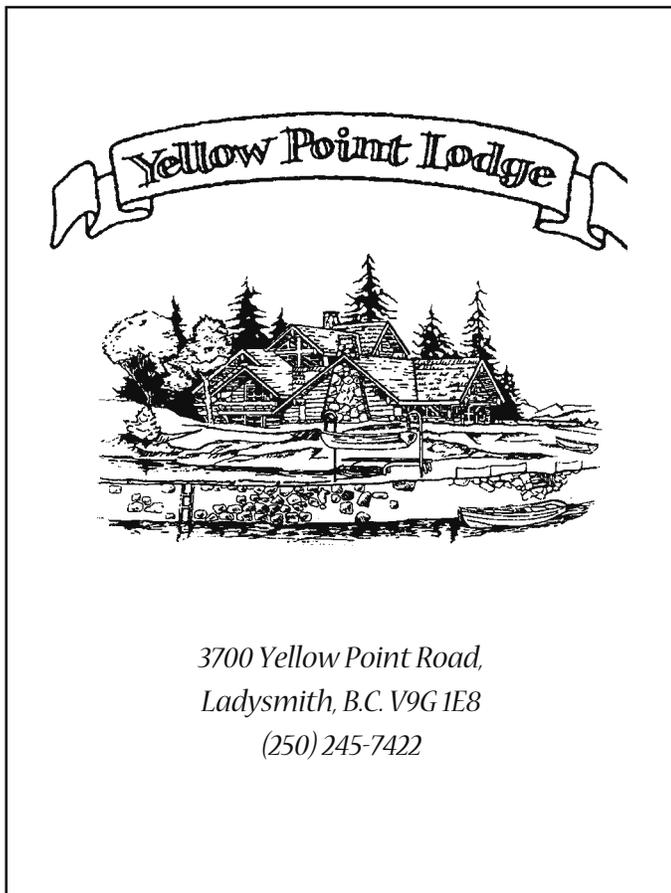
Gulls. Almost twenty species of gull have been reported from our area, they all go through several plumage changes lasting several years, and many species are quite similar. Gull identification can be very difficult. Our commonest or most easily identified gulls are **Heermann's**, **Bonaparte's**,

Mew, California, Glaucous-winged. Anything other than these is either rare or is difficult to identify and needs some details. **Thayer's Gull** may be common, but anyone who can easily distinguish it from a **Herring Gull** is a better-than-average birder. We need accurate identifications if we are to understand their seasonal occurrences. **Western Gull** is of particular concern. Identification of this species is not to be undertaken lightly.

Terns. It is disappointing to all of us that the "Common" **Tern** is now so rare. If you see one, please bear in mind that **Common** and **Arctic Terns** are notoriously among the most difficult of all pairs of similar birds to identify.

Alcids. Records of **Cassin's Auklet** should be accompanied by careful field notes.

Raptors. Records of **Golden Eagle**, or of any **Buteo** other than **Red-tailed Hawk**, should be accompanied by careful field notes. Of the **Accipiters**, **Cooper's Hawk** is common and resident and requires no comment. **Sharp-shinned** is seasonal and *very, very* hard to distinguish from **Cooper's Hawk**, and, if we are to understand its seasonal occurrence well, evidence of accurate identification must be supplied. Northern **Goshawk** is probably a *very rare resident* and probably also very frequently misidentified. Very careful details must be supplied of this species. The **Gyrfalcon** must



also be included in any list of most frequently misidentified species, and detailed notes are needed for this bird.

Hummingbirds. Anything other than **Anna's** or **Rufous** is a rarity of BRC calibre. Winter records of **Rufous** are exceedingly unlikely and require the most careful documentation.

Woodpeckers. Careful records of "Yellow-shafted" or intermediate forms of **Flicker** would be most welcome. **Hairy Woodpecker** is slightly uncommon and slightly similar to **Downy Woodpecker** so a few words of field notes, if not essential, would certainly be welcomed. Records of any forms of **Sapsucker** other than **Red-breasted** should have some documentation.

Our three *Empidonax* **Flycatchers** – Willow, Hammond's and Pacific Slope – are readily identified by song, though out-of-season records of non-singing birds may be almost impossible to identify with 100% accuracy. Any other species of *Empidonax* must go through the BRC.

Reports of any **Swallows** seen in the months October to February require field notes. The **Bank Swallow** is an exceedingly rare bird in this area, and frequently misidentified. Reports of this species without field notes will not be considered; reports with field notes will be referred to the BRC.

Although the **Rock Wren** has appeared several times recently, it is still a rarity, and all reports of this species should be accompanied by field notes. **House Wrens** do not occur here in winter, and any claims of this species in winter must be documented in careful detail.

A **Catharus Thrush** in summer is a **Swainson's**, and in winter is a **Hermit**. But if we are to establish accurate arrival and departure times of these species, care in their identification will be needed in the spring and fall when the two species may overlap.

Apart from the **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, which is almost regular in winter, *all* reports of warblers in winter should include some details. Spring arrival dates of the **Orange-crowned Warbler** are often difficult to determine because of frequent misidentification of the song of a **Junco** for this warbler. Anyone reporting this species in March of early April should make it clear whether he or she actually saw the bird, or merely heard the song.

Swamp, Harris's and White-throated Sparrows, and of course anything less common than these, should all be described.

Of the **icterids**, the **Rusty Blackbird** is a rarity and is often incorrectly reported. Winter reports of the **Brown-headed Cowbird** need some detail.

That's a rough guide of what would be helpful, so now let's all get our binoculars, our Wellington boots and, especially, our notebook and pencil, and go out and find some exciting rare birds and make sure that they are so well documented that no one can ever doubt us!

Come Bird With Us, Olympic BirdFest 2006

Sequim, Washington,
March 31 - April 2, 2006

By Bob Hutchison,
Publicity Chairman,
Olympic BirdFest 2006

Grab your binoculars and join the Olympic BirdFest 2006 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, March 31 - April 2, 2006.

The stage is set...quiet bays and estuaries, sandy beaches, a five-mile-long sand spit, and a protected island bird sanctuary on the Strait of Juan de Fuca; wetlands, tide pools, rainforests, and lush river valleys. The players are ready ... Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, Black Oystercatchers, Peregrine Falcons, and Pygmy owls will be sporting their finest spring plumage for this celebration. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat and kayak tours; a traditional salmon bake at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center, and more.

Come bird with us, and experience with others the spectacular landscapes of the Olympic Peninsula ... you just might go home with a new bird for your life list! Check out the offerings by going online or calling for a brochure. Sequim is just a ferry ride and short drive from Victoria ... in two hours you'll be in the rain shadow of the Olympics ... it's worth the drive.

Program information and registration can be found online at: <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org>.

To contact us by phone:

Call 360-681-4076,

E-mail us at:

rivercenter@olympus.net,

Or write to us at:

Dungeness River Audubon Center

P.O. Box 2450

Sequim, WA 98382

Welcome to New Members

Our Society grew by eleven new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our "welcome" column:

Gordon and Rhonda Usipiuk
Windthrop Road
birds, insects, botany, geology

Jill Stainforth
Montgomery Avenue
birds

Kara Stevenson
Bay Street
birds, marine studies



2006 Natural History Courses



Here's a chance to support the society while learning a bit more about natural history. These programs will be taught by experienced VNHS trip leaders who have volunteered their time. The proceeds will support VNHS conservation and education activities. Please note the lower prices for members (yet another reason to join!). We are interested in offering other courses but require more leaders to come forward. Please call Darren Copley at 479-6622 if you have any suggestions.

Beginning Birding



An easy introduction to the pursuit of birding for those with little or no previous experience. The emphasis will be on bird identification in the field. We will start with an illustrated lecture on March 9, 2006 and 6 Saturday morning field trips from March 11th to April 22nd. The cost will be \$75 for non-members and \$45 for members.

Take the next step beyond the basics of identification. Our group of local VNHS experts places an emphasis on birding by ear and the identifying field marks of those difficult groups and species. This course includes 8 very diverse field sessions around Victoria led by 8 different leaders. Sessions run on Sunday mornings beginning on April 23rd, 2006. The cost is \$95.00 for non-members and \$65.00 for members. The course is limited to fifteen participants.

Beyond Beginning Birding



If you have any questions, or would like to register, please call the Goldstream Nature House: 478-9414. More detailed brochures will be available in the new year.



**Victoria Natural
History Society**





Habitat Acquisition Trust
Creating a Conservation Legacy

HAT Tricks

Sharpen Your Skills to See a Sharp-tailed Snake

By Todd Carnahan, HAT Stewardship Coordinator



Sharp-tailed Snake. *Photo: Kristina Ovaska*

Very few Victorians have heard of Sharp-tailed Snakes (*Contia tenuis*). Fewer still have seen one, and those folks are likely mistaken. This earthworm-sized serpent is neither ferocious nor friendly, preferring instead to remain concealed for its entire life under rocks and wood. In fact, sharp-tailed snakes are so rare, and so elusive, that they are known from only nine sites in Canada – all of them on southern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands!

Sharp-tailed snakes are provincially red-listed (threatened/endangered) and listed under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). They are diminutive denizens of south-facing, open, rocky slopes with forest or woodland margins. Unfortunately, these places are also favourites for housing development. The Sharp-tailed Snake Recovery Team, initiated in April 2001, has drafted a recovery strategy and an action plan to help these secretive snakes. Sensitive building design and land management can allow snakes and humans to share these sunny hotspots in harmony.

Herpetologist Christian Engelstoft is working with Habitat Acquisition Trust to raise community awareness

of these rare and vulnerable snakes around the few locations where they have been found. Remnant populations in Metchosin, Heal's Rifle Range, and Pender Island suggest that the snakes were once more common in our region. By investigating locations based on air photo analysis, Christian has discovered more potential sites. He has worked with several landowners in those areas to build special hiding places to attract the snakes, as part of a monitoring program.

This past February and March, HAT staff met with residents who may have sharp-tails on their land. We will help them identify potential snake habitat, and provide information packages and advice about protecting and restoring key sharp-tailed snake areas. We might even see one of these rare snakes – but probably not!

Contact HAT at 995-2428 for more information.

Office: 316-620 View St. Victoria

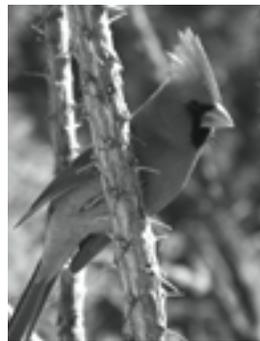
Mail: PO Box 8552, Victoria BC V8W 3S2

www.hat.bc.ca and www.conservationconnection.bc.ca: your database of conservation organizations and events in the CRD.

10% OFF scopes & binoculars for VNHS members (with this ad)



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MODERN - VINTAGE

WE BUY & SELL

Letters

To the Board of Directors and Members,
Victoria Natural History Society:

I want to express my sincere thanks to the society's board and members for the thoughtful and very useful gift presented to me by Marie O'Shaughnessy at our October 2005 Birders' Night, my last as host of what has proven to be a very enjoyable and successful program. I am sure that all birders have dreams of observing, hearing, photographing and marvelling at the behaviours of as many birds as possible. I will make good use of the 1000+ pages of this gift, the Howard and Moore *Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*.

To step down as your host was a difficult decision. I truly enjoyed the task. I must have! I stayed at it for just under 21 years. However, I am working and traveling out of town more often now, and feel that new ideas and new voices are always beneficial.

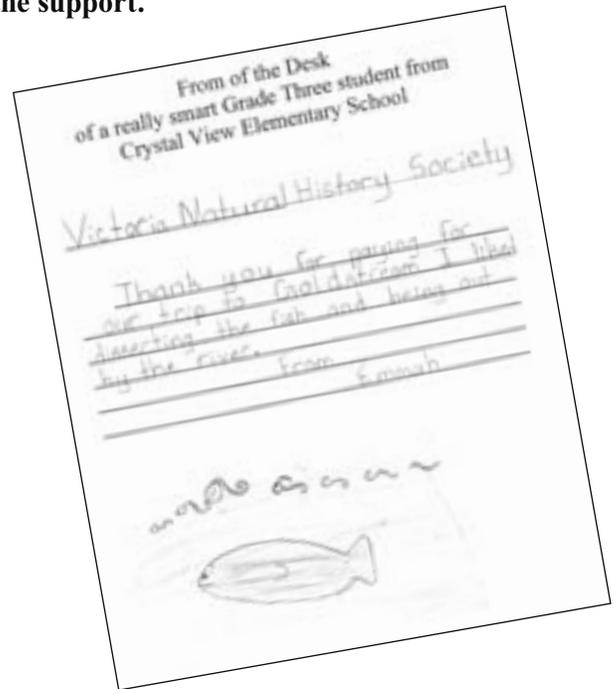
My thanks go to: Michael Shepard who initiated Birders' Night at Arbutus School in the early 1980s; to those who so kindly and competently hosted sessions in my absence; to those who attended regularly, bringing with them new members and new interests; and to the many excellent speakers that we have enjoyed over the years. I can recall presentations featuring the birds of Papua New Guinea, Australia, Borneo, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, Costa Rica, Central America, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, Botswana, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Southern England, Scotland's seabirds, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Hawaii, Buldir Island in the Aleutians, Baja California and Mexico's mainland, Arizona, Texas, California, and even a couple of "around the world" birding tours.

Features on Canadian birds and birding were enjoyed, as well: the Peace River, the Okanagan, Newfoundland, Alberta, the Rockies, Point Pelee, *Talking Owl*, Russian Snow Geese, Bald Eagles, hawk and eagle migrations, local Cooper's Hawk nesting, Purple Martins, Great Blue Herons, Western Screech-Owls, shorebird migration, pelagic birding, Western Bluebirds on Vancouver Island, bird songs of the west, the early (and recent) days at Rocky Point, ptarmigan on Vancouver Island, Barn Owls and Burrowing Owls. Those are just a few of the many programs that entertained and educated.

I am confident that Birders' Nights will continue and will grow. Those who learn about birds become protective of them, and there is no better way to encourage conservation than through education.

Sincerely,
Bryan R. Gates

The VNHS contributed financially to the Salmon Run school programs held at Goldstream this past fall. Here are some letters from students thanking us for the support.



Dear Victoria Natural History Society
My name is Jeremy Bernaldez and I am a student in grade six at St. Patrick's Elementary. We went on a field trip to Goldstream park in October. I enjoyed watching show and looking at dead salmon. I learned that the salmon provide nitrogen to the trees. I want to thank you for being a sponsor of the Goldstream education programs for students.
Sincerely,
Jeremy Bernaldez

Dear Victoria Natural History Society,
My name is Julie Bercin and I am a student at St. Patrick's Elementary. Our grade six class went on a field trip to Goldstream park in October. On this trip we learned about how the salmon affect the rest of the forest. I really enjoyed spending time at Goldstream and learning more about the salmon and all the other wild life at Goldstream. I want to thank you for being a sponsor of the Goldstream education programs for students.
Sincerely,
Julie Bercin

Letters

The VNHS School Project. Letters of appreciation for the books donated to school libraries.

Dear Board of Directors:

On behalf of the students and staff of École John Stubbs, I would like to thank you for your generous donation of print material on Natural History which we put into our school's library. The resource material, in particular, *Plants of Coastal BC*, *Mammals of BC*, and the Stewardship Series will activate an interest in natural history for many students new to this area of study and also promote a stewardship towards the environment. The resources will also be very useful for our Intermediate students use for research and report writing. The books will serve our teachers well as they use them to supplement the curriculum.

With Sincere Appreciation,
Ajmare Sundher, Principal

We wish to thank the Victoria Natural History Society for their kind donation of Field Guide Books for all our school libraries. As we mentioned, we are taking the books to our next Principals' meeting. They are a wonderful resource which we know will be put to good use.

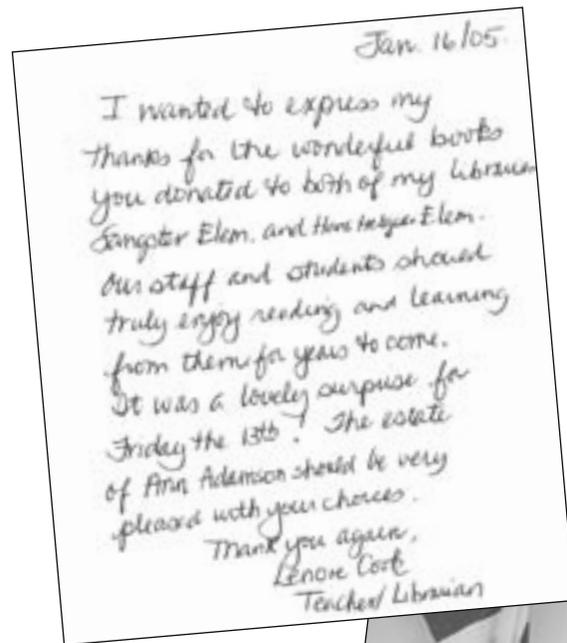
Thank you again,
Jordan Tinney
Assistant Superintendent
of Schools,
School District No. 63
(Saanich)

To Whom It May Concern

We received your gift to our school regarding the Natural Environment of British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest. We wish to thank you for your thoughtfulness in providing these books to us.

These kind of resources are a great help to our students and teachers.

Sincerely,
Jana Dick
Librarian, Victoria West Elementary



Jordan Tinney (Saanich School District 63) and John Defayette



Ann Nightingale and Brian Fox (Sooke School District 62)



John Defayette and Eileen Eby (Greater Victoria School District 61)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held September-April on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Presentations:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Murray and Anne Fraser Building, Room 159, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Murray and Anne Fraser Building, Room 159, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., in Murray and Anne Fraser Building, Room 159, University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>, and is updated regularly.

MARCH

Sunday, March 12

FIELD TRIP

Muir Creek as a Potential Park.

Join **Alanda Carver** and **Kate Woods** for a hike at Muir Creek. Muir Creek is a salmon spawning creek 15 minutes west of Sooke that may soon be logged. Home to the second largest yew tree in BC, twelve other old growth trees from five species have been found that could qualify for the Big Tree Registry of BC. Come view the Oligocene fossils and watch the eagles soar. Wear suitable clothing and footwear as it may be wet and the ground may be uneven in places. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch and drinks for the day-long outing. No pets please. Call Agnes at 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, March 14

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION (AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING)

How Deep Can Your Love Go

David Mazzucchi's love goes real deep, in caves that is, learn how they form, and how important they are anthropologically, economically, and scientifically, and what can be learned from studying stalagmites and stalactites. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser Building, everyone is welcome.

Sunday, March 19

FIELD TRIP

Satin Flowers at Mount Wells with Chris Gilbert and Agnes Lynn.

We visited this area last year later in the season. This year see the best display of satin flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) in the whole area. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Take the up-island highway towards Goldstream Park. Turn left on Sooke Lake Road shortly before you get to Goldstream. Turn left on Humpback Road at Ma Millar's pub. At the intersection with Irwin Road, stay right. Follow Humpback Road to the park entrance. Meet at the parking lot at 10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and drinks. No pets please. Call Agnes at 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, March 21

BOTANY NIGHT

Agnes Lynn: Chasing the Seasons through 2005 Part II

We had such a great response for photos from last year's botany outings that we couldn't show them all at the January Botany Night so we are going to do the second half at this meeting. This presentation will include photos from various participants at the outings as they chased the wildflowers as they bloomed. They

first scouted for early signs of spring locally, and then enjoyed the local peaks around the region before revisiting spring by increasing elevation. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m., everyone welcome.

Wednesday, March 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT

A Day in the Life of a Bird Banding Station

Now entering its 13th year of operation, the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) in Metchosin conducts on-going migration monitoring research through its bird banding and daily census programs at its site. Join **David Allinson** and other core RPBO members as they will provide us with a glimpse into the daily activities at Rocky Point, as well as updates on population trends and the data that has been collected, the different research projects underway, and the many interesting birds that occur there. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Fraser Building, room 159, bring a friend.

Sunday, March 26

FIELD TRIP

Birding Rithet's Bog

There should be some early swallows around and perhaps the first of our Rufous Hummingbirds returning to spar with the resident Anna's Hummingbird. Meet at 8:00 a.m. along Dalewood Lane (just off Chatterton Way) in the northwest corner of the bog. Leader TBA.

Monday, March 27

MARINE NIGHT

Once We Were Worms: Hemichordates and the Origin of the Chordates

Dr. Chris Cameron is a post doctoral fellow at Uvic and Bamfield. Chris will introduce the acorn worms (Phylum Hemichordata), including details of their natural history, and new information suggesting that the chordate characteristics of acorn worms may represent vestiges of an ancestral body plan from which the chordates evolved. Members of this small marine phylum play a central role in hypotheses about the evolution of echinoderms, hemichordates, and the chordates – the group to which humans belong. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building (Uvic Law Bldg.)

APRIL

Saturday, April 1

FIELD TRIP

Celebrate April Fool's Day with Sharon Godkin and Agnes Lynn with a visit to two delightful Saanich Peninsula parks, Oak Haven and Gore Parks.

The spring wildflowers are early in these parks so they will wet

your appetite for what will follow. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the entrance to Oak Haven Park on Garden Gate Drive, off Wallace Drive and just south of Benvenuto Avenue. Bring a snack and a drink. No pets please. Call **Agnes** at 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, April 2

FIELD TRIP

Brant Geese and the huge numbers of sea ducks and gulls up island

Come up to Parksville to see the annual congregation of Brant Geese and the large numbers of sea ducks and gulls. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:00 a.m. Leaders are **Gabe David** and **Rick Schortinghuis**. Call **Rick** at 652-3326 for more information.

Sunday, April 2

FIELD TRIP

Wild About Wildflowers — Meander to Magnificent Mill Hill for a Spectacular Spring Show of Wildflowers.

Since 2000, CRD Parks staff and volunteers have been battling invasive Scotch broom in the park's Garry oak ecosystems. Soak up the glorious colours of spring and admire the results of this restoration. Join us for guided flower walks, activities and more. Meet at the Mill Hill Regional Park information kiosk in the parking lot off Atkins Avenue. Joy Finlay and Agnes Lynn of VNHS will lead a walk to the top at 11:00 a.m. to make this a combined CRD and VNHS event. Call **Agnes** at 721-0634 for more information.

Thursday, April 6

SPECIAL LECTURE EVENT

"Trans-Pacific Migrations of the Albatross & Others" with Marine Biologist Peter Pyle

Back by popular demand! Discover the amazing movement patterns of the albatross and various other creatures. Find out how they overcome the hardships and risks of long-distance travel through and over the often inhospitable and food-deprived ocean. The great flights of the albatross, which come to California to get food for their chicks over 4000 miles away, will be a primary focus. The fasting of whales, tuna, great white sharks, and other marine animals, as well as the surprising over-water journeys of various shorebirds, land birds, insects, and bats will also be covered. Guest speaker, marine biologist **Peter Pyle** worked as a Farallon Island Biologist for Point Reyes Bird Observatory for 24 years, studying bird, bat, and butterfly migration and white sharks. He is also the author of the continent's primary bird banding reference, "Identification Guide to North American Birds". Peter currently works for the Institute for Bird Populations and is a Research Associate for the California Academy of Sciences. The Rocky Point Bird Observatory Society (RPBO) and the VNHS are proud to present this special lecture event. University of Victoria, David Strong Building Room C103, 7:30 p.m. Admission by donation to RPBO Society strongly encouraged!

Sunday, April 9

FREEWORKSHOP

Field Trip Leaders Workshop

Swan Lake Nature Centre 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Lunch and an optional nature walk around the Sanctuary to follow. Alternate date: April 29. See the Bulletin Board for more details. Call 478-9414 to pre-register (required).

Tuesday, April 11

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

From Flippers to Flukes: Whales, Dolphins, Porpoises, and Sea Turtles in BC

Nadine Pinnell, from the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, presents the wonderful world of B.C. cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) and sea turtles. Find out how to identify common whale and sea turtle species, learn about the threats they face, and discover how you can get involved in their conservation through the B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Matthews/McQueen Theatre (David Strong Building room 103) *** Please note room change***. Everyone is welcome, bring a mug for coffee.

Good Friday, April 14

FIELD TRIP

Triple Treat Easter Weekend.

First event is a trip up Jocelyn Hill with **Joy Finlay** and **Judith Holm**. Our goal is to see the gold stars (*Crocidium multicaule*) in bloom but we will not be disappointed if we miss them as there is an amazing array of wildflowers to enjoy plus many birds and panoramic views from the ridge. If time permits, we will also go up nearby Lone Tree Hill. Follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Road exit. Turn right on Millstream Road and continue to the junction of Millstream Lake Road. Turn left to continue on Millstream Road. Go past Lone Tree Hill Park on your right and watch for Emma Dixon Road and a large Stonecrest sign on the left. Park on the right hand side of the road. Meet there at 10:00 a.m. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Bring a lunch and drinks. No pets please. Call **Agnes Lynn** at 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, April 15

FIELD TRIP

Triple Treat Easter Weekend.

Second event is a trip to Lake Cowichan with **Marilyn Lambert**. We will visit the pink lilies (*Erythronium revolutum*) as well as stop to explore other areas along the Cowichan River. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch and drinks for the day-long outing. No pets please. Call **Agnes** at 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, April 16

FIELD TRIP

Birding Blenkinsop Lake

Come and check out the early migrants at Blenkinsop Lake. Meet at the south end, off Lochside Drive. 7:30 a.m. Leader TBA.

Monday, April 17

FIELD TRIP

Triple Treat Easter Weekend.

Third event is a visit to Thetis Lake Park with botanist **Hans Roemer** to enjoy the spring wildflowers, common and uncommon. Meet at the main parking lot at 10:00 a.m. (pay parking). Bring a snack and a drink. No pets please. Call **Agnes** at 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, April 18

BOTANY NIGHT

Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands) revisited

In the fall of 2005, **Adolf Ceska** accompanied his wife **Oluna**, **Bryce Kendrick** and **Paul Kroeger** on their survey of mushrooms of the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve on Moresby Island. Inevitably, this Botany Night will have some pictures of mushrooms, but also many interesting plants and recollections of Adolf's first visits of the Islands more than 35 years ago. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m., everyone welcome.

Sunday, April 23

FIELD TRIP

Birding Viaduct Flats and Quicks Bottom

Come out and check out the great trails around Viaduct Flats, Quick's Bottom and Layritz Park. A lot of the early migrants should be around. Meet at the foot of Viaduct Avenue at 7:30 a.m. Leader TBA.

Wednesday, April 26

BIRDERS NIGHT

A Big Year for Little Birds

In 2000, **Ernest Franzgrote** of Shoreham, Vermont, set out on a special kind of birding "Big Year". He undertook to see 200 different species of hummingbirds in a single year. Ernest visited a dozen countries and saw 204 species. He is also an excellent videographer and managed to tape 177, about half of which appear on his video. **Ann Nightingale** will present Ernest's video, augmented with slides of our local hummingbirds. You won't need your binoculars to catch these hummingbirds, but bring them if you want to see the details! We meet at 7:30 p.m. *** Please note room change*** in the Matthews/McQueen Theatre (David Strong building room 103) Everyone is welcome.

Monday, April 24

MARINE NIGHT*** PLEASE NOTE ROOM CHANGE***

The Underwater Photography of Kim Genereux

National and International award-winning underwater photographer **Kim Genereux** shares with us his favourite images from various locations he has visited around the world. We meet at 7:30 pm in Room C-103 (for this month only) of the David Strong Building (UVic Classroom Bldg.) See <http://pacificcoast.net/~plambert/index.html> for location of talk.

Saturday, April 29

FIELD TRIP

Mount Tzouhalem Ecological Reserve with botanist Hans Roemer.

Enjoy the rare deltoid balsam root (*Balsamorhiza deltoidea*) as well as other wildflowers of the Garry oak meadow. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch and drinks for the day-long outing. No pets please. Call **Agnes** at 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, April 29

FREEWORKSHOP

Field Trip Leaders Workshop

Swan Lake Nature Centre 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Lunch and an optional nature walk around the Sanctuary to follow. Alternate date: April 9. See the Bulletin Board for more details. Call 478-9414 to pre-register (required).

MAY

Saturday, May 6

FIELD TRIP

Camas Day in Beacon Hill Park

Birding walk with **Tom Gillespie** at 9:00 a.m., Archaeology Walk at 11:00 or 1:00 with **Grant Keddie**, Wildflower Walk with **Adolf Ceska** and **Brenda Beckwith** at 11:00 and 1:00. Walks are about one hour each. Meet at the flag pole atop Beacon Hill. Jointly sponsored by VNHS and Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society. Call **Agnes Lynn** at 721-0634 for more information.

BULLETIN BOARD

Field Trip Leaders Workshops: Two Dates to Choose From! Sunday, April 9 and Saturday, April 29 (Swan Lake Nature Centre 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.).

Fun, informative, and a free lunch! Now that I have your attention...

Our organization regularly offers field trips to our members, and now many of our members will also be helping to co-lead field trips for school children. The fundamentals of leading a successful field trip apply no matter the audience, and that is what these workshops are designed to teach. The workshops will cover many of the "how to" aspects of leading a field trip, as well as tips on making your walks entertaining but still educational. Large groups, bad weather, unexpected events- anything can happen, and we want you to be prepared. Everyone is welcome, and we hope that experienced trip leaders will participate to

provide some scenarios, and that new potential leaders will come out and gain the confidence they need to step up and offer to lead trips for the Society. Lunch will be provided, and a walk in the spectacular setting of the Sanctuary will follow. These workshops are supported through a grant from the Federation of BC Naturalists' Foundation Fund. Call the Goldstream Nature House – 478-9414 to pre-register (required, so we can plan for lunch)

Are you going to one of the VNHS meetings?

Willing to pick up a VNHS member in the Fairfield area? If yes, then please telephone 382-7202. Thank you for your consideration.

Are you going on one of the VNHS field trips?

Willing to pick up a VNHS member in James Bay? If yes, then please telephone 384-7553. Thank you for your consideration.

CAMAS DAY

WHEN: Saturday, May 6, 2006 - 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

WHERE: Beacon Hill Park (walks begin at the flagpole)

Guided Walks

9:00 a.m. Birding Walk in Beacon Hill Park (1 hour)

Join Tom Gillespie from the Victoria Natural History Society and learn to recognize some of the birds who call the park home.

11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Wildflower Walks (1 hour each)

Botanist Adolf Ceska and ethnobotanist Brenda Beckwith will lead groups to seek out the common and not so common flowers in the wildflower meadows of the park.

11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Native History of Beacon Hill Park (1 hour each)

Grant Keddie, Archaeologist at the Royal B. C. Museum, will lead a fascinating walk to archaeological sites in the park.

Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and Friends of Beacon Hill Park.
For information call Helen Oldershaw at 592-6659 or Tom Gillespie at 361-1694.