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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: *Paranthrene robiniae* forma “*perlucida*”,
 a clearwing moth (Family Sesiidae). See article (p. 6) for
 more information. *Photo: Chris Saunders*

There have been a number of occasions where members of the Society have been interested in carpooling, but it has invariably been a one-sided affair: someone who does not have a vehicle looking for a ride. I can’t remember a time when I’ve been contacted by a driver saying “I have a car and would love to fill it”. But the times, they are a changin’. Now that the price of fuel has everyone talking, it could be that car-owners would like to share the expense of travel, whether it is just to a Society evening or on a field trip out to Sooke (p. 22 and 23). Your Board has struggled with how to handle this, beyond the standard park-and-ride that we do for the longer trips, and the best we could come up with was encouraging passengers to help with the cost of the trip.

And then I heard a story on the radio about a new initiative of the Jack Bell Ride-Share (p. 16) and I felt a rush of gratitude – someone else is going to handle it for us! Starting in September, one-time trips and special events can be posted on the website, so the organization of car-pooling is a much simpler matter. Since it wasn’t yet available at the time of this writing, I am not exactly sure how it will work. It may mean we require a volunteer (p. 4) to post our events to the site. We’ll also need drivers that are interested in participating...

I’m looking forward to its success!

Claudia

Another thing members have requested is a rating system for our field trips in terms of their level of difficulty. These are now included in the calendar (p. 21-23).

President's Message

By Darren Copley

I can't believe it's time to write again. It seems like summer just began, but our long days are winding down, and the wildlife is migrating south, or preparing to over-winter. I expect to see my first "back-to-school" termite (Pacific Dampwood Termite – *Zootermopsis angusticollis*) any day now. I will miss all of our swallows, and other special summer visitors, like dragonflies.

I'd like to thank all of you who have welcomed me as your new president, and especially those who have written or spoken to me about your experiences in becoming a naturalist. I look forward to speaking with many more of you over the upcoming year, and want to continue to develop communication between the board and its membership.

Summer is a time of year when our Society functions slow to a Banana Slug's pace, but your board has been as active as usual. At our annual board retreat, where we discuss the big picture ideas, the main messages we came up with are based around communication with the membership, and how we can do a much better job of using your skills to help run the Society's activities. Our board is as guilty as many others of "just doing it ourselves", instead of asking for help. However, for most of our board members, the VNHS is not the only group they volunteer for, so to undertake new initiatives we need your help. In the past, we have relied on members stepping forward to offer help. This has worked with limited success, so, since it is known that people prefer to be asked directly, we will be doing a lot more asking.

When you filled out our membership form, you may have ticked off some choices from a list of volunteer categories. This year you can expect to receive direct requests for your help in a category you selected. If we haven't been in touch with you, and you want to help, contact any one of the board members. Our contact information is on the inside cover of the magazine. Many of you may not know the board members well, and may find this a barrier, but please let us know if you have any special skills you would like to offer the Society.

We have always worried about "bothering" our membership with phone calls or e-mails, but now realize how important this regular correspondence is in keeping a Society healthy and active. With technology as available to so many of you, we will be experimenting with regular e-mail notices about field trips and meetings, and sometimes very specific requests for your help. I realized last year just how helpful reminders for programs are when I missed out on Kathy Martin's ptarmigan presentation because I forgot. I receive reminders from Phil Lambert about marine nights and have never missed a presentation I wanted to see. You may have already noticed that we are using e-mail for our membership receipts, helping to reduce paper waste.



Your President volunteering to carry a spotting scope to the top of Hurricane Hill. Thanks for the amazing views of Olympic Marmot! *Photo: Claudia Copley*

If you prefer to read the magazine, and enjoy coming on the occasional field trip, but don't have the time to get involved, just let us know and we'll be happy to unsubscribe you from the e-mail list. And if you are still happy without e-mail (Barbara!), don't think you're off the hook for getting involved – we'll be sure to call.

Now you're probably wondering what we'll be asking of you. A priority is getting the word out about our Society. We want people to know that we're the group to get involved with if you want to learn more about nature and share it with others. This will entail taking our display to public events, helping with brochures, advertising, radio, TV, etc. A fun project along these lines is the creation of small brochure-type field guides for local plants and animals (e.g. common spiders) that we can hand out on school field trips and to interested public. All you photographers can help out by submitting photos of plants and animals for us to use. Our schools program, ably led by Bill Dancer, requires volunteers who can help on weekdays. Don't worry; we won't leave you on your own with a group of thirty kids! – It's a team effort. We would also like to work with UVic, Royal Roads, and Camosun students; getting them involved in Society activities like field trips, but also nest-box projects and invasive species removal. I know this is plenty to start off with, but we can also always use help with our meeting nights, fundraising, and finding advertisers for our magazine.

I'm going to include my contact information here so you can call me directly (no excuses!) if you want to get a start on volunteering for any one of these tasks, or an idea of your own, before we ask. I've already offered to help with the spider brochure!

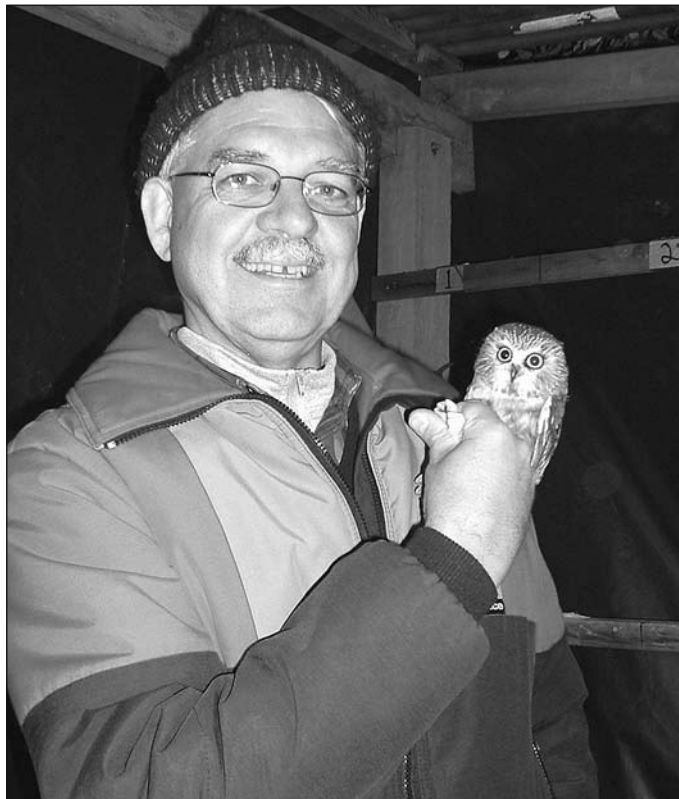
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In Memoriam: David Kelly and Fenwick Lansdowne

By Ann Nightingale

July 2008 was a sad month for the members and volunteers of Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Two very important contributors passed away—David Kelly, president from 2004 to 2006, and Fenwick Lansdowne, renowned wildlife painter and honorary president of RPBO.

DAVID KELLY took the reins from long-time president David Allinson in 2004, bringing with him a wealth of knowledge from his experience as a public servant and “über-organizer”. I don’t think we fully appreciated the scope of his expertise until his memorial service, where accolades were flowing from politicians, former colleagues, and many people he had mentored over the years. David was able to use his formidable people skills to get the best out of the RPBO Board members and to focus our attention on the potential of the organization. It was during David’s term of office, and with the encouragement of Michael Porter, that Fenwick Lansdowne agreed to become our honorary president. For a small organization with almost no public profile, this was a truly significant event.

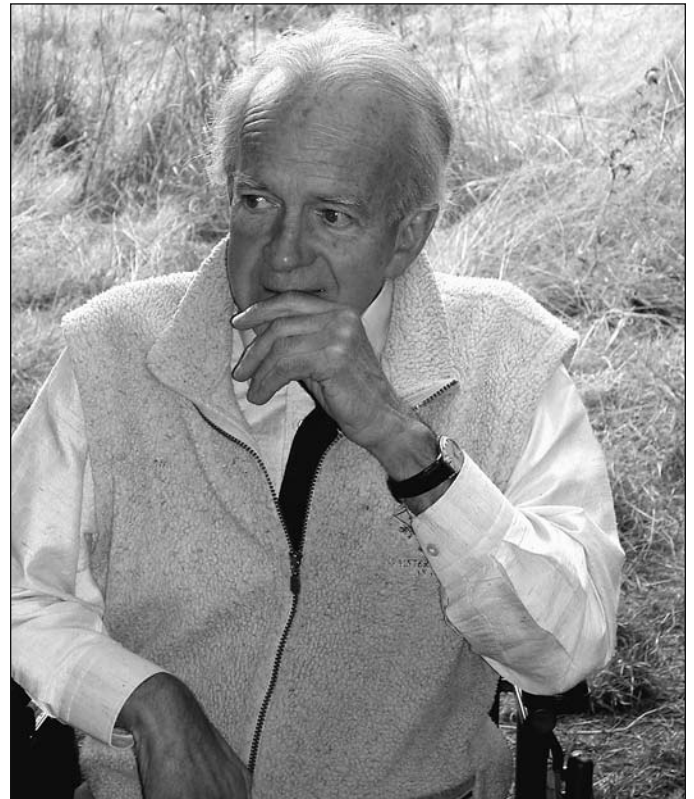


David Kelly. *Photo:* Paul Levesque

FENWICK LANSDOWNE was internationally known for his bird paintings, considered by many to be superior to those of Audubon. Fenwick is perhaps best known to the general public for his five-volume large format series of books containing his representations of many of the birds of Canada, and for his series “Rare Birds of China”, a decade long project in which he recorded that country’s bird species most threatened by environmental hazards and habitat loss.

Both of these men were lost to us at a relatively young age – David, on July 1, 2008, nine days short of his 63rd birthday, and Fenwick, on July 27, less than two weeks before his 71st birthday. By any standards, though, they contributed more to their communities than their years would suggest. It is my hope that their lives, and not their deaths, will continue to inspire us to pay attention to both the creatures and the people of this planet. Their shortened lives can also serve as a reminder that we don’t know how long any of us have and that it’s important to live our lives, as they did theirs, to the fullest.

Our condolences to the Kelly and Lansdowne families, and to all who knew and cared for these very special men.



Fenwick Lansdowne. *Photo:* Ann Nightingale

Is It a Wasp? No – It’s a Moth!

By Chris Saunders and Jeremy Tatum

Chris starts off this exciting narrative by writing: I was at Swan Lake at the crack of dawn on July 17 this year, but it wasn’t until 9ish when I noticed what looked like a stunning wasp fly by and land in a Snowberry patch. I quickly took some record shots (I use a Canon Powershot) and then, upon closer inspection, noticed that the features were more like that of a moth, not a wasp at all. Also of note was the fact that it just sat there and did nothing. One only has to try and photograph wasps for a short time to realize how active they usually are. At this point I was convinced that it was a moth.

When I got home, I uploaded the photos and sent them to Jeremy to get his thoughts and that is when my first big lesson in “sesiid” moths began. I was beginning to think that it had to be *Paranthrene dollii*, an eastern species, because all the photos of the western *P. robiniae* were of a yellow moth with quite different markings, but we still weren’t at all sure.

Well, as a birder, it normally takes me about three hours to walk around Swan Lake, but now as an insect watcher/ birder, I take four or five hours and I only get half as far. Every day I encounter something new and intriguing, o.k., sometimes hideous, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Now Jeremy takes over: When I first saw Chris’s photographs, I knew immediately that the moth was a member of the “clearwing” family, Sesiidae, but the exact identification of the species needed a bit more detective work. More than 1000 species of sesiid have been described worldwide, with 123 in North America. Yet, compared with some other moth families, little is known about them, and the general naturalist comes across them only infrequently. This is partly because they are often rather local in distribution, and they also have an adult lifetime of only a few weeks. And, although they are day-flying moths, they are often rather particular about the hours during the day when they are up and about their business. The immature stages are even harder to come by, for the caterpillars spend their young lives burrowing inside twigs or even roots. The most likely people to see sesiids are probably those who try to grow raspberries, for a few species can be minor pests. It is apparently possible in the U.K. to obtain “clearwing kits” containing sesiid pheromones for attracting these insects; I haven’t heard if such kits are available here.

To describe the most remarkable character of these exciting moths, we cannot do better than to quote directly



Paranthrene robiniae forma “perlucida”. Photo: Chris Saunders

from Eichlin and Duckworth (1988). They write:

“The degree to which species in this family have become modified structurally and behaviourally to resemble their models, primarily bees and wasps, is truly striking... The wings are narrow and in most instances partially devoid of scales; the abdomen is commonly banded with orange, yellow or white and narrowed basally, either by actual constriction or colour patterned so as to create an illusion of constriction. In addition, the legs are usually modified to resemble those of the model, even to the extent, in some groups, of scale tufts tipped with yellow to simulate the pollen gathering devices of bees.”

The scientific names given to some of the European species are quite telling. There are, for example, *vespiformis*, *apiformis*, *andrenaeformis*, *sphēciformis*, *bembeciformis*, and even *tabaniformis* (Baker 1985). Those whose Latin is up to scratch will recognize these as meaning “like a wasp”, “like a bee”, “like a mining bee”, “like a mud-dauber wasp”, “like a sand wasp” and, lastly, “like a horse-fly”. You get the idea!

A quick internet search by Chris suggested that his moth might be Doll’s Clearwing, *Paranthrene dollii*, though the snag with that was that that is an eastern North American species, whose range doesn’t reach the West Coast. It was our doughty editor, Claudia Copley, who suggested that it might be the western counterpart of *P. dollii*, namely *P. robiniae*, even though typical specimens of *robiniae* didn’t look much like Chris’s moth. However, a careful reading of Eichlin and Duckworth (1988) revealed that there exists a colour form of *robiniae*, forma “*perlucida*”, which is “very similar to *dollii*”. There are some minor differences, but the critical difference is that the hindwings of “*perlucida*” are mostly hyaline, whereas those of *dollii* are not. This immediately raised two questions: Do any of Chris’s photographs clearly show the hindwings? And what the deuce does “hyaline” mean?! Well, one of the photos did indeed show the hindwings, and our dictionary did have the word “hyaline” – meaning transparent or glassy, from the Greek “hyalos”, meaning glass. So, there we have it, two-in-one – a new moth and a new word in one day. The moth is *Paranthrene robiniae* forma “*perlucida*”. The caterpillar lives inside the twigs of poplars and willows.

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Saving Madrona Farm

By Karen Platt, member of the Friends of Madrona Farm Society

“In Victoria, during the 1960s, I belonged to three organizations that were interested in the environment, before the general public knew the word ecology,” wrote Ruth Chambers, Honourary Life Member of the Victoria Natural History Society, in her memoirs. Ruth Chambers’ strong conservationist legacy was evident throughout her life and lives on, thriving in her grandson David and his wife Nathalie, stewards and farmers of Madrona Farm, a 27-acre parcel of prime agricultural land on Blenkinsop Road. Their belief that farmland should belong to and provide for the community is a considerable force in a precedent-setting campaign to protect Madrona Farm forever.

The newly formed Friends of Madrona Farm Society (FoMF) recently entered into an agreement with The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) to purchase Madrona Farm, located near Victoria, for placement in a land trust with TLC. The FoMF must raise \$2,500,000; of which more than \$750,000 will be donated by the landowner. TLC’s mission is to ensure that the agricultural productivity and ecological values of Madrona Farm are protected forever. This fundraising campaign for the purchase of the farm by the community it serves, and the placement of the farm in the hands of a land trust, will be the first of its kind in BC, and part of the solution for local food security.

Once TLC holds title, the property will be inalienable and can never be sold. The farm, its uses for local, sustainable food production and conservation of biodiversity, will be protected forever by TLC. This will ensure the purposes of the FoMF are met in perpetuity.

Lawrence and Ruth Chambers bought Madrona Farm in 1952. From ’52–’82, Madrona progressed through three phases – from cows to vegetables to hay – until Lawrence died in 1982 and it was leased for hay production. “Our vegetables were fresh,” wrote Ruth Chambers. “We knew our customers individually. Our paper bags had Madrona Farm and our phone number stamped on each with a rubber stamp. Customers who rang by 10 a.m. would know that their order would be ready for them when the stall opened for them at 2 p.m.”

While Ruth and Lawrence’s three sons couldn’t escape farm life fast enough, grandson David moved to the farm in 1999 to care for Ruth. Inspired by his family history and her passion he decided to restore the family farmlands, which had become much depleted and overrun by blackberries and invasive species. Through hard work and enthusiasm, David has done his grandmother proud.

When Ruth died in 2002, ownership of the farm was passed on to her three sons – David’s father and two uncles. They, in turn leased the property to David and Nathalie



Madrona Farm. Photo provided by author

to farm and under their stewardship, it has flourished. But recently, the Chambers brothers decided to sell. And, although Madrona Farm is zoned Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), this designation does not require the land to remain in food production. Without further protection, Madrona could be purchased for use as a “hobby farm” or “gentleman’s estate,” and never again be used to grow food for the community.

David and Nathalie Chambers are true eco-farmers; Madrona’s 27 acres includes Douglas fir and Garry oak ecosystems, four natural ponds and a wooded corridor of diverse native tree species they began planting in 2004. More than 130 fruit trees now stabilize the farm’s southwest facing slope. Natalie and David have created a wildlife corridor to connect the farm to municipally-owned Mount Douglas Park. Madrona is home to many species of birds, including Great-horned Owls, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed

Hawks and Great Blue Herons. The retention of forest, particularly on the north edge of farmlands has been recognized as an important asset to farming and biodiversity. "There's not a spreadsheet in the world that can measure the value of maintaining forest on the northern slopes of a farm," said farmer Joel Salatin in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Agriculture, restoration and conservation are integrated on this third-generation family farm. Here, energy, enthusiasm and hard work produce more than 100 varieties of fruits and vegetables. Last year, Dave and Nathalie produced more than 128,000 pounds of food on this land, feeding hundreds of loyal customers at their roadside stand for 11 months of the year – with virtually no waste, no artificial inputs, and using less than 700 litres of diesel. There is something phenomenally satisfying about making a salad from local greens – in January. Now, Dave is training new farmers – people actually interested in growing our food themselves someday. The question is whether they will have land to do that. Our farmlands are at risk of becoming as endangered as any red-listed species.

Farming on Madrona is guided by a commitment to environmental, social and economic sustainability that honours the memory of Lawrence and Ruth Chambers. "The farm operates as close as possible to a natural ecosystem," says Nathalie. "Everything respects the memory of Ruth

and Lawrence and the values that guided their agricultural practice and appreciation for nature."

The campaign to protect Madrona Farm is a true community effort as well as a testament to an increasing desire and demand for organic, locally grown food. Community purchase of this farm is a test of our collective desire to protect farmland for farming. "We want to set the precedent to show that the public is willing to put up the money to protect what precious little arable land there is near the city for their food supply, so that governments will take notice and pony up, too," said David Chambers.

Please make your donation now! Online at: www.conservancy.bc.ca/donatetomadrona. For more information, go to www.madronafarm.com

The Land Conservancy is a registered charity and land trust protecting wilderness areas, cultural landmarks and agricultural lands in B.C. Since 1997, TLC has protected almost 120,000 acres of sensitive and threatened lands, involving more than 300 projects. TLC has grown to include more than 7,000 members, and is now part of an international network of National Trusts with more than seven million members. For more information, visit www.conservancy.bc.ca.

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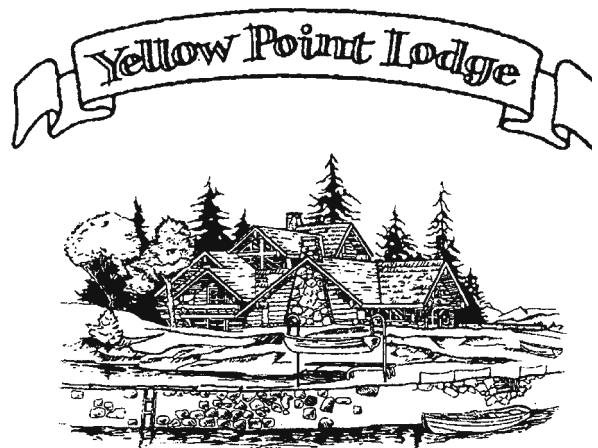
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Dockside Naturalists – Learn Your Fishes

By Gavin Hanke, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology – Royal BC Museum

On a lazy, rain-free day in Victoria, it is nice to grab some sushi or fish and chips, relax on a dock, and watch people scurry about like tormented ants. Better yet, look over the side of the dock and you may see thousands of fish swimming by – now that’s entertainment. Unlike many people along the waterfront, fishes would rather avoid being seen, and so you may have to be patient or really stealthy, because fish can retreat to deeper water or under the dock. Docks, piers, artificial rock walls, old tires, and other assorted bits of garbage in our harbours provide artificial cover for a great variety of marine organisms.

Forests of marine algae, sponges, barnacles, mussels, sea stars, feather duster worms, and anemones coat dock pilings and neglected boats. All the marine algae and pesky invertebrates (also known as ‘biofouling’) provide ample cover for small fishes.

This article is meant as a guide to the most common fishes around Victoria’s docks, in the faint hope that “Oh, look at the minnows” will never again be uttered from our coastal docks. Just because some minnows are small, and young fish have small bodies, it does not mean that all small fish are minnows. Please note that some minnows (fishes in the family



Docks near Laurel Point (top left) are great places to observe harbour-tolerant marine life. Biofouling on dock pilings and boats creates cover for fishes (top right) and fishes also congregate underneath, in the shade of the dock superstructure (bottom). *All photographs are by the author except as indicated.*

Cyprinidae) are not particularly small – look up the Giant Barb for an example of a big minnow. Furthermore, the odds are pretty slim that you'd see a “minnow” around a marine dockyard anyway. Vancouver Island has only three minnows (cyprinids) – the Peamouth, Common Carp, and the odd Goldfish, and while these fish can tolerate brackish conditions for a short while, none of them reside in marine water.

So for now, erase the word “minnow” from your vocabulary, because this article highlights common marine fishes around our docks. I based this paper on fishes caught during a few lazy days of fishing in the inner harbour in Victoria, and sightings while wandering along the waterfront or while floating along in my kayak. Obviously our coastal waters harbour a great diversity of fishes, some of which are difficult to find, but the species in this article are common, widespread, and easy to observe. Lamb and Handby (2005) and Lamb and Edgell (1986) detail many more fishes which are accessible to dock-bound naturalists.

FISHES IN OPEN WATER

Pacific Herring

From the dock, Pacific Herring can be differentiated from other open water fishes based on their supple body motion. Herring pass smooth sine-waves along their body, much like juvenile salmon, and are commonly seen charging at planktonic prey. Their mouths open wide as they engulf plankton.

Herring have elongate bodies with no adipose fin, and have a series of keeled scales along the belly. In addition, their upper jaw (maxillary bone) is long and curved, whereas most other fishes have a fairly straight maxillary. Herring scales are very thin and deciduous, so handle these delicate fishes carefully. They also lack a lateral line on the body. You also may find Northern Anchovy around docks, but these have a pointed snout extending well ahead of the mouth. In contrast, herring have lower jaws which protrude beyond the snout.



Threespine Stickleback

Marine Threespine Stickleback are superabundant in harbours, and can be found in schools of several hundred to thousands of individuals. They are easy to recognize because they keep their bodies fairly straight, and commonly appear to hover, using only their dorsal, anal, and pectoral fins to control pitch, roll, and yaw.

Sticklebacks have small mouths, and pick their prey from the water column or from dock pilings. These fishes are unmistakable with their anterior dorsal fin formed into three free spines, strong spines which reinforce their pelvic fins, and bony armour plating which reinforces their flanks. As an aside, marine Threespine Sticklebacks have heavy armour, but sticklebacks in some freshwater populations completely lack spines and armour.

Pacific Sandlance

Dock-bound naturalists are only likely to see young Pacific Sandlance. These elongate, silvery fishes have a protruding, pointy chin, an extremely long, low dorsal fin, and travel in tight schools. Many people call sandlance needlefish, which is incorrect. True needlefish are in the family Belontiidae. Strangely, true needlefish get called gars, whereas true gars belong in the family Lepisosteidae. The use of common names can be very confusing.

Adult sandlance burrow into sandy beaches for shelter, but leave the substrate to feed and breed. From the surface, young sandlance appear very eel-like, but in BC we have no shallow water eels. Apparently, sandlance are attracted to lights at night, so look for these slippery silver slivers along well-illuminated docks.



Fishes found in open water around docks – Pacific Herring (left), Pacific Sandlance (top) and Threespine Stickleback (bottom – Photo: Royal BC Museum files)

ELONGATE FISHES NEAR SHELTER

Bay Pipefish

Bay Pipefish are in the same family as seahorses (Syngnathidae). They share obvious features such as external armour, long tubular snouts, and move by fluttering dorsal and pectoral fins, with the tail acting as a rudder. They are slow and easy to catch in shallow water. Adults look like stray olive brown to pale green twigs and are quite cryptic.

Male and female pipefish wrap together and the female transfers fertilized eggs to the male's brood pouch. Males then retain the eggs and give 'birth' to live young which are so small that they resemble animated pine needles. Look for pipefish along richly overgrown docks and in eelgrass beds.

Tubesnout

Docks provide cover for Tubesnouts, and sometimes large groups of them aggregate, especially in breeding season. Tubesnouts are particularly attractive when in breeding dress in June – males have pectoral fins with a bright orange spot, a darker body, bright red pelvic fins, and a bright blue snout.

Tubesnouts are in the same general grouping as

stickleback, pipefish and seahorses, and like their relatives, have elongate bodies and long tubular snouts which act like a pipette to slurp up small prey. Tubesnouts seem to drift intermittently between slight twitches which keep the body heading in the desired direction. If you pick up a tubesnout, you'll feel the many minute, evenly-spaced spines which form the anterior dorsal fin. Like their stickleback relatives, tubesnout males create a nest out of vegetation and attract potential mates with an elaborate breeding dance.

Crescent Gunnel

I have seen many Crescent Gunnels snaking their way along submerged dock pilings, in search of prey in forests of dock-encrusting invertebrates, or winding their way up fronds of macro-algae or eelgrass. Look for them along submerged, near horizontal to shallow-angled cross-beams.

Crescent Gunnels are bright orange when in breeding dress, and have white and black edged crescent marks spaced evenly along the dorsal fin. They are superficially eel-like, and very slippery – so don't bother trying to grab one – a net is far more effective. If you look carefully, you will see minute finger-like fins hanging down below the gill chamber. These are the remnants of the pelvic fins. Other gunnells have completely lost pelvic fins. Even stranger yet, some nearshore fishes such as clingfish, lumpsuckers and snailfish have pelvic fins formed into powerful suction cups. As an aside, the "suction cup" on a remora is a modified dorsal fin – evolution never ceases to amaze me.



Elongate fishes commonly found close to dock pilings or beams – Crescent Gunnel (top), Bay Pipefish (middle), and Tubesnout (bottom).

DEEP-BODIED FISHES

Shiner Surfperch

Surfperch are among the most abundant fishes along our coast, and in places, tens of thousands can be seen cruising around docks. Surfperch are fairly generalized perch-like fishes with spiny and soft dorsal fins merging into one continuous fin. They have deep, silvery bodies with vertical blotches, pectoral fins elevated on the flank, and have small mouths with tiny villiform teeth.

Surfperch swim by flapping their pectoral fins much like tropical wrasses, and they are easy to catch with small baited fish hooks. The most interesting feature of surfperch biology is their reproduction. Females retain their eggs and fertilization is internal. They give birth to only a few live young, but these few young are large (5-7 cm). Males are reproductively mature at birth and most males breed in their first year; females breed by their second year. Several other types of surfperch are found around our docks, some of which reach a fair size and could be the foundation of a decent meal – if you are comfortable eating fishes from the harbour.

Copper Rockfish

Small Copper Rockfish can be found in fairly shallow water around docks and can be caught using light tackle. These fishes commonly are caught and people call them “rock cod”. This name is incorrect, as are the nineteen other common names for the species. Rockfish are in the same family as Red Lionfish and Estuarine Stonefish and lucky for us, rockfish have only mild venom associated with their fin spines.

Young Copper Rockfish may be seen cruising in search of prey, resting on the bottom in eelgrass beds and around docks, and the smallest individuals can be found under flotsam at the water surface. Larger individuals tend to live

in deeper water (down to 183 m). Adults reach 66 cm total length, live up to 50 years, and fully-grown females can carry more than 600,000 eggs.

Pacific Cod

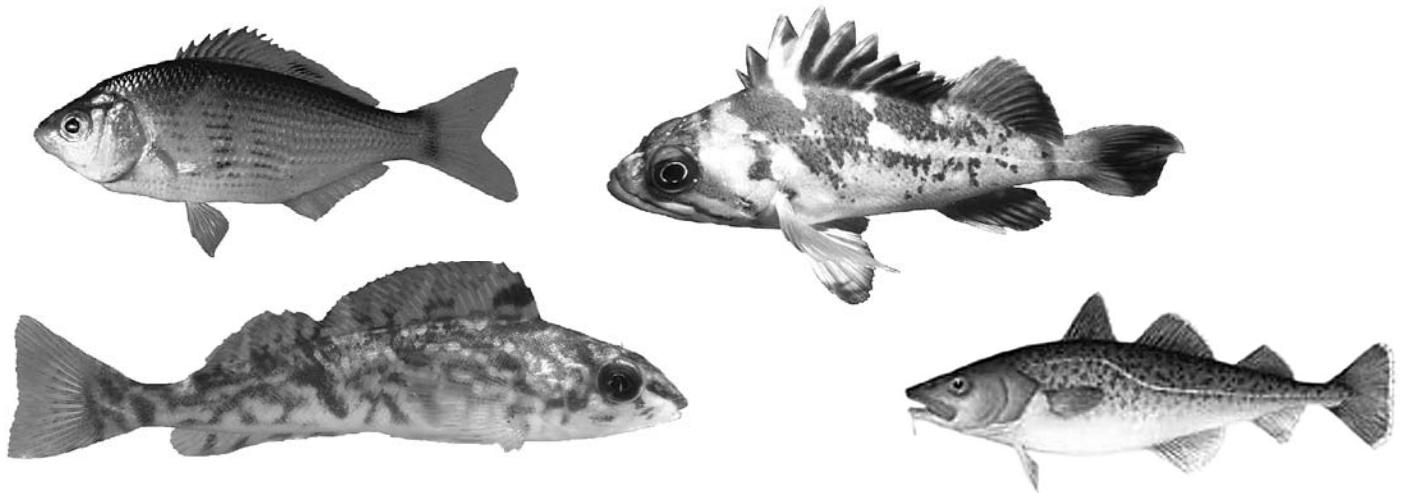
Pacific Cod grow to 1.17 m, and range across the North Pacific. In summer, you can see these predators darting around after smaller fishes. Those I have seen seem to work alone and are easily differentiated from the usual crowd of Sticklebacks, Herring and Surfperch around our docks. Pacific Cod are easily recognized because they have a broad head, a long mental (chin) barbel, three separate dorsal fins, and have a brown mottled to peppery dorsal colouration.

Pacific Cod range from near the surface down to 875 m, but usually live shallower than 300 m depth. They spawn in bays, mostly in late winter, and eggs are broadcast over the bottom. Young Pacific Cod mature in 2-3 years, and have been known to live as long as 12 years – the commercial fishery takes out many at about half that age.

White-spotted Greenling

White-spotted Greenlings grow to 48 cm, and generally are found in water less than 15 m deep. Their pale blue eggs are deposited in winter, and then guarded by very attentive males. Young White-spotted Greenlings are silvery and live in open water until mid spring, when they develop more cryptic colouration and take up an epi-benthic lifestyle.

Greenlings are interesting because they have multiple lateral lines running along the body, and have green-blue meat. This green-blue colouration changes to a typical white when the fish is cooked, but the small size of the White-spotted Greenling means that it not actively sought as a game fish. The short 1st and 4th lateral lines, the narrow tail base, and scattered pale spots on the body are distinguishing features of this species.



Deep-bodied fishes which tend to congregate underneath docks – Shiner Surfperch (top left), Copper Rockfish (top right – *Photo: Royal BC Museum files*), White-spotted Greenling (bottom left) and Pacific Cod (bottom right – *Illustration: Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch Program*). (**Editor’s note:** For more information on this important consumer awareness program go to <http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp>).

BOTTOM-DWELLING FISHES

Staghorn Sculpin

These sculpins are common around the base of docks and in shallow water near shore where soft substrate is available. Staghorn Sculpins partially bury themselves to avoid predators and as camouflage to ambush prey. These sizable sculpins grow to 46 cm, and are distinguished from the myriad of other sculpins on our coast by the following features: a branched spine on the pre-operculum with antler-like prongs, a naked body, and a dark spot in the rear half of the anterior dorsal fin.

Staghorn Sculpins are disliked by anglers and also are common by-catch in crab traps. The spine on the gill cover is extremely sharp, so be careful when handling staghorns (a.k.a. 'beach gators'). Staghorns are particularly abundant in estuaries and it is sometimes difficult to walk without sending many of them racing for cover. The first staghorn I ever caught ended up wedged in my sandals beneath my toes – luckily it was a tiny one and the pre-opercular spines did not lacerate my foot.

Butter Sole

Butter Sole are found at depths of 6-425 m, but at low tide, young individuals can be found in water only a few centimetres deep. They grow to 55 cm and have a rounded tail fin, a lateral line that arcs over the short pectoral fin, and a

prominent accessory lateral line parallel to the dorsal fin base.

Butter Soles are right-eyed flounders, which means that the right eye stayed stationary, and the left eye migrated from the left to the right side of the head during metamorphosis from the free-swimming juvenile to the bottom-dwelling adult. Young Butter Sole are really common in eelgrass beds, and if you are lucky, you may see them shuffling along in the shallows near dock pilings.

Starry Flounder

Even though it has boldly marked fins, the Starry Flounder is remarkably well camouflaged when resting on the sea-floor. These flatfish have scattered sandpaper platelets on the "eyed side" of the body, and the median fins have light and dark bars. The fins alone are sufficient to identify this fish from among all other flatfish in the province. Starry Flounders also are known to ascend coastal streams above tidal influence, but range as deep as 275 m in the ocean.

Young Starry Flounders are symmetrical and shaped much like other fishes, but when they reach about 1 cm length, they transform to the adult asymmetrical shape. Starry Flounder are interesting in that they can be left- or right-eyed, and the proportion of each type varies geographically (there are more right-leaning individuals to the south along the United States coastline, and more left-wingers to the north). In the Fraser River system, juvenile Starry Flounders have been found well-above tidal influence in Pitt Lake and the Sumas River near Chilliwack.



Fishes found on the bottom – Staghorn Sculpin (top), Starry Flounder (lower right), Butter Sole (lower left).

COLLECTING AND VIEWING FISHES

Most fishes that we see alongside docks are viewed from above simply because of our land-based existence. However, fishes are far more attractive if viewed from the side, as you would see them in an aquarium. A large, clear plastic bag or the plastic pet containers available at most pet shops, make nice light-weight temporary aquaria to hold small fishes for a few minutes. Put plenty of water in the container and release all fishes as fast as possible because they are adapted to cold water and won't survive long if allowed to warm up. You should also regularly refresh the water in the temporary aquarium so that fishes are not subjected to drastic temperature changes.

Small dip-nets have limited utility around docks because fishes have plenty of escape routes, but you can sometimes get lucky catching fishes with a head-long rush towards the water with a larger dip-net. If you are good with a cast-net, they are an efficient way to catch open water fishes, and umbrella shaped bait nets which are dropped and then hauled to the surface beneath fishes, also prove handy for pelagic fish capture.

Bay Pipefish are so slow that you can catch them by hand, but slightly larger fishes which are too fast for the dip-net or nearer the bottom, can be caught with a small hook (#16 or smaller) and some fine fishing line. However, hook-and-line fishing is harsh and difficult to justify if just for simple observation or fun.

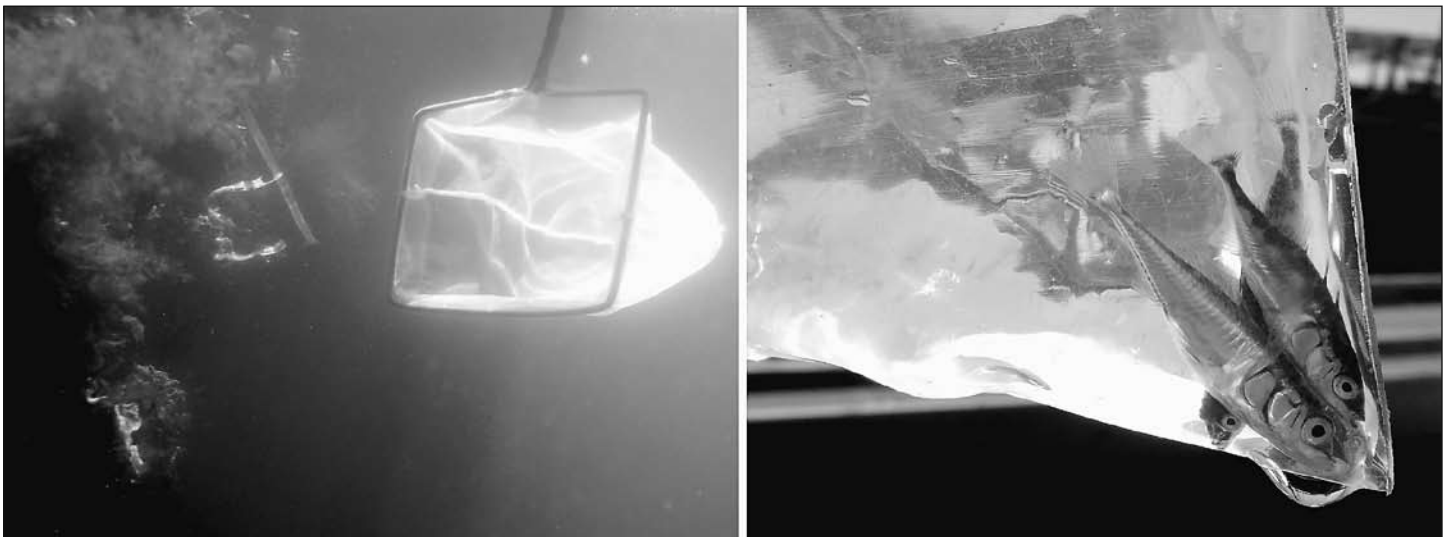
For photographs of "wild specimens", I used a Sealife DC600 submersible digital camera which was dunked in the water and allowed to automatically focus on each subject (many photos end up blurry using this "spray and pray" technique). Before you rush out and buy a purpose-built underwater camera, check to see whether you can find an

underwater housing for your existing digital camera. For shallow dockside photography, any underwater case will work because depth and lighting is not an issue (except perhaps on cloudy days or at night).

Dockside fish watching is a very clean, comfortable and convenient way to enjoy fishes while staying high and dry, and avoiding the risks associated with intertidal exploration on slippery rocks. I like floating docks because they stay at water level regardless of tides, so you can explore anytime and still find lots to watch – even if you have to resort to watching invertebrates. The fishes detailed in this short article can be found anywhere along our coast, and in some places, they can be superabundant. I have seen seemingly endless schools of Shiner Surfperch up at Port Hardy, and in other places (like the docks at Hartley Bay) the water was crawling with pipefish. Under a floating dock in Drury Inlet, I found hundreds of Tubesnouts in spawning dress, whereas other docks I have visited sheltered thousands of transplanted hatchery-raised coho. British Columbia's coastline is teeming with life and there is no end to the surprises that await a curious maritime naturalist. You never know what will swim by – because there are plenty of fish in the sea – well – at least there are plenty of those which we do not yet exploit for food.

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Dipnets are readily available in a range of useful sizes (left), and plastic bags (right) are convenient temporary containers to allow close observation of small fishes.

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Carpooling Options in Victoria

By Daryl Novak, Project Manager at Jack Bell Ride-Share

Want to save money, reduce your carbon footprint, and meet new people? Thousands of commuters across British Columbia are doing all of the above at www.ride-share.com, the free ride-matching database from Jack Bell Ride-Share. Launched in April 2005 by Canada's longest established public vanpooling and ride-sharing organization, almost 5,000 commuters are signed up, with more than 300 groups currently ride-sharing. Hundreds of new users are signing up every month.

Find a recurring ride in a Jack Bell Ride-Share fleet vehicle (van or car) and pay a monthly fare, or find a one-time trip or recurring ride in a privately-owned vehicle and negotiate your cost-sharing. It's simple to use the Jack Bell Ride-Share ride-matching website: just enter where you're starting from, where you are going, and your times, and the

www.ride-share.com

1-888-380-7433

system computes a route, searches for matches and shows them on interactive maps. You can then send a "suggestion to ride-share" to the matches that best suit your needs (a "suggestion" because you are never under any obligation to ride-share). Once a suggestion is accepted, you can email each other to work out the details of your commute.

In September, Jack Bell Ride-Share will be launching a simple webform that you can fill out to create "Trip Links" for ridesharing to special events, like a day-hike, wedding, or workshop. The "Trip Links" can then be emailed to attendees, or even embedded on to a website.

Ridesharing can save you money by sharing the costs, reduces traffic congestion, and can be the answer for those who live in places that aren't convenient to public transit. The camaraderie of the commute can make those trips to

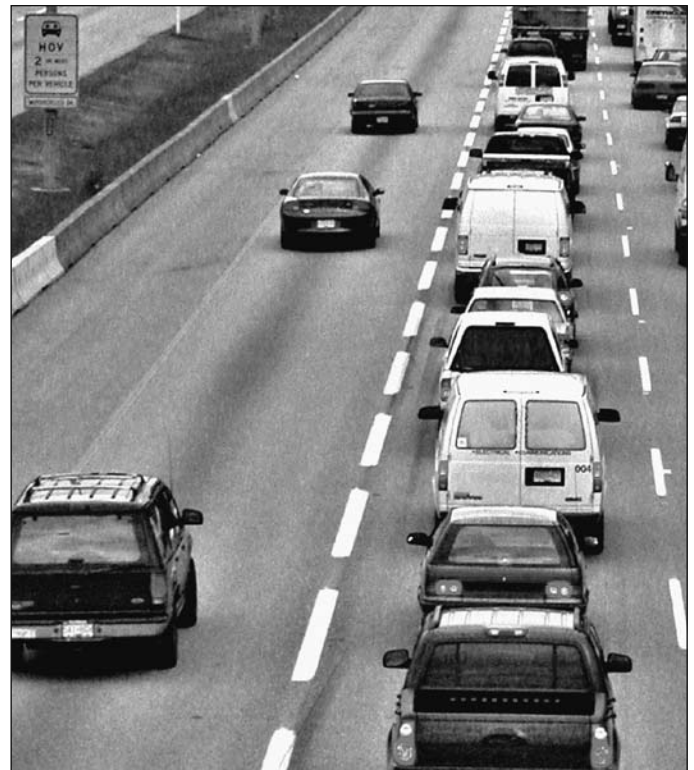


Photo provided by the author

and from work much more enjoyable, and takes more cars off the road, reducing carbon emissions and harmful pollution in our fragile environment.

Many companies and institutions are realizing the benefits, too, as a way of helping employees get to work and managing their parking needs while enhancing their environmental public perception. Vancity Credit Union, Ballard Power, City of Vancouver and UBC are among those with their own group on www.ride-share.com.

You can also call Jack Bell Ride-Share toll free at 1-888-380-7433 for more information.

Heart of the Watershed: a Symposium on Restoring the Courtenay River Estuary

By Krista Kaptein, Symposium Coordinator

If rivers and streams are the veins and arteries of a watershed, and wetlands are the kidneys that cleanse the water, then the central element of the watershed must be the heart: in the case of the Comox Valley, that heart is the Courtenay River Estuary.

The *Heart of the Watershed* is a symposium event hosted by Comox Valley Project Watershed Society, from October 3–4, 2008. This unique event will increase awareness and knowledge of the work that has been done and still needs to be done to preserve and restore the Courtenay River Estuary. The symposium will be of interest to policy makers (elected officials, municipal staff), professionals, representatives from environmental organizations, and concerned citizens. The aim is to create a community action group with a plan dedicated to preserving and restoring the health of the Courtenay River Estuary ecosystem.

The symposium program will include the history and importance of the estuary, present condition and challenges, and vision for the future. Activities will include speakers, displays, facilitated discussion sessions, workshops, and field trips. Planning partners for this event have included members of the Comox Valley Naturalists Society, Comox Valley Water Watch Coalition, Comox Valley Land Trust, Tsolum River Restoration Society, Puntledge River Restoration

Committee, Millard-Piercy Watershed Stewards, City of Courtenay Planning Department, Landworks Consultants, Georgia Strait Alliance, and Fisheries & Oceans Canada.

The key-note speaker will be Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon, Centre for International Governance Innovation Chair of Global Systems at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Ontario. Other featured speakers include Dr. Rob Butler, Adjunct Professor of Biological Sciences at SFU, and Dr. Will Marsh, of UBC Landscape Architecture. Additional presenters will include marine biologist John Tayless, archaeological researcher Nancy Greene, the Nature Trust of BC, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fisheries & Oceans Canada, Georgia Strait Alliance, Seagrass Conservation Group, Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society, Ministry of Environment, and more.

Funding support has been confirmed to date from the Real Estate Foundation of BC, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Comox Valley Regional District, Fisheries & Oceans Canada, Architecture in Balance, and Coastal Community Credit Union.

For more information, contact me at symposium@projectwatershed.bc.ca and visit the Project Watershed website www.projectwatershed.bc.ca for regular updates, program and registration information.



Courtenay River estuary. *Photo provided by author*

An Anytime, Anywhere Celebration of Nature in the City: Simple Citizen-Science Project Reaches Urbanites of All Ages

Nature has the power to soothe and enthuse. More people are finding that out as they join the free, year-round "Celebrate Urban Birds!" citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. From schools, hospitals, and senior centers, to wellness programs, scout packs, and military bases, participants are reaping the benefits of a closer connection to the natural world and a new appreciation for city birds.

A girl in 4-H changed her mind about city birds after taking part in the project: "At first I didn't like urban birds," she said. "I thought of them as pests. Then I realized that they are just like me and other kids. We are ignored or people just see us as pests or don't see us at all...yet if you look a little deeper you can see that on the inside we are pretty unique and cool!"

People of all ages and backgrounds participate in Celebrate Urban Birds through gardening, cultural activities and citizen-science. For the citizen-science part of the project, participants watch city birds for 10 minutes, check off 15 target species of birds, and send the information through the mail or the Internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Once enough data are gathered, scientists hope to learn more about how birds survive in cities and how they use urban green spaces such as parks, rooftop gardens, and even potted plants on balconies for food, resting sites, and shelter.

Individuals can participate on their own or through public events organized by local groups. Celebrate Urban Birds has partnered with more than 2,000 organizations to hold special "birdy" events featuring the arts, science, gardening, or other ways to draw people into bird study and observation. While supplies last, everyone who signs up will receive a Celebrate Urban Birds kit in English and Spanish with two colorful urban birds posters, educational materials about birds and urban greening, a data form, and a packet of sun-

flower seeds to plant in pots and gardens. More than 60,000 free kits have been distributed.

After receiving his kit, one elementary school youngster with Down's syndrome declared, "I will take these posters home and put them up on my wall forever – because I'm going to be a scientist when I grow up!" Teachers find that the 10-minute bird observation can be done within a class period, and it reinforces math, reading, scientific, artistic, and team-building skills. One teacher noted, "Our group of middle school boys was impressed with being able to help with a project sponsored by a university."

Some groups go beyond a single event by greening their neighborhood creating habitat for birds on balconies, rooftops, front stoops, or community spaces. Others are tapping into the arts, creating dances, drawings, murals, sculptures, puppet shows, and short films based on city birds. The Celebrate Urban Birds web site has lots of resources and suggestions about how to craft an event or project for libraries, nature centers, schools and youth groups, community gardens, home-school groups, or individuals.

Winners have been chosen for the project's first "Beautiful Birds in Urban Places" video and photo contest. Marian Mendez of Hialeah, Florida, captured first prize with her images of birds found in her back yard. She said, "I like to single out one bird and watch it for a while, trying to see the personality and mind behind it. And I'm out in the fresh air, getting sunshine and a new perspective on life." Stay tuned for the next photo contest! Learn more about Celebrate Urban Birds and sign up at www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org!

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab's web site at < <http://www.birds.cornell.edu> > .



Jim Farrell 477-7291 jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca

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The Big Sit – Coming Near You !!!

The Big Sit is like a Big Day or a bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours. The difference lies in the area limitation from which you can observe.

The simplicity of the concept makes The Big Sit so appealing. Find a good spot for bird watching – preferably one with good views of a variety of habitats and lots of birds. Next you create a real or imaginary circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle for 24 hours, counting all the bird species you see or hear. Find a spot, sit in it, have fun. This free event is open to every person and club and there is no guilt about burning fossil fuels (unless you count the barbecue grill).

The Big Sit is a fundraiser...this year's will be raising funds for Wild ARC

But there is also a challenge to doing a Big Sit. Spending 24 hours (or as many as you can stand) bird watching from inside a 17-foot diameter circle really sharpens your senses and skills. Your eyes get used to scanning the horizon and the sky overhead. Your ears are attuned to the smallest chip or snippet of bird song. Cool birds are flying over and past us all the time, yet we rarely take the time to fully absorb them. Every Sit produced something remarkable: a rarely seen bird, a late or early migrant, a huge flock passing quietly overhead.

The Big Sit is a fundraiser. Teams collect pledges for each species they tally. For example, if 20 team members pledged \$0.20 per species and the team tallies 50 species during The Big Sit! That means the team could generate \$200 for a special project (20 team members x \$0.20 x 50 species = \$200). This year's Big Sit will be raising funds for the Wild Animal Rescue Centre (Wild ARC).

Although The Big Sit is a non-competitive birding event, there are two basic categories in which teams can "win": Best Team Count (Highest combined total from team circle – you win Greater Victoria "braggin' rights") and the big prize: Swarovski Optik is offering \$500 to the circle who finds the "Golden Bird". What is the "Golden Bird"? After all of The Big Sit results are tabulated; a bird species will be selected by random drawing from the total list of all species seen in North America. All of the circles that listed that bird will be put into another random drawing. The randomly selected winning circle wins the Golden Bird prize of \$500. The winner is required to choose a non-profit, environmental organization to receive the \$500 donated



by Swarovski Optik. Qualifying organizations include bird clubs, Audubon chapters, land trusts, etc.

The Big Sit is sponsored by: Swarovski Optik, Alpen Optics and Wild Bird Centers. For more information contact Chris or David at the Wild Bird Center of Langford:

250-590-SEED (7333) or check their website for details (www.wildbird.com/langford)

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2008 Conservation Connection Forum This Fall

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Habitat Acquisition Trust



HAT

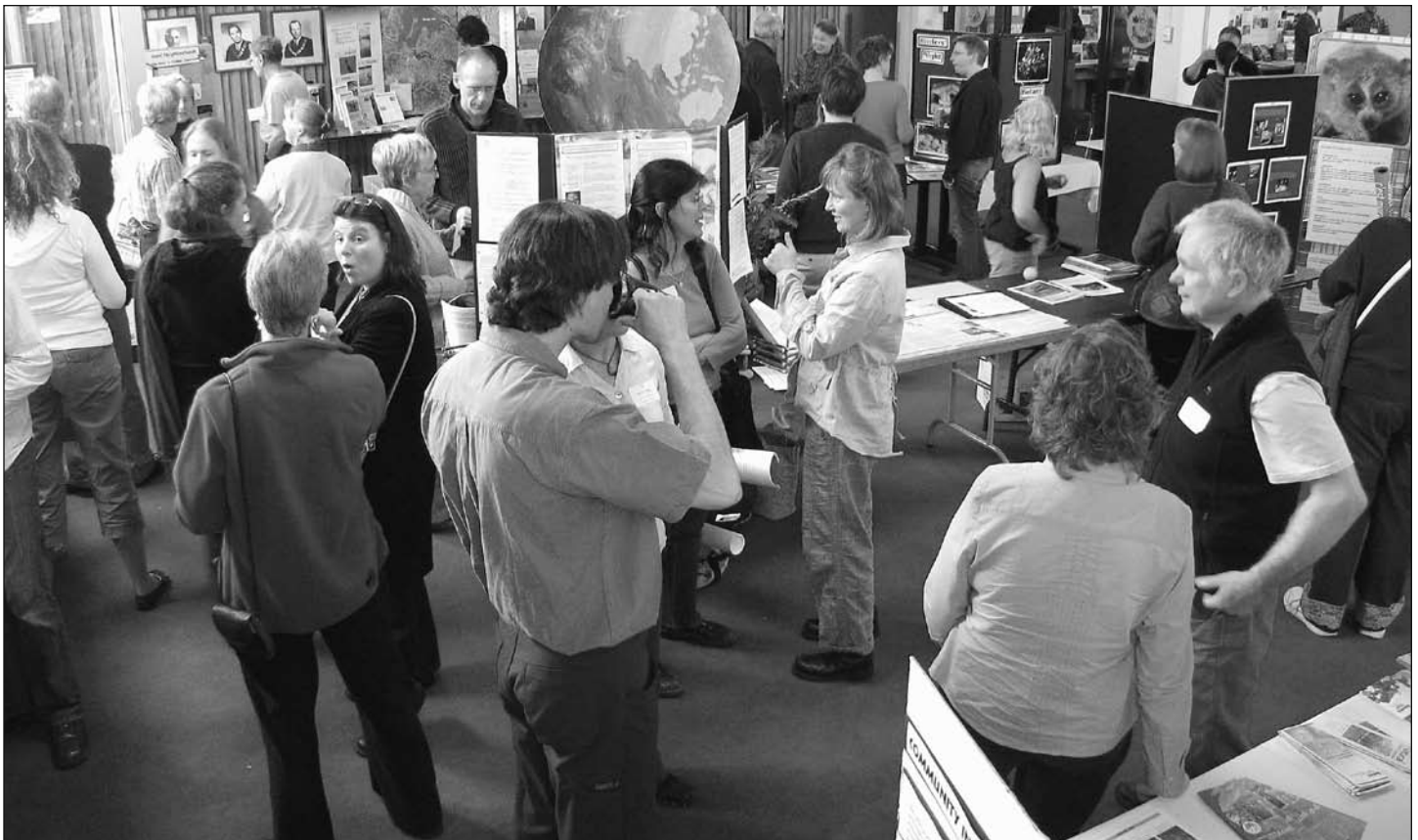
Creating Conservation Legacies

Mark your calendars! The eighth annual Conservation Connection Forum is September 19th at the Burnside-Gorge Community Centre! HAT hosts this annual forum to bring people and organizations working on environmental issues on the South Island and Gulf Islands together.

Amazingly, in our small region there are more than 100 different groups working on conservation and environmental issues. Although many people are working or volunteering with more than one group, few of us have the time to participate in *all* the associations in our region! The Conservation Connection forum brings these groups together for one day; providing an opportunity for people to share ideas, find out who is working on what, and develop connections.

This year, we are hosting the forum at the Burnside-Gorge Community Centre. There will be sessions on specific issues, such as the BC Government's new Conservation Framework, wetlands management best practices, and climate change effects on our marine ecosystems. There are also sessions on the capacity issues that every organization has to deal with, such as fundraising and volunteer management.

It's cheap too! For \$25 for non-profit groups or \$30 for all others, in addition to the forum you get a delicious organic lunch – perfect for those working in the less-than-well-financially-reimbursed environmental sector. For more information about the forum or to register, visit HAT's website www.hat.bc.ca, call us at 250-995-2428, or visit our office: 316-620 View Street, Victoria, B.C.



Last year's Conservation Connection Forum. *Photo provided by author*



A hatchling Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*). The lower shell (plastron) features striking orange to red patterns that give them their name. The coastal population is legally designated as endangered. Please report your Western Painted Turtle sightings to HAT – email hatmail@hat.bc.ca, or call 250-995-2428. Photo: Christian Engelstoft

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 22 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our “welcome” column:

John and Barbara Chase

Morris Drive
birds, marine

Dr. Val George

Coronation Avenue
birds, flowers

Chris Broadbent and

Karla Wagner
Carolwood Drive

Heather Murphy

Linden Avenue
nature in general

Marian Moore

Wicklow Street
birds, botany

David and Carol

Mallett
Westview Terrace
*sailing, bird watching,
natural plants*

James and Helen Currie

Lexington Avenue
*birding, native plants,
archeology*

Ian MacDonell

San Jose Avenue
wildlife

Elizabeth Woods

Vickery Road
birds, photography

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 Christmas Hill 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 250-479-2054 for further information and updates. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>, and is updated regularly.

Codes for Field Trip Difficulty Levels: LEVEL 1 — Easy walking, mostly level paths. LEVEL 2 — Paths can be narrow with uneven terrain. LEVEL 3 — Obstacles in paths requiring agility or steeper grades. LEVEL 4 — Very steep, insecure footing or longer hikes requiring good physical condition.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday, September 9

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

Captain George Vancouver

Have you ever wondered who the man was that the place we call home was named after? **Ed Pellizzon** has some fascinating facts about the man whom the island is named for. We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at UVic at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Sunday, September 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Elk/Beaver Lake: Big Trees and Signs of Fall

Tucked away in the southwest corner of Elk/Beaver Lake Park are a few large old growth trees that not many people even realize are there. This outing will investigate this corner of the park looking at the big trees and watching for signs of fall. We’ll check out seeds, berries and other indicators that summer has passed. Go north along West Saanich Road and turn right on to Beaver Lake Road. After you enter the park, turn left when you see the sign “Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park Beaver Lake Ponds”. Continue past the barn on your right. The parking lot is

after the sign "Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Centre". Park only on the right-hand side of the lot. Meet at the far end of the parking lot at 10:00 a.m. No pets please. Dress for the weather. Hiking boots and a stick will help you safely traverse the occasionally rough terrain as we will not necessarily be on groomed trails. Bring a snack and something to drink. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, September 16

BOTANY NIGHT

Here, There, and Everywhere

In spring and summer 2008, **Adolf and Oluna Ceska** attended *Botany B.C.* on Texada Island, *Botany Washington* on the Olympic Peninsula, and collected fungi on the Queen Charlotte Islands. In this kaleidoscope of events you will also see a plant that has not been collected in British Columbia since 1897, and get a short exposure to the Haida performing art, the first theatre play written and performed in the Haida language. You might leave confused, but not bored. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Admission free, everyone welcome, bring your friends.

Saturday, September 20 and Sunday, September 21

EVENT

Victoria's Monthly Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers, so get out your field guide. Call **James Miskelly** (count coordinator) at 250-477-0490.

Sunday, September 21

EVENT

The Dirt Safari

Trek through the tall grass of the flood plain to discover a 12,000 year old beach. Paint your face with marine clay and feel the earthquake as you jump on pickled peat. Help Mr. Jaws grab mud pudding from the bottom of Swan Lake. Build a soil sandwich, draw with dirt and play with pottery clay. Drop-in program suitable for ages 5 and up at Swan lake Nature Sanctuary, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Donations appreciated. Contact **Margaret Lidkea**: 250-479-0211.

Wednesday, September 24

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Birds on the Move

Birders follow the seasonal changes in the birds they see, but bird movements are more fascinating than the migrations we are familiar with. Join **Bruce Whittington** for a look at our west coast birds on the move. We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at UVic at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome, and bring a friend.

Saturday, September 27

EVENT

Hawk Watch at East Sooke Regional Park

The raptor spectacular is underway! Birding enthusiasts from the Society will be facilitating this event, as well as staff from Pacific Northwest Raptors, who will be bringing a live raptor. Displays and activities will take place in the field at Aylard Farm and experts with spotting scopes will be at the viewpoint above Beechey Head until 3 p.m. The hike up to the viewpoint requires that you wear sturdy footwear and be prepared for a 20-minute hike up a steep and rocky trail. Bring your binoculars, water and a lunch. Drop in at the CRD Parks tent in the Aylard Farm

parking lot off Becher Bay Road. 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Suitable for all ages.

Sunday, September 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Hawk Watch at East Sooke Park

Join **Dannie Carsen** and **Robin Robinson** to see the peak of the raptor migration. Up to 14 species of raptors are possible, and the other highlight is the large numbers of Turkey Vultures, hundreds may be seen at once. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 8:30 a.m. to carpool, or at the Aylard Farm parking lot at East Sooke Park at 9:00 a.m. Call Dannie at 250-544-2117 for more information.

Monday, September 29

MARINE NIGHT

Sharks to Cenotes: Diving the Caribbean from the Bahamas to the Yucatan Peninsula

Biologist/diver **Jim Cosgrove** will present slides and a video of his trips to the Caribbean, including freshwater diving in the Cenotes of the Yucatan Peninsula. 7:30 p.m. Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome.

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 4

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding at Whiffen Spit, Sooke

In recent years a Grasshopper Sparrow, Lapland Longspurs, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and a Ruff have stopped at this migrant stopover in Sooke. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Helmcken Park and Ride to carpool or meet in the parking lot at the foot of Whiffen Spit Road at 8:30 a.m. Call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 250-652-3326 for more information.

Sunday, October 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding

We have hired a boat (the *Fantasea II*) to go from Victoria Harbour out into the Juan De Fuca Strait and to Race Rocks to find some of the pelagic species that feed there. We will follow the tide debris line that occurs between Victoria and Race Rocks as the currents cause an upwelling of nutrients from the bottom resulting in the best feeding spots for the birds. Possible birds include shearwaters, murrelets, auklets, jaegers, Northern Fulmar, Tufted Puffin, many species of gulls, phalaropes, and other pelagics. There is room for 20 people; the cost is \$50.00 per person for a 5 hour trip (9 a.m.–2 p.m.). You must pre-register by phoning **Ed Pellizzon** at 250-881-1476.

Sunday, October 12

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Tuesday, October 14

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

Volcanoes: A Very Hot Topic

Catherine Hickson of Natural Resources Canada will be talking about some of the volcanoes in B.C., including her work at the Nazco Cone near Quesnel. Everyone is welcome. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 in the Fraser building at UVic. Bring your mug for tea and coffee.

Sunday, October 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Koksilah: Trees Worth Saving

You probably have heard about the big old growth Douglas-fir trees along the Koksilah River in the Shawnigan Lake area. **Warrick Whitehead** is one of a dedicated group trying to save these trees from being logged. He will lead us into the area and show us why this stand is unique and must be saved. To find out more about these trees, check out <http://koksilah.blogspot.com>. Meet at 9:15 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool to Shawnigan. No pets please. Dress for the weather. Hiking boots and a stick will help you safely traverse the rough terrain as we will not be on groomed trails. Bring a lunch, snacks and lots to drink for an all-day outing. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, October 19

EVENT

Wild Mushroom Show

A special presentation by the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society. Discover the world of wacky and wonderful mushrooms of Vancouver Island. The huge variety found in our forests, fields and gardens will be on display. Bring your specimens for identification by members of the Mycological Society. Drop-in family program for ages 6 and up. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations appreciated. Contact **Margaret Lidkea**: 250-479-0211.

Tuesday, October 21

BOTANY NIGHT

The Fynbos of South Africa

Join **Phillipa Hudson** as she journeys back to her roots to experience the extraordinary plant diversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom, a tiny area of the planet that offers one of the most diverse flora anywhere. The region that gave the world ericas, proteas, leucadendrons, ixias, watsonias and so many more families and genera has a rich history of exploration and study. From Wikipedia: “Fynbos (meaning “fine bush” in Afrikaans) is the natural shrubland or heathland vegetation occurring in a small belt of the Western Cape of South Africa, mainly in winter rainfall coastal and mountainous areas with a Mediterranean climate”. Admission free and everyone welcome. Bring your friends! Swan Lake Nature House 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT

A Plate of Ice: Birds of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean

Bryan Gates has plenty of slides and information about the birds that make this region their home. We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser building at UVic at 7:30 p.m. Bring your mug for tea and coffee. Everyone is welcome.

Monday, October 27

MARINE NIGHT

Underwater Archaeology in BC

Below the surface of British Columbia's lakes, rivers and coastal waters lies a fascinating history. Ships, planes, trains, and First Nations villages covered by a rising ocean almost 10,000 years ago, provide a rich variety of sites for the underwater archaeologist. Since 1975, the Underwater Archaeological Society of BC (UASBC) has systematically identified, located, surveyed and protected many of these historic resources. **John Middleton**, Director of the Victoria Chapter of the UASBC will talk about some of the more than 2000 shipwrecks in BC waters, including the *Boston* and the *Tonquin*, and provide an overview of the methodologies and technologies used to locate and survey them. 7:30 p.m. Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome.

BULLETIN BOARD

For Sale

Three slide projectors, \$30 each. All are manually operated and can use carousel slide holder, tipped on side, or trays that hold slides in a row: Sawyers 500S and 550A and a Strato Auto Focus. Contact Bob Chappell at rwchappell@shaw.ca or 250-388-4696.

Saturday Birding Group

We send out the time and location on the RBA (Rare Bird Alert) (250-592-3381) on the Thursday and Friday before that

weeks' walk. For more information, call Rick Schortinghuis at 250-652-3326.

Year-round Tuesday Morning Birding Group

The Tuesday Birding Group meets every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront in Oak Bay, they then decide where they will go birding that morning. The Tuesday Birding group has been around for more than fifty years. Call Bill Dancer at 250-721-5273 for more information.



Baby Violet-green Swallows. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*