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The Victoria NATURALIST

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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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Contents

A Message from the Board	4
Parksville Pacific Herring Trip 2016.....	6
Slugs are Slimy, Slugs are Scary, Slugs do not Seem Sanitary <i>By Ben van Drimmelen</i>	7
Community Involvement and Conservation for a Well-Rounded Curriculum <i>By Alanah Nasadyk, Habitat Acquisition Trust</i>	9
Surprise Finds at Harling Point <i>By Tina Kelly</i>	11
Learning with Vancouver Island's Marine Centres <i>By Tina Kelly</i>	12
International Migratory Bird Day 2016 <i>By Penny Lancaster, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, IMBD Coordinator</i>	14
Parks Canada BioBlitz 2016—Gulf Islands <i>By Athena George, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve Interpreter</i>	15
Spring is in full swing; the birds are chirping, the gardens are lush and the snakes are out... <i>By Katie Bell, HAT Volunteer and Wildlife Conservationist</i>	16
Watershed Wonders Day at Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre <i>By Tina Kelly</i>	18
Odds and Ends <i>By Gail Harcombe</i>	18
Letters	19
Bulletin Board.....	20
Welcome New VNHS Members	20
Calendar	21

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As sometimes (rarely) happens, submissions for this issue were looking somewhat sparse, so I looked through older issues of the newsletter, and “hit the jackpot”—in a rather sobering way. It was like reading things I’d read within the past few months. In the 2005 July/August issue, Claudia’s Note from the Editor spoke of reports of declines in bird populations, an article “Bees for Beginners” warned of declines in bee populations, and one about sustainable energy linked climate warming and the melting of the Arctic ice that was threatening polar bear survival. Recently (10 years later!), these topics have resurfaced. We are (again) hearing about grave concerns for bee populations and Arctic ice melting at an unprecedented rate, and reports tell us that in monitored populations making up 19% of the world’s seabirds, there has been a total decline of 70% since the 1950s, a loss of around 230 million birds. This is thought to be due to a range of factors, including disruption of island nesting sites, plastics and pollution in the oceans, and overfishing of species crucial to seabird survival. And, in a paper published in the journal *Science* in 2015, research provided the first real demonstration that climate is having a similar, large-scale influence on the abundance of common birds in widely separated parts of the world—showing for the first time that common bird populations are responding to climate change in a similar way in both Europe and the USA. An international team of researchers found that populations of bird species expected to do well due to climate change had substantially outperformed those expected to do badly over a thirty-year period (1980 to 2010).

Can we help reverse these trends? Perhaps. Reducing pollution, particularly plastic pollution and fossil fuel consumption, preserving remaining significant habitats, providing new habitats, and urging the powers that be for increased protection of large marine protective areas that provide refuge for seabirds is at least a way to start.

When you read this newsletter, the “lazy, hazy days of summer” will have officially begun. Of course, the warm dry days we’ve been enjoying (gosh, was it since February?) have had many of us thinking summer began weeks ago! Take the time to relax and enjoy the summer, but perhaps also to explore somewhere new. Lots of trails and beaches to try!

Gail Harcombe

Cover Photo: Sand-verbena Moth (Copablepharon fuscum). Photo: Sean McCann

A Message from the Board

The last issue of the magazine included the 2016/2017 board on the inside cover but no additional specifics, so here are a few details.

Darren Copley has happily stepped back into the role of Past-President with Ben van Drimmelen's willingness to step into the Presidency. It has been a long time since someone hasn't had to be cajoled into the top job! Thank you to Ben for providing a much-needed break from presidential duties to someone who has definitely earned it after 17 years on the Board, including almost eight years as President! Not only has Darren Copley been your President, he started out as the Program Director, was responsible for Field Trips for many years, and has also been handling Membership for us since 2003. If you think those trips over to the Olympics to see the Cultural Centre, look for Tufted Puffins or head out onto Dungeness Spit are great, then you have him to thank for dreaming them up many years ago. He also brought dragonflies and beach seines into the mix for field trips, in addition to birding and botany outings.

Three new board members joined the team at the annual general meeting and are still finding their feet: Charlene Woods, Vicki Metcalfe, and Stephanie Weinstein. We are pleased to welcome them and help with matching them to roles in the organization. Vicki has already agreed to work with Paige as a volunteer coordinator – another position we have needed filled for a long time. We hope to get ourselves out into the community more through the help of members, and see if we can't get some momentum on projects through opportunities to volunteer. Stephanie Weinstein will be your new host for Natural History Nights starting this fall, and on that topic, although they are not on the board, Birders' Night hosting is going to be handled by Ann Nightingale and David Bird. Seriously—we are not making this up! Finally, Ben's ascendancy has left the role of Secretary open, so Claudia Copley will handle the role again. Your other board members will continue doing great jobs in the various positions they hold.

One of the things that the VNHS offers are free field



VNHS September Social

Saturday, September 24, 2016
3:00 p.m. following Hawk Watch

You are invited!

Join CRD Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for Hawk Watch and then join your fellow VNHS members for a BBQ get-together at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Park. Members are welcome to a free smokie (veggie option available), beverage, cake, and camaraderie! Bring a lawn chair.

To RSVP, email or phone Gail: 250-652-3508, g.harcombe@shaw.ca
before September 16, 2015

**A reply is only necessary if you plan to come.
Please specify number of smokies and whether regular or veggie.**

trips into nature for school groups and other groups, and recently Bill Dancer and Stephanie Weinstein handled a very interesting session about which we thought the membership might like to hear. A member of our Society who is also connected to the Red Cross got in touch with us with a request regarding Syrian immigrant families and helping them adjust to life here. The goal of the presentation was to alleviate any fears the families had about wild animals, and the results were very successful and very rewarding.

Bill and Stephanie reported that there were 40 refugees consisting of roughly 40% grownups, mostly women and 60% children aged from three up to teen-aged and for the most part made up of preteens. The two took a whole range of posters, skulls, plants, and other information items and Stephanie had a slide show covering the natural world here in Victoria and concentrated on dispelling myths about dangerous wildlife. They also brought along examples of Poison Hemlock, Daphne Laurel, Stinging Nettle, and Laburnum and explained their toxic properties and precautions to take.

Bill and Stephanie reported that during set up and at the start of the presentation the children of all ages were very interested to see and touch items and filling in the colouring sheets Stephanie brought along, but very few adults were present. They were told they would be along later. This proved to be true and they listened and, through a translator,

asked many questions.

It apparently worked very well for both Stephanie and Bill to be there - many of the women gravitated towards Stephanie and the men to Bill when informally showing them items/specimens and answering questions. Once a comfort level was established, things went very well, and at the end adults were interested in going out to explore and to see things we had shown them or talked about. As part of the Schools Program, the VNHS may lead a field trip for the group with the help of the Red Cross organizers. It would be fabulous to get them outside and increase their comfort level and knowledge. Stephanie had questions like "will a Bald Eagle take your child?" And they seemed excited to learn about all the edible berries.

According to Bill and Stephanie, they were engaged and full of energy and an excellent group to interact with. The Red Cross representative was great, as was the interpreter, and the whole experience was wonderful. The children were bright and inquisitive and certainly happy and enjoyed themselves, and the adults, once they felt comfortable, were very communicative. All in all a successful afternoon.

And finally, don't forget the annual Hawkwatch and BBQ Social that happens at East Sooke Regional Park on Saturday, September 24, as a thank you to members. Please check the ad on page four and RSVP with your food preference. Don't forget a lawn chair.

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Habitat Acquisition Trust | 825 Broughton St Victoria | 250 995 2428 | hat.bc.ca/habitatguardians

Parksville Pacific Herring Trip 2016



1. Brandt
2. Long-tailed Duck
3. Long-tailed Ducks
4. Surf Scoter
5. Gulls
6. Barrows Goldeneye
7. Black Scoters

Photos by Liam Singh

Slugs are Slimy, Slugs are Scary, Slugs do not Seem Sanitary

By Ben van Drimmelen

Slugs are snails without shells. Like snails, a slug moves around on a large, muscular ‘foot’ which you can watch by placing a slug on glass and watching from below. Those dark and light bands are muscles; as they contract at the front of the foot, they pull the slug forward. Then muscles at the rear expand to give the slug a push. Slugs glide on a carpet of slime which makes it easier for them to travel over rough objects. They use two kinds of slime. A clear slime makes the travel carpet and also keeps the slug’s shell-less body from drying out. The other slime is coloured and tastes (if you are into slug licking) foul! It presumably protects them from many of their potential predators. Slug slime is intriguing stuff; it can absorb up to 100 times its original volume in water. That makes it very difficult to rinse from your fingers, so the best technique for de-sliming is to let the slime dry and then roll it off, like rubber cement.¹

For dining, slugs and snails use an organ that is unique in the animal kingdom: a rasping tongue called a radula. It is an elastic band running over a gristly core, armed with many broad, blunt chitin teeth. Food bits are rasped off and passed back into the gullet. You can feel the rasping if you put a large slug on the back of your hand and are patient enough to let it emerge and begin to escape.

To find food and shelter, the slug uses two sets of tentacles on its head. The shorter, lower pair of tentacles can smell and maybe taste as well. The upper, longer ones are optical, sensing light and smells. Those cells can’t recognize colours but they can at least tell the slugs when it is dark and time to go a-foraging.

Those longer tentacles are also touch-sensitive, an attribute that I have found useful in slug races. During lunch breaks in fieldwork, I’d sit down and set up a simple race track on the cover of my notebook - two lines of Xs. I would then put two slugs, side by side, on the cover. They would immediately hunch up – their only pathetic defence - but then each slug would cautiously extend its tentacles and began to move. To steer my slugs, I would wait until each slug got beside an X, then tap the tentacle on the side farthest from the X. In would go both tentacles, as each slug hunched up again. Soon, they would extend again, but this time the untouched tentacle would emerge before the touched one and the slug would make a turn away from the touched tentacle, around the first X and then continue onwards. A series of tentacle taps would guide both slugs through my racetrack, one slug would win, my break would be over and it was back to work. OK, maybe



Banana Slug. Photo: Kristina Ovaska

I was getting a bit “bushed”, but there was a (low) level of excitement.

Anyway, there are some twenty-five species of slugs in British Columbia, but fully half of those are introduced.² Most of the exotic species are Eurasian. They probably came in on imported plants and soil, a dispersal method that continues to work well today for slugs and their eggs to spread with garden refuse, soil, wood, rocks, and other materials.

The most destructive slugs in this region are non-native species, such as the European black slug and the grey garden slug. European black slugs are quite large, more than 12 centimetres long. They are usually black, but also come in reddish brown or even yellowish-orange. This slug has a furrowed back, and often has a rusty orange edge to its foot. It has a somewhat interesting defence. Besides hunching up for protection if you poke it, it will also start slowly wobbling from side to side. (I still can’t figure out how wobbling helps the slug, but there must be a benefit.)

Grey field slugs are much smaller (up to four centimetres long), mottled grey or light brown. These little slugs are almost omnipresent in our coastal gardens. If you disturb them, they extrude a milky slime.

And then there is the giant garden or giant grey slug, sometimes called the leopard slug. This one grows up to 20 centimetres. It can be pale-grey, ash-coloured, brownish or yellowish-white, streaked or spotted with black markings that sometimes merge to form lateral bands. These are particularly voracious garden pests although they feed mainly on fungi and decaying plant material. These slugs have to have easy access to water; they don’t retain water well, so they can easily dry

1 Griffith, H. 2015. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly. E-Fauna Nature Note accessed September 21, 2015. <http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/efauna/NatureNotesSlugs.html>.

2 Forsyth, R.G., 2003. Key to Slugs of British Columbia in Botanical Electronic News, accessed October 29, 2015 at <http://www.ou.edu/cas/botany-micro/ben/ben320.html>.



Great grey or Leopard slug. Photo: Kristina Ovaska

out during the day. They are also our fastest slug, clocked at 15 centimetres/minute. That is useful because they are versatile, sometimes being a predator stalking and eating other slugs.

Our most common native west coast slug is the banana slug. These are usually olive green with black spots (although they can range from a ghostly white to variously spotted and even black). That conspicuous hole on the side of the slug is an air passage to a gill, a throwback feature reflecting slugs' aquatic history. And the fact that the breathing hole occurs only on the right side is a reminder that slug ancestors had shells. The banana slug is the second largest slug in the world, reaching

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more than 20 centimetres (the world's largest slug is European, with the cumbersome name of *Limax cinereoniger*). This garden-friendly beast is usually not interested garden crops, it likes dead and decaying matter but may also feeds on green plants and fungi.

Another native slug is also not a problem to us: the blue-grey taildropper. This small (2-3 centimetres) slender slug can be grey, blue or some colour in between. As a defence, it can indeed detach its tail. (This is a popular trick; there are also yellow-bordered, reticulate, northern, papillose, banded, smoky, mottled and scarlet-backed taildroppers.) The yellow-bordered, scarlet-backed and reticulate live nearby, in the western areas of the Capital Regional District; the others are foreign.) The blue-grey taildropper lives in two of our local endangered ecological communities: Garry oak meadows and moist Douglas-fir–*Arbutus* forests.³ We don't know much more about it, except that it is endangered (at risk of going completely extinct), mainly due to loss of its habitats from development and other human activities.

Another intriguing local slug is the dromedary jumping-slug. At 6 centimetres, it is also fairly small, greyish with cream mottling on its back often with orange or yellowish underside. This one is at the northern limit of its range. It lives in mature and older cedar-hemlock forests which tend to be continually moist, and requires abundant coarse woody debris for cover. There is also a warty jumping-slug close to our area. Why are they called jumping slugs? Well, they jump, kind of... maybe more of a writhing anti-predator dance. You can see it in action in a YouTube clip taken on the West Coast Trail by local amphibian/gastropod specialist Kristiina Ovaska at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVj991ExTwQ>.

And what eats slugs? Garter snakes, for one. And salamanders and toads, plus songbirds such as fox sparrows, varied thrushes and spotted towhees. But there are also some carnivorous invertebrates that are specialists in attacking slugs – for example, the fearsome (to a slug) robust lancetooth snail. Unlike the broad and blunt chitin teeth on vegetarian snails, this local coastal forest snail has dagger-shaped radula teeth to stab snails and slugs. The lancetooth then follows the injured victim's slime trail until it dies and then uses the same sharp teeth to devour the prey. You can find video on YouTube of snails eating slugs, but only do that if you have a stomach for gory details...

A number of ground beetles will also devour slug eggs and small slugs. Encouraging these predators, including our harmless garter snakes, in your garden will help control pest populations of introduced slugs. And by all means, get out there, scrape around in the forest litter or go night-hunting (because fear of drying makes most slugs nocturnal and secretive) and get to know and enjoy our local native slugs. Slimy, yes; scary, no; sanitary, probably....

³ "Endangered" is used loosely here. Sadly, the federal government cannot list or designate endangered ecological communities under the federal Species at Risk Act. BC's Conservation Centre can list them, but does not have the authority to actually designate any organism or community as endangered. Instead, it designates organisms as "red-listed" (a designation which does not actually provide any legal protection for organisms, their habitats or ecological communities).

Community Involvement and Conservation for a Well-Rounded Curriculum

By Alanah Nasadyk,
Habitat Acquisition Trust
Community and Development
Coordinator



Mill Hill in Spring 2016, relatively Scotch Broom free thanks to the work of volunteers.
Photo: Alanah Nasadyk

High school is such a pivotal time in our lives. Students are busy with homework, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, post-secondary education and scholarship applications, and of course spending time with friends. It's a time where decisions can open up doors to lifelong aspirations and adventure. When Amanda Punch of Stelly's Secondary reached out to us at Habitat Acquisition Trust on behalf of the Stelly's Secondary Green Team Environmental Club, we knew this was something special. We were impressed and intrigued by Amanda and her peers' interest and initiative.

Nature and outdoor education is an important theme for many growing up on Vancouver Island. However, the first time I recall becoming involved in environmental restoration wasn't until a biology teacher at Belmont Secondary encouraged my class to volunteer for credits towards graduation by attending a broom pull at Mill Hill. I had never been to Mill Hill prior to this, but it became my first rewarding taste of community involvement.

When I heard that the huge swaths of broom volunteers removed would have to be air-lifted by helicopter, it felt really good to be a part of such an important project. At this time, I wasn't familiar with just how ecologically important Mill Hill was, nor with the impacts of invasive species. I had a vague sense that people with allergies despised broom and that some landowners weeded it from their land, so I understood removing it was a good deed. This was an important step towards my interest in conservation and all things wild.

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February 28th, 2016, Alanah Nasadyk, Chris McDonald, and the Stelly's Students at Oak Haven Park restoration day. Photo: Wendy Tyrrell

Seeing the opportunity to support students on their journey towards careers, community involvement, and becoming tomorrow's leaders in sustainability brought a smile to my face. It wasn't long after our initial contact that HAT and the Stelly's Green Team came together with our own broom pull to help restore Oak Haven Park in February 2016. Together we removed 12 cubic metres of invasive plants, making room for native wildflowers and other species to eventually recolonize and increase the biodiversity of a once overrun area. It was a stormy day with breaks of sunshine, but as the group of students stood on the Oak Haven hilltop with a rainbow crowning their achievement, they could look down on Central Saanich and see an obvious connection between this park and their community. From that hilltop we could even see the Stelly's school.

Putting their excellent leadership to use the Stelly's super-students contacted me again through the Vital Youth Program. This program initiated by the Victoria Foundation and supported by the Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation engages high school students in funding local charities to support their community and to learn about grant writing, as well as the non-profit sector. After meeting with the Stelly's Vital Youth club to share HAT's story, the students decided to give this year's Vital Youth Grant to their local land trust: HAT, further securing a mutually beneficial partnership. On May 17th HAT celebrated this grant with the Stelly's Vital Youth at the Victoria Foundation Year-End event.

With the Vital Youth funding we will be able to continue working to protect, restore, and study the endangered Garry Oak ecosystems of Oak Haven Park. Ongoing restoration is essential as the seed bank of invasive plants such as Scotch Broom can last decades. As with many things in life, with invasive persistence is key.

On Sunday, May 15th, another team of Stelly's students set out with Volunteer Coordinator Alf Birch and myself to take down invasive Scotch Broom and Laurel-Daphne. This event also included a nature walk and talk identifying native plants found at the site, sharing its history of restoration, and highlighting the rare slimleaf onion (*Allium amplexans*). In a coming together of local community support, Breadstuffs

Bakery provided a nourishing lunch to students at both of these restoration events. By the end of the day, we had removed roughly 9 cubic meters of weedy plant material, making a sizable dent in the encroachment of these plants into the park. Not only that, but we had strengthened connections with the land and spent a healthy, active day outdoors together.

Stelly's also has a course on Global Perspectives, encouraging community involvement and global citizenship. These students and the Stelly's Green Team participated in the previous restoration days and will be partnering with HAT in the following year to continue this relationship.

To see young people so active in their community and interested in preserving nature is so motivating. Oak Haven Park is a special place, protected by a conservation covenant between HAT, The Land Conservancy, and Central Saanich. Near eight other parks, including the sizable and well-known Gowlland Tod Park, Oak Haven bolsters connectivity and habitat for a wide array of plants and animals. The Garry Oak ecosystems within this park are among the most endangered wildlife assemblages in Canada, with less than 5% remaining from their pre-colonial range worldwide. This important place has been identified as viable habitat for several rare species, including the Blue-Grey Taildropper slug, and more studies of its species composition may reveal that it is indeed home for more wildlife in need of our protection and consideration. The Conservation Data Centre rating of rarity, scarcity, uniqueness and vulnerability for Oak Haven Park is high.



Broom "bouquet!" Photo: Alanah Nasadyk

I have been so grateful to work with the Stelly's students these past several months, and look forward to collaborating with many people in the community to restore this wonderful place for wildlife and for you and me.

HAT's Land Protection Program, supported in part by donations from people like you, allows us to protect, restore, and engage community members with the land. You can support Oak Haven and other HAT covenants through our current Land Protection campaign. More info at: www.hat.bc.ca/habitatguardians

If you know a student, teacher, or school group that may be interested in getting involved with HAT, please share us with them. We'd love to hear from you: 250-995-2428 or hatmail@hat.bc.ca

Surprise Finds at Harling Point

By Tina Kelly
Photos by author



The May 22 low-tide field trip offered up a couple of surprise finds along with many of the usual suspects. More than 35 members braved the slippery slopes of Harling Point's rocky shore to look for fish and invertebrates and all of those eyes helped us find some interesting species. Our most unusual intertidal discoveries were in fact vertebrates. Peeling back the Surfgrass to expose a tidepool, a Spotted Ratfish (*Hydrolagus collii*) was discovered. The 30cm headless Ratfish body showed us clearly why this fish highlights rat in its name—the rat-like tail. Not an intertidal species, this fish likely washed up to become

food for birds and other intertidal scavengers. The second unexpected species was a Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*); a recently deceased—due to its clean intact body—Rhinoceros Auklet was found along the shoreline. Other species found included Decorator Crabs, Gumboot Chitons, Black Katy Chitons, Blood Stars, Six-rayed Stars, Northern Clingfish, Pygmy Rock Crabs, Burrowing Cucumbers and a handful of algae species.



(above, left) Lowtide Explorers.
(above, right) Rhinoceros Auklet.
(left) Spotted Ratfish.

Learning with Vancouver Island's Marine Centres

By Tina Kelly



By way of geography and a familial connection, I had a marine science mentor at a very young age. A well-worn path from my grandmother's Cordova Bay beachfront house led to my great uncle's house next door. As a highschool science teacher, he was my go-to guy for consulting tide charts and answering questions about clams and geoducks I uncovered in the sandbar. All day, I mucked about on the beach, only breaking when called in for lunch. I realize how lucky I was to have had a childhood spent seaside and my very own science teacher just a staircase up from the beach.

If you don't have a personal science teacher and want to learn more about the ocean around us, Vancouver Island has many marine centres staffed by those eager to share their science and marine knowledge.

Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre, Port Hardy

As its name suggests, the primary focus of this Centre is to support salmonid enhancement, conservation and education initiatives on Northern Vancouver Island. Described as small but full of information, visitors can take a tour or take their time exploring the exhibits. Among the highlights are many fresh water aquariums (stand inside a "donut" tank for a 360° view of its inhabitants), a small theatre with a feature movie, microscopes for a closer look at invertebrates and juvenile salmon, and hands-on games—the "Wheel of Life" and giant Jenga. The Centre is open 10-5 daily from mid-May through the end of September. Tours of the Quatse hatchery are also available. www.thesalmoncentre.org

Discovery Passage Aquarium, Campbell River

Campbell River is known as the Salmon Capital of World. In keeping with that title, the quaint little—652 square ft.—aquarium on Campbell River's downtown waterfront highlights this species important to the town's economy. But there is much more to the surrounding sea, and this aquarium displays species living in rocky pools, kelp forests, and eelgrass meadows. Look for seastars, cucumbers, snails, rockfish, sculpins and many other species. Open daily from May through September. Visit at the end of the season and celebrate the release of the animals back into local waters. www.discovery-passageaquarium.ca

Deep Bay Marine Field Station, Deep Bay

Approximately one hour past Nanaimo, you'll find Vancouver Island University's Deep Bay Marine Field Station. This Leeds Platinum certified building was designed for research

but also invites the public to join in the education daily from 10-4. Two large well-stocked tanks highlight animals living in sandy and rocky ecosystems. Meander down the stairs to an indoor boardwalk (made from wood harvested from trees affected by the Mountain Pine Beetle) and you may find yourselves observing science in action; from the elevated boardwalk peer into laboratories and look for interpretive signs explaining the research happening within. Drop-in guided tours are also available. www.viu.ca/deepbay/

Ucluelet Aquarium, Ucluelet

The Ucluelet Aquarium upgraded from a "mini-aquarium" to a large permanent facility in 2012. Like the Discovery Passage Aquarium, Ucluelet is a catch and release facility (the former mini-Ucluelet aquarium now houses the Discovery Passage Aquarium). In March—the beginning of the season—staff collect an abundance of animals to fill their 30+ tanks (including one fresh water tank for salmon fry) and upon closing for winter, the local community comes out en masse to help release them back to the wild. Priding themselves on offering up-close and personal interactions in order to generate respect, the aquarium has scavenger hunts, numerous touch-pools, and hands-on labs featuring topics from algae to squid dissections, some of which are conducted outside, free for the public. Follow them on Social Media for up-to-date information. www.uclueletaquarium.org

Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre, Bamfield

Usually reserved for undergraduate and graduate students,



BMSC offers the public a chance to tour the facility during the summer. Check www.bms.bc.ca for dates and times.

Cowichan Bay Estuary Centre, Cowichan Bay
Cowichan Bay is one of Canada's Important Bird Areas. In addition to underwater estuary life, this Centre also

highlights the huge diversity of local marine birds, and much of their survival depends on a healthy marine environment. Telescopes, binoculars and a wildlife-viewing platform help you spot avian species. Volunteer educators, inside and out, help you with bird identification. Get hands-on with microscopes and a touch-pool well stocked with invertebrates. Check for opening hours and special events at www.cowichanestuary.ca

Gorge Waterway Nature House, Esquimalt

What once sold pop and potato chips to swimmers in the Gorge, now teaches visitors about sea cucumbers, fish, Olympia Oysters and the like. The former concession in Esquimalt Gorge Park has housed the Gorge Waterway Nature House since 2008. Open weekends during the winter, the nature house summer hours are extended. Local marine species are featured in a tank and a touch-pool. Connections between the land and the sea can be explored through a collection of natural objects—feathers, bones, and insects—and an interactive watershed model. www.worldfish.org

Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre, Sidney

The 10,000 square ft. "Aquarium of the Salish Sea," is undergoing rebranding as the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea, and features more than 25 saltwater habitats. Visitors during July and August can look forward to all day programs including talks, games, and other hands-on activities. Microscopes offer a closer look at a variety of marine invertebrates, and at the popular touch-pool, visitors can shake spines with a sea urchin, tickle a cucumber or be stung by an anemone. www.oceandiscovery.ca

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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.

International Migratory Bird Day 2016

By Penny Lancaster, Rocky Point Bird Observatory,
IMBD Coordinator



On May 14, 2016, the 7th annual International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) took place at the Beaver Lake Nature Centre in Saanich. Over the last few years, this event has continued to grow and bring together many groups for the cause of sharing knowledge and excitement about birds and their environment. Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) has taken the lead on running this event in recent years, with ongoing sponsorship and support from VNHS and CRD Parks.

This has been the biggest IMBD event in the history of Victoria, with 14 different organizations coming together



Hummingbird banding.
Photo: Andrea Neumann

to offer an eclectic range of expertise and entertainment. The birds were very cooperative as well, turning out in great numbers and resulting in some great bird walks and banding demonstrations. VNHS started the day off with the usual Saturday morning walk before the festival started. Then, bird walk leader extraordinaire, Geoffrey Newell returned to lead two well-attended bird

walks, followed by RPBO's own, Daniel Donnecke also leading a walk. Excellent views of birds in the hand from the banding crew were one of the biggest highlights of the day. There were four Dark-Eyed Juncos, including a family with one freshly fledged young, a pair of Black-Throated Grey Warblers, a Varied Thrush, Spotted Towhee, Wilson's Warbler, Red-Winged Blackbird, and Anna's Hummingbird. By mid-morning, the species list was close to overflowing the tally board. The final count for the day was 51 species.

Many new organizations were able to join this year, including Veins of Life Watershed Society, Parks Canada, The Robert Bateman Centre, Wild Arc, and Habitat Acquisition Trust. This year marks 100 years since the Migratory Bird Convention. To promote awareness about how migratory birds are being protected locally, Victoria Harbour and Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuaries were getting out the word about our local urban wildlife "biodivercity".

Returning participants included Rithet's Bog, Friends of EcoReserves BC, and BC Purple Martin Stewardship and Recovery Society. The Raptors (Pacific Northwest Raptors), showed a Turkey Vulture, Harris's Hawk and Prairie Falcon.

Many thanks to all the organizations and volunteers who helped make this year's IMBD possible, especially to VNHS and CRD for their continued support. RPBO is already looking forward to another great Bird Day next May!



(above, below) Photos: Penny Lancaster



"Steller's Jay".
Photo: Andrea Neumann

Parks Canada BioBlitz 2016—Gulf Islands

By Athena George, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve Interpreter

From noon Saturday, August 13 to noon Sunday, August 14, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve will hold a BioBlitz on Sidney Island. Parks Canada is happy to collaborate with the Victoria Natural History Society on this event.

This BioBlitz has two main goals: to connect young families in the Greater Victoria area to nature in the national park reserve, and to raise awareness of the conservation projects on the island such as coastal dune restoration.

In the summer of 2015, the Coastal BC Field Unit of Parks Canada held two BioBlitz events, one at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site, and the other on Saturna Island in the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. The support of members of the Victoria Natural History Society helped make these events a success. For species tallies go to: <http://www.inaturalist.ca/projects/parks-canada-bioblitz-2015-fort-rodd-hill> and <http://www.inaturalist.ca/projects/parks-canada-bioblitz-2015-gulf-islands>.

The 2016 BioBlitz on Sidney Island will be divided into three streams of participants. Nature Nerds, mainly adults, will head out on traditional species surveys. The Family Blitz will be set up as activity stations for families to roam between. Registered Volunteers will lead or assist on these two types of activities.

Parks Canada welcomes members of the Victoria Natural History Society to register as volunteer Survey Leaders or Survey Assistants. Survey Leaders are scientists or naturalists with a high level of knowledge. Survey Assistants are naturalists, interpreters or student specialists with an intermediate level of knowledge.

Registered volunteers will receive free camping at the group campsite, free passenger ferry fare to and from Sidney Island



and several volunteer hospitality meals. They'll also have the satisfaction of sharing their enthusiasm and knowledge and having fun with peers out in the field. Some collecting for species identification will be allowed under a Parks Canada Research and Collection permit.

While August isn't the best time of year to search for species (as one expert said, "it'll be dry as a bone"), it is a good time to escape to a car-free island with white-sand beaches. Parks Canada hopes that you will help take up this challenge to prove that biodiversity exists, even in August on Sidney Island!

Register at www.bb2016gulfislands.eventbrite.ca or 250-654-4000. If you have BioBlitz questions, email: athena.george@pc.gc.ca.

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



Spring is in full swing; the birds are chirping, the gardens are lush and the snakes are out...

Wait, Snakes?!

By Katie Bell, HAT Volunteer and Wildlife Conservationist



Three species of Garter Snake found on Vancouver Island, from left to right: *T. elegans*, *T. ordinoides*, and *T. sirtalis*

Do not fear, the snakes of Vancouver Island are non-venomous and feed primarily on slugs and worms. Photos show a Northwestern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis ordinoides*) attempting to chow down on a black slug (*Arion ater*). Snakes have a modified lower jaw that can separate into two halves (they do not dislocate their jaw as commonly thought), enabling snakes to eat food considerably larger than their own head. The largest part of the snake's body is often what limits the size of prey that can be consumed.

There are two major groups of snakes on the island: the Sharp-tailed Snake (*Contia tenuis*) and Garter Snakes (*Thamnophis* spp.). There are three species of Garter Snakes, including the Common Garter Snake, *Thamnophis sirtalis*, the Northwestern garter snake, *T. ordinoides*, and the Western (Terrestrial or Wandering) garter snake, *T. elegans*. All of these snakes are active during the day (diurnal) and primarily terrestrial, although all Garter Snakes can swim and *T. elegans* is often found near/in water feeding on juvenile amphibians or very small fish.

All three species of Garter Snake are common throughout BC and not at risk of extinction (yellow-listed). Distinguishing between these three types of Garter Snake is mostly based on morphology; primarily colour and patterning. All of these snakes have stripes that run the length of the body, however the colour and brightness of these stripes vary. An experienced snaker may also identify the species by counting the number of top lip (labial) scales.

The Western Terrestrial Garter Snake (snake on the LEFT in the photo) is the most distinguishable, with black spots that invade the prominent yellow/orange mid-dorsal stripe, making it appear zigzagged. Next, the Common Garter Snake (RIGHT in the photo) is the most familiar as it is the most common and also three distinct yellow stripes and red/orange bars run along either side of the mid-dorsal stripe.

Last but not least is the Northwestern Garter Snake (MIDDLE in the photo). This species varies greatly in appearance, often dull brown and with less prominent/incomplete/absent dorsal and/or lateral stripes. This species also has albino and melanistic (all black) morphs.

The most secretive and smallest snake species on Vancouver Island is the Sharp-tailed Snake, *Contia tenuis*. This is red-listed in B.C., and considered endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) due to low population size and secluded range (southeast Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Pemberton). This snake also relies on Garry oak meadows, which are native and biologically rich ecosystems that have been devastated by European settlement and continued development.

You can identify this snake species by its small, sharply-tapered and pointed tail. Also, these snakes have fairly consistent body colouration (greyish yellow/red-brown) without any distinct stripes.

HAT has been working to help the Sharp-tailed Snake

since 2005, identifying and protecting suitable habitat in the region to conserve it. To learn more about what HAT is doing for the Sharp-tailed Snake check out: <http://www.hat.bc.ca/sharp-tailed-snake-stewardship/about-our-program>.

If you suspect you have seen this snake please take a photo and call 250-995-2428 with a location, or email us a picture to confirm the identification at hatmail@hat.bc.ca. To donate to the Sharp-tailed Snakes you can do so by phone, online, or send cheque in the mail to PO Box 8552, Victoria, BC, V8W 3S2.

Remember, all of these snakes are completely harmless. Better yet, as slug-eaters they are great friends for your gardens; slugs munch on the leaves, as well as ripening fruits and vegetables of plants.



Sharp-tailed Snake, *Contia tenuis*.
Photo: Christian Engelstoft

(below) Northwestern Garter Snake, *Thamnophis ordinoides*, eating a black slug, *Arion ater*.
Photo: HAT supporter Michael McIlvaney



Watershed Wonders Day at Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre

By Tina Kelly



A big, big thank you to Bill Dancer, VNHS Schools Program co-leader for participating in our Watershed Wonders event. Your display and knowledge were a huge hit with our visitors. The total number of visitors to this event was 419 and every time I came to check in with you, you were actively engaged with great conversation and learning, so chances are you reached a great deal of those 419 people.



Odds and Ends

By Gail Harcombe

Test your knowledge of hummingbirds... Hummingbird facts you might not know ... Here are four of 10 quiz questions to be found at <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/solve/quizzes.php>

1. **True or False?**
Hummingbirds occur only in the Western Hemisphere.
2. **How many hummingbird species exist worldwide?**
 - a) About 70
 - b) About 250
 - c) About 330
 - d) About 500
3. **Why do hummingbirds hum?**
 - a) To navigate and find food
 - b) Because their wings beat as fast as 80 times per second
 - c) To ward off predators
 - d) Because they don't know the words

4. **Which of these is NOT acceptable hummingbird food?**
 - a) Flower nectar
 - b) Small insects
 - c) Sugar water
 - d) Honey water

Answers

1. True. This unique family of birds is found only in the New World, with the majority of species occurring in South America.

2. c) About 330. Of the 300-plus hummingbird species that exist worldwide, only about a dozen are commonly found in North America north of Mexico.

3. b) Because their wings beat as fast as 80 times per second. Wow! The birds are named for the humming sound made by those rapidly flapping wings.

4. d) Honey water. Honey, molasses, and artificial sweeteners must never be offered to hummingbirds. The chemical composition of honey is different from that of cane or beet sugar, so it is not the same kind of sugar hummers get when they sip nectar from flowers. Honey is not a natural food for hummers, and it spoils quickly when dissolved in water. The best thing you can do for hummingbirds is to provide natural plants that produce nectar and attract insects, and to provide sugar water (four parts water to one part white granulated sugar) in feeders.

LETTERS

Hello,

I want to say a big thank you to William Dancer for his participation in the Wild ARC Open House event. It went very well again this year and the weather uncharacteristically cooperated this time. We had approximately 825 visitors coming through to look at the displays and take a tour. Thanks to VNHS and William for being a part of this event and helping to make it a success!

Best regards,
Kari Marks
Manager
BC SPCA Wild ARC (Animal Rehabilitation Centre)

Each year another group of UVic students opens their e-mail and finds out that they are recipients of a donor funded scholarship or bursary. For these students a remarkable thing has just happened. A total stranger, someone like you, has impacted their lives in an incredibly profound way.

Not only do scholarships and bursaries bring much needed financial support, they offer a vote of confidence, a pat on the back for the hard work and fortitude that has brought the student to this point in time. A scholarship or bursary is so much more than a financial reward. It is a sign of faith in the student's choices, a voice saying we believe in you and wish you well on the path of your choosing.

Your support of UVic's students changes lives. For that we can never, ever say thank you enough.

Please find enclosed the letter from this year's recipient of the Alice M. Hay Scholarship.

With warm regards,
Cory Rabourn
Donor Relations Manager,
University of Victoria Development Office

Re: Alice M. Hay Scholarship

It is with the deepest gratitude that I thank you for selecting me as a recipient of this prestigious award. I was quite speechless when I read the award notification. It is truly a great honor to be held in such regard and also, I assure you, a necessary and welcome benefit. Receipt of this award is very important to me at this stage in my graduate career; as I

continue the writing process I have a renewed sense of value in the work that I am synthesizing.

I came to UVic from the east coast of the US because of my interest in Pacific salmon and the west coast, and to gain an international perspective on fisheries conservation issues and questions. My time at UVic has been an exciting exploration of the research and educational opportunities available to its students. I've taken advantage of the excellent courses offered by UVic and also completed a directed studies project focused on infectious agents affecting Pacific salmon.

I have spent much of the last three years executing five large-scale holding studies, examining disease processes of wild adult salmon in response to fisheries and climate change-related stressors. I have helped pioneer the use of high-throughput molecular techniques to answer disease-related questions about wild populations. I've greatly expanded my repertoire of skills during these years and continue to broaden my understanding of the factors affecting host-parasite relationships among different Pacific salmon species and stocks. I've had the benefit of sharing my results in an academic setting and with multiple stakeholders, including First Nations users and regulatory bodies such as the Pacific Salmon Commission. Though most of my time has been spent in the field, lab or at my computer, I have made some time to learn to rock climb, which has become a passion of mine. Hiking in the wet and wild woods of BC also cannot be beat!

Upon completion of my dissertation, I will likely stay on with my current lab as a post-doc to address a few of the tangential questions that inevitably emerge during any research endeavor. I have already begun a search for professorships across Canada and the US; I hope to find a teaching position with a strong research component so I may continue my exploration of stress impacts on disease processes in marine, freshwater and diadromous fishes and guide future graduate students through their own projects as part of that program.

Thank you so very much for the confidence you have given me as I synthesize the results of my graduate research and begin my professional career in the sciences. Your contribution to my progress is greatly appreciated and I will do my best to repay this honor in kind with the quality of work that is produced. I believe the fields of disease ecology and freshwater and marine sciences will surely benefit from the data I have gathered and the results I will share with the greater community.

Sincerely,
Amy Teffer
PhD student, Biology
Hometown: Granby, MA, USA

BULLETIN BOARD

NatureKids Seeks Adult with a Big Heart & Love of Sharing the Outdoors with Children!

NatureKids (formerly Young Naturalists) is currently recruiting for a volunteer co-leader for the Victoria Family Club. This is a fun and rewarding volunteer position helping to organize monthly 'Explorer Day' field trips, outdoors as much as possible. You don't need any special qualifications, and can lead Explorer Days yourself or find a Nature Mentor in your community, e.g., retired biologist, keen birder or local bee keeper!

NatureKids is designed to get children aged 5–12 years old and their families outside exploring nature!

Contact Tammy Keetch, Clubs Coordinator at coordinator@naturekidsbc.ca; www.naturekidsbc.ca

References required.

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks Sunday July 10 and August 14 at 9 a.m.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) hosts bird walks at Outerbridge Park in Saanich on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The walks begin at 9 a.m. at the parking area off Royal Oak Drive. This is an easy walk and suitable for people with mobility concerns. For dates and details, see <http://rpbo.org> and download the bird list http://rpbo.org/outerbridge_park.pdf

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Guided Bird Walks Every Sunday 9:00 a.m.

Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal and informative walk around the lake area. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is at 3873 Swan Lake Rd, off Ralph St. Donations are appreciated. For more information, see <http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php>. Download a copy of the sanctuary bird checklist http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/images/small_images/Online%20bird%20checklist%208.5X11.pdf

A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island (set of CDs and booklet) now available from Rocky Point Bird Observatory!

Want to improve your birding by ear? This guide provides an introduction to the call notes of common birds found on southern Vancouver Island (the species included can also be found throughout the Pacific Northwest). When learning to

bird by ear, many people concentrate on learning the songs of birds. This is understandable, because songs tend to be complex, conspicuous, and often beautiful to the human ear. However, songs are generally only given by breeding males in the spring and summer, and there is a whole world of simpler "chips" and "seeps" that are given year-round by songbirds of all ages and sexes. Being familiar with these could enhance your birding year-round! For information or to purchase (member discount available), contact RPBO at rpbo@rpbo.org

Atlas of the Breeding Bird of British Columbia—NEW free online publication is now complete!

The British Columbia Breeding Bird Atlas partnership has published online a major new resource for conservation - one of the largest volunteer-based initiatives in B.C.'s history. Leading B.C. bird experts describe the distribution, abundance, habitat and conservation of about 320 species of birds that bred and potentially bred in the province between 2008 and 2012. The atlas is illustrated by some of B.C.'s finest photographers. Detailed maps and graphs are included, and a series of tools allows you to explore and download the information. See <http://www.birdatlas.bc.ca>

CRD Parks

Don't forget to check out what field trips are going on at CRD parks, see <https://www.crd.bc.ca>

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 18 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our Welcome column.

Pauline and Jules Cohen
VICTORIA
*Marine, natural history, field
trips, and conservation projects*

Elaine Hawkins
VICTORIA

Ruth Edgar
NORTH SAANICH

Lo Stedman
VICTORIA
*All animals but especially birds,
hiking*

Jeannette Bourgoin
SIDNEY
Birding

Bharat Chandramouli
VICTORIA
Birding, nature hikes

Nancy Gibson
VICTORIA
*Birding, Botany and Marine
Biology*

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@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

JULY

.....

Sunday July 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join Gordon Hart on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. The outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. This month, we will meet at 10:00 a.m. near the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Rd) at the main parking lot just north of the summit. This early start is because we will likely go further afield, perhaps Shawnigan or Cowichan areas. Bring lunch and drinks. Contact Gordon at (250) 721-1264 or email Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca for more information.

Saturday, July 16 to Sunday, July 24

VICTORIA BUTTERFLY COUNT WEEK

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field

guides. Contact Gordon Hart (count coordinator) at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca if you would like to help out.

Sunday, July 17

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Mount Washington Botanical Day Trip

This trip is planned for peak bloom time, but the area is interesting over several weeks with a succession of subalpine flowers. The plan is to walk around the Lake Helen MacKenzie—Battleship Lake loop. We will also fit in a tour around Paradise Meadows. We will leave Victoria at 7:00 a.m. and return late, stopping for a quick supper on the way home. We'll eat our lunch someplace out on the trail. Register by contacting Agnes after July 6. First nine 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 \$35 for the day from Victoria. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation, it could be quite cool or rainy. Wear sturdy boots, and hiking poles might be handy.

Bring a lunch and drinks. Remember to bring money for a fast-food supper. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or if you need more information.

Sunday, July 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Hurricane Ridge High Elevation Wildflowers

We have arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us up the hill to Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park to enjoy the sub-alpine flowers at their peak. Most wildflowers at sea level have finished flowering for the season by then. We plan to walk up the Hurricane Hill Trail. We will take a very leisurely pace to enjoy all the flowers and the fabulous views. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation, it could be quite cool or rainy. Wear sturdy hiking boots and hiking poles might be handy. Bring a lunch and drinks. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the MV Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket (cost about \$48.00 CDN return). The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH US CUSTOMS. We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). There is usually good birding from the ferry. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$70.00 CDN. Limited number of participants, so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Book between July 6 and July 17. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through PayPal on the VNHS website (<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to reserve or for more information.

Saturday July 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Florence Lake & Langford Lake Birding

Join the Saturday Birding Group on the field trip to Florence Lake & Langford Lake. We will meet at the boardwalk at Florence Lake at 7:30 a.m. To reach our starting point, go out the Island Highway and take Exit 15 McCallum Rd. Turn right at the stop and you will be on McCallum/Spencer Rd. Turn left on Springboard Pl (formerly Brock Ave). Park at end of road (not in turnaround) where we will meet. It's about a half block to the boardwalk from there with a great view of the lake. Listen for Soras or Virginia Rails. Sometimes we'll get Steller's Jays and Band-tailed Pigeons and other birds not that common in town. After that, we will continue to Langford Lake. To get there, return on McCallum/Spencer Rd to the corner by the Shell station. Curve around the front of the gas station on to the frontage road, which leads to the Leigh Rd overpass. Left at Leigh Rd and cross the highway on the overpass. Turn right on Goldstream Ave. Park at the west end of Goldstream Ave just before it dead ends at the highway. Meet at the parking pullout and the group will meander down to the boardwalk from there. The marshy area often yields interesting birds as well as the walk through the forest to the lake usually gives us woodpeckers and other good woodsy birds. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, July 31

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Olympic National Park Obstruction Point Road

We have arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us up to travel along the scenic high elevation Obstruction Point Rd. Timing of the trip is planned for peak wildflower displays. Rather than one long hike, we will stop at a number of places and do several short excursions in search of sub-alpine flowers not too far from the road. This year we may do a longer walk at the end of the road in search of species endemic to the Olympic National Park. Be prepared for travel on unpaved twisty roads. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation, it could be quite cool or rainy. Bring a lunch and drinks. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the MV Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket which costs about \$48.00 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH US CUSTOMS. We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). There is usually good birding from the ferry. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$70.00 CDN. Limited number of participants, so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Book between July 6 and July 24. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through PayPal on the VNHS website (<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to reserve or for more information.

AUGUST

Sunday August 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join **Gordon Hart** on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. The 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 Rd) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact Gordon at (250) 721-1264 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, August 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Washington State Birding Trail

To savour some of the spots described in the excellent brochure entitled "The Great Washington State Birding Trail – Olympic Loop", we have arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us to a number of interesting birding stops. We will include some spots that we enjoyed in past years, some east and some west of Port Angeles. We may not see too many different birds than at home but the varying habitats make for an enjoyable experience. Locations will be mostly near sea level. Itinerary will be firmed up closer to the date to take advantage of any last minute reports of interest. Still time to put in your request for a potential stop! Dress for potentially changeable weather. Bring a lunch and drinks. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry

terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the MV Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket which costs about \$48 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH US CUSTOMS.** We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). There is usually good birding from the ferry, even a slim chance to pick up a Jaeger or a Fulmar. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$70.00 CDN. Limited number of participants, so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Book between July 6 and July 31. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through Paypal on the VNHS website (<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to reserve or for more information.

Saturday August 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Join us at the Bioblitz on Sidney Island in the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. VNHS and Parks Canada BioBlitz are collaborating in putting on this Bioblitz (see article page 15), and your assistance will be appreciated. You can go as a participant in the drop-in events (and bring your family and friends) but you can also participate as a registered volunteer. This is where we could really use your help in your area of expertise. VNHS is the primary contact for the Birding component. We will probably do Owling on Friday night and two Bird walks on Sat morning. If you wish to assist with the Birding, contact Agnes for more details. If you are interested in assisting as an expert with other aspects of the BioBlitz, contact Agnes and she will direct you to the appropriate person as they need experienced observers in all aspects of the BioBlitz. If you have BioBlitz questions, contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information closer to the date.

Saturday, August 20 to Sunday, August 28

VICTORIA BUTTERFLY COUNT WEEK

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guides. Contact Gordon Hart (count coordinator) at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca if you would like to help out.

Saturday August 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Island View Beach & Saanichton Spit Birding

Join the Saturday Birding Group who will be going to Island View Beach and Saanichton Spit. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the north end of the parking lot. It's the time of year that we might find some interesting shorebirds on their return migration and we might still see a few beach flowers in the dunes as we go along. To reach Island View Beach, go north on the Pat Bay Highway, turn right at the lights at Island View Rd (Michell's Market) and follow that to a left on Homathko Rd leading to the parking lot. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday August 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Dragonfly Field Trip at Elk/Beaver Lake

Meet **Darren and Claudia Copley** at the Beaver Lake Retriever

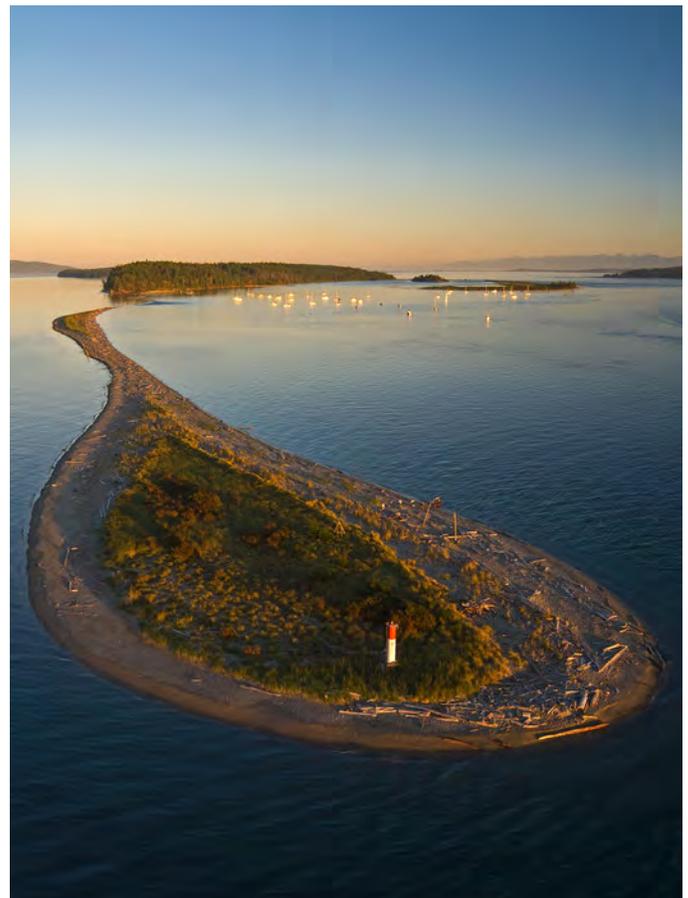
Ponds at 1:00 p.m. and we'll see what we can find. We'll look at what field guides are available, some tricks to catching dragonflies and even how to key out the difficult ones. Bring binoculars, an insect net (if you don't have one – we can provide) and hope for sunny weather. To reach the ponds, go north along West Saanich Rd. and turn right on to Beaver Lake Rd. After you enter the park, turn left when you see the sign "Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park Beaver Lake Ponds". Contact Claudia or Darren at dccopley@telus.net if you need more information.

Saturday, August 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Sidney Spit Birding

It's the time of year to make the trek over to Sidney Spit to look for interesting shorebirds on their southern migration. There have been some good ones reported from there—Baird's Sandpiper, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers and Plovers, maybe even that illusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper! Also close-up Purple Martins and other passerines in the woods. **Mike and Barb McGrenere** will be our leaders. Bring a lunch and drinks. We will go over on the ferry from Sidney that leaves at 10:00 a.m. Be there about an hour early to buy your ticket as it can sell out. Cost is \$19 for adults (\$16 seniors). Ferry leaves from the foot of Beacon Ave. Allow enough time to find a place to park. Parking rates vary on how far you are willing to walk. The return ferry leaves the island at 1:00, 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. so you can choose how long you wish to stay. Contact Mike at 250-658-8624 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca if you need more information.



Sidney Island. Photo: Parks Canada



Anna's Hummingbird. *Photo: Bill Merillees*