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# The Victoria NATURALIST

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**Editors:** Claudia Copley, 479-6622  
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(*Parks and Conservation, FBCN representative*)  
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James Miskelly, 477-0490, jmiskelly@telus.net (*Swan Lake Rep.*)  
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Clare Aries, 858-2900, indiaaries@yahoo.com  
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Send to: Claudia Copley

657 Beaver Lake Road, Victoria BC V8Z 5N9

Phone: 250-479-6622

Fax: 479-6622 e-mail: dccopley@telus.net

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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: *Tubaria punicea* — the Christmas Naucoria (p.10). Photographed on Mary Hill by Adolf Ceska. To see this species in full (and festive!) colour, check out the Society website.

My thoughts have been drifting more than usual lately and landing on the same topic again and again. It isn’t my fault – the topic was apparently chronically newsworthy – garbage. Vancouver’s garbage, to be specific. As the strike lingered and I heard about mounting trash, rats, and negotiations, I felt that the time had come for some trash talk. The obligatory reminder of the 4 R’s is too obvious to warrant mentioning, but something not everyone is aware of is the ability to recycle plastic in our region. Not just the blue-box pick up of certain numbers of hard plastic – soft plastic wrappers, foam chips, styrofoam packing material, gable-top milk cartons, meat trays, and even the foil-lined bags that your shade-grown, fairly-traded, certified-organic coffee comes in – Pacific Mobile Depot can handle it all! Drop off locations are located strategically around the region on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Saturdays of every month, or they will come to you. For more information check out their website: <http://www.pacificmobiledepots.com/> or phone 893-8383. Between this, regular recycling, and composting, there really isn’t much left – certainly not enough to make the news! Especially if the other R’s are all in active use when choices are being made...

*Claudia*

# VNHS Awards

## Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways. Some write articles for the *Naturalist*, some lead field trips, others serve on the board or on other committees. There are some who go out of their way just to make sure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities, by visiting shut-ins, or driving others to Society functions.

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. **Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2008.**

All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

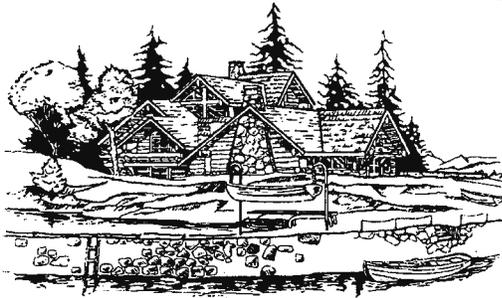
### VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

- 1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
- 1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
- 1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
- 1994 Kaye Suttill
- 1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
- 1996 Gordon Devey
- 1997 Michael Carson
- 1998 No recipients
- 1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
- 2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
- 2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
- 2002 Norm Mogensen
- 2003 Bob Chappell
- 2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska
- 2005 Rick Schortinghuis
- 2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
- 2007 no recipients

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# An Invitation to All VNHS Members

By Carolyn MacDonald and Jenny Eastman

The Municipality of Saanich's Garry Oak Restoration Project (GORP) needs your skills to help us care for our unique and threatened restoration sites. GORP has nine sites in Municipal parks that for the past seven years have been demonstration and education sites for ecological restoration.

Our restoration work is done by volunteers. The volunteer program involves a diverse range of community volunteers doing work as varied as Site Stewards or Photographers. Our work at the sites includes ecological restoration, inventories, monitoring and education. GORP is focused on creating partnerships, with the belief that we must work together to conserve and restore what little remains of Garry oak ecosystems. **We need your help.**

We have three specific ways you may be able to help us.

- GORP has invited the VNHS to become a partner in our work and we are looking for a VNHS member to sit on our **Steering Committee**. This committee meets three times a year and involves some minimal follow-up work between meetings. There is a minimum one-year commitment. This person should be willing to act as a liaison between the VNHS and the GORP Steering Committee. If you are interested, please contact John Henigman at 598-6326.
- We are inviting VNHS members to take part in ongoing inventory work on our sites. At this point we are looking for VNHS members who would be willing to act as **Team Leaders** to lead VNHS volunteers for specific inventory work. Whether you are a birder, a botanist, a budding entomologist... or a generalist looking to hone your skills, we need naturalists to help us identify species on the sites. The commitment for this work is very flexible. If you are interested, please contact Jenny Eastman as below.
- GORP has a very active public volunteer program. We always need hands-on **Restoration Assistants** to come out to weekend work parties for invasive species removal, planting and other restoration work. People of all ages and abilities are most welcome. The commitment is very flexible. If you are interested, please contact Jenny Eastman as below.

This is a great opportunity to get out and enjoy these rich and rare ecosystems while contributing information that helps us to restore them. We are open to hearing any ideas and we are flexible about how your volunteering might work.

GORP Coordinator of Volunteers, Jenny Eastman contact: ferns1@telus.net or call 744-1710. For more information about GORP: [www.gorpsaanich.com](http://www.gorpsaanich.com). To receive our free newsletter "GO Restore!" bi-annually, contact Carolyn MacDonald at [macdonac@saanich.ca](mailto:macdonac@saanich.ca) or 475-5475.

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## GORP SITES

Camas Park  
Chatterton Hill Park  
Feltham Park  
Little Mt. Doug  
Mahon Brook  
Mt. Douglas Summit  
Mt. Tolmie  
Playfair Park  
Wetherby Park

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Oaks at Chatterton Hill Park. *Photo provided by authors*

# Experiences at the Long Point Young Ornithologist's Workshop

By Ian Cruickshank

Along with five other teen-aged bird lovers from across Canada, I had the good fortune of being selected for this year's Bird Studies Canada Young Ornithologist's Workshop at Long Point Bird Observatory, Ontario. The workshop ran from August 3 to August 12, 2007 and was led by Stu MacKenzie and Fergus Nicoll. Long Point is a 30 km-long sand spit that extends out into Lake Erie. It is partially treed and has extensive marshes along its shores. The point acts like a magnet for migrating birds because it shortens the distance they must travel over water. Migration monitoring is carried out there on a huge scale; 27,607 birds were banded in 2006 at the Long Point Bird Observatory, the oldest bird observatory in North America. There are three field stations on the Point, Old Cut, at the base (where we stayed), Breakwater, located mid-way along the point, and the Tip. All three stations conduct daily banding and census taking during migration.

The main activity of the workshop was bird banding, which we did most mornings at Old Cut. Our day began a half hour before sunrise when we opened mist nets in a woodlot adjacent to the field station. Birds caught in this series of nets were put into small cloth bags and carried to the banding lab. In the banding lab, the bird was taken out of the bag and held in the bander's grip with the bird's neck held between the middle finger and the index finger, and the rest of the bird cradled in the hand. First, one puts a small aluminum band with a unique number on the bird's leg. Then one attempts to determine the age and sex of the bird by looking closely at things like plumage, wing length, molt, brood patch, gape, and skull. This can be challenging! After measuring fat deposits, wing length, and weight, the bird is released. The whole process in the banding lab takes a couple of minutes per bird, with one person recording data while the bander handles the bird. The prebasic molt was



At the tip of Long Point. *Photo:* Ian Cruickshank



Ian holding a Cedar Waxwing. *Photo provided by author*

occurring in August, so it was interesting to see many different complex molt patterns as we banded the birds. A Northern Flicker was right in the throes of molting; it had almost no tail left. For some birds, we recorded the age of each wing and tail feather on “molt cards”. One gets pooped on quite regularly when bird banding, and several of my shirts have acquired stains from Gray Catbird poop! We caught a number of birds that had already been banded at Long Point, and we learned that birds banded at Long Point have been recovered as far away as South America. As well as the daily banding activities, a one- to two-hour walking bird census is taken every morning, and daily estimated totals of bird numbers are compiled at the end of each day using census and banding data plus other miscellaneous observations. The large amount of data collected is very useful in bird conservation. I would estimate I banded thirty birds over the ten days. I found it rather hard to put birds through the banding process, but the top priority of banders is to ensure the welfare of the birds they study, so stress on the birds is always minimized. I have found that I look at birds with new eyes after observing them so closely.

On the August long weekend we took a two-hour boat trip to the tip of Long Point and stayed for two nights at the field station there. At the tip the landscape is composed of sand dune ridges topped with trembling aspen and eastern cottonwood, with marshes between the sand dunes. Most of the point is a national wildlife area with no public access, so it is a very peaceful landscape set amid the bustle of southern Ontario. We took long hikes into the wilds of Long Point and saw a great diversity of ecosystems. There are locations where one can see a marsh, a dry sand dune topped with Juniper bushes, a coniferous thicket, and an aspen grove, all in a one hundred-metre radius. At the tip there is a tree swal-

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low research program monitoring 64 nest boxes. We cleaned out the boxes after the spring season and recorded data on their contents.

We went on a “Big Bird Day” to try and find as many species as possible in the area surrounding Long Point. In some remnant areas of Carolinian forest, we were fortunate to see Hooded Warblers and Acadian Flycatchers, endangered species in Canada. I found the Carolinian hardwood forests quite interesting with their many species of deciduous trees, such as tulip, beech, hickory, basswood, sumac, and sassafras. I would love to have explored the array of plant life in these deciduous forests, but the mosquitoes were abundant! One of our stops was at the Jarvis Sewage Lagoons. The stink was strong at times (and we visited six different lagoons!) but we certainly saw a lot of shorebirds. A Peregrine Falcon dove, lightning fast, into a flock of sandpipers that we were watching, grabbed one and sent feathers flying. The sandpiper flock circled over for many minutes afterwards, the tight ball of birds flashing black and white as they turned in unison. Eventually they settled back to the ground to enjoy sewage lagoon bugs! On our “Big Bird Day” we spotted close to 100 species.

The final destination of an afternoon of geocaching was Mary Gartshore and Peter Carson’s native plant farm, a beautiful place. There are greenhouses and a field full of native plants being grown for habitat restoration around the area. We happened upon a concentration of butterflies attracted to the flowers, and Jody Allair of Bird Studies Canada identified the butterflies for us. We were treated to a wonderful surprise when a giant swallowtail, the largest butterfly in North America, showed up. It was huge! In Canada it is rarely seen, and only at the southern tip of Ontario. Other butterflies we saw there included buckeye (another rarity), common sootywing, American lady, cabbage white, orange sulfur, and monarch, plus the bizarre-looking hummingbird sphinx moth. This large moth, about three centimetres long, strongly resembles a hummingbird with a plump body and long bill. We were all rather amazed to see

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such an unusual creature. Field Sparrows were singing at this farm. I found their song to be one of the most beautiful bird songs I have ever heard, with clear whistled notes and trills breaking the silence.

While at Mary Gartshore's, we had a hummingbird-banding demonstration by David Ookines, a local bird-banding expert. It was done at a hummingbird feeder that attracted Ruby-throated hummingbirds in swarms; twenty of them would be flying around at once. A mesh screen was lowered over the hummingbird feeder to catch the birds. We each got to band a hummingbird and make all of the regular measurements. Holding a tiny hummingbird in the hand was quite the experience. Their heart rate is incredibly fast; it feels like a continuous vibration.

Several activities were a little gross! At the Bird Studies Canada head office we visited the Avian Energetics Lab. What is done there would best be described as grinding up dead birds! The resulting powder is then thoroughly analyzed to determine the chemical make-up of the birds. This work did not appeal to me! Mary Gartshore led a bird-skinning afternoon. I prepared a study skin of an Eastern Towhee and survived the experience of having the Towhee's eyeball explode in my face. All part of the process, I suppose.

There were some striking sounds at Long Point. I was quite surprised by the insect chorus during the warm summer nights in southern Ontario. There is a constant hum of crickets, loud *bizit* calls from katydids, electrical sounding buzzes as cicadas fly over, and the blinking display of fireflies. One could not step outside at Old Cut without hearing a Mourning Dove within a few seconds, at any time of day. I even heard them several hours before dawn. Carolina Wrens serenaded us in the Old Cut woodlot, and we heard the Black-billed Cuckoo's unique call.

Evenings were interesting at Old Cut. Several university students studying bats were staying at the field station. One evening we erected a 10-metre-high, 30-metre-long mist net, and after dark the students caught two bats and banded them in the bird-banding lab. The bats made high-pitched hissing sounds during this process. We also caught an Eastern Screech-Owl in a mist net. It was banded, and we all got to hold it briefly before it was released. Thousands of swallows, mostly Bank, flew over Old Cut each evening, on route to roost in the cattails of the marshes. When this many swallows fly over the whole sky appears to be moving. It reminded me of looking up at the sky when heavy snow is falling and seeing the thousands of snowflakes swirling down.

The environment at Long Point is certainly very different from the West Coast. In spite of all of the interesting sights and sounds, I found that I missed the smells of the sea, the Douglas-firs, and the western redcedars, and was very glad to see the Bushtits again upon returning!

I would like to thank Agnes Lynn for telling me about the workshop, and Ann Nightingale for writing such a supportive reference letter. Those ten days of learning and fun are something I'll never forget.

# Tête à Tête with a Gorilla Family

By David Stirling

We are hunkered-down with the Sabinyo Mountain Gorilla family, big daddy silverback, his three wives, three teens and a baby, at 2,500 metres on a dead volcano in Rwanda's Parc National des Volcans. Silverback's age is thirty-five; the three females are twenty-three, twenty-four, and twenty-five. Gorillas have been called gentle giants, not at all like King Kong of the silver screen. Gorillas are usually silent and peaceful, unlike Chimpanzees who are more like us, highly social, noisy (hootin' and hollerin'), and inclined to fits of temper and violence. As vegetarians, gorillas must spend most of their waking hours eating. Our bunch is a sombre lot, digging up plant clumps, bashing off a bit of dirt and munching the roots, seemingly oblivious to our presence. I saw a young one stripping the prickles off a thistle stem by gripping it at the base and pulling it through its fist, leaving it as smooth as a celery stock. Only the teens showed any interest in us, but it was only cursory. The baby demonstrated its playful nature by waddling up a slope and rolling down to mamma with a "Hey, this is fun" expression. There are about 700 Mountain Gorillas still roaming the parks in the three adjoining countries of Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of

Congo. Unfortunately, protection is not absolute as civil strife is endemic in this part of Africa.

We were six paying customers, plus fearless leader, local guides, and two soldiers. Each soldier was armed with the ubiquitous Kalashnikov assault rifle for protection in the unlikely event that we might meet the other guerrillas who could be lurking in these hills. The steep, narrow, muddy path, fringed with nettles and other plants of that ilk, was a tough go for me, as I am looking back on 80. With some assistance from a stalwart guide, who was an excellent nature interpreter, I made it. An hour with the gorillas was one of the highlights of a 17-day birding trip to central Africa.

Africa's forests and wildlife, now mostly confined to parks and reserves, are under accelerated threats from an exploding human population. Remnant forests are being chipped away by loggers, charcoal producers, and fuel gatherers. Any animal big enough for the pot is a source of "bush meat." Farmers covet the "unused" acres of the parks, and invade protected areas with their huge herds of cows and goats. Only the flow of euros and dollars from European and American eco-tourists can save the forests and wildlife of Africa.



Silverback. Photo: Barbara Begg

# The Christmas Naucoria: A Story of Serendipity, Networking, Military Obstructionism, and the Blind Eyes of COSEWIC and the BC CDC

By Oluna Ceska

At the end of December 2001, when checking Macoun's meadowfoam populations at the base of Mary Hill, I collected a strange, small red fungus, an agaric that grew on a rotting stump of an arbutus. I identified it as *Naucoria vinicolor*, a mushroom that is, according to Arora's *Mushrooms Demystified* "known only from California, but perhaps widely distributed." Arora "found it several times on oak in the fall and winter, but it is rare." I took the specimen to several meetings with the Pacific Northwest mycologists, but none of them had seen this fungus before.

For several winters I searched for this mushroom, but all in vain. In 2005, when doing a survey of Miniskirt Mountain in Langford, I came across three arbutus trees that had several fruiting bodies of this mushroom. You can imagine how excited I was. It was shortly before Christmas and I sent an e-mail message to several mycological friends. Dr. Jim Ginns, a retired Curator of the National Mycological Herbarium in Ottawa, forwarded our photographs to Dr. Brandon Matheny, who happened to work on this group of fungi.



The typical habitat of this rare mushroom – the base of an eroded arbutus tree (arrow). *Photos: Adolf Ceska*

There are several species of deep red fungi that occur on wood chips or rotting wood, and our fungus chose eroded arbutus trees as its substrate. Brandon Matheny set up a team of mycologists that were collecting and comparing small red agarics from various substrates and even from far away continents, such as Australia. They had only about two old collections of the mushroom growing on arbutus. When Brandon received Jim Ginns' note about my find, he wanted more of our material: "The more the merrier, you know!"

This message, received on December 20, decided how we spent Christmas 2005. No traditional Czech carp on the Christmas Eve table, just a pair of jeans and piously going on our knees around those arbutus trees that had eroded bases. From our previous surveys of the Department of National Defense, we knew a lot of suitable arbutus trees on Mary Hill, Albert Head, Rocky Point, and Heals Rifle Range. Our search effort was successful. We received emergency permission to search some Department of National Defense lands in the Victoria-Metchosin area and we found two trees at Yew Point (DND), one tree in Albert Head (DND), two trees on Mary Hill (DND), two trees on Heals Rifle Range (DND), and one tree at Rocky Point (DND). In

addition, we found two arbutus trees on Cobble Hill and two trees on Observatory Hill that also hosted this rare fungus.

We have never spent Christmas in a more enjoyable way. Fascinated by this small red critter, every find was the best Christmas present we were able to get. Within ten days, we sent plenty of collections to Brandon for his DNA study.

The DNA study showed that the arbutus fungus was a different species than what was known as *Naucoria vinicolor*. Professor Joe Ammirati from Washington State University in Seattle was responsible for investigating the type material of all possible red small mushrooms that would come to this complex. He found that our red mushroom from arbutus has been indeed described as *Pholiota punicea* in 1968 by A.H. Smith & Hesler. I was invited to be one of the co-authors to a paper on this mushroom that was submitted to a mycological journal in fall 2006.

The publication process is slow; the reviewers have to read the manuscript and show their ego, and authors have to answer their questions and adjust their manuscript accordingly. While doing this, a new winter came and a new search for our "Christmas *Naucoria*". After our 2005 successful search, several friends, Victoria naturalists, saw our presentation and devoted their 2006 Christmas to the search



*Tubaria punicea*.

on their own. This was a great help, since the Department of National Defense have virtually kept us out of their sites. We had to have a pricey \$2,000,000 liability insurance (each of our six visits cost us over \$140.00), and certain areas, namely Mary Hill in Metchosin, the best site for our mushroom, was strictly out of bounds. *Inter arma enim silent Musae*. In the military, Muses are always silent. We were not able to monitor populations known to us in the Department of Defense properties, and we were not able to look there for more arbutus trees that would host this fungus.

Never mind. We showed our photos in various meetings with naturalists and amateur mycologists and their search resulted in quite a few new sites. The most interesting was one that Teresa Klemm found in Errington near Parksville that extended the known range of this fungus farther northward on Vancouver Island. Christian Englestoft, Moralea Milne, and Christopher Pratt each found one or more arbutus trees with this fungus. We found several additional trees on Cobble Hill and on Observatory Hill. At the end, with the help of our friends, we ended up with about 40 trees that hosted this fungus. Unfortunately, the military areas were out of bounds for our search and we just can hope that the Environmental Science Advisory Committee (ESAC) will one day pay attention to this interesting fungus and permit a proper survey in the military areas. This way we would get a more complete picture about its distribution on southern Vancouver Island.

Arora pointed out that *Naucoria vinicolor*, a close relative of our fungus, “does not belong to the genus *Naucoria* in its modern sense.” This is also true about our fungus that grows on arbutus. In our recently published article (Matheny *et. al.* 2007), Brandon Matheny, Else Vellinga and Joe Ammirati transferred all related small, red fungi into the genus *Tubaria*. Our fungus, growing on eroded bases of arbutus was originally described as *Pholiota punicea*. After its trans-

fer to the genus *Tubaria*, it will be known as *Tubaria punicea*. The closely related species, “*Naucoria vinicolor*” that is known from various garden wood chips (but NOT from arbutus trees) in California and Washington, will become *Tubaria vinicolor*. So far this particular species has not been found in Canada.

We currently know arbutus trees in about 11 different sites that host *Tubaria punicea*. Its distribution on Vancouver Island ranges from Rocky Point, Metchosin to Mill Hill, Observatory Hill, Heals Rifle Range and Cobble Hill. The northernmost site is at Little Mountain in Errington, near Parksville. Considering how many arbutus trees we had to examine, this fungus is definitely rare, but neither COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada), nor the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC) “track” mushrooms, in spite of the fact that Scott Redhead (1997) made a good start in listing about 65 species as rare or notable in British Columbia.

The ecology of *Tubaria punicea* is still to be studied. We found it mostly on eroded bases of living arbutus trees and, in only about two cases, it also grew in the hollows of dead arbutus trees. Is it a benign saprophyte, living from the rotting arbutus wood, or is it a parasite that contributes to the demise of arbutus trees on which it lives? There are many unanswered questions that need to be followed and studied in the future. Nevertheless, we made the first step by finding what this fungus is and by finding trees where one can monitor its life cycle and learn more about its ecology.

#### References

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 Redhead, S. 1997. *Macrofungi of British Columbia: Requirements for Inventory*. British Columbia Ministry of Forests Research Program, Working Paper 28. 118 p.

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# Words for a Young Crow

By K.R. Prior

It would appear  
that among the crows of the younger generation  
a rumour has been going round  
concerning humans.  
Though they're clearly far from being as smart  
as corvidae,  
and planet-wide they're certainly crazy,  
nevertheless,  
due to  
the extreme length of their lifespan,  
older humans may occasionally  
know things  
that are useful to crows.

So maybe this bird  
standing at the edge of the pond  
listening carefully  
to our conversation  
hopes to harvest pearls of wisdom  
from our talk.

But what can we  
the older generation of another species  
possibly teach a smart young crow  
who's already heard it all  
a thousand times?  
You want a lecture, do you, bird?  
Basic ontology,  
or facts of life from an avian worldview?  
Well okay, but I'm telling you,  
you're wasting your time.

The first question to ask, of course,  
is, one eye or two?

If both the eyes are looking at you,  
it's probably planning to eat you:  
assume it's hostile,  
it's the mark of a predator  
to look at a bird  
with both eyes at the same time:  
so don't stare: well-brought-up crows  
use one eye only:  
the other may quite properly  
watch out for grubs,  
or show respect  
by looking away.

Humans are two-eyes  
but they don't like crowsflesh much,  
and without guns they're usually harmless,  
and they leave lots of fascinating garbage,  
so they're useful enough to have around.  
But you must be careful: never let them know  
you understand human speech.

So what else?  
Never tangle with a roosting owl,  
just stand your ground and scream,  
same as with a hawk,  
take no nonsense from anyone,  
let sleeping dogs lie,  
if you see a gun - but why am I  
telling you this:  
you don't need me to draw the picture,  
these are the claws, that's the beak.

You're disappointed, I can tell,  
you think I'm holding out on you,  
but that's all I know,  
so you may as well  
go and tell the rest of your mob,  
it's just as everyone always says,  
there's nothing new to be learned from humans.

*K.R. (Roy) Prior is a serious birder and a serious poet. Those two passions come together in the poem "Words for a Young Crow." Before he became a poet, Roy was a ground-breaking editor of The Victoria Naturalist. He "single-handedly built the magazine into a forum for more scientific articles" and gave it a "better foundation," according to an editorial in the September-October, 1986 issue, written when Roy moved to Ontario. Since returning to Victoria in 1994, he has walked through Beacon Hill Park and along the Dallas Road waterfront every day, birding and writing poetry.*

—Janis Ringuette

# A Cricket on the Hearth

By James Miskelly

According to a Dickens character, a cricket on the hearth is the luckiest thing in the world. During the winter in Victoria, we are unlikely to hear the merry chirp of the house cricket that frequents European folklore, but we may receive other species as occasional guests. These will be the camel crickets of the family Raphidophoridae. They are silent and spidery creatures of drab colouration and secretive habits. Their name comes from their humped backs. Their typical habitat is dark places in the forests, whence they emerge in the night to scavenge fungi, decaying vegetation, or dead insects. In the late fall they seek out places to pass the winter, occasionally venturing into human abodes. People sometimes fear these simple forest creatures, thinking that they will bite or that the female's sword-shaped egg-laying appendage may inflict a sting. The truth is that they are harmless to the point of being unable even to defend themselves if handled.

The family Raphidophoridae includes almost six hundred species worldwide, twenty-four of which occur in Canada and four of which occur on southern Vancouver Island. The most distinctive species, and the one least likely to be encountered, is the cave cricket\*, *Tropidischia xanthostoma*.



A cave cricket, showing some leg. Photos: James Miskelly

It is easily identified by its fantastically long legs and antennae. A large individual with a body length of 2 cm would be 20 cm long if the legs and antennae were fully extended. Cave crickets are frequently seen in caves, but also live in other dark places, including piles of debris, under bridges, and in abandoned buildings. In BC, they are found along the coast from Victoria to the Alaska panhandle.

The remaining species are less distinctive, but may still be easily identified by the texturing on the abdomen of the males (the ones without a sword-shaped appendage protruding from the end of their bodies). The only one with a completely smooth abdomen is the Agassiz camel cricket, *Ceuthophilus agassizii*. It also can be bigger and bulkier than the following species, reaching a body length of close to three centimetres. It is found across southern BC, and can



The hidden camel cricket, showing the diagnostic row of bumps down the back of the abdomen.

even be found under stones in the dry interior grasslands.

Our most common species, and certainly the one most likely to come inside in the winter months, is the hidden camel cricket, *Pristoceuthophilus celatus*. The males of this species have a warty texture to the sides of the abdomen, with a row of large smooth bumps down the middle of the back. The hidden camel cricket reaches a body length of about two centimetres and is very common in local forests. It also occurs across southern BC and up the coast. The Pacific camel cricket, *Pristoceuthophilus pacificus*, is the least common species in our area. Like the hidden camel cricket, the males have a warty texture to the abdomen, but the Pacific camel cricket lacks the smooth bumps down the middle. The hind legs of this species are distinctively bowed

and armed with a thorn-like spine. It is found across southern BC.

The mute brown camel crickets of the winter months are like leafless shrubs, damp grey meadows, or birds in non-breeding plumage. They are understated little emissaries sent from the summer world to help us pass the time. Watching them crawl across the basement floor, we can dream about the warm weather around the corner, when all the wild things will again burst forth with riotous colours and musical voices, and when our faces can again be warmed by the sun instead of the fire. This is what makes a cricket on the hearth such a lucky event, the reminder that the summer world is never far away.

*\*Common names have been invented for this article.*

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## Seashore Life of British Columbia

### A CD by Bryce Kendrick

Review by Bill Austin

**D**r. Bryce Kendrick is a world authority on fungi, but it is clear from this CD that his avocation is to observe all the seaweeds and animals he can find, to explore their lifestyles, and to photograph them, not just for his grandchildren, but also for all of us who share his curiosity about seashore life. Bryce tells his story through a nice, comfortable, conversational writing style coupled with some 500 good quality images, including close-ups. Since this is a CD, the images can be large, and include multiple views of the same organism without the cost limitation dictated by colour printing.

In the introduction Bryce tells us about the mysteries and beauty of the seashore he experienced as a boy. He asks us to think about why so many organisms live in the harsh intertidal environment, and at the same time reminds us to be gentle and respectful. Bryce then introduces us to one major group, the echinoderms or spiny skinned animals. In our local intertidal zone these include sea urchins, sand dollars, sea stars, and brittle stars. He points out that they all share a radial symmetry in five parts, as well as a unique plumbing system to operate the tube feet. By the way, if you want to learn about all the local echinoderms from the intertidal to 50 or more metres deep, the Royal BC Museum has handbooks covering all echinoderm groups in British Columbia.

In the next section Bryce describes and portrays the various kinds of hard habitats such as cliffs, reefs, and boulder beaches, some exposed to open ocean swells and waves,

others protected. Soft habitats such as sand, mud, and estuary, including salt marshes, are also covered.

The remainder of the CD is arranged alphabetically by group and includes algae (sea weeds), birds, bryozoans (moss animals), cnidarians (e.g., sea anemones and allies), crustacean (e.g., crabs to barnacles), echinoderms (e.g., sea stars, sea urchins) fish, lichens, mammals, molluscs (e.g., snails, clams), phytoplankton (the drifting single celled organisms that have pigments to capture the sun's energy), plants, sponges, tunicates (sea squirts), and worms (a mix of different wormy groups). Some groups are treated in detail while others such as bryozoans and sponges include only a few examples. This is understandable given that most intertidal species in these two groups can only be identified under a microscope. There are a few surprises. For example, some close-ups of lampshells or brachiopods tucked away under molluscs, and a short movie of a worm trying to burrow into a hand with its proboscis.

Bryce concludes the CD with images portraying the beauty of the seashore. All in all a nice virtual field trip as a treat for your grandchildren, or maybe to enjoy yourself.

*Seashore Life of British Columbia* –  
a CD by Bryce Kendrick

\$10.00 (+ postage)

50% of proceeds will go  
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# Field Trip to Cape Flattery, August 18, 2007

By Aziza Cooper

The VNHS trip to Cape Flattery on August 18 encountered enough puffins and sunshine to delight all 41 participants. Leaders were Rick Schortinghuis and Marilyn Lambert.

Departing Victoria at dawn, the Coho ferry sailed through a calm sea with about 20 Red-necked Phalaropes and many Common Murres and harbour porpoises. Three hummingbirds were seen alongside the boat and a group of unidentified shorebirds crossed our bows. Nearing Port Angeles, a steady rain began.

In PA a huge luxurious bus awaited us, and we met our tour leader, a colourful character named Willie Nelson,

of All Points Tours. His cowboy boots, red bandana and flowing white hair and beard gave him a Wild West flavour, although he didn't sing to us. As we travelled west he shared his knowledge of the history and geology of the Olympic area. As a former member of his tours said, "If history wasn't exactly like Willie says, it ought to have been!"

When we reached our rest stop at Clallam Bay County Park, the rain had stopped. We walked on the shore and watched Common Loons diving and yodelling, a Semipalmated Plover on the beach and wonderful eye-level views of 15 Red Crossbills foraging for salty wood on a fallen alder.



A view from Cape Flattery. *Photos: Pauline Davis*

By the time we got to the Makah Whaling Museum at Neah Bay, the sky had cleared and we enjoyed sunshine for the rest of the day. We toured the very interesting exhibits, ate lunch provided by the tour and checked out the beach for wildlife, Black-bellied Plovers, turnstones and oystercatchers, many gulls and, in the distance, a barking California sea lion.

Onwards to Cape Flattery down the narrow road, gravel in the process of being paved. Tree branches brushed the top of our tall bus. A 15-minute trail on mud and boardwalks through spruce and salal woods led to the viewpoint from the most north-westerly point of the USA's lower 48 states. Glorious sun, magnificent sea stacks and cliffs, and views ten metres straight down to Tufted Puffins fishing below us. The puffins were bright coloured clowns. We watched one splashing and rolling right over, little legs wagging comically in the air. Puffins were around us for the hour and a half we spent there, diving, sleeping, chasing each other and flying off to their burrows, beaks loaded with silver-glinting fish.

Tatoоче Island to the north was the puffins' destination, a breeding base for cormorants as well, and a basking place

for tawny Steller's sea lions. A Peregrine Falcon made hunting passes over the bird colonies.

The viewpoint had a wooden platform, and below it, a small open cliff-top with no railing and a dangerous drop to the rocks and ocean. Enthusiastic nature-watchers and their dogs and children had to be very careful to avoid the edge!

On the cliffs by the lookout were wind-eroded caves and holes, home to families of Pelagic Cormorants. Downy chicks panted in the sun and begged from their parents.

Reluctantly leaving the Cape Flattery viewpoint, we next spent half-hour at nearby Hobuck Beach, enjoying sand, sun and the sparkling Pacific Ocean, looking through flocks of Western Sandpipers and California Gulls.

Our trip back was along a route closer to the coast. Three river otters were on a rock offshore, deer peeked from the woods, vultures and Mourning Doves appeared. We crossed the Elwa River bridge over a deep gorge.

Winding up our day in Port Angeles was dinner and exploring the town and the birds offshore. And so back to Victoria by 10 p.m., after a long and enjoyable day.



Western Sandpipers.

# Christmas Bird Count 2007: Where the Birders are (for a Crock-Pot Luck dinner)!

Victoria – Saturday, December 15, 2007, Saltspring Island/Sidney – Saturday, December 29, 2007, Duncan – Monday, January 1, 2008, Sooke – TBA

By Ann Nightingale

**B**eginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition: a “Christmas Bird Census” that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count. These efforts have allowed hobbyists and scientists to monitor population trends and to get just a little closer to nature during the Christmas season.

More than 1800 communities in North America are assigned standardized 15-mile diameter circles in which to count all the birds they can in a single day. In our area, this covers almost all of the greater Victoria region, so we need plenty of help. We’re going to make a run at breaking the 200 participant level this year, so please come out and do your bit! Counters under 18 years of age and Bird Studies Canada members are invited to participate at no charge. Other counters are asked for a \$5 tax-deductible contribution to offset the costs of the count and follow-up publications.

You don’t have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. You can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. There are a few “keeners” who go out looking and listening for owls in the pre-dawn hours, and a few teams of boating birders who check out the offshore waters, weather permitting and suitable boats available. Feeder counts can be reported via the VNHS website.

Our bird numbers were up quite a bit last year over the previous few years. Our total of 94,659 individual birds was our best total in the past five years. Interestingly, a significant number of these birds were on the ocean, possibly blown in by the strong winds of the week before the count.

Overall, though, our bird count trend is downward from the heyday of the 1990s. In the chart below, you can see how our counts were building from the inception of the count circle in 1958 to the late 1980s. Things really took off then for several years, but since the peak in 1993, we have been moving downward. This is especially disconcerting given that our participant numbers remain high, and we have had the advantage of good birding weather for several years. The dip you can see on the chart in 2000 was a truly awful birding day, a rival to last year’s Duncan count!

Among the 144 species seen last year, two new species were added to the Victoria CBC Checklist: Ruddy Turnstone

and Common Yellowthroat. These are both excellent winter sightings for the area. Other unusual birds included a Brown Pelican, a Tundra Swan, three Brant, a Common Redpoll (only the second for our area), Cassin’s Auklet, Least Sandpiper and an American Black Duck. Although they don’t count as separate species, there were also a Slate-coloured Junco and Common (Eurasian) Teal reported. Our total of 144 species fell one short of the high number for Canada; 145 species were tallied in Ladner.

For those who are unsure about participating in this year’s count, or who want to tune-up their bird-counting skills, a number of field trips in November and early December will serve as a good practice.

If you are curious, interested, would like to see lists and pictures of the region’s winter birds, or just need more information, please check out the VNHS website ([www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/)) and the Christmas Bird Count site ([www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org)) or contact Ann Nightingale at 652-6450 or by email at [motmot@shaw.ca](mailto:motmot@shaw.ca) for the Victoria or Saltspring/Sidney counts; Derrick Marven ([marven@shaw.ca](mailto:marven@shaw.ca); 250-748-8504) for the Duncan count; Denise Gubersky ([dgubersky@telus.net](mailto:dgubersky@telus.net); 642-3996) for the Sooke count. If you have a preference to count in a specific area, you may contact the team leader for the area directly.

## New format for the Post Count Gathering!

After the day of counting is over, there is a post-count gathering to share stories and find out how we have done. At the request of many Christmas Bird Counters, we are going to try a Crock-Pot Luck this year, and will be starting the gathering at 5 pm. We’re asking all who would like to attend to bring a salad, a dessert, a Crock-Pot entrée (soup or stew) or contribute \$7 towards other items (such as beverages and buns) that we will purchase. If there is something that you’d really like to bring that isn’t on this list, give me a call. Everyone who plans to attend will need to register their item on the VNHS website or by phoning or emailing me (Ann Nightingale, 652-6450, [Motmot@shaw.ca](mailto:Motmot@shaw.ca)). The post-count gathering will be at the Gordon Head United Church Hall, 4201 Tyndall Ave. Since this will take a bit more

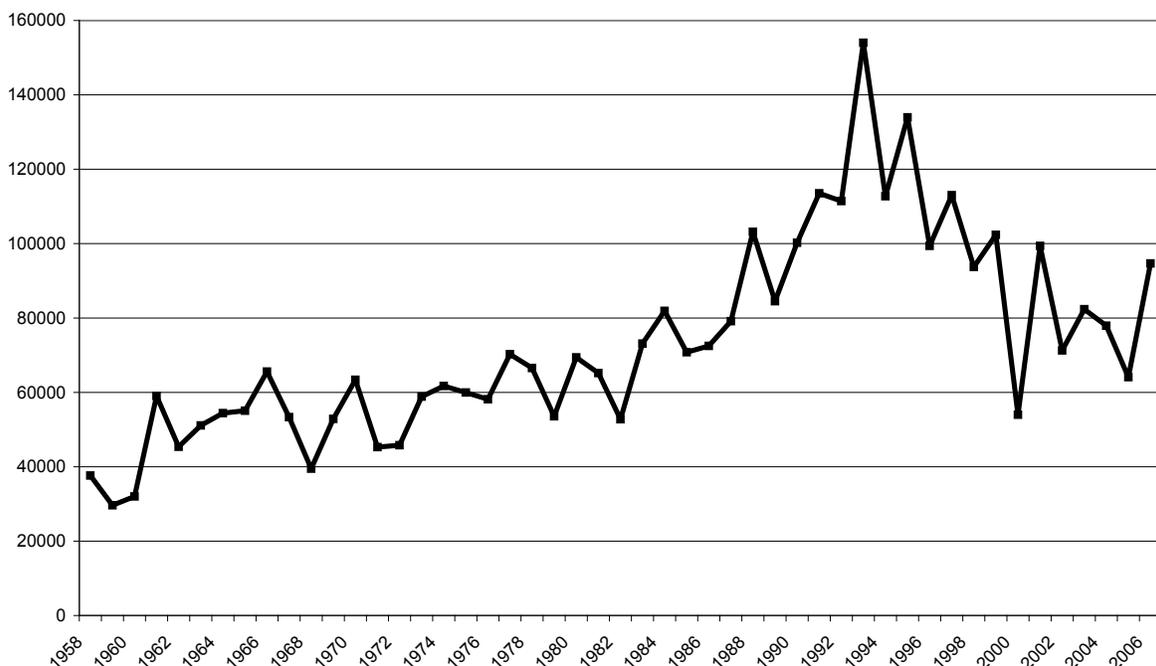
organization than our usual gatherings, I am looking for some assistance. If you would like to help with the dinner, please contact me.

Here is this year's list of leaders. If you'd like to be a bird counter this year, please contact the leader for the zone you'd like or register on the VNHS website.

## 2007 Bird Count Areas

Area Name	Leader	Phone	Email
1 Butchart Gardens - N. Highlands	Warren Drinnan	652-9618	drinnan99@telus.net
2 Central Highlands	Rick Schortinghuis	652-3326	shylo@islandnet.com
3 Goldstream - Finlayson Arm	Adam Taylor	250-743-4273	a.s.taylor@telus.net
4 Thetis Lake - Hastings Flat	Tracy Anderson	478-4490	t_anderso@hotmail.com
5 Langford Lake	Glen Moores	655-3772	gmoores@islandnet.com
6 Albert Head - Triangle Mountain	David Allinson	391-1786	passerine@shaw.ca
7 Esquimalt Lagoon - Mill Hill	Derrick Marven	250-748-8504	marven@shaw.ca
8 Esquimalt Harbour	Camilla Smith	479-4950	camillas_@hotmail.com
9 Portage Inlet - The Gorge	Donna Ross	384-5327	hoshihana@shaw.ca
10 Victoria Harbour	Ed Pellizzon	881-1476	edlps@telus.net
11 Beacon Hill Park	Tom Gillespie	361-1694	twgille@telus.net
12 Oak Bay	Mike Edgell	656-5998	dadv@uvic.ca
13 University - Cadboro Bay	Marie O'Shaughnessy	598-9680	isis_mosh@shaw.ca
14 Ten Mile Point - Arbutus Rd	Andy Stewart	477-1328	andy.stewart@shaw.ca
15 Gordon Head - Mt. Douglas	Jeremy Tatum	477-1089	jtatum@uvic.ca
16 Swan Lake - Cedar Hill	Bill Dancer	721-5273	dcdancer@shaw.ca
17 Blenkinsop Lake - Panama Flats	Cheryl Mackie	479-4083	bcmackie@pacificcoast.net
18 Elk Lake - Cordova Bay	Mike McGrenere	658-8624	mcmgrenere@shaw.ca
19 Prospect Lake - Quick's Bottom	Dave Fraser	479-0016	arenaria@island.net
20 Martindale - Bear Hill	Mike Bentley	479-7024	mbentley@lgl.com
21 Zero Rock (ocean)	TBA	652-6450	motmot@shaw.ca
22 Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	477-5922	lambert@pacificcoast.net
23 Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ron Bates	386-1264	rbates@bc1.com

## Total birds counted, Victoria Christmas Bird Counts, 1958-2006



# Help Prevent Cuts to the Canadian Wildlife Service

By Mara Kerry, Director of Conservation — Nature Canada

Nature Canada is appealing to members of the Canadian Nature Network at all levels to write letters to their local MP and cc: Environment Minister John Baird to prevent rumoured cuts to the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) but accentuating the great work of the CWS. According to a senior official within Environment Canada the funding available to the migratory bird program has been reduced for this year (by approximately 42%) and the funding to the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN) has been cut significantly (~70%) as they review whether or not the work of EMAN fits better under education and citizen engagement vs. scientific monitoring. There have been no cuts to the National Wildlife Area program and no salary cuts within the CWS.

That being said, this is now an influential time to let your federal MP, the Minister of the Environment and the Prime Minister know how important the work of the Canadian Wildlife Services is to Canadian's and to the protection of our wild species and spaces. Nature Canada believes that taking a positive tone in your letters would have more resonance with decision makers. As such we are providing some guidelines below. However, the most important thing is that you as a member of the naturalist community make your voice heard.

- Express your strong support for the work of the CWS overall
- The migratory bird conservation is a federal responsibility (because of the Migratory Bird Convention Act) and birds are important to Canadians (tourism, birding, ecological indicators, pest/insect control, cultural and economic values etc....)
- The National Wildlife Area and Migratory bird sanctuary system is a critical tool in conserving wild species and their habitats as mandate under the Canadian Wildlife Act
- Environmental monitoring is required in order to make appropriate land-use and conservation management decisions and necessary to protect viable populations of common and rare or endangered species and allows evaluation of the effectiveness of management interventions.

- Protecting species and habitats are important in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change and closely linked with clean air and water. Many of our National Parks protect crucial watersheds for urban centres in Canada. Forests clean the air by removing pollutants, CO<sup>2</sup> and adding pure oxygen. It is not an either or situation.
- The conservation and monitoring of wild species and space should not happen at the expenses of other emerging priorities and new investments in environmental protection are required if we are to achieve sustainability in future, especially in light of further projected increases in federal surpluses this year.

Letters to the House of Commons can be sent without a stamp and submitted under your own name or, if appropriate, your organization or local club name.

Name and contact information of your local MP available at:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>.

The addresses for John Baird; Minister for the Environment and the Prime Minister Stephen Harper are:

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A2  
**email:** pm@pm.gc.ca

John Baird  
Minister of the Environment  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6  
**email:** BairdJ@parl.gc.ca

We wish to thank you for taking the time to write and make your voice heard. Together we can make a difference.

# HAT Tricks

## HATs Off to VNHS Members



As many of you know, Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) was founded more than 10 years ago by members of the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS). HAT was created:

“...to promote the preservation of the natural environment through

- (i) the conservation of habitats by acquisition, by conservation covenants, or by other legal mechanisms,
- (ii) the promotion of habitat stewardship, education, and research...”

—*HAT Constitution*, July 14, 1996

One of the primary motivators for creating HAT as a separate entity from the VNHS was to start taking advantage of changing laws about private land conservation, namely those allowing conservation organizations to hold conservation covenants. Since 1996, HAT, its staff, and Board of Directors have maintained strong ties to the VNHS, though, admittedly, these ties have weakened over the last few years. That is why we at HAT are trying to rebuild our bonds with members of the VNHS by asking those of you who are not currently members of both organizations to consider becoming a member of HAT.

HAT continues to offer a significantly discounted membership to all current VNHS members. However, membership is more valuable to our organization than the money it provides. Your membership demonstrates support for our organization. This support is integral to our ability to leverage support from businesses, government and other donors for our award winning outreach programs, Good Neighbours and Good Neighbourhoods. It also helps us to raise funds for land conservation initiatives like conservation covenants and acquisitions by demonstrating that we are a community-supported organization. More members means a stronger community voice. So if you once were a HAT member and have let it lapse, or even if you have never been a member, but appreciate our work, please consider becoming a member today. You can get all of our membership details off our website at [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca).

If you are looking for other ways to support HAT, we are also accepting expressions of interest for those wishing to

join our Board of Directors. Due to health issues, we have three positions available and are eager to fill them as soon as possible. Board members have an opportunity to significantly contribute to the direction of our organization through hands-on activities and through formation of policies. Workload varies depending on the projects that you become involved with, but directors can anticipate a minimum of 2-3 hours of work per month. Meetings are quarterly, so it is expected that directors will spend two thirds of their time directly contributing to the work that we do.

If you are considering adding your voice to the overall direction and focus of our young but productive organization as a board member, please contact our Executive Director, Jennifer Eliason, to set up a meeting to learn more (995-2428). You can also check out our website at [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca) to learn more about our activities.

We at HAT are proud of our heritage and of the support that members of the VNHS have shown us so far. So to all past and present members of VNHS, please accept our thanks as we look forward to increasing the strong bonds between our great organizations.

Sincerely,  
HAT Board & Staff

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**Jim Farrell 477-7291** [jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca](mailto:jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca)

# 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 House; **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.

## NOVEMBER

### **Saturday, November 10**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### ***Birding Martindale Flats***

Late migrants, winter arrivals, and raptors should make for some great birding with **Warren Drinnan**. Meet at the farm market at the corner of the Pat Bay Highway and Island View Road at 8:30 a.m. Park along Lochside Drive, north of Island View Road. Gum boots are mandatory!!!! Call Warren at 652-9618 if you need more information.

### **Tuesday, November 13**

#### NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

##### ***The Cariboo Chilcotin Grasslands***

The Cariboo Chilcotin grasslands are one of the ecological wonders of the world and British Columbia's most endangered ecosystem. Grasslands cover less than 1% of the province yet supports over 30% of its threatened or endangered plant and animal species. Photographer **Chris Harris** will talk about these grasslands and his recently published book on them called *Spirit in the Grass*. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser Building at the University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome – bring a friend and a travel mug!

### **Sunday, November 18**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### ***Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho***

**Mike McGrenere** will lead this trip on the *M.V. Coho* on its usual sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. The crossing takes 1½ hours and this is the best opportunity to see bird species such as Shearwaters, Fulmars, and Phalaropes, which are usually found further out to sea. We will be birding from the bow of the boat so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 sailing of the *M.V. Coho* (allow plenty of time for parking). Ferry cost is \$14.00 (US) return (~\$22.00 Can), and it is essential to have two pieces of ID with you for customs, one with a photograph. We'll return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing.

### **Tuesday, November 20**

#### BOTANY NIGHT

##### ***Three years of Mushroom Survey on Observatory Hill***

**Oluna and Adolf Ceska** have found more than 500 species of "macrofungi" on Observatory Hill since November 2004. They will not show you all of them, only the most interesting ones, and we will complain about the weather and its role in mushroom growth. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome, bring your friends.

### **Saturday, November 24**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### ***Snow Geese at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Ladner***

Come and see the annual Snow Goose spectacle at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. Every November thousands of Snow Geese stop over in this part of the Fraser Delta. Past trips have produced over 100 species of birds for the day. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 6:00 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We will return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. Cost should be about \$40.00 per person with car pooling. Bring a lunch and a drink. Call **Rick** at 652-3326 to confirm.

### **Monday, November 26**

#### MARINE NIGHT

##### ***Marine Life of the Early Explorers.***

**Rick Harbo**, author of *Shells and Shellfish of the Pacific Northwest*, describes the origins of local marine species names, as well as collections and observations by Steller, Cook and others while on their voyages. Rick has been reviewing Cook's journals and Bank's Collection at the British Museum of Natural History. Many molluscs and other specimens have also been described from the collections of James Swan from Neah Bay and also Barkley Sound. 7:30 p.m. Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome.

### **Wednesday, November 28**

#### BIRDERS' NIGHT

##### ***Purple Martin Recovery Program***

In 1986 a number of dedicated volunteers started to build and install Purple Martin nest boxes along the Victoria waterfront and other places within the Georgia Basin to bolster the Martin's dwindling population. After a number of years and successes, the project became The Purple Martin Recovery Program. **Bruce Cousins and Charlene Lee** will be updating us on this program. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building at UVic. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a travel mug!

## DECEMBER

### **Saturday, December 1**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### ***Christmas Bird Count Tune-up***

Meet at the Helmcken Rd Park and Ride at 8:30 a.m. This will give you a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting and identification skills. This trip will cover Knockan Hill Park and Hastings Flats and the roadsides in between. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and notepad. Special interest for novice or near-novice CBCers. For more info, call **Ann Nightingale**, 652-6450.

## Sunday, December 2

### FIELD TRIP

#### ***Gull Identification Workshop at Goldstream***

Learn more than you ever thought possible about the gulls that winter on Vancouver Island. Some come from as far away as the prairies to take advantage of the winter abundance of salmon. Don't be afraid of gulls... Use this as an opportunity to practice for the Christmas Bird Count. Meet at the Goldstream Picnic Area parking lot by the Finlayson Road bridge at 9:00 a.m. and wear adequate winter clothing. Leader **Chris Saunders**.

## Saturday, December 8

### FIELD TRIP

#### ***Christmas Bird Count Tune-up***

Meet at the foot of Viaduct Avenue and Interurban Road at 8:30 a.m. We will cover Viaduct Flats and Quicks' Bottom and areas in between. Call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 652-3326 if you need more information.

## Tuesday, December 11

### NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

#### ***Winter Birds of Victoria***

Are you participating in the Christmas Bird Count this year? Or the feeder watch? Or maybe you would like to learn which species of birds call Victoria their home during the winter? Then come and join **Ann Nightingale** as she shows us the beautiful birds, and the numbers of birds that call Victoria their home during the winter and the species of birds that one

can expect at their feeders as we approach our 49th annual Christmas Bird Count. \*\*\***PLEASE NOTE ROOM CHANGE FOR THIS EVENING**\*\*\* We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room C-103 (Mathews/McQueen Theater) in the David Strong Building at UVic. Everyone is welcome.

## Saturday, December 15

### EVENT

#### ***Victoria Christmas Bird Count***

See the article in this issue (p.18) or contact Ann Nightingale at 652-6450 (motmot@shaw.ca) or visit our website [www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/)

## Saturday, December 29

### EVENT

#### ***Saltspring Island/Sidney Christmas Bird Count***

See the article in this issue (p.18) or contact Ann Nightingale at 652-6450 (motmot@shaw.ca) or visit our website [www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/)

## **JANUARY**

### **Monday, January 1**

#### EVENT

#### ***Duncan Christmas Bird Count***

See the article in this issue (p.18) or contact Derrick Marven (marven@shaw.ca; 250-748-8504).

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## BULLETIN BOARD

**ABA Regional Conference in 2008:** The American Birding Association is planning a "two-city" Regional Conference to be held in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia from August 30th to September 6th, 2008. Field trips in and around Victoria will fall on 3-5 September and originate from the Harbour Towers Hotel and Suites. Ann Scarfe has been chosen to serve as Field Trip Coordinator for the island portion of the conference. As a graduate of the University of Victoria and Program Manager for Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary for the last 17 years, Ann has shown the substantial local knowledge necessary to fulfill her duties as Field Trip Coordinator. She will be looking for local birders who might wish to serve as route captains and field trip leaders. It would be most helpful to Ann if those individuals interested in participating contact her [atrams@pacificcoast.net](mailto:atrams@pacificcoast.net). Congratulations, Ann!

The ABA looks forward to a successful event in BC and for the participation of the local birding community to help make it a success. Registration will begin in the spring of 2008 and be open to ABA Members and non-members alike.

### **Saturday Birding Group**

Meet opposite the entrance to Beaver Lake Park on Elk Lake Drive (between Haliburton and Royal Oak) at 7:00 a.m. April-June, 8:00 a.m July-March. Birding location will be decided at the meeting point. For more information, call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 652-3326.

### **Year-round Tuesday Morning Birding Group**

Meet at the foot of Bowker Ave. at 9:00 a.m. Birding activities take place at various locations around Greater Victoria. For information, contact **Bill Dancer** (721-5273) or [dcdancer@shaw.ca](mailto:dcdancer@shaw.ca).

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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 21 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our "welcome" column:

**Peter and Elizabeth Crockford**  
Marsett Place  
*general*

**David and Yvonne Court**  
Calvert Road

**John and Linda Fitch**  
Oxford Street  
*environment, birds, flowers*

**Valerie and Bryan MacDevitt**  
Fairfield Road  
*birds*

**Steven McGehee**  
Dept.of Biology, UVic  
*birds*

**Gary Woodburn**  
Anchorage Avenue  
*photography*



Northwestern Crow. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*