



# The Victoria NATURALIST

JANUARY  
FEBRUARY  
2012  
VOL 68.4

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the  
**VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**,  
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4  
Contents © 2012 as credited.  
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

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**Desktop Publishing:** Frances Hunter, 250-479-1956  
**Distribution:** Tom Gillespie, Phyllis Henderson, Morwyn Marshall  
**Printing:** Fotoprint, 250-382-8218

Opinions expressed by contributors to *The Victoria Naturalist* are not necessarily those of the Society.

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### Guidelines for Submissions

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COVER PHOTO

An endangered mollusc in Canada: the Oregon Forestsnail (*Allogona townsendiana*). Only one population of this species has been reported on Vancouver Island, so any sightings (including photographs), should be sent to Jennifer Heron at the BC Ministry of Environment (Phone: 604-222-6759. Email: Jennifer.Heron@gov.bc.ca/). Read more on p.14. *Photo*: Jennifer Heron

I had a really wonderful experience near the end of the previous year that I hope some of you also witnessed: a total lunar eclipse.

Although total lunar eclipses are not necessarily rare occurrences, this was the first that I had seen, and it was amazing.

I’m an early bird, so it has always been a challenge for me to partake in late night activities: owling, disco-dancing, and eclipse-watching, to name a few. But the eclipse that occurred on Saturday December 10, 2011 happened at 6:05 a.m. – Perfect for an early riser like me. Even better that seeing an eclipse, is seeing it from your bed, out your bedroom window, while you are still snuggled under the warm covers with your binoculars – I will never forget it. It lasted about an hour with the earth-shadow completely covering the full moon, and we got to see the moon reappear just before it set behind distant trees. The night was cold and clear and perfect. What a treat.

If you weren’t up to see it, the next one is on April 15, 2014. Something to look forward to!

Happy New Year!

*Claudia*

PS: The next issue of the magazine will be handled by James Miskelly and Ken Sohm, so please submit any articles, images, bulletin board items, etc. to them. Their contact information can be found on the inside cover of this issue.

# President's Message

By Darren Copley

I was recently corresponding with a friend and VNHS member who volunteers in local parks in Saanich and got onto the topic of volunteering. She, and the few other volunteers she works with, do an incredible job at tackling invasive species in this and other nearby parks. Without them, Mount Douglas would have been taken over by Garlic Mustard, English Ivy, and Scotch Broom (to mention a few). I can also think of another nearby example at Rithet's Bog where the majority of the work is done by volunteers. Why isn't government doing this you ask? They have limited funds to look after all aspects of park management, and have put their limited budget towards tackling new invaders before they become established. In Saanich, and a few other municipalities, they also provide support to the volunteer groups. Anyway, before I say something that I shouldn't about how government needs to put in as much funding in controlling the established invasives as they do the new ones, I should get back to my conversation with Judy.

She, and I, worry that many people put off volunteering, or getting involved in clubs like the VNHS, until they are retired. I'm hoping I can convince her to write an article that explains the many reasons why you shouldn't wait. Her main worry is that our parks can't wait until you retire, so if you are enjoying them now, get out there and help other volunteers remove invasive species. You also think you'll have more time when you retire, but that often isn't the case. You may be less able physically if you wait until later to help out. If you are interested in hearing how you can help protect these parks that we all enjoy for nature viewing, send me a note and I'll put you in touch with Judy, or some of the other groups working in your favourite park.

I must say that I was happy to be able to tell Judy that many of the volunteers that help out with our Society are not retired. I wish I could tell her that more of us got involved in these restoration projects, but that will hopefully come with time. On the subject of volunteering, I'd like to thank the two members who recently stepped forward to help us with Society functions, in response to my plea in my last President's Message. Ken Sohm has joined the Board as Secretary and Leah Ramsay has led us into the 21st century with a Twitter Account. Now we just need a Facebook page! I'd also like to thank outgoing directors Wendy Tyrell and Shona Lawson for their efforts on the Board. Good luck in your future endeavours. Since I'm on a roll, I thought I'd mention a couple other places we require volunteers:

Social committee  
Advertising  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Website maintenance  
Digitizing back-issues of the magazine  
Helping mail out the magazine

Switching gears a bit, I'd like to ask for your support in a project that our Society is helping with: *Bring Back the Bluebirds*. As many of you probably know, the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team is fundraising to reintroduce Western Bluebirds back to Southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands after a successful reintroduction program on San Juan Island. Our Society was heavily involved in trying to save bluebirds when their numbers crashed in the 1990's. Despite incredible efforts, led by Harold Pollock, bluebirds no longer nest here. In Harold's name, the Board has decided to help with the fundraising for this project. If you donate to this cause, the Society will match your donation, up to \$5,000. We are also looking for other ideas to help fundraise: e.g. art show, raffle, dinner, birdathon, etc. The first year of the reintroduction will cost \$50,000, so we definitely need your help. To donate, visit our website ([www.naturevictoria.ca](http://www.naturevictoria.ca)), and click "donate" on the main page where you can select the Bluebird Project and pay by Paypal. You can also donate by mailing in a cheque to our regular address.

The *Bring Back the Bluebirds* Program is also looking for help with getting nestboxes placed on the Peninsula in key areas that should have them in anticipation of the Saltspring Island reintroduction, North and Central Saanich, particularly, and Sidney. This would involve engaging landowners of likely properties and helping mount bluebird boxes. If you are interested in being a nestbox program "champion", and working with us to mount nestboxes in those areas, please let me know.

And, after asking you all to be generous with your time and money, I am happy to leave you with an incredible story. Long-time VNHS member, and local teacher, Janet Arnold, left the Society a bequest of approximately \$400,000. The Board has decided to invest this money and use the annual interest for yearly projects that support the mandate of the Society. In this way her donation will support conservation initiatives long into the future. If you were a friend of Janet Arnold and are interested in helping us write an article in an upcoming issue, please contact the editor.

Thanks and happy new year!

# VNHS Awards

## Call for Nominations

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

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

The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honorary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. **Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2012.**

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

### VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

- 1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
- 1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
- 1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
- 1994 Kaye Suttill
- 1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
- 1996 Gordon Devey
- 1997 Michael Carson
- 1998 No recipients
- 1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
- 2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
- 2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
- 2002 Norm Mogensen
- 2003 Bob Chappell
- 2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska
- 2005 Rick Schortinghuis
- 2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
- 2007 No recipients
- 2008 Ann Nightingale
- 2009 No recipients
- 2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn
- 2011 Claudia and Darren Copley

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# The Victoria Naturalist: A Retrospective

## (Part 1: Volume 1, 1944/45)

By Hans Boerger

The 6th floor of the Fannin Building at the Royal BC Museum houses a small library. Among its gems are a set of four green books containing bound sets of the *Victoria Naturalist* from its inception in April, 1944, to 1965. Unbound copies from 1996 to today are arranged in magazine boxes next to the bound sets. Through the assistance of Claudia Copley, I was able to spend several days perusing this treasure trove of local natural history.

What surprised me was that a natural history society was formed at a time when thousands were dying on the battlefields of World War II. Was this focus on nature a way of forgetting the horrors of war for a time? Or was it a natural progression in the local natural history movement, which had started years before with the formation of the Natural History Society of BC by local naturalist Robert Connell and others?

Whatever the reasons, in the spring of 1944, the new Victoria Natural History Society arose out of the ashes of the defunct Natural History Society of BC, with Robert Connell as the president. On Wikipedia you will learn that Connell (1871-1957) was a Scottish-born Anglican priest who moved to Victoria in 1901.

Retiring from the pulpit in 1923, Connell taught art at a private boy's school and botany at Victoria High School. He also wrote a weekly column on nature and geology for the *Victoria Daily Times*. In 1932 he became involved in provincial politics, becoming leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and leader of the opposition from 1933-1937. You will find his obituary in the *Victoria Naturalist*, Volume 16, Issue 7, January, 1958.

During the first year there were six botanical outings,



including one to Goldstream by train! This was also the first year that Purple Martins (termed Western Martins at that time) did not nest in downtown Victoria in a cornice of a warehouse corner of Fort and Wharf. The first Christmas Bird Count tallied 1371 birds belonging to 37 species. Volume 1, Issue 8 lists the names and addresses of all 120 members.

Crisp black-and-white photographs adorn the front and back covers of each of the nine issues packed with articles on local species, meetings, and outings. It is an excellent start for a magazine that has now been published for 67 years, becoming one of the top natural history society publications in Canada.

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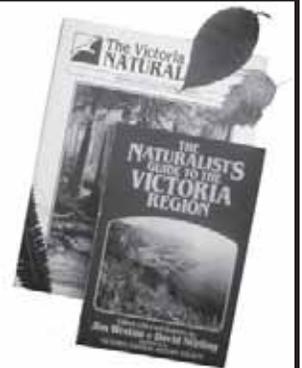
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VICTORIA NATURAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY

- VNHS membership
- VNHS Field guide covers
- VNHS Beginning Birding Course
- VNHS Beyond Beginning Birding Course
- VNHS *Naturalists' Guide to the Victoria Region*

Ask at a meeting, or contact Darren at 250 479-6622



# BC Field Ornithologists Conference in Fort St. John

By Agnes Lynn

First of all, who are the BC Field Ornithologists (BCFO) anyway? A while back, I noticed that several of the local birders belonged to the group. Whenever they would meet, it was almost like they had a secret handshake! It took me a while to realize that what I was observing was the camaraderie that results from being a member of that organization. It's made up of some of the best birders in the province, with no distinction between professional and amateur. I was a bit worried that a mere mortal wouldn't be accepted, but I bit the bullet and joined a few years back and have really enjoyed being a member.

My first exposure was through their publications, a quarterly newsletter called *BC Birding*, with many birding articles that interest me as an amateur birder in BC, and a more scholarly *British Columbia Birds* publication that comes out about once a year. Through these, I got to know a lot about some of BC's keen birders as well as BC birds. For

those of you who are familiar with Bird Studies Canada, it has a similar feel but with just BC issues, birds, and people.

For several years, I read accounts of the BCFO annual conferences with their amazing field trips but I never managed to attend one. This year I did get to the annual conference as well as three of their quarterly field trips. The first quarterly one was in Parksville-Qualicum in the spring. Although it's an area that I was familiar with, it was the people who came that made it a great couple of days. Leader Guy Monty performed miracles as the birds that were expected didn't come and the weather was grim. It didn't take long to feel right at home with these total strangers, talking birds the whole day long. I also attended the excellent fall field trip around White Rock and Boundary Bay with George Clulow as our knowledgeable guide.

As soon as I heard that the annual conference was to be held in Fort St. John, I decided that I had to go despite



Lunch stop at Pink Mountain with the peak in the distance. *Photo: Jo Ann MacKenzie*

having an insane schedule at the time. It was held June 10 – 12, planned for the best birding time in the area. The reason that I have been trying to get up to the Peace Country for birding is because that area is actually on the other side of the Rockies, so it has a great variety of birds not seen elsewhere in BC. This was a golden opportunity to go birding with people who really knew where to find the treasures.

To break up the long drive to the conference for us southerners, the adventure started with one of the quarterly field trips held in Prince George and led by local expert Nancy Kreuger. That day she managed to cover several habitats and we saw about 70 birds in total. Highlights for me included good close-up views of American Redstarts, Tennessee Warblers, and a Magnolia Warbler. The hoped-for Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were nowhere to be found despite us lurking in their favourite spots. We also had a great time at the sewage lagoon that had been written up in the *BC Birding* newsletter as a teaser to get us to go to the field trip. I know normal folks don't understand how birders love sewage lagoons, but all the participants were thrilled to see the southern duckies hanging out, raising their families up there. Everyone was so helpful that day; making sure that we all got good looks at the birds. It felt just like one of our local birding outings, even though I didn't know a soul.

After a dinner out together, we talked about the plans for the next day. We were going to go in convoy to Fort St. John and Nancy had planned some birding stops for us along the way. That day didn't work out for me as I had car problems, but I caught up later. Nancy and others had suggested that

we take the road through Hudson Hope so that we would see the beautiful land that will be flooded if the Site C Dam gets built. So sad.

I got to Fort St. John too late for the opening event in the evening, but I was up early for the first morning of field trips. They divided the 40 of us into two groups with local birders plus other experts in each group. My group went south that day down through Dawson Creek, almost to the Alberta border. We went in convoy, so don't ask me exactly where we went, but I do remember that we got to Swan Lake. We chased a Blue-headed Vireo through the fields and it never did show itself but we heard it several times. The Rose-breasted Grosbeak was much more cooperative and entertained us for several minutes. We enjoyed Philadelphia Warbler and Mourning Warbler along the way. Black Terns were on the lake, as well as other tidbits. It was just a matter of absorbing one great bird and another would show up.

We went back to Fort St. John and they fed us lunch. We spent the afternoon listening to a number of short interesting technical birding topics such as a report on Sharp-tailed Grouse in northeastern BC. Then we had our obligatory annual general meeting, but they kept that short. After a bit of free time to bird or rest, everyone enjoyed the excellent banquet that evening, complete with another speaker who discussed the challenges we will face with avian migration conflicting with wind farm developments. All the meals are included in the conference fee so it keeps the logistics simple.

Next morning, we switched routes and headed out once



Hoary Marmot (*Marmota caligata*). Photo: Ron Long

again. This time we headed north and stopped at Beatton Provincial Park on Charlie Lake. We chased a number of birds through the woods (including Boreal Chickadee) and finally saw a Black-throated Green Warbler. We looked out on the lake but a number of the birds were on the other side as usual! I was teased by an Ovenbird many times throughout this trip but never managed to see one. They call constantly but are very secretive. We meandered through some other fascinating areas nearby with good birds everywhere.

Finally we headed a bit south to the Taylor area. There is one place where the Canada Warbler is often seen and we were lucky enough to see it after a lot of back and forth meandering. Everyone was happy with that one. After that, we went looking for a Vesper Sparrow, plus there was a spot where we might see a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. As we were scanning for the Vesper, a lady came by and invited us to her yard. She said she had the hummingbirds. Actually, she had an oasis of amazing plants growing there and all the birds knew where she lived! A couple of highlights for me in her yard included great looks at an Eastern Phoebe as well as the promised Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. We hated to leave. I never did see a Vesper Sparrow but saw lots of other birds to make up for it.

Next it was back to our hotel for lunch and the wrap-up of

a very enjoyable conference. We had some spare time before we started our official extension trip with Russell Cannings, so a few of us headed off to check out the sewage lagoons, of course! I spent a bit of time there with Barb and Mike McGrenere, who were the only Victoria folks that I knew at the conference. We enjoyed close-up views of such birds as Eared Grebes and Cinnamon Teal, plus many other ducks enjoying themselves in these huge ponds with few predators in evidence.

After supper we joined up with Russell for the extension field trip, an extra cost addition for those who wanted to get the most out of their trip to the north. Russell had worked in the area for a number of years so knew all the good spots for birds. There were 12 participants and Russell. We squished into two small vans for the next couple of days. We planned to stay at the same hotel in Fort St. John the first night and, since the days are so long up there at that time of year, we took advantage of that. He had planned to take us down to an area where he had seen Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the past but when we told him of our delightful afternoon visit, he decided to go there. The owners had said that we were welcome anytime, not knowing that we would be back



Willow Ptarmigan. Photo: Clive Keen



Snow Cinquefoil (*Potentilla nivea*). Photo: Jo Ann MacKenzie. Moose (*Alces alces*). Photo: Ron Long

so soon! The birds were as plentiful as earlier in the day and the Ruby-throats did show up. As we left, the Common Nighthawks were calling overhead.

We then proceeded to Watson's Slough. The plan was to get there just at dusk, hoping to see the Yellow Rail and the Nelson's (Sharp-tailed) Sparrow. We heard the rail almost right away but it was like its cousins and kept hidden. The sparrow was also clearly heard but we only got fleeting glimpses as they fluttered in the grass near the marshy bits. I think that was the most buggy part of the adventure. Most times the bug repellent did its job but it was a challenge that evening. However, I would say that I didn't find the bugs much worse than on typical woodsy Vancouver Island outings.

Next morning, we started off at a hot spot near Baldonnel where we got good views of a pair of Connecticut Warblers, a hard bird to find usually. After that quick stop, we headed off north and visited Pink Mountain along the way. This area has a small park but needs more protection, and photographer Ron Long has been spearheading a campaign to get more of it included in the park. It is under threat from

mining, oil and gas exploration, and potential wind farms. Not only are there many important birds that live there but also an amazing selection of true alpine plants that need protection. We managed to get almost to the top of the mountain in our trusty vans, only needing to test the depth of a few puddles as we inched along. There were a few high elevation birds, including a Townsend's Solitaire seen from the car on the way up. The highlight of the day was a male Willow Ptarmigan who just sat there while we all admired him. I was actually standing on the road when I saw it but others had fanned out along the slope to assist in finding the birds. I was also busy looking at the plants such as the Woolly Lousewort (*Pedicularis lanata*) and many others that I did not recognize. A few Hoary Marmots were around as well, watching us. After slowly descending the mountain, we checked a dug-out pond behind the gas station and there was a pair of breeding Greater Yellowlegs, just one of the nice surprises that we saw along the way. Going to and from Fort Nelson, we enjoyed seeing a Caribou right close by the road and a few Moose, including the sweetest little baby Moose. It was beautiful terrain in the Black Spruce forest with many



Woolly Lousewort (*Pedicularis lanata*). Photo: Jo Ann MacKenzie

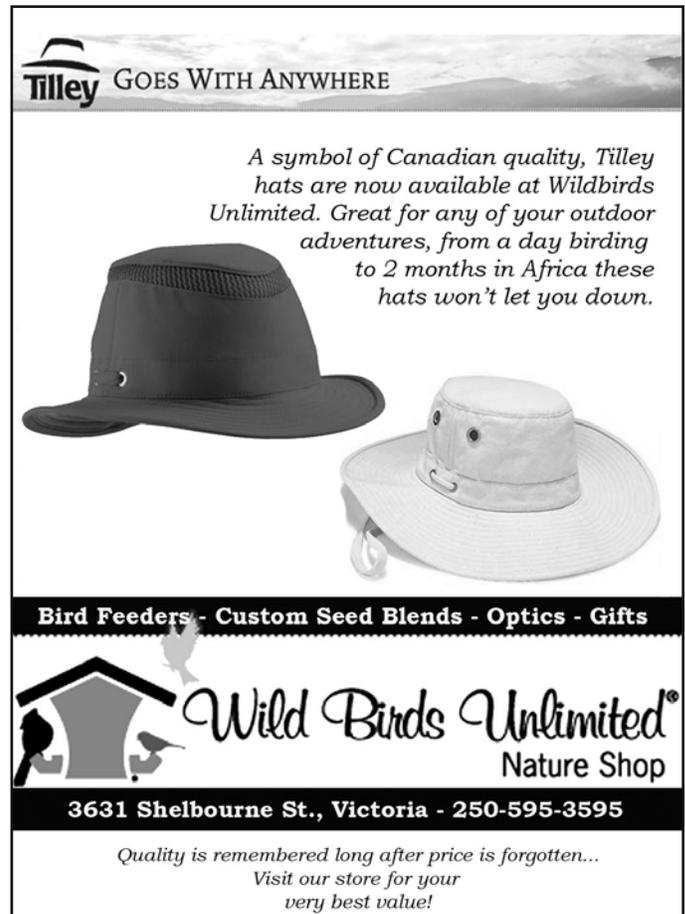
interesting plants that I tried to see as we zoomed by. We settled into our motel in Fort Nelson and had dinner before calling it a night.

The plan was to get up and go birding at a Demonstration Forest before breakfast but both me and my roommate, Jo Ann MacKenzie, slept through our alarms and missed the early birds. After breakfast we headed north on the Liard Highway, almost as far as the Northwest Territories, and visited several spots looking for good warblers, flycatchers, vireos, and such. We stopped at one forested spot hoping for a Bay-breasted Warbler. We enjoyed a nice birdie walk and had almost given up on the Bay-breasted. We were back at the cars and finally we did get a great look at it. Everyone was pleased with that one. The best spot of the day was Parker Lake. We saw Yellow-bellied Flycatcher there and a number of other good birds, including some on the water. A Trumpeter Swan was a surprise. Oh, we did check out the sewage lagoons there too but nothing too exciting, just the Northern Pintail as a new bird for the trip. No shorebirds at the airport but we enjoyed a field of 40 Sandhill Cranes both days as we went to and from the motel. As people were resting before dinner, I walked out to the area where they had visited while I slept in. I did get a real Winter Wren there so my BC checklist now includes both Pacific Wren and Winter Wren. I sure couldn't see or hear much difference but who is to argue! After dinner we all returned to the Demonstration Forest and went in circles around the trail, enjoying various birds as we meandered. I was once again enjoying the delightful northern plants as well.

On the final day, we returned to Parker Lake but had to walk in because the road was too muddy from the rain the previous night. We enjoyed a Palm Warbler that wasn't there the day before, and more Yellow-bellied Flycatchers. There were also a couple of unexpected Swamp Sparrows there. Finally we headed out and checked a few more spots on our way south. Once again the Ovenbirds teased me while they hid in the bushes. The trip ended in the early afternoon back at Fort St. John. Russell did an excellent job of leading the trip. He was organized and helpful and knew the territory. The weather for the entire trip was amazingly good with very little rain or wind.

I had to hurry to be home for Friday, so I headed off for

Prince George right away and back to Victoria the next day. That was a long drive but I enjoyed seeing a group of White Pelicans on Williams Lake. I saw them right from the highway. In total, I saw almost 140 birds on the trip and ended up adding 25 new BC birds to my list. I also got to hang out with some of the best birders in the province. Think about joining the BC Field Ornithologists and taking part in their great activities. The web site is <[www.bcfo.ca](http://www.bcfo.ca)> or ask me or the McGreeneres for more details. Maybe you'll join us in Princeton next year for their annual conference on June 1 and 2, 2012.



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# Rescuing a River in the Salish Sea

By Tina Kelly

There is a monumental restoration project taking place in the Salish Sea. Located in Washington's Olympic National Park, approximately 10 km west of Port Angeles, the Elwha River empties directly into Juan de Fuca Strait. The Elwha watershed, formerly one of the most productive river systems in the Salish Sea, has long been impeded by not one, but two dams, the Elwha and the Glines Canyon.

In the early 1900's, the area in and around Port Angeles was experiencing an economic boom. To provide the energy needed for burgeoning industries, Thomas Aldwell facilitated the construction of the two dams on this powerful river. Something was wrong, however, and illegal, in their design – the absence of fish passage or ladders.

Prior to dam construction, the local Klallum tribe relied heavily on this river ecosystem for salmon. All five species of Pacific Salmon along with Steelhead and Bull Trout had some

natal connection to the Elwha's river and tributaries. The two dams severely hindered natural sediment flow. Kilometres of riverbed became eroded, nutrient-depleted and altered in geography, reducing suitability as salmon spawning habitat. The construction of the dams also decreased the 100 kilometres of river and tributaries available for spawning and rearing habitat to only eight kilometres.

Fast forward to September 2011. There are now holes in the dams, on purpose. After years of studies and debate, the United States government is undertaking the largest dam removal process in their country's history. Like a reverse game of Tetris, pieces will slowly be removed from the dam walls. This carefully-orchestrated and highly-organized removal will occur over three years. During each step of the deconstruction process, organizations, officials and graduate students will closely monitor and evaluate changes to the river system.

In the almost 100 years since the upper dam was erected, a tremendous amount of fine and large sized sediment has built up behind it; one estimate puts this amount at 13 million cubic meters of sediment. The dam deconstruction is occurring slowly primarily to limit the sediment loads negative effect on the spawning suitability of the riverbed. Other than ensuring healthy and size-



A guided tour of the Elwha River upper dam and reservoir was included in the Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educators conference held in July 2010 at the Olympic Park Institute. *Photo by author.*

appropriate spawning gravel is created, restoring each salmon population has its own restoration strategy. These strategies include the use of captive brood programs and hatcheries.

The Elwha nearshore is also in danger as the sediment is released from the upper reservoir. Though the nearshore has changed in structure – sediment size, nutrient changes and erosion – because of dam construction and other human impacts, such as a bulkhead built on nearby bluffs, it has been for years a critical habitat for many plants, algae, fish, and invertebrate species. The goal is to minimize impact on these species while slowly rebuilding the wetlands, beaches, and estuaries at the river’s mouth.

A lot of eyes – government agencies, scientists, First Nations, fisheries, and citizens – are paying close attention

to the Elwha dam removal. All have a vested interest in returning this ecosystem to its natural state. Many are confident all salmon species will return to spawning in the Elwha; one predication has the current population of 3,000 returning salmon increasing to 400,000. In an age where river and stream degradation, and decreasing salmon stocks – and their associated environmental repercussions – are repeatedly in news, everyone is hopeful for that “feel good” story, in which we successfully reverse the damage that humans have caused. It may take 15-20 years for the system to return to its pre-dam state, but if all goes according to plan, it will be worth the wait.

More information on the dam removal process, including webcams and detailed information on the restoration approach for each salmon species, can be found at <[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)>

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## Deck Stacked Against Those Who Question Site C Dam

*Nov 17, 2011 Press Release*

**T**he process for assessing the impacts of BC Hydro’s proposed Site C dam on the Peace River is biased against those who would challenge the dam, charge environmental groups. This allegation follows the receipt by the Peace Valley Environment Association of an e-mail from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency advising that a maximum of only \$19,000 will be made available to any group wishing to participate in the environmental assessment.

A Joint Review Panel Process will conduct hearings on behalf of both the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the BC Environmental Assessment Office. “Effective participation requires hiring experts who can review BC Hydro’s studies and hold them accountable,” says Andrea Morison, Coordinator for the Peace Valley Environment Association, which successfully prevented two previous attempts to get the dam approved. “This will cost us tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, something we, as a small, largely volunteer group, cannot afford” she adds.

The estimated cost of the construction of the dam, which is proposed for the Peace River upstream from Fort St. John, has grown dramatically to almost \$8 billion. However, on November 10th a Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency official notified the Peace Valley Environment Association that each group wishing to engage in the environmental assessment is limited to a maximum of \$19,000 in funding for the entire process.

“There is a long history of vocal public opposition to Site C,” says Tria Donaldson of the Wilderness Committee. “The paltry funding Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has set aside for non-profits is totally insufficient – it appears clearly designed to silence the very valid and very serious concerns of non-profit groups,” she adds.

“This proposal is huge in both scope and controversy,”

says Sierra Club BC Executive Director George Heyman. “There are major questions regarding the intended end-use of Site C power, loss of significant agricultural land and species habitat, and impacts on First Nations and local communities. The presentation of alternatives deserves to be enabled, not hobbled, as part of an open public process.”

“Very clearly, there is no intention by government to allow for truly effective or fair public participation in this three-year environmental assessment process,” states Morison. “We need money to hire experts to advise and represent us at the hearing, to review and critique BC Hydro’s studies, and to put forward our own vision for the future of the Peace River Valley – \$19,000 is simply not nearly enough,” Morison adds.

“An effective and fair environmental assessment requires that federal and provincial decision-makers hear both BC Hydro’s experts as well as experts with alternative opinions,” notes Wendy Francis, Program Director for the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, an organization concerned about the impacts of a third hydro reservoir on the Peace on the ability of large mammals to move through the region. “With such a paltry sum available to non-profit groups wanting to participate, the evidence presented to the panel will hugely favor BC Hydro’s case,” Francis adds.

### **For more information contact:**

Andrea Morison, Peace Valley Environment Association,  
250-785-4711

Wendy Francis, Program Director, Yellowstone  
to Yukon Conservation Initiative, 403-763.8633

Tria Donaldson, Wilderness Committee, 250-686-9249

George Heyman, Sierra Club BC, 604-312-6595

Sierra Club of BC Foundation, 250-386-5255

[info@sierraclub.bc.ca](mailto:info@sierraclub.bc.ca)

# Oregon Forestsnail (*Allogona townsendiana*)

Excerpted from a Ministry of Environment Develop With Care – Invertebrate Species At Risk Fact Sheet.

Snails and slugs (gastropods) perform important ecological roles and contribute to the health of the ecosystems they occupy. By consuming large quantities of live, dead, and decaying vegetation, they facilitate turn-over of nutrients and minerals and aid in decomposition. In turn, gastropods are consumed by a variety of invertebrate and vertebrate predators. Snails sequester calcium and other minerals in their shells, which are then released in forms usable by other organisms when the snails die or are consumed. Many gastropods feed on fruits and fungi, aiding seed and spore dispersal. In British Columbia there are a number of gastropods that are considered species at risk, including the Oregon Forestsnail (*Allogona townsendiana*).

Oregon Forestsnail only occurs in Canada on the Lower Mainland and a single population on Vancouver Island. It is a large snail, with an adult shell diameter about 28–35 mm. The shell is globular and coloured a straw-yellow to light brown, with fine lines and an opening with a white, thickened rim that flares outward. The outer layer of the shell is often partially worn off, exposing a whitish under-layer. The animal itself is pale brown.

Oregon Forestsnail occupies moist deciduous or mixed-wood forests at low elevations. Plant species within its habitat include Bigleaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Black Cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*) and/or Red Alder (*Alnus rubus*) dominated stands. The snails are often found in riparian areas along streams, along forest edges, and in small forest gaps. They prefer sites with abundant moisture-loving herbaceous plants such as stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), fringe-cup (*Tellima grandiflora*), or bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*). Sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*) is also often present. In many areas the snails show a close association with stinging nettle. Soft productive soils, leaf litter, and coarse woody debris are thought to be important for mating, egg-laying, shelter, and hibernation.

The best time to locate nests of Oregon Forestsnail is during the egg-laying period in the spring, especially after a heavy rainfall or when the forest floor is thoroughly moist. Oregon Forestsnail digs a burrow for egg-laying, and, although several nests of Oregon Forestsnail have been located in British Columbia, detailed descriptions of the burrows and behaviour of the snails are lacking. Nests of many snails might be clustered in the same area, especially in small habitat patches where suitable soft soils are in short supply.

Any activity that reduces the function of the nest would constitute damage or destruction of the snail's "residence", as defined by the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). This would include, but is not limited to, activities that prevent access,



Oregon Forestsnail (*Allogona townsendiana*).

Photo: Jennifer Heron

physically moving or altering the nest, affecting future occupancy, productivity, or causing nest abandonment. Nests can be damaged by activities that compact, disturb, or change the composition of the soil layer.

The length of the breeding period of Oregon Forestsnail is poorly known but likely extends from the spring to late summer. In BC, adult snails have been found in the process of burrow construction and egg-laying in May, and a mating pair was found in March. The length of the incubation period of land snails in general is strongly dependent on temperature, and can be as short as a few weeks under normal summer temperatures in northern climates. However, the period required for incubation can be highly variable among species, geographic localities, and even within clutches. In some landsnails, young snails from a single nest burrow can continue to hatch over an extended period. During periods of dry weather, hatchlings may remain within the nest burrows and emerge only when the autumn rains soak the ground. The nests of Oregon Forestsnail are considered residences from March to November, or until the young have left the nest, unless new information is acquired that indicates otherwise.

Please send any possible sightings of this endangered snail, including photographs, to Jennifer Heron at the BC Ministry of Environment (Phone: 604-222-6759. Email: [Jennifer.Heron@gov.bc.ca/](mailto:Jennifer.Heron@gov.bc.ca/)).

# “Canada’s Mossiest Rainforest” Found on Vancouver Island

By Ken Wu and TJ Watt

Conservationists with the Ancient Forest Alliance ([www.ancientforestalliance.org](http://www.ancientforestalliance.org)) on Vancouver Island have come across what they are calling “Canada’s Mossiest Rainforest”, a forest of enormous old-growth Bigleaf Maple trees – some up to 2.5 meters (eight feet) wide – completely draped in gardens of mosses and ferns. Unlike other spotlighted old-growth forests in British Columbia that have all been “coniferous” or needle-leaf trees (fir, cedar, spruce, etc.), this is an old-growth “deciduous” or broad-leaf forest. The “Mossy Maple Rainforest” is found near Cowichan Lake on southern Vancouver Island in Hul’qumi’num First Nations territory. See an incredible photogallery at: < <http://www.ancientforestalliance.org/photos-sub.php?sID=2> >

Within the “Mossy Maple Rainforest” are two different old-growth stands several hundred meters apart, surrounded by second-growth maples, Red Alders and conifers.

The “Mossy Maple Grove” is the densest and mossiest old-growth stand and is also nicknamed “Fangorn Forest” in reference to the ancient deciduous forest in the second

*Lord of the Rings* series. It is located on private forest lands that, until recently, were owned by TimberWest. The company sold its private lands last summer to two public-sector pension funds, the BC Investment Management Corporation and the federal Public Sector Pension Investment Board, without consulting the local Hul’qumi’num First Nations. The luxuriant understorey is filled with a large diversity of herbaceous plants, and is frequented by Roosevelt Elk and Black Bears.

The “Mossy Maple Gallery” is a more open, park-like stand of scattered giant maples and some enormous cedars and Douglas-firs growing on Crown lands north of “Mossy Maple Grove”. Giant spiny stemmed Devil’s Club and legions of Roosevelt Elk, Coastal Black-tailed Deer, Wolves, Cougars, and Black Bears make this area home, as evidenced by their abundant tracks and scat. This area is known to local hunters.

The “Mossy Maple Rainforest” is in the unceded territory of the Cowichan people, part of the Hul’qumi’num First Nations group (<<http://www.hulquminum.bc.ca/>>). “Our



Photo: TJ Watt

culture and our identity as Hul'qumi'num people are tied to our land. The large-scale clear-cutting on our unceded territories is an assault on our culture and on our human rights," stated Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group chief negotiator Robert Morales. "The Hul'qumi'num land use plan calls for the protection of the last old-growth remnants in our territories. The BC government failed to consult with us regarding the sale of TimberWest lands to the two pension funds, and they still refuse to negotiate compensation for the give-away of more than 80 per cent of our territories to private interests through the E&N land grant more than a century ago."

"Bigleaf Maples, because of their hard wood, were used by our people to make many things, especially paddles, while the large variety of understorey plants are still used for many types of medicines and foods. The herds of elk and the remaining salmon have always been vital foods to our culture," stated Arvid Charlie, an elder with the Cowichan Tribes with an extensive knowledge of the traditional uses of plants and resources.

In recent years farmers and woodlot owners on Vancouver Island have begun tapping Bigleaf Maples for their syrup, which is milder and different in flavour than syrup from sugar maples in eastern North America. Currently demand for BC maple syrup far surpasses the supply.

Currently there are no known logging plans – nor protective designations – for either of the two old-growth maple groves. Old-growth Bigleaf Maples are highly sought after

by the logging industry for their extremely strong, dense wood, and most old-growth stands are now long gone. This type of forest is new to most conservationists and to the general public, few of whom are aware of old-growth deciduous rainforests. Bigleaf Maples support First Nations cultures, abundant wildlife, salmon streams, BC maple syrup, and important scenery. The last ancient stands must be protected.

The Ancient Forest Alliance is calling on the BC government to protect BC's endangered old-growth forests through a Provincial Old-Growth Strategy and through implementing First Nations land use plans, and to ensure the sustainable logging of second-growth forests. To protect old-growth Bigleaf Maples on private lands, the government needs to allocate funds to purchase these stands for conservation purposes. These ancient maple rainforests are some the mossiest and awesome – or "mossome" as we like to say – forests on Earth. If done sensitively, they could support a significant eco-tourism and cultural tourism industry that would benefit the local economy, much as the famous Bigleaf Maple rainforests of the Hoh Valley in Washington's Olympic National Park do.

## Bigleaf Maples

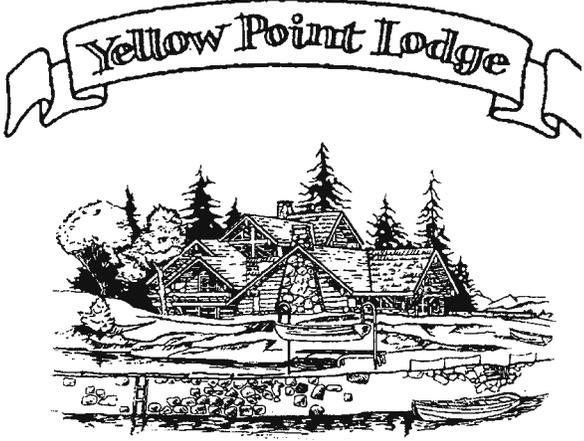
Bigleaf or Broadleaf Maples (*Acer macrophyllum*) can grow to three metres (10 feet) in trunk diameter and live to 300 years old, making them among the largest deciduous trees in the temperate world. Most old-growth Bigleaf Maple stands have been logged over the past century, along with the original giant Sitka Spruce that they often grow with along rivers and streams.

Logging of conifers can assist the spread of second-growth bigleaf maples up slopes and mountainsides in areas where they would normally be at a competitive disadvantage to conifers. Old-growth Bigleaf Maples tend to be found at lower elevations on flatter land and near streams and rivers where they established themselves long before European colonists arrived. Maples are often succeeded after several centuries by taller old-growth conifers, such as Sitka Spruce and Western Redcedars, that can shade them out.

Their bark is ideal for the growth of diverse mosses, Licorice Ferns, and *Lobaria* ("lettuce") lichens, harbouring more "epiphytes" (plants growing on trees) than any other trees in North America. Over time soil accumulates underneath the decomposing mosses and ferns on the tree branches. Researchers in the 1980's discovered that the maples actually send aerial roots from their branches into these canopy soils to tap the extra nutrients!

The soils of Bigleaf Maple groves are rich, and support a luxuriant and diverse understorey layer of herbaceous plants and shrubs, giving some stands a semi-tropical feel in summer time. The edible young maples, shrubs, and diversity of herbaceous plants often attract elk and deer, and their predators, Cougars and Wolves.

Bigleaf Maples provide shade, woody debris, leaf litter nutrients, and stream bank stabilization that help to support salmon and trout.



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# HAT Tricks

## HAT Celebrates 15 Years

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director,  
Habitat Acquisition Trust

A little more than 15 years ago, a group of VNHS members and volunteers approached the Victoria Natural History Society's Board about creating a new organization. Their goal was to create a local land trust that would work with other small organizations in the region to conserve natural places. Because of the conservation challenges this region faces, these volunteers felt it was important for this new land trust to lead education programs to help people care for nature at home. The VNHS Board agreed and the "VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation" was born, receiving official status from the Canada Revenue Agency on December 9, 1996.

Some of the names involved are likely familiar to VNHS members: Bruce Whittington, Jan Garnett, Leah Ramsay, Jeff Stone, Mike Shepard, Colleen O'Brien, and Marilyn Lambert made up the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation's first board. Over time, HAT's name was shortened, first losing the Foundation tag, then the VNHS surname, but we continue to work towards the vision that those VNHS volunteers imagined for us (and we still have a special VNHS members rate!).

HAT has had challenges and successes. Along the way, governments have slashed funding for environmental education, protection, and organizations, including ours. Urban Forest mapping in 2008 documented what we all knew, that we have lost significant tree cover over the past 20 years. Research is showing that children have less access to nature, and are spending less time playing in wild places. Rare species are still rare, and once healthy species, like the coastal Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias fannini*) and Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), are now at-risk. We know our work is not over.

On the success side, Ayum Estuary, HAT's first big project, was saved by the Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek, the VNHS, and HAT. That estuary became one of the first puzzle pieces of an ambitious wildlife corridor stretching from Saanich Inlet to the Sooke Estuary. Today that corridor, the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, is 90 per cent



# HAT

Creating Conservation Legacies



David Anderson and schoolchildren celebrating the protection of Ayum Creek, the beginning of the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt corridor. *Photo provided by author*

protected. The Matson Conservation Area, the last Garry Oak meadow on Victoria's Inner Harbour, was acquired by HAT with the partnership of the Friends of Matson Lands and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Currently HAT protects more than 1600 hectares of natural ecosystems in the Capital Region, and our land owner contact programs have helped more than 350 households find ways to help their yards be friendlier to nature, and both those numbers continue to grow.

Over the next year, HAT will be celebrating our 15th year. We would like to invite you to share your stories of HAT and VNHS past, and your hopes for the future of our region. Thank you for joining us in the struggle to conserve nature.

*To learn more about HAT volunteer opportunities and projects, please email [hatmail@hat.bc.ca](mailto:hatmail@hat.bc.ca) or call 250-995-2428.*

# Chatter

## Activities of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO)

By Jessie Fanucchi and Ann Nightingale



### New Publicly-Accessible Banding Site in the Works for RPBO

One of the mandates of RPBO is to provide public education, and we're excited about doing that. However, our location on Department of National Defence (DND) property has made bringing guests to the station problematic, especially since 9/11. We now have a strong team of core volunteers, sufficient to consider expansion of our operations to a second banding site, one which will encourage visits from school groups and members of the general public. The new site will also allow us to have younger people involved in our bird monitoring programs. Currently DND doesn't permit anyone under 18 to volunteer with us, so we are very excited about the prospect of our second station!

We have a site in mind, with a couple of options available, and are now working to raise the funds to enable us to take this major step. To this end, we can use some help. Donations are always gratefully appreciated <<http://rpbo.org/support.htm>>. We would also like to find a few people who would be interested in researching and applying for grants and other funding. We'd provide the content for the applications - we just need assistance in putting together the paperwork and making contact with foundations, corporations, and others who might support us. If you are interested in working on this project with us, please contact Michael Simmons (250-665-6414) or email [rpbo@rpbo.org](mailto:rpbo@rpbo.org).

### Next Bird Monitoring and Banding Workshop: March 30 – April 1

Since 2003, Rocky Point Bird Observatory has been training students, naturalists, artists, and others the finer points of bird identification and banding techniques at our annual bird monitoring and banding workshop. The workshop takes place over two and a half days, with time devoted to field work, lectures, and specimen study in the lab. Many of our students are absolute beginners when it comes to identifying birds, let alone figuring out their age or sex. Others have years of experience as birders and some have considerable backgrounds in bird-banding. When it comes to birds, there's always something new to learn!

The class size is kept small, and for the field sessions, the group is divided into groups of about five or six people to



Learning safe techniques for removing birds from mist nets is a component of the banding workshop. *Photo of Megan Lyden and Christina Carrieres provided by RPBO*

ensure that everyone has an opportunity for some up-close and personal time with the birds. Participants can expect to work with dozens of specimens to see the finer details of feather molt and wear, and to learn safe bird mist-netting and handling techniques with live birds. Each student will have the opportunity to band at least one bird from start to finish, birds and weather permitting.

The workshop is something of a "crash course" covering most aspects of a bird banding field station, from net-site selection and set-up, to banding, data collection and the safe release of the birds. Two and a half days won't turn a novice into an expert, or provide enough experience to be an independent bander, but the workshop serves as a great "sampler" of skills researchers, banding station volunteers, and field assistants will use. Even those who don't plan to have a volunteer or professional career in ornithology find the experience adds to their understanding and appreciation of birds in the wild.

RPBO will be offering its next workshop on March 30 to April 1 at Royal Roads University. Proceeds support the

ongoing projects of RPBO. For more information, or to register, please visit <[rpbo.org/workshop.htm](http://rpbo.org/workshop.htm)> or contact Emily Barnewall (778-440-1432; [workshop@rpbo.org](mailto:workshop@rpbo.org)).

**Feature Bird:** Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*)

The Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*) is a small, vocal wren. These birds are uniformly dark brown with a thin, pointed bill and typical short, upward positioned tail that characterizes many wrens. These charismatic little birds breed from southern Alaska to the northern states east of the Rocky Mountains and winters in breeding areas as well as southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico. Pacific Wrens can be found flitting around coniferous and mixed forests, often near water. They enjoy a diet of invertebrates, predominantly insects and spiders. Males will build the domed nests made of moss, bark, twigs, rootlets, grass, feathers, hair, and decayed wood, lined with feathers and hair. Pacific Wrens will also roost communally during cold winters.

The Pacific Wren is a newly-defined species, previously identified as Winter Wren. In 2010, The American Ornithologist Union split the species based on significant differences in vocalizations and mitochondrial DNA. The Pacific Wren is a year-round resident throughout much of its range, but the Winter Wren of eastern North America is highly migratory. An animated map of the annual distribution of these wrens in the United States can be seen at <[http://ebird.org/results/STEM/animations/WIWR\\_Large.gif](http://ebird.org/results/STEM/animations/WIWR_Large.gif)>. The common name “Winter Wren” (now *Troglodytes hiemali*) was retained by the eastern North American species, and the scientific name *Troglodytes troglodytes* was retained by the (now) European Wren.

The Pacific Wren is one of the most banded species at RPBO, with 175 individuals banded in 2010 and 154 in 2011. They are also one of the most enjoyable species to listen to in the field, often singing in full view throughout the season.

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Pacific Wren. Photo: Mike Yip



## 2012 Birding Courses



RPBO is delighted to be working with the Victoria Natural History Society again to offer two birding courses in Spring 2012. Here's your chance to support both organizations while learning about our local birds. These programs will be taught by experienced trip leaders who have volunteered their time. Victoria Natural History Society members receive a discount on the course registration fee.

### Beginning Birding



**Beyond Beginning Birding:** Take the next step beyond the basics of identification. Our group of local VNHS and RPBO experts places an emphasis on birding by ear and the identifying field marks of more difficult groups and species. This course includes eight very diverse field sessions around Victoria led by eight different leaders. Sessions run on Sunday mornings, beginning on April 15, 2012, with the May long weekend skipped. The last session will be June 10. The cost is \$105 (\$75 for VNHS or RPBO members)

### Beyond Beginning Birding



**Information and registration for these courses is on the RPBO website:**  
< <http://rpbo.org/community.htm>>  
or by contacting [birding@rpbo.org](mailto:birding@rpbo.org).



# Letters

To the Victoria Natural History Society,

I want to express my sincere gratitude to you for making the Freeman F. King Scholarship possible. I was overjoyed to learn of my selection for this honour, and I am truly appreciative of your support.

I am currently majoring in Biology and Earth and Ocean Sciences, with hopes of becoming a marine biologist. The financial assistance you provided will greatly help me in paying my educational expenses, and it will allow me to concentrate more on my studies.

Thank you again for your generosity and support. I promise that I will work very hard and eventually help others in the same way that you have helped me.

Sincerely,  
Alicia Lew

## **Thank you letters from students and teachers participating in the VNHS *Connecting Children with Nature* Project, where member volunteers lead school groups into nearby natural areas**

Thank you for teaching us about different types of birds.

I touched a spitbug

Thanks for showing us all the birds.

I had a good time

Thanks for letting us do some birdwatching with you.

I liked learning about the plants the Indians used.

I saw Oregon Grape.

I learned that the yellow plant (broom) is an invasion to the native plants.

Thank you for all of it ☺

Thank you for accompanying our class on a nature walk at Christmas Hill. Many of us had never been to that park before! We saw lots of interesting things and learned a lot more since you were there to guide us.

Thanks for helping us to educate another group of children on the importance of noticing and protecting nature!

The kids really appreciated the time you've spent with us. Many of them had never used binoculars before. It was a great learning experience and they loved having you here! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Thank you so much for sharing your time with us at the beach. We had a great time.

Thank you so much for being a guest speaker at our camps. The kids really enjoyed learning about different native bird species.

# Welcome to New VNHS Members

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

**Gwendolyn Toland**  
Stadacona Avenue  
*The natural world, art/  
illustration, photography*

**Daniel and Susan Donnecke**  
Casa Linda Drive  
*Birds*

# Seedy Saturday

## Victoria's Annual Seed & Garden Show

Saturday, Feb 18 • 10AM-4PM

Victoria Conference Centre

Hosted by James Bay  
Market Society



# 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.

**NEW: Eco Learning Hive:** A new website for environmental school programs in the Capital region area is up and running! The Eco Learning Hive website is available to post information about your organization and environmental education programs and events. It is a great way to connect with other organizations and will be a one-stop shop for teachers and parents. World Fisheries Trust, the lead partner in designing the site, would love to have as many programs on the site as possible, so go to <[www.ecolearninghive.org](http://www.ecolearninghive.org)> to add your programs. The site is brand new, so any feedback you have on the whole process is much appreciated!

**Do you like eagles??** The Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS) needs a few volunteers to monitor eagle nests

and one volunteer to collect the data. Observations only need to be made twice a year; early in the breeding season for activity and later for productivity. This is a great citizen science project and the results of the last 10 years in the CRD area can be seen at <[www.wildlifetree.org](http://www.wildlifetree.org)>. Please contact Gwen Greenwood: [tggreenwood@telus.net](mailto:tggreenwood@telus.net). 250 652-2876

**Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Programs:** Check out the spring program selection available at Swan Lake <[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca)> **Marine Birds:** a course for naturalists and nature enthusiasts. **Love Among the Feathers:** The romantic adventures of our local waterbirds. **Birding Basics:** an introduction to the birds of spring.

Every Wednesday and Sunday Bird Walk. Meet at the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary parking lot: 9:00 a.m.– 10:30 a.m.

**Capital Regional District Parks.** CRD Parks offers programs for nature lovers of all ages. See <[www.crd.bc.ca/parks](http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks)> for more information. Programs are one to one and a half hours long and free unless otherwise noted.

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## 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.

### JANUARY

#### Saturday, January 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

##### *Saturday Morning Birding*

Call the "Rare Bird Alert" (250-704-2555) or click "Rare Bird Alert" on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Usually starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca). Everyone welcome.

#### Tuesday, January 10

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

##### *Green Fire – Premier of Aldo Leopold Documentary*

##### **\*\*Note Time Change**

VNHS is sponsoring the Victoria (and Western Canada) premiere of *Green Fire*, the new **Aldo Leopold** documentary. Leopold, an American wildlife and forest ecologist, founded environmental ethics in the 1940s with the publication of his famous book, *A Sand County Almanac*. The *Almanac*, one of the most popular environmental books ever published (sales in the millions),

makes a lyrical plea for the preservation of intact ecosystems. Leopold's life, the film argues, is no less interesting than his book. Once an active foe of every keystone predator, Leopold risked his reputation in the 1940s to make a place for bears, cougars, and wolves in conserved landscapes. VNHS member **Kem Luther** will provide a short introduction to Leopold, his book, and the documentary. We meet at 7:00 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at the University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend. **(Note that, due to the 70-minute length of the film, we will start at 7:00 p.m.)**

#### Saturday, January 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

##### *Saturday Morning Birding*

See description under Saturday, January 7.

#### Tuesday, January 17

BOTANY NIGHT

##### *Variations In Holocene Moisture and Fire Disturbance Regimes As Evidenced From Paleoenvironmental Records*

**Dr. Kendrick Brown** from the Pacific Forestry Centre will talk

on how paleoecological and paleoclimatological records are used to examine the interaction between fire disturbance, plant community composition, and climate – principally moisture availability. Records from the coastal temperate rainforest complex of western North America, Northern Great Plains, and boreal Scandinavia provide examples over millennial time scales. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend.

### **Saturday, January 21**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

See description under Saturday, January 7.

### **Sunday, January 22**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

#### ***Guided Tour of Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre***

Want to explore the amazing marine life in our Salish Sea? Join **Tina Kelly** and her “Oceaneers” as she gives us a personalized adult tour. Experience the aquariums, each representing different habitats, ranging from the sea floor to the sea shore. See hundreds of fish, invertebrates, and marine plants. You will have a chance to ask questions and listen to fascinating facts about the sea life that inhabits our local waters. We’ll also get to investigate the touch tanks and examine creatures under the microscope, things usually reserved for school groups. Tour starts at 10:00 a.m. and you are free to continue your exploration of the facility on your own after the tour. Address is 9811 Seaport Pl. (off Beacon Ave.), Sidney BC. Cost is \$14.00 per person. You must pre-register before Monday January 16 by contacting **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

### **Wednesday, January 25**

BIRDERS’ NIGHT

#### ***How Citizen Science Contributes to Bird Conservation***

Bird Studies Canada (BSC) is Canada’s leading non-profit bird research and conservation organization. In addition to research, BSC coordinates several citizen-science monitoring programs where volunteers collect data using standardized methods. This information provides a valuable long-term database, which is being used to understand changes and patterns in bird abundance and distribution, and to identify emerging conservation issues. Join **Karen Barry** as she describes recent results from the BC Coastal Waterbird Survey and BC Beached Bird Survey, and provides an update on a global conservation initiative in Canada, the Important Bird Areas program. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

### **Saturday, January 28**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

See description under Saturday, January 7.

### **Sunday, January 29**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Goldstream Nature Walk***

Goldstream Provincial Park is lush with foliage all year round. Let’s meander along the stream and through the lower reaches of the park, enjoying the evergreen foliage and challenging ourselves to identify the bare branches of the deciduous shrubs and trees. The mosses and lichens are lovely as well at this time of year. There will be birds to enjoy too. There still should be some eagles and gulls around cleaning up after the remnants of the fish that spawned earlier. We also hope to see and hear

the American Dipper who frequents the edges of the river and walks under water looking for any leftover salmon eggs or other goodies. The old cedars and other rotting trees encourage all the woodpeckers, including the occasional Red-breasted Sapsucker. We’ll stop afterwards at the fire pits and have hot dogs, marshmallows, and hot chocolate to warm up. Who says that adults can’t enjoy these things! Even snow will not cancel the event as long as the roads are passable. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the far end of the parking lot near where the trail starts to the Nature House. Parking is free! Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

### **Monday, January 30**

MARINE NIGHT

#### ***B.C.’s Forgotten Oyster, the Olympia Oyster, Ostrea lurida.***

The Olympia Oyster, native to the Pacific Northwest coast, was once common and widespread and supported a commercial fishery, until it crashed in the early 1900s. In 2003 it was listed under the *Species At Risk Act* (SARA) as a species of special concern. **Alicia Donaldson**, a Masters candidate at UVic, is studying the effects of temperature, salinity, and substrate type on their growth and development, and hopes to determine their preferred settlement substrate. Results from this work will inform restoration efforts and management decisions. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Bring a friend. Everyone is welcome.

## **FEBRUARY**

### **Saturday, February 4**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Boundary Bay and Raptors***

Join us for a trip to Boundary Bay in Vancouver. We can expect to see large flocks of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. There should be time for a quick trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary as well. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry. We will return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. Cost should be about \$55.00 per person with car-pooling. Bring lunch and a drink. Dress warmly. Call **Rick** at (250) 885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca to register.

### **Saturday, February 11**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

See description under Saturday, January 7.

### **Sunday, February 12**

BIRDING EVENT

#### ***VNHS Valentine Couples Birdathon***

From 6 a.m. to Noon, count as many bird species as you and your valentine can find in the Victoria checklist area. Gather at noon at the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House to meet other birder couples, compare war stories, and share a laugh or 10. Event fee is \$10 per couple, the proceeds of which go entirely to supporting VNHS conservation efforts. For event checklist and/or additional information contact ringleader **Alan MacLeod**, bigadore@gmail.com, or 250-382-3854.

### **Tuesday, February 14**

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

#### ***BC’s Magnificent Parks: The First Hundred Years***

British Columbia is home to many magnificent parks and is one of the few jurisdictions to realize and exceed the UN target of

protecting 12 per cent of its area. Join author **James Anderson** as he talks about the 100th anniversary of the BC Parks system. He will speak about the roots of our parks system and how its focus has changed over time. He will also discuss the growth of the parks system in the broader context of an emerging framework for land use planning and the debate over resource allocation. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

### Saturday, February 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

#### *Saturday Morning Birding*

See description under Saturday, January 7.

### Tuesday, February 21

BOTANY NIGHT

#### *The Highlands of Western Honduras*

Though overshadowed by the reputation of some its neighbours, Honduras boasts large areas of forest and a great diversity of ecosystems. The highlands of western Honduras feature tropical dry forest, rainforest, pine/oak, and cloud forest. **James Miskelly** will provide a botanical overview of this under-explored corner of Central America. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

### Wednesday, February 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT

#### *Birding Southern Africa – A Truly Exciting Experience*

Over the past 15 years safari guide **Brent Reed** has explored the entire southern portion of Africa as well as several major islands off the mainland. Join Brent as he takes us on an armchair safari through Botswana's Chobe National Park, Zimbabwe's birding highlights and into Mozambique's tantalizing hinterland where large areas of pristine lowland forest still exist. This talk will showcase both the amazing endemic birds of the region as well as Africa's scenic beauty. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser building. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

### Saturday, February 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

#### *Saturday Morning Birding*

See description under Saturday, January 7.

### Sunday, February 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

#### *The Winter Hummers of Cadboro Bay*

Join **Dave and Agnes Lynn** in their garden in Cadboro Bay from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to check out the Anna's Hummingbirds that stay all winter. We will have special guest Cam Finlay to tell you about his banding of hummingbirds over the past few years. See what encourages them to hang around. You will also learn about their food plants, both native and non-native. There should be lots of hummers around. The males might still be doing their aerial shows, although the females should be on their nests by then. Address is 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor Avenue in Ten Mile Point. No pets please. Dress warmly. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

### Monday, February 27

MARINE NIGHT

#### *Intriguing Behaviour of the Whales of British Columbia.*

Did you know that there are 25 different kinds of whales that spend time along the coast of British Columbia? Come and learn about the diversity of whales in B.C. and how they make a living in the waters off our coast. Marine educator, **Leah Thorpe**, will show us how to identify these species and will also discuss research techniques being used to better understand whale behaviour, as well as threats facing these marine mammals and how we can all be part of the solutions. Leah is completing her Master's degree in environmental education and communications at Royal Roads University. She is also the Outreach Coordinator for Cetus Research and Conservation Society and is on the Board of the Marine Education and Research Society. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Bring a friend. Everyone is welcome.

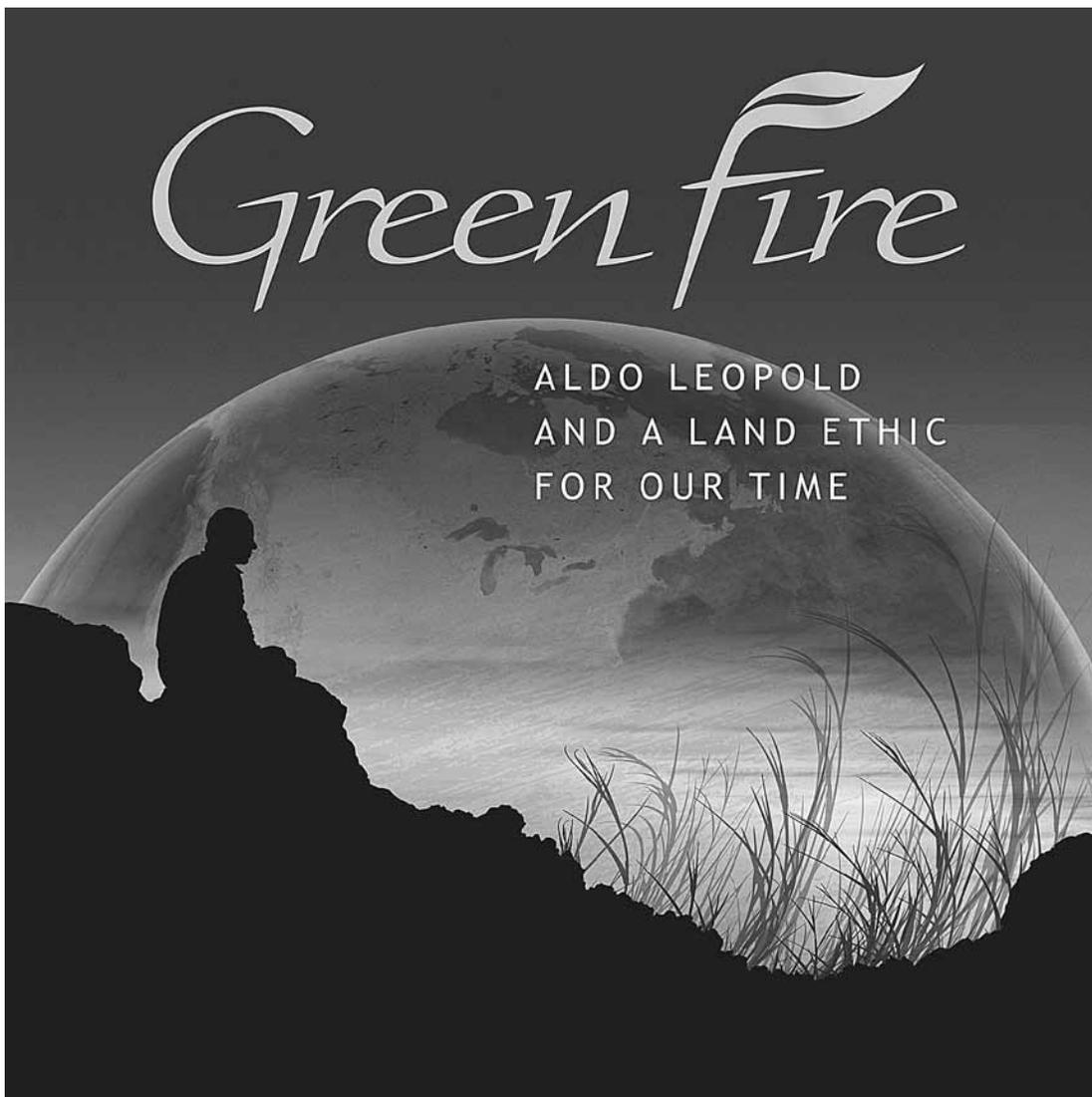
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VNHS is sponsoring the Western Canadian premiere of *Green Fire*, the new Aldo Leopold documentary: 10 January, 2012 – Join us!