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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Co-Editors: Gail Harcombe, 250-652-3508, Ken Sohm, 250-658-6115
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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Honorary Life Members Dr. Bill Austin, Mrs. Lyndis Davis,
Mr. Tony Embleton, Mr. Tom Gillespie, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill,
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Officers: 2010-2011

PRESIDENT: Darren Copley, 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net
VICE-PRESIDENT: James Miskelly, 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com
TREASURER: Gordon Hart, 250-721-1264, gordh19@shaw.ca
SECRETARY: Ken Sohm, 250-658-6115, ksohm@live.com

Directors and Committees

Darren Copley, 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net (*Membership*)
William Dancer, 250-721-5273, w.dancer@telus.net (*Schools Project*)
Gail Harcombe, 250-652-3508, gharcombe@shaw.ca (*Publications*)
James Miskelly, 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com
(*Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary representative*,
FBCN representative)
Ken Sohm, 250-658-6115, ksohm@live.com (*Publications*)
Directors at Large:
Nathalie Chambers, 250-477-3093, madrama@telus.net
James Clowater, 250-370-9281, clowater@shaw.ca
Nancie Dohan, 250-592-1956, nancied@shaw.ca
Phil Lambert, 250-477-5922, plambert@pacificcoast.net

Presentation Coordinators

Marine Night: Phil Lambert, 250-477-5922,
marinenight@pacificcoast.net
Botany Night: Adolf Ceska, 250-477-1211, aceska@telus.net
Natural History Night and Birders' Night: Christina Ball,
250-655-1818, ball_ch@telus.net

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VNHS Website: www.vicnhs.bc.ca

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Deadline for next issue: June 1, 2012

Send to: Gail Harcombe

7368 Veyaness Road, Saanichton BC V8M 1M3

Phone: 250-652-3508

e-mail: g.harcombe@shaw.ca

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, book reviews, etc. We prefer electronic submissions – these can be submitted in either IBM or Mac compatible word processing format - but hardcopies are also accepted. Please include photographs or illustrations if possible, along with a suggested caption and photo credit. If digital, images need to be high resolution: a minimum of 1200 x 1550 pixels, or 300 dpi at the size of photos in the magazine. Once scanned/input, hardcopy materials will be returned to the sender if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

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COVER PHOTO

Gooseneck barnacles (*Pollicipes polymerus*) –
you may even see some on the field trip May 8th!
Photo: Tina Kelly

It was wonderful to return to the start of spring after our month in Colombia – Pacific Chorus Frogs singing, Indian Plum and Satin Flower blooming– my favourite season, by far. I was also grateful for the capable handling of the magazine in my absence – a sincere thank you to James Miskelly and Ken Sohm for their good work. Love that bird on the cover!

And the changeover in editors is going a step further: I am pleased to announce that both Ken Sohm and Gail Harcombe have agreed to take over editing duties. My thanks go out to both of them for accepting the task, and to Penney Edwards and Darren Copley for serving as my second set of eyes on many of the past issues. And thanks to you, Society members, for letting me hog the podium for as long as you did! But after eight years it was time to give others an opportunity to get involved, and Gail and Ken both come with plenty of previous editorial experience through their work and volunteer activities.

Please join me in welcoming Gail and Ken as your new editors, and be sure to keep those submissions coming in!

Claudia

President's Message

By Darren Copley

In case you missed the Annual General Meeting in April, here is a summary of the Society's accomplishments in 2011.

The Victoria Natural History Society regularly donates to worthwhile causes, and this year we continued the tradition. Annually we contribute \$4000 to support public programming at the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. This year \$10,000 was put towards the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team's *Bringing Back the Bluebirds* project (see p.7); with half of this coming from members. As well, \$2000 was put towards the activities of Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Other educational support went out in the form of \$750 to the local Science Fair, as well as our regular support through scholarships at the University of Victoria, Camosun College, and Royal Roads University.

To be able to continue funding great projects like this, we have many to thank, not the least being our long-time treasurer Gordon Hart. Gordon has continued to keep our Scholarship and Conservation Funds growing while providing the interest that can be used for these great programs. We also get many donations above membership fees from our members – thank you! This year we were fortunate to collaborate with The Land Conservancy and their *Island Chef Challenge* event, where our ticket sales raised almost \$700 for each group. Thanks also to Alan MacLeod and Jan Brown who coordinate the Annual Valentine's Day Couples' Birdathon (see p. 8). These proceeds also come to the Society. As you probably know by now, our most generous donation this year came from a \$400,000 bequest from Janet Arnold, a retired teacher in the Sooke School District who first joined VNHS in September 2003. Her estate was divided between three organizations – the BC SPCA, the North Island Wildlife Recovery Association, and us, the Victoria Natural History Society, demonstrating both her commitment to supporting nature and concern for wildlife. We look forward to being able to fund even more great projects through the interest that this will provide.

Our *Connecting Children with Nature* program was more active than ever, reaching almost 500 children. This is all thanks to our volunteer leaders and the excellent coordination by Bill Dancer and John Henigman. For members and the public there were 30 monthly presentations (including the very successful hosting of the Western Canadian Premiere of Aldo Leopold's *Green Fire*), more than 100 field trips (including weekly Tuesday and Saturday birding), and our second Annual BBQ Social held in conjunction with Hawkwatch at

East Sooke Park. Speaking of events, I must not forget our largest: the Christmas Bird Count. This annual bird count is a tremendous amount of work and is run by Ann Nightingale. She makes it look easy, but don't be fooled. Especially when you consider all the volunteer time Ann puts in to a number of organizations.

Your Society has representatives on the following committees/boards: Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, Viaduct Flats Committee, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, and Rocky Point Bird Observatory, and we had our display at the Swan Lake Native Plant Sales, the Westshore Town Centre's Hobby Show, and Seedy Saturday. Thanks to all of you that helped with these events! We now have a presence on Twitter too, thanks to Leah Ramsay. I would like to thank artist and member, Joanne Thomson, for helping us with artwork for the Society's new rack cards through Hemlock Printers' *Off Cuts for Charity* program – a match to our promotional banner.

In partnership with Capital Regional District Parks and the Rocky Point Bird Observatory, we again hosted the now annual *International Migratory Bird Day* at Beaver Lake Park. This year we will again be co-sponsoring this event: the third annual *International Migratory Bird Day* will be held at Beaver Lake Regional Park on May 12 (check out the calendar p.21 and the back cover). I hope many of you will come out and enjoy a day dedicated to celebrating birds.

Also keeping Society volunteers busy this past year are our regular activities: correspondence, BC Nature representation, our financial health, advertising, producing *The Naturalist*, membership, and the many ways we try to promote our Society and natural history to others. A big thank-you goes out to all our Board Members who are continuing on in their capacity as directors: Nathalie Chambers, James Clowater, Claudia Copley, Bill Dancer, Nancie Dohan, Gordon Hart, James Miskelly, Phil Lambert, and Ken Sohm, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank outgoing board members Jennifer Ellenton, Shona Lawson, and Wendy Tyrrell for their work. Gail Harcombe has just recently joined our Board, providing a connection with Habitat Acquisition Trust through her volunteer activities, as well as her years of experience in publications working with the Ministry of Environment. We look forward to the contributions Gail will provide.

Although this wasn't our award to give, we thought it very important to mention a significant honour that was earned by one of our Society's most hard-working members: a Garry

Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team's Acorn Award, presented to Tom Gillespie for the myriad of ways he has helped protect and promote nature (see p.7). Congratulations Tom! And we were very happy to present the Society's Distinguished Service Award to a deserving member: Bill Dancer. Read all the reasons for this award on page 6. Congratulations Bill!

At the AGM I also talked about our declining membership. This worrisome trend has been a focus of many of our recent Board meetings, and will continue to be a focus in the year to come. If you have any ideas on how to promote our membership, or reasons why you think it may be declining, please contact me personally. When your board gets together for our annual board retreat (don't worry, it's in the CRD, not Costa Rica), this year's topics will include membership, volunteers, and partnerships, and all ideas are welcome. For an example of a new partnership, VNHS has been asked to help out with the Metchosin Bioblitz, an excellent fit. Be sure to check out the Calendar (page 21) for more details.

Before I sign off I want to recognize Daniel Bryant for handling the Society's Rare Bird Alert – thank you for all the time you put into this popular feature. Daniel wanted a break from the job, and I am pleased to say that a volunteer stepped forward to fill his shoes – it is now Steven Roias' voice you hear on the recording.

Here's to another great year, and thanks again everyone!



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RAYMOND JAMES

Member CIPF

Distinguished Service Award: Bill Dancer

Bill is a keen naturalist both from his personal interest, and in his delight in encouraging others to participate. Many of us know Bill for his leadership each week of the Tuesday Birding Group where we all meet at Bowker Avenue for the shorebird review before continuing on to one of dozens of destinations for the appropriate bird locale. Is it raining, windy or wet? Should we go inland, hillside, shoreline, lakeside or ponds, forest or field? Have there been any rare bird sightings that need our attention? An ever-changing roster of many of the beautiful birding spots will be on the agenda each week.

Bill is keen to get the weekly count numbers up while still offering the newcomer, and many long-time members, many hints as to each bird's whereabouts. We all eventually get a glimpse, and he is generous with letting the scopely-challenged share a view through his ever-ready spotting scope.

Perhaps even more importantly, Bill is exuberantly enthusiastic about the **Connecting Children With Nature School Program**, taking children (grade K through grade 7 or 8) out to a variety of sites to experience first-hand the wonders of our beautiful natural environment. He often comes to Tuesday Birding full of stories about the kids with whom he has had a recent outing, letting us know how much fun they were and how much they enjoyed the time out in nature. But for sure, his delight in his interaction with the children is inspiring. He obviously loves the time he has with these diverse groups. As a continuing Director (Schools Project) of the VNHS Board, Bill fills an important and useful role in keeping the lines open between the Society and participating schools. Hundreds, if not thousands of children have been directly connected to their natural environment through this specific effort.

Bill has also served as a wonderful ambassador to visiting birders vacationing in Victoria, offering up morning- and day-long outings to make sure travelers get a full tour of the southern tip of Vancouver Island to augment their life-lists, or just to enjoy a day trip searching out what they might find to be an unusual species from what they would normally find in their part of the world.

Bill also volunteers at Rocky Point Bird Observatory, has been seen out at Hawk Watch and participates in the Wednesday Birders' nights at UVic. It's always hard to recognize him in 'civvies' – no binoculars or hat – at the monthly gathering – but he is often there.

Besides his dedication to VNHS projects, Bill is active with the Friends of Government House, the Cadboro Bay Residents' Association and the Emergency Preparedness Committee. He attends the meetings of the CRD Core Area Liquid Waste Management Committee and has helped to persuade the CRD to preserve Haro Woods and put the sewer facilities in a less eco-sensitive location. He's actively

involved with invasive species removal in both Haro Woods and Konukson Park. The impact from Bill's work is obviously felt throughout many areas.

Many in the VNHS (and wider) community know Bill, and have been the recipient of his enthusiasm and generosity. It is based on these qualities that Bill Dancer is such a deserving recipient for the award.

Postscript from Bill: "I would like to make it clear that as far as I'm concerned the Schools Program is a team effort in which all participants help to make it the success it is."



VNHS President Darren Copley presents Bill Dancer (right) with the Distinguished Service Award. Photo: Nancie Dohan.

The Acorn Award

It gives us great pleasure to report that a long-time Victoria Natural History Society member was this year's recipient of the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team Acorn Award. Congratulations Tom Gillespie! Tom is one of the founders of both GOERT and the Vertebrates at Risk Recovery Implementation Group (RIG). He is the founding Treasurer of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society (GOMPS), Treasurer for the Rocky Point Bird Observatory Society, and volunteer for the Friends of Ecological Reserves, the B.C. Purple Martin Stewardship and Recovery Program, and of course he has been a critical volunteer for the Victoria Natural History Society for literally decades.

Trudy Chatwin, Chair of GOERT's Vertebrates at Risk RIG says, "Tom has been a very faithful participant and volunteer on the RIG and has been involved in Garry Oak conservation from the beginning. I know that Tom has supported many conservation organizations, and he has monitored and searched for Coastal Vesper Sparrows and built and monitored many a Western Bluebird box."

About his role in GOMPS, Tom says, "I've been the Treasurer of GOMPS since the beginning, when we first passed the hat around at an informal gathering at Swan Lake. We sat around in a circle, 62 of us. The money gathered that night got us going for the first little while. At that time, Garry Oak ecosystems were well-known



Congratulations to volunteer extraordinaire Tom Gillespie, who received his Acorn Award at the GOERT research colloquium. Presenting the award is GOERT staff member Chris Junck (left).

among the science community, but they hadn't been promoted among the public; we wanted to get people involved in their conservation."

Congratulations, Tom!

\$10,000 Donation to Bring Western Bluebirds Back to the Islands!

News release from the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team.

By Carolyn Masson

Do you remember Western Bluebirds? At the VNHS Annual General Meeting March 13, 2012, the Society presented the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT) with a \$10,000 cheque to help bring these birds back to Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

These native songbirds once thrived in our local Garry Oak ecosystems but have gradually disappeared, and are now considered extirpated (locally extinct). Western Bluebirds are one of more than 100 species at risk in Garry Oak and associated ecosystems.

Partners in the *Bring Back the Bluebirds* project have been putting up nest boxes in suitable habitat for several years. However, experts tell us that we need a re-introduction to

jumpstart the population, as the birds are unlikely to re-establish on their own. Building on the success of a five-year re-introduction program on neighbouring San Juan Island, we are ready to have Dr. Gary Slater bring pairs of Western Bluebirds from healthy populations in Fort Lewis, Washington, to sites in our area. We have been getting permits and volunteers ready to go, but are still lacking in funds to bring the birds here. Shyanne Smith, GOERT Executive Director, says "This donation from the Victoria Natural History Society is critical to this project going ahead. We desperately need funds to pay for the costs of moving and looking after these birds, and this donation will go a long way toward making this happen."

About Western Bluebirds

Biologist Trudy Chatwin says, "In May 1989, when my twins were four years old, we watched Western Bluebirds nesting in a beautiful Garry Oak meadow on Mt. Tzouhalem, near Duncan. Since 1995, however, the local population of Western Bluebirds has not been known to nest in BC. I would like to help restore nesting populations of this important and beautiful bird so that my daughter Heather, a leader of the Victoria Young Naturalists' Club, can inspire others with the thought that they can be a part of restoring nature, and that they too can watch Western Bluebirds at their nests."

Garry Oak Ecosystems and the role of GOERT

In all of Canada, Garry Oak and associated ecosystems occur only on southeastern Vancouver Island (Victoria area to the Comox Valley), on the Gulf Islands, and in two isolated areas in the Fraser Valley. Today, only around one per cent of the natural ecosystem remains in the Capital Regional District and five per cent overall. These ecosystems are a hotspot for biodiversity, with at least 1,600 native plants and animals dependent on the habitat. Of these, more than 100 species have been assessed as either provincially rare or nationally at risk of extinction.

GOERT is a charitable organization dedicated to the recovery of Garry Oak and associated ecosystems in Canada and the species at risk that inhabit them. The team was formed in 1999 as a comprehensive partnership of experts affiliated with all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, First Nations, volunteers and consultants. In 2007, the organization was incorporated as a non-profit society in B.C. and became a registered charity in Canada in 2009.



Society Treasurer Gordon Hart (left) and President Darren Copley present a cheque for \$10,000 to the GOERT's Trudy Chatwin and Betsy Rose in support of the *Bring Back the Bluebirds* project. Photo: Nancie Dohan.

New Blood Enlivens Valentine Birdathon

By Alan MacLeod

An infusion of new blood enlivened the fifteenth annual VNHS Valentine Couple's Birdathon on February 12. Nine couples participated, just one short of the highest number ever. That might have been good news enough but no, better still, the organizers were gratified to welcome four couples to the event for the first time. One rookie duet, Mike and Joanna Preston took top honours. The Prestons led the way with 82 species counted in the prescribed six a.m. to noon count period. For their troubles, Mike and Joanna will have their names inscribed on the coveted Anderson Trophy, featuring Jerry Anderson's fine carving of a pair of cuddling mourning doves. Second-place spoils were shared by two couples, Mike and Barb

McGrenere and Agnes and David Lynn, both previous winners of the birdathon. The McGreneres and Lynns finished their morning's work with 74 species. Jennifer Walker and Alexandre Morin were not just new to the birdathon but they are in the enviable position of being new birders too; for them, birding outings are still ripe with the possibility of spotting something they've never seen before. Their initiative won them the greenhorn prize, which sometimes goes begging. Not this year.

Jan Brown and I managed to win the 'green' prize, a gift voucher from **Wild Birds Unlimited**. Walking out our James Bay door shortly after six a.m. we covered nearly 17 km on foot and wound up finding 68 species in our own



Front (L-R): Jenny Feick, Jan Brown, Mike and Joanna Preston, Agnes and David Lynn;
Middle: Barb McGrenere, Jennifer Walker, Alexandre Morin, Barb McLintock, Ann Scarfe;
Back: Alan MacLeod, Ian Hatter, Gladys and Jerry Anderson, Daniel Donneck, Mike McGrenere.

James Bay neighbourhood. It tarnished the glory only a little bit that this year, unusually, we were the only green team in the field.

The other first-timers in the Birdathon were Daniel and Susan Donneck and the team of Ann Scarfe and Barb McLintock. Rounding out the field were Birdathon veterans Jenny Feick and Ian Hatter and the team of Jerry and Gladys Anderson who can make a claim no one else can match: the Andersons have never missed a Valentine Birdathon. They have participated in all fifteen to date and have been overall winners five times.

And what of the birds? Some of the species most enthused about were: Eurasian Collared-dove in the Welch Road/ Mallard Avenue area of Central Saanich, Black Scoter off Esquimalt Lagoon, Western Meadowlark at Panama Flats and two warbler species, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned, in good old non-rural James Bay. The aggregate species count for the Birdathon was 110 species, just short of the 15-year average of 111 and nine in arrears of the 2007 total of 119. Apart from the fun quotient served up by the Valentine event, participants also get to feel good about delivering a benefit too. As usual, the proceeds from the ten-dollar entry fee for couples will go entirely to supporting VNHS conservation efforts.

Jan and I extend thanks to our principal sponsor **Don Wuest of Wild Birds Unlimited**, to the helpful people at the Swan Lake Nature Centre for their usual kindness at the post wrap-up, and of course to all those who made the event a success by their enthusiastic participation.



Mike and Joanna Preston, winners of the 2012 Valentine Birdathon. *Photos provided by the author.*

Garry Oak Meadow Restoration at Fort Rodd Hill

By Hailey O'Neill, Fort Rodd Hill Species at Risk Co-op Student

The Parks Canada Species at Risk (SAR) team has been busy at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site of Canada restoring ecological and cultural aspects of Garry Oak ecosystems in a one-acre area of the Fort that was previously a disturbed field.

In the fall of 2010, a native plant nursery was constructed on site and 175,000 Common Camas (*Camassia quamash*) seeds were sown in cold frames in addition to more than 30 other species native to Garry Oak ecosystems. In August

2011, pea-sized camas bulbs were separated and re-flatted at a lower density to reduce competition. This daunting undertaking was accomplished through the help of many enthusiastic volunteers. By keeping careful records, we calculated that 98,000 bulbs had developed!

To reduce the non-native grasses and forbs previously dominating the site, 860 yards of leaf mulch was obtained from the City of Victoria and District of Saanich leaf collection programs. Numerous volunteers and staff helped



Vancouver Island University student volunteers helping re-flat camas bulbs in the native plant nursery at Fort Rodd Hill.
Photo: Helena Mahoney.

spread the mulch fifteen centimetres deep in the meadow. Some sections of the meadow were covered with cardboard prior to being mulched; this will allow SAR staff to determine the best practice for suppressing non-native species on site.

We are now installing a deer fence around the restoration site and future steps include establishing a walking trail, interpretive signage, and constructing a visitor entrance. Special thanks go out to the volunteers who helped so far with this project; their efforts are greatly appreciated! Members of the public are encouraged to come out to Fort Rodd Hill to take a look at the work accomplished so far.

A returning volunteer, Camilla Smith, spreads leaf mulch during a weekend volunteer event at Fort Rodd Hill.

Photo: Susan MacIsaac



21st Annual Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat CAMAS DAY

WHEN: Sunday, May 6, 2012, 7:00 am – 3:00 pm

WHERE: Beacon Hill Park (walks begin at flagpole on top of Beacon Hill)

Guided Walks (each 1-2 hours long)

Rick Schortinghuis, Victoria Natural History Society

Rick Schortinghuis, Victoria Natural History Society

Dr. Adolf Ceska, Victoria Natural History Society

John-Bradley Williams

Kem Luther, Victoria Natural History Society

Chris Ryzuk (P.Eng)

Fred Hook, Natural Systems Technician, City of Victoria Parks

John-Bradley Williams

7:00 am, Early Bird Walk

9:00 am, Late Risers Birding

11:00 am, Wildflower Walk

11:00 am, First Nations Walk

11:00 am, Moss Walk

**11:00 am, Soils, Sediments and
Sea Levels of the Dallas Road Cliffs**

1:00 pm, Wildflower Walk

1:00 pm, First Nations Walk

Please check the website at www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca

Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and Friends of Beacon Hill Park

For more information, 250-380-5023



Three Weeks in Yelapa, Mexico

By Aziza Cooper

A wonderful winter holiday was three weeks in Yelapa, a small community west of Puerto Vallarta, accessible only by boat. My objective was birding, but the sun, beaches, good food, and peace would appeal to everyone. I'd recommend it to anyone who wants a quiet, rustic setting in the tropics.

There are no cars or big hotels. All the walks are cobblestone or dirt, and the only motorized transport is small open boats, which provide the link to the outside world, and four-wheelers, which outrage the gringos who know the place from earlier days. Horses, mules, and donkeys are work animals for transport, and manure is a hazard. A cattle drive went through the village on my last day – eight large steers and four cowboys on horseback.

Yelapa has only had electricity since 2001, but now the raucous sounds of mariachi or gringo music sometimes blast the village far into the night. My room in a wonderful house on a ridge above the village had a bird's-eye view of all the speakers. Much tolerance was required.

The house, Casa Milagros (House of Miracles), is large, lovely, clean and has a very kind, wonderful owner, Antonia, who speaks no English, but has a wonderful ability to grasp broken Spanish and sign language. The house has 180 steps to climb up, carrying all your luggage, but when you arrive, there is a large balcony and two huge rooftop decks. The view is stupendous: Yelapa Bay and the hills surrounding it, the pueblo down below, the lagoon and wide beach and its palapa restaurants; snorkelers and kayakers, whales and dolphins, pelicans and frigatebirds gliding; upriver to the distant hills in the south, east to the far side of Banderas Bay; and the distant Marietas Islands to the northwest, destination of day-trips to snorkel and whale-watch.

Full moon occurred halfway through my stay, and the sight of moonlight on the bay was so lovely. Night was also great for yoga on the roof before sunrise, watching for shooting stars. A few days before I left, a day of rain ended with the most wonderful rainbow I've ever seen – a brilliant half circle with glowing double rows at both ends, framing the palms in front of the house, and the whole bay and eastern hills, and lasting for half an hour. Glorious!!

Sunrise was at about 7:30 am, so that birding didn't have to mean extremely early starts. Our days began with breakfast about 8 am and bird walks starting anytime after 8:30 am – a relaxing holiday.

Many days were sunny, sometimes with clouds flowing over the hills from the Pacific Ocean to the west in the afternoon. Weather was constantly changing, often windy at night which calmed in the morning, many days cloudy at



Casa Milagros view. *Photos provided by the author.*

dawn and clearing a little later. Unpredictable! Temperature, however, was very constant – slightly cool at night and warm all day every day. HOT in the sun, and breezes and clouds were very welcome to birders at midday.

All my days were spent in many hours of birding, plus some relaxing on the beach, swimming in the warm ocean, several walks to the waterfall upriver for swimming and basking, and eating excellent Mexican dinners in the restaurants in town. Our casa had a full kitchen for the use of guests, but we chose to prepare our own breakfasts and lunches, and enjoy dinners out. The night before I left, a duo: female jazz vocalist and soprano sax player, and her partner, guitar player and also a vocalist, performed at one of the restaurants, entertaining a crowd of diners on the terrace.

All the restaurants use purified water for food preparation, and soak vegetables in a purifying solution. I had no digestive issues while I was there.

We made a side trip with friends to Tacamate, an even more remote settlement a half-hour's boat ride to the west. A walk up the river there leads to a heavenly deep pool and waterfall. Our party of five had the place to ourselves. Butterflies filled the air, hot sun blasted down and pure flowing water roared over the granite cliffs.

Birding consisted of long, slow walks. The closest was up a steep, eroded, dirt path behind our house leading to the only road out of the area. The forest is dry jungle, dense brush and farmyards around the village. Roosters crow all day and night. Many palm trees are mixed with giant trees of kinds unknown to me, some topped with bright yellow

or pink flowers, or trunk and branches studded with spines. Some logging has been done on the higher slopes, but most of the hills around Yelapa look quite untouched. Streams flowing from the hills supply water for the village.

Flowers are everywhere, brilliant pink or red Bougainvillea, and Hibiscus of many colours. Some houses have wonderful gardens. Butterflies surrounded us everywhere we went, the commonest being Zebra Heliconian, black with yellow stripes, dazzling in motion.

Military Macaws flew over many times daily, giant squawking silhouettes against the sky. On one walk upriver I found four feeding in a palm tree and had great long views. The area is recognized by the Mexican government as an important area for these macaws and researchers monitor the population.

Birding in Yelapa was wonderful every day, with some days holding more surprises than others. Yelapa was my third birding trip to Mexico, with two previous visits to San Blas, Nayarit, one combined with Baja. Many of the San Blas birds' ranges extend to Yelapa, which is not much further south in the neighbouring state of Jalisco. My Costa Rica trip also shared some of the same species as Yelapa.

Best birds: San Blas Jay and Black-throated Magpie Jay – both very colourful, and the Magpie-Jay's crest and enormously long tail are amazing. Squirrel Cuckoo also has vivid colours and a broad flashy tail. Blue Mockingbird occurred on a surprisingly large number of outings, and varied between shy and skulking and in-our-faces flaunting and posing. It's a deep blackish blue, also with a broad sweeping tail, plus a shaggy ruff around the neck.

Probably the ultimate birds in my three weeks there was the pair of Bat Falcons perched on the communication tower directly behind Casa Milagros. These are small, fast-flying falcons with deep blue, white, and bright rufous colours. I watched a poor Golden-crowned Emerald fly out of our balcony bougainvillea to be picked off in midair by a Batty streaking by. Bat Falcons also eat bats and dragonflies.

Uphill on the road to Chacala, Yelapa's "parent" village, duets of monotonous chirps signalled a hummingbird lek. Long-tailed Hermits were absent when we arrived in late January, but by mid-February were numerous, continuously vocal, and constantly chasing and sparring. They were another flashy species, drab coloured but with a very long down-curved beak which they would open in display to show a bright orange lining, and a very long white tail, invisible in the field guide illustration. These 'Mexican' Long-tailed Hermits may be split in future to full species status.

Scrub Euphonia deserves some kind of prize for fabulous colour. The male is deep midnight blue with forehead and breast a glorious rich yellow. Another bird for a colour award was the Orange-breasted Bunting, a turquoise blue, green and orange-yellow flash, gone all too soon.

Golden Vireo was lovely at first glance, yellow and green, but just too common to rate as a "best bird" – seen every walk up the hill, and often from the balcony. The warblers familiar to North Americans were the same – Wilson's, Black-throated Grey, Yellow, MacGillivray's, and especially Nashville, which was hard to avoid. Nashville Warbler and Blue-grey Gnat-



Snowy Egret.

catcher both are eligible for a booby prize because their large numbers distract birders searching for the new and unusual. Black-and-white Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush were always nice to see for birders from western Canada.

Laughing Falcon was the classic Gary Larsen bird of prey: "I know I'm cool". It appears to be wearing wraparound shades, has a spiky punk hairstyle and sits up on a conspicuous perch looking really cool. For me, it was an ultimately wonderful sighting.

West Mexican Chachalacas can often be heard doing their loud squawking and clattering noises. We also saw them many times, up to 15 at once. Sometimes I saw them courting, with bowing and tail-fanning like a smaller drab version of Peacock. Their tameness and large numbers are a tribute to the people of Yelapa who could easily hunt them, but don't.

Elegant Trogons were seen almost every day. They were another spectacular "yard bird" at Casa Milagros. A male Citreoline Trogon once perched near our balcony, showing off its bright yellow belly.

A mob of small green long-tailed birds chattering and screeching as they fly by were Orange-fronted Parakeets, almost too common to mention. Also seen but only as fly-bys were Lilac-crowned Parrots, square-tailed and deeper-voiced. These parrots were also kept in cages in the pueblo,

and I fed one regularly in my favourite taco restaurant. Feeding it keeps it from screeching in your ear while you eat.

Wading in the river, we walked right up to the stilts, herons, egrets and ibis for fabulous photo opportunities. Snowy Egrets were in their showy breeding plumage with delicate ornamental plumes tossing in the breeze. Reddish Egret was up to its antics dashing and darting at the minnows. Black-necked Stilts are one of the most elegant birds of all, but when poised on one leg above their own reflection, really live up to their name – stilts on stilts!

Yelapa was a good experience with some cautions as well. One major caution is: Don't go off-trail! If you do, as I did, many invisible biting bugs will make your life a misery for two weeks or more. These tiny creatures, locally called guinas, live on grasses and shrubs, and their bites cause large welts which itch badly for two weeks. They live in the seams and pockets of your clothes, and are very hard to get rid of. I was unlucky enough to have about 500 bites, and made a special trip to Puerto Vallarta to get all my laundry done, and to buy the medicinal shampoo/body wash to kill them. The bites had a large impact on my birding and cheerfulness for a week or so, but have left me with no lasting ill-effects.

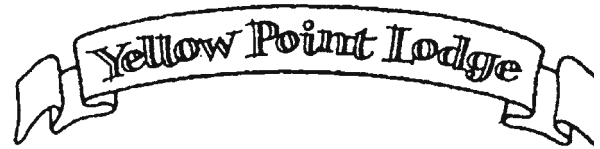
Another creature to beware of is the scorpion. A friend had a bite at a party on the beach, and found breathing quite difficult for awhile. I was climbing the stone steps one evening and one of the small, very venomous yellow ones was right in the middle of the path. Always carry a flashlight, and watch where you step! A hair-raising story was of a local who got a bite while she was sleep-walking!!

Snakes are definitely present. A longer resident had a story of waking to find a large snake hanging from the fan in their room. I have a close-up photo of an extremely venomous Coral Snake, seen only after my companion had walked past about two feet away from it.

Much more charming neighbours were the harmless geckos clinging to walls and ceilings, suction cups on their

feet, making their loud kissy-noise calls in the evening. Lights by the wall attract flying insects, and the geckos stake out the light as their hunting grounds.

Lovely Yelapa has its dark side as well as the bright sun and rainbows. I'll always remember it fondly and will be glad to return.



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Hat Tricks

News and Notes from HAT

By Adam Taylor



New Covenant

HAT is very pleased to announce a new covenant on seven acres of Nancy Powell's Metchosin property. Thanks to Nancy, this amazing property with a rocky outcrop (broom-free too, thanks to Nancy's relentless pulling), a creek, and second-growth forest will be protected forever. Nancy dedicated the covenant to her friend Ivan, who left Nancy the property when he passed away. In his honour, the covenant is known as "Ivan's Island", and reflects his commitment to preserving nature.

A covenant is one way to leave a conservation legacy behind. We are always happy to talk about conservation options with anyone, so please feel free to call or email anytime, and to pass our name on to anyone you might know with an interest in conserving their land.

Craigflower Good Neighbours

HAT is looking for a few Good Neighbours in the Craigflower Watershed this spring and summer. The Craigflower Watershed is probably best known for Thetis Lake, but there are many other lakes and wetlands in this watershed that provide habitat for many species, including the endangered Western Painted Turtle. There are also records of Blue-grey Tailedroppers (my favourite endangered slug) in the forested areas of the watershed.

Through the Good Neighbours project, we help people become better stewards of their land. HAT will be offering workshops and free confidential property visits to help residents of this important Victoria watershed steward nature. If you, or someone you know, lives in the Craigflower watershed, and is interested in a property visit, please let Todd know (todd@hat.bc.ca, 250-995-2428).

Thanks for the tweets!

I've enjoyed learning about VNHS events, and seeing other interesting articles, links, and photos through the VNHS twitter account (@VictoriaNHS), and we owe Leah many thanks for re-tweeting us too! HAT's twitter handle is @HabitatAcqTrust if you're looking for us.

New Website

In keeping with this digital age, and new tech tools like Twitter, HAT has also just updated our website. Our



Carmen Cadrin and Wendy Tyrrell at Nancy Powell's property. *Photo: Adam Taylor*

primary goal was to make the site more user friendly, and to help you easily find information that is useful to you. You will find information on all our programs, and resources and links to help you steward your property. Of course, we'd love for you to check it out www.hat.bc.ca and please let us know what you think, and what would help you.

The Georgia Strait Alliance

By Christianne Wilhelmson (with GSA staff)

If you live anywhere around the Strait of Georgia, you know this to be true: we are home in an amazing part of the world. The Strait is a spectacular 10,400 square kilometer (4,000-square mile) inland sea. Countless small creeks and rivers, as well as the majestic Fraser River, feed the system with nutrient-rich silt and fresh water, supporting thousands of species of plants and animals. Millions of birds, migrating across three continents and more than 20 countries, depend on the marshes, eel-grass beds, mudflats, beaches and flooded meadows for their survival. This huge estuarine system supports a living ocean including species such as salmon, seals, dolphins, sea lions and the iconic orca, emblem of the B.C. coast.

But this incredible body of water is not only important for wildlife: the region's human population depends on this ecosystem for much sought-after resources, work, recreation and a quality of life that makes this such a wonderful place to live. The waters of the Strait support commercial, sport and aboriginal fishing and the shellfish aquaculture industry. They also provide work in transport and other forms of marine commerce.

However, though this region greatly supports our quality of life, rapid population growth, urbanization and development seriously threaten the habitat of the Strait, its

watersheds and the wildlife that live here. Parks Canada says that southern Georgia Strait is “the most at-risk natural environment in Canada”.

Since 1990, Georgia Strait Alliance (GSA) has been the only grassroots organization focused on protecting the marine environment throughout the Strait of Georgia, where more than 75% of British Columbians live, work, and play. Our individual, organizational and business supports come from communities all around the region, and include environmental, recreational, labour and community groups; sport and commercial fishing organizations; eco-tourism companies, the marine industry, and other local businesses. This diversity gives us a distinctive voice within the B.C. environmental community and a unique ability to build strong alliances. Combining this collaborative style with our science-based and positive, solutions-focused approach means that Georgia Strait Alliance is able to effectively address the most pressing issues threatening the marine environment.

What are these most pressing issues? There are many, but here are a few we'd like to highlight (*to view information on our work to protect the southern resident killer whales, to improve wastewater treatment around the region and to fight weakening of environmental laws, please visit our website, www.GeorgiaStrait.org*).



Photo: © Dave Ellifrit, courtesy of the Center for Whale Research.

Tanker risk growing in the Strait

If you monitored the media over the last few months, you could be forgiven for thinking that the threat of increased crude oil tankers plying B.C. waters is only an issue for the north coast. But sadly, that isn't the case. As the fight goes on to stop Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline, residents here in the Strait of Georgia are facing a plan that's received much less public and media attention: to increase what's already a large amount of crude oil moving through our local waters. The pipeline and tankers are already here, and we're not ready for the risks they bring – let alone the risks that will come with the increase that's planned. From 2005 to 2009, the volume of crude oil exported by tankers from the Westridge terminal in Burnaby grew by about 350%. Currently, about 75,000 barrels/day are shipped out from the terminal. Kinder Morgan (owner of both the terminal and the TransMountain pipeline which carries the crude oil there from the Alberta tar sands) may increase this to approximately 450,000 barrels/day by 2016 – and perhaps as much as 600,000 barrels/day. This would make the volume of crude oil being shipped out through the narrow and busy waters of Burrard Inlet and the Strait of Georgia approximately equal to, or possibly even greater, than what



Photo: Bruce Obee/GSA files.

Enbridge plans to ship from Kitimat in its Northern Gateway project. *Learn more here:* www.GeorgiaStrait.org/tankersFAQ

Open net-cage fish farms and disease

In the final days of hearings at the Cohen Inquiry into the decline of the Fraser River Sockeye, shocking information came to light regarding the Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA) virus. Testimony from federal scientists showed that Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) has been aware of the deadly ISA virus in B.C. waters for decades (the same pathogen that all but wiped out the Chilean salmon farming industry in 2007) but has kept that news quiet through withholding the information and muzzling its scientists. After independent researchers detected the ISA virus in B.C. salmon in the fall of 2011, DFO publicly announced that its own tests for the virus gave negative results. It suggested the earlier positive results from other (independent) labs were not credible because the tests could not be duplicated, and stated that, since the fish tissue had degraded, the results may have been showing a "false positive". DFO's behaviour on this issue was outrageous but not that surprising to GSA, as we have for years denounced the agency's conflicting mandate: to simultaneously support the growth of the aquaculture industry while protecting the health of wild salmon and wild fisheries! *Learn more here:* www.GeorgiaStrait.org/ISA

What can you do to make a difference?

With so many issues threatening our beautiful inland sea, it can feel like there is nothing each of us can do to make a difference, but in fact, you can make a great impact with just a few actions. Here are a few options:

- Make a charitable donation to Georgia Strait Alliance: We rely on the support of individuals just like you to do our work. At a time when environmental groups and environmental protection laws are under attack and efforts are being made to silence our voices – and your voices as well – your donation will help to ensure that GSA can continue to be the watchdog for the Strait's magnificent natural diversity. <http://www.georgiastrait.org/?q=node/111>
- Learn more about the issues facing the Strait: Our website www.GeorgiaStrait.org has a broad range of information on threats from pollution from wastewater and storm water to impacts of climate change to the growing threats to our endangered orcas.
- Take action: The "urgent action" section of our website enables you to make your voice heard on issues of urgent importance <http://www.georgiastrait.org/?q=node/757>.
- Join us in a beach clean-up: In April and May of this year, we have joined with the Coastal Community Credit Union to do beach clean-ups around the region www.GeorgiaStrait.org/beachesclean.

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Vancouver Island Trails Information Society:

A Proud Publishing History, 1972 – 2012

By Eric Burkle, VITIS President

Some 40 years ago, a small group of Victoria area hikers, all active members of the Outdoor Club of Victoria, decided to write the first comprehensive trail guide for Vancouver Island after being encouraged to do so by people such as Ruth Masters and Syd Watts. Initially the plan was to do one small booklet covering a selection of hikes on Vancouver Island, but someone at the Times Colonist newspaper suggested splitting the booklet into three volumes, and someone else had the bright idea to go for periodic updates.

The 32-page booklet, written on a manual typewriter and with hand-drawn maps, hit the shelves in October 1972 for a bargain price of \$1.00. *Hiking Trails I: Victoria and Vicinity* became an instant success and needed immediate reprinting before Christmas, having had record sales at the Eaton's downtown store. Since then, the original book, plus *Hiking Trails 2: South-Central Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands* (first published in 1973) and *Hiking Trails 3: Northern Vancouver Island* (first published in 1975) have gone through 32 editions using the latest technology in map creation and book design. Our latest initiatives include ebooks and a mobile-friendly home page.

In its forty years, the Society has had only four presidents, and its founding president, Jane Renaud (Waddell) is a proud 90-year old living in Victoria. The subsequent presidents were Susan Lawrence, John Harris, and currently Eric Burkle.

The non-profit Vancouver Island Trails Information Society has sold an estimated 100,000+ copies, both locally and internationally, helping to attract foreign visitors, while putting back thousands of dollars into Vancouver Island outdoor and environmental projects, from Swan Lake in Victoria to Strathcona Park near Courtenay and places between and beyond.

VITIS continues to support other outdoor organizations both morally and financially. VITIS has also established a scholarship and bursary program at four Island post-secondary institutions. For further information, individual book updates, Society news, etc., go to <http://www.hikingtrailsbooks.com>. We always appreciate receiving updates on hikes featured in our books, which we post on our website.

Through arrangement with Orca Book Publishers, our books are available at most Vancouver Island bookstores and a number of outdoor stores, or directly from our website (includes shipping costs). Ebooks are available at <http://us.orcabook.com/productdetails.cfm?PC=1457>. During this anniversary year, various Victoria area and Island public libraries will feature a special display of our many book editions from those 40 years.

We look forward to serving the Vancouver Island outdoors and recreation community for many more years. Happy hiking!



Letters

Hello Vancouver Island Naturalists,
As you most likely know, Enbridge is planning to build the Northern Gateway pipeline from Alberta to Kitimat, B.C. (apparently with the backing of the federal government). The oil tankers that would collect the oil would pass through the Great Bear Rainforest – home to precious wildlife, including the iconic Spirit Bear. An oil spill would threaten the wildlife, fish stocks and the livelihoods of regional First Nations communities.

I have created an online petition: Save BC's Great Bear Rainforest from Enbridge (Currently at 5654 signers and counting):

Here is the link: http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Stop_Enbridges_Northern_Gateway_pipeline/?whtizcb

I'm asking you to please consider signing this petition. The future of northern B.C.'s environment is at stake as well as the livelihoods of First Nations communities. If you choose to sign it, please pass it along for the broader membership to sign.

In the last two years I have travelled to the north with my mother (a member of the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club) and have gained a greater appreciation for the beauty of the north and the wildlife there, including Grizzly Bears and Black Bears.

We need to send a strong message to the Canadian and B.C. governments that our natural wilderness areas should be treasured and not serve as dumping grounds for big oil companies.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,
James MacGregor

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 15 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column:

Frankie Allen

Deception Place

Wildlife tracking, flora and fauna, writing, photography, conservation

Sharon Patton

Richmond Avenue

Sports – watching curling, skating and golf and tennis; hiking, quilting, sewing and bridge

Lee Whitford

Cliff Street

Mycology, geology, birds

Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

Courtney Street

Bluebirds recovery program

Sarah Oxley

Nelthorpe Street

Mainly birding, also marine and botany

Lea Goward

Dingley Dell

Keen interest in nature, writing, and art



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BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Year-round Tuesday Morning Birding Group

The Tuesday Birding Group meets every Tuesday at 9:00 am 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.

The Beaty Biodiversity Museum at UBC is hosting two events that may be of interest:

Interaction March 6 – May 6, 2012. A photography exhibition exploring diverse interactions between organisms, the environment and us. Predator and prey, pollinator and plant, organism and habitat, plant and sunlight – this exhibition highlights interactions that are often too fast, too slow, too global, or too hidden for us to notice and allows us to explore them in depth.

Birding Bonanza March 10 – May 25, 2012. Discover the amazingly diverse lives of birds like never before through displays and activities of bird specimens from our exclusive behind-the-scenes collections. Special programming will include hands-on activities with real bird specimens, birding activities and lessons, museum tours, puppet shows, scavenger hunts, crafts and more. 6804 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4.

Phone 604-762-4908 Fax 604-822-2016
karen.leung@ubc.ca @beatymuseum @ubcgarden
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Metchosin BioBlitz II May 4 and 5

A BioBlitz is an intense 24-hour census of wildlife populations in a given area. At Metchosin's first BioBlitz in 2011, sixty taxonomic specialists found 850 different species. On Saturday, May 5, new teams of specialists will fan out over Metchosin to count, count, count. Members of the public are invited to join a search team. You don't have to be an expert to be on the teams – you can learn as you go. Meet us at the Mel Cooper cabin of the Boys and Girls Club at 8:30 am and/or 1:00 pm. Join us also on Friday night, May 4th, at the Metchosin Council Chambers (7:00 pm) for slide presentations on Metchosin species. Further information and maps are on the BioBlitz web site at <http://metchosinbiodiversity.com>. Contact Moralea Milne, moraleamilne@gmail.com or 250-478-3838, for further information.

The VNHS Botswana Zimbabwe & Mozambique Safari – November 2013

Brent Reed of Letaka Safaris, who presented at Birders' Night in February, has put together a special itinerary for the VNHS group for travel in November 2013. This safari will be led by Grant Reed and begins in the Chobe National Park in Botswana and travels through Zimbabwe

to the city of Beira where the safari ends with a flight to Johannesburg. If you are interested in more information on this trip, please e-mail info@birdingsafaris.com with the **subject line Mozambique 2013**. Once we have an indication of numbers we will send out pricing and final itineraries. Please note that there is no obligation to book but if you are even vaguely interested please let us know so that we can get some idea of possible group size. URLs: <www.letakasafaris.com> <www.birdingsafaris.com> <www.facebook.com/pages/Letaka-Safaris/116723301988> <[http://twitter.com/letakasafaris](https://twitter.com/letakasafaris)>

The Outerbridge Park Rehabilitation Group is in need of volunteers to help out in two areas:

- 1) botany related activities, i.e., planting, pruning, mulching, etc.; and
- 2) knowledgeable volunteers capable of repairing, maintaining and monitoring nesting boxes for birds.

The park is about 10 acres in size and has been left derelict for about 10 years and the existing nesting boxes are in rather poor condition. Anyone interested in this project would be able to set up their own schedule and program. Those interested in the botany work would become part of an existing group which meets from 9:00 – 12:00 am Thursdays (coffee, tea and baked goods provided). For more detailed information please contact Norman Fowlow at normfowlow@hotmail.com. 250-652-3799. Outerbridge Park is in the Sunnymead area on Royal Oak Drive near Lochside Elementary.

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)

Attention birders going through 100 Mile House!

A generous offer from Barry Bolton, a new VNHS member who lives in the Cariboo: "I attend the Tuesday Birding group when in Victoria. If VNHS members are planning a visit to my area around 100 Mile House, I would be pleased to provide information or directions. Email contact is the best for me. barrie.bolton@gmail.com"

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 pm); **Natural History Night:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 pm, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 pm, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 pm, University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>, and is updated regularly.

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

MAY

Saturday, May 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Witty's Lagoon

This walk is part of the Metchosin BioBlitz. Meet at the main parking lot at 7:00 am. Leader TBA. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more information.

Sunday, May 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Rithet's Bog

Join **Marie O'Shaughnessy** to observe local and migrating birds arriving to nest in this area. Meet at 7:30 am off Chatterton Way by the interpretive sign for Rithet's Bog. Call **Marie** at 250-598-9680 for more information.

Sunday, May 6

EVENT

Camas Day – 21st Annual Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat (Beacon Hill Park)

This event includes guided walks (about one hour each). See details p.11.

Sunday, May 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Mount Prevost Glacier Lilies

Mount Prevost is just north of Duncan. It's an excellent area for plants, birds and butterflies but our trip is planned for us to see the yellow Glacier Lilies (*Erythronium grandiflorum*) that should be in bloom at this time. Normally these plants are found at much higher elevations in the subalpine areas and appear just after snow melt. The population found here and in other parts of the Cowichan Valley are probably a separate subspecies or even a separate species. Experts are arguing this one out! These flowers are very short compared to the ones found at high elevations. If time permits on the way back, we will check out the Somenos Garry Oak Preserve to see the Yellow Montane Violets (*Viola praemorsa*). Bring a lunch, snacks and drinks for the all day outing. Wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. You might also bring binoculars. No pets please. Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 9:00 am to carpool. Contact **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, May 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Intertidal Exploration at Whiffin Spit

Join **Phil Lambert** to explore the intertidal zone at Whiffin Spit in Sooke. This beach usually provides many examples of exposed west coast flora and fauna. From Sooke follow the West Coast Road about 1.7 km west then turn left on Whiffin Spit Road. To carpool meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 10 am. Rubber boots recommended and a walking stick if you have one. Bring water and a snack or lunch. For more information call **Phil** at 250-477-5922.

Wednesday, May 9

EVENT

Have You Seen This Shark? Basking Sharks in British Columbia: The Past, Present and Future of Canada's First Listed Endangered Marine Fish Species

A presentation by **Romney McPhie**, Research Biologist, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, on the biology and ecology of the Basking Shark – the second largest fish in the world, and one of the most imperiled. Ms. McPhie is a research biologist working with sharks, skates and rays at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, BC. Admission; \$14 for adults, \$8 for children aged 6–17 years. Free to Discovery Centre Members and Annual Pass Holders. 7:00 pm at the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, 9811 Seaport Place, Sidney B.C., Contact 250-665-7511.

Saturday, May 12

EVENT

3rd Annual International Migratory Bird Day!

The Victoria Natural History Society, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, and CRD Regional Parks are proud to present the 3rd Annual International Migratory Bird Day from 7:00 am – 2:00 pm at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. Help celebrate and learn more about the journey that birds take from their summer and winter homes by participating in this free all-day event that offers engaging activities for birders of all ages, expertise, and abilities. Participate in guided bird walks, mist-netting demonstrations, hummingbird and passerine banding demonstrations, live raptors, and children's activities. Be sure to check out booths representing local organizations focused on studying migratory birds and gather information on ways to help conserve species and their habitats.

9 am: *Event opening* – Picnic shelter (at the Elk/Beaver Lake filter beds). Displays, touch tables, crafts, scavenger hunts, games, fun! Follow the signs!

9 am to 2 pm: *Bird banding demonstrations* – mist nets will be nearby and constantly checked for songbirds.

9 am to 2 pm: *Hummingbird banding demonstrations* – hummingbird feeder traps will be monitored all day.

Birding walks: There will be a 7:00 am walk with the VNHS Saturday Morning Birding Group. Meet at the main parking lot at Beaver Lake. All other walks (~ 40 minutes in length) leave from the picnic shelter and run every hour, starting at 10:15 am).

Live raptors: Pacific Northwest Raptors will have birds of prey at the event, with a demonstration flight in the morning and afternoon.

Sunday, May 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. We should see a good variety of migrating shorebirds and passerines. Meet at the south end by the washrooms at 7:30 am. This is a five-hour walk. Bring a snack and a drink. Call **Ann** at 250-514-6450 for more information.

Monday, May 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Brooks Point on South Pender Island

This CRD Park was described in an article in the last *Victoria Naturalist*, so we are trying to organize a trip to see the wildflowers. Details for the trip are not yet finalized but we hope to catch the 8:30 am ferry, returning at 3:10 pm. Participants will be expected to carpool and share in transportation expenses. Although the terrain is not terribly rugged, wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. You must pre-register between May 1 and May 10 for this event when more definitive plans will be in place. Bring a lunch, snacks and drinks for the all day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Friday, May 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Mt. Newton

Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton Heights at 7:30 am. This is a great area to see Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-throated Grey Warblers, and Mourning Doves. Leader TBA. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more information.

Saturday, May 19 and Sunday, May 20

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.

Saturday, May 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Blenkinsop Lake and Mount Douglas

Meet at the south end of Blenkinsop Lake opposite Don Mann at 7:00 am. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more info.

Sunday, May 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Butterflies, Birds, and Blooms on Mt. Tolmie

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a natural history walk on Mt. Tolmie. Meet at the main parking lot just north of the summit at 10:00 am. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more information.

Monday, May 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds, and scenery along the way. Meet at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km along Sooke River Road at 8:00 am. Bring a cool drink and lunch. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 if you need more information.

Saturday, May 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mountain Road

Meet at the mailboxes on Stewart Mountain Road, which is off Millstream Road in the Highlands at 7:00 am. It is a great place to see warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. Call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 250-885-2454.

Sunday, May 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Little Saanich Mountain (The Observatory)

Join **Ed Pellizzon** on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain. This is an excellent place to see lots of migrant species of birds. Meet at 7:30 am at the bottom of the road leading up the mountain at the big sign for Centre of the Universe on West Saanich Road.

Sunday, May 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Scramble up the Back of Mount Douglas

This will be a chance to enjoy the birds and the flowers on Mount Douglas. The Great Camas (*Camassia leichtlinii*) and the Menzies' Larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*) are both the same colour and will be in bloom together along with the yellow Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) and other late spring flowers. Please note the trail is very steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at the trail entrance on Blenkinsop near Lohbrunner at 9:00 am. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. You will want to bring binoculars. Wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. No pets please. Contact **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

JUNE

Saturday, June 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

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

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the Hydro substation. This is a great area to hear or see most of the warblers, vireos, and flycatchers we have in our area. This is a four-to-five-hour walk. Meet at the Nature House on Munns Road at 7:00 am. Call **Rick** 250-885 2454.

Sunday, June 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding the Duncan Area

We will try to find a Red-eyed Vireo and other warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride 7:00 am or at Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 8:00 am. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 if you need more information.

Sunday, June 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Grasses of Observatory Hill

Many people think that grasses are all the same or that the differences are highly technical. On the contrary, they are as distinctive and recognizable as many other groups of plants. Learning a handful of local grasses adds interest to every stroll. Join **James Miskelly** for an exploration of the grasses of Observatory Hill. We will meet at the bottom of the hill at 10:00 am and walk up the road. On the way, we will encounter species typical of Douglas-fir forest, oak woodland, moss bald, and disturbed habitats. No pets please. Contact **James** at james.miskelly@gmail.com or 250-544-0455 for more information.

Sunday, June 3

EVENT

World Oceans Day at the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre and Beacon Park in beautiful Sidney, BC.

Entertainment, activities and exhibitors brought together to celebrate all things ocean. This family friendly event runs from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm. For more information visit <http://www.oceandiscovery.ca/>

Saturday, June 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Jordan River Area

Join **Mike McGrenere** for a trip to Jordan River. In the past it has been a hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall, and it is a great place to hear Fox Sparrows singing in the spring. Meet at the Helmcken Park & Ride at 7:00 am. Bring lunch, etc. Call **Mike** at 250-658-8624 if you need more information.

Saturday, June 16 and Sunday, June 17

EVENT

Victoria Butterfly Count

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Saturday, June 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

Saturday Morning Birding

Call the “Rare Bird Alert” 250-704-2555 or click “Rare Bird Alert” on the website on Thursday or Friday before to find out each week’s location. Usually starting at 7:00 am, rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Everyone is welcome.

Sunday, June 17

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Duncan Butterflies

Meet at the entrance of the boardwalk at Somenos Marsh at 10:00 am. This trip is weather dependent, it needs to be sunny.

Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 am for car pooling. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 if you need more information.

Sunday, June 17

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Cowichan River Footpath

This is an area well known to hikers and fisherman. Jack Sutherland has enjoyed hiking this area but this time he will slow down and be looking for the wildflowers and enjoying the birds along this scenic waterway. We will be investigating the area between Skutz Falls and Marie Canyon. There is a small segment of Garry Oak meadow where we will see some of the late spring wildflowers but the highlight of this section of trail is the abundance of plants found in the “Oddballs” section of the field guide by Pojar & McKinnon. This includes Ground Cones (*Boschniakia hookeri*) and Candy Sticks (*Allotropa virgata*). Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 7:00 am to car-pool. Although the terrain is not terribly rugged, wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. Bring a lunch, snacks and drinks for the all day outing. No pets please. Contact **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, June 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL TBA)

Saturday Morning Birding

Call the “Rare Bird Alert” 250-704-2555 or click “Rare Bird Alert” on the website on Thursday or Friday before to find out each week’s location. Usually starting at 7:00 am, rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Everyone welcome.

Sunday, June 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Jordan Ridge and San Juan Ridge

Due to uncertainty regarding access to areas high above Jordan River, please contact Agnes to get on an email list which will provide details on field trips in this area (probably starting on June 24) closer to the dates. Trips may include visits to see some high elevation early wildflowers such as Smith’s Fairy Bells (*Prosartes smithii*), high elevation bogs containing plants such as Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), areas with fields of White Avalanche Lilies (*Erythronium montanum*) and other meadows rich in plants normally at much higher elevations such as White Rhododendron (*Rhododendron albiflorum*). B.C. Breeding Bird Atlas data will be gathered on these trips. Trips may include hiking on the Kludahk Trail (goes along the San Juan Ridge). You must pre-register for these trips due to transportation limitations and potential change of plans due to snow cover and/or road conditions and changeable access. Number of participants will be dependent on availability of high-clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicles for carpooling. Generally start from Victoria at 8:00 am. Be prepared for cold and/or wet weather. Wear sturdy footwear, and a hiking stick is a good idea due to the uneven ground. Bring a lunch, snacks and drinks for the all day outings. No pets please. Contact **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for further information on these trips.



Winged Migration

May 12th, 2012

Beaver Lake Regional Park

Picnic Shelter (9am - 2pm)

(follow the signs from the nature house
or park at the filter beds)

-  Bird Walks
-  Live Raptors
-  Children's Activities
-  Information Displays
-  Mist-netting Demonstrations
-  Hummingbird Banding Demonstrations

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



Art by Rafael Lopez

