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The Victoria NATURALIST

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COVER PHOTO
Pacific Spiny Lumpsucker.

The past few days have seen Gail Harcombe and I organizing the material for the *Naturalist*. It is a bit of work but enjoyable, and I learn a lot from such close reading: blue-listed Red-legged Frogs; the significance of Walleye Pollock; what exactly *is* a theropod? Did you know that crayfish are averse to elevation gain? What is the name of a marine creature described as “a swimming ping-pong ball covered in spikes”? (First answer in gets the chocolate bar.) Follow a forensic love affair with teaspoons of “goop”; how about high drama at Ogden Point? Ever waded into the ocean at Willow's Beach? Ever considered the incidental costs when a covenant is enacted?

Most of the articles, besides making fascinating reading, have a message, an insight. Examples are the last line of “In Seine Diversity” and the final couplet from Bill Merilees' piece, Micro-Molluscs.

The Calendar offers a great variety of outings and there is something for most tastes: kayaking for the fit of any age; laid-back boat tours; and multiple excursions to the Olympic Peninsula that include opportunities to see birds.

Gail and I, as co-editors, will be alternating in this column. That way you won't get bored. We are both appreciative of the writers who have taken the time to compose their articles and include excellent photographs. Thank you, and thanks also to the members who set up and lead the field trips.

Enjoy the summer,

Ken Sohm and Gail Harcombe

President's Message

By Darren Copley

This is the time of year when it seems as if the Society is much less active because our evening presentations are on hold until September. But in actual fact we have been out in the community quite a bit, trying to convey our interest in nature to others every chance we get.

This year we helped sponsor the 2nd annual Metchosin BioBlitz, and our members participated in large numbers. What a great opportunity to showcase some of the incredible natural history in our region. This statement from the website sums up this year's BioBlitz: *This year the experts found even more species in Metchosin's lands and waters – almost 950 of them. The 2011 and 2012 BioBlitzes have now documented over 1200 unique species that share living space with the human residents of Metchosin.* Thanks to Ann Nightingale for representing our club and the Rocky Point Bird Observatory, by presenting on local owls, followed by the always popular owling expedition.

International Migratory Birds Day was another successful partnership between the Rocky Point Bird Observatory and CRD Parks. Hundreds of people participated in this 3rd annual drop-in event held at Beaver Lake Park. It was an opportunity for our clubs and ten other local groups to showcase the work they do in promoting and protecting migratory birds. Thanks to all who participated. There were banding demonstrations, nature walks, falconers, and yes, nice weather.

We also participated in a couple of other local events. The 2nd Annual YesBC Greater Victoria Youth Climate Action Summit, at Royal Roads and Fort Rodd Hill, had participation from Bill Dancer and John Henigman leading nature walks. Marilyn and Phil Lambert also set up a display and touch table at this year's World Oceans Day Festival at Esquimalt Gorge Park. This year's theme is "Youth – the Next Wave for Change." Thanks for helping us get the word out, and if you'd like to help us staff one of these displays, or have another event idea, please let me know.

It's also been an amazing spring for birds. Thanks to all of you out there spotting these interesting birds, and giving us an idea this year of how important some of our green spaces are for migrating birds. Who knew that Panama Flats would be such a hot spot after all the disturbance it's received? And what a wonderful story of birders working with local farmers to allow the Black-necked Stilts an opportunity to breed here. This type of cooperation is certainly lacking at the national level, so it's really nice to see. Make sure you support our local farmers. I also think that with Panama Flats becoming a Saanich Park, our Society should begin some surveys to show how important it has become to wildlife. Any takers?

Dare I admit that our club was also a bit politically active? Perhaps we are being monitored for it now... Our Society, along with more than 500 other organizations, blacked out our website and Twitter account on Monday June 4, 2012 (World Environment Day), to protest Bill C-38. I wish we could do more because as I write this Alberta has another oil spill threatening the local water supply, invasive fish are being reported in Burnaby Lake, federal scientists and parks staff are losing jobs in positions that affect all of us, and funding for scientific research is being pulled. Also with the changes to charity law, our Society may not be able to speak out anymore to protect our environment.

If you are wondering what is so bad about Bill C-38, check out this excerpt from Elizabeth May's website:

The Top 5 Reasons why C-38 will devastate Canada's environment

- It repeals the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* and introduces a weaker version, without a single day of hearings before the environment committee.
- It removes protection of endangered species and their habitat, when approving pipeline projects, by amending the *Species at Risk Act* and the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*.
- It guts the *Fisheries Act* by removing provisions for habitat protection.
- It repeals the *Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act*.
- It eliminates the National Round Table on Environment and Economy.

Back to good news. Our nature-themed school programs are very busy, and I'm sure that co-organizers Bill and John and their suite of volunteers will surpass 500 school children this year. The update to the VNHS book, the *Naturalist's Guide to the Victoria Region*, is due out this October, in partnership with the Royal B.C. Museum. Back in 1967, biologist and former director of the Royal B.C. Museum, Yorke Edwards, produced the first *Naturalist's Guide to the Victoria Region*, a 38-page booklet identifying interesting places to go and things to see around the area. Revised by Edwards in 1975, and developed into a book published by the Victoria Natural History Society in 1986 by Jim Weston and David Stirling, the publication has now grown to more than 200 pages and is in full colour, with new and updated chapters on all manner of creatures. Thanks to Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley and all the chapter authors for working on this project.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Nathalie Chambers for her participation on the VNHS board. Her connection to The Land Conservancy of BC has been a real asset. Nat helped us out with the annual Hawkwatch, the Chef Survival Challenge (which raised a lot of money for the Society and is a very entertaining event!), presentations to our members, and a strong voice for nature out there representing us. We wish her good luck with her ongoing work with TLC. I look forward to hearing about it.

Hope to see you out on one of our great hikes this summer. By the time you read this, the annual board retreat will have happened. We use this opportunity to brainstorm about the coming year, so hopefully we'll have some big new ideas for 2013. Remember to put the Hawkwatch/BBQ Social and the Chef Survival Challenge on your social calendar – Saturday September 22 and Sunday September 23, 2012, respectively – what a weekend!



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Hat Tricks

Partnerships Protecting Habitat

By Adam Taylor



Recently I visited a Metchosin property that HAT is in the midst of protecting forever. This conservation-minded family is pleased to be able to donate a conservation covenant on 20 acres of natural habitat – their backyard. The area being protected connects to an existing park and is covered in rocky outcrops blanketed with native wildflowers, grasses, and mosses, with a mixed forest of Douglas-fir and western hemlock. We are of course excited: it is an amazing opportunity to conserve local nature.

It is an opportunity that wouldn't exist without the work of others. The property was first identified by the Metchosin Foundation, who contacted the landowners and started talking with them about permanent protection. Local biologists with the Foundation volunteered their time to help prepare a baseline (an ecological and physical description of the land), and the Foundation has donated money to help pay for the costs of creating the conservation covenant.

Covenants are an extremely cost-effective tool for permanently conserving land, but the simple truth is that protecting land costs money. Even though the family is donating the covenant (a gift of partial interest in land), which is worth tens of thousands of dollars, there are still

many other associated costs for which cash is needed. Land surveys, legal advice for landowners and the land trusts, staff time, and appraisals all cost money – thousands of dollars each – not to mention an endowment to ensure that funds are available for long-term monitoring and maintenance in the future.

Which is where the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society or GOMPS comes in. GOMPS is able to co-hold the covenant with HAT, and their expertise in Garry oak and associated ecosystems will be a great help in ensuring that these rare ecosystems on the property are properly cared for over time. As well, they have committed \$5000 to pay for professional services, like a survey and appraisal, needed to complete the covenant.

HAT, the Metchosin Foundation and GOMPS are all working together to raise the nearly \$15,000 needed just to protect the property. The VNHS has also generously supported HAT's covenant program over the years, and helped us secure several important habitats in the Capital region.

Working together can save natural places, and it is a pleasure to work with other organizations and individuals committed to caring for nature.



Overlooking newly covenanted habitat. *Photo: Adam Taylor.*

In Seine Diversity: Eelgrass Beds

By Jeannette Bedard, Gavin Hanke, Melissa Frey

Eelgrass beds around Victoria support a diversity of life, often marginalized as simple curiosities sighted while beachcombing. Despite field guides and internet information overload, the average “Victorian” typically remains unfamiliar with non-game intertidal fish and local invertebrates. They are missing out, as outlandish shapes and attractive coloration can be found in these creatures, most of which have fascinating adaptations to life in the shallows.

On a Friday evening in November 2011, we hauled two beach seines at Willow’s Beach to collect fish and invertebrates for the Royal B.C. Museum. This presented an opportunity to talk about these animals with the Victoria Natural History Society. Typically in the Victoria region, low tides occur at night in the winter, and this Friday evening turned out to have the best low tide. Regular small waves rolled onto the beach and the surf reflected light from the houses overlooking the beach.

Coastlines are notoriously non-static, sandy beaches in particular. Sand shifts with each wave and on a quiet day you can even hear sand move. Typically, sand is composed of eroded quartz pieces, mixed with ground up shells, decaying seaweed, wood, faeces and decaying animal remains. Just offshore, where waves break, the sand is a bit more stable allowing eelgrass beds to grow. Eelgrass beds, like the ones at Willow’s Beach, are a common temperate water ecosystem found both on sandy beaches and in muddy estuaries. At low tide, eelgrass may reach the surface, while at high tide the bed is completely submerged.

At first glance the ribbon-like structure of each eelgrass blade looks the same, but in fact, there are different types. Around Victoria, the most common type of eelgrass is

Zostera marina. Eelgrass is a plant rather than an algae like seaweed. Like the grass of a lawn, eelgrass rhizomes allow it to spread beneath the sand into a large colony. Salt isn’t required by the eelgrass – in fact, it could be grown in your garden. Over time eelgrass has evolved salt tolerance to fill this environmental niche. The long, slender rhizomes are edible, reported to be crisp and sweet. The leaves are also edible, and each one may reach 120 cm long while only being 2-12 mm wide. This plant grows in the subtidal zone or the lowest intertidal, handling depths up to 6 m. In addition to being edible, eelgrass has been put to all sorts of uses, from creating the smoke for smoking fish to insulating a house.

Eelgrass’s most important role is forming the base of an ecosystem. The eelgrass’s rhizomes and tangled roots bind the substrate creating a stable habitat. The leaves provide a buffer to water movement and shelter many organisms. Eelgrass inhabitants vary by season, with the greatest diversity in late spring and summer. Algae and tiny plants, like diatoms, coat the eelgrass leaves with a furry olive-green coating and bacteria incorporate detritus into this coating. Tiny organisms including protozoans, worms, and crustaceans move in to take advantage of the food this film provides. Certain snails live and reproduce by laying their eggs on the blades. Crabs, shrimp, clams, sea stars, brittle stars, and sea cucumbers add to the diversity. Some species of nudibranch specialize on living in eelgrass while different life stages of jellyfish take advantage of the abundant food.

Many fish species also make these places home. The dynamic environment along our shores forces fish to be highly mobile and sparsely distributed, so you will have to



(Left) White-spotted Greenling. (Right) Pacific Spiny Lumpsucker.

wade for a while to appreciate the beach's diversity. Eelgrass beds present a structural oasis for fish on an otherwise barren stretch of sand. You can expect far more fish to reside in and around the shelter of eelgrass, and, for the same reason, any isolated rock or sizeable scrap of debris (even garbage) can act as shelter. One of the best ways to discover what lives in the eelgrass is with a beach seine.

A beach seine is a long wall of mesh, like a fence. The bottom is weighted with a lead line, while the top rope is dotted with floats. Seines are a common fishing method for both gathering food and conducting science. They have a downside, the net scrapes over habitat the same way a trawl net damages the sea floor habitat. The seine we used was a simple wall of mesh while others often have a bag in the middle to prevent fish escaping.

The seine, measuring about 15 metres by 1.5 metres, was hauled out into the surf by two people. Since the water was too cold to wade in without protection against hypothermia, special outfits were required. One of our net haulers wore hip waders while the other, perhaps the smarter of the two, sported a dry-suit. Once the net was in position offshore, those of us onshore pulled it in using long ropes attached to each side of the net. Everything, including seaweed, animals, and garbage that can't fit through the net's mesh got pulled ashore for us to sort.

The first beach seine on Willow's Beach caught very few fish – disappointing given the weather and effort required to haul a decent-sized seine net. Clearing the net didn't take long as there was very little biological debris and some garbage. As soon as we were done, Darren Copley and Gavin Hanke waded back into the surf for a second attempt. This time they aimed to haul the net through an eelgrass bed.

This second net-haul was teeming with all sorts of interesting life. Everyone piled in to help sort the critters from the seaweed and debris. Critters were put into buckets to keep them healthy. Once that was done, everyone gathered around to view the catch. Obviously, fish love structure in



Willow's Beach.

their lives because the presence of eelgrass made all the difference. An example of each critter was put into a clear ziplock bag along with plenty of water and passed around while Darren described what we had found.

The fish catch included Walleye Pollock, a member of the cod family most famous as being the primary ingredient in fake crab (some crab juice and red dye make up the rest). These fish are not normally found at wading depths as they typically spend their lives farther offshore. The White-spotted Greenling we caught is the least colourful of this family which includes the popular Lingcod. Another lucky catch was a copper and blue, Striped Sea Perch as it is not normally found this close to shore.

English Soles and Starry Flounders are common flatfish that use their shape and colouration to blend into the bottom. Another fish taking advantage of sand as cover that made it into the net was a Sandlance. This spear-shaped fish burrows into sand to hide and is a key species in the ecology of this coast providing food for many predators.

We caught a few common coastal fish, including a variety of sculpins (Sharpnose, Sailfin, Roselip). The Sailfin Sculpin stands out with its tall dorsal fin; other sculpins are squat



Nudibranch found in the eelgrass bed. (Photos by the authors.)

and bulbous with big mouths. Also in the net was a High Cockscomb, a common intertidal fish. Breeding males can add flashes of colour with their showy orange stripe.

Loads of Tubesnouts and a few Bay Pipefish came in with the net. Tubesnouts are closely related to sticklebacks with a long, slender body ending in a head resembling a tube, hence their name. Pipefish look similar to tubesnouts; however they are closely related to seahorses, with a long narrow body like a pencil, and the head of a seahorse. Both species have tiny mouths with which they suck in small crustaceans, equivalent to catching plankton with an eyedropper. We caught one tiny Pacific Spiny Lumpsucker which is officially the cutest fish ever. This fish resembles a swimming ping-pong ball covered in spikes.

Finally we caught a single neon-green Penpoint Gunnel, a tropical-water coloured fish in our temperate zone. This fish looks like an eel, but isn't, and it gets its colour through eating the local seaweed. The bright green colour of the one we found would allow it to blend in almost perfectly (they also come in other colours to match other seaweeds). To add variety to its diet, the Penpoint Gunnel hides in eelgrass or sea lettuce beds to ambush little crustaceans and molluscs. They were named because their anal fin spine looks like a calligraphy pen nib.

Eelgrass habitat teems with invertebrates, ranging from sessile (fixed, as in barnacles) anemones and stalked jellies to slow-moving snails and nudibranchs to speedy crabs and shrimp. Buried within the sediment a variety of clams can be found using their siphons to filter food from the overlying water column. The most curious invertebrate we found was a bright green Eelgrass Isopod that was reminiscent of a terrestrial sow bug.

The array of shrimp species that can be found is daunting. Blacktail Shrimp do not necessarily have a black tail. They bury themselves in the sand to wait in ambush for an amphipod dinner. In contrast, the little green Grass Shrimp takes cover within the foliage, well aware that other animals would consider it dinner. Another common armoured inhabitant is the Dungeness Crab. This crab faces an increased threat from human exploitation.

Sandy beaches are not the only place to find eelgrass beds. Mud flats and estuaries also are packed with life and so it is well worth mounting your own estuarine expedition. Eelgrass beds can be thick in estuaries and muddy bays and these are great places to search for fish and invertebrates without the need for scuba gear. The upper reaches of Victoria's Inner Harbour are nice and muddy, and it is fun to float along in a canoe or kayak to watch fish. As the tide recedes, fish retreat to eelgrass where they are sheltered from the eyes of roving theropods (predatory birds, e.g., gulls, herons, ospreys, etc.). The mouth of the Sooke River or Metchosin Creek (Witty's Lagoon) also should present hours of fun to those seeking "sloppy" seashores.

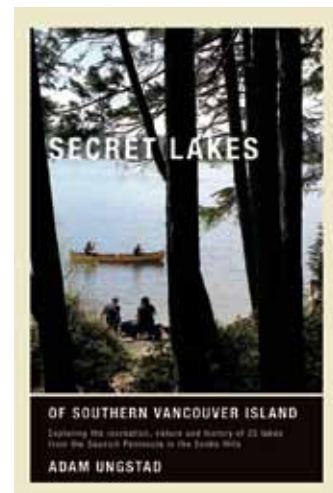
While coral reefs are often considered the most charismatic coastal ecosystem, eelgrass beds have their own charms, cast of interesting creatures, and provide important ecosystem services. Kept healthy, eelgrass

improves water quality and helps curb erosion. Unfortunately, these ecosystems are often located near human developments and activities, and in turn are often subject to disturbances such as pollution and dredging. Despite years of abuse, our coastal ecosystems are fairly resistant to change and you can still find areas with rich fish and invertebrate communities. Low tides in June are great for fish and invertebrate watching, especially since eelgrass beds will be far more obvious. Marine life is readily accessible to everyone who cares to look, and a great way to introduce children to the wonders of nature. It also is more important than ever for adults to spend time exploring beaches, even if only to gain an appreciation of what we will lose if we fail to adequately protect this planet.

Further Reading

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Metchosin Conducts Successful Second BioBlitz

By Kem Luther

The second Metchosin BioBlitz took place on May 5, 2012. More than fifty area specialists tallied almost 950 species, one hundred more than in 2011.

A BioBlitz is a 24-hour field inventory of species' populations in a restricted area. The term "BioBlitz" seems to have originated at an event held in Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens in Washington, D.C., in 1996. Over the last fifteen years, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of BioBlitzes have been held all over the world, and Canada hosts several important BioBlitz events each year. Here in B.C., there are annual BioBlitzes at Metchosin, Burnaby Lake and Whistler.

At the Metchosin event, the birders fanned out across the district early in the morning, eyes and ears cataloguing the species contributing to the dawn chorus. Later in the morning, specialists in plants, lichen, fungi, marine organisms, insects, slugs, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and mammals convened at the Mel Cooper cabin of the Metchosin Boys and Girls Club. The contingent included several members of the co-sponsoring Victoria Natural History Society. Members of the public soon arrived to join the experts. Andy MacKinnon's bagpipe voice organized the arrivals into several groups and sent them out to survey Camosun College's Van der Meer Reserve, the Pearson College



Specialists gather at the Mel Cooper cabin for the Metchosin BioBlitz. *Photo: Kem Luther.*

waterfront, the shoreline from Weir's Beach to Witty's Lagoon, and the Boys and Girls Club property. The Department of National Defense (DND) gave Hans Roemer permission to lead a group of ten scientists into the rarely-visited Mary Hill section of Metchosin. Marine experts volunteered to rendezvous with a morning beach seine conducted by CRD Parks.

Three hours later the groups reconvened at the Mel Cooper cabin for a lunch of pizza and soup. At 1:00 p.m. the experts and members of the public formed themselves into new teams and headed out to several more Metchosin locations. One group (17 people) went to Camp Thunderbird. Another surveyed Blinkhorn Nature Park/Mount Blinkhorn. A third team visited Tower Point at Witty's Lagoon Park. Two of the experts arranged to meet up with a second CRD family program, a nature walk at Witty's Lagoon.

At the end of the afternoon forays, the BioBlitz experts went home to examine their collected specimens and to compile lists of what they had seen. Over the next three weeks, they submitted their lists to BioBlitz co-ordinators, who correlated and checked their sightings – almost two thousand of them – against standard lists. When the numbers were added up, organizers found that the experts had recorded:

Vascular plants	407	Other insects	20
Birds	100	Bees	23
Fungi	88	Algae	22
Lichens	78	Mammals	11
Bryophytes	66	Slugs/Snails	8
Marine organisms	72	Fish	5
Butterflies/Moths	31	Amphibians/Reptiles	5

Over 1200 Metchosin-based species have now been documented in the 2011 and 2012 BioBlitzes. A full listing of the species found at the two events can be viewed at the BioBlitz website www.metchosinbiodiversity.com.

Between 2% and 3% of the species found during the 2012 Metchosin BioBlitz are on provincial red or blue lists. Here are some of the more interesting finds from the species-at-risk subset:

1. A member of the team that Hans Roemer led into the DND lands caught a glimpse of *Rana aurora*, the blue-listed Red-legged Frog. In recent years the spread of the invasive Bullfrog into areas of Southern Vancouver Island has raised concerns about the viability of native frog populations. Bullfrogs are known to take over the habitats of the elusive Red-legged Frogs – they may even lunch on them. The District of Metchosin has allocated money in recent years to help control local Bullfrog populations.
2. A fascinating pair of rare mosses turned up at the 2012 BioBlitz. During the Mary Hill foray, moss expert Gerry Ansell honed in on a rarely-seen population of Rigid Apple Moss, *Bartramia stricta*. This red-listed moss, put at risk by the destruction of wide swaths of its Garry Oak habitat, has only been found on Vancouver Island in two



(Top) Common Bladder Moss (*Physcomitrium pyriforme*). Photo: Jamie Fenneman. (Below) Sharp-tailed Snake (*Contia tenuis*). Photo: Moralea Milne.

places: on Mary Hill and at Nanaimo's Notch Hill. Jamie Fenneman found a second rare (B.C. blue-listed) moss in the field near the Boys and Girls club cabin: *Physcomitrium pyriforme*, Common Bladder Moss, has attractive, urn-like capsules, as you can see in the accompanying photo. This moss prefers exposed, wet soils.

3. Moralea Milne found one of the Sharp-tailed Snakes (*Contia tenuis*) that live on her Camas Hill property. She was lucky – March and early April are better times to go looking for this small snake (it seldom reaches 30 cm in length). Endemic to California, Oregon, Washington, and B.C., Sharp-tailed Snakes are known from only a few Vancouver and Gulf Island sites. As you can see from Moralea's photo, the snake has an oddly stub-pointed tail.

4. Among the rare plants found by BioBlitz experts were two members of the genus *Sanicula*. The yellow flower clusters of the most common sanicle on Southern Vancouver Island, Pacific Sanicle (*Sanicula crassicaulis*), are found in woods and open areas throughout Metchosin. A red-listed cousin, Purple Sanicle (*Sanicula bipinnatifida*), occasionally turns up in the same habitat. This plant, as the name suggests, has purple flower heads. At the BioBlitz Jamie Fenneman found Purple Sanicle on private property on Leefield Road. Joe Antos came across another rare cousin, *Sanicula arctopoides*, the Bear's Foot Sanicle (also called Footsteps of Spring), at one of the CRD parks. Bear's Foot Sanicle has yellow flowers, grows lower to the ground than its cousin sanicles, and likes to live on bluffs near the ocean.

The Metchosin BioBlitz is organized by the Metchosin Biodiversity Project. www.metchosin-biodiversity.com for further information. It acknowledges the organizations whose support made the 2012 BioBlitz possible: the Metchosin Foundation, CRD Parks, the Victoria Natural History Society, CRD Water, DND/Rocky Point, and the District of Metchosin. Gifts of food were received from Costco, My Chosen Pizza, Martha Haylor, and Jo Mitchell.

The next Metchosin BioBlitz is scheduled for Friday night, April 26, 2013, and Saturday daytime, April 27, 2013. Anyone wishing to add their expertise to the next blitz should contact Andy MacKinnon, metchosinmacs@gmail.com

*But nature is a stranger yet;
The ones that cite her most
Have never passed her haunted house,
Nor simplified her ghost.
To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those that know her, know her less
The nearer her they get.*

—from “What mystery pervades a well!”
by Emily Dickinson



Purple Sanicle (*Sanicula bipinnatifida*). Photo: Jamie Fenneman.

The Bird and the Octopus: Predator or Prey?

By Ann Nightingale

In late March, I received an email containing a series of photographs the likes of which I'd never seen before. The first image looked like a gull eating some amorphous orange substance just below the surface of the water. A jellyfish, perhaps? It was only on seeing the second photo that the truth became apparent. It wasn't the orange blob that was being eaten, it was the gull! In the shallow waters, an octopus was patrolling the rocks beneath the Ogden Point Breakwater, and the photographer had captured a rarely seen occurrence. Unfortunately, the photos arrived without the photographer's name, but a little bit of detective work resulted in the name – Ginger Morneau – and a way to contact her.

Here is her story:

One of the great things about being a nature lover is that your powers of observation seem to improve. While others are walking by, oblivious to the activities going on all around them, naturalists notice the creatures and the behaviours, especially if they are out of the ordinary.

Such was the case on March 24, 2012, a sunny Saturday morning, when Ginger, her husband Ken, and brother Lou Baker were walking along the Ogden Point Breakwater on Dallas Rd. in Victoria, BC. As the group headed out along the walkway, Ginger noticed a gull acting strangely a short distance ahead of her. The bird was on the inside of the breakwater, where the water is clear and can be quite still. The gull appeared to be feeding on something underwater,



Photos: Ginger Morneau.





but Ginger noticed that it didn't raise its head. As they approached, they could see a red-orange shape in the water below the gull. When they got to the spot directly above the gull, they could see that it was an octopus. And Ginger's camera was in her hand.

The Giant Pacific Octopus frequents waters at a variety of depths and can be seen regularly patrolling the shallows of the shorelines around Victoria. The octopus is a mollusc, much to the surprise of many observers who tend to think of clams when they hear the word, and has a sharp beak which it usually uses to feed on crustaceans and molluscs. Closely related to squid, they are known to occasionally take fish and even birds. Octopuses are extremely intelligent animals with excellent vision, and are reputedly great problem solvers. Although they live only about four years – dying after they breed – they can grow to have a span of more than 20 feet and to weigh more than 100 pounds. The size record is 30 feet across and more than a whopping 600 pounds! The octopus that Ginger was watching wasn't that large, but it was still an impressive individual. What was even more impressive, though, was that it had one of its tentacles wrapped around the head of the gull, holding it under water. Despite its intelligence, it seems improbable that the octopus understood that submerging the head of the bird would cause it to die. Most likely, the gull had been pecking at the octopus, and its head was simply the most accessible part of the bird.

The first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull was struggling when Ginger first saw it, flapping its wings in an attempt to break the octopus's grip, but without success. The octopus's eight-tentacled arms allowed it to cling firmly to the rocks and simultaneously maintain its grasp on the gull. Initially, air was bubbling to the surface, but within a minute, the struggle was over. More tentacles came out of the water

to grab the body of the gull and pull it completely under. Other gulls flew overhead, noisily checking out the scene as if to see if there were going to be any scraps, but disappeared once the victim had been pulled from the surface.

Ginger described the battle as "primal" and although she wanted to rescue the gull, it wouldn't have been possible due to the sheer drop from the walkway – not to mention that the writhing tentacles of the octopus were more than a little intimidating. So she snapped a few more pictures, aware that she was witnessing a rarely-seen event. There wasn't time for more – from her first picture to her last, only 53 seconds had elapsed. A couple of others watched the spectacle, but most people just walked on by, unaware of the struggle just fifteen feet below them. Several people have commented negatively on the thought of rescuing the bird, but it's quite normal for someone to feel compassion for an animal engaged in a life and death battle. While everyone agrees that the predators deserve their hard-won meals, most of us will feel at least a twinge of helplessness and loss when witnessing an animal die.

There are a few written records of octopuses catching and eating sea birds, including reports of one with a den near a boat ramp on Whidbey Island that was seen catching both gulls and Pigeon Guillemots. The story of Victoria's gull-eating octopus with the series of photographs was published on the BirdFellow website www.birdfellow.com/journals in late April, and within a few days had gone "viral" on the Internet. Ginger was inundated with calls from the media and nature publications from around the world to repeat her story and grant permission for use of her photos. The pictures appeared as a headline for several news sites and even large search and social media pages such as Yahoo and Comcast. Normally, this kind of publicity will bring out other



Photos: Wayne Duke.

similar photographs, however at the time of writing this article, no others have surfaced. Ginger may have captured the first photographic evidence of predation of a bird by an octopus. She certainly has the most widespread photos now!

The story doesn't end here, though. People have reported the tables turned – octopuses being eaten by seals and birds. Since the BirdFellow story broke, I've been contacted by two people who have witnessed Harbour Seals eating octopuses very close to where this story took place. Wayne Duke of Parksville has also provided photos of a Bald Eagle at Boyle Point on Denman Island attempting to pry an octopus from the rocks. Despite the obvious advantages of talons and

wings, the bird did not manage to take the octopus, although I suspect that it was probably mortally wounded in the battle.

Ginger's response to seeing the gull and octopus battle has allowed hundreds of thousands of people to witness this rarely seen phenomenon through her photographs. These interactions probably happen far more frequently than we realize, but take great observational skills to notice such a quick, but deadly, confrontation. The next time you are at the ocean's edge and see a gull placidly sitting on the water, look deeper – you never know what lurks below the surface!



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Crayfish Walkabout

By Bill Merilees

Fresh water crayfish have fascinated me for years, ever since my dad and I travelled by the Inter-Urban tram line to Still Creek in Burnaby. Here, using a small wad of meat in a cloth sack attached by string to an old fashioned fishing pole (cut from the nearby bush) we would angle for crayfish. After what seemed like a wait of ages, we would carefully raise the bait to the surface and dip net our catch.

Now times are altered. Blessed with three large pools in our garden we have crayfish whenever we want them – not for food but simply for enjoyment – especially with our grandchildren.

Twenty or more years ago we imported crayfish from a local lake into two of our pools where they have done quite well. This species is the Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*). Its common name is derived from a light patch located at the pincers joint. It is the only native species found in this province (Baldwin 2011). This species is a voracious herbivore and carrion scavenger. They quickly graze down all our aquatic pond-weeds, other than water lilies.



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Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*).
Photo: Bill Merilees.

After a time we began to encounter crayfish walking across patios or down the driveway, sometimes hiding under garden vegetation and occasionally, dead and desiccated, tucked away in all sorts of nooks and crannies where they had sought refuge. Some were found, still crawling, up to a block away from our garden!

To determine if there was a pattern to these overland journeys a program was started that recorded the date, size, and gender of all those on 'walkabout' and still alive. After recording the pertinent data the individuals were returned to one of the two populated pools. Table 1 is the result of the twenty-eight individual's size, gender and date found. It appears that for gender (14 female – 14 male) and for size and date there is no pattern or trend to these movements.

There were however some interesting observations:

1. Crayfish never seem to move uphill, only down. To date none have ever been found in the highest pool even though the distance is but ten feet though three feet higher. In this upper pond, without crayfish, the aquatic vegetation does quite well.
2. During the study two large females, each with tiny (1 cm) living young still attached to their swimmerets, were found going walkabout. All were returned safely to the pools.
3. Although none of these crayfish were marked (some had a leg, a pincer or parts of antennae missing), size and gender indicated that repeat walkabouts were not attempted, with one exception. One male was captured and returned three times in one week!

There is some question about whether crayfish on Vancouver Island are native or introduced. Crayfish (as well as crab) remains do not preserve well over time and therefore have not been found in archaeological excavations (Roy Carlson, pers. comm.). However, I have found crayfish in the lake a short distance behind the Village of

Yuquot (Friendly Cove) and the place name Crawfish Lake (sic), also on Nootka Island, certainly suggests a natural presence. As these are very isolated locations, particularly Crawfish Lake, human introduction would seem a remote possibility.

Why do crayfish go walkabout? It has been suggested that population overcrowding or water quality may be the mechanism to promote this dispersal. However, since overland walkabouts take place during our driest and warmest months, this seems perplexing for an aquatic animal.

In a garden setting, a good sized pond, preferably of fair depth with a few piles of softball-sized rocks in which to hide, makes an ideal home for these 'fresh water lobsters'. Yes – they *are* good to eat, but I could never be so inclined; they are just too fascinating.

I would like to thank Dr. Roy Carlson, retired Professor of Archaeology, Simon Fraser University, for his assistance, and my family for the joy they and 'our' crayfish have provided me.

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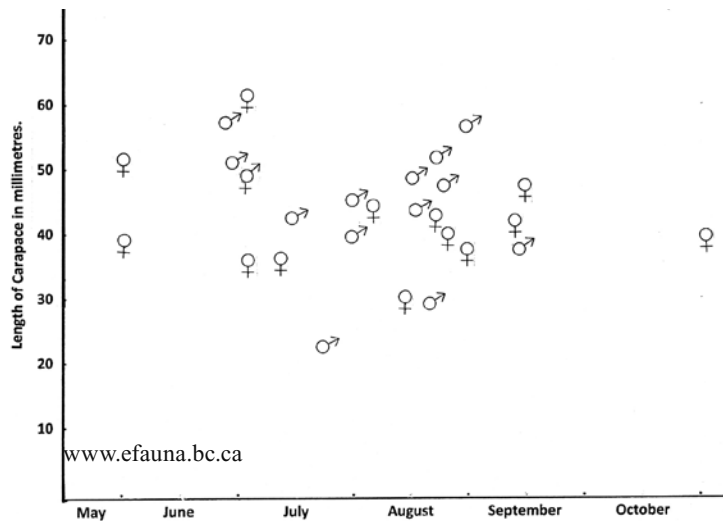


Table 1: Size, Dates and Gender of Walkabout Crayfish at Nanaimo, 2001 to 2011. Table provided by Bill Merilees.

Micro Molluscs – or – What’s in that Low Tide Goop?

By Bill Merilees

Few naturalists will ever have scraped up intertidal ‘goop’ (aka slime and encrustations), taken it home in a ziplock bag and popped it into the family freezer. Then, as time affords, the package is thawed out, the ‘soft stuff’ floated off, and the ‘hard stuff’ sieved to separate out the 1-3 mm-sized fraction. Then, teaspoon by teaspoon, the tiny clams and snails can be picked out with watchmaker’s forceps under a dissecting scope. Well, for about 25 years this has been my fascination.

From the Olympic Peninsula to Haida Gwaii, about 300 such samples have passed under my dissecting microscope. A photo of a portion of one snail sample is provided. By recording the size of each area scraped, an indication of a species’ population can be estimated along with the species’ composition for that habitat. Not an exact science, but this process does offer a reasonable estimate of what is present. Sometimes very little is found, at other times there is a veritable zoo. From one square foot, the ‘best’ has been about 25 species with as many as 750 + individuals. As of 2012, about eight to ten species new to science have been described and now await formal publication.



Some of the shells found in a sample of intertidal “goop.” Photo: Bill Merilees.

The fascination continues with every sample taken. You just never know what will turn up. The eminent scientist, Miriam Rothschild, is reported to have said: “a person who develops a fascination for nature will be satisfied for a lifetime, but one lifetime will never be enough.”

Amen!

Activities of Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO)

By Jessie Fanucchi



Field season is well underway at RPBO. Hummingbird banding has been underway across the province since April. Our MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) program is once again taking place at Madrona Farm and Witty's Lagoon until August. Migration Monitoring begins July 21 at Rocky Point leading up to owl banding in September. We are still working on getting a second, easier to access migration monitoring site set up this summer. Stay tuned!

The last few months have been very busy for RPBO with workshops, courses, outreach and fundraisers! We put on a very successful (and full!) monitoring and banding workshop at the end of March, led by our former bander-in-charge

Ron Melcer. We also ran an introductory birding course. RPBO participated in several events this spring including the Bald Eagle Festival in Campbell River and the 3rd annual International Migratory Bird Day along with VNHS.

Funding is always a challenge for RPBO, leading us to get creative with our fundraising efforts. For the second year in a row we held a raffle which raised over \$2000. We also headed a Bailee Birdathon (the oldest sponsored bird count in North America, raising money for bird research and conservation, in which birders, sponsored at a flat rate or on a per-species basis, attempt to find as many bird species as they can in a 24-hour period), including a mayor's challenge where local politicians competed against one another. As well, RPBO is participating in two affiliate programs <http://rpbo.org/affiliates.php>. These programs allow people to subscribe to Bird Watcher's Digest or purchase 'Larkwire' (a really great, complete, game-based learning system for mastering bird sounds – designed for both beginners and advanced birders) with RPBO receiving a portion of money.

Finally, we are offering three pelagic tours later this summer: August 11, August 25 and September 29 <http://rpbo.org/trips.php>. Thanks again to everyone who continues to support us! Donations can always be made directly at <http://rpbo.org/support.htm>.

RPBO also has some new homes on the internet! We have a new Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/rockypointbirdobservatory> as well as a Twitter account <https://twitter.com/#!/RockyPointBird>. We are hoping to have regular updates about our field season as well as events and courses that RPBO will be offering.

Feature Bird:

Bushtit

(*Psaltirparus minimus*)

Bushtits are small, chickadee-like birds that can be found year-round in the Victoria area. They are plump, large-headed, with long tails and short, stubby bills. Their colouring is not distinctive: they are brown-grey, slightly darker above than below. Adult females can be distinguished from adult males by their iris colour – females will have a pale grey iris. This species ranges from Guatemala to Southern B.C. and as far east as Texas. These birds are almost always found in flocks, continuously chattering as they forage for insects and spiders. These flocks may be led by a single bird or a group of leaders. They are communal roosters, huddling



International Migratory Bird Day. Photo: Alison Moran.



Bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*) caught at RPBO. Photo: Jessie Fanucchi.

shoulder to shoulder during cold spells. During breeding season, pairs will break up to seek out territories and build nests but will return to the group until nests are completed. Bushtit nests consist of a long, pendulous sack suspended from several branches made from a wide variety of plant material, lined with feathers and hair with an entrance near the top. They also engage in cooperative breeding, with helpers, usually male, aiding in raising the nestlings.

Though an infrequently banded bird at RPBO (only 10 were banded in 2011 and 11 in 2010) it can almost be guaranteed that they are caught together! Where there is one Bushtit, there are always more.

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Letters

Thank you so much for having a booth at our World Ocean's Day Festival 2012. Your booth was very popular and everyone was so interested in the specimens that you brought along. Hope to see you again soon.

All the best,
the World Fisheries Trust family

I was fortunate to receive The Victoria Natural History Society Award at the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair. I was very excited to be selected for the award and really appreciate the recognition for my work.

I am in grade 7 at South Island Distance Education School and this was the first time that I participated in the science fair. I studied the effect of "green" herbicide on the freshwater crustacean *Daphnia pulex*. It was amazing to see the tiny organisms swimming under a microscope, and also very sad to discover that natural products, considered environmentally friendly, caused them to die.

My participation in the science fair was a great experience and I learned a lot from my project. I look forward to participating again next year at the science fair. Thank you for your generous donation.

Yours truly,
Adrian Chlysta

Dear Victoria Natural History Society.

I am writing to thank you so very much for my Science Fair Award. I was thrilled to receive it and am encouraged to continue on competing in future fairs. It feels so good for my hard work to be acknowledged.

Respectfully,
Lauren Roberts Grade 6, St. Margaret's

I would like to thank you for supporting the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair and my project. I plan to use the money for a school band trip to Seattle, and to aid in paying for the Reynolds Soccer Academy, which I will be attending in the upcoming school year. I hope that I may have the chance to participate in the Science Fair again next year. It was a very rewarding and inspirational experience. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Sydney Brewer

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 14 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column:

Michelle Spani
Seagirt Road

Geoff and Judy Godfrey
Colqitz Avenue
All nature and her preservation

LeeAnn and Pierre Dil
Arnold Avenue
Birds

Helen Davis and Rich Wier
Colville Street
Natural History

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

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.

Needed: Volunteers and Nest-finders

Rocky Point Bird Observatory is starting long-term projects on hummingbird nesting. One study will look at the behaviour of nesting female Anna's and Rufous hummingbirds and a separate study will examine nest placement. Volunteers are needed for nest observation, video annotation and data entry. These studies are non-invasive, as birds are monitored from a distance. As nests are found, the study will be expanded into CRD parks

or private lands. Waivers must be signed and a membership to either RPBO or VNHS is necessary for participation in the direct observations. Please contact us if you find a nesting bird or an abandoned nest. For more information you can contact Tiffany Olsen (tolsen@uvic.ca) or Christina Lam (clam@uvic.ca)

Rocky Point Bird Observatory is pleased to be offering several short pelagic trips out of Sooke:

Saturday, August 11, 2012 – 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Juan de Fuca Strait \$90

Saturday, August 25, 2012 – 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Sooke to Swiftsure Bank \$200

Saturday, September 29, 2012 – 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Juan de Fuca Strait \$90

Great opportunities to get up close and personal with the

birds that you would see from afar, on the M.V. Coho. Maybe porpoises and whales, too.

There are 12 spaces for each trip, and the trip must be full in order to go. We expect them to fill quickly. If the trip is cancelled by RPBO for poor weather, insufficient registration or other causes, full refunds will be issued. Otherwise, there will be no refunds within three weeks of the trip date unless the opening is filled by another registrant. Wait lists will be kept.

The **departure point is Mariner's Village, 6585 Sooke Rd, Sooke**. The vessel is a 12 passenger Zodiac Hurricane, an open vessel. Bring warm clothing, snacks, food, drinks, binoculars, camera, sunglasses, and gloves. Make sure to take some sort of seasickness medication the night before and/or morning of the trip. Passengers will be outfitted with flotation/survival suits on the boat, and will need to be at the dock 20 minutes before departure. Passengers will be required to sign a liability waiver.

Register at: <http://rpbo.org/trips.php> Contact person is Jeremy Kimm vanislebirder@yahoo.com Tel: 250-589-5371

Flathead BioBlitz! A note from Galen Armstrong

Hi! I'm writing to tell you about the first-ever BioBlitz in British Columbia's Flathead River Valley. Following in E.O. Wilson's footsteps (he was the originator of the BioBlitz concept), we are sending a team of intrepid biologists, earth scientists and naturalists to B.C.'s Flathead to begin to catalogue the area's biodiversity and raise awareness of its need for permanent protection.

There is a lot we don't know about the Flathead, but we do know that it's one of the most biologically important areas in

the world, and a critical link in the continent's longest remaining wildlife corridor. It is also largely undeveloped, and mostly unprotected.

We are inviting scientists to join us this summer on this important expedition. The team of scientists, most or all from B.C., will be supported by a coalition of groups in B.C., Alberta, and Montana, dedicated to protecting the Flathead River Valley. Please visit www.sierraclub.bc.ca or www.flathead.ca to learn more about our coalition and campaign to protect the Flathead.

Dr. Ric Hauer, a professor of limnology at the University of Montana, who has spent many years studying the Flathead, has kindly offered to join us in the Flathead for an orientation and to offer assistance during the BioBlitz.

The Flathead BioBlitz will take place starting August 13, 2012, for a week to 10 days, depending on how much time you can commit.

Location: The far south-eastern corner of British Columbia in the Flathead. We will likely convene at Sage Creek, which is accessible by unmarked logging roads near Cranbrook. Specific sites of study will differ depending on scientists' interest and expertise. The 'Flathead Wild' coalition will offer guides, maps and assistance.

We are also working with a renowned wildlife artist, Dwayne Harty, who will be painting in the Flathead during the same time www.dwayneharty.com.

If you are interested in being involved in this project or wish more details you can contact Galen Armstrong at Sierra Club BC by email galen@sierraclub.bc.ca or phone 250-386-5255 ext. 243.

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 Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Night**: 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.

Birding trips – July/August

No specific trips are planned, but please stay in touch with the Bird Alert (250-704-2555) and watch for any birding outings that may come up.

JULY

Sunday, July 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

*Discovery Island & Chain Islands Ecological Reserve
Bird-watchers Kayak Tour*

Once home to First Nations people and lighthouse keepers,

Discovery Island is now a Provincial Marine Park. A mecca for sea kayakers and nature enthusiasts, the area presents many opportunities for viewing wildlife and many birds. The tour will also explore the nearby Chain Islands which are protected bird sanctuaries and seal rookeries. You may see Bald Eagles, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, various sandpipers and other shorebirds. By kayak, we are able to see the numerous sea birds that nest and feed in and around these shores such as the Pigeon Guillemots, Black Oystercatchers and Cormorants. Baby Harbour Seals remain undisturbed as we quietly glide past. You do not need to be an experienced kayaker as enough instruction will be given for you to enjoy a safe day on the water. Cost: \$95. A 5 hour guided tour starting at 9:30 a.m. from the Oak Bay Marina parking lot. Minimum required: eight people/per tour.

Sign up as soon as possible but at least a week in advance. We will be out on the water for five hours so please pack a lunch and some snacks. We normally pull up on a beach to have our lunch and do a bit of exploring on the island. Depending on the day's weather, be prepared to layer up or down while on the water. Suggested gear: sunglasses, sun hat, sunscreen, footwear you can get wet, windbreaker, toque, binoculars, lunch, snacks, and lots of liquid to drink. **For more information or to register, phone Pacifica Paddle at 250-665-7411.**

Saturday, July 21 and Sunday July 22

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 250-544-0455.

Sunday, July 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Discovery Island Marine Park Tour in Comfort

We will travel to Discovery Island via the Blackfish motorized 'canoe', no paddling required. It is normally moored near Oak Bay Marina. Look at the web site <http://www.blackfishwilderness.com/motherk.htm> to see that this 45-foot vessel really isn't what we think of as a canoe but rather a lovely boat with very generous looking seats. There will be no kayaks associated with this trip. We will leave from the Oak Bay Marina at 8:45 a.m. and cruise leisurely out towards Chatham and Discovery Island, checking the birds and other wildlife as we go. Although the majority of the trip is in the dry comfort of the 'canoe', there will be transfers via zodiac to and from shore. Wear water shoes (or bare feet) and have pant legs that can be pulled up as water may be knee deep. We will be dropped off to investigate the southern part of Discovery Island which is a Provincial Marine Park. We will be picked up from the island at about 3:30 p.m. and on the return trip we may do some further investigation around the islands in search of shorebirds. The cost of the trip will be \$35 per person. Please be prepared with cash, exact change please. Suggested things to take: lunch, snacks, lots of drinking water, windbreaker (island breezes can be chilly), sun glasses, sun screen, insect repellent, hat, water shoes, small towel (to dry your feet), binoculars, good shoes/boots (for hiking around on the island). You can bring a backpack and it should stay dry. Limited number of participants so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Book between July 4 and July 15. Contact **Agnes** at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

AUGUST

Friday, August 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Mount Washington Botanical Day Trip

This trip is planned for peak bloom time but the area is interesting over several weeks with a succession of flowers. The plan is to meet at Raven Lodge on the mountain around 11:00 a.m. and decide when we get there what we will do with our day. If snow level permits, we will walk around the Lake Helen MacKenzie – Battleship Lake route. We will also fit in a tour around Paradise Meadows on our way to and from our main adventure. The trail will be on hilly and uneven ground but will be done at a slow pace. We will leave Victoria at 7:00 a.m. and

return late, stopping for a quick supper on the way home. Pack a lunch that we'll eat someplace out on the trail. Preregister by contacting Agnes after July 4. First nine people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$35 for the day from Victoria. Additional cost of \$15 (\$12 senior) if we go up the chairlift for a scenic tour if time permits and weather cooperates. Remember to bring money for a fast-food supper. Bring lots of water, lunch and snacks. Wear proper footwear and warm clothes and bring a hiking stick, as it can be cold up there. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Sunday, August 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Hurricane Ridge High Elevation Wildflowers

For several years, VNHS has arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us up the hill to Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park to enjoy the high elevation species of sub-alpine flowers at their peak. Most wildflowers at sea level have finished flowering for the season by then. We plan to walk up the Hurricane Hill Trail. Due to the heavy snow pack, the route may vary if conditions dictate. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation it could possibly be quite cool or it might rain, so be prepared. Also wear sturdy hiking boots and hiking poles would be an asset. Bring a lunch, snacks, and lots to drink as we will not be near any facilities. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour by 9:45 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. sailing of the M.V. Coho (later start than usual due to road closure for bicycle race till noon). Allow plenty of time to park and purchase your ferry ticket which costs about \$31 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH U.S. CUSTOMS.** We will be down from the mountain to Port Angeles by 7:30 p.m. to give us time for supper at one of the nearby restaurants before the ferry leaves at 9:30 p.m. (90 minute crossing). Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$55 CDN. Limited number of participants so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Book between July 4 and July 29. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through Paypal on the VNHS website (vicnhs.bc.ca) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus. Contact **Agnes** at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

Sunday, August 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Olympic National Park Obstruction Point Road

For a change of scenery in Washington's Olympic National Park, we have arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us up to travel along the scenic high elevation Obstruction Point Rd. Rather than one long hike, we will stop at a number of places and do several short excursions in search of sub-alpine flowers not too far from the road. We hope to find some species endemic to Olympic National Park. Due to the heavy snow pack and the uncertainty of the road conditions, the route may vary. Be prepared for travel on unpaved twisty roads. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation it could possibly be quite cool or it might rain, so be prepared. Also wear sturdy hiking boots and hiking poles would be an

asset. Bring a lunch, snacks and lots to drink as we will not be near any facilities. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the M.V. Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket which costs about \$31 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! U.S. CUSTOMS SEE AUG 5 EVENT.** We will return on the 5:15 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). Also there is usually good birding from the ferry. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$60 CDN. Limited number of participants so reserve your spot early. VNHS and VIRAGS members get priority. Book between July 4 and Aug 5. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through Paypal on the VNHS website (vicnhs.bc.ca) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus. Contact **Agnes** at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

Saturday, August 18 and Sunday August 19 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 250-544-0455.

Sunday, August 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Discovery Island & Chain Islands Ecological Reserve Bird-watchers Kayak Tour

This is an identical trip to the one on July 15. Please refer to that one for details. For more information or to register, phone Pacifica Paddle at 250-665-7411.

Sunday, August 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Olympic Peninsula Tufted Puffins, Brown Pelicans and More

This is a popular trip to Washington's Olympic Peninsula as

we now merge two previous trips that we have done before. We hope to enjoy seeing some good birds again but there will be lots for all nature lovers to enjoy along the way at a leisurely pace. We will start with the tour to Cape Flattery, the most northern point on the west coast of the continental United States and one of the closest locations to Victoria where you can see Tufted Puffins. Islands off the point are home to thousands of seabirds throughout the year. The birds can be observed from platforms which are located about a half hour's walk through the forest. Instead of stopping at the excellent museum on this trip, we will continue south to La Push and other beaches where we hope to see Brown Pelicans and other sea birds that might not venture as far north as Victoria. We will make intermittent stops along the way to enjoy the beaches where we can see the dune plants as well as the birds. Also remember that the entire Olympic Peninsula is covered with the lush growth of giant trees and luxuriant vegetation which makes for a very scenic trip. Tour leader Willie also is full of fascinating facts about the area. This will be a long day so bring a lunch, snacks and drinks as we will not stop near any restaurant facilities. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the M.V. Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket which costs about \$31 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! U.S. CUSTOMS SEE AUG 5 EVENT** You'll have to get your birding in on the way over because we will return to Victoria on the 9:30 p.m. sailing (90 minute crossing time). After the bus drops us off, there will be time for dinner in Port Angeles. Cost of the charter bus is \$60 CDN. Limited number of participants so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Book between July 4 and Aug 19. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through Paypal on the VNHS website (vicnhs.bc.ca) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus. Contact **Agnes** at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.



VNHS at World Oceans Day. Photo: Darren Copley.



International Migratory Bird Day. *Photo: Darren Copley.*