The Victoria NATURALIST

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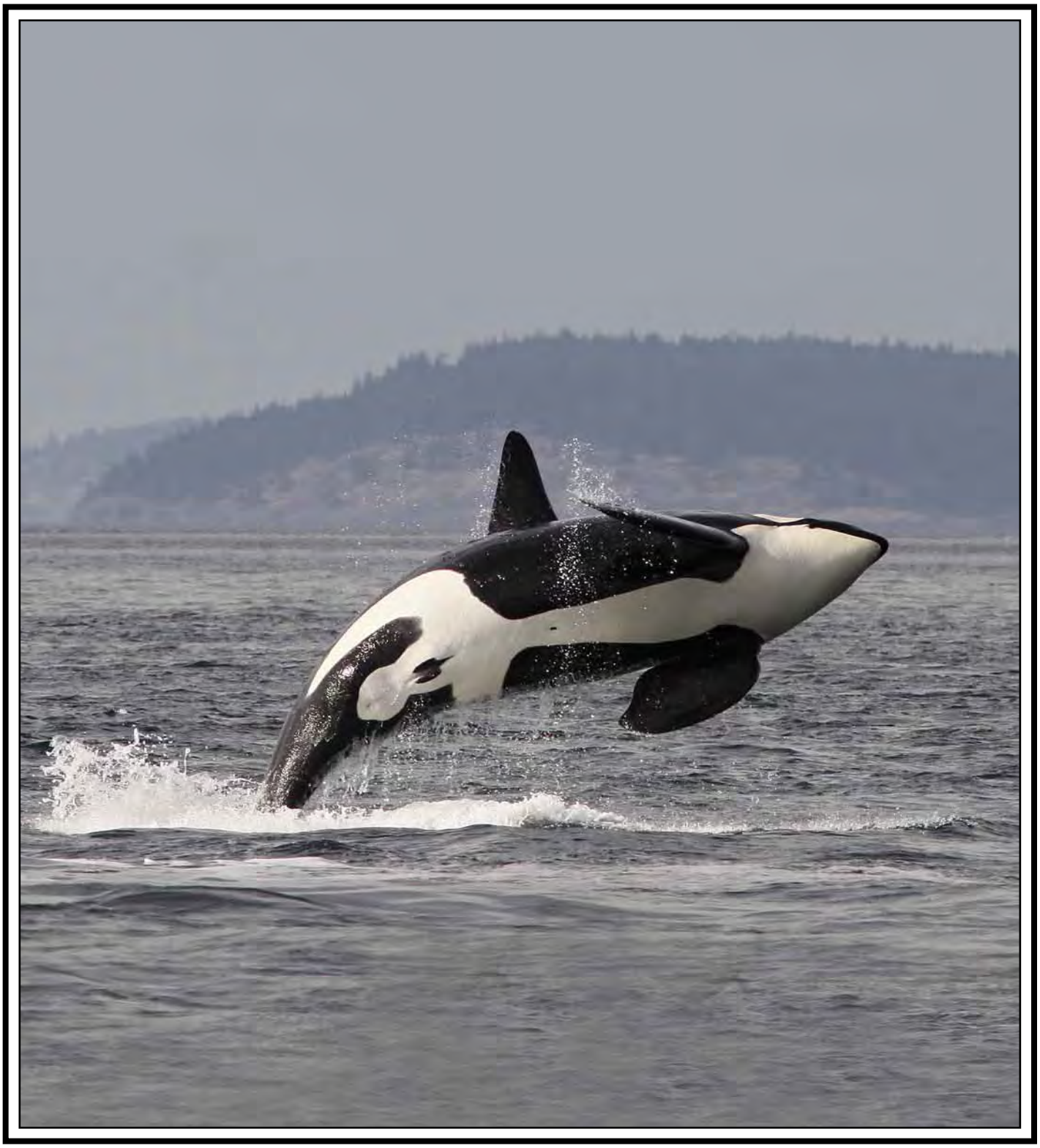

The Victoria NATURALIST

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Contents

COVER PHOTO by Marie O'Shaughnessy
Male Orca breaching.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

In recent weeks, "Citizen Science" has been mentioned in newspapers, on the web, and in conversations I have had with friends and colleagues. Coincidently, I have been lucky enough to spend a fair amount of time with my grandchildren, including the newest one, a grandson, born mid-June, and it is not as much of a stretch to connect these two seemingly very different topics as you might think.

Citizen science is the gathering of vast amounts of scientific data by ordinary people; naturalists who share their observations are considered citizen scientists. As governments cut back on professional staff time in the field, citizen scientists play an increasing role. Data collection is increased and the involvement of private citizens can also open possibilities for biodiversity monitoring in areas challenging for professional surveys, such as private lands and urban and suburban areas. One of the greatest benefits could be that the enormous amount of data collected on species and their habitats can assist in identifying threats to biodiversity and detecting trends over time. And, once in a while, something new is discovered (one of our current members was recently entering journal entries from a Guatemala trip that resulted in a new bird record for the country)!

For the past five years, numerous biologists and naturalists have been performing fieldwork contributing to projects such as the Breeding Bird Atlas of BC and MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship). Bird observatories like Rocky Point and Pedder Bay, and even a fun event like Hawk Watch, result in collection of useful data. Christmas Bird Counts (probably one of the oldest examples of citizen science), and more recently Bioblitzs, contribute immensely to the knowledge we have.

Provincial data systems, like E-Flora BC, E-Fauna BC, Reptiles of BC, and BC Frogwatch, and systems that go beyond provincial boundaries, including iNaturalist and eBird, capture and use the data from citizen scientists. Concerns regarding data quality of citizen-collected biodiversity data can be somewhat alleviated by the use of standardized approaches and further allayed by the fact that observations are monitored by knowledgeable experts and verified against known species ranges. The advent of digital cameras has resulted in photographic evidence of many new records, making it easier to verify these records.

And here is the connection to grandkids...the contributions of citizen scientists to the knowledge base makes a real difference, directly affecting the conservation actions we take now and in the future. Increasing our understanding of what we have now, and of how things are changing (how threats such as habitat loss, invasive species, and urban sprawl are affecting biodiversity), will help improve the effectiveness of our actions and hopefully give future generations a greater chance of having a wonderfully diverse natural world to experience and enjoy.

Gail Harcombe

President's Message

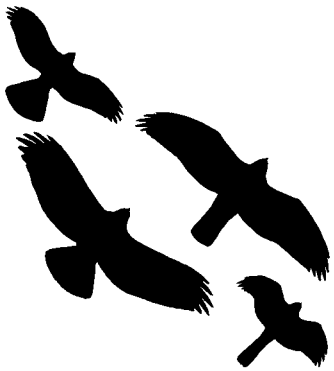
It is summer fieldwork season as I write this. We're heading back to the Rocky Mountain National Parks after another Whistler Bioblitz. We did an earlier trip in June: "The Last Chance to See Site C" – sampling the flood zone of the Site C dam for invertebrates. These collections may end up being the last time some species are recorded from that area, and for some species it may be the first AND last time, since invertebrates are still relatively under-sampled overall. I'm sure it is not difficult for you to imagine how I feel about that. Now that I have seen what remains of the magnificent Peace River I am even more committed to the idea of further damming being dropped entirely.

On a more pleasant note, book sales of VNHS' *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region* are going well. They are available on the ferries, and we sell them at every event. So far approximately 1300 copies have been sold, and this fall we will ensure that all Victoria area schools are given a free copy for their libraries. It is a great way to encourage others to learn more about the regional flora and fauna, promote the Society, and we will use any royalties generated from the sale of the book to do further conservation and education work.

It seems like forever ago now, but your Society again co-hosted an International Migratory Bird Day with CRD Parks and Rocky Point Bird Observatory in May. We had a smaller turnout than in the previous year, but participants seemed to stay quite a long time and really explore the event's activities. Next year we are considering moving it to Beaver Beach to access more of the walk-by traffic. Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park is among the busiest of the CRD parks: all those dog-walkers and joggers. Hopefully some will stop and learn about birds!

Don't forget about our annual Hawkwatch and BBQ Social out at East Sooke Park on September 28th. This is a time to socialize, eat, and watch birds – What could be better? RSVP with your food preference, bring along a lawnchair, and put in a request for sunny weather: the best guarantee for seeing hundreds of migrating Turkey Vultures.

By now you know that the Victoria Natural History Society has agreed to co-host the Annual General Meeting of BC Nature, our provincial-level umbrella group, with the Rocky Point Bird Observatory from May 1-4, 2014. Harbour Towers is the venue, the theme is Coastal Connections, and the organizing is in progress. We want to see you there too – it is the 70th anniversary of the Society and the 20th anniversary of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory: a time to celebrate!



VNHS September Social

Saturday September 28, 3:00 p.m.

following Hawk Watch

You are invited!

Join CRD Regional Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for Hawk Watch and then join your fellow VNHS members for a BBQ get-together at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Park. Members are welcome to a free smokie (veggie option available), beverage, cake, and camaraderie! To RSVP email or phone Ken: 250-658-6115, ksohm@live.com before September 20. Bring a lawn chair.

Life on Top of Our Light Fixture

By Joy and Cam Finlay

Photos: Ann Nightingale

And they were off! Four newly-fledged Pacific-slope Flycatchers took to the adjacent Ocean Spray flowering bushes just after dawn this morning (July 4).

In mid-June, we returned from a 13 day trip to Ottawa and outside the kitchen door to our deck, we noted something on top of the light fixture above the door. Stepping on a stool and holding a mirror, we found a beautiful moss bowl-nest containing three eggs, buff-coloured with brown splotches. We predicted that if there was a fourth egg next morning we'd see the adults and incubation would begin. We supposed the birds chose this site not knowing anyone else lived here. Sure enough, the adult was on the nest next morning. When it left the nest we recognised it as a flycatcher. What species? The slight eye ring and two light-coloured wing bars narrowed it down. Our bird books did not help that much as there were several flycatchers. In *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by John K. Terres, we found nest descriptions. The Pacific-slope Flycatcher "…nests among roots of upturned trees, in piles of driftwood...under eaves on beams of unoccupied buildings, under bridges," etc. That clinched it. We blocked off the stairs to the deck, and locked the kitchen deck door. The next morning, there were 4 eggs. Again checking, our reference stated that incubation took 14 days.

On June 19 (15 days after incubation began) we did the mirror check and there were four bean-size pink chicks and a half egg shell on the deck floor below the nest. Also on this day a second flycatcher, presumably the male, appeared. Up to that time there was only one bird and she spent almost all her time on the nest. Once the chicks were hatched and she left to feed, the male would fly in to sit on the railing until she came back. He then took off and would return shortly with something and fly up to the nest to drop his beak down into the cup. Both birds fed the young with what appeared to be small moths or butterflies – you could see the wings sticking outside the bill. We watched as the parents foraged among the leaves of the Ocean Spray – sometimes they would be out and snap something in the air then return to sit on the deck railing or a nearby branch. The book stated that "More than 38% of animal food is Hymenoptera (ants, bees, wasps), also eats many beetles, moths, caterpillars, flies (about 31% of animal food), also some berries and seeds."

Soon after the chicks hatched, Ann Nightingale came over and using the mirror, photographed the chicks. Later she took a picture of the female at the nest.

With the chicks in the nest and two very active parents feeding, we were careful when friends came to see our new family. Each time people arrived, we waited until both parents were away and quickly let visitors slip over, take a mirror check and then get away. Feeding, which began each morning after the temperature rose a few degrees, continued up to late afternoon. Then as dusk arrived, activity ceased.

The evening of July 3 (14 days after hatching), the nest was chock full of four nestlings. Then this morning, shortly after sunrise on the 15th day the nest was empty! Two days later we heard the adults call and then saw both flitting in low bushes nearby.

Butterflies of the Victoria Area: A Photo Essay

By Val George

Photos by author

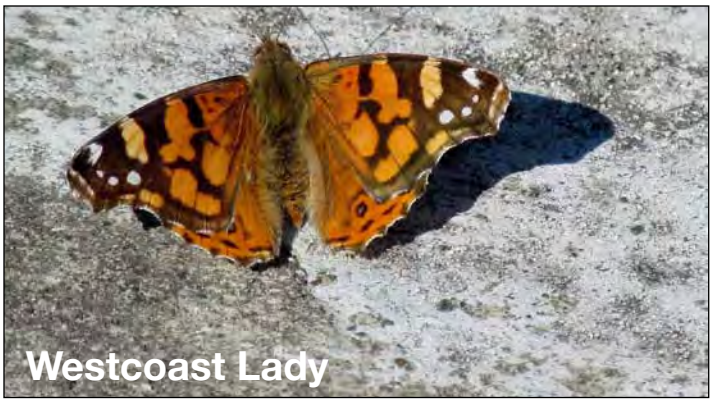
This isn't going to be a technical article – the butterfly experts can write that type of article. What motivated me to do this photo essay is that a number of our less common butterflies have obligingly cooperated for their portraits when I've been out on my bird and flower expeditions this year. Following is a sample of the results, together with a selection of a few of the more common butterflies that occur in the southern part of Vancouver Island. The photos are presented in more-or-less the order in which these butterflies usually appear throughout the spring and summer.

It's been a good year for Mourning Cloaks (*Nymphalis antiopa*), one of our more conspicuous butterflies with its richly-coloured dark maroon wings edged with light yellow. This species overwinters as an adult insect, so the butterflies begin to appear in spring as soon as the weather warms enough for them to fly.

The Satyr Comma (*Polygonia satyrus*) is another species that overwinters as an adult butterfly. Satyr Commas were also quite common this year.

Elfins are small brown butterflies, so often they go unnoticed except by butterfly enthusiasts who specifically look for them. Moss's Elfins (*Callophrys mossii*) are also rather uncommon and occur in only a few locations. I photographed this one at Cowichan Station along the railway tracks, an excellent location for butterflies generally.

Most of the abundant little blue butterflies we see are Western Spring Azures (*Celastrina echo*). However, careful examination of them will sometimes reveal a different species, like this pretty little Grey Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus*). This is a grey-blue butterfly with large orange spots on both the upper and lower sides of its lower wings.



The Westcoast Lady (*Vanessa annabella*) is one of our less common butterflies on Vancouver Island. This one is sunning itself on the concrete roof of the reservoir at the top of Mt. Tolmie, a good place to look for this and the more common and similarly coloured Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*); both are patterned orange or pink-orange with black markings.

I was fortunate enough to catch this California Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis californica*) sunning itself on a warm day in May. This is another of our less common butterflies.

Our most spectacular butterflies are the swallowtails. Three species occur regularly in the Victoria area: Western Tiger (*Papilio rutulus*), Anise (*Papilio zelicaon*), and this Pale Swallowtail (*Papilio eurymedon*). As its name implies, this species has the palest background colour on its wings – in fact, white – as opposed to the bright yellow of the other two.

Not all the white butterflies we see on Vancouver Island are Cabbage Whites (*Pieris rapae*), introduced, presumably accidentally, from Europe in the mid-19th century. The ones that appear in July and August flying high in the Douglas Firs and pines where they lay their eggs are Pine Whites (*Neophasia menapia*). They do occasionally come down to ground level to nectar, as this one is doing.

Activities of Rocky Point Bird Observatory

By Jessie Fanucchi

The field season is well under way at Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Our Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship program wraps up August 4th. For the second year we are running a program at Madrona Farm in Saanich. This is an amazing site for birds despite its small size and active farming. This year has produced good numbers of Orange-crowned Warblers, House Finches, and Rufous Hummingbirds. We thank Natalie and Dave Chambers for the continued support of this project. Now in its 5th year, our second MAPS site is located at Witty's Lagoon. This site supports a good number of Rufous Hummingbirds, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Song Sparrows. This year also marks our 10th year of participating in the MAPS program. In addition to Witty's Lagoon and Madrona, previous MAPS sites have included Rocky Point and Royal Roads University.

The fall migration monitoring program kicked off spectacularly this year on July 21st. Once again this year we are running simultaneous 90 day programs on the Department of National Defence property at Rocky Point and also at Pedder Bay Marina. After a full day of banding on the 21st, board members, volunteers, major donors, and other distinguished guests welcomed the Lieutenant Governor, The Honourable Judith Guichon, to our banding program at Pedder Bay Marina. The Lieutenant Governor is the representative of Her Majesty the Queen in British

Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon (left) holding Wilson's Warbler, watched by Ann Nightingale. *Photo*: Chantal Jacques

Columbia. Her Honour received a tour of our banding station, and learned about our history and RPBO's current projects. She was shown our nets and, luckily, was able to observe the extraction and banding of a Wilson's Warbler. After the tour, a reception at the Pedder Bay gazebo was held. The Lieutenant Governor joined volunteers for a speech from co-president Ann Nightingale, followed by remarks from Her Honour, after which she was given gifts on behalf of RPBO: a copy of volunteer Glenn Bartley's Birds of Vancouver Island and an Adopt-A-Bird certificate for the Wilson's Warbler she released that day. The day ended with conversation, mingling, and cake! Rocky Point Bird Observatory is proud to have The Honourable Judith Guichon as our honorary patron. We look forward to keeping her updated on all the activities of RPBO! Special thanks go to the following people: Martin Paish, general manager of Pedder Bay Marina, Ann Porter, Sheila Henly, Colleen and Rob Malatest, Jane Hammond, Jo Mitchell, Maureen Grant, Stacey Hrushowy, Ann Nightingale, Michael Simmons, Rick Schortinghuis, Brian Pomfret, Marianne Dawson, Ann Scarfe, Chantal Jacques, Christian Kelly, Misha Warbanski, John Costello, Gail Harcombe, Mary Robichaud, Cheryl Mackie, Marilyn Lambert, Donna Ross, and Jessie Fanucchi.

Feature Bird

Wilson's Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*)

The Wilson's Warbler is one of the most abundant warblers found during fall migration in the Victoria area. Wilson's Warblers have a striking bright yellow head and breast, with slightly duller olive back, tail, and wings. The distinct black cap found in both sexes (though significantly less prominent in females), is the key to identifying this species. Wilson's Warblers are insect gleaners, spending their time in the tree tops and shrubs searching for insects and occasionally flycatching. Outside of Victoria, Wilson's Warblers can be found as far north as Alaska and the Yukon, as far east as Newfoundland in the summer breeding season and as far south as Central America in the winter.

Wilson's Warblers breed in the Victoria area. They prefer shrub thickets of riparian habitats, edges of beaver ponds, lakes, bogs, and overgrown clear-cuts of mountain and boreal forests during this time. Their nests are usually placed on the ground at the base of or low in shrubs or under grass bunches. The nests are bowl-shaped, made of vegetation, and lined with grass or hair. They can lay 2-7 eggs, which are off-white with fine reddish spots.

Wilson's Warblers are one of the most numerous birds caught at Rocky Point. Over 280 individuals were banded in 2012 and 340 in 2011. The majority of these individuals were hatch year-aged birds (~90%). The large number of individuals banded at our stations gives banders and volunteers a great opportunity to see the variation in age and sex of this beautiful little bird.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Nd. All About Birds: Wilson's Warbler. Available: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/wilsons_warbler/id Accessed: July 30, 2013.

Pomfret, B. 2012. Migration Monitoring at Rocky Point Bird Observatory Fall 2012. Available: http://rpbo.org/reports/migf_2012_rpad.pdf Accessed: July 30, 2013.

Pomfret, B. 2011. Migration Monitoring at Rocky Point Bird Observatory Fall 2011. Available: http://rpbo.org/reports/migf_2011_rpad.pdf Accessed: July 30, 2013.

Wilson's Warbler. *Photo*: Acacia Spencer-Hills

Hat Tricks

Counting Trees

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Habitat Acquistion Trust (HAT)

When a tree falls in the city, does anybody hear it? HAT wanted to learn about how our land cover in the Capital region is changing, and in particular how much tree cover we were losing as our population continues to grow. We expected change, but we found the scale and speed of change astonishing.

We care about trees because they play a critical role in our environment and are enormously beneficial to wildlife, people, and our global environment. They provide food, shelter, clean the air, trap rainwater, and provide peace of mind. They increase our property values, reduce our stress, and offer the joy of discovery to young and old alike. However, trees are long-lived, and even the fastest growing species take years to reach significant size. Yet despite their virtues and the need for long-range thinking to conserve trees, they are falling at a rapid pace.

To map changes in our region, HAT used orthophotography provided by the CRD from 2005 and 2011. Every square metre of the region was mapped and assigned one of 17 categories, such as treed, impervious surface, agricultural land, and exposed soil. By comparing the results from the two years, we were able to map changes in land cover.

In that six year span, we found that our region lost over 2500 acres of tree cover – an area over 12 times the size of Beacon Hill Park. At the same time, we paved or built over an even larger area – 3700 acres! It is remarkable how quickly our landscape is being transformed (even during a global economic crisis that "slowed" new construction down).

Of course, there are many reasons that trees come down. Trees get old and die, get knocked over by wind, become diseased, or 'just fall over." In a mature forest, trees fall down all the time, but there are young trees growing in the gaps the dying trees leave. A sort of dynamic balance is achieved where tree cover remains fairly stable. Large scale events, like forest fires, can dramatically reduce tree cover very quickly, and is followed by a long period of re-growth.

Neither of those things is happening here. The trend, whether over the last six years, or the past twenty is the same. Tree cover is being lost, and it's not being replaced. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong correlation between the areas that lost tree cover and the areas that gained impervious surface – more often than not they are one and the same. So the challenge becomes conserving tree cover in a region that is under immense development pressure.

Planning, regulation, and bylaws may be part of the solution. The District of Saanich and the City of Victoria recently passed urban forest strategies. Perhaps in six years, we will be able to look back to see if the strategies were effective. There is some reason to be hopeful: regulations protecting trees and vegetation in riparian areas do seem to work. In fact, while tree cover as a whole declined, tree cover in riparian areas increased slightly.

However, private landowners have to play a role. It would appear that few trees are being planted on private property, yet private property accounts for over 75% of land in the region we studied. The right tree in the right spot can protect homes from winter wind, give shade in the summer, and provide wildlife with habitat.

Photo: HAT staff

Photo: Todd Carnahan

There is help available if you are considering planting trees on your land. Through our landowner contact programs, HAT can help people find that perfect tree species for your backyard, business, or play area. Other organizations offer help too, from the Evergreen Foundation to Tree Canada to local arborists.

To quote Irish-Canadian pioneer Nelson Henderson, "The meaning of life is to plant a tree under whose shade you do not expect to sit."

By the Numbers

Of the 13 CRD municipalities, in the 6 years between 2005 and 2011:

- The District of Saanich lost the most tree cover: 378 hectares. Langford was next, losing 118 hectares of tree cover.
- The City of Victoria lost the largest percentage of its remaining tree cover – 8.8%. In absolute terms, this was only 42 hectares, but the City of Victoria has a relatively small amount of tree cover.
- The Town of Sidney lost the least amount of tree cover at 7 hectares, but that accounts for 7.5% of the small municipality's remaining tree cover.
- Metchosin lost just 1.3% of its tree cover (66 hectares), the lowest percentage of any municipality. Highlands was next, losing only 1.4% (46 hectares) of its tree cover.
- Highlands also has the highest level of tree cover in the region: 84% of the municipality is treed. Sidney is the least treed – only 18.3% of the Town has tree cover.
- Looking at impervious surfaces between 2005 and 2011:
- Saanich gained the most impervious surface at 532.8 hectares, followed by Langford, which gained 183 hectares.
- Sidney gained the least impervious surface – 19.2 hectares.
- Victoria is the most "paved" municipality; 55% of the municipality is covered with impervious surfaces. Highlands is at the opposite end of the spectrum; only 3.1% of the municipality is covered by roads and buildings.

The full report, and data for those so inclined, can be downloaded from our website at www.hat.bc.ca.

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 8 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column.

Frances Hunter
Goward Road
Conservation, butterflies, moths

Peter Lowens
St. Andrews Street
Birding, trees, flowers

Picking Up Chicks in Haida Gwaii (again)

By Anne Hansen

Soon after arriving in Victoria six years ago, I had a chance conversation with a woman on the beach. I introduced myself as an artist with a budding obsession with Black Oystercatchers.

The woman told me about an organization in Haida Gwaii that seeks volunteers every summer to assist in their biological research camp. I rushed home, looked up the Laskeek Bay Conservation Society on the internet, and found their main research subject is Ancient Murrelets, but they also "do" oystercatchers.

In 2009, I got to spend a week there with half a dozen other volunteers.

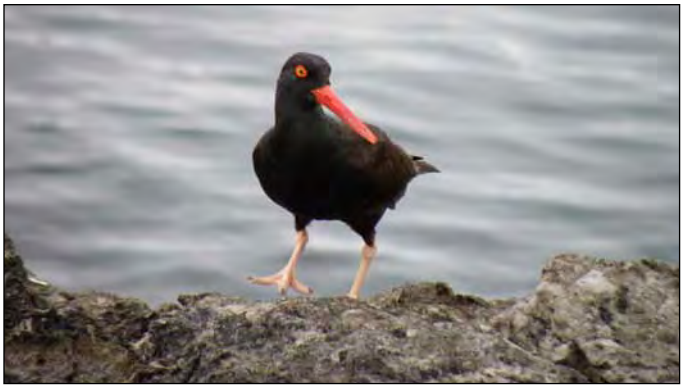
The camp is on the remote East Limestone Island, about an hour by float plane or zodiac boat out of the town of Charlotte. It is a couple of kilometers across the water from the old village of Skedans, known for its totem poles and featured in Emily Carr's work. Now a protected heritage site, it is open for visitors and staffed by the Haida Watchman Program in the summer.

There's a legend that if you drink water from a certain spring in Haida Gwaii, you will return to the islands. I had a sip in 2009, so it's no surprise that I found myself back there this summer.

East Limestone has undergone a huge change since my previous visit. A couple of years ago, a violent November storm blew down half the island's forest. A huge tree narrowly missed the cozy cabin where we cook, eat, and enjoy the wood stove. The biologists are excited about how the forest will rebound. Dead trees are a woodpecker's bed and breakfast.

This is an amazing opportunity for outdoor lovers. No particular skills are needed other than a keen interest. Tasks include cooking, pruning the trails, and taking notes. Doing "sea watch" involves sitting on a cliff overlooking a gorgeous ocean vista and keeping your eyes peeled for whales. There's no guarantee of whales, but you will see scores of Pigeon Guillemots with fish in their beaks, coming and going from the water to their cliffside nests.

Also on the camp's "to do" list is accompanying the biologists in the boat to find Black Oystercatcher nests. Birds are banded, and notes are taken on the numbers and health of the current brood. The chicks are instructed by their very upset parents to hide motionless in a crevice, and they blend in perfectly with the dark-mottled rocks. The hero of the day finds the most oystercatcher chicks. Jake Pattison and Ainsley Brown, our expert guides, excelled at this job.



(Top) Examining Pigeon Guillemot nests on East Limestone Island, July 2013. (Below) Black Oystercatcher, Haida Gwaii. *Photos*: Anne Hansen

Another highlight was the hullabaloo coming from a sea lion island surrounded by two Orcas. Their sound was like a mass human protest, saying "no". Steller Sea Lions make a tasty lunch for these transient Orcas.

We returned to camp to the melodies of thrushes and wrens, followed by an exquisite supper made by the very capable Emily Grubb, environmental studies intern for the season. (And no, it didn't rain much the whole week!)

As I stated to the infamous Harper-appointed "public" hearings on the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline earlier this year: Artists generally don't flock to B.C. to paint portraits of government panel members, or to marvel at oil pipelines, clear-cuts, or corporate mining company headquarters in Vancouver. My photographs from the week on Limestone Island will provide fuel for evermore oystercatcher art.

Consider spending a week next summer with the Laskeek Bay Conservation Society, or gifting the experience to a favourite naturalist. You can end your trip with a spectacular, calorie-burning hike up the Sleeping Beauty trail. On a clear day, the summit offers a vast panorama over the town of Charlotte and beyond.

See my Oystercatchers and new bird species on the James Bay Art Walk (September 14, 15), James Bay Community School, 140 Oswego Street. www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com

New Wildflower Book

By John Fitch

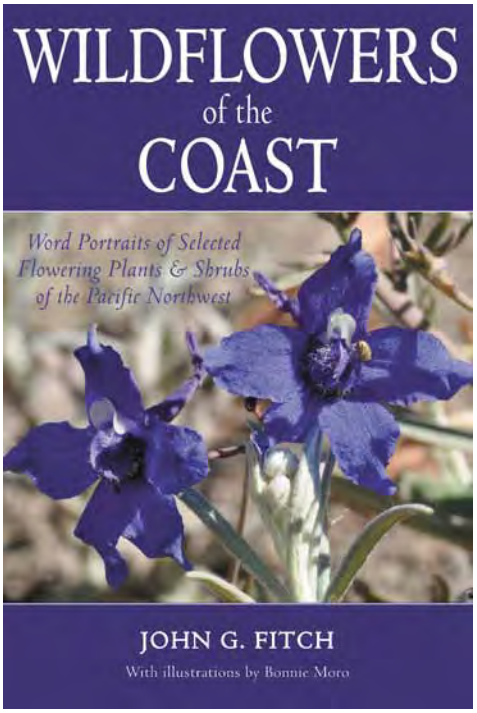
A VNHS member, John Fitch, has just published *Wildflowers of the Coast*. This is a collection of some 70 poems, each describing a particular flowering plant native to the Pacific Northwest. The most innovative and important feature of the book is its attempt to integrate poetry with detailed, botanically accurate description. Here is a typical example:

Vanilla Leaf, *Achlys triphylla*

Often in the forest you will find a carpet
of rounded yellow-green leaves. Among them
are slender spikes of cream-white flowers
like miniature torches in the woodland gloom.
Each leaf is held a foot above ground
by a wiry stem sent up from the rhizome.
Its shape: a circle with scalloped edges
and deep clefts running like spokes to the centre,
splitting it into three lobes or leaflets.
To children's delight, if you take out the central
lobe, the remaining two by magic
transform to a pair of angel wings.
First and last the leaf is ghostly.
In spring it emerges furled, an almost
colourless membrane, a delicate fan;
in fall, when the leaf itself is gone,
its veins persist as a lacy network.
Each leaf contains an elusive fragrance:
drying, they release a faint scent of vanilla
or new-mown hay. Once country folk
would collect them and hang them in bunches to perfume
the house and ward off flies and mosquitoes,
and they named the plant Sweet After Death.

The book is illustrated with about 20 pen-and-ink drawings by Bonnie Moro.

John Fitch *was formerly Professor and Chair of the Department of Greek and Roman Studies at the University of Victoria. His publications since retirement include a translation of* The Work of Farming, *a late-Roman farming manual by Palladius. For many years John lived on a farm on the Saanich Peninsula, where he grew fruit and raised sheep with his wife and daughter.*



Harvest Lily, *Brodiaea coronaria,* by Bonnie Moro

Bonnie Moro *has a BA in psychology and a BFA in sculpture, in addition to undergraduate studies in botany and graduate studies in philosophy. Since childhood she has enjoyed drawing and painting plants as a means of understanding their detailed structure, and responding to it. She has prepared illustrations for the Cactus and Succulent Information Exchange and for the Rock and Alpine Club and the Rhododendron Society of Victoria.*

Chasing Dragonflies at Beaver Lake

By Ken Sohm

Some twenty or so members enjoyed this dragonfly hunt on a lovely afternoon in early July at the Beaver Lake Ponds. There were three components to the outing: general explanation of some of the characteristics of dragonflies; the mechanics of capturing these insects and handling them; and of course identification. I had read Robert Cannings' chapter on dragonflies in the new *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region* and this outing illustrated some of what I had read.

The first thing that our leader, Gord Hutchings, explained was that the insects we usually refer to as dragonflies consists of two groups, dragonflies and damselflies; these two groups collectively belong to the order Odonata. He also mentioned that though damselflies are usually smaller than dragonflies, the largest Odonate is actually a damselfly and the smallest a dragonfly.

On our short stroll down through the long grass to the first pond damselflies flew up and were deftly caught by Gord. Both forktails, they were identified as Pacific Forktail (*Ishnura cervula*) and Western Forktail (*Ishnura perparva*). At the pond, the strikingly red Cardinal Meadowhawk (*Simpetrum illotum*), Four-spotted Skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) and Blue-eyed Darner (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*) were observed both in flight and in the hand. There is a simple technique involved in extracting the insect from the net – holding it gently by the wings – and in the passing of it from hand to hand. This was very much of a 'hands on' outing!

Through long practice Gord uses the Latin name when identifying species, feeling that the Latin is both descriptive and consistent. He explained that most of these flying dragonflies over the pond would be males, looking for females. He also commented on perching habits, that the insects tend to come back to the same perch briefly, such that if that perch, for example a cattail, is broken off and one's finger put there instead, chances are good that the dragonfly will use your finger. We were also able to see examples of the tandem position, where a male and female fly joined together.

And so it went, dragonflies were caught, observed in the hand, and released. We ended up with what I thought was an impressive number of species: 11 caught and another 4 identified in flight. At the very end of this two hour jaunt, Gord tried hard to catch a Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*) for us since this is one of the largest of the local dragonflies. After much weaving and stalking through the meadow (Gord commenting on the importance of peripheral vision), it turned out to be too elusive.

This was truly a memorable experience primarily because of being able to handle and examine these insects – to see up close the beautiful colouration, the extraordinary large eyes, and other details is quite special. No doubt bird banders share this experience too.

Gord expressed regret that there were no kids there – he loves having young people along. One remarkable and

(Left) Dot-tailed Whiteface. (Right) Western Poundhawk. *Photos*: Val George

amusing touch was that he carefully moved a darner to one of the participant's nose to which it clung for several minutes. This was of course with permission of the owner of the nose, if not the dragonfly! I can well understand the fascination that a young person would have to be up close and personal with a Blue-eyed Darner or a Cardinal Meadowhawk. Or to watch Gord skilfully wield his net, reach in and carefully extract the insect. Many thanks to him for his generous sharing of expertise, and to Agnes for arranging this outing (and of course for laying on the gorgeous weather).

Gord Hutchings is a field biologist specializing in entomology. Besides the Odonates he is passionate about Mason Bees.

(Top) Whitetail female. (Below) Blue Dasher. *Photos*: Val George

Where Have All the Southern Resident Orca Gone?

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Photos by author

Water is life! The oceans are large bodies of water that support and sustain creatures great and small. Oceans regulate the earth's climate and contribute a great deal of the oxygen found in our atmosphere. Nutrients found in the ocean feed the smallest single-cell creatures, phytoplankton, while Krill, a small crustacean, nourishes the largest whale on earth, the Blue Whale. The oceans cover 70% or more of this world and at every level of watery environment unique species thrive. As humans explore we are only just beginning to understand how vital the oceans are to all life. It is a hidden world. What appears to be empty sea from the surface is where today's researchers descend to explore the sea floor in submersibles that can withstand extreme marine pressures. Scientists are collecting, photographing and identifying exciting life forms and exploring the amazing topography that shapes our seas. We share these discoveries through various forms of media.

However, the oceans are under siege. Natural catastrophe and changing world climate has started to affect the composition of the oceans. Scientists tell us that only a small percentage of the oceans have been explored. However, the constant threat from humanity on land and sea appears to be having a detrimental effect. The changes that are occurring at the Polar Region especially appear to have a great impact on environments that support wildlife, fish, and sea-bird colonies. Continental shelf environments and reefs are showing signs of change as evidenced by the death and decay of coral reefs. Shorelines that were once nurseries and critical habitat for many plants, fish and other creatures are eroded by higher tides and wave action. Whether natural, cyclical or human-influenced, changes are happening. One cannot deny the evidence, for I have seen the healthy marine environments that once supported abundant fish and seabirds disappearing Today, it is the Orca, the Killer Whales of the Salish Sea, that are telling us something has changed.

Within these busy and fertile waters, the abundant, charismatic apex predator, *Orcinus orca*, the Killer Whale or

J Pod, February 21, 2010.

Orca, is found in all the world's oceans. Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish scientist in 1758, identified and catalogued this creature, giving it its title after the Latin god of the underworld, Orcus. Thought in earlier times to be a monster from the deep that ate human flesh, this toothed whale, the largest member of the Dolphin family, spends more time beneath the surface than above. When it comes to the surface, it is there to breathe, initiate play with other members of the pod and to orient itself to landmarks, people and boats. From my many observations on the water it is apparent that they recognize certain faces of researchers, e.g., dedicated personnel from the Centre of Whale research on San Juan Island. Orca are curious about people, as we are of them.

It is good to remember that they are creatures of the sea swimming freely, and this is their domain. They are intelligent and can swim away from water traffic as they wish. They belong to a highly complex, matriarchal, and cohesive society. They have a language and travel in close family groups called pods. Several pods that use the same or similar calls are classified as belonging to a clan. The calls are learned within a family group. The Northern Resident Orca have several clans as well as having almost three times the number of individuals as that of the Southern Residents.

Here within the Salish Sea, a shared inland body of water off the south coast of B.C. and Washington State, there is a clan of whales called J Clan. This community of whales is probably the most studied in the world and consists of three pods, J, K, and L. They are associated with each other through family DNA and share similar call dialects, a type of language. They are known as the Southern Residents. A playful, curious group of whales that share food and social behaviours with each other, they pass down information from one generation to another.

Like Orca the world over, each pod, clan or family group has a preference for certain types of prey. Some individuals and family groups have developed unique skills to ensure they hunt successfully after a specific prey. These skill-sets may be seen in a behaviour that requires drowning a young whale of a different species, or by creating waves that wash off resting seals on icebergs. Others will partially beach themselves in order to apprehend and capture food. The marine mammal hunting Orca is the true apex hunter of the sea. It will cooperate with others within its family groups when hunting other species of whales, seals, sea lions, dolphins, or porpoise. Other forms of prey items include sharks, rays, penguins and even schools of fish. Locally, the Southern Residents forage for salmon, and it is the Chinook, the largest and fattiest of the salmon that they seek. Generally, they appear in this area during the summer months. Typically, June, July, and August, represent the months when one is likely to see, almost daily, returning Orca. Usually, individual pods arrive singly but on occasion a 'Superpod ' is seen, where all members of the three pods come in together and stay together for several hours, then separate to forage in areas that may be a mile or more apart. Their winter wanderings out in the Pacific keep the three pods apart for much of the other seasons. Historically J Pod is seen far more often during the year in this area than either K or L Pod. To date, however, the lengthy absences, days known as ''no- whale-days'', of these three pods are causing some major concerns.

Spyhop.

There are of course other whales in our area that are seen fairly regularly, Humpback, Minke, Transient Orca, and the occasional Grey. Since the end of May, when the pods have come in from the west coast, traveling the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Orca have stayed briefly along the west coast of San Juan Island, their preferred site for foraging. Briefly has meant 1- 2 or 3 days. L Pod, for instance, left three members of its pod, the L 22's, consisting of a mom, L22, 'Spirit' and her two adult sons L79, 'Skana', and L89 'Solstice'. They remained there for nine days, traveling up and down the shoreline, foraging. The rest of L Pod was seen heading out west with members of J Pod and K Pod in the middle of July. The question is, was L 22, sick? We know individual family groups stick close together, especially the boys with their mothers. In fact, boys never leave home! Females with young may sometimes form sub-groups, but remain within the pod.

What was the cause of this unusual split in L Pod? Was it a case of only enough Chinook to feed three animals? Adult Orca require 250-300lbs of fish a day. When other Orca were around for a short time, they were observed to swim over to Vancouver, the Fraser River Delta, in search of Chinook Salmon. However, they soon disappeared, suggesting that there wasn't sufficient food available. The question is, if they are not here in these waters, where are the Orca? Do they have to travel way out over the Continental shelf to intercept the largest of the Chinook before the fish head in to the rivers to spawn? Has the long, dry spell of warm weather here on the coast created different and difficult circumstances for the whales and/or salmon? After all, Orca have been around approximately 10,000,000 years, and it is known that knowledge is passed down from generation to generation as to how to survive and where to find fish. Could we be seeing a distinct change in predicted behaviours for the Orca? Is this a new trend? Are changes occurring in our waters that cause a reduction in the Salmon numbers?

There have been plenty of press reports concerning salmon and the effects of fish farms situated on salmon spawning rivers. Orca need salmon to survive as do many

other species along our coast and also our magnificent forests. Salmon is the backbone of British Columbia and it needs to be protected. Earlier this year, when the Orca count was conducted by the Center for Whale Research, four Southern Resident Orca were unaccountable, and presumed dead. The total number of Orca is now 82. Will we see more reduced numbers over the coming months due in part, to a lack of fish? Are our federal and provincial governments, and that of Washington State, questioning what is happening? Are they ensuring and providing, within the mandate of The Endangered Species Act, a protected environment in which these Orca may travel and forage safely and successfully? These specific Puget Sound Orca were given a listing of Endangered in 2005 by NOAA, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. That same listing was threatened recently by California State farmers, but luckily, the threat was overturned and the Orca remain listed as endangered.

A recovery program in 2008 was initiated to address the needs for protection for these animals. Chemical pollution from industrial and agricultural practices, PCB's, and flame retardants, PBDE's were found in the food chain. Accumulation of chemical levels in the blubber of these animals remains high. Not surprising when almost 9,000,000 people live in three large cities that border the Salish Sea. Several other factors are being addressed, noise pollution, vessel strikes, discarded fishing gear that trap and injure whales. The biggest threat appears to be the lack of Salmon stocks.

Over the winter months, some older animals pass away.

(Top) Female Orca with her calf. (Below) Orca family spyhop.

However we are seeing some younger males not returning. This is a worrisome trend. If there are no calves born when other whales die, the situation becomes critical. Their numbers were depleted dramatically during the years of capture, 1960-70, for Marine Parks. To this date, a captured youngster, an L Pod female, named 'Lolita ' remains in the Miami-Aquarium. She has been swimming in isolation in a small, concrete pool for 40 years. This is called 'entertainment', and is unacceptable! There is no question that these animals suffer from mental illness while in captivity. Thankfully, many of us know that the only place for these intelligent mammals is the ocean, swimming alongside their families. With all the negative press generated by whales in captivity, it would seem a good time for Lolita's retirement and a return to the waters off B.C. and Washington State. A movement has started to bring Lolita home. One hopes she will survive to see her home environment and family once again. Blackfish, a new movie about to be launched, should shed truth on the conditions that these captive Orca experience while performing in the name of entertainment http://www.npr.org/blogs/13.7/2013/07/17/202979220/blackfish-takes-aim-at-seaworld It appears that Orca only kill people, usually their trainers, while in captivity. David Kirby's book, ''Death at Sea World'' also highlights the unnatural world in which captive Orca live.

As for Southern Resident Orca behaviour, there is a beautiful event called a greeting ceremony that occurs when all three pods come together after weeks or months apart. Upon meeting, the members of the pods will display a great deal of tactile behaviour. Surprising antics of breeching, spyhop, and tail lobbing activity accompany the enthusiastic call sounds heard over the hydrophones. Headstands and backward somersaults are also part of the act. It isn't hard to imagine that when the girls from one pod meet the boys from another pod that breeding activity occurs below the surface. There is no set season in the year for breeding and generally 17-18 months later a calf, a large one at that, is born. Weighing in at 400 lbs and 6-7 feet long, the young are nursed for one year, but do share fish during that first year of life. 'Granny', J2, the Matriarch of J Pod, at 102 years of age, leads the pod and is often seen babysitting many of the youngsters while their mothers forage. In all her years she has seen so much change to her environment. I wonder what she thinks and where she takes the whales to find salmon, since they aren't showing up in the waters off Victoria as they should be?

I have had the privilege over the past six years of observing Orca, both Southern Resident and Northern Resident whales in their natural habitat, and have learned who is who in the pods. Each occasion on the water has brought me much joy especially when a new calf is born. There seems to be a procession by family and pod members when this happy event occurs. I have observed the mother swim over to a boat and show off the new addition to the pod. There is sorrow too, as members within the pods are no longer seen. J1, ''Ruffles," as he was known, disappeared in November 2010. At 60, he was the oldest male within the Southern Resident Clan. He was the iconic image of J Pod, seen in movies, books, and on postcards. The distinct ruffled trailing edge of his dorsal fin

resembled a ''Ruffles'' potato chip. He was nearly always seen swimming close to, or beside, Granny, J2. Perhaps she was his great aunt or grandmother.

My interest in marine mammals started a long time ago, and it wasn't until I took a whale watching trip in a Zodiac one September afternoon, that this passion for whales was ignited. There is so much to an Orca. Their biology is very similar to human. They are mystical and truly magical to watch. They capture the imagination. They cross the barrier between human and animal when they look at you. For those who want to know more of this charismatic creature from our oceans, try watching the movie 'Saving Luna,' produced and directed by Michael Parfit and Suzanne Chisholm. This film will move the skeptic in anyone and bring one to a much closer understanding of their needs and wants. These same authors have also launched a book this summer called, ''The Lost Whale,'' the true story of this whale. Interestingly, he was an L Pod whale that became lost in Nootka Sound and spent four years in and around Gold River. If you want or need to listen to the whales in real time, try linking to the Orca Sound, Salish Sea hydrophone network, to hear the Southern Residents when they are in, http://orcasound.net/ or http://www.orca-live.net/ for the sounds of the Northern Resident whales in the Johnstone Strait area. It is even more fascinating to listen to http://www.orca-live.net/community/index.html

It is a whole different and changing world out there. One can only hope that the Orca will find enough to eat and not have to travel so far afield. Perhaps they have discovered the best places to forage, where salmon abound. As conditions change in the oceans, will the fish change their times of return? Will we see fewer of these magnificent mammals that engage us with their lives and play? Wherever they are, I hope they are in good health and will return to delight us with their presence. Their lives are dictated by food so they will always follow the Chinook, hopefully back to the Salish Sea. Latest updates: August 7th, 2013: six members of L Pod have shown up along the west side of San Juan Island. Now that is serendipitous indeed, but where is the rest of the pod and where are J and K?

[*All the pods came into these waters yesterday, Sunday morning (August 11). They went over to the Fraser River Delta immediately and foraged, and have now returned to the west side of San Juan Island. I hear their chatter so clearly on the hydrophones off San Juan Island. I am ecstatic...*]

Odds and Ends

Answers to July/August crossword:

1. Killdeer
2. Bufflehead
3. Heron
4. Crow
5. Towhee
6. Widgeon
7. Geese
8. Sooty
9. Cob
10. Raven
12. Owl
13. Coot
14. Glaucous-wing
15. Grebe
16. Lark
17. Murre
18. Tern
19. Jay
20. Loon
21. Wren

8A. Scoter

Fun Quiz (from October 1974)

(Discover the answers on a nature hike) [or wait for the next issue of the Victoria Naturalist]

1. What is the leg difference between a centipede and a millipede?
2. What is this duck?

Is it a diver or a dabbler?
Where is it found?

3. Where does "hardhack" (*Spirea douglasii*) like to grow?
4. What is a gribble?

June 1974

The smallest species of amphibian is believed to be an arrow-poison frog (*Sminthillus limbatus*) found in Cuba. Fully grown specimens have a maximum recorded length of 0.51 of an inch.

[*Editor's note: According to the BBC, January 2012, (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-16491477), a frog species that appears to be the world's smallest has been discovered in Papua New Guinea by a US-based team. At 7mm (0.27 inches) long, Paedophryne amauensis may be the world's smallest vertebrate - the group that includes mammals, fish, birds and amphibians. The researchers also found a slightly larger relative, Paedophryne swiftorum.*]

Letters

Hi Bill,

Personally, as well as on behalf of the EECOM conference organizing committee, I would like to thank you so much for volunteering to lead a field trip for conference attendees. Everyone I spoke to thoroughly enjoyed exploring and learning about the natural areas – and discovering a few of the inhabitants – around UVic with you. I hope you had a chance to chat with some of the folks who share your passion for connecting children to nature!

Wishing you a summer of delightful discoveries.

Kelly

Lagunas Encantadas

By Dannie Carsen

We rode the running boards of the truck on the old road to Tepetiltic with the cool morning air streaming in our faces. I had one hand clutching the roof rack while I scanned the trees and listened for songs in the pine-oak forest. A distinctive "cheo" and a chittering call caught our ears. "Silky Flycatcher" [Gray Silky-flycatcher] called out our guide Francisco, and the truck stopped. We located the flycatcher with the distinctive crest at the tops of the pines. The long needles of the pines and the leaves of the scrub oaks were more reminiscent of northern temperate forests than western Mexico. The place was jumping with birds in the canopy.

Our goal was to spend three days (February 17-19) developing a good bird list for trip locations for the upcoming Lagunas Bird Festival. The festival takes place northeast of Tepic in western Mexico and was held the first week in March 2013. Johnny and Francisco were helping organize the birding trips for the festival and needed to scout trip routes, times of day, and meal venues. The two towns hosting the festival were Santa Maria del Oro and San Pedro Lagunillas and we also planned to visit the little village at Laguna Tepetiltic.

Our explorations took us to pine-oak forests, desert thornscrub and lagoon-side riparian habitats for some wonderful inland birding. Francisco's plan involved dawn to dusk birding over three days around the volcanic lakes glowingly entitled "Lagunas Encantadas" [enchanted lagoons] by Nayarit State tourist promotions.

Francisco had been talking up birding these lagoons for weeks. He enlisted his friend and ornithologist, Johnny, and his surfing buddy Dave plus Dave's son Alex. Dave provided the wheels, a stout four-wheeler king cab pickup, that barely fit the five of us and our gear.

We left San Blas at 4 p.m. on Saturday, and drove an hour in afternoon heat to Tepic, the inland capital of Nayarit State, then headed southeast along Highway 15 toward Guadalajara. It was another hour to Santa Maria del Oro, a town of 2000 perched on the slopes of a volcanic cauldron.

It was dark by the time we met our sponsor, the town's representative for the birding festival. For supper, I made the acquaintance of four delicious tacos made from large tortillas and deliciously spiced pork, beef, and chicken toppings with hot sauce, beans and guacamole, cooked up by a stern-faced woman in a little stand at one corner of the zocolo, or village square, which was thronged by residents and us five visitors. Her nephew – a lad of 12 – served us, surprising me with a California drawl from his time in the states.

We stayed the first two nights at a little resort called Koala Bungalows where the five of us shared a cabin with two bedrooms. I got the couch in the living room. The lakeside resort is nestled down the hill along the shores of a steep-sided volcanic lake, Santa Maria Laguna, at around 2400 feet. This is cottage country, with a deep volcanic lake

Laguna Santa Maria del Oro. *Photo*: Dannie Carsen

surrounded by steep, forested mountains. The clear turquoise waters and idyllic setting draw hoards of Guadalajaran visitors, usually driving SUVs or luxury cars, migrating to the lake on weekends and holidays.

Johnny and Francisco got up at 4 a.m. for the lakeshore walk listening for owls. Francisco heard it first, the throaty coughing call of the Mottled Owl, and we used the tape to draw it in. The floodlight illuminated a small, streak-chested owl sitting 75 metres up a large tree. We heard seven owls and got video footage of two of them before dawn.

Dave and Alex joined us at 6:30 a.m., and we had 13 species birding along the laguna shores. I especially enjoyed the enchanting song of the Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush and the bellows of the Collared Forest-Falcon while getting looks at Cinnamon Hummingbird and Black-throated Magpie-Jay. All the birds were lifers for Dave and Alex!

We trucked on down the road to Real de Acuitapilco, a little town only 10 km away on a rough road. There we spent an hour birding an open field in the translucent morning light, observing Violet-crowned and Magnificent Hummingbirds, Lazuli and Painted Buntings, Short-tailed Hawk, and Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers.

The Real Road also had a Lesser Roadrunner scooting across in front of the truck and many warblers, vireos, and woodpeckers. Francisco took us to Cabanas Aquila Real, an ecotourism property that features an old maize grinding wheel driven by water. We walked down a nice stone walkway to cascading waterfalls at the bottom. This would be the site of a lunch buffet during the birding festival with local people providing the food.

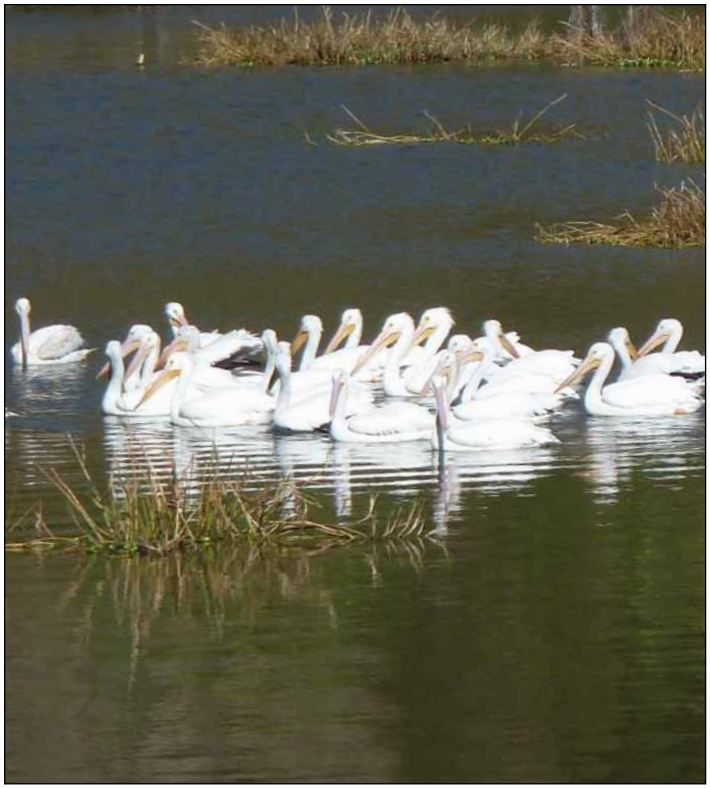
After lunch we drove down the El Buluato road during the afternoon, where despite the 30ºC temperatures, we spotted a Northern Harrier and a Cordilleran Flycatcher. We stopped at a favoured location near a little swamp and I got my first great views of the Blue Mockingbird after hearing many in other locations. Before supper, we hiked up a trail leading to spectacular laguna views atop a water tank built to service a new resort subdivision. I spotted a Red-billed Pigeon, and we all observed wintering Black-throated Gray and Orange-crowned Warblers in the fading light. Supper was chicken and tacos in a little family restaurant near the town square. I had at least five lifers already!

Sunday morning found us making our way from Santa Maria del Oro to San Pedro Lagunillas at 4:30 a.m. Dave found his way down to the main highway and we turned onto the old Tepetiltic road. This cobblestone road could be one of the original sections of the Camino Royal built by the Spanish hundreds of years ago. It is flanked by pine and oak forest, providing a lovely backdrop for great looks at birds including Laughing Falcon, Painted Redstart and Golden Vireo. I scored six lifers there: Bright-rumped Attila, Gray Silky-flycatcher, Rufous-capped Warbler, Elegant Euphonia, Tufted Flycatcher, and Dusky-capped Flycatcher. It was great morning light and the pleasures of "riding the boards" in the cool morning air made it particularly memorable - the best birding I've had in Mexico. We got long lingering looks at many Gray Silky-flycatchers and Elegant Euphonias plus many other residents of the pine-oak landscape. In late morning we finally bumped down steep cobblestone streets through the little town of Tepetiltic on the shores of the laguna. On the way down, we stopped for great views of a White-throated Thrush [formerly White-throated Robin] (another lifer) only eight feet away in a thorny bush.

Tepetiltic. *Photo*: Dannie Carsen

Tepetiltic has 500 people in little stone and concrete houses perched on a hillside overlooking the shallow laguna. It has a small and picturesque malecon at the edge of the lake, where you could while away a morning watching wading birds or scanning nearby hills for hawks. No hotels or restaurants here, but there is a passable road which circles around this shallow lake. We rode along the lakeshore and got great views of shorebirds, gulls, and terns, huge flocks of American White Pelicans (500+) and occasional specialties such as Curve-billed Thrasher. Birds sighted were: Purple Gallinule and Common Gallinule, Least, Pied-billed, Clark's and Western Grebe, White-faced Ibis, Red-tailed Hawk, Caspian Tern, Great

Spotted Wren. *Photo*: Gail Harcombe



American White Pelicans on Tepetiltic. *Photo*: Dannie Carsen

Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Snowy, Cattle, and Great Egret, Bronzed Cowbird, American Coot, Eastern Bluebird, Varied Bunting, White-eared Hummingbird, Acorn Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Gray Flycatcher, Lesser Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow and Rusty-crowned Ground Sparrow, House Wren, Blue-black Grassquit, Common Raven, Wilson's and Yellow-rumped Warbler, Say's Phoebe, Ruddy-breasted Seedeater, and Belted Kingfisher.

Back on highway 15, we made the pilgrimage to La Mojonera Restaurant, which has goat and baby pig barbecue that you eat with lovely big homemade tortillas filled with tomatoes, onions and spicy hot sauce. We ate a lot, had a few beers, and started to feel sleepy. Wandering over to the playground next to the restaurant, miraculously we found hammocks to lie in for a short siesta. We passed the time attempting to identify foraging warblers, hummingbirds and woodpeckers high up in the trees. We finally got back on the highway and meandered down to our motel in San Pedro Lagunillas in the heat of the mid-afternoon.

Our last overnight stay was in San Pedro, only 30 km away from Santa Maria del Oro. It is a ranching town and seems busier than Santa Mario. Laguna San Pedro is deeper than shallow Tepetiltic and has been stocked with small-mouthed bass. We cleaned up at our motel, then drove down to the lakeshore – a riparian tangle of lakeside shrubs. It was packed with pickups as some local landowners and fishermen were roasting pork strips, bass and prawn on the fire. They noticed the gringos with binoculars, and Francisco explained about the bird festival. With typical Mexican hospitality, they offered us a beer and a piece of bass. We hoisted a few quartitos (230ml bottles of beer) and tasted the roast bass, but finally had to get out birding before dark.

We drove back to the main road and parked near some burned agave cactus fields. There we headed down a little path for late afternoon looks at a Black Phoebe, Brown-crested and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, Golden Vireo and a wayward Peregrine Falcon; White-tailed Hawk (a lifer), Crested Caracara and Cooper's Hawk, plus Lesser Nighthawk. Lit by a golden sun, this was a magical landscape that few gringo tourists see in Mexico.

From our motel, it was only a 25 minute walk downtown past a sports field where they were playing soccer. High above the players, passing now and then through the lights, Pauraques dove and swooped for insects. We had a good supper and headed back to the motel to prepare for the last morning of birding. I had at least nine lifers for the day and enjoyed the best birding of the trip.

We got started on our last morning at 5 a.m. on Hermit Road, a lurching drive up a mountain in the pre-dawn dark which produced Painted Bunting, Tufted Flycatcher, White-eared, Broad-tailed, and Berylline Hummingbirds, White-breasted Nuthatch, Bright-rumped Attila, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bridled Titmouse (lifer), Warbling and Plumbeos Vireos, Black-throated Gray and Townsend's Warblers, Brown-backed Solitaire, Elegant Euphonia, Varied Bunting, Band-tailed Pigeon, Blue Mockingbird, Happy and Spotted Wrens, Hepatic Tanager, Bushtit, Hammond's Flycatcher,

Greater Peewee, Zone-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and Violet-green and Northern Rough-winged Swallow. Great views of the Brown-backed Solitaire completely in the open, singing. The Spotted Wren did the wren thing along a low log in the morning sun.

At 8 a.m. we enjoyed a short walk along a tree-lined road and picked up Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Rusty-crowned Ground Sparrow, Blue Mockingbird, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Acorn Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanager, Greater Peewee, and Zone-tailed Hawk.

Satiated with birding, we decided near lunchtime to head into Tepic and visit a Nayarit beerhall – a "Butanero". They brought the Quartitas in tubs of ten and we finished the first tub amid much talk and laughter. Seafood began arriving, plates of fish cerviche and shaved marlin and camarone cerviche prepared right at our table with fresh limes. The second round of Quartitas we drank to wash down the extra spicy cerviche. Finally, they brought decadent deep-fried shrimp which were crunchy in their shells. The burn from the shrimp required a third round of Quartitas which coincided with the band beginning to play. Three trumpets were accompanied by a trombone, tuba and French horn and they really blew out the local songs. We stayed for a while longer to enjoy this true Nayarit experience.

Around 4 p.m., we wended our merry way back towards San Blas. We stopped during the descent to sea level at Mirador de Del Aquila, a Military Macaw preserve, and were fortunate to see eight green Military Macaws sailing over the green hills below. Francisco set up the scope just below the cliff face and if you craned your neck you could just make out two indistinct shapes in a little tree. Two little lovebirds of the hills emerged: Bat Falcons! They had perched beside each other in the tree and were the highlight of our birding experience for the day.

Bat Falcons through the scope. *Photo*: Dannie Carsen

All in all, we saw approximately 230 species over the three days of birding and I had 20 lifers during our trip to the amazing landscape of the Lagunas Encantadas. What a great trip!

[Don't miss Dannie's presentation on the Lagunas Encantadas at Birders Night Oct. 23]

Chef Survival Challenge: A Winning Recipe for Saving Farmland

By Robin Alys Roberts

This September 8th, Madrona Farm again offers its most entertaining public education event: *The Chef Survival Challenge*. If you've missed out on the last five years, be sure to go this year. Brace yourself for cheering, wild songs, and the potato gun announcing the start of this sixth annual event. Ten gourmet chefs will have transformed themselves, dressed in survival gear to brave Madrona's challenging obstacle course. Each accompanied by a partner, they'll balance on a beam over a mud pit, hop over haystack hurdles, scramble up a climbing wall, crawl through irrigation pipes, swing down a zip-line, paddle out to Condiment Island to pick up their condiment bags – all before running up the 24-acre hillside to gather their ingredients. Finally switching to their chef whites, while we look on and they answer any questions, they'll whip together a gourmet's delight – survival style – on their camp stoves.

Meanwhile, kids play, we relax, laugh and dance to music. Then comes the auction for one of ten special meals. The chef with the highest bid wins the Golden Broccoli Trophy to display in his restaurant. If your bid doesn't win, you can still happily imbibe in the separately catered dinner made from Madrona Farm's ingredients.

Upon reaching their goal in 2010 to save Madrona Farm in perpetuity, Nathalie Chambers declared, "A community is one of the most powerful forces in nature, and if we all stand together, there is no problem too big for us to solve!" Current money raised goes to the Big Dream Farm Fund (http://www.chefsurvivalchallenge.com/the_big_dream_farm_fund.html), to save more farmland forever. Connected to the National Trust for Land & Culture Canada (http://ntlcbc.com/?page_id=696), this fund will be available to organizations dedicated to farmland conservation, sustainable farming education, and outreach.

Last February, a house fire claimed the life of a bright, young, compassionate, sustainable farmer. Subsequent insights from a neighbouring fireman who shared the

firemen's motto "Everyone can contribute" prompted David and Nathalie Chambers to select this as the theme of the 2013 Chef Survival Challenge. Each year, each Survival Chef has a partner. Last year, it was ten of Canada's 2012 Olympians. This year it will be ten of our Saanich firemen, to honour their great contribution to the human ecosystem.

With fundraising and the farm itself modelling biodiversity in action, Madrona's sustainability motto could well be, "Everyone must be allowed to contribute." The bees, the frogs, the hummingbirds, the ladybugs, the variety of trees, the rocks, the sand, the compost and of course, the worms love contributing. Their biodiversity has a chain-linked impact on the sustainability of our farmland.

If we had to choose one species as the finest contributor, perhaps it would be the sadly maligned bee. Worldwide, there are 25,000 known species (http://www.buzzaboutbees.net/types-of-bees.html). B.C. is home to 450 different native species. Vancouver Island claims 200 (www.planbeenow.ca). Most bees don't sting. Males cannot. Bumblebees and lone bees are usually meek and only sting out of defence, and then after giving three warnings: lift first leg, lift second leg, finally turn on their backs and show you their stinger (http://beestrawbridge.blogspot.ca/2013/03/which-bees-sting-and-which-dont.html). Even swarms of honey bees sting only if provoked. Unless allergic, the average human adult can withstand 10 stings per pound of body weight – or more than 1000 stings (http://www.buzzaboutbees.net/bee-sting-facts.html). It is possible to tell bees to be gentle. I have watched a young child pick up a bee and stroke its back lovingly more than once. Bees pick up our tension and react in defence. As world-famous animal behaviourist Thomas D. Seeley explains in his richly illustrated Honeybee Democracy, bees can be our greatest teachers – on collective wisdom, democracy and effective decision-making (http://press.princeton.edu/titles/9267.html).

Biodiversity, within bees or in the wide world, is key – whether we're mixing our own genes with another family's, whether a butterfly finds its special flower, or whether an adjacent forest provides a habitat for pollinators of farmlands. If our ecosystem is healthy, it contributes to our health.

And yes, *Victoria Naturalist* readers like you contribute simply by buying sustainable, organic food. With Madrona Farm offering delicious in-season produce year-round, it contributes to align our bodies in a balance of biodiversity from within. Opting to have a healthy change from out-of-season veggies while savouring produce on farmland close to home, we can also reduce the impact of greenhouse gases by rejecting the need for transport trucks and jets to bring relatively tasteless produce picked green from far-flung countries. Wow – the ripple effect of mutual contribution!

Since Madrona Farm is now protected in perpetuity, this year's Chef Survival Challenge has progressed to a stage that embraces the firemen's motto. Every Canadian can contribute to saving farmland. Everyone, internationally, can contribute. If we want to eat, and if we want to stay healthy, we must all contribute.

Please enjoy contributing – in accordance with the firemen's motto – by joining the fun at Chef's Survival Challenge this September 8th!

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Downloadable Warbler Guides – you'll want these!

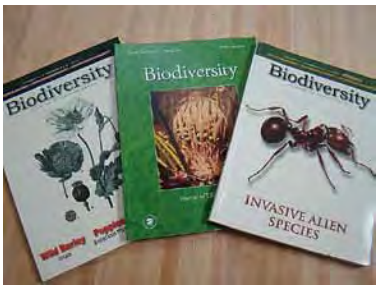
The publisher of the new Warbler Guide has made several sheets of comparisons available (faces, side view, fall plumage, etc.) for free download. Lots of birders will want these: http://blog.press.princeton.edu/2013/07/25/downloadable-warbler-guide-quick-finders

Biodiversity – Free to a good home: 48 issues of a fine scientific journal

Biodiversity: Journal of Life on Earth. Volumes 1 (2000) through 12 (2011). Volume 5 is missing #4. "The aim of Biodiversity is to raise an appreciation and deeper understanding of species, ecosystems and the interconnectedness of the living world and thereby avoid the mismanagement, misuse and destruction of biodiversity. Articles are written for a broad readership including

scientists, educators, policy makers, conservationists, science writers, naturalists and students. Biodiversity aims to provide an international forum on all matters concerning the integrity and wellness of ecosystems and the diversity of species." http://biodiversityconservancy.org/journal.html

Also, from the journal that eventually morphed into Biodiversity – Canadian Museum of Nature's Global Biodiversity, there are 7 issues from volume 7 and 8 (1997-9).



These journals have an incredible wealth of information, scientific papers, commentary and book reviews. There are a number of special issues including: Biodiversity and poverty alleviation; Invasive alien species; Biodiversity and climate change; The value of biodiversity to food & agriculture; Viruses- how much do we know?; And Conservation of the world's birds. I hope they are useful to someone with a connection to schools, libraries or other way that people can read and learn. Please contact Donna Ross by email hoshihana@telus.net if you want these journals for your library.

Small Suite Sought

Female VNHS member with native plant gardening experience seeks a small but bright quiet suite in the James Bay/Fairfield area. Please contact leijne at telus.net for more information.

Swan Lake Guided Bird Walks

Every Wednesday and Sunday at 9:00 a.m. Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal and informative walk around the lake area. Walks are generally led by Victoria Natural History Society members. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is at 3873 Swan Lake Road, off Ralph Street.

Wild Mushrooms: an introductory course for adults

This series of classes is sponsored by Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary and the Southern Vancouver Island Mycological Society (SVIMS). Register for as many as your interest and schedule allow. Details at http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php.

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 or steeper grades, requiring agility. LEVEL 4 – Very steep, insecure footing, or longer hikes requiring good physical condition. **Please – no pets on VNHS field trips.**

Members! Remember that if you want to do a talk or know someone who might, please contact one of the talk night coordinators. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share. Contacts: Birder's Night and Natural History Night – Christina Ball; Marine Night – Melissa Frey and Phil Lambert; Botany Night – Kristen and James Miskelly. Email/phone numbers on p.2 of the newsletter.

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP
Meets every Tuesday at the foot of Bowker Ave on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) at 9:00 a.m., rain or shine. Birding activities take place at various locations around Greater Victoria. For more information, call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP
Meets every Saturday morning, usually at 8:00 am, rain or shine. Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check the Rare Bird Alert on the web (http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/rarebird.html) on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday, September 10

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION
Salmon Confidential
Salmon Confidential is a film on the search for what is killing BC's wild salmon. When biologist **Alexandra Morton** discovers BC's wild salmon are testing positive for dangerous European salmon viruses associated with salmon farming worldwide, a chain of events is set off by government to suppress the findings. Tracking viruses, Morton moves from courtrooms, into British Columbia's most remote rivers, Vancouver grocery stores and sushi restaurants. The film documents Morton's journey as she attempts to overcome government and industry roadblocks thrown in her path and works to bring critical information to the public in time to save BC's wild salmon. The film provides surprising insight into the inner workings of government agencies, as well as rare footage of the bureaucrats tasked with managing our fish and the safety of our food supply. Join us for this screening of this fascinating documentary. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Tuesday, September 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Botanizing in the Altai Mountains and Far Western Russia

Ken Marr and **Richard Hebda** visited Russia in 2010 and 2011 to collect selected species of circumboreal arctic/alpine plants. All of these species also occur in British Columbia. We are analyzing the DNA of these species to attempt to understand the migration pathway of alpine species into BC following the last ice age and to evaluate evidence for the existence of full glacial refugia within the borders of BC. This illustrated presentation will feature many images of plants and landscapes in the two areas that were visited. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, September 21 and Sunday, September 22

EVENT

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers to submit butterfly records. If you would like to participate, please contact James Miskelly at 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com

Wednesday September 25

BIRDERS NIGHT PRESENTATION

Applications of Unmanned Vehicle Systems to Wildlife Research and Management in the 21st Century

Small unmanned vehicle systems (UVS), formerly exclusive to militaries, are rapidly advancing in sophistication and availability to civilians. Ranging from hand-launched autonomous airplanes to terrestrial robots to underwater machines, they are increasingly being employed in such areas as agriculture, emergency services, meteorology, oceanography, geophysics and film-making. Another area that shows great potential for the applications of UVS and associated markets is wildlife research and management. Applications being carried out in various regions of the world today include monitoring breeding, wintering and migrating populations of colonially nesting birds, spawning salmon and orangutans, mapping breeding habitat of endangered species, tracking threatened caribou and polar bears in the far north, examining nest contents of raptorial birds breeding in inaccessible locations, and deterring poachers in Africa. As technology and industry continue to develop and the regulatory procedures begin to loosen, we anticipate an ever-widening range of applications to surface in this field. Some examples include underwater tracking of foraging aquatic birds, detecting signals from songbirds bearing radio-transmitters, surveying nest contents of underground burrows of birds and mammals, and dispersing nuisance birds. Join **Dr. David Bird** for this presentation which will attempt to explore possible applications of UVS of all types and sizes to help meet the needs of today's wildlife biologists and managers and to delve into the limitations faced by those wishing to utilize UVS in terms of costs, size, practicality in the field, regulations, etc. 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 28

EVENT

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 lawn chair. [And don't forget the BBQ for VNHS members following the main event! See notice, page 4.]

Saturday, September 28

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 p.m., and the evening should wrap up around 9 p.m. 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/owl_bbq.php.

Sunday, September 29

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding

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 GST) per person for VNHS members, $85.00 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 by email at motmot@shaw.ca. See more details about the trip at http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html.

Monday, September 30

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION

Subtidal Invertebrate Fouling Communities of the British Columbian Coast

Heidi Gartner has been the Invertebrate Collection Manager at the Royal BC Museum since the summer of 2012. She will present key findings, with a focus on introduced species, from her Master's research studying invertebrate, fouling communities of the British Columbian coast. Heidi will also provide a brief overview of the invertebrate collection as well as on-going projects and research at the Royal BC Museum.

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 5

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 p.m,. and the evening should wrap up around 9 p.m. 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/owl_bbq.php

Sunday, October 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)
Colquitz Creek Ecological Restoration Walk
We enjoyed **Dr. Val Schaefer**'s ecological restoration tour around the UVic Campus in the spring so we will continue the theme with another of his walks. Along with Jessica Miles, he has produced an on-line book covering several ecological restoration walks in the Victoria area so you can get a preview of what we may see by checking out http://www.urbanecology.ca/documents/Books/RestorationWalksInVictoria.pdf. The Colquitz Creek watershed starts in Elk/Beaver Lake and covers about 60% of Saanich. Birders' paradise Viaduct Flats is part of it plus Swan Lake before it discharges into Portage Inlet. Even though it is not enclosed in culverts as is the fate of most urban streams, it still has been highly degraded over the years and the water quality is poor. Despite this, it is still one of the last salmon bearing streams in Victoria for Coho and Chum Salmon. Of course we can't cover this whole area in one session but Val will take us on a walk to show us some of the progress that has been made repairing this watershed one project at a time. We'll have a look at some of the restoration projects around Swan Lake including invasive species removal, wetland creation and a turtle nesting site. We'll move on to see an infiltration area along Blackberry Road and a constructed wetland at the Willowbrook Subdivision. We will start at 10:00 a.m. from the Swan Lake parking lot (Swan Lake Rd, off Ralph Street). There will be some changes in elevation and the ground will be uneven in spots so sturdy footwear is recommended. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250- 721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, October 8

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION
Princess Royal Island in Photographs and Stories
Princess Royal Island, the fourth largest island in British Columbia, is situated in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest. The island is largely wild and mostly covered with temperate rainforest. The area is also rich with First Nations culture and history, including abandoned settlements and active communities. Salmon, sea lions, seals, orcas, porpoises and many other marine species inhabit or frequently visit island's waters. The most famous inhabitants of Princess Royal Island are spirit bears, known scientifically as Kermode bears, an extremely rare subspecies of American black bear, known only to exist in British Columbia's temperate rainforest. For two seasons, **Mikhail Belikov**, a professional photographer and a VNHS member, has explored the island and surrounding areas travelling solo by kayak. He will share his photographs and stories. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Tuesday, October 15

BOTANY NIGHT
Summer in the State of Jefferson
Southern Oregon and northern California form a wild and diverse region of rugged mountains, arid rainshadows, oak woodlands, and active volcanoes. **James Miskelly** will present an overview of the landscapes and vegetation of the so-called State of Jefferson. There may be a few animals too. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, October 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)
Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding
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, $85.00 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 motmot@shaw.ca. See more details about the trip at http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html.

Sunday, October 20

NON-VNHS EVENT
Coastal Waterbird Monitoring Workshop:
Bird Studies Canada is offering a free workshop to learn about BC waterbirds and Citizen Science monitoring programs, co-sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society. This workshop will include an indoor classroom session and a guided walk to review the techniques to conduct Beached Bird and Coastal Waterbird Surveys, two of several monitoring programs coordinated by Bird Studies Canada in BC. Everyone is welcome to attend, including those interested to volunteer or those already participating who would like some extra training. The workshop will be held Sunday October 20: 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m., at the University of Victoria (room TBD). Pre-registration is required as spots are limited. To sign up, contact **Karen Barry** (bcprograms@birdscanada.org) or 604-350-1988. Please dress for the weather and bring a bagged lunch and binoculars if you have them.

Wednesday, October 23

BIRDERS NIGHT PRESENTATION
Lagunas Encantadas
Join **Dannie Carsen** for a photograph and video presentation on birding the Enchanted Lagoons near Tepic in Nayarit State in western Mexico. Take a "ride on the running boards" of a kingcab truck cruising the backroads of Nayarit looking for birds while Dannie narrates the backstory to his intensive three-day birding trip to three upland volcanic lakes: Santa Maria del Oro, Laguna Tepetiltic, and Laguna San Pedro northeast of Tepic. Neotropical migrants from both eastern and western North America abound in this location, wintering waterfowl, herons, shorebirds and other waders are present in good numbers, and there are lots of endemics and specialties in the pine-oak, thornscrub, and lakeside and streamside riparian landscapes. For those thinking of visiting Mexico with birding in mind, this is a good introduction to the range of birds, landscapes and food you can expect. See Dannie's article on page 20 of this issue for more information on the birds to expect. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Monday, October 28

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION
From the Abyss to Your Laptop in Near Real Time!
Rick Searle, Manager of Education Programs at Ocean Networks Canada, will give a presentation about the world-leading technology embedded within the VENUS and NEPTUNE cabled observatories, the deep ocean research that this technology enables, and the educational programs that have been developed for students, teachers and the public, including an exciting new television program.

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Gull nest found on the Beacon Pier in Sidney – interesting with the gull and the texture of the wood posts and rusty metal rope/hook.
Photo: Tina Kelly