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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Officers 2015-2016

PRESIDENT: Darren Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net
VICE-PRESIDENT: Purnima Govindarajulu 250-920-7874, purnimap@uvic.ca
TREASURER: Gordon Hart 250-721-1264, gordh19@shaw.ca
SECRETARY: Ben van Drimmelen 250-598-0570, ben@barristers4bears.com

Directors and Committees

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(*Membership, BC Nature representative*)
Claudia Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net (*Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary representative, BC Nature representative*)
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Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508, g.harcombe@shaw.ca (*Publications*)
Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, plambert@pacificcoast.net (*Publicity*)
Directors at Large:
Purnima Govindarajulu 250-920-7874, purnimap@uvic.ca
Paige Erickson-McGee 250-588-1635, pericksonmcgee@gmail.com

Presentation/Field Trip Coordinators

Marine Night: Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, marinenight@pacificcoast.net
Botany Night: Kristen and James Miskelly 250-544-0455, kristen.miskelly@gmail.com, james.miskelly@gmail.com
Natural History Night: Claudia Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net
Birder's Night: James Clowater 778-426-0166, clowater@shaw.ca
Field Trip Coordinator: TBA—contact a board member if you have ideas.

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Send to: Gail Harcombe

7368 Veyaness Road, Saanichton BC V8M 1M3
Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: publications@naturevictoria.ca
[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

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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 300 dpi for all sizes is requested.

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Contents

A Message from the Board	4
VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations.....	5
The Common Murre <i>Judy Burgess</i>	5
Protecting Eelgrass from Anchoring Practices in Our Marine Parks <i>Ben van Drimmelen</i>	6
The Last Flight? TLBO Closes After Record-setting 10th Year <i>Alisa Gordaneer</i>	9
The 2015 Christmas Bird Counts— Year of the Blob <i>Ann Nightingale</i>	10
Oak Bay Islands Boat Trip <i>Agnes Lynn</i>	12
Birding Trip to the Olympic Peninsula <i>Agnes Lynn</i>	13
WSI-I-KEM, Naturalist John Macoun's Last Stomping Ground <i>Kerry Finley</i>	14
HAT: Change is in the Air <i>Adam Taylor</i>	15
Golden-Crowned Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia</i> <i>atricapilla</i>) <i>Penny Lancaster</i>	16
A Good Read—The View from Lazy Point Book Review <i>Ken Sohm</i>	17
Welcome to New Members	17
Low-tide at Roberts Bay, Shoal Harbour <i>Tina Kelly</i>	18
Odds and Ends <i>Gail Harcombe</i>	19
Bulletin Board	20
Calendar	21

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Some time ago, I wrote a “Note from the Editor” that talked about some of the interesting species being found in our ocean...species that could become residents if the trend in ocean warming continues. I also mentioned that observations by “citizen scientists” are a great source of information. Naturalists such as our members are key citizen scientists helping us track changes and increase our knowledge of regional biodiversity. This is especially important in this time of fewer government professionals involved in ecological research and inventory.

A recent exception when professionals WERE involved is described in a recent article in Victoria's Times Colonist newspaper—an international collaboration of scientists compiled a survey study called *Fishes of the Salish Sea: A Compilation and Distributional Analysis*. The previous study, completed in 1980, listed 216 species...the study completed this year lists 253, 37 more! It is thought that northward movement of some of these species from southern waters has been happening for a number of years, with fish entering the Strait of Juan de Fuca and remaining in the slightly warmer waters with different currents—somewhat closed off from the colder ocean outside the Strait.

This study included information from the RBCM, which is often contributed by naturalists. As global warming continues to drive shifts in biodiversity patterns, this contributory role from naturalists will become even more valuable.

Fishes of the Salish Sea is available online at <http://spo.nmfs.noaa.gov/pp18.pdf> and is to be published as a book, potentially expanded to include illustrations for every species. Such a book could be used as a field guide, aiding those interested in viewing and identifying marine animals, in turn resulting in more accurate contributions to our store of knowledge.

I encourage you to take advantage of such books as this, adding to your knowledge as you get out and about in nature, hopefully participating in the many great field trips and activities such as Christmas Bird Count. I hope you all have a great November and December, and a safe and happy holiday season. See you next year!

Gail Harcombe

Cover Photo: Predicting winter weather...a Woolly Bear caterpillar (larval form of the Isabella Tiger Moth, *Pyrrharctia isabella*) is a true sign of fall. *Photo:* Gail Harcombe

Message from the Board

What a perfect Hawkwatch and BBQ Social we had! The weather was exactly what we requested, attendance was high for the Hawkwatch and the BBQ, and everything we needed to bring for the event was remembered—including the hotdogs!

It was nice to see old friends and get to know some new people in the sunshine, surrounded by the beauty of East Sooke Park (see photo p. 23). Vultures put on an excellent show and there were some other raptors seen as well: all part of the annual departure to warmer climes.

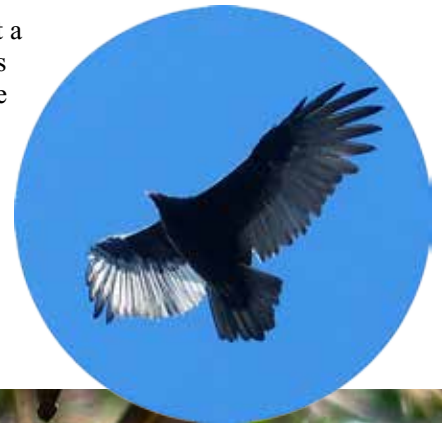
Something we noticed for the first time this year was another migrant with slightly less charisma but equally interesting: Green Darner Dragonflies. The old farm fields were crowded with this handsome species getting a last meal before undertaking the same crossing as the raptors—the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Spotting such a concentration is a rare treat for naturalists in this region. It is one of the largest dragonflies in the world and known to migrate as far south as Mexico. In the south it breeds year-round, so, similar to Monarch butterflies, it is a new generation that comes north next spring, not the same individual that left in the fall. Surprised to learn that some dragonflies migrate? Good! Learn more from the amazing Xerces Society: http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/MDP_Field_Guide_8-3-2012_Final_Websec2.pdf

Other news from the board: we are very pleased with the results of the \$75,000 donation to Swan Lake's boardwalk

replacement and really hope that the success to date leads to the further support needed to complete the span across the water. If you haven't been there in a while, stop in to check it out.

Speaking of support: thank you to everyone who takes out a membership to the Society and also to many of you who donate over and above your membership. We really appreciate the vote of confidence in our use of these additional funds. Some of the many things we will be doing with this money include helping out Habitat Acquisition Trust with their conservation covenants, installing interpretive signage about marine habitats in partnership with the Friends of Uplands Park, purchasing some items for the Connecting Children with Nature effort, and increasing the scholarship amounts at the University of Victoria and Camosun College.

We are still short a few board members and would welcome interest from our membership. Eight congenial meetings a year and a few decisions...not very onerous.



(lower) Seen at HawkWatch 2015: Migrating Green Darner getting a last meal before crossing the Strait. (top) Turkey Vulture seen from East Sooke Park. Photos: Aziza Cooper

VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways: writing articles for the Naturalist; leading field trips; or serving on the board or committees. Some go out of their way to ensure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities by visiting shut-ins or driving others to Society functions. The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways, for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2016. All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with their address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

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Dr. Bill Austin, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mr. Tony Embleton, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling, Mr. Bruce Whittington, Mr. David Anderson

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

- 1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
- 1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
- 1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
- 1994 Kaye Suttill
- 1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
- 1996 Gordon Devey
- 1997 Michael Carson
- 1998 No recipients
- 1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
- 2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
- 2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
- 2002 Norm Mogensen
- 2003 Bob Chappell
- 2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska
- 2005 Rick Schortinghuis
- 2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
- 2007 No recipients
- 2008 Ann Nightingale
- 2009 No recipients
- 2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn
- 2011 Claudia and Darren Copley
- 2012 Bill Dancer
- 2013 No recipients
- 2014 John Henigman, Jeremy Tatum
- 2015 Hans Roemer

The Common Murre

By Judy Burgess

Photo by author

Paddling kayaks into Cooper's Cove near Sooke, B.C., on August 17th, we spotted an unusual bird. Steaming toward our boats, a Common Murre pushed up a tiny wake. It stopped every once in awhile, rose in the water, flapping, preening, paddling with its feet then settled on a path toward us. My husband Tom and I have only seen Common Murres, *Uria aalge*, on two occasions: on a VNHS trip to the Olympic Peninsula and while on a whale watching boat. Both times we were far from land and the murres were travelling in groups, heading away from us. This bird's unusual activity kept us motionless. Only the click and zoom of my Nikon, recording our visitor's bold approach could be heard as we held our breath and the seabird paddled between our boats.



Protecting Eelgrass from Anchoring Practices in Our Marine Parks

By Ben van Drimmelen

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is a type of seagrass, a group of marine flowering plants found in shallow coastal areas around the world, typically on sheltered sandy or muddy intertidal and subtidal portions of estuaries, shallow bays and coves. There are two species of eelgrass locally: *Zostera marina* is our native species and *Zostera japonica* is an exotic. *Zostera marina* is generally found at less than 4 metres¹ below the lowest normal tide, which is deeper than *Zostera japonica*.

Eelgrasses grow both by vegetative growth and by seed germination, but most growth is vegetative. The fleshy roots grow horizontally, creating dense, extensive beds or meadows, producing a productive and diverse habitat. From an unstructured muddy/sandy bottom, those beds produce leaves that supply nutrients to salmonids and other fish, shellfish, waterfowl and over 100 species of invertebrates.² In addition, the meadows stabilize the subtidal substrate, reducing coastal erosion. By reducing currents and increasing sediment deposition, they also stabilize shorelines.

Eelgrass abundance varies seasonally because the most productive growing periods are spring and summer. However, abundance is also affected by physical disturbance, and anchoring by recreational boaters is one important source of disturbance due to several factors:

- both eelgrass plants and anchoring boaters prefer shallow, protected waters with soft bottoms;
- both eelgrass and recreational boaters are at maximum abundance during the summer months;
- there are no alternatives to anchoring, such as mooring buoys, in most bays and coves where eelgrass is likely to be present; and
- there are almost no anchoring exclusion zones along the BC coast to protect eelgrass beds. As result, boaters tend to anchor on substrates that are well suited to eelgrass beds.

Damage from scouring by anchors and both anchor chains and ropes is particularly obvious in eelgrass beds – gaps are left when swaths of eelgrass are torn up. The more the beds are fragmented, the less they can function as an erosion buffer. Fragmentation also disrupts their ecological integrity and functioning as shelter, food and refuge for marine wildlife.

The boaters in the Salish Sea are naturally attracted to our magnificent marine parks. Parks are for people, but surely conservation of park resources is the primary task of park



Kelp crab on eelgrass. Photo: Ben Van Drimmelen

administrators. Therefore, it is particularly in our local marine parks that continuing use of eelgrass beds for anchoring seems inappropriate. Parks policies logically should discourage anchoring there.

A few of our marine parks have mooring buoys available, potentially a great way to reduce disturbance to the delicate habitats on the bottom. However, there are two problems. First, mooring buoys are rare. There are mooring buoys in only three of the six local national marine park areas: Sidney Spit, Tumbo/Cabbage Islands, and Beaumont Bay (on South Pender Island). The situation is worse in our 19 local provincial marine parks. Mooring buoys exist in only three: Montague Harbor, Newcastle Island, and Plumper Cove.

The second problem is an economic one. Both provincial and national parks charge a fee to use a buoy—\$12.00 and \$9.80 respectively. However, there is absolutely no fee for anchoring. By charging a fee to use mooring buoys but not charging a fee for anchoring, parks management creates a paradox—notwithstanding the need to protect eelgrass beds, governments have created a financial incentive for recreational boaters to anchor for free rather than pay to use a buoy. The unfortunate result is continued damage of sensitive eelgrass beds in our marine parks.

Some efforts have been made to educate boaters to minimize their damage to eelgrass meadows. Sidney Island has signs on the dock asking boaters to avoid anchoring in less than 10 metres of water. Washington State uses a similar voluntary boater information policy - a brochure indicates the general location of eelgrass beds in the San Juan Islands and asks boaters to anchor outside of those areas.

However, voluntary compliance alone is inadequate. A 2006 study³ examined impacts of recreational boating on eelgrass at

¹ One variant of *Z. marina* can grow as deep as 10 metres, but as a general guideline, assuming a lower limit of 4-5 metres below the low normal tide should be adequate.

² Wright, N., L. Boyer and K. Erikson. 2014. Final Report - Nearshore Eelgrass Inventor. SeaChange Marine Conservation Society. Victoria, B.C. 12pp

³ Leatherbarrow, K.E., 2006; Monitoring environmental impacts of recreational boat anchoring on eelgrass (*Zostera marina* L.) and benthic invertebrates in the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada. Master's thesis, Department of Geography, University of Victoria. 114 pp.

two popular national park⁴ mooring/anchoring sites – Sidney Spit and Tumbo/Cabbage Island – and found that the high-density anchoring areas appeared to be in poorer health than low-density anchoring area and areas equipped with mooring buoys. While only 30% of overnighting boats chose to anchor rather than moor at Sidney Island, 85% of those boats were anchored in eelgrass beds. Despite the coaxing by signs on shore, many boaters were choosing to anchor in shallow water even when there were mooring buoys available.

This suggests that regulations are needed to reverse the paradoxical policy that encourages anchoring and discourages use of mooring buoys. That sounds simple, but anchoring, and the right to constrain it, is actually a fairly complex matter. To begin with, there is a common law right to navigation, which includes a right to anchor.⁵ A small issue, as legislation regularly displaces common law. The next question is: which level of government has the authority to regulate anchoring? That requires consideration of the division of powers set out in Canada's Constitution. The federal government has exclusive legislative authority over buoys, navigation and shipping, so there is no legal barrier for Parks Canada to charge a fee for anchoring in a national marine park.⁶

As for the province, the provincial legislature has constitutional authority over the management of public lands, including provincial foreshore.⁷ Happily, public land includes “land, whether or not it is covered by water”.⁸ That certainly suggests that the province also has authority to regulate what happens on the shallow sea bottom. Nevertheless, BC Parks fears that the province cannot regulate anchoring, citing an Ontario provincial court case that did indeed conclude that that province did not have the authority to charge a \$10 fee for anchoring in a provincial park, given the federal exclusive authority over navigation.⁹ However, it is significant that that lower court decision has not been followed by any other court.¹⁰ Instead, other, and higher, courts have indicated that anchoring in provincial parks can be constrained by the province, as are other recreational activities, as long as the primary purpose of such regulation is protection and management of the parks, and not regulation of navigation.¹¹ Provincial laws protecting and managing park resources can therefore be valid even if they overlap federal powers.

Thus, there is no legal obstacle to both the national and provincial marine parks charging a fee for anchoring in marine



Sea cucumber in eelgrass. Photo: Jamie Smith, Coastal Photography Studio

parks. So, what can we conclude? We know that eelgrass beds are an important component of the BC coast, including bays and coves in marine parks. We also know that many marine parks in the Salish Sea area are enjoyed by recreational boaters who use those sheltered bays and coves as anchorages. And we know that eelgrass beds are easily damaged by boaters' anchoring, both from the plowing effect of the anchors and from scouring by associated anchor chains and ropes.

Despite those conclusions, neither the national nor provincial marine park authorities charge a fee for anchoring in marine parks. Worse, in the few parks where mooring buoys have been installed, both administrations charge a fee for tying to a mooring buoy. The combination of free anchoring and fee-based mooring creates an incentive for recreational boaters to anchor, and a disincentive to use mooring buoys. The effect is to encourage anchoring and the resultant damage to eelgrass beds.

The federal and provincial governments both could better regulate anchoring in marine parks to protect and conserve eelgrass beds. Both agencies should, at a minimum, place signage in popular park anchorages to inform boaters about the location and sensitivity of local eelgrass beds. Producing and distributing brochures on “best anchoring practices” would be even more effective. Signage and brochures should inform

⁴ The term “national park” is used in this report for both established federal parks and federal park reserve areas.

⁵ *R. v. Lewis*, 2009 BCPC 386, at para 29. The Court considered regulations enacted by the federal government, in consultation with the City of Vancouver, with respect to anchoring and mooring in False Creek.

⁶ Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B of the Canada Act 1982 (U.K.), 1982, c. 11, ss. 91(9) and 91(10).

⁷ Constitution Act, 1982, s. 92(5).

⁸ Land Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 245, s. 1.

⁹ *R. v. Will*, 1999 CanLII 19915 (ON SC). Bad facts make for bad law, and this case typified over-zealous enforcement. Mr. Will was sailing on Lake Huron and anchored some distance from shore in a provincial park. A park warden came out and demanded a \$10 fee for an overnight permit but Mr. Will refused because he was not using any amenities of the park. Mr. Will was fined, but the fine was set aside by a sympathetic court.

¹⁰ Failure of higher courts to apply a lower court decision is an indicator that the lower court decision may not, in fact, be good law.

¹¹ *General Motors of Canada Ltd. v. City National Leasing Ltd.* [1989] 1 S.C.R. 641, at para. 45.

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boaters about the location and sensitivity of local eelgrass beds and explain why boaters should only use mooring buoys or anchor in depths of more than five metres below chart datum.

But research has indicated that those steps will not be enough. Both provincial and federal parks should install and maintain mooring buoys in all heavily-used recreational boat anchorages and eelgrass beds. And, most importantly, park agencies should create an incentive for boaters to use those mooring buoys when they are available, and also create a disincentive for boaters who choose to anchor in eelgrass beds in our marine parks.

It really is a pretty simple fix—the parks departments of both the federal and provincial government should:

- ✓ charge a fee for recreational boaters who choose to anchor in eelgrass beds at depths less than five metres in marine parks; and
- ✓ charge no fees for boaters who use mooring buoys and those who anchor at depths of more than five metres.



Eelgrass in Bracket Cove. Photo: Jamie Smith, Coastal Photography Studio

The Last Flight? Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory Closes after Record-setting 10th Year

By Alisa Gordaneer



Avery Bartels bands one of the more than 16,000 birds documented in the past decade by the Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory. *Photo: Roma Shaughnessy*

After documenting and banding a record-breaking number of migrating Western Tanagers, American Robins and Swainson's Thrushes returning to the Tatlayoko Valley this spring, and a banner summer for insect-eating birds like flycatchers and swallows, the Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory (TLBO), located in the Chilcotin 250 kilometres west of Williams Lake, is shutting down for the season—and possibly forever.

The TLBO has monitored bird population data for the past decade, operating under the wing of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. But now it faces an uncertain future as funding has not been found for it to continue.

The station, staffed by two professional banders and a cadre of volunteer naturalists, costs approximately \$17,000 per year to operate. It tracks birds and population patterns, which provides important information about climate and habitat well-being. But unless a new source of funding is found, the work that's been conducted over the past decade will stop—which could potentially devalue a decade of crucial scientific records.

According to Avery Bartels, who has worked at the station since 2010, and has been the Bander-in-Charge for the past two years, gathering good information about birds' migration patterns takes a minimum of 10 years, and ideally, should be longer.

"The longer the project goes on, the more valuable the data becomes," says Bartels, explaining that the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN), a national organization, uses data from bird observatories across Canada that have been in operation for 10 years or more.

Bruno Drolet of the CMMN states, "TLBO currently

provides trend data for 152 regular migrant species, nearly one third (41) of which are considered to be top priority for landbird monitoring in Canada. This is a very significant contribution to landbird management." Over past decade, the TLBO has banded a total of 16,216 birds.

"This 10 year mark is widely regarded as the threshold at which point the data starts to become usable," says Bartels, adding that now is the time to begin building a long-term database, not shutting down the research.

"It is important now more than ever that the station carries on, so as to get the most out of the great work that has already been accomplished," says Bartels. "The amount of time and effort required to build them up is nothing to take lightly and discontinuing a project of this scale should only occur when all avenues have been pursued."

Andrew Harcombe, who worked with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to start the Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory and ran it until his retirement earlier this year, wrote in his blog (August 28) that "Specific funds for running the TLBO have never been secured; funding to date has been cobbled together from existing funds and discretionary sources. Because discretionary funding is often hard to acquire, future funding for TLBO is in doubt." Since its inception in 2006, the TLBO has banded 16,216 birds, representing more than 140 species. What the future holds for the observatory remains to be seen.

The Nature Conservancy is looking for partnerships with organizations that could be interested in keeping the observatory in flight. For more information visit www.natureconservancy.ca/bc

TLBO BLOG <https://tatlayokobirds.wordpress.com/>

The 2015 Christmas Bird Counts—Year of the Blob

By Ann Nightingale

Will El Nino and the warm water “Blob” bring something spectacular for our Christmas Bird Counts this year? With the unusual weather patterns, we should expect the unexpected! While the real value of the Christmas Bird Counts is the long-term data on our winter residents, I know that finding a rarity or two adds a bit of spice to the count.

We had a record-breaking number of feederwatchers last year, the first time we’ve broken 100. I found a StatsCan report that says that 37% of Victoria residents feed birds. We need to find a way to reach them! A feederwatch list (with photos) and report form are posted at vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/feederwatch.html, and I will put together flyers again this year for people to distribute to their friends and neighbours.

Despite a miserable weather day last Victoria Christmas Bird Count, 222 determined field counters and 110 feeder-watchers, tallied 76,359 of 141 species. An out-of-season Barn Swallow that had been reported days earlier at Clover Point made an inland retreat, but was still spotted—at Quick’s Bottom. A few species broke their previous records last year: Greater White-fronted Goose (111), Canada Goose (6860), Turkey Vulture (34), Black-bellied Plover (298), and Eurasian Collared-Dove (more than tripling the previous record with 214). Anna’s Hummingbirds were surprisingly strong given the windy conditions with 761 counted.

Rare and uncommon birds last year included Band-tailed Pigeons, Brant, Pine Grosbeaks and our second ever Red Knot.

Everyone is welcome!

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is on **Saturday, December 19** this year. The BCVI fifteen mile diameter circle is centred on the Marigold/Interurban area.

You don’t have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters.

I’d also be interested in recruiting some groups—walking groups, school groups, scout groups, or any other group that would like to support the activity. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Most teams spend all of the daylight hours out in the field, but there is room for people who can only spend part of the day too. Come out for as long as you can! There are a few “keeners” who go out looking and listening for owls in the pre-dawn hours. There may be boats on the water again this year, so if that is your particular specialty, please let me know.

If you are curious, interested, would like to see lists and pictures of the region’s winter birds, or just need more information, please check out the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca/website/index.php/christmas-bird-count) and the Christmas Bird Count site (birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count). If you have a preference to count in a specific area, you may contact the team leader for the area directly.

Feederwatchers don’t have to register—just report your birds on the appropriate count day!

There will be a post-count gathering at the end of the day. We’ll meet at Gordon Head United Church, 4201 Tyndall Ave, at 5 pm for a wrap up of the count and to enjoy the company of fellow naturalists. Everyone is welcome, whether you participated or not. More details for participants will be sent out with the Christmas Bird Count notices.

We will need one or two new zone leaders for the Victoria count. Check our website for up to date reassignments and vacancies. Please let me know if you are interested in becoming a zone leader!

If you’d like to be a bird counter this year, please contact the leader for the zone you’d like or register on the VNHS website. The updated leader list and meeting times and places will be posted on the website. Feel free to invite a friend!

Count	Date	Coordinators
Victoria	Sat, Dec 19, 2015	Ann Nightingale -250-652-6450; victoriabc@naturevictoria.ca
South Salt Spring Island/Sidney; North Salt Spring Island/Galiano; Pender Island	Sun, Dec 20, 2015	Daniel Donnecke 250 744-5615; sidneycbc@naturevictoria.ca (South Salt Spring/Sidney); Tim Marchant tim@villagecobbler.ca (North Salt Spring); Mike Hoebelmhoebel@telus.net (Galiano Island); Gerald McKeating gerald-mckeating@shaw.ca (Pender)
Sooke	Sun, Dec 27, 2015	Cathy O’Connor-250-580-5673; sookecbc@naturevictoria.ca
Duncan	Fri., Jan 1, 2016	Derrick Marven 250-748-8504; marven@shaw.ca

	Area Name	Leader	Phone	Email
1	Butchart Gardens - N. Highlands	Warren Drinnan	250-652-9618	cbc1@naturevictoria.ca
2	Central Highlands	Warren Lee	250-478-7317	cbc2@naturevictoria.ca
3	Goldstream - Finlayson Arm	Robin Robinson	250-391-5995	cbc3@naturevictoria.ca
4	Thetis Lake - Hastings Flat	Barry McKee	250-721-3499	cbc4@naturevictoria.ca
5	Langford Lake	Barbara Lake	250-652-6450	cbc5@naturevictoria.ca
6	Albert Head - Triangle Mountain	Rob Gowan	250-592-8905	cbc6@naturevictoria.ca
7	Esquimalt Lagoon - Mill Hill	Rick Schortinghuis	250-885-2454	cbc7@naturevictoria.ca
8	Esquimalt Harbour	Don Kramer	250-995-9369	cbc8@naturevictoria.ca
9	Portage Inlet - The Gorge	Jeff Gaskin	250-381-7248	cbc9@naturevictoria.ca
10	Victoria Harbour	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc10@naturevictoria.ca
11	Beacon Hill Park	Mary Robichaud	250-507-8760	cbc11@naturevictoria.ca
12	Oak Bay	Geoffrey Newell	250-598-0158	cbc12@naturevictoria.ca
13	University - Cadboro Bay	Val George	250-208-0825	cbc13@naturevictoria.ca
14	Ten Mile Point - Arbutus Rd	Agnes Lynn	250-721-0634	cbc14@naturevictoria.ca
15	Gordon Head - Mt. Douglas	Margie Shepherd	250-477-5280	cbc15@naturevictoria.ca
16	Swan Lake - Cedar Hill	Bill Dancer	250-721-5273	cbc16@naturevictoria.ca
17	Blenkinsop Lake - Panama Flats	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc17@naturevictoria.ca
18	Elk Lake - Cordova Bay	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc18@naturevictoria.ca
19	Prospect Lake - Quick's Bottom	Dave Fraser	250-479-0016	cbc19@naturevictoria.ca
20	Martindale - Bear Hill	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc20@naturevictoria.ca
21	Zero Rock (ocean)	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc21@naturevictoria.ca
22	Chain Islets (ocean)	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc22@naturevictoria.ca
23	Juan de Fuca (ocean)	TBA	250-652-6450	cbc23@naturevictoria.ca

ANNE HANSEN—A Different Species of Wildlife Artist



www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com

anitabike@gmail.com

<https://picasaweb.google.com/anitabike>

Oak Bay Islands Boat Trips

By Agnes Lynn

We have been working with Coastal Sea Ventures since last year to get us out on the water. Bob was kept very busy with his trips from Victoria to Port Renfrew and Bamfield so it was hard to schedule anything with much notice. Finally we managed to arrange some trips on very short notice at the end of the season. In all, we took four trips with 12 people each time, two trips on each day. We meandered out from Oak Bay Marina, around the Chain Islands, Trial Island, Discovery and Chatham Islands. We were not able to get in as close as with other boats with shallower draft, but the boat was very quick so we covered a lot of ground in the two hour tours. Each trip got nice close up views of most of our common seabirds and, happily, the weather was good for all the trips. Bob may not return next season so we were very fortunate to get in these impromptu trips. Thanks also to the photographers for their contributions.



Heerman's Gulls. *Photos: Marie O'Shaughnessy*



Cormorants and seals. *Photo: Kim Capson (inset) Rhinoceros Auklet. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*

Birding Trip to the Olympic Peninsula

By Agnes Lynn



(above) Adult Black Oystercatcher and chick observed far below us at Cape Flattery. (left) Foggy visit to Salt Creek Recreation Area where the sun sneaked through the trees. Photos: Sharon Godkin

On Sunday, August 16, nineteen VNHS members headed out on the 6:10 am sailing on the Coho. We usually enjoy watching birds from the front deck of the ferry and things started well when we spotted a good-sized group of Red-necked Phalaropes on the water. We enjoyed views of most of the common alcids but the fog rolled in before we were able to see much more. This fog stayed with us for the whole day, so we were restricted to seeing the birds in close. Our entertaining bus driver met us as usual at the ferry dock so we were on our way quickly. First stop was the mouth of the Elwah River. Two dams have been removed from the Olympic National Park higher upstream so the whole delta has been modified by the silt pouring down the river. We got looks at some good warblers and vireos on the way down, but the mouth of the river was shrouded with fog so we'll have to go back another year to explore more thoroughly. We made a stop at a new area for us called Salt Creek Recreation Area. It was foggy, but eerie shafts of sunlight through the trees made for an interesting walk. We can't wait to return because we could see people walking out quite a ways around some little islets, similar to what you see at Long Beach. We weren't sure enough of how the tides would come in so left more detailed exploring for next time. We had great fun trying to identify the shore birds there because the fog did crazy things to the birds when we tried identifying them through the scope. Next

was Clallam Bay—always great. We walked out across the curved bridge and looked at the shorebirds inside the edge of the spit and enjoy the water birds such as scoters, loons and grebes on the outside. They are back there a couple of weeks before we see them in Victoria. We finally made it out to Cape Flattery. There is about a half-hour walk down to the viewing platforms. If the weather is clear, you get an expansive view of the water where we usually see the Tufted Puffins, plus we can see all the way across to Tatoosh Island. On a good day with a spotting scope, you may even see the young puffins in their burrows as well as Common Murres on the island. But on this trip, we got skunked on the puffins. Instead, this time below us, we got Red-necked Phalarope—nice to see them up close. Pigeon Guillemots and cormorant were also noisily flying in and out of the nearby caves and settling on the water. As we were leaving, we spotted a Black Oystercatcher down below us on a big rock and realized it was bringing food to a young chick. It was fascinating to watch. We had to start up the hill in time to make one more stop at beautiful Pillar Point, although the birds were not too exciting—again due to the lack of visibility. Willie managed to get us back in time for our 5:15 ferry and we said goodbye for another year. We have been taking trips with him for almost 10 years now so look forward to some more botany and birding adventures again next year, hopefully minus the fog.

Wsi-I-Kem, Naturalist John Macoun's Last Stomping Ground

By Kerry Finley

The very first glimpse and the very last impression of Vancouver Island for millions of residents and tourists is a beautiful little lagoon, as they hurry to and from the Swartz Bay ferry terminal in North Saanich. The lagoon is obscured by an unsightly thicket of Scotch broom which – for once – has a useful purpose of maintaining the tranquility, protecting a rare intertidal plant community, and limiting disturbance of the winter resident Green-winged Teal. There is no indication that we are looking at the historical area of Wsi-ikem (or Tsehum), the original home of the Coast Salish people, and that we are also looking at one of the oldest wildlife sanctuaries on the Pacific Coast - the final stomping grounds of one of Canada's most notorious naturalists, John Macoun.

When "Professor" John Macoun, Chief Botanist of the National Museum, retired to Sidney in 1912, he was one of the most renowned scientific figures in Canada, famous for his botanical explorations of the prairies and his dismissal of Palliser's Triangle as an obstacle to the settlement of the prairies. He was a naturalist in the old sense, self-taught, alert to all life. He and his son, James, had just completed the first Catalogue of Canadian Birds, a monumental task, but the indefatigable Professor had no intention of retiring. At age 81, his life as a free naturalist had just begun, in the paradise of W'Saanich and Wsi-i-kem (Tsehum). Within a year of his official retirement, he had collected and documented for science 247 species of fungi, 128 species of lichen, 31 species of liverworts, 700 species of flowering plants, and 195 of the known 264 species of island seaweed. In 1914, he wrote, "I mean to commence a more extensive system of field work." and when he suffered a stroke that paralyzed his right arm, he taught himself to write with his left hand and continued to document the local flora of the Saanich peninsula.

In his last correspondence, dated 28 June 1920, to Dr. Newcombe, curator of the provincial museum, Macoun thanks him for sending two specimens of *Godetias*, and in his last nature column for the Sidney and Islands Review (June 25, 1920), written under his nom de plume "The Rambler", he credits Dr. Newcombe for *Godetia caurina* (Wild Godetia), #259 on his growing list of the Wild Flowers of Saanich. Ever the optimist, he wrote "Our



John Macoun 1902. Photo courtesy National Archives of Canada PA33784

collectors are doing so well that by autumn we will be able to show that North Saanich has more than half the total known species as yet found on the Island. ... Before we are through we will show that Professor Stevenson and Professor Macoun are only attempting to tell what nature had done for Saanich before the advent of man."

Unfortunately Professor Macoun was unable to complete his list. It ends at specimen 265, *Linaria cymbalaria*, Kenilworth ivy, "a casual garden escape" collected on June 28th. On July 18th, in his ninetieth year, he died peacefully in his sleep.

He was buried in Patricia Bay Cemetery, but his body was later disinterred and removed to Ottawa for national recognition.

In addition, John Macoun was responsible for establishing the first migratory bird sanctuary in North America. Last Mountain Lake Sanctuary in Saskatchewan was established in 1887 as a result of his work. Macoun's initiative led to the establishment of a network of sanctuaries across the country and made Canada a leader in signing the terms of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act* of 1916. In recognition of this legacy, Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary was established in 1931, by an Order-in-Council of the Canadian government.



Macoun's meadowfoam (*Limnanthes macounii*). Photo: Rob Cannings

Change is in the Air

A brief message from Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Habitat Acquisition Trust



After nearly eight wonderful years as Executive Director of Habitat Acquisition Trust, the time has come for me to move towards a new challenge. Recently, I was offered the opportunity to join the Marmot Recovery Foundation as their Executive Director, which I have chosen to accept. The position offers a better fit for my family's needs, while allowing me to continue to pursue my passion of conserving B.C.'s natural heritage.

There is a cost to this opportunity, which in this case is that I must leave an organization that I am also passionate about, and whose work I also believe in. HAT's work is an effective and efficient way to make real, tangible conservation gains on south Vancouver Island. I am extremely proud of the HAT team—I know them to be capable and passionate, collaborative and practical advocates for conservation. Whoever is selected to succeed me will add to the team, and bring their own strengths to the organization making HAT stronger than ever.

As I write this, Habitat Acquisition Trust has just begun the search for a new Executive Director, but hopefully as you read this we are well on our way to having selected a new ED. That person will help HAT grow and prosper and be a model regional land trust for our community. I am looking forward to working with them as they learn their new role.

Watching for Slugs

In past years, keen observers have found the diminutive and endangered Blue-grey Taildropper slug as late as Christmas time, and fall is the best time of year to look for them. If you want to find one, your best bet is to look under leaves in woodland meadows and edges, especially oak and maples. However, Blue-grey Taildroppers have also been found crossing trails, so if you see an interesting slug, please report it to HAT. If you can, take a picture and email it to hatmail@hat.bc.ca.

Listening for Owls

HAT is still seeking reports of our Western Screech Owl, which despite its name does not screech. Its call sounds like a gentle series of quiet hoots, somewhat like a bouncing ball. If you think you have heard or seen a Western Screech Owl, please let us know.

Protecting Lands: An Update

Working with species that are being affected by development and land use changes in our region is only one component of our work. HAT is also working to permanently conserve



(above) Treefrog observing Adam.
Photo: Todd Carnahan

(left) Western Screech Owl. Photo: Adam Taylor

habitats for these owls and other species. Land protection projects often take a long-time to complete, but once

finished they last forever! HAT is especially excited to announce that Barb von Sacken has recently joined HAT as our Land Acquisition Coordinator. This will allow Wendy to devote more time to restoration and land management projects.

Golden-Crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)



By Penny Lancaster, RPBO

The Golden-crowned Sparrow is a winter resident of Southern Vancouver Island and may be commonly found in this region from September through April. This medium-sized sparrow can be identified by a brown streaky back and greyish brown underparts. During breeding season, adults have a black cap with a golden crown. When not in breeding plumage, the gold crown is quite faded and the head appears drab. The bill is stoutly-shaped and dusky-coloured. Females and males of the species are not distinguishable by field markings.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow breeds from northern British Columbia northward, throughout much of Alaska, and winters from southern British Columbia south to Baja California. During breeding, this sparrow prefers stunted boreal bogs near the tree line, especially near willows and alder. The nest is a thick cup of twigs, dry bark flakes, moss, ferns, leaves, and coarse grasses found in low, dense vegetation. It may be lined with fine grasses, ptarmigan feathers, and hair from Moose, deer, or Caribou. While the female collects nest material, the male follows her around and



Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*).
Photo: Mike Yip

sings. The female will lay 3-5 eggs, with one or two broods per season. Surprisingly, relatively few field studies have actually been done with this species in its breeding grounds, with current knowledge largely sourced from scattered notes in journals.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow was well-known to gold miners in the Klondike at the turn of the twentieth century due to its distinctively melancholy song of three descending notes. Miners bestowed the name “Weary Willie” to this bird as the three notes of its repeated song say “No gold here” or “I’m so tired,” which was an honest portrayal of miners’ experiences of the time.

During the 2014 migration monitoring period at Rocky Point Bird Observatory, 76 Golden-crowned Sparrows were banded at the Rocky Point station, and another 166 were banded at Pedder Bay. A total of 321 and 166 individuals were observed at the two stations, respectively.

In the winter, preferred habitat is dense woodlands, tangles, brush, and chapparal, where they gather in loose flocks among other sparrows, especially with the White-crowned Sparrow. So next time you go outside, just listen for the distinct, yet simple song of Weary Willie.

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Pomfret, B. 2014. Migration Monitoring at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory Fall 2014. Available: http://rpbo.org/reports/migf_2014_rpad.pdf . Accessed: 30 September, 2015.



2015 Musical HATs the Annual HAT Party!

November 9, 2015

7:00 to 9:00pm

**Glenlyon Norfolk School
Beach Drive**

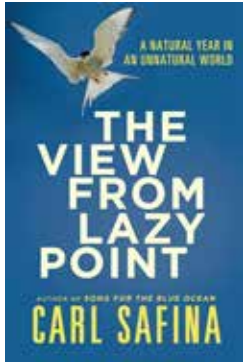
We are bringing back our musical themed evening with a twist! Join us for:
The Green Music Showcase and Fundraiser
in Oak Bay and be serenaded by biologists with guitars while we raise funds for conservation with a silent auction, light snacks, and drinks. Featuring HAT's very own Jill Robinson and her musical stylings.

Tickets just \$20 so bring a friend.

For tickets or info visit hat.bc.ca or
call 250 995-2428.

A Good Read—The View from Lazy Point

Book Review by Ken Sohm



This 2011 book, *The View from Lazy Point*, has been on the library shelves (and possibly yours) for a while. I just finished it and found it engrossing, with a wealth of information. Among his more recent titles is *Beyond Words: How Animals Think and Feel*. The author, Dr. Carl Safina, a noted biologist, lives near Montauk Point, Cape Cod. Founder of the Safina Centre (formerly called the Blue

Ocean Institute), he is an acclaimed writer on environmental topics and has done television series. This writer is in the tradition of John Muir and Aldo Leopold and often alludes to the latter. The writing is forceful, eloquently descriptive, and passionate in defense of planet earth. There is such a wide range of topics and locales that there is never a dull moment.

There are two themes in the book: one describes the month by month happenings during one calendar year at his home (many of his walks shared with his dog Kenzie). We witness the migrating birds and the return of the residents; the emergence of the local amphibians and the arrival of horseshoe crabs; the various schools of fish in the sound and his fishing outings; Dr Safina has been a dedicated sea fisherman since youth, and he still evidently gets excitement from it though tempered with a strong sense of conservation. His catch is destined for the table or the larder, nothing is wasted.

The other theme is the gross destruction that a consumer society has wreaked on natural systems and indeed on our own survival. He quotes a prescient Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower, who in 1961 warned: "...we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military/industrial complex..." Although noting the bad things that have happened in the past, such as the slaughter of the Eskimo Curlew, Dr Safina is not totally pessimistic and points to predators like Peregrine Falcons and Osprey: while rare in his youth he now has nesting Osprey in his 'backyard' so to speak.

Mainly connected with this environmental theme, he makes many expeditions to threatened environments: we dive with him in Bonaire where he witnesses the decline of the coral reefs and why this is happening; we visit Palau in Micronesia where many farmers can no longer grow their staple, Taro, because of salt water inundations; a trip to the Inupiat Eskimo community at Shishmaref on the Chukchi Sea portrays a community living 'on the edge', where the residents, probably here for thousands of years, will have to



relocate due to increasing storms and the rising ocean.

Other trips find the author on a forest trail in S.E. Alaska at salmon spawning time in the midst of Brown and Black Bear including two cubs (he does have a local fisherman guide) and the adrenaline is palpable. Another kind of excitement occurs in the South Falklands where he and two scientists, there to study and tag penguins, stare out the window at the potty seat some 40' away, wondering who is going to be first to warm the seat. Outhouses blow away in the gale winds. We also sail north to Svalbard, almost 80° N. lat., to see Polar Bears and seals, with an incidental trip into the dark, deep caverns of the Doomsday Vault, the world's seed storehouse.

So, if you want to find answers to some of nature's intricate connections, such as that between the shrinking horseshoe crab populations, shorebird migration, the commercial eel fishery, and cutting edge medical research, read the book.

Welcome to New VNHS Members

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

Kathy Brown
Victoria
Birding, photography, natural history

Low-tide at Roberts Bay, Shoal Harbour

By Tina Kelly

Photo by author



The brewing storm that resulted in power knocked out to more than 200,000 British Columbians didn't damper the August 29 field trip to Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary hosted by Nature Canada's Saanich Peninsula NatureHood. Kitted out with gumboots and Gortex, we explored the tidal mudflat looking for some of the area's rich invertebrate and algae biodiversity. A few of our finds—Green Ribbon Worms, Pacific Lugworms, Nuttall's Cockles, Butter Clams, and a 25 cm Starry Flounder. As the edges of the bay are peppered with rocky outcrops, we also found a few of the usual rocky habitat creatures—Acorn Barnacles, Brown Flatworms, Pacific Oysters, and Pink-tipped Anemones.

A particular fun find were Bubble Snails—hundreds of Bubble Snails. First spotting their thin, white, empty shells, we looked for living snails among the algae. Once our eyes were trained to the appearance of this snail, whose brown body often completely covers the shell, we spotted them everywhere. More evidence we were in Bubble Snail territory was their distinct egg masses attached to seaweed. Spring and summer are the seasons to spot this snail in sandy mudflats among algae. They are a difficult find for winter exploring, so remember to search for them next year!



*We keep it natural.
For them.
Forever.*

Join the growing community of legacy supporters who are investing in nature for future generations with Victoria's local land trust.
Give us a call. Create a Conservation Legacy.

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Helping people understand and care for habitats | Conserving nature on south Vancouver Island



HAT

Odds and Ends

By Gail Harcombe

Greater Victoria's Migratory Bird Sanctuaries

A recent article by Tina Kelly in the September 2015 issue of *Island Parent* provides information on the three designated Migratory Bird Sanctuaries (MBS) and gives some great tips for winter birding. One of the tips I especially like is “Make like a duck! Waterproof yourself with the west coast staples—gumboots and a raincoat.”

The three sanctuaries are Shoal Harbour (see article p.18), Victoria Harbour, and Esquimalt Lagoon, all of which are home to resident and winter visitor waterfowl and shorebirds in surprisingly large numbers. The tips range from the one above to reminders to bring field guides and binos, and leave your dog at home.

This is a great article that reminds us that if perhaps you are not a snowbird—or at least, not for the entire Victoria winter—you can get immense enjoyment out of not only the birds but the shoreline inhabitants (plants and animals) that are regularly seen here. <http://tinyurl.com/islandparent>



Least Sandpiper.
Photo: Marie
O'Shaughnessy

Did You Know...?

That the Pygmy Rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) is the world's smallest leporid (a member of the Leporidae family (the family of mammals that includes rabbits and hares)—less than 30 cm and about 0.5 kg. Interestingly, it is and is one of only two rabbit species in North America to dig its own burrow. Highly dependent on big sagebrush (*Artemisia spp.*) in the Great Basin (California, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Washington), the animal is very vulnerable to climate change. Warming temperatures negatively affect the sagebrush, the rabbit's primary source of food and shelter, and increase the susceptibility of the plant to fire, disease, and invasive species.

The good news is that the Nevada Department of Wildlife, in conjunction with University of Nevada, has initiated a multi-year study to determine the ecology and demography of pygmy rabbits in Nevada, with the hope that this will inform management practices, resulting in better protection for the species.

From Billions to Extinction

The Passenger Pigeon: Lessons from the Past for a Sustainable Future

Excerpts from the Project Passenger Pigeon website
<http://passengerpigeon.org/index.html>

“The story of the passenger pigeon is unlike that of any other bird. With a likely population between 3 and 5 billion, it was the most abundant bird in North America and probably the world. Yet human exploitation drove this species to extinction over the course of a few decades.”

2014 was the centenary of the extinction of the passenger pigeon – once the most abundant bird species in North America, if not the world. A group of scientists, educators, conservationists, artists, musicians, filmmakers, and others, worked together to use the centenary of the passenger pigeon's extinction to engage people in this story and to use it as an opportunity to promote habitat preservation and species conservation.

In the year 1800, more than five billion passenger pigeons flew the skies of the eastern United States and Canada. However, in the face of slaughter for food and recreation, coupled with habitat loss, this seemingly inexhaustible resource was depleted in just a few decades. By 1900, the species was virtually extinct, and by September 1, 1914, Martha, the last of her species, died in the Cincinnati Zoo.

The passenger pigeon's story is proof that even common species can be lost forever if we do not interact with them in a sustainable manner. The story of how the most abundant bird in North America disappeared so quickly is unique in the annals of human history. Though a century has passed since the loss of this species, it remains a poignant example of nature's abundance, as well as a powerful reminder of humanity's ability to exhaust seemingly endless riches. The echoes of the passenger pigeon's life still resonate today and can teach us lessons of stewardship, hope, and sustainable living for the future.

The centenary of the passenger pigeon's extinction reminds us of the connections all of us have to the natural world and the power we each have to influence the world for good.

For more information on the project, go to <http://passengerpigeon.org/casestatement.html>

BULLETIN BOARD

Metchosin MycoBlitz—Saturday, November 7

As a follow-up to Metchosin's spring BioBlitz, there will be a MycoBlitz to cover the amazing diversity of fungi found in Metchosin. Knowledgeable leaders will lead teams all over Metchosin helping to find specimens to add to the already large list of species. Members of the public are invited to join a search team. You don't have to be an expert to be on a team – you can learn as you go. Meet us at Metchosin Municipal Hall, 4450 Happy Valley Road (just behind the Fire Hall) at 9:00 a.m. For more information, including details on a mushroom talk to be held on the previous evening, check out <http://metchosinbiodiversity.com>. Contact Moralea Milne at moreamilne@gmail.com or 250-478-3838 for further information.

Island View Beach Regional Park Management Plan Meeting—Saturday, November 21

CRD Regional Parks is updating the 1989 Island View Beach Regional Park management plan following a 4-step public participation process. Steps 1 and 2 have been completed and the results presented to the Regional Parks Committee:

- **Step 1**—present environmental information about the park and to seek public feedback on that information.
- **Step 2**—gather information about issues and interests the public would like to see addressed in the management plan.
- **Step 3**—provide a forum for the public to jointly discuss the issues identified in Step 2 and to develop possible options for addressing these issues in the management plan.

Step 3 is now underway. The Staff will hold a community dialogue session on Saturday, November 21, 2015 from 9:30 – 3:30 p.m. at the Greek Orthodox Church (4648 Elk Lake Drive). We invite the members of the Victoria Natural History Society to participate in this important community dialogue. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Information on how to register will come out soon. This is a pivotal time in the history of Island View Beach Regional Park and we hope you will play an important part in helping to determine its future.

The Real Thing—

The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan

The Real Thing, by Briony Penn, is the first official biography of Ian McTaggart Cowan (1910–2010), the “father of Canadian ecology.” We are pleased to advise that the biography is to be published in mid October. Further information on the book and planned legacy events can be found at <http://cowantherealthing.com/>. There is a digital collection of field journals at <http://www.uvic.ca/library/featured/collections/bc/Cowan.php>

Christmas is Coming!

Great gift idea—Nature Guide to the Victoria Region

Edited by Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley

The Victoria region is one of the most biologically-rich areas of the country, with many plants and animals found nowhere else in Canada. 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, David Stirling, Alan MacLeod, James Miskelly, Robert Cannings, Bryce Kendrick, Philip Lambert, David Nagorsen, Anna Hall, Gavin Hanke, and Leon Pavlick describe the species most likely to be seen here and direct you to the best places to see them. The Guide is in a portable, easy-to-read format, and includes beautiful full-colour photographs, checklists, and a map of all the great places to visit. 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 southeastern Vancouver Island. \$15 at Society evening presentations. Look for them in local bookstores!

UPDATE your Membership Information

If you have not received any recent emails, it may be because you have changed email address or failed to give VNHS the address. Please consider contacting us at members@vicnhs.bc.ca to make sure you get the Vertical Response emails and receive reminders and changes to events—don't miss opportunities for things like the amazing Fantasea trips!

VNHS In Search Of Stellar Volunteer Coordinator...

Are you passionate about VNHS? Would you like to contribute 1 day a week to a volunteer position where you can make a difference to nature? We are looking for an individual to assist in matching our skilled and talented volunteers with projects that need to be completed in our various programs. This position is flexible, but for consistency we ask for a commitment of six months, 4-5 hours per week. Experience with MS Office and email required. Other valuable skills could be past work in conservation or restoration, project management, web design and webpage editing, volunteer supervision, or office coordination. **Contact Paige pericksonmcgee@gmail.com or call 250-588-1635.**

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/website/index.php/calendar> and is updated regularly. PLEASE NOTE: EVENT DETAILS ARE ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION BUT CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS.

Remember that if you want to do a talk or know someone who might, please contact one of the presentation night coordinators. If you have an idea for a field trip or wish to volunteer as a leader, please contact any board member—contact information on page 2. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share!

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.**

NB. While evening presentations are open to the public, field trips are designed for members. Guests may join if invited by members for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING

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 VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Meets every Saturday morning, usually at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. Check on the Calendar page of the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca/website/index.php/calendar) on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. Novice and experienced VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society. For more details, contact Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454 or Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Mushrooms at Royal Roads

This area has a diverse selection of mushrooms so it is always a great place to wander at this time of year. A member of both the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (www.svims.ca) and VNHS, **Kem Luther** will lead us around the area assisting us in identifying what we see. Bring your favourite field guide and we will assist you at learning more about these mysterious fungi of the forest. Please note this is an observation trip, not intended for collecting. However, a few selected specimens will be chosen by the leader for closer examination. Meet at Royal Roads University (2005 Sooke Rd) by the Tennis Courts near the university entrance at 10:00 a.m. Note parking fees are in effect. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, Nov 10

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

The Real Thing:

The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan

Author **Briony Penn** will read from the official biography of early naturalist/biologist/conservationist, Ian McTaggart Cowan (1910-2010), who was documenting biodiversity, climate change, logging, pesticides and conservation issues before most of us were born. Briony will bring clips from his early TV shows—the forerunner to *The Nature of Things* (by David Suzuki, who he first hired) and the fascinating stories from his wildlife journals that span the entire century, province and species from Alces to Zapus. His journals of southern Vancouver Island start in 1929 and include the natural history of Beacon Hill, Rocky Point, Saturna Island, Clayoquot Sound, Cowichan Lake, Haley Lake (with the rediscovery of the Vancouver Island marmots) and much more. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Everyone is welcome. Please feel free to bring a friend.

Saturday, November 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Snow Geese at Reifel Bird Sanctuary

Come and see the annual Snow Goose spectacle at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. Every November, thousands of Snow Geese stop-over in this part of the Fraser River delta. There is normally time to visit Boundary Bay or another site as well. Past trips have produced up to 80 species of birds for the day. Bring a lunch and drinks as we will not be stopping for refreshments. Dress warmly as it can be windy near the water. We go rain or shine. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We plan to return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes. First eight people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$65 for the day from Victoria. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to confirm attendance.

Sunday, November 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Fungi Observations in John Dean Park

Mycologist **Bryce Kendrick** (www.mycolog.com) will lead us on an informative nature walk through the Park. Mushrooms are only one of the types of organisms that he will show us. We will learn how molds and slime molds differ from the mushrooms. You might also ask him why fungi are more like animals than plants. As this is a park, there will be no collecting. However a few selected specimens may be chosen by the leader for closer examination. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the far end of Carmanah Terrace. Follow East Saanich Rd to Dean Park Rd and right on Carmanah Terrace to the end. Although we will not cover a large distance, the ground will be uneven and occasionally steep. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, November 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Flora and landscapes of the Hawaiian Islands

Hawaii is home to species that occur nowhere else in the world. Among plants the number of endemic species is ca. 89%. Unfortunately because of its mild climate, many non-native plant and animal species also occur here. Feral rats, goats, pigs and deer have caused significant damage to the landscape and many non-native plants have become established. The Polynesians who settled the islands about 1000 years ago brought many food plants with them. **Ken Marr**'s presentation will illustrate some of the more spectacular endemic plants species as well as some aspects of Hawaiian Ethnobotany, and the problems caused by introduced species. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Sunday, November 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho

Mike McGrenere will lead this trip on the MV Coho on its usual sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. He

has been doing this trip for about ten years now and he says this is the best opportunity to see bird species that are usually found further out to sea, including shearwaters, fulmars and phalaropes. The crossing takes 90 minutes. We will be birding from the bow of the boat, so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. sailing. We will return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket. Street parking is free on Sundays. Return ferry fare is \$36 US (about \$48 CDN). You will require a Passport or enhanced driver's license to go through US Customs. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Wednesday, Nov 25

BIRDERS NIGHT

The Conservation Efforts of The Nature Trust of BC and their Impact on the Birds of Vancouver Island - AKA "This Presentation is for the Birds!"

The Nature Trust of BC (TNTBC) is the oldest exclusively BC-based land trust in the province. For 44 years, it has acquired ecologically significant lands. Although not specifically dedicated to the protection of birds or fish, TNTBC's acquisition of 470 properties across BC has had a profound, positive impact on both bird and fish populations. A great deal of this benefit for birds comes from their conservation of estuarine properties at the mouth of some of the province's most important rivers. TNTBC is fortunate to have the guidance of Dr. Rob Butler, a foremost ornithologist, who is on its Board of Directors. TNTBC's important-to-birds properties include: Boundary Bay; Swan Lake–Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary; Somenos Marsh; as well as estuarial properties on the Cowichan, Nanaimo, Fraser and Englishman rivers. The Nature Trust of BC's, **Steve Housser**, will give us a lively "presentation for the birds" on his organization's work—often in cooperation with other groups such as Ducks Unlimited. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Everyone is welcome. Please feel free to bring a friend.

Monday, November 30

MARINE NIGHT

Negative ecological consequences of open net pen salmon aquaculture

Dr. Lawrence Dill will describe potential negative consequences of the sort of salmon aquaculture practiced in BC, not only for wild Pacific salmon but also other marine and terrestrial species. The talk will include recent data on the relationship between sea lice infection and the competitive ability and growth of juvenile Sockeye salmon. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Everyone is welcome. Please feel free to bring a friend.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Esquimalt Lagoon Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at the bridge at Esquimalt Lagoon at 8:00 am for a chance

to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip will cover the ocean birds along the lagoon and will go into the fields back behind the lagoon to provide a variety of birds. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. Call Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454 or contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, December 8

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Awash with Opportunity: Putting "Sustainable" in B.C.'s New Water Laws

British Columbia has an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to significantly improve its water law regime. Escalating issues such as droughts, floods, ecosystem degradation, and conflicts over water use underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive change to water management and the supporting legal structure. In B.C., recent efforts to modernize water laws to better respond to present-day realities resulted in the new Water Sustainability Act (WSA). The WSA was passed in 2014 and will come into effect through supporting regulations in 2016-2017. This presentation by **Oliver Brandes** and **Rosie Simms** (POLIS Water Sustainability Project) will explore some of the necessary elements of effective modern water law, focusing on B.C.'s ongoing effort to implement the WSA and improve water governance. Drawing on recent research examining California's devastating drought and groundwater law reform, the talk will highlight key lessons from California that could help inform a comprehensive and effective approach groundwater management in B.C. It will offer conclusions about how B.C. can work towards watershed governance and a more sustainable water future. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Everyone is welcome. Please feel free to bring a friend.

Saturday, December 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Juan de Fuca/Esquimalt Harbour Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at Juan de Fuca (Westshore) Recreation Centre Park and Ride (Ocean Blvd and Sooke Rd) at 8:30 a.m. for a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip

will cover the recreation centre property, parts of Esquimalt Harbour and the roadsides in between. Bring your walking shoes, fieldguide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. Contact Ann Nightingale at 250-652-6450 or motmot at shaw.ca if you need more information.

Tuesday, December 15

BOTANY NIGHT

Members Night: Botany Night Christmas Party

A full night to share a few photos, a story, or a song and dance. You might want to try out some material in preparation for a full-length Botany Night Presentation. You might want to see if the group can identify some of the photos you've taken over the last year. You might just want to sit back and have a few snacks. Treats are appreciated but not required. If you have something to present, please contact kristen.miskelly@gmail.com (778-679-3459). Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Saturday, December 19, 2015: Victoria

Sunday, December 20, 2015: South Salt Spring Island/ Sidney; North Salt Spring Island/Galiano; Pender Island

Sunday, December 27, 2015: Sooke

Friday, January 1, 2016: Duncan

Everyone is welcome! You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Most teams spend all of the daylight hours out in the field, but there is room for people who can only spend part of the day too. Come out for as long as you can! There are a few "keeners" who go out looking and listening for owls in the pre-dawn hours. There may be boats on the water again this year. If you are curious or just need more information, please check out the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca/website/index.php/christmas-bird-count) and the Christmas Bird Count site (birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count). If you have a preference to count in a specific area, you may contact the team leader for the area directly (see article p. 10).



September 26 at Beechey Head—enjoying the sunshine and "raptor show" at Hawk Watch 2015.
Photo: Jeannie Cosgrove



Harbour Seal seen on Oak Bay Islands trip. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*