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The Victoria NATURALIST

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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 PC 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 x1550 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

Red-tailed Hawk in flight. *Photo: Marie O’Shaughnessy*

Correction – July/August:

p. 10 photo was incorrectly credited to Kem Luther.
 The correct photographer was Roger St. Pierre.
 Back cover photo was incorrectly credited to Darren
 Copley. The correct photographer was Claudia Copley.

By the time you read this issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*, the 2012 Olympics will be over. For close to two weeks, we have watched athletes from all over the world striving to be “faster, higher, stronger”. A number of websites I visited recently have fascinating descriptions and statistics about species in the wild that live this motto every day, inspiring me to write this editorial.

In this issue, you can read about Western Bluebirds, who triumphed over adversity to establish breeding sites. Read about Rocky Point Bird Observatory, tracking tiny long distance flyers, and about a proposed new National Marine Conservation Area that is home to some of nature’s finest Olympians: Rhinoceros Auklets (deep sea divers – diving up to 57 metres); several species of terns (long distance flyers); and salmon and whales known to migrate thousands of kilometres. Not to mention some heavyweight wrestlers – the Steller’s Sea Lions.

We invite you to join us at Hawk Watch, where you may be lucky enough to see a Peregrine Falcon, perhaps nature’s fastest bird.

Did you know that here on Vancouver Island, we have Olympians of the plant world? Groves of magnificent old growth Douglas-fir and western hemlock on the Koksilah River, and redcedar and Sitka spruce on Cortez and other nearby islands inspire respect and deserve protection.

Then there is another type of competition...the Chef’s Survival Challenge...where only the fastest and best survive to win the Golden Broccoli Trophy.

I hope you will take advantage of the many event and field trip opportunities available through VNHS in September and October – perhaps you will see one of nature’s Olympians up close!

Gail Harcombe

President's Message

By Darren Copley

Well I hope you all had a great summer this year. At the time of this writing, Claudia and I have an amazing field season planned – surveying the province for invertebrates for the Royal B.C. Museum. This year several national parks in the Rockies are part of the survey effort, as well as an area that really needs to become a national park: the Flathead Valley. Check out Sierra Club's website for details on the special BioBlitz effort to help protect the region as parkland. The vast un-roaded Brooks Peninsula on Vancouver Island is a target destination as well. That one will likely be wet and wild, given the weather the north coast has been having!

The Board is busy with their own summers and it is nice to get a break from meetings and other VNHS obligations. We did, however, have our annual board retreat at the CRD Parks Forester's Cabin in Francis King Park. This is an opportunity for us to brainstorm about the upcoming year, and to discuss the successes of the previous year. The main message again this year was that of finding ways to increase our membership, and further discussions about the future of our website. We also spent quite a bit of time going over the magazine to help with the transition from Claudia to Gail and Ken as editors. Thanks again to Claudia for all her hard work over the years. I hope that now that she has more time I can convince her to write the president's message, or perhaps her own column.

A really fun action item that came from the retreat was a commitment to do the first of a series of VNHS brochures which cover different groups of organisms. The first thing we'll try our hand at is rare butterflies of the region. Please let us know if you have any great pictures of any life stage of local butterfly that we can use, as well as larval food plant pictures. These brochures will have membership information, and be available on field trips, schools programs, and other appropriate venues. Other butterfly brochures have been done, but this will be the most up-to-date, especially since we have butterfly expert James Miskelly on the board.

While on the subject of publications, the updated VNHS *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region*, edited by our own Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley, is due for release this October in partnership with the Royal B.C. Museum. See page 11 for more details, and be sure to help us spread the word. This guide is a must-have for any naturalist in our region, and of course will make a great (and very reasonable) gift. I'm really happy to have this come to fruition, and want to thank all of the authors, editors, and photographers who volunteered so much of their time.

It seems like we are hanging with the big guys now. Publishing with the RBCM, having displays at the James Bay market, and even making it on the Victoria Foundation's annual Vital Signs® community check-up survey. The survey asked respondents to identify what they



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think are the most important issues facing Greater Victoria today, and it included our Christmas Bird Count – good job Ann! We also have had our schools program co-coordinator Bill Dancer communicating with the David Suzuki Foundation, giving them the details of our great program. Congratulations to all the volunteers with this effort – they interacted with over 500 students this year!

Don't forget to let us know if you can make it to our annual HawkWatch and BBQ Social, where the number of vultures in the air is matched by us as we descend on veggie and meat dogs at East Sooke Park. This is a great opportunity to see an incredible natural spectacle and spend time with like-minded members. This year the date is Saturday September 22 from 11–3 (see ad page 11 of this issue), with the socializing and eating scheduled for after the event itself. We are also helping with the fun at Madrona Farm again: the Chef Survival Challenge (p. 18). Tickets sold by the VNHS see half of the proceeds going to our own conservation work. So attend the event and buy your tickets from a board member or at an evening presentation.

There is another great line-up of speakers for this year's meetings – thanks to the organizers and hosts: Adolf Ceska, Christina Ball, James Clowater, and Phil Lambert. I can't believe that there are still new speakers available and topics that I don't want to miss. Keep checking our website and the twitter feed for updates, and let me know if you want to help out with any of our great activities. I'll hopefully be able to make it out to Rithet's Bog (www.rithetsbog.org) this September to help eradicate the introduced Eastern Cattail that is slowly filling in the bog. Maybe we'll see you there, or at another event. Thanks for being a member of the VNHS!

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 3 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column:

Dr, Lawrence M. Dill
Head Street
Fish and marine life

Jannaca Chick
Olympia Drive
Birds, hiking, photography

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Hat Tricks

Join us for Conservation Connection

By Adam Taylor



“Let’s Work Together” is the theme of HAT’s annual Conservation Connection Forum. It’s also the title of a 1970s blues hit by Wilbert Harrison, but that’s probably a coincidence. What’s not a coincidence is the number of people and organizations working to steward the environment in our region. At last count, there were well over 100 organizations working on conservation and environmental issues in the region. They range from national organizations with regional offices in Victoria, to local volunteer groups caring for a special park. Some work to challenge the government to protect the environment, while others prefer to work on the ground, pulling invasive plants, restoring streams, and caring for parks. And a few do it all!

The VNHS is one of the oldest environmental organizations in the region, and we hope that members will join this year on Sept. 28th at Royal Roads University. There are lots of good reasons to come. Aside from excellent company and opportunity to catch up on who’s doing what, there will be a number of excellent sessions. Dr. Brian Starzomski, UVic Professor of Biodiversity Conservation and Ecological Restoration, will present, as will the founders of the region’s first outdoor Kindergarten at Sangster Elementary. Reporters from the Times-Colonist and Shaw Cable will help you understand how to get your story out. There will be

networking and an opportunity to connect with experienced, knowledgeable folks on a variety of topics, including volunteering, grant writing, and more.

Ending the day, Saanich Gulf Islands MP Elizabeth May, the first elected Green Party of Canada member, will provide the keynote presentation.

In an era when news about the environment seems endlessly negative, it is important to reflect on successes we have had (and there have been successes!) and to connect with others who care about nature. Besides, it’s cheap – just \$35 for VNHS volunteers – and includes lunch!

To find out more, view the full agenda, or register, visit HAT’s website at www.hat.bc.ca or call us at 250-995-2428.

Play Again Film

HAT and Open Cinema will be hosting a screening of *Play Again* this November. The film explores the challenges of youth suffering from Nature Deficit Disorder and importance of outdoor play and learning. (We will, however, be hosting the screening indoors!). View the trailer at www.playagain.com, and watch for the announcement from Open Cinema. Hope to see you there!



Newcastle Island camping. *Photo: Adam Taylor*

Mucking About in Boats and Beaches – Discovery Island, July 22, 2012

By Ken Sohm

The skies were somewhat foreboding as twelve intrepid souls prepared to embark on our local ocean trip. Fortunately for two of us on the wait list, two people read the messages from Environment Canada and cancelled at the last minute. A report of a wolf on Discovery Island added a touch of anticipation.

The outing was organized and led by Agnes Lynn, and a very capable boat owner/operator, Al Lubkowski of *Blackfish Wilderness Expeditions* took us from Oak Bay Marina out to the islands. With a little gentle calisthenics – remarkable how agile naturalists of any age are – we transferred from the dock to the dinghy and finally to the large and covered canoe. This involved about three trips as the zodiac was small.

On the trip out we passed small groups of Pigeon Guillemots and Rhinoceros Auklets while Harlequin Ducks and cormorants did fly-bys. Near our destination, seals and pups lazed on the rocks. Once we had pulled into a sheltered bay on Discovery Island, dried our feet and organized ourselves, the weather improved and from then on the ambient temperature was perfect for our activities.

We ambled along the trail leading towards the lighthouse, hearing various forest birds amongst which Red Crossbills, Pacific Wren, House Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet. Never having been on these islands, I had no idea it was so forested. In the open beach areas, American Goldfinch were seen and heard and two species of swallow, Violet-green and Barn, were present. The former were nesting in an old shed or boat-house and we assumed the Barn Swallows must also

have nested on the island since the ones we saw were juveniles.

The outlying rocky islets had gulls aplenty, mostly Glaucous-winged Gulls, some with young. Eagle predation has been hard on the gulls' nesting areas. Besides the prevalent species there were a few California Gulls and some Heermann's Gulls in formal and elegant plumage and striking red bills. I counted at least seven on one of the islets and there may well have been more. The shorebirds had not heard about our trip and failed to show up although a Spotted Sandpiper was heard, and a group of Black Oystercatchers made a cameo appearance as we had our lunch on the beach.

A good deal of attention was paid to the many plants; of special interest here was a clump of Indian pipe and many patches, some quite large, of rattlesnake plantain. This plant, *Goodyera oblongifolia*, with a striking leaf pattern, is not a true plantain but simply named so because of the similar flattened leaf rosettes. In one location we found rein orchid, and the grass held many delicate blue harvest brodiaea. Fool's onion and nodding onion were both found near the shore.

We were picked up at precisely 2 p.m. by our affable boatman and cruised leisurely back through the various channels between and around Discovery and Chatham islands. The consensus in our group was that this trip was a great idea, enabling us a rare opportunity to see what our nearby islands hold of interest. Too bad about the no-show wolf. Thank you Agnes for organizing the event and so capably leading this island adventure.



Photo: Robert Auger

Letters

The Victoria Natural History Society sponsors several scholarships and bursaries at the University of Victoria, Camosun College, and Royal Roads University. Below are letters of thanks from students receiving these awards.

To President Darren Copley and the VNHS Directors and members:

I am an Environmental Technology student at Camosun College who was awarded a bursary through the Camosun College Foundation this winter semester thanks to the generous donation by the VNHS.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for this financial contribution to my education. It was a very unexpected surprise to receive this bursary, which I plan to put towards my fall 2012 semester tuition.

Born and raised on Vancouver Island, I value protecting the sensitive local ecosystem, and I am proud to say I have been hired for a summer position with Parks Canada in Pacific Rim National Park doing dune habitat restoration. SO EXCITED.

Thank you again for this unexpected gift!

Sincerely

Keltie Hinton

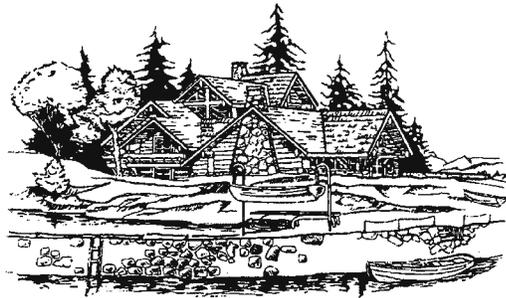
I am honoured and grateful to receive the Alice M. Hay Scholarship through the Victoria Natural History Society. This contribution will help me complete my master's degree in biology this summer at the University of Victoria and Royal BC Museum.

I am passionate about the flora of British Columbia and the conservation of native ecosystems. My research has offered a unique perspective on modern-day ecosystems by taking a peek into the past. Using fossilized pollen and spores, I am investigating ancient plant communities leading up to the last glaciation on southeastern Vancouver Island. This research will document prehistoric plant communities, and improve our understanding of when and how far glacial ice reached the area. Knowledge of past ecosystems places surviving habitats and species in a broader ecological, historical, and cultural context.

I am dedicated to the conservation of ecosystems within British Columbia and I hope to continue working in the field of plant ecology and conservation on Vancouver Island. Your support means a lot to me; thank you!

Sincerely,

Kristen Harrison



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Our Opportunity to Leave a Legacy

By Torrance Coste, Vancouver Island Campaigner – Wilderness Committee

Vancouver Island is known the world over for its breathtaking, unique, and often pristine natural areas. From discipline-leading biologists to veteran mountaineers to kids on their first camping trip – any who visit the Island’s wilderness areas understand how lucky we are to have them.

As an environmentalist, the preservation of Vancouver Island’s natural ecosystems is of profound importance to me. Our environment is worth preserving wholly for its own sake, but also to inspire and ground us as we develop. If we hope to move to more sustainable, environmentally responsible ways of living, we will need relatively undisturbed ecosystems to remind us what this coast was like before European contact and industrialization, to give us something to strive for. By minimizing the contrast between industrial and natural landscapes, I believe we can mitigate our impact on the global environment and move towards the solutions to some of the world’s most dire environmental crises. Here on Vancouver Island we have protected some of our natural history. Our parks, from the jagged peaks of Strathcona to the pounding surf of Pacific Rim, to the splendour of Carmanah-Walbran, are the wonder of all who experience them.

But frankly, we’ve not enough. Our protected areas are too few, too fragmented, and too unrepresentative of the Island’s ecosystems.

Approximately 13% of Vancouver Island is under some form of protection – half of that in a single park. The low-elevation valley bottoms, where the highest levels of productivity and the largest trees are found are hardly represented in our parks, and as a result, have been logged almost completely. Less than 10% of the valley-bottom old-growth on Vancouver Island remains intact.

In terms of area protected, we lag far behind other international jurisdictions, such as Bhutan, Tanzania, and Venezuela – all of which have protected over 30% of their land base. We simply have to do better. Industrial development pressures will only increase, as the Island’s population grows and natural resources become scarcer in other parts of the province, the country, and the world. Right now will be our best – maybe our last – chance to expand our protected area network.

The Wilderness Committee is calling for the doubling of Vancouver Island’s protected areas; to conserve our natural history for future generations and bring us closer to other international jurisdictions. As we look to expand existing protected areas and protect new wildernesses, the focus will be on endangered ecosystems and species. Old-growth temperate rainforest is one of the rarest – and most valued – ecosystems on earth, and as more and more of it falls to clear-cutting, the wildlife it supports also becomes endangered.

Here this campaign begins to blend with other long-time initiatives of the Wilderness Committee, such as the creation of stand-alone endangered species legislation for B.C., and a ban on all old-growth logging.

Locating and choosing areas worthy of protection is a huge task, and obviously cannot be done from my desk. Part of my job is connecting with allies up and down the Vancouver Island area, often visiting their communities and seeing the wilderness areas that matter most to them. This is by far the best part of my job. I meet local activists whose organization and commitment is surpassed only by their passion for and knowledge of the natural history in their area. By working together with these communities, I hope to raise awareness about just how much wilderness on the Island is still without protection, and encourage people to demand their government leadership take action to conserve our natural history. To list all of the gems that deserve protection on Vancouver Island would take weeks, but here are a few examples that are close to my heart.



Me and my dog in front of the unprotected San Juan Spruce – Canada’s largest Sitka spruce.

Photo: Torrance Coste



A recent industrial clear-cut near Nanoose Bay.
Photo: Torrance Coste

Less than an hour from Victoria stands a grove of old-growth Douglas-fir and western hemlock on the Koksilah River. The giant trees tower skyward above massive sword ferns, salal thickets, and deep blankets of moss. And amongst the rich flora of this stunning ancient forest grows environmentalism itself. From the loggers who came across the grove in the 1980s and refused to cut the giants, to local grassroots activists who've fought for them on an ongoing basis for decades, this special place stirs our emotions and demands a kind of loyalty from all who visit. People leave the grove proud that a forest like this still exists so close to urban areas, and with a great desire to see it protected.

Old-growth Douglas-fir stands in the Coastal Western Hemlock zone are one of the rarest ecosystems in Canada and most under-represented in our parks. This grove is unusually accessible, a chance for us all to see how our forests used to be. It stands near – but not inside – a provincial park and is still at risk of being logged.

Another community I've visited for this campaign is Cortes Island – the gateway to Desolation Sound and a truly unique environment. Eight percent of Cortes is owned by corporate logging giant Island Timberlands. The company plans to clear-cut and liquidate their holdings – some of the most ecologically significant land on the island – in the next few decades. In the Island Timberlands parcels on Cortes stand stunning old-growth Douglas-fir, redcedar, Sitka spruce, hemlock, and maple trees, as well as many rare and endangered species like the otherworldly ghost pipe, the majestic Gray Wolf, and even the elusive Northern Flying Squirrel. These forests also contain salmonoid-bearing streams and are



The blue-listed Red-legged Frog in an old-growth stand on Cortes Island. *Photo: Torrance Coste*

adjacent to existing protected areas, and therefore could become legitimate wildlife corridors on the small island.

What makes Cortes unique is the fact that some of the community groups have actually committed to purchasing these sensitive areas as park lands, along with their municipal government, the Strathcona Regional District. Thus far, Island Timberlands has refused to cooperate.

With so many unbelievable areas on Vancouver Island, protecting enough of them can seem like a tall task at times. But this is the discussion we need to be having. Doubling our parks will help maintain our status as one of the world's premier wilderness areas. It will provide security to tourism and other more sustainable industries. As we look to transition to less environmentally destructive ways of life, we will need wilderness areas in their pre-contact state to inspire us to develop more sustainably. From the culture-steeped shores of west Nootka Island, to the breathtaking upper Walbran Valley, to the legendary Clayoquot Sound: these areas need to be preserved as monuments to future generations, living natural history.

Here on Vancouver Island we have a rare opportunity to do something incredible. If we rise to the challenge, we will have done more than conserve world-class wilderness areas. We will have protected an essential part of ourselves, our past, and our future.

For more information or to get involved, please visit us online at <http://wildernesscommittee.org/> or drop by the Victoria office in Fan Tan Alley, call 250-388-9292, or email torrance@wildernesscommittee.org.

Nature Guide to the Victoria Region due out in October!

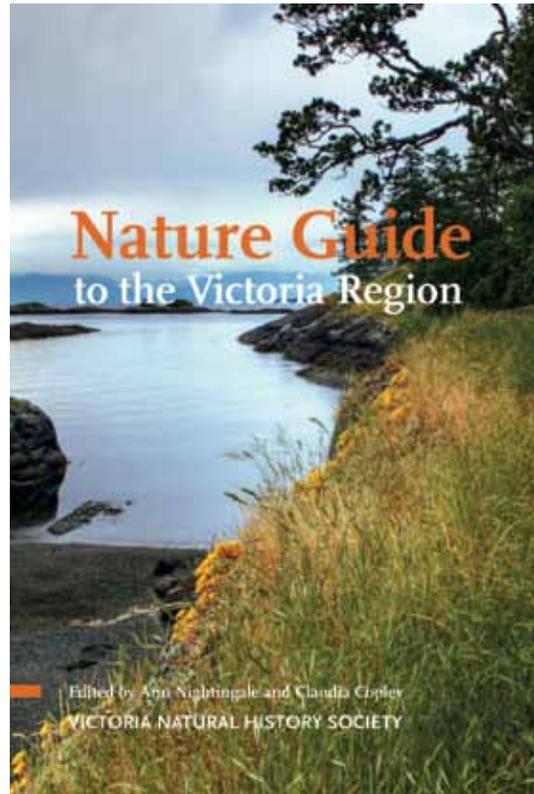
By Claudia Copley

In the fall a revision of the Victoria Natural History Society's very own guidebook to the region will be released. Watch for it on sale at Society evening presentations and in bookstores everywhere. Society members will be able to support our work and get the best price by buying it directly from us. At just \$15, this full-colour book is an amazing price and will make a wonderful gift to yourself and to anyone you know who is interested in nature. The Victoria region is a natural wonderland – one of the most biologically rich areas of the country, with many plants and animals found nowhere else in Canada.

Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned naturalist, a visitor or a resident, this book will give you the knowledge you need to get the most out of your explorations of south-eastern Vancouver Island.

Ten local experts have contributed their knowledge about all things natural in this region, from mushrooms and dragonflies to owls and whales. In ten chapters, they describe the species most likely to be seen here, and direct you to the best places to see them.

Birds – David Stirling and Alan MacLeod
Butterflies – James Miskelly
Dragonflies – Robert Cannings
Fungi – Bryce Kendrick
Intertidal life – Philip Lambert



Land mammals – David Nagorsen
Marine mammals – Anna Hall
Nearshore Fishes – Gavin Hanke
Plants – Leon Pavlick
Reptiles and amphibians – Gavin Hanke

Nature Guide to the Victoria Region is designed to help you understand the variety of habitats and natural wonders awaiting your discovery, all in a portable, easy-to-read format. It includes beautiful full-colour photographs, checklists, and a map of all the great places to visit.



VNHS September Social
Saturday September 22, 3:00 p.m.
following Hawk Watch
You are invited!

Join CRD Regional Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for this annual event at Aylard Farm, complete with live raptor demonstrations. Then join your fellow VNHS members for a BBQ get-together in East Sooke Park after Hawk Watch. Members are welcome to a free smokie (veggie option available), beverage, cake, and camaraderie! (See calendar for more details about Hawk Watch.) To RSVP, email or phone James: 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com before September 20. Bring a lawnchair.

A Bluebird Summer: Bringing Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) back to Southeastern Vancouver Island

By Julia Daly, Bring Back the Bluebirds Project Technician,
Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team

When asked to write a “week in the life” article that described my experiences as a field technician working on the pilot year of a five-year Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) re-introduction project, I thought to myself, how can I generalize all I’ve seen and done over the past six weeks into one “typical” week, when each day brings so many personal firsts? On my first day of work, for example, I got to see live Western Bluebirds for the very first time—an entire family of them! Little did I know that these same birds would later choose to remain at their release site *and* produce another clutch! As I write this, four newly hatched bluebird chicks are nestled inside a bluebird box in the Cowichan Valley. They are the first Western Bluebirds known to have hatched on Vancouver Island in 17 years.

In the 1950s, Western Bluebird numbers in southwestern British Columbia (the northern extent of their former range) began to decline, a trend that continued until the mid 1990s when the last breeding activity on Vancouver Island was recorded. Compounding pressures, such as wide-scale commercial and residential development, the removal of dead wood from habitat, pesticide use, long-term wildfire suppression, and the introduction of exotic invasive species,

such as European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), and domestic cats appear to be the main drivers of this loss.

We’re hopeful that Western Bluebirds will rebuild a population in this area through our ecosystem recovery program that combines the translocation of Western Bluebirds, habitat restoration, and the building of “bluebird trails” of nestboxes placed in suitable habitat throughout the region. The first phase of this international project re-introduced a breeding population of Western Bluebirds to the San Juan Islands, where they hadn’t nested since the 1930s. Thanks to a generous \$10,000 grant from the Victoria Natural History Society, we were able to go ahead with the pilot year of the program in Canada.

My experiences working with this incredibly adaptable and undeniably beautiful species, and the many people who are working to help them, have given me hope that the songbirds will soon return to southwestern B.C. for the long term. In this pilot season, 17 Western Bluebirds (8 adults, 9 juveniles) were captured from Joint Base Lewis-McChord military base in Washington State, which contains one of the largest remaining tracts of Garry oak habitat in northeastern



View from the first family’s aviary. They chose a nestbox just outside the aviary for their second (and historic) brood.
Photo: Julia Daly



June 27, 2012: Five eggs have been produced by one of the re-introduced adult pairs! Photo: Julia Daly



July 13, 2012: I see a glimpse of a blue egg remaining under four pink bodies. Looks like only four of the eggs will hatch. Photo: Julia Daly

Washington, and translocated to the Cowichan Valley. At least one of the four translocated adult pairs has produced young here, which is the news of the summer! Our goal is to release at least 90 adult Western Bluebirds in the area by the year 2016. Here are some of the highlights, quirks and things I've learned through my job as the "Bring Back the Bluebirds" Project Technician...so far.

June 4, 2012 I arrived in the Cowichan Valley for my first day of work and was greeted by the site manager at Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve (CGOP), Irvin Banman, who guided me on a tour of the native plant nursery that he manages on site, which specializes in the propagation of species associated with Garry Oak ecosystems. Soon we were met by Trudy Chatwin, a Rare and Endangered Species Biologist for the BC Ministry of Environment, and together we surveyed 26 nestboxes in the area. We recorded many Tree and Violet-green Swallow nests and a few House Wren nests. I learned about House Wren "dummy nest" building behaviour—fascinating, but it does create extra work for the technician. In the evening, GOERT Conservation Specialist Kathryn Martell and Gary Slater of Ecostudies Institute arrived with the first family of bluebirds translocated from Washington State.

June 5-6, 2012 I traveled to Fort Lewis, Washington with Gary, who coordinates the translocation component of the project. In the early morning of June 6th, we drove to Joint Base Lewis-McChord to capture a family of bluebirds at a known location (i.e., where breeding activity had been

observed). When we arrived at the capture site, the sun was just coming up over the horizon, lighting up the Garry oak meadow full of dry grasses and blooming deltoid balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza deltoidea*) into a gleaming sea of gold and yellow. I couldn't gaze at the landscape for long, however, as moments later we were quickly setting up mist nets around a Garry oak tree bearing the nestbox of a family of seven Western Bluebirds (an adult pair in their second year of life and their five 12-day-old chicks). Within 45 minutes, we had successfully captured the adult pair and their nestlings for banding. Once they had been banded and their border-crossing paperwork signed, we proceeded on our drive and ferry ride back to the Cowichan Valley. After 12 hours of nearly continuous cheeping, hand-feeding and fecal sac removal during the trip back, we arrived back in the Cowichan Valley. My ears were ringing, but my heart beamed for the bluebird family and their potential establishment on Vancouver Island.

June 6 The two bluebird families were held in aviaries until the young fledged from the nestboxes (about one week). How I treasured my early morning and evening visits to the aviaries to feed and check up on them! Through a tiny crack above the door on the only walled side of the aviary (the other three sides are wire mesh) I was able to peer in and watch their activities undetected. Sometimes I would close my eyes and listen to their subtle sounds—soft and content sounding "chips" and "peeps" against a backdrop of a gentle summer wind. At other times I worked on surveying for the four bluebirds that had already been released and monitoring and cleaning out the contents of other nestboxes throughout the region. I enjoyed learning about the unique sets of nesting materials used by the different cavity nesters I encountered, and the colour and size variation of each species' eggs.

June 11 Today was release day for the first family of six Western Bluebirds that arrived at CGOP on June 4th (exactly one week earlier). They took their time flying out of the aviary (more than 6 hours), but wasted no time in producing more offspring once they made their way out! The adult pair began searching for another nesting site almost immediately. Over the next couple of days I saw them defending several nestboxes near the aviary. At first they seemed fixated on securing a nestbox already occupied by a family of Tree Swallows! Eventually they settled on a nestbox that we hastily erected in the same area, which not only had a spectacular view, but also had a reliable food supply within 10 meters (mealworms that we provided). Made perfect sense to me.

June 17 I found a tidy nest made of fine dry grasses in the first family's nestbox!

June 20 Wow, what amazing hovering skills! Today I saw one of the adult females hovering above the ground for several seconds to home in on an insect in the grass. Finally she pounced and caught the winged bug in her bill!



Western Bluebird fledgling perched on a Garry Oak tree at Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve.
Photo: Bill Pennell

June 25 I peeked inside the nestbox and found four beautiful blue eggs that became a clutch of five by June 27th.

June 29 The adult male is seen delivering mouthfuls of food to his mate inside their nestbox. She must be incubating her eggs!

July 4 The first family of bluebirds at CGOP seems healthy, except I fear that one of the four juveniles (a female) may have died, as I did a survey of all the leg bands on June 26th and could only confirm five birds. I am going to get the spotting scope out again tomorrow morning at feeding time to firm up those results, as it should be a clear sunny day here.

July 9 Four of the eggs have hatched! Ninety percent of their body mass will be reached by 10–11 days of age. They develop so fast! All this time, I've been watching the juveniles from the first brood learning to hunt, and today I witnessed them hunting for wild insects on their own at 36 days old.

July 3–17 So far this month I've been busy monitoring the progress of the family of bluebirds that remained at their



July 22, 2012: Banding day for the first Western Bluebirds to hatch on Vancouver Island since 1995.
Photo: Bill Pennell

release site (the adult pair with the three surviving fledged young and four two-week-old chicks); surveying for the other 11 bluebirds that have been released; installing, monitoring and cleaning out nestboxes that have been installed in the Cowichan Valley; meeting with local landowners that are interested in or already hosting bluebird nestboxes; and collaborating with the Cowichan Tribes First Nation to share knowledge of Western Bluebird ecology and management.



A Song Sparrow comes in to score an easy snack while an adult female and juvenile bluebird feed on mealworms provided by Julia. *Photo: Gabriel Daly*

I've seen, felt and learned so much over the past six weeks, and I'm certain the next month and a half will be just as memorable. Soon some of the translocated bluebirds may embark on a short-distance migration into the north-western U.S. to overwinter. I hope to see them back here for their next breeding season.

However adaptable Western Bluebirds seem to be to our ever-increasing presence and impact on the landscape, they are certainly not immune. We have already lost Western Bluebirds on Vancouver Island once before. Bringing them back goes hand in hand with a commitment to retain what we still have of their habitat, and to restore even more; it's a leap of faith that we as stewards of the land are ready, this time, to care for the Western Bluebird and other species depending on Garry oak and associated ecosystems. We're off to a good start. Let's keep the momentum going.

For more about the Bring Back the Bluebirds project, please see www.goert.ca/bluebird, or follow our progress on facebook (www.facebook.com/garryoakeco).

Update, August 2, 2012 The four nestlings that hatched on Vancouver Island were banded on July 22nd and fledged on July 29th. They have been seen high up in the Garry oaks at Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve, being fed by their parents and by at least one of their older siblings.

A National Marine Conservation Area is in the Works and Your Feedback is Needed

Summary of CPAWS-BC (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society BC) article by Gail Harcombe

What's New? – a National Marine Conservation Area

Parks Canada is finalizing the boundaries and other measures to create a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) in the Southern Strait of Georgia, and they are seeking public input. Your feedback will influence the outcome.

What is a National Marine Conservation Area?

A National Marine Conservation Area is a type of **marine protected area** that is managed and used in an ecologically sustainable manner to meet the needs of the present and future generations. It has the same goals as a national park – conservation, public understanding, appreciation, enjoyment – in addition to the goal of sustainable use. Activities such as commercial and recreational fishing, shipping, transportation, tourism and recreation are



Photos: Top row, Marie O'Shaughnessy. Below: Darren Copley

allowed, but are managed in a conservation-oriented manner to maintain a functioning ecosystem. Traditional food, social and ceremonial harvesting by First Nations peoples also continues in NMCA reserves.

Why is this NMCA Important?

The southern end of Georgia Strait is the most heavily utilized and affected of all the marine regions on the west coast of Canada. Known by Coast Salish peoples as "SQELATES" (meaning "home"), this body of water has long been revered for its role in nurturing both human and natural ecosystems. Home to Canada's most endangered Orcas, the area provides habitat for a vast array of marine life, but is also a source of resources, transportation and recreation for millions of humans. Currently, 22 species in the marine waters of the southern Gulf Islands are either federally designated as Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern, or considered high conservation priority by the provincial government. Increased use creates heavy stresses on the marine ecosystem.

CPAWS-BC's role

CPAWS-BC leads the Southern Strait of Georgia Marine Conservation Network - a coalition of conservancy and community groups, scientists, and stakeholders in the Southern Gulf Islands working to support and strengthen efforts to protect the marine environment – and is working to protect the marine environment by raising awareness and engaging the public to support the establishment of a NMCA.

CPAWS-BC has 4 key messages for Parks Canada and politicians:

1. The proposed north and south boundaries are good, but the large rectangular area northeast of Galiano and Valdes Islands should be added back into the NMCA.
2. The NMCA boundary should extend up to the high tide line and include important near-shore ocean habitats (e.g., areas beside provincial parks)
3. The NMCA should include a network of core "no take" areas that are fully protected.
4. Parks Canada should assume management responsibility for the entire NMCA at once, rather than phasing it in over many years.

For the complete article and to provide your feedback on why the Southern Strait of Georgia is special to you, go to <http://cpawsbc.org/campaigns/southern-strait-of-georgia>

Activities of Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO)



By Jessie Fanucchi

July 2012 saw the opening of our new migrating monitoring site at Pedder Bay Marina. This site will run in parallel with our operations at Rocky Point, but will be open to the public for visits, and will be able to take new volunteers throughout the season. The materials for the banding station were donated by Rona Home and Garden on Langford Parkway, and other materials were donated by Megapower Installations. Pedder Bay Marina has given us permission to band on their site, and have provided a trailer site for the season. Glenrosa Bed and Breakfast has housed the trailer for us during the winter. Thanks go to these local businesses for their support! Brian Pomfret has returned as bander-in-charge at Rocky Point for his third season, and Rick Schortinghuis is bander-in-charge at Pedder Bay. They are assisted by interns, Christina Lam, Andrea Follett, and Naomi Harder and many hard-working volunteers.

RPBO is extremely grateful for a generous donation from Microsoft, made possible by volunteers Megan Lyden and Sam Mann. Sam's work team at Microsoft won a major award, and as part of the award, each member was able to designate a charity or charities to receive a donation.

Megan and Sam designated RPBO as the recipient of Sam's share.

We are also grateful to VNHS members and others who gave us donations to replace the Kowa scope that was stolen in December. Kowa provided a replacement at cost – they had donated the stolen scope 18 months earlier – which the donations nicely covered.

RPBO was well represented at the North American Ornithological Conference in Vancouver in August. Several members gave poster presentations on a wide variety of bird topics.

The Hummingbird Project undertook a nest-watching survey this spring which received a lot of favourable press in the local papers.

Upcoming events include an Open House at Pedder Bay on September 8, a Juan de Fuca Pelagic trip on September 29, and a couple of bird barbecues and Northern Saw-whet Owl banding demos in late September and early October. (No, the birds don't get barbecued.) Visit rpbo.org for more information on visiting the Pedder Bay site, and to reserve your spots for these events!

Feature Bird:

Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*)

The Black-and-white Warbler is a small yet distinctive member of the wood warblers. Unlike many warblers, Black-and-white Warblers do not possess any yellow coloring. Like their name suggests, these warblers have black and white striped plumage. Males and females can be hard to distinguish from one another, with females having less contrast between their black and white plumages. Also, Black-and-white warblers have unusually long hind toes and claws on each foot. The Black-and-white Warbler is a common summer resident throughout most of the eastern and central United States and much of Canada and is a long-distance migrant. Its extensive wintering range includes most of Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean islands (West Indies and Bahamas), and northern South America. Like many warblers, Black-and-white Warblers feed on caterpillars, insects and spiders. However, these warblers are bark foragers, using their well-adapted feet to hop and creep on tree trunks looking for insects (much like nuthatches). Black-and-white Warblers build their nests on the ground, near the base of trees. Nests are open cup and usually made of dry leaves, grass, bark, and pine needles, lined with fine grasses, horsehair, and moss. They can be quite aggressive and territorial, attacking not only rivals of their own species but other species as well including nuthatches, chickadees and other warblers.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory banded its first Black-and-white Warbler this year at their MAPS site at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in Metchosin. This is a rare visitor to B.C., let alone the island, with only a handful of records to date. Getting to see such a rare bird up close is just a part of the advantages of volunteering with RPBO.

References:

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. All About Birds. http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-and-white_Warbler/lifehistory
Kricher, John C. 1995. Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*). In *The Birds of North America Online*. A. Poole, ed. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/158>



Black-and-white-Warbler: Photo: Ann Nightingale

Rocky Point Bird Observatory – Coming of Age

By Ann Nightingale

Eighteen years ago, VNHS gave “birth” to Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO), a small team of volunteers who would undertake bird migration monitoring on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. VNHS members who had been given permission to bird on Department of National Defense (DND) property at Rocky Point noticed that the fall abundance and diversity of birds at the ammunition depot was much greater than in other areas of Victoria, and let the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) know about this secret gem. CWS sent some researchers, who with the VNHS volunteers, and with the permission of DND the, established what is still the only west coast station in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network.

The primary purpose of RPBO is to monitor and study western species which are not well monitored through other programs or in other parts of Canada. These include frequently banded species such as Orange-crowned Warblers, Lincoln Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Swainson’s Thrush, Wilson’s Warbler; Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, among many others. Since beginning its bird banding program, RPBO has banded more than 50,000 migrating birds.

During the 1990s, the volunteers worked hard to develop a standardized protocol and volunteer training to establish a strong core of personnel. In 2000, the then well-established group became a registered charitable society. What had started out as a group of untrained and inexperienced volunteers had become a “real” organization, contributing valuable information to scientists, researchers and government decision-makers. The society’s bylaws set three priorities for the group:



Intern Andrea Follet and volunteers Ann Scarfe and Jo Motek admire the first Townsend’s Warbler of the season. *Photo: Ann Nightingale*

a) to contribute to conservation of migratory birds in western North America through monitoring, research and public education.

b) to work with other societies and like bodies having interests in common with this Society, within and beyond the Province of British Columbia.

c) to do all such other things as are incidental, ancillary, or conducive to the attainment of the purposes and the exercise of the powers of the Society.

Since day one, our emphasis has been primarily on monitoring, but we are starting to see a balance developing within RPBO. Since 2002, we have expanded our monitoring activities to include Northern Saw-whet owl migration with Project OwlNet, nesting bird monitoring with the Institute for Bird Populations, the hummingbird project started by Cam Finlay, and an owl nest-box project in Boardman, Oregon. In July, 2012, we opened our second fall migration monitoring site at Pedder Bay Marina.

We have assisted with several research projects, providing feather samples for DNA research and blood samples for West Nile Virus research. We remove ticks from birds and send them to Ontario for investigation of the spread of Lyme disease. We have several collaborative projects under



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development which involve respected scientists from across Canada and the US. Our volunteers, banders and board members have prepared articles for scientific journals and magazines such as *The Victoria Naturalist*, as well as posters for conferences and innumerable public presentations for community groups.

We have introduced hundreds of young scientists, naturalists and other volunteers to the techniques used to monitor bird populations. A number of our volunteers and interns have gone on to post-graduate study in ornithology or careers in biology. Since 2002, we have offered eleven bird monitoring and banding workshops and several birding courses.

Although visitors have been able to watch some of our projects in action, access to Rocky Point has been understandably restricted since the events of September 11, 2001. This lapse in our community education has come to an end with the establishment of the Pedder Bay site, where we will be developing a variety of public education options. We welcome visitors of all ages, including school groups, at this site. Check out our website (rpbo.org) for details.

When you look at RPBO's accomplishments over the years, it may surprise you to learn that all of this has only been possible because of the amazing volunteers that have committed their time and energy into making RPBO a success. Since 1999, RPBO has hired a bander-in-charge for its fall migration program, and since 2006, we've been able to hire an intern with funding support from Environment Canada's Science Horizons program. Occasionally, we've had enough in the bank to pay a bander-in-charge for some of our other projects, but the majority of work – more than 5000 hours every year – is done by volunteers.

Looking forward, RPBO is developing its first official strategic plan. We have lofty goals, and will need to recruit more volunteers and get a whole lot better at fundraising to accomplish them. One thing is clear—everyone involved with RPBO is committed to ensuring the long-term future of the organization. We have several research projects lined up which will incur lab costs and other expenses. We are at the stage where we are going to seriously consider hiring an administrator to keep track of all of the projects, deadlines and be something of a whip-cracker to ensure that everything gets done.

We are incredibly grateful to VNHS and CWS for giving us our start and to the Department of National Defense, CRD Parks, Madrona Farm (TLC), Pedder Bay Marina, and several property owners for permission to band birds on their properties. However, for the long-term survival of RPBO, we need to think about somehow acquiring an appropriate property or obtaining a covenant on a property owned by someone else which will allow us to continue monitoring indefinitely. While this isn't urgent, we recognize that it will be a significant step for us to take.

We're through our awkward teenage years and moving into organizational adulthood with anticipation and excitement, and just a little trepidation. We know that it's going to take a lot of work, and a lot of it is going on right now. We have several events, including an open house and a couple of fundraising bird barbecues (no, not what you are thinking!) planned for September and October, and are happily accepting new volunteers for our Pedder Bay site. If you would like to be a part of RPBO's future, please visit us at rpbo.org or contact Ann Nightingale or Michael Simmons at rpbo@rpbo.org or you can reach Ann by phone at 250-652-6450 or Michael at 250-665-6414.

Chef Survival Challenge – The VNHS is participating again this year!

By Nathalie Chambers and Claudia Copley

Warning: The Chef Survival Challenge is hilarious and if you are shy about releasing deeply repressed or eruptive laughter accentuated with loud snorting in public our suggestion is to seek help before you attend this event. If that doesn't work you could try wearing sunglasses, bring friends who already know about your issues, or come alone. If you are still feeling uncomfortable, dress in disguise so people you don't know won't recognize you. Mind you, it is a small town, but whatever you do, don't miss this event. It is good for the heart!

Imagine the hottest chefs in Victoria, the very sight of them is like the ringing of Pavlov's bell, your

tummy will start to grumble and growl, there will be an excess of saliva in your mouth. Dreams of fine dining in your favourite restaurant dance like sugar plums in your head.

It's show time. The cheering begins. Get ready, most people have never experienced anything like it – suddenly out of nowhere you hear the Sylvester Stallone's *Rocky* theme song and see the chefs make their descent to the stage for introductions, but wait: where are their whites? These chefs are dressed in Survivor gear and after braving the obstacle course and muddy terrain will change into the proper chef attire.

Two weeks prior to this event the chefs are given a list

of potential available vegetables growing on the slopes at Madrona Farm, but they have no idea where the vegetables are planted. One mistaken vegetable location could literally wind the chef and drain the energy resources needed to complete the task.

This is serious. The potato gun is fired and off they go.

The farm-style obstacle course includes haystack hurdles, climbing wall, balance beam over the bottomless mud pit, zip-line, irrigation pipe crawl, tire course and the legendary boat race out to Condiment Island to gather their condiment bags (a real crowd pleaser).

Since this is a game of survival, chefs are only allowed to bring two bags: one with their favourite knife, cutting board, pot and pan, and the other bag with their condiments. The protein of their choice is stored in a cooler in their cooking tent. The goal here is minimal. Remember it *is* survival.

During the foraging, spectators can watch the chefs, enjoy the delicious feast that is included in the price of the event, and have a wine or beer in a beautifully bucolic and blissful environment while chatting with friends and listening to music.

After the chefs have finished picking their vegetables and have cleaned up, the atmosphere changes and turns into an open-air cooking demonstration. Get up-close and personal with your favourite chefs. It's a foodies dream. Watch them work their magic and taste their masterpieces by being the highest bidder in the live auction. The winner of this competition is not the fastest in the obstacle course, but the chef who receives the highest bid on their delicious work of art.

The winning chef is the first to display the Golden Broccoli Trophy in their restaurant, and all of the Chefs get a chance to have the trophy in their restaurant over the year. Their names are all plated in gold on the trophy. The reason why these chefs are the finest the City has to offer is because they insist upon local sustainable produce for their restaurants. It is their signature, their claim to fame. They participate in this event to demonstrate their dedication to these local ingredients, the importance of farmland conservation and education to make people aware of it, and to the future sustainability of their industry.

This event is targeted at EATERS. Since we all have to eat, this issue and event concerns us all. Everyone has or had a connection to a farm, sometimes sweet, sometimes sweaty, and usually always dirty, but a really important part of who we are. Sometimes farming skips a generation, sometimes the memory is contained within our cells, our ancestors, the connection can be traced to the Tigris/Euphrates delta back to the origin of our species. Whatever your particular scenario, attending the Chef Survival Challenge event will reconnect you to the farm in your heart, and put you in touch with who you are and where your food comes from in a wonderful carefree day among fellow EATERS. It may just be the most amusing and tastiest day of your life!

5th Annual Chef Survival Challenge

Date: Sunday, September 30, 2012 – The Harvest Moon

Location: Madrona Farm, 4317 Blenkinsop Road

Time: 12-5 (gates open at 11:30)

Tickets: \$40 for adults and \$100 for Families (2 adults, up to 2 children under 12 years) (\$15 per additional child)

Available through VNHS board members and at VNHS evening presentations and events like the Hawkwatch BBQ. The VNHS gets half of the proceeds of the tickets we sell, so buy them from us and support our conservation work in addition to farmland conservation. Tickets also available at the Madrona Farm Gate (4317 Blenkinsop Road, Wednesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.) and online at chefsurvivalchallenge.com.

THE 5TH ANNUAL CHEF SURVIVAL CHALLENGE AND FEAST

MADRONA FARM 30. SEPT. 2012



VICTORIA OLYMPIANS TEAM UP WITH OUR HOTTEST CHEFS TO COMPLETE A CHALLENGING OBSTACLE COURSE, FORAGE FOR VEGETABLES AND CREATE CULINARY MASTERPIECES.
100% OF NET PROCEEDS TO FARMLAND CONSERVATION & EDUCATION

INCLUDES BBQ FEAST AND THE CHANCE TO BID ON CHEFS' MASTERPIECES
KIDS TENT, FACE PAINTING, STORY TELLING, MORE!
SUNDAY NOON-5PM
GATES OPEN 11:30AM
ADULTS \$40, FAMILY \$100*
TICKETS 24/7 AT
CHEFSURVIVALCHALLENGE.COM
OR AT MADRONA FARM GATE
4317 BLENKINSOP RD VICTORIA

*UP TO 2 CHILDREN UNDER 12 - \$15 PER ADDITIONAL CHILD



ALANIS BIRN

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Year-round Tuesday Morning Birding Group

Meets Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. Birding activities take place at various locations around Greater Victoria. For more information call Bill Dancer at 250-721-5273 for more information.

Saturday Morning Birding Group

Meets every Saturday morning - Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting 8:00 a.m., depending on sunrise, rain or shine. For more details, call Rick at 250-885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory

Upcoming events include an Open House at Pedder Bay on September 8, a Juan de Fuca Pelagic trip on September 29, and a couple of bird barbecues and Northern Saw-whet Owl banding demos in late September and early October. Visit <http://rpbo.org> for more information on visiting the Pedder Bay site, and to reserve your spots for these events!

Photography workshops

More Nature Photography Workshops with Mikhail Belikov are coming up: Basic and advanced photographic techniques, how to photograph subjects in nature, working with digital image files and more. For additional information and schedules, please visit www.focusonwild.com after September 15 and check for an announcement in the next issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*.

Play Again Film

HAT and Open Cinema will be hosting a screening of Play Again this November. View the trailer at www.playagain.com, and watch for the announcement from Open Cinema. Hope to see you there!

Volunteer opportunities

Members are always welcome to help staff our displays at events. Contact Darren Copley if you are interested in helping VNHS at events (or in any other way) 250-479-6622, dccopley@teuls.net

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.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday, September 4

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Saturday, September 8

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Saturday, September 8

NON-VNHS EVENT

Rocky Point Bird Observatory Open House

For years, RPBO has been something of a mystery because of restricted access to Rocky Point. Visitors are now welcome at their new publicly accessible banding operation at Pedder Bay Marina. Park in the main parking lot and follow the signs to the event. We'll demonstrate how and why we catch and band birds, what we are learning, and how you can help conserve birds in your own neighbourhoods. The open house will run from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Everyone welcome! For more information, visit <http://rpbo.org>.

Sunday, September 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Mystery Palaeontology Field Trip

Tom Cockburn of the Victoria Palaeontology Society (www.vicpalaeo.org) has once again agreed to take us on an outing. Palaeontology is the study of fossils and Tom will take us to an area where we will learn something about the ancient history of this area by examining remnants of ancient times. Previously we went with him to explore the fossils at Muir Creek. Final details of the outing were not available at press time. We will probably meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 10:00 a.m. to carpool. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634 after September 2 for final details.

Tuesday, September 11

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Tuesday, September 11

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

Flower designs and How Native Bees Work in Concert With Them – Pick me, Pick me!

Join **Gord Hutchings** for this talk about how nectar-seeking insects and flowers have co-evolved to become highly dependent on one another. While most evolutionary processes involve direct adaptations of a single species, with bees and flowers the evolutionary process involves two interlinked species. How flowers have adapted to ensure the visitation by bees and how bees have adapted to ensure the survival of flowers is a fascinating example of co-evolution. Learn about the over 450 different species of native bees in BC and Yukon, their habitat, nesting requirements and their unique lifestyles and biology. 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, September 15

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Saturday, September 15 and Sunday September 16

EVENT

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers to get out their field guides! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 250-544-0455.

Sunday, September 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding, 9.30 a.m.

We have hired a boat (the Fantasea II) to go from Victoria Harbour out into the Juan De Fuca Strait and to Race Rocks to find some of the pelagic species that feed there. We will follow the tide debris line that occurs between Victoria and Race Rocks as the currents cause an upwelling of nutrients from the bottom, resulting in the best feeding spots for the birds. Possible birds include shearwaters, murrelets, auklets, jaegers, Northern Fulmar, many species of gulls, phalaropes, and other pelagics. Sea mammals, including whales, are also possibilities. There is room for 20 people; the cost is \$65.00 (including HST) per person for VNHS members, \$85 for non-members, for a 5 hour

trip (9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.). You must pre-pay on the VNHS website or by cheque to VNHS, and pre-register by phoning **Ann Nightingale** at 250-652-6450 or emailing her at matmot@shaw.ca. See more details about the trip at <http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html>.

Tuesday, September 18

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Tuesday, September 18

BOTANY NIGHT

Blooms at the Blitz

In May 2012, the Metchosin Biodiversity Project held its second BioBlitz. Among the 1200 Metchosin organisms found in the two blitzes are over 500 plants. **Kem Luther, Andy MacKinnon, and Moralea Milne** will present some highlights from the VNHS-sponsored event. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Admission is free and everybody is welcome. Bring a friend!

Saturday, September 22

Hawk Watch (Special Drop-in Event) - CRD Parks East Sooke Regional Park, Victoria, 11am - 3pm

The raptor spectacular is underway! Join birding enthusiasts from the Victoria Natural History Society, as well as staff from Pacific Northwest Raptors who will be bringing live raptors. Displays and activities will take place in the field at Aylard Farm and experts with spotting scopes will be at the viewpoint above Beechey Head until 3 p.m. The hike up to the viewpoint requires that you wear sturdy footwear and be prepared for a 20-minute hike up a steep and rocky trail. Bring your binoculars and/or a scope, water and a lunch. Bring a lawnchair.

Saturday, September 22

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Come to Hawk Watch!

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Sunday, September 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Discover Charters River

Join **Rosemary & Sid Jorna** of the Juan de Fuca Community Trails Society who will take us on a hike around the CRD Charters River property, followed by a guided tour of the new Charters River Salmon Interpretive Centre completed last year. The habitat in the area is amazingly diverse and interesting from a natural history standpoint even this late in the year. This piece of land was acquired fairly recently by the CRD, courtesy of a donation by an anonymous donor. It is a valuable piece of the land which fits in with the regional Green/Blue Spaces strategy (see background at http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/documents/greenblue_spaces_strategy.pdf). After the hike, we will learn about how members of the Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society (see <http://salmonforsooke.com>) have lent their expertise to create the Salmon Interpretive Centre. Bring your lunch which we can eat between the hike and the guided tour. A suggested donation of \$5.00 or more to the Interpretive Centre would be a nice gesture. Dress for the weather. Wear

sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a hiking stick. To reach Charters River, go out Sooke Rd and turn right on to Sooke River Rd just before the Sooke River bridge. We will meet at the parking lot just to the right after the Charters River bridge on the Sooke River Rd at 10:00 a.m. No pets please. Contact **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Monday, September 24

MARINE NIGHT

Climate Change Fore and Aft: Where on Earth Are We Going?

Dr. Tom Pedersen, Professor, and Director of the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions at UVic will speak about his research on the oceanographic history of the western margin of North America. What can be learned about past climate change from chemical records stored in sedimentary marine deposits? We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria.

Tuesday, September 25

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Wednesday September 26

BIRDERS NIGHT

The Secret Life of Hummingbirds Up Close

Join **Eric Pittman** for this presentation with rarely seen video footage of hummingbirds gathered during years of research and observation. Eric has filmed more than 20 different hummingbird nests from egg to flight in HD video. Universities have used his video as the core of studies on the habits and behaviour of these elusive birds. During the thousands of hours of footage, he has captured unique scenes such as nest building, hatching, fledging, learning to eat, fighting a caterpillar and even resting on his finger. 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, September 29

NON-VNHS EVENT

Rocky Point Bird Observatory Bird Barbecue and Owl Banding Demo

Join RPBO at the gazebo above Pedder Bay Marina for a fun fundraising barbecue (no birds will be barbecued), slide presentation, and with weather and owls cooperating, an owl banding demonstration. The barbecue will begin at 5 pm, and the evening should wrap up around 9 pm. Park in the main parking lot and go up the stairs near the marina building to the gazebo. Tickets must be purchased in advance as attendance is limited to 20 people. For more information, please see <http://rpbo.org/barbecue.html>.

Saturday, September 29

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Sunday, September 30

CHEF CHALLENGE AT MADRONA

5th Annual Chef Survival Challenge – Quest for the Golden Broccoli

Event details: Location: Madrona Farm, 4317 Blenkinsop Road

Time 12-5 (gates open at 11:30). Tickets are \$40 for adults and \$100 for Families (2 adults, up to 2 children under 12 years) (\$15 per additional child) Available through VNHS board members and at VNHS evening presentations and events like the Hawk Watch BBQ. The VNHS gets half of the proceeds of the tickets we sell, so buy them from us and support our conservation work in addition to farmland conservation. Tickets also available at the Madrona Farm Gate (4317 Blenkinsop Road Wednesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.) and online at chefsurvivalchallenge.com.

OCTOBER

Tuesday, October 2

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Saturday, October 6

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Saturday, October 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding, 9.30 a.m.

See September 16 for details. You must pre-pay on the VNHS website or by cheque to VNHS, and pre-register by phoning **Ann Nightingale** at 250-652-6450 or emailing her at motmot@shaw.ca. See more details about the trip at <http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html>.

Saturday, October 6

NON-VNHS EVENT

Rocky Point Bird Observatory Bird Barbecue and Owl Banding Demo

See September 29 for details. Tickets must be purchased in advance as attendance is limited to 20 people. For more information, please see <http://rpbo.org/barbecue.html>

Tuesday, October 9

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Tuesday, October 9

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

First Nations Wool Dog

Elaine Humphrey was brought a Coast Salish blanket from the mid 1800s and asked to identify the material by microscopy. It turned out to be made from mountain goat hair and the now extinct wool dog. This initial study exploded to an exciting collaboration between scientists, museum curators, historians and many Coast Salish people interested in learning more about their heritage. Many oral stories have been confirmed through electron and light microscopy. Join Elaine as she talks about how a simple question of "what is this blanket made of" lead to connections with the Coast Salish people and Peruvian textiles, museums around the world and lost blankets of exquisite

workmanship found and restored, and how a valuable dog lost its way. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building.

Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Bio: Elaine Humphrey was trained as a Biological Oceanographer. During her PhD working on marine snails that bore holes in oysters, she was introduced to electron microscopy. Marine Biology is cool but electron microscopy is way cool. Put the two together and she is in heaven. Her world got very much bigger since she began running an electron microscopy facility that catered to every field. Her world got very much smaller when she was invited to run the new electron microscopy facility at the University of Victoria which houses the highest resolution microscope in the world and can look at subatomic worlds.

Saturday, October 13

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Sunday, October 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Elk/Beaver Lake Big Trees

Tucked away in the southwest corner of Elk/Beaver Lake Park are a few large old growth trees that not many people even realize are there. This outing will investigate this corner of the park looking at the big trees and enjoying the signs of fall. We'll check out seeds, berries and other indicators that summer has passed. It's a great chance to see what native plants are evergreen if you are planting native plants in your garden. To reach the starting spot, go north along West Saanich Rd. and turn right on to Beaver Lake Rd. After you enter the park, turn left when you see the sign "Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park Beaver Lake Ponds". Continue past the barn on your right. The parking lot is after the sign "Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Centre". Park only on the right-hand side of the lot. Meet at the far end of the parking lot at 10:00 a.m. No pets please. Dress for the weather. Hiking boots and a stick will help you safely traverse the occasionally rough terrain as we will not necessarily be on groomed trails. Bring a snack and something to drink. For more information, contact Agnes at 'thelynns at shaw.ca' or 250-721-0634.

Tuesday, October 16

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Tuesday, October 16

BOTANY NIGHT

On the Line

This film has been made by **Frank Wolf** and it presents the environmental issues across the entire length of the Northern Gateway Pipeline proposed area. Frank has travelled (bicycled, walked and canoed) the entire distance. It also presents the issues to be met by tankers on the coast. Admission is free and everybody is welcome. Bring a friend! Please, **note the LOCATION CHANGE: University of Victoria, Bob Wright Centre, Room A104.** 7:30 p.m. Parking is just across the Ring Road behind the Bev Glover Greenhouse Facility (the first parking lot on your right, if you come from downtown Victoria).

Note: UVIC parking fee is \$2.25 for the whole evening, but it may go up in the fall.

Saturday, October 20

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Saturday, October 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding

See September 16 for details. You must pre-pay on the VNHS website or by cheque to VNHS and pre-register by phoning **Ann Nightingale** at 250-652-6450 or emailing her at tomtom@shaw.ca. See more details about the trip at <http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html>

Tuesday, October 23

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Wednesday October 24

BIRDERS NIGHT

Tropical Travels

Since photographer **Glenn Bartley** last spoke for the VNHS he has spent considerable time in the New World Tropics. Join us tonight while Glenn shares a few new stories and photos from recent trips to Peru, Costa Rica and Ecuador. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug. **Bio:** Glenn Bartley is a professional nature photographer and author who focuses on creating images of birds in their natural habitat. He resides right here in Victoria. To see more of Glenn's images or find out how you can join Glenn on an instructional Photo Life Workshop, visit: www.glennbartley.com <http://www.glennbartley.com/>.

Saturday, October 27

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check 'Rare Bird Alert' on the Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

Sunday, October 28

NON-VNHS EVENT

South Vancouver Island Mycological Society Annual Mushroom Show

A fungophile extravaganza: information, displays, experts on hand – amazing! Swan Lake Nature House, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. All welcome.

Monday, October 29

MARINE NIGHT

Dining by the Glow of Bioluminescence

James Clowater, ornithologist, naturalist and Birder's Night coordinator, will describe the nocturnal foraging strategy of the Western Grebe, based on his own research in Saanich Inlet. We meet at 7:30 pm in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria.



Join us for this year's Hawk Watch: 22 September, 2012. BBQ Social afterwards for VNHS Members! RSVP by September 20 (see page 11). *Photo: Hawk Watch 2011 by Claudia Copley*