



The Victoria **NATURALIST**

MARCH
APRIL
2016
VOL 72.5

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4
Contents © 2016 as credited.
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

Editor: Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508
Production: Patrice Snopkowski, CGD
Distribution: Ken Sohm, Laura Gretzinger
Printing: Fotoprint 250-382-8218

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

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Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

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Deadline for next issue: April 1, 2016

Send to: Gail Harcombe
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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, book reviews, etc., up to 2000 words. Please note: If you are concerned about protecting your privacy when submitting an item, please notify the editors at the time of your submission and indicate whether or not you wish to use a pseudonym or have your name withheld.

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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Cover Photo: Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) seen in Victoria, BC. Photo: Jody Wells

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I found myself in a difficult position this February—I had a surfeit of submissions and it was very difficult deciding what to defer. Thank you to all of you who provided me with interesting articles and tidbits that I was unable to fit into this issue (it could have been 32 pages!). I hope to publish them in coming issues.

I hope you enjoy the variety of topics in this issue. Our “foreign” birding story, Val’s wonderful article about birding in Ecuador, reminds me of my own experience, both in Ecuador and in the adjacent Colombia. It truly is an amazing concentration of biodiversity, so much of it relatively easily accessible. It makes me want to go back and explore even more of the country!

I wish to extend **Congratulations to Ann Nightingale**. She has been awarded the 2016 Betty Petersen Award for Conservation and Community by The American Birding Association.* [excerpt from the citation accompanying the announcement]

“Ann Nightingale is an active British Columbia birder and a tireless promoter of birding. She has been deeply involved with numerous conservation efforts, public outreach programs and liaison activities on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Ann is a past President and Board Member of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) ... and she is a past winner of the Governor General’s Caring Canadian Award for her work there. She is the face of the Vancouver Island birding community...representing a vital liaison between the birding community and the general public.”

Congratulations Ann—well deserved!

And lastly, a chuckle for you...

“A VW Beetle Was Spotted in the Insect Collection at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History...”

While walking through the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Christopher Jobson spotted a toy “VW Bug” hidden amongst a collection of taxidermied beetles. Most likely the joke of a good-humored curator, commenters suggest museums frequently hide objects like this for observant patrons to discover.

A picture really is worth a thousand words, so if you can, you should check the website <http://www.thisiscoolossal.com/2016/01/museum-beetle-cleveland/>

Gail Harcombe

*<http://blog.aba.org/2016/02/announcing-the-2016-aba-awards-recipients.html>

A Message from the Board

Hopefully you are reading this a week or so in advance of our Annual General Meeting (March 8th) and you put that date into your calendar. We do not have any particularly important business to attend to, but we do need quorum! So please come out—we promise to keep the AGM short and entertaining (less than half an hour) and then our guest speaker from Habitat Acquisition Trust, Jill Robinson, will be presenting on local wildlife—something naturalists care deeply about.

There are a few other things to cover here as well. First off: a huge thanks to Ann Nightingale for once again organizing a successful Christmas Bird Count. As many of you know, Ann is also an integral part of many of the other counts that happen in the region. Her involvement has been critical to getting out counters and feeder watchers, and the summary you will find on page 7 is also thanks to Ann. If there are others out there that would like to help out share the Christmas Bird Count effort it would be great to provide a bit of a break for Ann. And considering how many months it is until the next one there is plenty of time to be mentored in whatever responsibilities you would like to take on.

On the topic of birds, the Victoria Natural History Society has always had a connection to the efforts of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO). We have overlap of our membership, a regular column about RPBO activities in the newsletter, and we regularly support the banding program through financial contributions. In recognition of the importance of the data being collected and the potential uses for it, we have provided another \$5000 in support of RPBO this past January.

Now speaking of support: some of you may remember

Dorothy Coombes, a former member of the Victoria Natural History Society, Habitat Acquisition Trust, The Land Conservancy of British Columbia and a supporter of the Royal BC Museum. Born in Leafield, England, Dorothy lived in British Columbia since 1977. Although she was more recently living in Ladysmith, Dorothy lived in downtown Victoria for many years.

Dorothy's work with the provincial government involved computers and data security in the ministries of health and finance, and much earlier on in her career she had trained as a registered nurse. She was also very interested in civic issues. Because she lived downtown, Dorothy was a regular visitor at The Field-Naturalist, a nature-themed store that long-time VNHS members will remember with fondness, and later, the Habitat Acquisition Trust office. For these visits, Dorothy was always cheerful and friendly, and staff and volunteers learned about her concerns on topics such as population control and her frustration with the city planners for planting deciduous trees because they are bare in the winter.

Because of her lively personality, interesting concerns, and regular visits, Dorothy was a memorable character to those who knew her. In turn, Dorothy remembered her connection to the Victoria Natural History Society when she passed away. Half of the value of her home in Ladysmith has been received as a bequest to the Society: almost \$168,000. It is because of donations and bequests from members that we are able to support conservation and education initiatives throughout the region. We really appreciate the confidence the membership shows in the Society's role through these contributions.

Leave a Lasting Gift

Donate to The Nature Trust of BC in your will to help conserve the natural diversity of wildlife, plants and their critical habitats for future generations.

For more information, contact Deb Kennedy at debkennedy@naturetrust.bc.ca or call 604-924-9771 or 1-866-288-7878

www.naturetrust.bc.ca



2015 Butterfly Count Report

By Aziza Cooper
Photos by Author



(left) Red Admiral
at Rocky Point.

(top right)
Purplish Copper
at Martindale
Flats.

(lower right)
Purplish Copper.

The Victoria butterfly season in 2015 ended very early due to the warm, dry weather throughout the summer. The butterflies took advantage of the favourable weather to finish their breeding and life cycle much earlier than usual, and by the last months of the count period there were very few butterflies around. On our last butterfly walks we saw so few that we had to resort to birding! The early season is a motivation for butterfly-watchers to get out early in 2016 in case this summer is equally sunny and dry. Enjoy them while you can!

In 2015, most butterflies were doing quite well compared to previous years, with a few exceptions. We had seven record highs since beginning the count in 2006. Grey Hairstreak and West Coast Lady were just over the previous high count. Four were double the previous highest: Propertius Duskywing, Woodland Skipper, W. Tiger Swallowtail and Painted Lady. And Red Admiral was four times the previous high count! The reason for these increases? Could it be the recovery of these populations from the Btx spraying? Or simply the diligence of our counters? Or other reasons?

Other species also increased, but by smaller amounts: Anise and Pale Swallowtails, Cedar Hairstreak, Brown and Moss's Elfin, Cabbage, Green Comma and Ringlet. Lorquin's Admiral was in good numbers and Spring Azure was the second highest count since 2006.

Satyr Comma, Silvery Blue and Mourning Cloak were down, and Pine White was in exceptionally low numbers. A number of butterfly species are chronically low or absent including Tortoiseshell, Woodnymph and Sulphurs. Mylitta and Field Crescent were not seen in 2015.

A notable sighting, but outside the Count area, was David Robichaud's discovery of Boisduval's Blue in a hydro



right-of-way near Spectacle Lake, the first recent observation near Victoria. This inspired our July 5th butterfly walk to visit this spot, but although we found ten Grey Hairstreaks and five other species, the new blue did not show.

Many thanks to our enthusiastic observers! Twenty-seven butterfly watchers submitted a total of 163 reports from around the count circle.

We welcome new participants. All that's needed is binoculars (preferably with close focus) and an interest in butterflies.

Please come out to the monthly butterfly walk and see if butterflying suits you. The walk is held on the first Sunday of the month from April to September. It starts at the summit of Mt Tolmie at 1pm, where we decide on our destination for the day. Please let me know your email address in case of changes such as starting earlier to head to a more distant area.

To add your name to the butterfly count and monthly walk email list contact me, Aziza Cooper, at tanageraz AT yahoo. com. Good butterflying to all this season!

Butterfly Count Results 2015

	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL
SPECIES							
Proterptus Duskywing	25	9					34
Two-banded Checkered Skipper							
European Skipper			300	10			310
Woodland Skipper			14	1392	595		2001
Clodius Apollo							
Anise Swallowtail		6	18	1			25
Western Tiger Swallowtail		27	251	37	3		318
Pale Swallowtail		45	36		3		84
Pine White			1	25	2		28
Cabbage White	69	164	351	137	259	87	1067
Sara's Orangetip	72	10					82
Clouded Sulphur							
Orange Sulphur							
Sulphur species							
Purplish Copper		1	3		2		6
Cedar Hairstreak	1	4			1		6
Brown Elfin	9	2					11
Moss' Elfin	3	2					5
Western Pine Elfin							
Grey Hairstreak	5	2		1	4		12
Western Spring Azure	189	151					340
Silvery Blue		2					2
Satyr Anglewing	4	1	2				7
Green Comma	1	4	1				6
Mourning Cloak	8	3			2	2	15
California Tortoiseshell	4						4
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	1						1
Painted Lady	10	13	9	16	6	1	55
Westcoast Lady		3	1	2	1		7
Red Admiral		9	3	7	3	1	23
Field Crescent							
Mylitta Crescent							
Lorquin's Admiral			189	35	5		229
Common Ringlet		20	50		19		89
Common Woodnymph							
Great Arctic							
Monarch							
Total	401	478	1229	1663	905	91	4767

Number of Observers per month	14	13	19	14	17	14	
Total of Individuals participating							27
Number of Reports	19	30	30	27	40	17	163

Rare Visitors Steal the Christmas Bird Count Limelight

By Ann Nightingale

The 2015 Victoria Christmas Bird Count had potential to be pretty special. In the weeks leading up to the count, several rare and uncommon birds, including Rock Sandpiper, Rock Wren, Rough-legged Hawk, Common Redpoll, Long-eared Owl, Northern Waterthrush and Yellow-breasted Chat, had been seen. Despite a forecast for heavy winds, two of our three sea teams were able to get out, and a record-setting 241 field participants headed to the streets, parks and beaches to count all the birds they could find on December 19th. The teams contributed more than 500 party hours, covering more than 1100 kms in their search.

The weather stayed fairly reasonable throughout the day. The “bush-beaters” were joined by 51 feederwatchers, only about half of what we had last year. I know I’m beginning to sound like a broken record about the feederwatch, but I think we really need a team leader who can focus on developing a good, long list of feederwatch volunteers. If that concept appeals to you, please email me to get that ball rolling. It’s never too early in the year to start a project like this!

It was pretty much a given that the Yellow-breasted Chat would be the bird of the count. We had only three records for the checklist area, and it was being amazingly cooperative, coming to feeders at the end of Penshurst. In fact, the neighbourhood had turned into something of a battle zone, with three families vying for the attention of the bird by one-upping the others with the quality and variety of food set out for it. In the end, I received two feederwatch reports and one field counter report for the chat. In this case $1+1+1=1$.

Other than that, the count was turning out to be pretty typical. That is, until I got a phone call from Nathan Hentze, counting in the Panama Flats area. “I’ve got a Redwing,” he said. If you’ve been following the reports for our Christmas Bird Counts, you may recall that two years ago, three months after the count, we received photos from an Alberta birder who had been in town over Christmas. He’d snapped a couple of definitive shots of a bird that could only be a Redwing during our count week. It was the bird of the count two years ago, even though none of us had seen it! Now, less than 100 m from where those photos had been taken, Nathan was looking at BC’s second record of this species. As it had been two years earlier, this bird was frequently blocked by foliage and it’s only a few birders who have managed to photograph it in the open. There is an article by Acacia Spencer Hills in this issue with more information about this species. I should note, too, that it was a good lesson in checking out every bird. The bird was first detected high in a Douglas-fir snag by Mike Davis. Initially, he thought it was the much more common Downy Woodpecker until it flew past them

for a quick re-identification. Keep looking up! Sorry, chat. You were bested by our Eurasian visitor! That made two new species for our overall list.

The wind held off, and we had good conditions through most of the day. Although our total number of individuals (71761) was almost 5000 fewer than we got on a miserable day last year, the species total was exactly the same—141. There were also two other species reported from feeders—Yellow Warbler and American Tree Sparrow, both fairly near the Gorge—that may have been good sightings, but I was unable to verify these birds to a level sufficient to pass through the vetting process that our results go through once they leave my hands. In any case, 141 secures us the national lead for this year. Ladner got the foul weather (along with Sooke and a few others) this year. Congratulations to all who participated!

It seems that every year, at least a few species break their previous records. This year: Cackling Goose (381), Canada Goose (6,860), Bufflehead (2,947), Turkey Vulture (40), Mourning Dove (76), Barred Owl (13), Downy Woodpecker (234), and Peregrine Falcon (16). Anna’s Hummingbirds made a strong showing with 861 counted. However, several of the uncommon birds, including the Rock Wren and Rough-legged Hawk, and Cassin’s Auklet (all of which made it into count week) were not seen on count day. Perhaps the most painful miss was Skylark, for the second consecutive year.

Martindale/Bear Hill regained its title as the birdiest zone with 93 species, followed up by Oak Bay with 86. Other uncommon birds seen included Harris’s Sparrow, Rock Sandpiper and Sooty Grouse.

Results for all of the counts, including those from the southern part of Vancouver Island can be found on the Audubon Society’s site: www.audubon.org/birds. You can review statistics going all the way back to the very first official Christmas Bird Count, graphs, maps and find all sorts of other cool information. If you want to search by count circle, the codes for the local counts are BCVI (Victoria), BCSO (Sooke), BCSS (Sidney/South Salt Spring), BCGS (Galiano/North Salt Spring), BCPI (Pender Island) and BCDU (Duncan).

Thanks again to everyone who participated. I am especially grateful for those wonderful volunteers who take on zone leadership. This would be an impossible task without their continued support.

For those who like to plan ahead, The Victoria 2016 count will be on Saturday, December 17.

2015 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

Count Areas		Victoria Count (Field & Feeder)																							New Records in Bold	
Species		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	22	23	Total #	Prev High	
Gt. White-fronted Goose	Butchart Gardens / Northern Highlands	225																						34	111	
Cackling Goose		1204																						883	381	
Canada Goose					176	4	52	268	166	176	191	4	4	5	15	372	136	507	203	165	648			5,533	6860	
Mute Swan							4	4		3														11	77	
Trumpeter Swan		117			14			1										10		5	50	124		321	458	
Tundra Swan		5																			2			7	41	
Wood Duck		9																		38	53			219	219	
Gadwall		12					7	2		20										19	45	16		122	170	
Eurasian Wigeon		4								3		2	1				2	3	1					16	28	
American Wigeon		1099		7	2		5	110	15	161	120	274	81	263	2	196	306	44	6	22	1369			4,082	14889	
American Black Duck												1												1	2	
Mallard		844	25	40	158	10	43	98	24	209	56	448	70	62	20	278	477	485	250	98	1418			5,119	10336	
Northern Shoveler		48					3				9						6	12	18	3	20			119	476	
Northern Pintail		94			20		2	42		3				1			1	186			50			399	2690	
Green-winged Teal		93			10				2	24				1				107		6	220			463	2436	
Canvasback																				5	1			6	302	
Ring-necked Duck		33	14		17	17	7										7	13	7	68	23			206	663	
Greater Scaup						4		2											12					19	3100	
Lesser Scaup		7			8		10	19		163		1					11	3		10		1		233	1012	
Harlequin Duck							6		6		57	36	25	4	16	1								200	410	
Surf Scoter								47	12		23		93	40	167	259			21		48	65		784	1478	
White-winged Scoter								1					6		3	8					1			19	834	
Long-tailed Duck		50	10	75	9	36	98	242	92	144	399	135	358	20	74	186	13	13	319	29	347	297	1	152	577	
Bufflehead		11	2	38			11	56	24	6	59	9	8	6	13	4					8	5		349	745	
Common Goldeneye		7	2	22							5		1											37	361	
Barrow's Goldeneye		18	11	7	25	6	36	14	9	4	18	4	28	16	51	47		17	6	17	9	10		35	662	
Hooded Merganser		24		9	15	3	5	12	27	3	26	12	48	8	30	9	12	9	93	26	19	12		402	602	
Common Merganser							28	25	28		62	45	26	10	27	5		2	154		66	31	2	509	791	
Red-breasted Merganser																								6	429	
Ruddy Duck																								2		
California Quail		37	6	3	33	3	19	26	2						2	5		12	5	44				266	580	
Red-throated Loon								1																6	140	
Pacific Loon							3						1		2	2			2		3			11	488	
Common Loon							2	3			4		2			2			5		2			22	109	
Pied-billed Grebe						8		2		1	1		9	4	14	21	2		8	7	1			36	100	
Horned Grebe							22	21	11		2	7	9	4					87		9			207	1100	
Red-necked Grebe		3							3		10	8	35	4	15	6						6	19	145	671	
Eared Grebe																								2	123	
Western Grebe																								34	3314	
Brandt's Cormorant		7	2	18	8	22	8	16	6	4	108	4	64	6	28	5	6		4	68	7	8	32	22	453	1181
Double-crested								12	2		9	5	28	4	7	21			17		2	93	35	235	2300	
Pelagic Cormorant		4	2	3		1	2	4	12	7	5	8	5	2		2	1	2	6	4	6			76	162	
Turkey Vulture		1	2		3		27	1	2		1		10	6	7	11	2	3	5	13	18	4		40	34	
Bald Eagle (adult)		24	4	23	10	4	9	4	2	9	3		3	4	4	1	4		4	3	8	1	1	169	448	
Bald Eagle (imm)		3		35	2		8	8	2	3		1												86	incl	
Unaged Bald Eagle			4				2	4	1												4			17		
Northern Harrier		1																			2			3	6	
Sharp-shinned Hawk			1	1	1	1	1				1						1	3		2	3			15	30	
Cooper's Hawk		5	4	1	4		2			1	2	2	4	1	2	5		6	2	8	5			59	62	
Red-tailed Hawk		6	4	3	5		2	1		1		1		1		1	1	5	3	4	9			47	79	
Golden Eagle				1																				1	4	
Ring-necked Pheasant					1																			1	93	
Sooty Grouse			1																					1	3	
Virginia Rail																								4	14	
American Coot		28				1																		239	298	
Black-bellied Plover												17	221											54	370	
Killdeer		1		5			6						11			24					7			96	111	
Black Oystercatcher							4		6		16	3	57		6							4		4	14	
Greater Yellowlegs										1			3											2	70	
Spotted Sandpiper							1																			
Black Turnstone							3	8	8		29	12	44	1	10	2						1		118	370	

2015 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

Count Areas		Victoria Count (Field & Feeder)																							New Records in Bold	
		Feeder																							Prev	High
Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	22	23	Total #			
Sunbird											5	64			1									74		
Sanderling											1	2												67		
Rock Sandpiper																								2		
Dunlin												9	165											174		
Wilson's Snipe									3							1					1			9		
Mew Gull	5		23			630	18	9	4	36	18	146	1	17	37	1		6		90	5	615		1,661		
California Gull											9	3		1						3	2	25		43		
Herring Gull	1		1								1	1								288				43		
Thayer's Gull	2		1		5	50	1		2			3	1	3	8		6	5						88		
Western Gull																								2		
Glaucous-winged Gull	810	51	632	26	13	70	108	53	209	454	194	95	126	89	161	86	106	364	47	297	39		15	4,045		
Common Murre						60	14			7		39										103		223		
Pigeon Guillemot						23	3				5	41		15	3			1		4	7		103	127		
Marbled Murrelet												10			3						21	15		64		
Ancient Murrelet						2	10				3	35			2									47		
Rhinoceros Auklet											3	2									10			6		
Eurasian Collared-dove																								1		
Rock Pigeon	63	51		2	40	2	15	2												90				117		
Mourning Dove	5					6	67	70	19	373	149	55				28	20			65			34	1,042		
Barn Owl	2																			70			1	76		
Western Screech-owl		2																		1				4		
Great Horned Owl	1		5				5	2			2									8				23		
Northern Pygmy Owl																								1		
Barred Owl		1							1		4	4		2			1							13		
Northern Saw-whet Owl																				1				1		
Anna's Hummingbird	42	32	4	9	6	27	31	26	46	93	83	19	17	43	41	66	67	38	38	45				88		
Belted Kingfisher	1	2	1	1	1	2	4	4	1	8		2	2	3	4		1	3	1					41		
Fed-breasted Sapsucker	1	2	1	1			1	1	1	1	3			1	2		2		2	1				19		
Downy Woodpecker	2	3	2	2	4	3	6	3	11	8	21	22	11	2	17	13	16	13	36	10				234		
Hairy Woodpecker	4	2				2	2	2	2	5					4				37	6				36		
Northern Flicker	33	17	19	13	2	8	35	17	25	13	13	16	7	26	71	24	47	27	42	37				527		
Pileated Woodpecker	3	6	1	4		2	1	2	3				2		3	1	2	3	6	3				43		
American Kestrel	3																			2				5		
Merlin	4		1					1	2		1	1			3	1	1			3	1			17		
Peregrine Falcon	2					1				1	1	1			1		1			5	1			16		
Northern Shrike									1			1				1								5		
Stellar's Jay	29	14	11	8	17	11	23	6	16	3	14	13	20	25	39	60	28	51	38	38				505		
Northwestern Crow	45	5	12	18	15	11	26	16	300	184	183	40	81	73	1600	247	107	84	12	344				3,440		
Common Raven	72	34	21	52	7	12	7	3			4	4	3	6	24	2	12	17	57	40				395		
Chest-backed Chickadee	102	89	29	70	12	31	91	41	79	90	153	66	42	126	246	77	92	103	222	76				2,033		
Bushtit	18	13	10	31	51		16		75	140	55	36	10	92	45	48	129	65	53	27				1,110		
Fed-breasted Nuthatch	15	13	6	2	5	4	11	1	11	9	32	10	16	12	20	14	16	18	59	19				331		
Brown Creeper	1	14		1	1	4	7	3	1	7	19	5	1	1	21	3	8			11	8			129		
Bewick's Wren	9	7		5	1	4	28	9	18	21	23	15	5	12	22	14	38	12	26	12				298		
Pacific Wren	13	20	26	22	2	9	49	8	7	8	24	16	1	12	57	6	17	26	40	37				406		
Marsh Wren	8				4		3									2			10					39		
American Dipper			4																	8				4		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	88	111	68	246	8	28	118	8	31	25	58	42	2	19	177	35	79	19	297	98				1,557		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	19	8	4	18		22	29	3	12	12	20	16	5	13	14	10	21	22	11	24				291		
Feeding																								1		
Hermit Thrush	1		1	3			1		2		1	1		1	1					1				16		
American Robin	128	28	4	32	7	23	85	110	215	150	138	73	44	170	142	73	124	174	291	291				2,331		
Varied Thrush	8	36	14	16	2	4	12	8			7	2	1	8	16	3	4	12	11	10				185		
European Starling	271	31	12	83	4	11	49	4	435	250	95	9	60	23	434	92	137	222	262	1779				4,348		
American Pipit												1	3							8				12		
Cedar Waxwing									3	11		9				15				4				97		
Orange-crowned Warbler										1										5				5		
Yellow-rumped Warbler										4		1												6		
Townsend's Warbler									2															2		
Yellow-breasted Chat															1									2		
Spotted Towhee	110	28	6	28	14	39	61	29	52	41	45	59	35	49	91	62	73	65	125	83				1,180		
Savannah Sparrow					5											1					5			11		

2015 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

Species	Count Areas																							Total #	New Records in Bold
	Butchart Gardens / Northern Highlands	Central Highlands	Goldstream	Thetis Lake / Hastings Flats	Langford Lake	Albert Head / Triangle Mtn	Esquimalt Lagoon / Mill Hill	Esquimalt Harbour	Portage Inlet / The Gorge	Victoria Harbour	Beacon Hill	Oak Bay	UVIC/ Cadboro Bay	10 Mile Point	Gordon Head / Mount Douglas	Swan Lake / Cedar Hill	Blenkinsop / Panama Flats	Elk Lake / Cordova Bay	Prospect Lake / Quicks Bottom	Martindale / Bear Hill	Oak Bay Islands (offshore)	Albert Head / Esq Harbour (offshore)	Feeders		
Fox Sparrow	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	22	23			
Song Sparrow	52	8	7	14	2	18	57	14	22	7	17	24	19	41	70	42	57	52	84	60			51	718	
Lincoln's Sparrow	61	11	7	37		8	64	9	30	58	26	19	6	14	28	31	51	39	48	82			28	657	
Swamp Sparrow	3							1				1				2	15	1		31				54	
White-throated Sparrow	1						1					1			2		1			1			1	5	
Harris's Sparrow												1												1	
White-crowned	6					5	25		19	7	1	8	1	4	6	17	14	12	3	218				11	
Golden-crowned Sparrow	109	17	20	30	7	48	86	53	141	83	40	65	48	35	94	53	103	102	120	202				116	
Dark-eyed Junco	462	120	31	69	64	31	168	80	267	127		61	56	129	281	120	185	284	289	443				384	
Red-winged Blackbird	162	2		3	18	13	25			30			3		2	8	35	14	38	64				2	
Western Meadowlark												1			37	26	105							5	
Brewer's Blackbird		48					55				30		9		6	2	2	3		75				385	
Purple Finch	6								6			5												18	
House Finch	59	17	2	8	1	2	29	18	18	24	10	26		26	45	14	65	30	94	72				91	
Fied Crossbill						10	23		3					6	5									47	
Pine Siskin	79		3	2			127		35	2	74	15		16	88	2	123	55	40	96				61	
American Goldfinch									7	2	1	2								8				21	
Evening Grosbeak			1																					1	
House Sparrow	94	14		39	32	31	122	46	292	282	55	14	8	21	140	153	213	87	70	179				155	
Glauc-winged Western Gull										2	2	18					9							29	
Unidentified Hummingbird																								4	
Domestic mallard																								2	
Unidentified Owl																								2	
Unidentified Duck								6		1									15					6	
Unidentified Gull								51	40	2000	5	2000		5	28				55					116	
Unidentified Cormorant										1		35												56	
Count Totals	7,039	951	1,282	1,425	470	1,734	2,800	1,177	3,415	5,819	2,681	4,778	1,160	1,670	5,693	2,515	3,612	4,850	3,280	11,625	728	1,061	1,998	71,761	
Species Totals	77	49	51	50	43	70	77	54	62	67	63	86	56	59	76	62	69	69	64	93	26	18	42	141	

(see Participant List on page 15)

Spirals in Time— The Secret Life and Curious Afterlife of Seashells

BOOK REVIEW

By Bill Merilees



Spirals in Time—The Secret Life and Curious Afterlife of Seashells by Helen Scales, 2015. Bloomsbury Sigma Publishing Plc, London, UK, 304 pages. \$32.00 Cdn.

Seashells have fascinated mankind for millennia. For food, as curios, currency, communication ceremonial regalia, the list of their uses goes on and on. Among us who has not walked a seashore and picked up a seashell or two?

The molluscs most of us are familiar with include the squid and octopus (Cephalopods), snails and nudibranchs (Gastropods), clams (Bivalves), tusk shells (Scaphopods) and chitons (Polyplacophora). There are also a number of other 'lesser' known groups but these are quite 'obscure'. As can be imagined, due to their numbers and long fascination by man, molluscs offer a fascinating and rich source of natural history lore.

Helen Scales' *Spirals in Time*, presents a marvellously broad compendium of shell stories. Her stated goal is to present "some of the more offbeat, forgotten and little-known tales of how those shells have made their way

into the human world.” This she does delightfully.

Seashells in the archaeological records date back more than 100,000 years to a cave in Morocco where a number of pierced and painted marine snail shells were uncovered. These are considered the world’s oldest known jewellery.

When it comes to the number of known mollusc species, today’s estimate is about 85,000. How many more unknown species are actually ‘out there’ is speculative. Estimates as high as 200,000 species are postulated, second only to the arthropods (insects and crabs, etc.), with about 1.2 million presently named species!

Collecting seashells is a time honoured passion. The oldest collection known, unearthed in Pompeii, dates back to 79 A.D.! During the 1800’s, gentlemen of leisure built large collections, often through purchase, but some organised their own expeditions. Hugh Cumming was one of the latter. As knowledge through exploration grew, the world epicentre of marine biodiversity became focussed on the Coral Triangle. Bordered roughly by Papua New Guinea, eastern Indonesia and the Philippines, this became one of Cumming’s destinations. In 1846 his collection, numbering 52,789 specimens and representing 18,867 species, was offered to the British Museum for 6000 pounds, today the equivalent of about \$1,000,000 Can. When he died in 1865 this collection had grown to more than 83,000 specimens. They now feature prominently in the impressive display at the Natural History Museum.

One of the species Cumming collected live, within the Coral Triangle, was the cone shell *Conus gloriamaris*, the molluscan superstar known as ‘The Glory of the Sea’. Up to 13 cm (5 inches) in length and exquisitely decorated with fine golden saw tooth markings, prize specimens were highly treasured. In 1824 one was auctioned in London U.K., for 100 pounds (today about \$16,000 Canadian). After 1950, when collectors finally found out how to find them, they became readily available. Today good specimens fetch about \$100 Can.

One of the long standing mysteries of seashells is how they impart the exquisite patterns to their shells. With only a rudimentary brain, hardly more than a couple of ganglia, how is this possible? Scientists still do not have the complete answer, but recent computer modelling technology offers some clues. By tweaking the equations used in their models they were able to produce stripes, spots and zigzag patterns, very similar to those found in nature. Further modelling, incorporating neural stimulation component, has shown even greater promise in solving this conundrum.

As local currencies, shells, in particular the Money Cowrie, are one of the oldest and most widespread forms of hard currency. At the peak of the slave trade, fleets of slave traders were transporting as many as forty million cowries to West Africa annually. Here, along our northwest coast, dentalium or tusk shell, known as Haiqua, became a short lived currency during the fur trade era.

Scales devotes a fascinating chapter to chronicling our present understanding of the fossil record of cephalopods, from the ammonites to present day chambered nautilus and

the Argonaut, aka the paper nautilus. The former, with 4 species still extant, are the last remaining members of an ancient 400 million year pedigree. The Paper Nautilus, is in a very different lineage, being related to squid & cuttlefish. Jason and his ship the Argo, of Greek mythology, even get a mention in this chapter!

Have you ever heard of sea silk? If you think this an April Fool’s joke you could be forgiven. Vague references to this rare fabric go back to Roman times but it was not until a sample, excavated from the 14th Century site, near Paris, provided confirmation of its existence. Perhaps it was this discovery that Jules Verne picked up on, in his classic *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, when he dressed Captain Nemo and his crew in uniforms of byssus. A byssus is the collection of threads mussels use to anchor themselves to the substrate. Around the Mediterranean Sea, the Noble Pen Shell, a very large mussel, growing to 50 cm (20”), anchors itself into the sandy bottom of bays by long fine byssal threads. These threads, as long as 12-15 cm (5-6”), when cleaned, combed and spun to become the threads for sea silk. Horatio Nelson is reported to have given his lover, Emma Hamilton, a pair of sea silk gloves, “made only in Sardinia from the beards of Mussels”.

In a very abbreviated form, the above are just a few of the interesting stories covered in this book. Whether you are an armchair naturalist, or a concologist (a collector of seashells), *Spirals in Time* is a fascinating insight into mollusc lore and a great read. You will not be disappointed!



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Ecuador: An Ultimate Birding Experience

By Val George

Photos by Author

“You’ll get 50 species of hummingbirds,” our guide, Eduardo, told us at the start of our Northern Ecuador tour. We actually got 51 - and that’s just for the fairly small area we covered in the two weeks in the country. If the hummingbird family (Trochilidae) is one of your favourite families of birds - as it is mine - then Ecuador is the place to go. The country has about 130 species on its checklist, about 40% of the world’s total. They come in all sizes and gorgeous colours, from the beautiful turquoise-blue, and aptly-named, Long-tailed Sylph to the Robin-sized Giant Hummingbird.

“You should get about the same number of tanagers,” Eduardo also informed us. Forty-one was our tally for the trip, 56 if you count other members of the family Thraupidae. The Ecuadorian tanagers come in almost every imaginable colour and colour combination, from the spectacular Paradise Tanager with its bright green face, royal blue breast and scarlet rump to the relatively plain, single coloured (light blue) Blue-Gray Tanager. Some of the species make our only regularly occurring species, the Western Tanager, look almost drab.

Unlike the hummers which we mostly saw at the feeders that every lodge has set up, we normally encountered tanagers in flocks of several different species moving high in the forest canopy. This made for difficult identification since the birds were obscured by foliage most of the time. One would disappear behind the leaves and another species would emerge. Even our guide’s excellent identification skills sometimes didn’t help much because he’d call out a species but we couldn’t figure out which particular bird he was looking at in the flock. Mostly though, the ID challenges were stimulating rather than frustrating.

A different identification challenge presented itself with the tyrant flycatchers (Family Tyrannidae). We saw several dozen species, with many of them being very similar, resembling our empids. For these our guide was essential; without him, we would have had to put many of them down as simply *Tyrannulet* sp., *Elaenia* sp., or even just as Flycatcher sp.

Ecuador is one of the top birding countries in the New World. Though not much more than 1% of the land area of North America, it has about 70% more species on its checklist. Even the small area we covered in the northwest of the country around Quito (the capital) had well over 600 species on the list we were given of possible birds we could see.

Not surprisingly, with so much birding potential, birding



Long-tailed Sylph.

tourism is a significant part of the country’s tourist industry. Consequently, facilities for birders are excellent. All the main areas for birding have high quality lodges, many of them catering specifically to birders. These lodges are strategically located, give first class accommodation and food services, and can provide expert local guides.

Typical of the lodges we stayed at is Wildsumaco Lodge. We spent three days there and could have stayed much longer and still have had many more local species to find. The lodge is located about 150 km south-east of Quito in the eastern foothills of the Andes. At about 1500 m elevation, it sits in a large wildlife reserve in the sub-tropical cloud forest.

The view from the lodge is spectacular, looking over the forest canopy with the Andes in the distance. When the ever present patches of cloud drift away, several snow-covered volcanoes are visible, including the 5800 m Volcano Antisana. The lodge’s large veranda affords a view into the canopy of the forest as well into a large area of smaller shrubs and trees, so bird viewing opportunities are excellent.

Some of the more exotic species we recorded for the trip we saw by simply sitting on the veranda and waiting for the birds to come us. Toucans, like the large Black-mandibled Toucan and the smaller Many-banded Aracari, came to feed on the fruit in the trees in front of us; oropendulas and caciques regularly passed through, as did multi-coloured barbets and, of course, many species of tanagers.

Though the other lodges we stayed in were comparable to Wildsumaco, I must admit to a bias for this one because



(top) Collared Aracari. (lower) Choco Toucan.

it was here, watching from the veranda, I got two of my top target birds for the trip. Macaws are my favourite species of birds. A couple of times, pairs of Chestnut-fronted Macaws flew by; this is one of the smaller members of the genus *Ara*, but still a gorgeous macaw. The other species we saw from the lodge was the endangered, very large, brilliant green and red Military Macaw.

As at all the lodges we stayed in, hummingbird feeders attracted a great variety of species. Wildsumaco claimed to have recorded over 30 species with 15–20 of them coming regularly to their feeders.

With the diversity of birds at the lodge, it was difficult sometimes to leave to explore the forest trails, but these were very productive, too, with spectacular birds like trogons, toucans, jays and the peculiarly shaped, bright orange Andean Cock-of-the Rock. Several species of woodpeckers could be seen in the forests surrounding the lodge, ranging in size from Lafresnaye's Piculet, which is not much larger than a Bushtit, to the Pileated-sized and similarly coloured Lineated Woodpecker. Woodcreepers, birds that behave very much like woodpeckers though they are not related, were also seen regularly working their way up the trunks of trees. Add to these the forest-gleaners, manikins, antbirds, antpitta, flycatchers, warblers, euphonias and several other families of birds and any walk on forest trails gave us many additional species for our trip list.

It was in the forests and at the forest edges close to Wildsumaco Lodge that we recorded the few Canadian birds that we saw on the trip: Blackburnian Warblers, Western Wood Peewees, and House Wrens were the most frequently seen. Our first of several Canada Warblers elicited the



Torrent Duck.

exclamation, "That's a lifer for me," from two members of our group. The rest of us thought it rather amusing that Canadian birders had to go all the way to Ecuador to get a Canada Warbler for their life lists.

Though most of our birding on the trip was done in forested habitat, we also spent some time at the higher elevations in alpine country. Here we found species like: Andean Lapwing, Andean Gull, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, Carunculated Caracara, as well as the elusive, grouse-like Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe. An alpine lake at about 3,700 m elevation gave us - except for a pair of Torrent Ducks we'd seen earlier in the trip doing their death-defying plunges into a raging river - our only waterfowl of the trip: Andean Ruddy Duck, Yellow-billed Pintail, Andean Teal, Silvery Grebe and Andean Coot.

In a short article like this I've been able to mention only a few of the well over 400 species we saw. I can't conclude, though, without saying something about the iconic bird of the Andes, the Andean Condor. This is the national bird of Ecuador, but it is becoming increasingly scarce due to habitat loss and persecution by farmers who wrongly believe that condors are a threat to their livestock - they're not because they feed almost exclusively on carrion.

There are probably less than 100 Andean Condors left in Ecuador but we did manage one sighting, a group of four soaring high over some rock cliffs. I had seen these condors before in Chile where they're somewhat easier to find, but the sighting of this group was still one of the highlights of the trip for me. The size of the bird makes it a very impressive sight when one is seen soaring in the thermals arising from the Andean slopes - with a wingspan averaging 3 m, it's the largest flying bird in the New World (the ostrich-like rheas of the eastern region of South America are heavier but, like ostriches, they can't fly.)

Other vultures (Cathartidae), Turkey and Black, were seen by our group much more frequently. We saw numbers of these almost every day.

To conclude, I can confidently say that a trip to Ecuador should be on every birder's "bucket list." A caution though: with so many species to see, new ones come at you so fast that sometimes it's overwhelming. But, hey, that's nothing to complain about, is it?

Note: The trip I've described here was a 15 day tour in March/April, 2015 arranged by Avocet Tours from Kelowna.

Keeping up with the HATters: Habitat Acquisition Trust's Annual Report

By Alanah Nasadyk



Everyone here at HAT would like to send a **big, heartfelt thank you to our supporters**. Your contribution has allowed us to continue providing high quality programs that result in positive, on-the ground benefits to natural areas across our region. While the tides are shifting at HAT, with a few new faces joining our team, we feel stronger than ever and confident that HAT will continue to thrive under our watch.

This year, we welcomed **Barb von Sacken** and **Alanah Nasadyk** to the **HAT team**. **Jill Robinson**, previous Stewardship Coordinator began a new role as **Executive Director**. We have all truly enjoyed our work thus far and have been inspired by the HAT community who support conservation efforts everyday. **Paige Erickson-McGee** and **Wendy Tyrrell** continue their dedicated work at HAT, taking on new challenges and contributing to HAT's strong reputation as a science-driven organization that works towards conserving nature on Southern Vancouver Island. Collaborating with many innovative partners, HAT will continue to focus our attention locally and inspire grass roots action through research, stewardship, education and land protection.

2015 was an inspiring year of action. In the **Land Protection** arena, regular work parties **removed thousands of invasive plant species** and **planted 150 new trees and shrubs** at the Trincomali Nature Reserve on Galiano Island. We also made important progress in the legal protection of three conservation covenants to protect important habitat in the Highlands, East Sooke, and the Western Communities.

Through our **Green Spots program**, which helps schools and students learn via hands-on experience in nature, HAT worked **with over 500 students** to enhance natural habitat on school grounds at Quadra Elementary, Cedar Hill Middle School, and Elizabeth Buckley. We also partnered with the West-Mont Working Group, developing a Management plan for a local covenant and engaging with students in taking out invasive species to enhance habitat for species at risk.

The **Good Neighbours** habitat stewardship program's

focus in 2015 was on promoting **urban forest**. We **met with over 40 landowners** to offer personalized advice on caring for nature in their yards. **Thirty households signed up as Habitat Stewards**, and committed in writing to exercising best practices in caring for nature. HAT also partnered to restore Ivy Place Greenway in Oaklands and to host the **Urban Forest Symposium** in conjunction with Oak Bay's Tree Appreciation Day. Through this event members of the community enjoyed a nature walk and tree planting.

Highlights of HAT's **Wildlife Stewardship** programs for species at risk included the detection of **five new Western Screech Owl occurrences** and installation of **24 owl boxes** on private property. A further six more boxes designed specifically for Western Screech Owls will be installed in the next month. Over **7000 bats** were counted in the summer, and **53 bat boxes** installed. Hot spots of amphibian road mortality were surveyed, with over **1300 mortalities recorded**. With this data HAT is currently assessing mitigation matters. Habitat for Western Painted Turtles, Blue-grey Tailed Slugs, and Sharp-tailed Snakes was also identified, monitored, and enhanced.

Goldstream Chums, a program through which HAT ensures local students continue to experience the salmon run first-hand, enabled **4700 students** to participate in ecological education programs. This program provided **200 different school groups with salmon education** and during the salmon spawning season, from October to early December, 30,000 people came through the Goldstream Nature House's doors.

HAT's annual events for 2015 were also well attended, allowing us to connect with many people across the capital region. The **Native Plant Garden tour**, which will be happening again this year on May 1st, reached over 215 people. The **Member and Volunteer Appreciation Lunch** in 2015 allowed us to say a special thank you to 82 attendees, and this year's lunch will be held June 15th. The **Wildlife Night** update on species at risk stewardship programs welcomed 37 attendees. Our **Conservation Connection Forum** involved




Habitat Acquisition Trust's new Community & Development Coordinator, Alanah Nasadyk, was delighted to come across this endangered Blue-grey Traildropper Slug at HAT's Ruby Creek Covenant Restoration Event in Metchosin, Jan. 23rd 2016. Please report any of your own sightings of this rare species to hatmail@hat.bc.ca
Photo: Alanah Nasadyk

another 83 participants. HAT also reinvigorated a previous tradition, **Musical HAT's Night**, which was a tremendous success and raised \$6300, with over 100 guests.


On January 27th, 2016, we hosted the **Annual General Meeting** featuring a mixer and special guest talk by ethnoecologist Judith Arney, and was attended by 63 people, 41 members. We are all very excited for what the rest of this year holds in store and look forward to continuing HAT's legacy to protect nature on Southern Vancouver Island.

If you would like to stay up-to-date with upcoming events in the HAT community, visit www.hat.bc.ca and send a message to us at hatmail@hat.bc.ca to join our newsletter mailing lists.




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2015 Victoria Christmas Bird Count *(continued from page 10)*

Participant List

Jonathan Adams	Chris Chutter	Terry Gagne	Rhonda Korol	Bill McMillan	Rebecca Reader	Jeremy Tatum
Arnold Adlkirchner	Jenny Clarke	Serge Gallazin	Don Kramer	Darlene Meads	Cheryl Redhead	Kim Taylor
Dave Aldcroft	Rebecca Clarke-Coates	Jeff Gaskin	Vanessa Kramer	Dorothy Meads	Julie Rhodes	Andy Teucher
Glen Armstrong	James Clowater	Donna Gaudard	Audrey Kyle	Vicki Metcalfe	Mary Robichaud	Greg Teucher
Robert Auger	Rosalind Coleman	Tracee Geernaert	Barbara Lake	Kirsten Mills	Robin Robinson	Jules Thomson
Thomas Barbin	Claudia Copley	Val George	Bob Lake	Carol Milo	Steven Roias	Fred Trudell
Ian Barclay	Darren Copley	Wayne Giles	Marilyn Lambert	Marilyn Misner	Donna Ross	Bette Marie Tuckey
Doug Bateman	Jeannie Cosgrove	Geoff Godfrey	Rease Larson	Rod Mitchell	Donna Roth	Ed Tupper
Sylvia Beacom	Michael Cranny	Sharon Godkin	Warren Lee	Glen Moores	Amélie Rousseau	Gail Tupper
Kim Beardmore	Elizabeth Cross	Patty Golumbia	Ariel Lenke	Judy Moores	Katherine Rowe	Alistair Urquhart
Roger Beardmore	Ian Cruickshank	Todd Golumbia	Christine Lintott	Iria Garcia Moreiras	Mary Sanseverino	Ben van Drimmelen
Barb Begg	Paul Cumberland	Rob Gowan	Kitty Lloyd	Mary Morris	Chris Saunders	Marie Van Roy
Fred Beinhauer	Bill Dancer	Robert Hadley	Eric Lofroth	Jo Moteke	Ann Scarfe	Joyce Vezina
Louise Beinhauer	Morgan Davies	Andrew Harcombe	Paul Lukaszek	Mike Moteke	Sue Schaefer	Leo Vezina
David Bird	Mike Davis	Gail Harcombe	Agnes Lynn	Alanah Nasadyk	Rick Schortinghuis	Fern Walker
Louise Blight	Ross Dawson	Bruce Hardy	David Lynn	David Newell	Karen Schrey	Ken Walker
Marjon Blouw	Meredith Dickman	Rick Hardy	Andrew MacDonald	Geoffrey Newell	Tanya Seebacher	Lindsey Walker
Neil Boyle	Margaret Dohan	John Harper	Dave Mackas	Jean Newell	David Seymour	Rob Walker
Janice Brown	Nancie Dohan	Ann-Marie Hart	Bob Mackie	Jeff Newman	Margie Shephard	Ted Walker
Martha Burd	Daniel Donnecke	Gordon Hart	Cheryl Mackie	Rae Ann Newman	Juliet Simon	Karla Ward
Karen Burns	Leo Donnecke	Richard Hebda	Mairi MacKinnon	Ann Nightingale	Liam Singh	Kathleen Ward
Carol Callahan-Maureen	Marilyn Down	John Henigman	Alan MacLeod	Sheila Norton	Jacques Sirois	Stephanie Weinstein
Cynthia Callahan-Maureen	Ted Down	Nathan Hentze	Pat MacLeod	Brian Nyberg	Camilla Smith	Jody Wells
Ian Cameron	Rodney Drabkin	Cheryl Hoyle	Carol Madsen	Hennie Nyhof	Doug Smith	Bruce Whittington
Mary Cameron	Warren Drinnan	Kelly Hunter	Ron Mathews	Mark Nyhof	Norma Smith	Jeremy Wilson
Syd Cannings	Don Eastman	Peggy Hutchison	Donna Matthews	Morrough O'Brien	Ken Sohm	Neville Winchester
Dannie Carsen	Claire Ebendinger	Scott Jaeger	Trevor Matthews	Andrea Olson	Joan Sommers	Diane Wolfe
Dick Chadwick	Mike Edgell	Lynda Jamison	Margie Mayfield	Marie O'Shaughnessy	Judy Spearing	Gerry Wolfe
Ginny Chadwick	Christian Engelstoft	Hugh Judd	Barb McClintock	Jim Patterson	Acacia Spencer-Hills	Lorrie Wood
Nicole Chatel	Sue Ennis	Maria Judd	Patty McDonald	John Pierquet	Margaret Stevens	John Woods
Jannaca Chick	Barry Evans	Candace Jung	Barb McGrenere	Elaine Preston	Tom Stevens	Lars Yunker
Beth Christopher	Jessie Fanucchi	Lynn Kavanagh	Mike McGrenere	June Pretzer	Don Stewart	Mark Yunker
	Cam Finlay	Christian Kelly	Barry McKee	Leah Ramsay	Dan Sterling	
	Dave Fraser	John King	Dana McKee	Cathy Reader	David Stirling	
	Jesse Fraser	Adrian Koolman	Marcie McLean	Emma Reader	Lauren Strachan-Hall	

Special Species Profile: Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)



By Acacia Spencer-Hills



Photo by Daniel Donnecke

As members of a naturalist's club, you've probably been hiding under a rock these last few weeks if you haven't heard of Victoria's illustrious and crazy-rare guest: the holly-tree-loving Redwing of the Wilkinson Rd area! This bird made the front page of the Times Colonist even! Your species profiler had to research farther afield (haha!) to find more information on this bird, as their go-to site courtesy of Cornell University, mainly concerned with North American birds had no information. A smaller thrush species, the Redwing is recognized by the reddish-brown flanks and underwings it's named for, and the conspicuous

creamy-white stripe above the eye. Males and females are similar in appearance, while the juvenile appears similar to the adult but with heavier spotting and less red colouration. Indeed, to the less practiced eye they could appear as juvenile robins on first glance. Mainly subsisting on a variety of invertebrates, Redwings will switch to a variety of berries in the winter months as many birds often do.

While a fairly unremarkable bird, what makes our visitor so remarkable is that it is so far out of range. The normal breeding range for this species extends from Iceland across Northeastern Europe and in to Siberia, while their migration takes them to South and Western Europe, North Africa, the Black and Caspian Seas, and into Southwest Asia. In fact, this is only the 2nd record for BC, with the 1st record being here in Victoria as well (the thought is that this is the same bird). There are several eBird records for Eastern North America, but this is still the quite rarity. If you're interested in seeing this bird, it MAY still be around... it frequents the holly bushes and oaks in the 3900 block of South Valley Drive, but is very shy and skittish, so be prepared to wait.

Bins up and happy twitching!

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Nd. Bird Guide: Redwing Available: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/r/redwing/index.aspx> Accessed: January 28th, 2016.

LETTERS

I am pleased to be sending a note of thanks from one of our students here at Royal Roads. We very much appreciate the encouragement and support shown by the Victoria Natural History Society for our students and thank you for that partnership.

Sincerely,
Hayley Bennett
Advancement Coordinator
Royal Roads University

Dear Victoria Natural History Society

I would like to thank you for the generous award of your bursary. On behalf of my family we express our sincere gratitude for easing some financial pressure.

Thank you
Jenn D. Benoit
BSc. Environmental Candidate
Royal Roads University

Several weeks have slipped by since I had the immense pleasure of premiering my documentary "Wetlands Matter" at an evening event hosted by the Victoria Natural History Society. I'm very grateful for this opportunity as it gave me a chance to gauge how well it connected with others and to make last minute refinements based on these observations and the feedback I received from those of you who attended and spoke with me after the screening.

My documentary made its national premiere on World Wetlands Day (Feb. 2nd), on ShawTV channels in Winnipeg, The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Calgary and Edmonton. The video is also publicly accessible through my Vimeo and Youtube channels. If any of you wishes to view the final version, you can either find it through the Wetland Matters Facebook page or the EKOS Communications website. Or, simply e-mail me and I'll send you the direct link.

But just because the video has been produced and

broadcasted doesn't mean the project is wrapped up. Far from it! As noted earlier, there's still much to be done to ensure the documentary has as much reach and impact with certain audiences as possible. Not just on World Wetlands Day but over time.

As well, my documentary just scratches the surface of the wetland drainage issue, which deserves greater depth of treatment to unravel the underlying complexities. Hence, I feel compelled to write a book on it next. And who knows what might come after that as I sense that I'm into this cause for the long haul.

Which brings up another thing that I forgot to mention. If anyone wishes to contribute to my wetlands project, they can do so through it's GoFundMe site at gofund.me/prairiepot-holes Sorry, it's not tax-deductible, but you'll have an extra warm fuzzy feeling from knowing that you're helping to protect and restore prairie wetlands.

Oh, and one more thing I also neglected to do, which I'm also kicking myself for, is to give you my e-mail address in case any of you wanted to follow-up with further questions or comments. So here it is: Rick.Searle@ekoscommunications.com

Thank you once again Victoria Natural History Society for the invitation to present my documentary and for the great turnout and level of engagement.

Rick Searle

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Founded by the Victoria Natural History Society in 1996



Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 22 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our Welcome column.

Donald and Fiona Flook

Victoria

Natural History: Birding, botany, conservation, and marine

Maury Peterman

Victoria

Nature hikes in diverse

environments; birding

Charlene Lloyd

East Sooke

most natural things, including birds, plants, insects, fungi, conservation

Susan Reid

Victoria

birding, nature walks, education, protect nature

Donald C Stewart

Victoria

birding, small mammals,

photography, hiking, biking, boating

Pat Ishkanian and Pierce Brewster

Sidney

all natural history



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Galiano Island, BC

www.festivalactivepass.com

www.facebook.com/FestivalActivePass

festivalactivepass2016@gmail.com

An "Experience the Gulf Islands" event

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Ivy's Book Shop
and
Niagara Grocery

See Anne's art on the
Oak Bay Studio Tour
in April.

www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com
<https://picasaweb.google.com/anitabike>
anitabike@gmail.com

BULLETIN BOARD

Camas Hill Restoration Day, Metchosin, Saturday, March 5, 2016

Please contact Habitat Acquisition Trust at volunteers@hat.bc.ca for more details.

UVic's IdeaFest celebration, March 7-12, 2016

Explore a showcase of urban forest encounters through an interactive photo-art exhibit at the A. Wilfrid Johns Gallery (MacLaurin Bldg., A. wing, next door to the UVic Music Dept.). Contact Narda Nelson at nelsonn@uvic.ca or Nicole Land at nland@uvic.ca.

Converting Lawn to Native Meadow Workshop, March 20, 2016

Join Kristen Miskelly, biologist and owner of Saanich Native Plants, at The Gardens at HCP, 1:00–4:00 p.m., to learn how to convert conventional lawn to meadow habitat. HCP members \$45, Non-members \$60. Call 250-479-6162 or email communityed@hcp.ca for more information.

Swan Lake Guided Bird Walks

Every Wednesday and Sunday at 9:00 a.m., bring your binoculars and walking shoes 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.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year until April 4, 2016

Don't miss this annual favourite! Visit the exhibit at the Royal BC Museum to see award-winning images that tell astonishing stories of our natural world while pushing the boundaries of technical skill. Showcasing the most compelling images selected from more than 42,000 entries from 96 countries, this exhibition celebrates the beauty and magnificence of our world, as well as acting as a stark reminder of the fragility of nature.

Olympic Birdfest 2016, April 15^o 17, 2016

The Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society festival is preceded by a San Juan Islands Cruise on April 12-14, 2016, and followed by a two-day excursion to the Neah Bay area of coastal Washington on April 17–19, 2016. rbrycehut@wavecable.com for information.

International Migratory Bird Day, Saturday May 14, 2016

9 AM to 2 PM at Elk and Beaver Lake Regional Park—A day of celebration with bird-friendly displays and activities, banding demonstrations and educational booths. Appropriate for all ages and abilities. More info to come closer to date. www.RPBO.org

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To discuss the possibility of leaving a planned gift to Swan Lake, please contact kburton@swanlake.bc.ca or phone: 250.479.0211 today.

 SWAN LAKE
CHRISTMAS HILL
NATURE SANCTUARY

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.

Despite our best efforts to schedule events in advance, changes are inevitable. Please check the website close to the date for any changes. We sometimes also schedule additional events due to unexpected opportunities. Please be sure that VNHS has your up-to-date email address to receive these changes or notice of additional events. If you do not use the internet, team up with someone who does to keep up with changes.

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 (<http://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.

MARCH 2016

Tuesday, March 8

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT AND AGM

Habitat Acquisition Trust's Wildlife Stewardship Program (year in review)

Jill Robinson (HAT Executive Director) will give an update on Habitat Acquisition Trust's Wildlife Stewardship Program monitoring and field work on bats, amphibians, owls, and even restoration! She will talk about bat roost and recording results, HAT's work with amphibians, the owl call monitoring results, and their success with restoration. We meet in Rm 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Free. Everyone is welcome. NOTE: the VNHS Annual General Meeting will be held prior to the presentation.

Sunday, March 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Parksville

See the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn! Massive numbers of sea ducks and gulls follow the herring in close to where we can observe the birds feeding on the herring roe. We can also enjoy the beginning of the congregation of the Brant Geese in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area and vicinity. Bring a lunch. We will carpool and start from Victoria at 7:00 a.m. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes. First 9 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 \$20.00 per person. Number of participants will be limited to minimize cars. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.

Tuesday, March 15th

BOTANY NIGHT

Vancouver Island's limestone ridges

Shane Johnson's images are well-known within a small circle of the internet. Join us for an evening of wild landscapes and plants from the high limestone ridges of Vancouver Island's mountains. Shane has made a number of explorations to different areas of Vancouver Island and promises to leave you feeling alpine high! Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday March 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Centennial Park

We will go to Centennial Park in Central Saanich. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Hovey Rd entrance off Wallace Drive. Meet at the main parking lot by the lawn bowling club. Lots of good woodsy birds. Maybe a Red-breasted Sapsucker and there is sometimes an American Kestrel in that general vicinity. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, March 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Elk/Beaver Lake Big Trees

Tucked away in the southwest corner of Elk/Beaver Lake Park are a few large old growth Douglas-fir trees that not many people even realize are there. This outing will investigate this corner of the park, looking at the big trees and enjoying the early signs of spring. It's a great chance to see what native plants are evergreen if you are planting native plants in your garden. To reach the starting spot, go north on West Saanich Rd. and turn right on Beaver Lake Rd. After you enter the park, turn left when you see the sign "Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park Beaver Lake Ponds". Continue past the barn on your right. The parking lot is after the sign "Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Centre". Park only on the right-hand side of the lot. Meet at the far end of the parking lot at 1:00 p.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Wednesday, March 23

BIRDER'S NIGHT

Burrowing Owls in California— An Abundant Endangered Species?

Mr. Barclay will present a slideshow titled Burrowing Owls in California—an Abundant Endangered Species? about burrowing owls in California. In the first part of his presentation he summarizes burrowing owl natural history, range, abundance and distribution range-wide and in California, breeding strategy, habitat associations and movements in California. In the second part he discusses its conservation status and addresses the question - why all the concern about burrowing owls in California? He illustrates how management of vacant lands in developing parts of California affects burrowing owls by initially attracting them and then eventually destroying their habitat. We meet in Rm 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Free. Everyone is welcome.

Friday, March 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Magnificent Wildflowers and Birds at Mill Hill

Enjoy a Good Friday visit to Mill Hill for an early spring show of wildflowers and listen for the good selection of birds as you climb through the varying habitats. Soak up the colours of spring that are just starting as the progression of wildflowers begins for another year. It's also a good place to check for birds as you look down over the tree

canopy near the top. Note that the route is steep and rough on the way down but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at the Mill Hill Regional Park information kiosk at 9:00 a.m. To get to the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge, then left on to Atkins Road. Turn left at the four-way intersection to continue on Atkins Avenue that leads to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday March 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Leisurely Walk Up Lone Tree Hill

Great way to spend Easter Sunday! This little knoll is a treasure trove of spring wildflowers. It is a bit early for the full diversity of species on this hill but it's fun to see which flowers are the early ones in the long progression of blooms that we enjoy in Victoria. We can certainly take in the fantastic views from this high viewpoint as well as listen for birds such as the Orange-crowned Warbler singing his heart out. In a previous year, we were treated to great views of a Townsend's Solitaire at the top so don't overlook that bird just because it looks like a Robin from the back. The trail is a gradual climb but is at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Starts at 10:00 a.m. To get to the park, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, March 28

MARINE NIGHT

BC Marine Mammal Response Network—Large Whale Disentanglement Efforts 2009 to Present

Paul Cottrell has worked as a marine mammal research biologist with the Department of Fisheries for 18 years, most recently as the Pacific marine mammal coordinator. His talk will summarize the greater than 15 Humpback Whale and Gray Whale disentanglement efforts conducted by the British Columbia Marine Mammal Response Network. We meet in Rm 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Free. Everyone is welcome.

Monday, March 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Satin Flowers and Birds at Juan de Fuca

This outing is a chance to look at the early Satin Flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) and other emerging spring flowers as well as enjoy the birds who are telling us that spring is here at last. The Shooting Stars (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*), Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), Spring Gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*), Monkey Flowers (*Mimulus alsinoides*) and Fawn Lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*) should be in bloom now. It is also a great place to check out the birds so this trip will have some of each. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre (Westshore Parks & Recreation), 1767 Old Island Highway. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to Victoria. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Thursday, March 31

NON-VNHS EVENT

It Was a Very Big Year!

Ann Nightingale will be the guest presenter at Rocky Point Bird Observatory's Annual General Meeting, speaking about her adventures

to set a Vancouver Island Big Year record in 2015. This slide-illustrated talk is jointly hosted by VNHS and RPBO, and will start at approximately 8 p.m., following the AGM. Everyone is welcome to attend the AGM to learn more about the work being done by Victoria's own migration monitoring station, an "offspring" of the Victoria Natural History Society. Fraser building/Room 159, UVic, 7 p.m. Bring your cup and a friend!

APRIL 2016

Sunday April 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join **Aziza Cooper** on the first of the season's Butterfly outings! This outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will meet near the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. The meeting time may change. Check website closer to the date for updates. Contact Aziza at 250-516-7703 or email her at skylarkbc123 at gmail.com for more information.

Saturday April 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding at Rithet's Bog

Join us as we enjoy a birding walk along the level loop trail around the bog. Rails and Anna's Hummingbirds, wetland-loving warblers, swallows, migrating teal and other ducks are all possibilities. There should be a number of early migrants around now as well as the considerable resident population of birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m. along Dalewood Lane (just off Chatterton Way) at the northwest corner of the Bog. Leader is Marie O'Shaughnessy. Call Marie at (250) 598-9680 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, April 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Enjoy Early Spring Flowers and Birds at Gore and Oak Haven Parks

What better way to spend a morning than in these two delightful Saanich Peninsula parks with their exquisite spring wildflowers and plenty of birds. To allow more people to partake in the level section in Gore Park, we will do this park first. Oak Haven Park has a climb to the summit but it is not terribly strenuous or long. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the entrance to Gore Park. To reach Gore Park, proceed along Benvenuto Dr towards Butchart Gardens. Turn right on Amwell Dr. Follow Amwell Dr to reach Greig Rd. Turn right to the park entrance on the right. We usually walk to Oak Haven from Gore Park and return. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Tuesday, April 12

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

The Quintessential Ecosystem Engineer: Past, Present and Future

For one million years, *Castor canadensis* has been shaping the North American landscape and ecosystems in profound ways. Once numbering an estimated 60-400 million, the beaver was one of the continent's most widespread mammals before Europeans arrived, but 300 years of fur-trade slaughter reduced its population to the low hundred-thousands by 1900. In her new book, "Once They Were Hats:

In Search of the Mighty Beaver," **Frances Backhouse** examines what happened after we nearly wiped this keystone species off the map, and how we can learn to live with beavers now that they're returning. In tonight's presentation, she'll talk about her research and the fascinating animals that inspired it. For more information about her book, see www.backhouse.ca or www.facebook.com/MightyBeaver.) We meet in Rm 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Free. Everyone is welcome.

Saturday, April 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to Offer

Join us to enjoy the wildflowers and the birds as well. Our goal is to see the Gold Stars (*Crocidium multicaule*) in bloom but we will not be disappointed if we miss them as there is an amazing array of other delights and great panoramic views from the ridge. We might see a Golden Eagle on the ridge or hear or see a Sooty Grouse. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Bring a lunch. Meet there at 9:00 am. To reach the start, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd. Go past Lone Tree Hill Park on your right and watch for Emma Dixon Rd on the left. The trail head is on Millstream Rd just past that intersection. Park on the right-hand-side of the road. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, April 17

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Two for One Bargain—Horth Hill and Bear Hill Wildflowers

Enjoy having two treats in one day. It is hard to fit all the good wildflower areas into the short period when they are at their peak so we'll double up. Despite the close proximity of these two areas, the flora is quite different. Horth Hill is sunnier and drier. The Chocolate Lilies (*Fritillaria affinis*) should be great there. Bear Hill is more woodsy and doesn't get as much sun. If we are lucky, we'll see some Pink Fairy Slippers (*Calypso bulbosa*) there. We will be joined there by Jules Thomson, the CRD Steward for Bear Hill, who will lead us to the top of Bear Hill. Note that both trails are gradual climbs but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Bring a lunch and we'll eat it between walks. Meet at the parking lot at Horth Hill at 10:00 a.m. To get to Horth Hill, take the Pat Bay Highway north to the Wain Rd exit. Follow Wain Rd west, then turn right on Tatlow Rd to the park entrance on the right. To get to Bear Hill from Horth Hill, return to the highway and go south. Turn right at Island View Rd, left on Saanich Cross Rd to Central Saanich Rd. Continue south on Central Saanich Rd to right on Keating Cross Rd, left on Oldfield Rd and left on Bear Hill Rd to the parking area. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, April 19th

BOTANY NIGHT

Continuity over the centuries: how the tradition of botanical art has endured

Join **Ken Sohm** to briefly examine the various approaches of artists to botanical motifs over many centuries. The emphasis will be on 'fine art' (think Monet or Van Gogh) but examples of the equally fine parallel tradition of Botanical art from the Dutch Golden Age floral painters up to the present will be included. After a brief overview of the early painters, we will deepen the focus on significant 'modern' painters from Cezanne on up to contemporary painters such as Jim Dine. We will see how painters have 'fed' on previous painters' work, creating continuity

in this tradition. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Friday, April 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Cowichan and Somenos Garry Oak Preserves

To make the drive to Duncan worthwhile, we'll pack in a few Botany and Birding adventures. We have arranged a visit to the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve which is not generally open to the public. You will see the wildflowers that have emerged after the enormous restoration efforts of taking out massive quantities of invasive Scotch broom. They also have an interesting nursery area where they grow the native plants that they have been using to fill in any bare areas. We hope to be able to check out the nearby area where they have been coordinating the Western Bluebird Recovery project as well. VNHS has assisted in financing this project. Then we'll stop at the Somenos Garry Oak Preserve to see the mother-load of Prairie Violets (*Viola praemorsa*) and Chocolate Lilies (*Fritillaria affinis*) that look like they are on steroids. Plus there is a good birding area along the creek there as well. Finally we'll stop at the other side of the marsh at the Somenos Marsh Conservation Area to check out the birds from the boardwalk that extends along the side. Bring a lunch. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 9:00 a.m. You must register for this event as the number of visitors is limited. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 after Mar 3 to register or if you need more information.

Saturday, April 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Playfair Park Goes Native

This outing may NOT happen on this exact date. We are still in the process of determining when this outing will take place. Playfair Park is known for its Rhododendron and perennial beds but there are other surprises in this diverse Saanich Park as well. Colleen O'Brien has quietly converted a good swath of it back to its original habitat under the native Garry Oaks. Not only Camas but other native wildflowers now thrive under her care. It has taken several years to gradually remove the invasive grasses and other thugs and replace them with the original inhabitants of this meadow. Come see the rewards. You must register for this event as the number of visitors is limited. If you wish to be informed of when this trip will take place and more details, contact Agnes before April 18 at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634.

Saturday, April 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1/2)

25th Camas Day in Beacon Hill Park

The 25th Camas Day includes wildflower, birding, archaeology and other natural history walks. Check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website <http://www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca> closer to the date for more details.

Sunday, April 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

The Wild Side of Thetis Lake Park

This park is overflowing with wild flowers, common and uncommon. Pause to enjoy the ferns, lichens, mosses and other supporting cast as well. Our walk will only cover a small fraction of this fantastic park. We hope this visit encourages you to come again on your own. The trail is a gentle climb but taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. To reach the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge. Continue on this

road when it goes under the highway and you will come to the Thetis Lake Park parking lot. Meet at the main parking lot at 1:00 p.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, April 25

MARINE NIGHT

Pacific Herring: Interactions Across the Land-Sea Interface

Dr. Caroline Fox is a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow at Dalhousie University and UVic and a Conservation Scientist with Raincoast Conservation Foundation. Every year, Pacific herring, a small but crucially important forage fish, gather to spawn on nearshore and intertidal zones along Canada's Pacific coast. Spawn events attract large aggregations of predators and scavengers, including black bears and other terrestrial consumers. Dr. Fox will explain the importance of Pacific herring, their spawn events, and their connections with intertidal and terrestrial ecosystems. We meet in Rm 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Free. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Unveiling the Migratory Mysteries of a Charismatic Seabird from Alaska and Surprising Implications of Wildlife Tracking.

Year-round ecology and behaviour of seabirds is poorly understood due to difficulties associated with measuring at-sea activity during the non-breeding season. **Jill Robinson** describes her study of the at-sea distribution of small diving seabirds using lightweight biologging devices that track individuals across seasons. Jill recovered 10 (of 31) geolocators deployed on Crested Auklets (*Aethia cristatella*) at a breeding site in Alaska and revealed for the first time, an unexpected long-distance migration. We meet in Rm 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Free. Everyone is welcome.

Saturday, April 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Along Lochside Trail at Blenkinsop Lake

Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. We will check if migrants such as Swallows, Warblers or maybe an early Black-headed Grosbeaks have joined the residents such as Cooper's Hawks and Downy Woodpeckers. If we try to spot these birds before the leaves fill in completely, they might be easier to see but each year is different. Meet at 8:00 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Contact Rick at 250-885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR COMING MONTHS

Sunday, May 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1/2)

Habitat Acquisition Trust Native Plant Garden Tour

Once again HAT will be coordinating this tour. See website <http://www.hat.bc.ca> closer to the date.

Possible June Tour to Cougar Annie's Garden

As mentioned in last Naturalist, Bulletin Board section, groups may now reserve to visit this garden. If there is sufficient interest, we may organize a VNHS tour. See website <http://www.boatbasin.org> for information on the garden. For more information and to express your interest, contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634.



Carunculated Caracara. *Photo: Val George*