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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Contents

President's Message <i>By Darren Copley</i>	4
2010 VNHS Award Recipients	5
Ancient Forest Alliance <i>By Ken Wu</i>	6
Valentines Vanquish Vexation, Vault to Victory <i>By Alan McLeod</i>	9
The Winter Hummers of Cadboro Bay <i>By David Riedel</i>	10
Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society Wetland Restoration Project <i>By Purnima Govindarajulu</i>	12
BC Breeding Bird Atlas – Halfway Home! <i>By Ann Nightingale</i>	18
GORP: Not Your Typical Trail Mix <i>By Brigitte Dreger-Smylie</i>	19
Welcome to New VNHS Members	19
HAT Bringing Good Neighbours Project to Island View Beach <i>By Adam Taylor</i>	20
Calendar of Events	21
Bulletin Board	23

COVER PHOTO

Goose-neck barnacles (*Pollicipes polymerus*) photographed at Botany Bay, near Port Renfrew © Mikhail Belikov/ <www.focusonwild.com>. For those interested in learning more about our local marine life check out the two intertidal field trips in the calendar (p21): Saturday, May 29 and Sunday, June 13.

As naturalists our approach to the beauty of nature seems to occur with senses tuned to maximum: bird song, flower scent, insect buzz – we take notice of things most people are oblivious of. But when the topic of nature being battered from all directions comes up, the desire to plug your ears and cover your eyes to avoid the onslaught can be overpowering. The simple fact is that many naturalists prefer the solace of nature to the rancour of dispute. But while our eyes and ears are blocked, the very things we value can be lost. And often the voices that are heard on nature's behalf lack the knowledge of a naturalist, and debate with emotion alone, when passion combined with facts are really the perfect blend. And then there are the voices that **don't** speak for nature: they are many, they're loud, and they're constant.

Because of the barrage of issues, I often feel pulled in a million directions and powerless overall. But our community needs to be heard. It is critical that we find our voices in defence of the things we value. Among the issues needing our attention is the Regional Parks 2010-2019 Strategic Plan. Information about this process is available on the CRD Parks website <<http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/planning/strategicplan.htm>>, and the Advisory Panel is welcoming the public's input. Please consider taking time to comment on how our regional parks could be better cared for to protect their natural values.

Claudia

President's Message

By Darren Copley

When I was in my early 20's, a Wood Duck showed up in a recently-constructed pond at my parents property near Beaver Lake, and I immediately thought we had a very rare bird – something so spectacular had to be rare. But then after going through my field guide I learned the truth. And, by reading more about Wood Duck natural history, I discovered that many types of ducks actually nest in woodpecker holes, and will also use artificial nest-boxes. I quickly built my very first nest-box, and, although it would not win any woodworking awards, it did win the attention of our first pair of Wood Ducks. I also got to see the babies fledge – I spent an hour watching the day-old chicks after seeing them drop three metres out of the box attached to a cottonwood tree. And that was the beginning of my life-long hobby of building nest-boxes.

The Victoria Natural History Society has an even longer history with nest-boxes, and is currently involved in the Western Bluebird Recovery Program in partnership with the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team and the Salt Spring Island Conservancy. Harold Pollock, the Society's original bird house man, spent many hours trying to keep this species in the region, and the plan was a good one. We are going to try again now that the Washington population is rebounding. Members can help by providing nest-box supplies, such as 1×6 and 1×8 rough cedar.

Invasive species are a huge problem when you are trying to encourage native birds: House Sparrows, European Starlings, and Grey Squirrels all impact native cavity-nesting birds by destroying the eggs, killing the nestlings, and even killing the adult birds. The Society is going to provide entrance-hole templates that will reduce the likelihood of the introduced House Sparrows using nest-boxes throughout our region. For a small donation to the Society (\$3 each), anyone can have as many as they need. Victoria Natural History Society members can help by spreading the word about the impacts these non-natives are having, modifying your own nest-boxes to exclude them, and by collecting the 1×6 hardwood shorts and/or plastic lumber needed in their construction. If you are handy and want to build an excluder yourself, "how to" instructions and dimensions are available online: <<http://members.shaw.ca/swallows/>> – many thanks to Malcolm Rodin for providing this.

Thanks to VNHSer Bob Chappell, Claudia and I once again have a camera installed in one of the nest-boxes on our pond. This one happens to "belong" to a Hooded Merganser. What a treat it is to see her inside the nest – laying eggs, adjusting the nesting material, preening – all leading toward that critical 24 hours when the chicks hatch and have to climb up the inside and pop out into our pond. We try very hard not to miss that season finale!



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2010 VNHS Award Recipients

(Presented at the VNHS AGM)



Distinguished Service Award: Gordon Hart

Gordon Hart is one of those people who contributes greatly to the Victoria Natural History Society behind the scenes, so is not often recognized for his efforts. In fact, the Annual General Meeting is usually the only time that most VNHS members get to see his work.

Gordon has been the treasurer of the VNHS since 1996. Unlike most directors' positions, the treasurer's job actually requires some very specific skills. Gordon's background as an accountant makes him impeccably qualified for this position, and under his guardianship, the VNHS's accounts and investments have weathered the economic storms we've seen in the past several years. Gordon has been instrumental in maintaining and improving the VNHS's contributions to student scholarships and awards. He has managed donations from \$5 to more than \$75,000 to ensure that the desires of the donors have been honoured, and has worked with partners such as Leadership Victoria to see projects like the Witty's Lagoon Teaching Shelter completed professionally and responsibly.

Most organizations' treasurers only get attention when there have been misdeeds. We wish to break this trend by recognizing Gordon's positive contributions to the Victoria Natural History Society by presenting him with a Distinguished Service Award.

Distinguished Service Award: Agnes Lynn

There are some members of our Society whose first name is recognized by almost everyone. Agnes is one of those people.

Agnes Lynn, although supposedly retired, has an unrivalled energy level for just about anything she decides to do. She has worked tirelessly for several natural history and gardening organizations, including the VNHS, the Native Plant Study Group, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, the Victoria Rhododendron Society, and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park, to name just a few. She has organized and led field trips, registered participants for events, spoken at meetings, and invited the public to her home for activities as diverse as banding hummingbirds to proofreading reams of research data. Agnes has provided a vehicle *and* a chauffeur for numerous field trips by enlisting the help of her husband, Dave, for many projects. With Agnes, it's almost like getting a two-for-one deal!

Always outspoken, and often serving as a mother figure, keeping her fellow naturalists on the narrow path, both literally and figuratively, there is probably no one better known throughout the naturalist community than Agnes Lynn. For all of these reasons and more, we presented Agnes with a Victoria Natural History Society Distinguished Service Award.

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Ancient Forest Alliance – New Eco-Group Points to Resource Depletion as the Driver Behind the Collapse of Coastal Forestry Jobs and Ecosystems

By Ken Wu

A new organization has recently emerged in the world of BC's non-profit environmental community: the Ancient Forest Alliance. Founded in January 2010 by former Wilderness Committee activists, the new organization seeks to continue the grassroots education and mobilization campaigns to protect old-growth forests, but with a new twist: without charitable status, which will enable the organization to get more political in its criticisms or endorsements of politicians. This will become a great motivator for the BC government and all political parties to embrace a conservation agenda to protect the disappearing

ancient forests of Vancouver Island and southern British Columbia. In addition, the organization will be building broad-based support among First Nations, businesses, faith groups, scientists, and members of naturalist clubs for ancient forest protection.

At the core of the Ancient Forest Alliance's philosophy is the understanding that resource depletion has resulted in the increasing collapse of both coastal forestry jobs and of ecosystems on BC's southern coast. While the recent recession and the downturn in the US housing market have been regularly cited for the woes of BC's coastal forest



A backcountry explorer in a Gordon River Valley clearcut, near Port Renfrew. The BC government continues to allow the destruction of ancient temperate rainforests on Vancouver Island even though less than 25% of these ecological treasures remain. *Photo: T.J. Watt*

Today, 75% of the original, productive old-growth forests on Vancouver Island have already been logged, including 90% of the valley bottoms where the biggest trees grow and most biodiversity resides.

industry, the simple fact is that the logging companies have largely depleted the biggest and best old-growth stands in the valley bottoms and lower elevations that historically built the industry. Despite our slow climb out of a recession, the crisis with coastal forestry jobs will only continue unless the BC government ensures the industry's reorientation towards sustainable second-growth logging and value-added manufacturing, rather than promoting ancient forest liquidation, mill closures, and massive raw log exports to foreign mills.

In a report for the Ministry of Forests (Ready for Change, 2001), Dr. Peter Pearse describes the history of "high grade" overcutting: "The general pattern was to take the nearest, most accessible and most valuable timber first, gradually expanding up coastal valleys and mountainsides into more remote and lower quality timber, less valuable, and costlier to harvest. Today, loggers are approaching the end of the merchantable old-growth in many areas, and are caught in the vise of rising costs and declining harvest value, the primary sector of the industry no longer earns an adequate return (page 7)."

Today, 75% of the original, productive old-growth forests on Vancouver Island have already been logged, including 90% of the valley bottoms where the biggest trees grow and most biodiversity resides.

In addition, our forests have also been "cherry-picked" by tree species. During the first half of the 20th century, commercial loggers scoured the coast for tall, straight Sitka spruce trees for ships and World War I and II airplanes. Similarly ancient Douglas-firs were heavily logged until the last major coastal stands were gone by the 1970's. Western redcedar was considered to be a lower value species in the early days, but with the depletion of the giant firs and spruce trees, have become the new "green gold" and are quickly being high-graded out of the landscape. Western hemlock and amabilis fir, once considered to be "junk" species, will inevitably become highly sought-after species as the giant western redcedars are depleted.

As the last of the old-growth stands are being eliminated, so too are the forestry jobs and the biodiversity that depends on them.

BC's coastal forest industry, once the mightiest in Canada, is now a mere remnant of what it once was. Over the past nine years, more than 60 BC mills have closed and 20,000 forestry jobs have been lost, including scores along the coast.

Similarly, the wildlife of Vancouver Island and BC's southern coast is being pushed towards collapse. Coastal black-tailed deer populations on Vancouver Island, once numbering more than 200,000 animals in the 1970's, have declined to less than 60,000 today due to logging of their

mid-elevation old-growth wintering habitat, where they find food and shelter. The Spotted Owl, found in the old-growth forests of the Lower Mainland, once numbered more than a thousand birds – today, only six individuals are known to exist in BC's wilds. The Vancouver Island wolverine – a wilderness-dependent 27 kilogram weasel-relative able to kill a deer and fight off a bear hasn't been seen on Vancouver Island for almost two decades. The rivers and streams, once overflowing with millions of spawning chinook, sockeye, chum, coho, and steelhead, are now a sad remnant of their former glory – degraded with logging debris and silt.



Ancient Forest Alliance co-founder Tara Sawatsky stands beside the Tolkien Giant, a massive old-growth western redcedar growing in the unprotected Upper Walbran Valley on Vancouver Island, BC. It measures more than more than 15 m around and 5 m across at its base, and would be well over 500 years old.
Photo: T.J. Watt

The history of resource depletion and the collapse of human and natural communities is a familiar one around the world, both in forestry and fisheries. Historically and today, it has been facilitated by a combination of near-sighted politicians, greedy corporations, and bureaucrats with old mindsets who either don't believe in or don't really care about the earth's limits. Rather than watching and facilitating the history of resource depletion play itself out again in the old-growth forests of southern BC, our government needs to wake-up and steer us away from heading over the precipice.

While much of the old-growth forests are now gone on Vancouver Island and BC's south coast, enough remains so that there is still a chance to do things right. If the BC government enacted policies to protect our ancient forests and ensure the sustainable logging and value-adding of second-growth forests, which now constitute the vast majority of the productive forest lands on BC's south coast, we could protect our last old-growth forests and sustain forestry jobs at the same time. The human and natural communities of the planet deserve nothing less.

To find out more about the Ancient Forest Alliance, or to make a donation visit <www.ancientforestalliance.org> or call 250-896-4007.

KEN WU worked for a decade as the Wilderness Committee's campaign director in Victoria and is a co-founder of the Ancient Forest Alliance.



Ancient Forest Alliance co-founder and campaign director Ken Wu sits a-top a giant western redcedar stump measuring 4.3m (14ft) in diameter. After it had been growing more than 1,000 years, this tree was logged by Teal Jones Group as part of a 2007 clearcut in the Upper Walbran Valley. Photo: T.J. Watt


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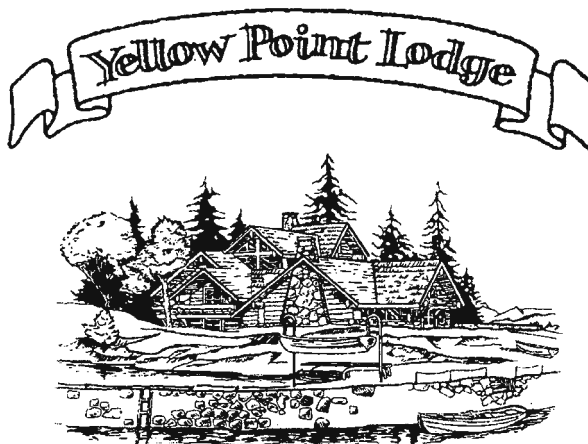
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Valentines Vanquish Vexation, Vault to Victory

By Alan MacLeod

The weatherman had forecast a so-so day and an occasional rain squall did vex participants, but despite the damp forecast a record number of couples – ten – turned up for the 13th annual VNHS Valentine Couples' Birdathon, February 14. By all accounts, no one regretted rising early to join the fun. We were happy to see several new faces at the wrap-up gathering, and two familiar ones missing these last few years.

The big winners in this outing were Mitchell Grant and Amy Medve. In their second try for the top step of the podium, Amy and Mitchell found 74 species in the checklist area, one of their best being a Northern Saw-whet Owl on Finlayson Arm Road. Their two-fold reward: having their names engraved on the Anderson Trophy, and a gift certificate from **Wild Birds Unlimited**.

Last year Agnes Lynn suggested that we offer a “greenhorn” prize to encourage participation by new birders. So we did, and are glad of it. First-year birder Jessie Fanucchi led her valentine, Spencer Dixon, on a merry chase to some of Victoria's best birding hotspots. The rookies collected 41 species for their efforts. Two of them, Sanderling and Snow Goose, were “lifers” for Jessie – the first of her birding career. For Spencer the morning was even more memorable: virtually all 41 were lifers for him. Their reward for boldly going where they had never gone before was a dinner for two sponsored by **Swans Brewpub**.

Three couples put themselves in this year's “green division” – those forgoing motorized transport. Mike and Barb McGrenere, Andrew and Gail Harcombe, and ourselves – Jan Brown and I – all did the birdathon by bicycle – and almost finished in a three-way tie, two at 67 species, one at 69. Jan is a nimble quilter; last year she hand-crafted a handsome pair of tote bags for the leading green couple. Feeling obliged to do my bit this year, I produced fridge magnets with raw materials of local wind-felled Garry oak, Canadian bird stamps and powerful rare-earth magnets. The Harcombes and McGreneres each took away a set of four magnets. Since Gail and Andrew were doing their first-ever bike-birding perhaps they deserved something extra, and they got it: a gift certificate from **The Red Brick Cafe** in Sidney.

The largesse kept on coming. By group consensus the prize for *Bird of the Day* went to Jeremy and Thea Kimm for the Spotted Sandpiper they found at Albert Head Lagoon. Thea and Jeremy get to dine out, not just on the glory, but at the **James Bay Inn** too. The aggregate species count in this year's birdathon was 106 species. Before the grand total was disclosed every couple took a turn at guessing the total. Agnes and David Lynn came close, guessing 105, and won themselves a gift certificate from **Michell Farms** in Central



The big winners: Mitchell Grant and Amy Medve. *Photo provided by author*

Saanich. A gift certificate from **The Victorian Bird House** went to Jenny Feick and Ian Hatter.

David Fraser and Leah Ramsay, back in the hunt after an absence of a few years, had a very different morning from the one they had planned. They'd been out on the town on Saturday night and got entangled with more than one glass of an unfamiliar but tasty cocktail. As a consequence they were fast asleep at the appointed 6 a.m. start time and remained that way for another four hours. We give them heaps of credit for going ahead anyway and regret only that we hadn't thought to conjure a prize for most species seen on a per-hour basis.

And what of the birds? Apart from the Northern Saw-whet Owl and Spotted Sandpiper, notables include an American Bittern at Swan Lake, four Snow Geese at Martindale Flats and – a sure sign of spring – numbers of Western Meadowlarks at scattered locations.

Jerry and Gladys Anderson are our co-organizers of the Valentine Birdathon. The four of us beat the bushes each year, inviting selected businesses to sponsor prizes. We think the birdathon is a pretty swell event even without the prizes, but the sponsors each year provide icing on the cake – or gravy on the fries, if you prefer – and we are, as always, grateful to our sponsors for their support. We encourage VNHS members to give them your business.

Finally, given the record turnout we can also boast a record bounty for VNHS conservation efforts: all of the entrance fees collected from participating couples will go to that cause.

The Winter Hummers of Cadboro Bay

By David Riedel

On February 21, VNHS members Agnes and Dave Lynn hosted an annual event, “The Winter Hummers of Cadboro Bay.” For research purposes, Anna’s Hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*) were caught and banded, various measurements were taken, and the birds were released. Agnes is a dedicated botanist and horticulturalist, and the Lynn’s property has a vast array of native and non-native plants, many of which bloom during winter months. The hummers have noticed.

We were also privileged to have Cam Finlay in attendance to share his expertise. British Columbia’s acknowledged authority on hummingbirds, Cam has been involved in the banding of approximately 30,000 hummingbirds in the province. In 2007 he was interviewed for an article about the decline of BC’s hummingbird populations: <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2007/05/07/bc-hummingbirds.html>>.

Hummingbirds (family Trochilidae), indigenous to the western hemisphere only, are amongst the most beautiful, remarkable, and fascinating vertebrate animals on Earth. Perhaps those are subjective qualities, but very few people can remain indifferent to these little creatures as they zip around like miniature helicopters, stopping to drink from the flowers. They are inherently awe-inspiring, and figure prominently as icons of First Nations art. In *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*, David Sibley describes hummingbirds as “tiny birds with exceptionally long bills...unmistakable.” He continues, “They have extremely long and broad primaries and beat their wings up to 70 times per second in insect-like hovering flight.... All hummingbirds are essentially solitary and aggressive.” In *A Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*, Roger Tory Peterson adds, “Jewel-like gorgets (throat feathers) adorn most adult males. Hummingbirds hover when feeding; their



Photos: Agnes Lynn

wing motion is so rapid that the wings appear blurred. They can fly backward. Pugnacious.”

To catch hummingbirds, a net was set up over a hummingbird feeder that could be lowered when a bird arrived. As a patient crowd waited quietly, an incoming bird was heard announcing its arrival with a strident jika, jika, jika, jika. After it came to the feeder, the net was lowered quickly. Dave reached in and gently caught the hummer in his hand. After a few moments of being carefully handled, birds usually calm down.

I stayed long enough to see two birds caught, measured, and banded with a unique identifying number. The first was a female weighing 5.02 grams; next, a male weighing 5.24 grams. With each bird, Dave took various additional measurements, checked for fat and parasites, and then released the bird. On release, the birds were as vocal as they were on arrival. (Note: native birds can be legally trapped and banded only with a valid federal permit issued by the Canadian Wildlife Service. Trapping without a permit is a federal offence.)

The Canadian population of Anna’s Hummingbird is restricted to southern Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland; it is accidental in the Okanagan. In the 1920s, Anna’s Hummingbird was found no further north than California. But, as Cam told us, it followed hummingbird feeders north. By 1940, it was located in Oregon. By the 1950s, it was confirmed as wintering on Vancouver Island. It is now very common on southern Vancouver Island, particularly greater Victoria, and is the only hummingbird species that can be regularly found in Canada year-round. When we have occasional spells of freezing temperatures, I think of these creatures, which have high surface area to body mass ratios, and thus lose heat rapidly. They survive the cold by going into a state of torpor, slowing their metabolism down to a minimum. They also rely on sugar from feeders, and slower-metabolizing proteins from small spiders and insects.

In late January, a female Anna’s Hummingbird will lay two eggs, which she incubates for an average of 16 days. The nestlings fledge after an average of 21 days. After

copulation, males are negligent and absent parents. Females do all the work – from building a nest of plant material, lichens, and spider webs, to incubating the eggs and feeding the nestlings. She will often have a second brood in March.

Vancouver Island has another common species, the Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). The first ones arrive here shortly before the spring equinox, travelling north as a trail of red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) and salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) flowers open before them. They stay only for the breeding season, and leave in August. In the breeding season, Rufous Hummingbirds can be found throughout BC, except the northeastern corner. It also ranges into southern coastal Alaska and southwestern Yukon.

For more information on both species, see Cam Finlay’s article on Anna’s at <<http://talkaboutwildlife.ca/profile/?s=178>>, and Rufous at <<http://talkaboutwildlife.ca/profile/?s=180>>. Both were written for Albertan readers, but contain good information, as documented by our local expert.

Like all animals, hummingbirds have specific habitat requirements. Migratory hummingbirds, like the Rufous, additionally require a series of stops along their migration routes, with adequate food and shelter at each stop. Across western North America, the population of Rufous Hummingbirds is declining due to habitat loss. By banding on a regular basis, we are able to track numbers as part of a long-term study of the population.

The animals of the biosphere are interconnected, including our own species and the various species of hummingbirds. It would be a terrible loss to see these splendid creatures decline and become rare. Let’s be mindful of these smallest birds, and work together to ensure a bright future for them.



Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society Wetland Restoration Project

By Purnima Govindarajulu

Introduction

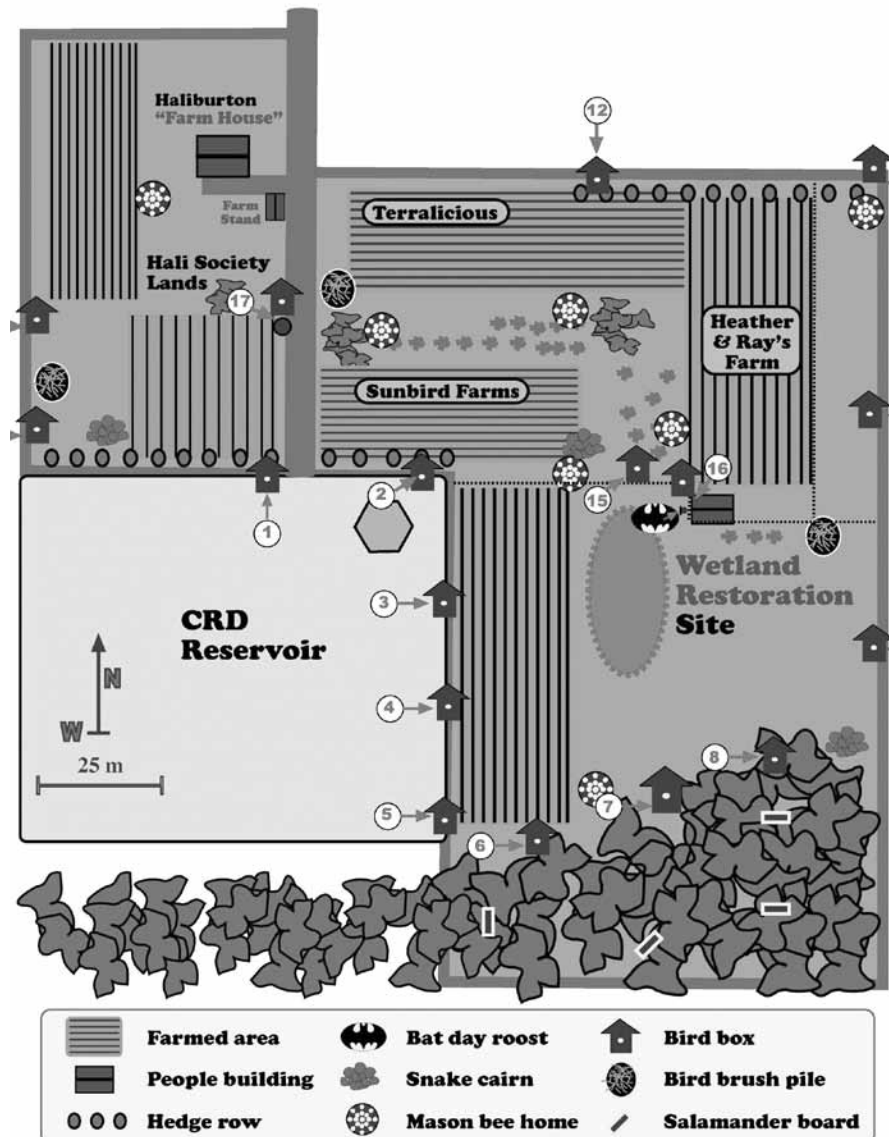
Urbanization often results in rapid degradation of ecosystems¹⁻³ and declines in biodiversity is predicted to increase rapidly over the next 30 years.⁴ If we are to meet the targets set by the UN Convention on Biodiversity, wildlife conservation and stewardship activities need to occur in human modified habitats as much as in protected areas and parks.^{5,6} Recent research shows that creating networks of temporary wetlands can benefit a number of taxa, especially in human modified habitats.^{2,7-9} Small, isolated, temporary, fishless ponds are not protected under current landuse legislation and their loss can lead to declines in a number of vertebrate and invertebrate taxa,¹⁰ especially amphibians. Many permanent ponds are dominated by introduced fish and bullfrogs in southern Vancouver Island and are not suitable habitats for breeding amphibians. We chose amphibians as the focal species of our restoration effort because of their public appeal, their roles as indicators of ecosystem health and because they use both aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Amphibians not only need aquatic breeding habitats but also need upland forested and grassland foraging areas connected to breeding ponds by riparian corridors. Given these habitat needs, amphibians are ideal focal species around which to plan urban biodiversity restoration and enhancement.

Our project goal was to restore a highly degraded wetland on Haliburton Community Organic Farm. The three objectives of the project were to: 1) restore the degraded wetland into a functioning vernal pond; 2) conduct a wetland restoration workshop; and 3) create a land-stewardship demonstration site.

Site Details

Haliburton Farm is a 4.09-hectare area in the District of Saanich on southern Vancouver Island and is zoned as a demonstration farm. Historically there was a fairly large pond (called "lake" in early maps) in the south-western section of the Farm. This pond was filled by the Capital Regional District Water

Service in the 1970s using soil excavated from the construction of the adjacent underground water reservoir. This changed the hydrology of the site and, although water now collected in winter on the northern edge of the historical wetland, it drained away by the end of May, making it unsuitable breeding habitat for amphibians or invertebrates that normally thrive in temporary fishless wetlands with a longer hydroperiod.^{11,12} The wetland was also extensively invaded by reed canary grass and the aquatic diversity was low, dominated by a few aquatic beetle species.



Project Planning

In 2008, we invited renowned wetland restoration expert Thomas Biebighauser to evaluate the site and prepare a project plan. Soils were tested using a soil auger and a tile probe. Organic material averaging 25 cm thick was found in the surface layers of the wetland, which rested over a sand layer at least 1.5 m thick that contained one to two thin layers of silt. The soils were mottled, indicating seasonal saturation with water. The water table was not encountered, showing that the area drained slowly and deeply by summer.

There are three primary techniques for creating a wetland: 1) exposing the water table (groundwater technique); 2) building a dam to collect runoff (surface water technique); and 3) creating a depression and an impermeable layer to increase water retention (liner technique). As we did not encounter the water table when we dug test pits, we concluded that the water table was too deep to be excavated to form a wetland by the groundwater method. The soils on the proposed restoration site are too coarse to be shaped and compacted to create an impermeable clay layer and earthen dam to hold surface water. Therefore, a synthetic liner was chosen as the best method to develop a wetland with the hydrologic regime needed to support amphibian breeding and aquatic invertebrate habitat.

The ideal area for the wetland was the low area dominated by reed canary grass, situated along the upper edge of the



Tom Biebighauser testing the soil using a soil auger.

historic wetland. The wetland was to be built below the profile of the ditch now draining the farm so that the drainage was not changed. This project was designed to increase the length of time that the center of the area held water.

The overall size of the restoration area is 45 m x 20 m, which was the maximum extent of the wetland in the winter. To provide an extended hydroperiod (the amount of time water is retained in a wetland) for breeding amphibians and invertebrates, we created two deeper ponds that would retain water until the end of summer. Pond 1 was placed in the open and was 18.2 x 15.2 m and Pond 2 was placed closer to the forest and was 12.2 m². These dimensions indicate the dimensions of the liner used, and the pond itself was slightly smaller, with an irregular shoreline. Pond 1 was lined with a PVC (polyvinyl chloride) liner and Pond 2 with an EPDM (ethylene propylene diene monomer) liner, which are the two most popular pond liner materials available. Both pond liners are aquatic safe and have been used successfully for decades by restoration experts such as Mr. Biebighauser.

We did not want the ponds to hold water permanently because we wanted to prevent invasive bullfrogs from breeding in the pond.¹³ Native amphibians in our region breed early (February to June) and most metamorphose out of the ponds by the end of the summer (June to September), although some native amphibians can remain longer in the ponds under some environmental conditions. Bullfrogs on the other hand, breed late in the season (June-July) and all tadpoles must spend the first winter buried in the mud in the pond. By letting the pond dry by the end of August, all bullfrog tadpoles will be killed even if eggs were laid in the pond in June. Bullfrogs are generalist predators and have been shown to have negative effects on native fauna.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ The magnitude of these impacts is exacerbated through habitat change in complex ways.¹⁷⁻¹⁹

In our design, the only way for the ponds to dry by late summer is through evaporation. A deep pond may not dry by the end of the summer, whereas a shallow pond may dry too quickly. The rate of evaporation depends on a number of factors including air temperature, atmospheric pressure, and wind speed. The rate at which a pond dries will also depend on surface area, shading by trees, day-length, and transpiration by surrounding vegetation among other factors. Since we did not have accurate estimates of most of these factors, we simply estimated the number of days it would take to evaporate a given volume of water at the average temperature, wind speed and atmospheric pressure for Victoria from June to August. Given these calculations, we estimated that a pond of the sizes in our restoration project will need to be approximately a meter deep in late May or early June, and that this volume of water would evaporate by the end of the summer. Although these estimates were very rough, our confidence in these calculations increased because this depth of one meter is similar to the depth of other highly productive amphibian breeding ponds in our region.

Once detailed wetland plans were drawn, appropriate permits were obtained from the District of Saanich and checks were completed to ensure that there were no buried utilities

at the site. The wetland was completely dry by the time excavation started, so no wildlife salvage was required. The reed canary grass, which in June was more than two metres tall, was mowed to improve visibility on the site and to facilitate excavation. We also conducted a neighbourhood outreach campaign to all the immediate neighbours to explain our project and the ecosystem benefits of the project.

Wetland Construction and Workshop

The actual construction of the wetland was organized as a hands-on teaching workshop, and the participants assembled at the restoration site at 9 a.m. June 28, 2009. Following a brief introduction of the day's procedures by Mr. Biebighauser, work on pond building commenced. The first step in the procedure was to measure and mark the outline of the area to be excavated for Pond 1. Although the pond liner is manufactured as a rectangle, the outline of the pond was drawn to be an oval (to maximize the size of the pond) and the excavation was perfectly bowl-shaped to prevent slippage of the liner. The lowest area on the perimeter of the pond was determined using a laser level and all depth measurements were referenced from this lowest point in the pond perimeter.

Since the site was heavily invaded by reed canary grass, we decided that the top 25 cm of the wetland restoration area would be scraped and mounded and buried under a tarp for a few years to kill the roots and seeds. This top soil would not be used within the wetland area to prevent reinvasion by this grass. Once the top soil was removed and the outline of the pond revealed, the next step was to dig a trench along the axis of the wetland to establish the depth and slope contours. The goal was to have a wetland that was a meter deep, but the excavation had to be 20 cm deeper to

accommodate the liner and the topsoil that would be deposited on top of the liner.

During these excavations, an old drainage structure was uncovered. The drainage structure was a trench about 50 cm deep, filled with small rocks and pebbles at the bottom, surrounding concrete drain tiles. Mr. Biebighauser surmised from the type of drain tile used, that the drain structures could date from the 1800s to the early 1900s. It was not possible to tell which way the drain flowed because the land contours had been changed so much during the past century. Such drains have been used extensively throughout North America to drain wetlands, and convert these rich bottomlands to agriculture. We removed the drain tiles, and used the small rocks and pebbles to make snake habitat on the edge of the wetland. The excavation also unearthed an old rusted irrigation pipe, indicating that there may have been a pond or a well nearby that was used when Haliburton Farm was an active farm in the mid-20th century.

While the excavation was going on, Mr. Biebighauser taught the workshop participants the various techniques of testing and analyzing soil conditions and the importance of properly understanding soil conditions to determine the best wetland building technique. He demonstrated the technique of wetting the soil and forming ribbons; soils rich in clay would form long ribbons, whereas soils with high sand and coarse grains would form short ribbons that break after a few centimetres. Soils that could form ribbons greater than 10 cm were suitable for compaction to form surface-water wetlands.

By the end of that first day, the excavation of the bowl for the first wetland was completed. The surface of the wetland was raked and all stones and sharp objects that could pierce the liner removed. The site was ready for the laying of the liner the following day.

Work on the wetland started at 8 a.m. on the second day. As with Pond 1, the outline was drawn for Pond 2 and with detailed instructions from Mr. Biebighauser, the excavator operator was able to proceed. While the depression from Pond 2 was being excavated, work to complete Pond 1 began. One problem was a small seep of water that collected at the bottom of Pond 1. It was unclear where the water was originating but it seemed to seep from the east side of the pond about 20 cm above the bottom of the pond. After examining the location of the seep and the rate of flow, Mr. Biebighauser decided that this would not cause a problem and that once the liner was in place with the earth on top, the pressure of this weight would force the water in the seep to find an alternate route to flow.

The next step was to line the excavated depression with an impermeable barrier to retain water in the depression. First a geo-textile fabric was laid on the bottom of the depression. This would protect the PVC pond-liner from being ruptured by sharp objects. The pond liner was then laid over the geo-textile fabric. The liner was covered over with another layer of geo-textile. The liner, sandwiched between the two layers of geo-textile, is well protected.

Once the liner was secured with the spikes along its edge, the topsoil saved from the excavation could be added on top of the liner to form eventually the muddy bottom of the



An intact drainage tile unearthed during construction.

pond. The amount of topsoil that is added and the placement of the soil can be used to create an irregular shape to the shoreline of the wetland so that it looks more natural. Piles of topsoil can also be used to create islands and a diversity of depths. The minimum amount of topsoil at any location on the pond bottom should be 20 cm deep, but more soil can be added to create shallower areas.

The same procedures described above were repeated for Pond 2: mark the perimeter of the pond, remove topsoil with reed canary grass seeds and discard (or bury), dig a trench along the main axis of the pond to ensure depth and slope contours are correct, excavate the pond (saving topsoil for later use), line the bottom of the pond with a pond-liner sandwiched between two layers of geo-textile, cover the pond bottom with topsoil to create a natural shape to the wetland and a diversity of depths, seed the topsoil with fall rye, and cover over with straw to minimize erosion of newly disturbed soils.

By late afternoon on the second day, both wetlands had been built. All that remained was to add logs and woody debris to both the ponds to provide perches for birds and dragonflies, and safe basking areas for amphibians and reptiles.

Post-construction Update

The original plan was to leave the ponds dry until winter rains filled them naturally, but the seep at Pond 1 that was noticed at the end of the first day of construction continued and started to lift the liner. To remedy this situation we decided to fill the ponds with water, and the added pressure from the weight



The excavation started by scraping the top soil off to reveal the perimeter of the pond and a trench was dug along the axis to establish depth and slope contours.



The pond excavation was lined with a layer of geo-textile and the PVC liner placed on top of this layer. A second layer of geo-textile was then laid on top of the PVC liner to further protect it.



The wetland merged once the winter water levels increased.

of the water in the ponds forced the seep to seek an alternate path. A concern with filling the wetlands in July were mosquitoes. While the pond had a dense colony of mosquito larvae, transects surveys conducted in late July and August did not show increased mosquito density even 20 m from the shoreline.

Dragonflies and damselflies arrived in large numbers within days of filling the ponds and the pond was quickly colonized by predaceous aquatic beetles and back-swimmers. During the day numerous swallows fed over the area and at night bats were detected foraging over the pond. Deer frequented the pond and several bird species were observed at the pond, including a Common Yellowthroat, which had not been observed in the area before.

The ground was too dry for planting riparian vegetation in June, so this was completed in November and December. A number of plants, including hardhack, red-osier dogwood, salmonberry, thimbleberry, small flowering bulrush, clustered wild rose, and red elderberry, have been planted around the wetland. It is hoped that the woodier plants will create enough shade to suppress the growth of reed canary grass, but we expect to fight this invasive weed for many years at this site. In addition, we planted two sides of the wetland with native hedgerows to provide cover for passerine birds.

This winter the two constructed ponds filled with the rains and merged to form one expansive wetland as in previous years. The water levels were slightly higher but the hydrology of the site remains unchanged. We monitored the ponds eagerly in spring to see if they would be colonized by Pacific chorus frogs which start breeding in our region in early March. Only a single frog was heard calling at the start of the season but by mid-March at least a dozen frogs could be heard chorusing from the pond. The sweet sound indicates the first step in our long-term goal of enhancing biodiversity, and especially amphibian biodiversity to the area.

We will continue to plant reeds and rushes around the shoreline, and create other habitats such as snake cairns. We will not translocate other amphibians such as red-legged frogs or rough-skinned newts that could breed in the pond but may not be able to migrate there, for at least two years

after construction. This will enable us to document natural migration patterns in newly-created wetlands in urban landscapes with high levels of habitat fragmentation.

We will continue to monitor the biodiversity changes in the wetland over the years. Our next big project is a Garry oak grassland restoration adjoining the wetland. We hope to create a series of habitats with the wetland merging into a wet meadow, and on to drier grassland with native grasses and herbaceous plants typical of a Garry oak meadow. We are committed, over the long-term, to developing the area as a learning and teaching site for urban biodiversity and ecological restoration.

Acknowledgements

The project would not have been possible without the generous sharing of knowledge and time by many experts including Thomas Biebighauser, Elke Wind, Darren Copley, Claudia Copley, James Miskelly, and the many other volunteer biologists on the Haliburton Farm Biodiversity Project. Angela Elliot, Jackie Waldron, and Chelsea Paige, students from the Camosun College Environmental Technology program conducted baseline biological surveys prior to wetland restoration, and assisted with neighbourhood outreach and public education. Paula Hesje at The Land Conservancy efficiently facilitated the logistics of workshop registration and publicity. Dayle Cosway and Tina Baynes of Terralicious provided hot delicious local lunches during construction, making a great change from sandwiches, pop and chips. Helium balloon aerial photography was provided by Stephen Price and Alistair Bell. The project was completed efficiently and to specification only because of the skillful handling of the excavator by John Pollard, who handled the large machine as if it were a sculpting tool. The project was funded by the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, the TD Friends of the Environment Fund, and the District of Saanich. In-kind contributions were provided by the BC Ministry of Environment, Victoria Natural History Society, District of Saanich, Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society, The Land Conservancy, and Copley Brothers Construction Ltd.

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BC Breeding Bird Atlas – Halfway Home!

By Ann Nightingale

It's hard to believe that we are already into Year Three of the BC Breeding Bird Atlas. More than 135,000 records have been submitted, and the bird maps are really starting to take shape. For the southern Vancouver Island Region (18), volunteers have contributed more than 1386 hours, and found 140 species.

We're discovering lots of new information and a few surprises about where our BC birds are breeding. On southern Vancouver Island, Dark-eyed Juncos have long been considered a higher elevation breeder, but so far 27 of our atlas squares have recorded confirmed breeding status for this species. Western Screech-owls, once our most observed owl has only been reported from three atlas squares – two of those on the Gulf Islands – and breeding hasn't been confirmed in any of them. By contrast, the Barred Owl has been reported in 18 squares and confirmed as a breeder in seven.

As you might expect, the areas closest to the city of Victoria have been best covered, but that doesn't mean that all the work has been done! To the contrary, there are a number of species that have been observed during the breeding season right around Victoria, but that we still haven't received reports of any of the "confirmed" breeding codes. Within the Victoria core area, for instance, covering from south of Mt Doug Park and east of Saxe Point Park, for instance, we don't have confirmed status for birds as common as Wilson's Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Pileated Woodpecker or Pacific-Slope Flycatcher. Keep in mind, you don't need to find the nest to confirm breeding – seeing an adult carrying food or nesting materials is sufficient!

Certain species that we'd expect to confirm breeding throughout the southern Vancouver Island region have only been documented in a fraction of the squares. For instance, the Rufous Hummingbird has only received confirmed status in 15 of our 46 squares.

So, what does this mean? Well, although we really need people to head to the hills this year and search out the birds in the backcountry, we still need help from birders who don't want to go too far afield. You can check the current status reports for Region 18 (or any other region for that matter) on the data summary pages or species maps on the Breeding Bird Atlas website <<http://birdatlas.bc.ca>>. If you prefer, you can drop me a line at motmot@shaw.ca or call me at 250-652-6450 and I will let you know what birds (and atlas squares) are in the greatest need of attention.

Remember that you can report your observations from any square in the province, so keep the Breeding Bird Atlas in mind as you travel through the province this summer! It's not too late to join in and contribute to this very important project.

GORP: Not Your Typical Trail Mix

By Brigitte Dreger-Smylie

The first time I went to Playfair Park, the rhododendrons took my breath away. On Mount Tolmie, the crisp morning air put smiles on our faces and calm in our hearts. Breathing in the fresh air, sitting on the earth with friends, working the soil with our hands, shovels, and sticks to remove the overgrown non-native plants, knowing that we would be giving something beautiful a fighting chance for survival – these will forever be cause for my participation in environmental projects. At first, volunteering for the Saanich's Garry Oak Restoration Project (GORP) felt like something an eco-friendly soul should be participating in, but for all of the volunteers, it has become something far greater. Seeing familiar faces every second Saturday, getting to know the parks in our region that we so often overlook, eating cookies and chips while you watch tarps full of invasive plants being carried away (plants that you spent all morning removing), provides the gratification so many of us need to return.

Saanich's Garry Oak Restoration Project was formed a decade ago with the purpose of preserving Garry oak habitats – both the trees and the many other species associated with this ecosystem. As one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada, this habitat is home to many plants that are extremely rare, and GORP is in a constant race against increasing urbanization, litter, and accidental damage. But we fight back by removing invasive species from the nine Saanich Parks we work in, and we would welcome more like-minded individuals dedicating their time to help the cause. Saturday mornings between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. are the meeting times for GORP site projects, and within these two hours, huge sections of the ecosystem can be cleared of invasive species. Although there is a handful of official volunteers, site managers, and regular volunteers, every pair of hands help.

Caring about the environment and doing something for the environment are wholly different. A friend from GORP once told me she read in a magazine that it was no longer “stylish to feel guilty about the environment.” Though we took offence to the statement, I have come to think that one can't help but agree with it: guilt must only be felt if you're not making an attempt to counter the problem. Get out of bed one Saturday morning, join us at one of the parks we are working hard to keep healthy, and feel good about your weekend. I guarantee the feeling will keep you coming. Even if it doesn't, you've spent two hours of your life helping something that doesn't have the voice to ask for help itself.

To volunteer for the Garry Oak Restoration Project or to find out where the next scheduled site party is, visit the website at <www.saanich.ca/gorp/> or contact Saanich Parks via email or telephone at 250-475-5522 or marian.mccoy@saanich.ca.



Camas. Illustration: Joanne Thomson

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 11 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our “welcome” column:

Karen and Bob Schrey
Dallas Road

Kathy Schaffer
Simcoe Street
Birding, intertidal

Jenny Cohen
Leighton Street
Coastal ecology, botany, and archaeology

Carrie Maier
Wallace Drive

Hiking; exploring all outdoor nature activities and learning about earth sciences; plant identification and medicinal/food sources or uses; fossil and rock hounding; bird watching and identification

HAT Bringing Good Neighbours Project to Island View Beach

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director



Island View Beach, nestled on the Cordova Shore waterfront and sheltered by James Island, is popular with dog walkers, picnickers, and bird watchers. Though many are struck by the natural beauty of the place, few realize the ecological treasure this small park harbours. At first glance, the sparsely vegetated sand dunes and saltwater marsh may not appear special. Yet these habitats are two of the rarest ecosystems in our region, and are found almost nowhere else in BC.

In fact, this small park is home to at least four federally-listed endangered species and many other provincially-listed species. This includes the Sand-Verbena Moth (*Copablepharon fuscum*) and its host plant the Yellow Sand-Verbena (*Abronia latifolia*), both of which are endangered, the poorly-named Common Nighthawk, and the *insulana* subspecies of the Common Ringlet butterfly (*Coenonympha tullia*), both provincially red-listed and candidates for endangered species listing.

Small parks do not support the same level of diversity as large protected areas. Little buffer exists to protect small parks from threats like changing water runoff patterns that result from development, or the encroachment of invasive species. Pets can exact a heavy toll on wildlife, particularly birds. Pollutants, fertilizers, and pesticides change the basic chemistry native species have adapted to. Without

support, the rare species of Island View Beach are in danger of being extirpated altogether. This has already happened to the endangered Streaked Horned Lark, a former resident of the park. The challenge is find ways to support and buffer the park's ecosystems in ways that are affordable and sustainable.

HAT is currently seeking funding to bring our award-winning Good Neighbours outreach strategy to the communities adjacent to Island View Beach Regional Park. Through public outreach events and focused landowner contact, HAT will inform and engage locals to become stewards of the natural areas in and adjacent to the park. HAT outreach staff will consult with residents on land management techniques that will help to maintain the extraordinarily sensitive ecosystems and work with them to find appropriate land uses that protect both dune and saltwater marsh habitats, while maintaining current agricultural and recreational uses.

If you live in the Island View Beach area or Central Saanich, and wish to find out more about the project, please contact the HAT Office (250 995-2428, or hatmail@hat.bc.ca).

Habitat Acquisition Trust, PO Box 8552 Victoria BC V8W 3S2, Ph 250 995-2428 Fax 250 920-7975 <www.hat.bc.ca>



(Inset) Yellow Sand-Verbena (*Abronia latifolia*). Photo: Darren Copley

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., 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., University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. 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.

MAY

Saturday, May 1

EVENT

19th Annual Camas Day in Beacon Hill Park

This event includes guided walks for birds at 7 and 9 a.m., wildflowers at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. archaeology at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., bark beetles at 11 a.m., and an insect walk at 1 p.m. Walks are about one hour each. Meet at the flag pole atop Beacon Hill. Jointly sponsored by VNHS and Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society. For more information, call **Helen Oldershaw** 250-592-6659 or check the website at www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca

Sunday, May 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Witty's Lagoon Songsters – Birding Trip

Join **Dannie Carsen** and **Gordon Hart** for a foray around Witty's Lagoon for some great ear birding and good views of warblers, vireos, and shorebirds. Meet at the main parking lot off Metchosin Road at 7 a.m. Bring lunch to enjoy the ocean views. Call Dannie at 250-544-2117 or <dcarsen@shaw.ca>

Saturday, May 8

EVENT

Winged Migration – International Migratory Bird Day!

Celebrate the return of our feathered friends at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in Metchosin! Today is International Migratory Bird Day. Join CRD Regional Parks, Rocky Point Bird Observatory and the Victoria Natural History Society for this day-long event. Bird watching, children's activities, bird banding demonstrations, presentations, and more. Check CRD Regional Parks website for details. From the Nature Centre in the main parking lot off Metchosin Road, follow the bird signs to the Witty's Lagoon Teaching Shelter. **BC Transit #54 or #55**

Sunday, May 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Scramble Up the Back of Mount Douglas

The delphiniums should be perfect and the rest of the colourful cast should still be great as well. **Jules Thomson** lives on the slope of the mountain and will show you some of her favourite little trails. The Friends of Mount Douglas have done a great amount of invasive species removal in that area and so you will see the benefits of their work. The birds should be interesting as well and Jules will point out some intriguing residents. Please note the start of the trail is steep and rough but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear sturdy footwear and bring a walking stick if you wish. Meet in front of 1251 Pearce

Crescent, off Blenkinsop. Starts promptly at 9 a.m. No pets please. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, May 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. You should see a good variety of shorebirds and passerines in their migration. Meet at the south end by the washrooms at 7:30 a.m. This is a five-hour walk. Bring a snack and a drink. Call Ann at 250-652-6450 for more information.

Saturday, May 15 and Sunday, May 16

EVENT

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers to get out their field guides! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 250-477-0490.

Sunday, May 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

San Juan Ridge Wildflowers

This is an area high above Jordan River. We hope to enjoy the Avalanche Lilies (*Erythronium montanum*) on steroids and other early sub-alpine flowers. Be prepared for cold and/or wet weather due to the elevation and wear sturdy footwear. On the way up, we will be in and out of the car frequently to check roadside flowers. Length of hike will depend on road conditions. Some rough ground and a reasonably steep hike at a slow pace. You might wish to bring a walking stick. You must pre-register for this trip after May 1 due to transportation limitations and potential change of plans depending on snow cover. Guaranteed spot if you are willing to bring your high-clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicle for carpooling. Starts from Victoria around 8 a.m. Bring a lunch, snacks and plenty to drink for an all-day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Saturday, May 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mountain Road

Meet at the mailboxes on Stewart Mountain Road, which is off Millstream Road in the Highlands at 7 a.m. It is a great place to see warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. Call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 250-885-2454.

Saturday, May 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Observatory Hill (Little Saanich Mountain) Nature Walk

Join **Darren** and **Claudia Copley** for a walk in the park – who knows what we'll find! Flycatchers, Western Tanagers, and a variety of woodpeckers are some of the birds we might find, but at this time of day we may also see butterflies and other interesting insects. Meet in the parking lot at the bottom of the Hill at 1 p.m. We will walk up the road and may use a few of the trails at the top. ***This trip will also be promoted outside the Society.

Sunday, May 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding with Marie O'Shaughnessy

Join **Marie O'Shaughnessy** for a birding trip in the Ten Mile Point area. Meet at Gyro Park at 7:30 a.m. and we'll car pool to Phyllis Park at the top of Wedgwood Point, taking in some of the trails around that area, including the top end of Konukson Park. Call 250-598-9680 for more information.

Monday, May 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

A Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail from Sooke Potholes to Leachtown.

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds, and scenery along the way. Meet at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km along Sooke River Road at 8 a.m. Bring a cool drink and lunch. Call Rick at 250-885-2454 if need more information.

Saturday, May 29

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Intertidal Exploration at Macaulay Point.

Phil Lambert will lead an intertidal exploration to Macaulay Point. A low tide of 0.3 ft should reveal some interesting marine invertebrates. Meet at Fleming Beach boat ramp at the foot of Lampson St. in Esquimalt at 9 a.m. Rubber boots or hiking boots are recommended. The footing can be slippery and rough so hiking poles would also be useful. Bring water and a snack. For more information call Phil at 250-477-5922.

Sunday, May 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Tour of Haliburton Community Farm Biodiversity Project

Join **Purnima Govindarajulu** for a tour of the farm to see what the Biodiversity Project has been up to and learn how to encourage wildlife on your property. All the bird and bee nesting boxes will be occupied. We'll peek under the salamander boards and check out who has moved into the wetland. Turn east off Pat Bay Highway on to Haliburton Road. The farm is at 741 Haliburton Road. A laneway located after Rose Lane provides access to the farm gate. Meet at 9 a.m. No pets please.

JUNE

Saturday, June 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding the Duncan Area

We will try to find a Red-eyed Vireo and other Warblers, Vireos and Flycatchers. Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride 7:30 a.m. or at Cowichan Bay Dock Rd. at 8:30 a.m. Call Rick at 250-885-2454 if you need more information.

Sunday, June 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Birding the Power Lines and the Ponds at the Hydro Substation along Francis King Park

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the Hydro substation. This is a great area to hear or see most of the warblers, vireos, and flycatchers we have in our area. This is a four-to-five-hour walk. Meet at the Nature House on Munns Road at 7 a.m. Call Rick 250-885 2454.

Sunday, June 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoying the Last of the Season at Eagle Heights

Visit an area northwest of Shawnigan Lake that needs protection for its unique habitat. It has interesting native grasses and other late wildflowers such as Clarkia. We might have time to look for some of the things that Pojar and MacKinnon refer to as "oddballs" if the weather is good. Wear sturdy footwear and bring a walking stick if you wish. Dress for the weather. Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 9 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch, snacks and plenty to drink for an all day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Friday, June 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Saltspring Botanical Adventure

Last year we made a trek to Saltspring Island but only investigated the southern part of the island. This year we will concentrate on the northern section. We will continue our search for more wildflowers and enjoy the birds along the way as well. Please note some trails may be steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. Dress for the weather. You must pre-register after May 1 for this event to assist in planning. We will carpool to catch the 9 a.m. ferry, returning around supper time. Participants will be expected to share in transportation expenses (about \$20.00 with 4 sharing). Bring a lunch, snacks and plenty to drink for an all day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Saturday, June 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Jordan River Area

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a trip to Jordan River. In the past it has been a hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall and it is a great place to hear Fox Sparrows singing in the spring. Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 7 a.m. Bring lunch, etc. Call Rick 250-885-2454.

Sunday, June 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

High Jordan Ridge Bogs

We plan to investigate an area high above Jordan River that contains unique bogs usually only found at much higher elevations. Be prepared in case of cold and/or wet weather due to the elevation and bring high rubber boots (hiking boots are not good enough). Also a hiking stick is a good idea due to the uneven ground. You must pre-register for this trip after May 1 due to transportation limitations. Preference will be given to those who do not go on the May 16 trip. Guaranteed spot if you

are willing to bring your high-clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicle for carpooling. Starts from Victoria around 8 a.m. Bring a lunch, snacks and plenty to drink for an all-day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Sunday, June 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Intertidal Exploration-Whiffen Spit.

Join **Phil Lambert** to explore the intertidal zone at Whiffen Spit in Sooke. This beach usually provides many examples of exposed west coast flora and fauna. From Sooke follow West Coast Road about 1.7 km west then turn left on Whiffen Spit Road. To carpool meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 8 a.m., otherwise, meet at the Whiffen Spit parking lot at 9 a.m. Rubber boots recommended. Bring water and a snack or lunch if the weather is nice. For more information call Phil at 250-477-5922.

Saturday, June 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Botanizing in Gowlland Tod Provincial Park

Join **Kristen Harrison** on a botany adventure into Gowlland Tod Provincial Park. Meet at the end of Durrance Road (turning left off Wallace Drive) and we will explore Gowlland Todd Park around Todd Inlet. Phone or email Kristen for more information: 250-598-6546/ kristenh@uvic.ca.

Saturday, June 19 and Sunday, June 20

EVENT

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers, so get out your field guides. **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 250-477-0490.

Sunday, June 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Nature Walk at Blenkinsop Lake

Join **Darren** and **Claudia Copley** for a walk in the park – who knows what we'll find! Bird possibilities include specialties such as Green Herons and Black-headed Grosbeaks, and we are guaranteed to see moose... Meet at the parking lot at the end of south end of the Lochside Trail (the portion of Lochside Drive closest to McKenzie Avenue) at 8:30 a.m. ***This trip will also be promoted outside the Society. **BC Transit #6 or #26**

Sunday, June 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Portland Island Exploration

Years back, the trip to Portland Island was a popular field trip for VNHS so we thought we would try it again. Portland Island, also known as Princess Margaret Island, is now part of the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. The plan is to walk around the island. There should be lots of birds and wildflowers as well as beaches to explore. We will be looking for bird sightings to add to the BC Breeding Bird Atlas. The island was originally home to feral sheep that have since been removed. It will be interesting to see how the vegetation has recovered from their excessive grazing. We will take a specially-scheduled ferry over to the island at 9 a.m. and return at 4:30 p.m. You must pre-register for this trip after May 1. Space on the ferry is very limited and the trip will only happen if we get a minimum of 10 people confirmed by May 15. The trip is dependent on good weather as high winds would cancel the outing. Cost is \$26.00 for the ferry. Dress for the weather. Bring a lunch, snacks and plenty to drink for an all day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

BULLETIN BOARD

River Otter Research in Victoria

We are looking for volunteers to help out with field data collection. Activities will include radio-tracking of the study animals and fecal collection at latrine sites. Both surveys will be conducted through the spring, summer and fall of 2010. We are flexible to your availability. If you can join us for a few days, or just an afternoon, your assistance (and free labour) will be greatly appreciated. Please contact Cait Nelson: Cait.Nelson@gov.bc.ca or 250-893-3606. Sites are accessed by zodiac, car and by foot. We would like to minimize our carbon footprint as much as possible and plan to incorporate kayaks and bicycles in our survey as well. Come prepared to work hard, get dirty, and do science.

Be a Baillie Birdathon Sponsor or Participant!

More than 7,000 people from across Canada participate in or sponsor the Baillie Birdathon in May of every year. During a 24-hour period in May, participants attempt to find as many bird species as they can, sponsored at a flat rate, or on a per-species basis. Birders can designate a favourite conservation organization to receive a portion of the funds they raise. This year Ann Nightingale will be participating to raise funds for

Rocky Point Bird Observatory. To sponsor Ann, please call her at 250-652-6450 or email motmot@shaw.ca. If you want to support Ann's Birdathon using a credit card, you can do so at <<http://birdathon.annnightingale.ca>>

Saturday Birding Group

We send out the time and location on the Rare Bird Alert 250-704-2555) on the Thursday and Friday before that week's walk. For more information, call Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454.

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 50 years. Call Bill Dancer at 250-721-5273 for more information.

Every Wednesday and Sunday Bird Walk

Meet at the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary parking lot: 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. For everyone!

International Migratory Bird Day

May 8th, 2010



Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
Teaching Shelter

(Follow the signs from the parking lot)

Bird Walks

Mist Netting Demonstrations

Hummingbird Banding Demonstrations

Children's Activities

Information Booths

Displays

For More Information Please Visit:

www.rpbo.org or www.crd.bc.ca



BC Hummingbird
Project



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Making a difference... together

