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The Victoria NATURALIST

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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

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We prefer electronic submissions—these can be submitted in either PC or Mac compatible word processing format—but hardcopies are also accepted. Please include photographs or illustrations if possible, along with a suggested caption and photo credit. If digital, images need to be high resolution—a minimum of 300 dpi for all sizes is requested.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I confess...it is awfully hard to discipline oneself to sit and write when the weather is so amazing and the surroundings so beautiful. I trust that many of you have been able to take advantage and perhaps introduce friends and relatives to the wonders of nature in and near Victoria. Sunny beaches and shady forests...what a great place!

I've been "collecting" stories/tid bits since the last newsletter, so what follows is a bit of everything gleaned (without serious research) from newspaper and various websites. I hope you find it as interesting as I have, and perhaps it will spur you to write an article for the newsletter yourself?

A "creature from the deep"—this spring, a species never before documented in B.C. was sighted off Clover Point. A Pacific angel Shark (*Squatina californica*), an animal that looks more like a skate than what we typically picture as a shark, was found by two swimmers, despite it being partially buried and well camouflaged in the sand. Lucky for the swimmers, these fish eat small fish and molluscs. What conditions brought it here? Climate change? Hmm...

Then a short while later, a new whale species was found—this rare beaked whale, as yet unnamed, was one of five such whales found in Alaskan waters. Beaked whales can reach 40 feet and spend 90 minutes or more underwater while hunting (mainly squid), making them hard to see, so this was a lucky find.

Then there are the birds...and other flying things...drones are providing us with incredible footage from a new angle—a great example of this being recent photos showing northern resident Orca feeding on an almost exclusive diet of Chinook Salmon—something not well-documented before.

Tracking birds keeps getting more and more high-tech... from isotope analysis to satellite imagery to geo-locators, scientists are gathering data on migration, feeding grounds, nesting areas and a host of other information. Added to data acquired by banding birds, these new data provides a much better picture of distribution and number and perhaps, the more we know, the better equipped we will be to make a difference in conserving more of our natural world.

One last comment re birds—have you ever heard of an albino hummingbird? Check out the photos by Mike Yip of a white Anna's Hummingbird seen on Qualicum Beach—on the Vancouver Avian Research Centre blog: www.birdvancouver.com/blog_spring_summer2016.html Amazing!

Gail Harcombe

Cover Photo: Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*).
Photo: Kim Beardmore

A Message from your Board

Summer is always a quiet time for your board of directors—we get a break from regular meetings and scatter like cats all over the place for holidays and other excitement. At the time of this writing, we had not yet had our annual strategic planning session, and no date could satisfy all schedules! So there is little to report on the decision-making front, but we are getting geared up for the fall.

One of the initiatives in which your Society has become involved is the Urban Sanctuaries Project, a collaborative effort being coordinated by the Bateman Centre, at the urging of VNHSer Jacques Sirois, to draw attention to the federal Migratory Bird Sanctuaries in our region, and the need to value them more. New board member Vicki Metcalfe is capably representing us at these meetings, where the coalition recently set out their core objectives: to create a diverse working group, to increase awareness of Migratory Bird Sanctuaries, and to steward diverse natural ecosystems. We are looking forward to contributing to this important undertaking and will report on activities as they occur.

Some of you may remember that the Society has also been working with the Friends of Uplands Park and the Oak Bay Municipality on a Cattle Point kiosk project that focuses on the adjacent marine environment. The VNHS agreed to provide a donation of \$1000 and we also applied for and received an additional \$1000 of funding through the Parks and Recreation Foundation of Victoria. All of the funding is now in place, and this project is moving ahead. We look forward to seeing the finished product at this popular beachfront location.

Another item that we'd like to draw your attention to is the many VNHS members who were recently awarded Saanich Environmental Awards; recognizing environmentally conscious individuals and organizations for their contributions to helping preserve the natural environment of Saanich through education, hands-on activities, etc. These include, in alphabetical order by last name, Bill Dancer, Purnima Govindarajulu, Agnes Lynn, and James and Kristen Miskelly. Of course there are very likely other VNHSers that are members of the Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid Enhancement Association and the Victoria Golden Rods and Reels Fishing and Social Club, organizations that were also award winners. To read the further details of these award recipients visit: <http://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/natural-environment/saanich-environmental-awards/2016-award-winners.html>

Please don't forget that the annual HawkWatch and BBQ Social is booked for September 24 at East Sooke Regional Park: 11am-2pm for the HawkWatch, followed by a BBQ (smokies and cake!) hosted by your board members in appreciation of the membership. Please remember your lawn chair or picnic blankets because there is only a single picnic table in the area. We do our best to minimize waste, so if you need a plate and utensils, please bring them—we'll just have napkins for holding dogs and cake. Vegetarian dogs are available—just put in your request when you RSVP—see the advertisement right for details on how to do that, and the calendar page 18 for additional details on the fieldtrip. We really look forward to seeing you there, and we always hope for spectacular weather and great raptor viewing.



VNHS September Social Saturday, September 24, 2016 3:00 p.m. following HawkWatch You are invited!

Join CRD Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for HawkWatch 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.**

HAT Prepares Colony of Dark Night Volunteers for the Second Annual Bat Count

PLUS Townsend's Big-eared Bats Rescued in the Westshore

By Paige Erickson-McGee, Stewardship Coordinator, Habitat Acquisition Trust



Christina Carrieres holding one of the 14 Townsend's Big-eared bats rescued in the Westshore. Photo: Paige Erickson-McGee

From horror movies to health warnings, societal attitudes about bats are typically negative. Many people view bats as pests. This type of public attitude has contributed to the general decline of bat populations around the world to the point where over half the species found in the province are considered at risk.

There is fear about bats and rabies; they are the only mammal on Vancouver Island that is known to carry rabies, but we are looking at less than half a percent of bats in healthy populations testing positive for rabies. It is extremely rare, although it is an important reason never to handle bats, live or dead, with your bare hands.

There are 10 species that we know of on Vancouver Island, but there is much still to learn. Right now we have very little idea of where bats are roosting in the Capital Region, and we have almost no idea where some species hibernate in the winter time, whether they gather in small groups under protected spaces like firewood piles, or in big congregations in caves as seen in other parts of BC.

It is difficult to protect our bats when we do not know where they are roosting or how many there are. This also makes it a



Townsend's Big-eared bat being fed a mealworm during rehabilitation at Wild ARC. Photo: Christina Carrieres

challenge to notice substantial population declines from disease. To address this concern, Habitat Acquisition Trust has prepared a colony of Dark Night volunteers for the Annual Bat Count across the Capital Region as a part of the BC Community Bat Program of Southern Vancouver Island. Similar to the bird or butterfly counts, this citizen-science initiative encourages residents to count bats at local roost sites.

The Annual Bat Count continues to help the BC Ministry of Environment collect baseline data on bat populations, specifically where they are roosting in the summer months looking at the density and distribution of roosts. The goal is to gain a sense of the bat population numbers before the devastating White Nose Syndrome (WNS) fungal disease affects bats in the province. WNS is caused by a fungus that usually affects the bats in caves during winter hibernation and is detectable in dead or dying bats found in the winter and spring until about May 1st.

“White Nose Syndrome is estimated to have killed more than six million bats since it was first discovered in eastern North America a decade ago,” says biologist Dr. Purnima Govindarajulu with the Ministry of Environment. “In March

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2016, the disease was detected just east of Seattle. This has greatly increased our urgency to understand bat populations in BC. We need the public's help to census local bat populations. The summer of 2016 may be our last year to obtain population estimates before White Nose Syndrome causes widespread declines in western North America."

The National Wildlife Health Center issued a bulletin on 15 July 2016 that stated a single Silver-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) tested positive for the fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd). This bat was originally collected during the same month and in the same county as the Washington Little Brown Myotis bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) with previously confirmed WNS. This suggests that Silver-haired Bats may be a carrier of the fungal pathogen. Through the BC Community Bat Program, 31 bats from BC were submitted for fungal testing, and none tested positive for WNS.

The risk continues next winter so it is extremely important for landowners who have bats to count their colonies; we suspect large and important roosts are out there and we would like to help landowners conduct counts and protect the bats. We hope to prevent situations where people might unintentionally disturb or harm them.

What You Can Do:

- Protect wetlands on your land and in your neighbourhood, they provide key habitat for the bat's food source
- Retain any standing dead trees or snags on your property (that are not a safety hazard) as they provide natural roosting habitat for bats
- Build a bat box with plans from www.bcbats.ca and follow instructions to install it in an appropriate location
- Ask your friends and neighbours if they have bats and if they do, direct them to HAT
- Participate in the Annual BC Bat Count in the summer months June 1 to 21 and July 21 to August 15, visit www.bcbats.ca for more information.

A Good News Story—Big-eared Bats find a Helping Hand

On Saturday July 16, a partnership with Christina Carrieres from SPCA Wild Arc and Jeff Krieger from Alternative Wildlife Solutions sprang into action after HAT received a report of dead and live bats found in a Westshore building. Upon arrival, a total of 14 Townsend's Big-eared Bats (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) were rescued after becoming trapped in the interior of a building – several were emaciated and dehydrated. Of the 14 that were collected, 4 were adult females still feeding their pups, and the other 10 were pups themselves, 3 of which did not survive the journey to the rescue centre.

The 11 surviving bats were rehydrated and fed mealworms over two nights at the Wild ARC centre, and then re-released back into the roost with HAT staff on July 18. Very conscious of not disturbing any other bats inside the attic where more bats were roosting, Christina carefully placed each bat back at the entrance of the roost, and one by one the bats crawled back

in. Christina described the Townsend's species as being much gentler and more docile than the *Myotis* species she is more familiar with.

The building has since been appropriately repaired to ensure the bats cannot become trapped in the interior, but HAT is continuing to work with the property managers to ensure this roost remains protected and continues to provide habitat for the bats. It appears there is a significant colony of Townsend's Big-eared Bats living in the attic of the building, and upon counting the bat roost on July 25, a total of 33 bats were observed.

This particular species of bat typically roosts in larger structures with slightly cooler temperatures than other species, and do not tend to use typical bat boxes. With the warm weather continuing, HAT staff have been working with the provincial bat biologists and Species at Risk specialists to identify how we can support this particular colony of bats, collecting options such as building a bat condo or another structure to provide additional roosting habitat on site.

According to the BC Ministry of Environment, "Townsend's

Big-eared Bats are at risk because they are confined to small regions of suitable habitat at low elevations in the southern part of British Columbia—precisely the areas that humans prefer to occupy. Disturbance of females with young can severely lower breeding success. Repeated disturbance at winter hibernacula can cause energy loss, abandonment of the caves and death." The Townsend's Big-eared Bat is currently listed on the Provincial Blue List.

This project is in need of funding and experienced volunteers to conduct site visits, manage many questions from the public, and for equipment. The project is partially funded by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation with support of the BC Conservation Foundation, and the Federal Habitat Stewardship Program. HAT provides information for people managing bats in buildings on their property or who have questions about how to steward and attract bats.

To find out more about bat counting, get assistance dealing with bat issues, or if you know of a roost location, visit www.bcbats.ca or call 1-855-9BC-BATS or email bats@hat.bc.ca

Nature's Olympics—Who's Really the Fastest and Strongest?

Fastest runners: Cheetah takes gold with top sprinting speed of 70mph. Pronghorn Antelope gets silver at close to 70mph, but more commonly 30–45mph

Fastest flyer: Peregrine Falcon, with top speeds of 120–200mph clocked by different people

Marathoners: Artic Tern, migrating as much as 30,000 miles every year. Gray Whale migrates a 10,000 circuit from the

Arctic to the warm water calving areas and back again.

Diving: Sperm Whale and Northern Bottlenose Whale are close, but Sperm Whale wins with dives of over a mile. Best dive by a bird? Emperor Penguin to depths of 1770 feet!

Jumping? Greatest distance: Gold goes to the inch-long Southern Cricket Frog—jumps more than 60 times

its length!

High jump: the "lowly spittlebug"—jumps 115 times its body height!

Strongest: Let's hear it for invertebrates! The Rhinoceros Beetle! This little creature can carry 850 times its own body weight. An African Elephant can carry only a quarter of its own weight.

Excerpt from eNature August 2016, Vol.16, No.15.1 <http://wild.enature.com/blog>



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European Fire Ant Control Efforts

By Ben van Drimmelen



Ant nest. Photo by author

I have, since 1995 or so, had many nests of small, aggressive ants on our property in Oak Bay, and they made it difficult for us, our friends and our pets to use our yard. I did not at that time know that these ants were not native to the area, but a 2012 article in the Vancouver Sun newspaper discussed introduced European fire ants. My ants matched the description—small, red and aggressive, rapidly swarming and stinging. I sent some samples to an ant specialist who confirmed that I had been infected by these troublesome insects.

This fire ant, *Myrmica rubra*, is native to Europe and Asia. It swarms and attacks aggressively if disturbed, among other stimuli, by vibration of the ground. They can bite with their mandibles but the real impact comes from a stinger at the end of the abdomen. The effect is similar to stinging nettle, producing moderate pain and swelling although it can also produce severe allergic reactions. (This beast is different from the “imported red fire ant” that causes more extreme pain in the southern US.)

Accidentally introduced to eastern North America in the 1900s, the European fire ant has become a significant pest in the eastern US, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.¹ Worse news was that it reached BC by 2010, probably introduced with landscape plants from eastern North America. It is now established in the Fraser Valley and Courtenay as well as in my neighbourhood and some other areas in Victoria.

Control efforts there have not been particularly successful anywhere. A European fire ant nest has no visible feature at the ground surface, so it is hard to locate precisely. Each nest



Photo: Robert Higgins, Thompson River University



Photo: Susan Horton, Thompson River University
Thompson River University images used with permission

has multiple elusive queens, making nest eradication very difficult. Nevertheless, I decided to take the little buggers on. The first step was to try to determine how widespread this ant was in my neighbourhood, so I prepared and distributed an information brochure and questionnaire to all 50 residences in the square block containing my property. The responses indicated that the ants were localized, with all 22 infested properties in the middle third of the block. There was hope; maybe my local outbreak could yet be controlled!

I first tried control without a pesticide. By pounding the ground with a sledge hammer, I located 35 fire ant nests in 2013 and put a bait of 3% borax in a sugar solution at each nest. Initially, the ants were feeding at the baits, but they lost interest after about seven weeks. The baits had no obvious effect on the ant nests, so Round One went to the ants; borax baits alone could not control these fire ants.

I next decided that I needed to learn more about them. In 2014, I simply located 18 nests and recorded nest vitality over the summer. It varied quite a bit among nests, so I concluded that the ants were relocating their nests periodically over the summer. I also placed paving stones near each

¹ Invasive Species Council of BC. European Fire Ant, accessed September 8, 2015. <http://bcinvasives.ca/invasive-species/identify/invasive-species/invasive-insects-fungi/european-fire-ant>.



Fire ants up close. *Photo by author*



Ants attacking! *Photo by author*

nest, hoping that the ants could be lured into nesting under the nice warm pavers, making control easier. That seemed to work, particularly earlier in the summer when the ground was still quite cold. However, even when the ants relocated under the bricks, they did not appear to have most of their nest against the under-surface of the brick. Sometimes eggs were observed there, but generally the ants made a tunnel down into the ground below the brick, which presumably led to additional nest area.

I decided to try control again in 2015, using a new treatment technique. The theory behind this technique is that the clever nest queens have escape tunnels spreading laterally into the soil that they, and attendant workers, occupy as soon as a nest is disturbed. After some time, they come out and re-establish the nest. Therefore, the new treatment sought to contain and treat each entire nest, including any lateral tunnels. When a nest was located, I would try to dig out the entire nest by removing the soil 20 cm deep and in a radius of 10 cm.

Then I would have to kill the ants, and, as borax didn't work, I would reluctantly need to use a pesticide. I chose



Photo by author

permethrin, an insecticide with generally low toxicity.² It is broken down by microorganisms within approximately 4 weeks and does not mix well with water, so it wouldn't contaminate groundwater.

I located 24 nests over the summer. I dumped the soil, with nest, in a wheelbarrow and sprayed it with 0.25% permethrin, mixing the soil and re-spraying twice, then returning the soil to the hole. It worked! The treated nests were all completely destroyed and, by mid-September my yard appeared to be ant-free. However, two problems remain. First, the labour involved in digging and mixing 24 wheelbarrows of ant-infested soil is more than the average homeowner is likely to be able to apply. The second problem is aesthetics. My back yard now looks like a cemetery, with patches of bare earth and a couple of dozen paving stones marking past nest locations all over my yard.

Still, I did win Round Two. Although it is an absurd amount of sweaty work, I was able to clear my yard.

But what about re-invasion from my 21 ant-infected neighbours? While queens have wings, European fire ant queens seem to prefer not to fly. This means they do not spread widely. As nest populations grow, the queens tend to simply walk away with some workers and establish new ant nests nearby. So, in 2016, I am simply monitoring by counting fire ant nests all summer. That will give me a re-infection rate.

And after that? Well, I then hope to pass the torch to the municipal government. Maybe they can induce my neighbours to eliminate all of the fire ant nests in the block. Or maybe municipal work crews can get permission to go onto the properties to do the work. It is obvious that control is needed. Without it, public parks, playgrounds and campsites in the capital Regional District will inevitably be infested, eliminating use for sports and by dogs and small children. And, of course, these invasive ants will be harder and harder to control as time goes by, as the infected areas grow in size.

For more BC information, go to http://faculty.tru.ca/rhiggins/myrmica_rubra_index.htm or <http://bcinvasives.ca/news-events/media/articles/european-fire-ants/>.

² Although toxicity generally is low, permethrin is highly toxic to cats, fish, aquatic invertebrates and honeybees (if sprayed on blooming plants).

Ron Satterfield, 1921-2016

Remembrance by Alan MacLeod



Three birdoes Ron Satterfield, Alan MacLeod, Bruce Whittington

How often I asserted he was the man for whom the expression ‘salt of the earth’ was coined. He was that rarest of humans: a friend who never, ever disappointed. And now he is gone. Ron Satterfield departed this mortal coil, well into his 96th year, August 12. His wonderful old heart had skated on thin ice these past few years, yet his demise—imminent and

inevitable though it may have been—packs a great wallop.

Our friendship germinated in birding and birds but as the years and decades went by it flourished in diverse soil: nature, history, human folly, the successes and failures of the Blue Jays, a shared antipathy to Stephen Harper.

Ron was a terrific birder and naturalist, someone who knew the wild world and, more important, cared deeply for its welfare.

He was 60 when our friendship took root. He was an expert birder, I was a Johnny-come-lately who felt he’d wasted his first thirty-three years by not being a birder. He indulged my ardor to tap all I could from his deep well of bird lore. Soon enough I was infected by the peculiar madness of the birding Big Day—an all-out effort to list as many species as could be found in a single 24-hour period. For years in the early-mid 1980s, often in the company of Bruce Whittington, Ron and I would head out shortly after midnight on an early May morning to listen for owls then welcome the sunrise at Munn’s Road, counting the singers—warblers, thrushes, sparrows, et al—voicing their joy at the dawn of a new day.

We got better at it. At first we thought a century—a hundred species—represented a pretty good effort. Not for long: soon the three friends pushed the count to 110, 120. Eventually we counted it a bust if we failed to reach 130 or 135 before the big day was done. I was a hard taskmaster. No breaks were allowed. Lunch was permitted but only on the fly and only after we’d hit a hundred species. Ron was a quarter-century older but he never wilted, never grumbled, never quit. Indeed, years later, after we’d come to our senses and given up the Big Day game, Ron reveled in the memories, made it clear that those times were some of the best of his life.

Though not invested with degree-granting authority I bestowed an honorary doctorate on Ron, often introducing him as ‘Dr. Satterfield’, convinced the award was entirely apt.

He was an identical twin, his brother Harold—‘Har’ to



(left) Ron Satterfield, Clover Point, 2012

(lower) Flight-Sergeant Ron Satterfield, circa 1941

Ron—the best friend of his life. Each was pretty much a wild child: they spent every available hour outdoors. They were sometimes truant, the classroom never able to match the lure of the fields and waters of Victoria’s Foul Bay and Ross Bay neighbourhoods. When the Second World War broke out Har and Ron joined up early. Initially an army man, Ron soon took to the air as a recruit in the CATP, the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Flying Ansons and Cornells he survived a crash; more than a few of his comrades did not.

I loved hearing Ron’s wartime stories. Some of the memories he was least proud of happened to be the very ones I found most endearing. He did not always fit the officers’ template of an ideal airman: he occasionally ‘went over the fence’ for an unauthorized leave in whichever town or city



happened to be closest to his base. He was not always the best turned out or most fastidiously shaved of his comrades but at graduation time he finished near the top of his class. Flight-Sergeant Satterfield regretted that he was never shipped across the Atlantic to do his bit for King and Country in the dangerous skies of Europe. He remained in Canada, flew young airmen on training runs, supporting the efforts of the CATP.

When the war was over he returned to Ross Bay, went to work as a carpenter, married a girl, Joy, he had known her whole life, raised a family of four, found the time to become a master birder.

He never stopped walking. Though his range diminished as he negotiated the years of his tenth decade Ron left his Fairfield home almost every morning, pushed his walker along the margins of Ross Bay, always with binocular in hand. He never stopped taking an inventory of the regular birds he found on the bay and always kept an eye peeled for rarities. He made countless friends, all of whom stopped to exchange pleasantries whenever they were lucky enough to cross his path.

It is trite to say of the passing of a fellow mortal that the world is a poorer place for his parting. In the case of Ron Satterfield it is no mere reflex. Ron was one of the finest people I ever knew and one of the truest, most loyal of friends. There was no one like him. I will miss him hugely.

News from Nature Conservancy of Canada

Nature Talks: Brian Keating on Getting in Touch with the Natural World

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is excited to invite you to our fall Nature Talk on November 23. This evening event will feature naturalist Brian Keating, former head of conservation outreach at the Calgary Zoo, who can now be heard weekly on CBC Calgary's *The Homestretch*. Previously a regular on the Discovery Channel, Brian uses his expertise to lead nature-focused travel groups all over the world.

For Nature Talks, Brian will take us on a visual journey into the natural world to explore the importance of direct experiences in nature, the effects of the nature on health and psychological well-being, and the basic need to stay connected with the very substance that makes us human.

Wednesday November 23 at 7 pm

Dave Dunnet Community Theatre, Oak Bay High School,
2121 Cadboro Bay Road

A reception will follow the presentation.

Admission is by donation.

www.natureconservancy.ca/bc

It's Not All Talk: Volunteering with the Nature Conservancy of Canada

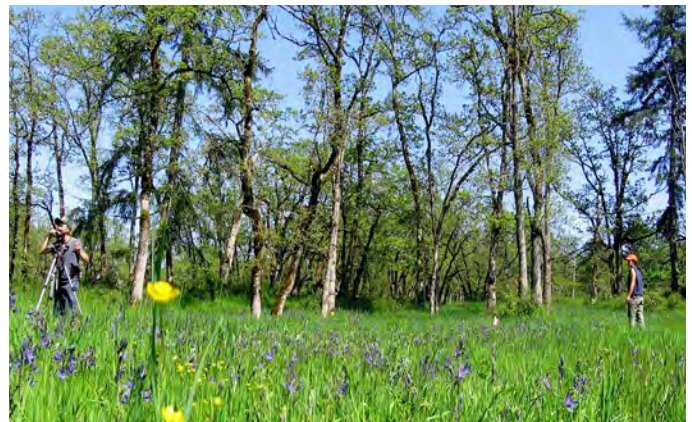
From planting seedlings to restoring wetlands, pulling invasive plants and nurturing endangered wildlife, there are plenty of opportunities to get your hands dirty on Nature Conservancy of Canada conservation areas across Vancouver Island. Several of these ecologically significant places are usually closed to the public to protect and restore sensitive habitat, but through volunteering you can experience these amazing sites and contribute to conservation efforts at the same time. The Nature Conservancy of Canada is always looking to grow our outreach initiatives and meet more people who share the passion of protecting nature, so please help spread the word about the dynamic fall events taking place on our conservation areas in and around Victoria. Find out about upcoming events at www.conservationvolunteers.ca



Chase Woods. Photo: Mike Szaszik

Chase Woods

Chase Woods is located on Mt. Tzouhalem in the Cowichan Valley, near several other protected sites. It is home to coastal Douglas fir and Garry oak trees, and small wildlife and birds of prey. Volunteer events here range from removing invasive plants, surveying for bats and planting native species to enhance the pockets of Garry oak habitat found throughout the conservation area.



Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve. Photo: Nigel Finney

Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve

One of the largest Garry oak meadows in Canada, this site supports the globally-endangered Garry oak ecosystem. Volunteer events are held here on a weekly basis.

James Island

The white sand beaches of James Island, a short boat ride from Sidney, are more than a beautiful view. They host a rare sand spit ecosystem which is threatened by invasive species. The unique movements of the sand create the conditions several endangered plants need to survive. Volunteering with NCC is one of the only ways the general public can visit this private island.

(left) James Island. Photo: NCC

A Day in the Wildlife of Matson Conservation Area

By Alanah Nasadyk, Habitat Acquisition Trust Community & Development Coordinator
Photos by author



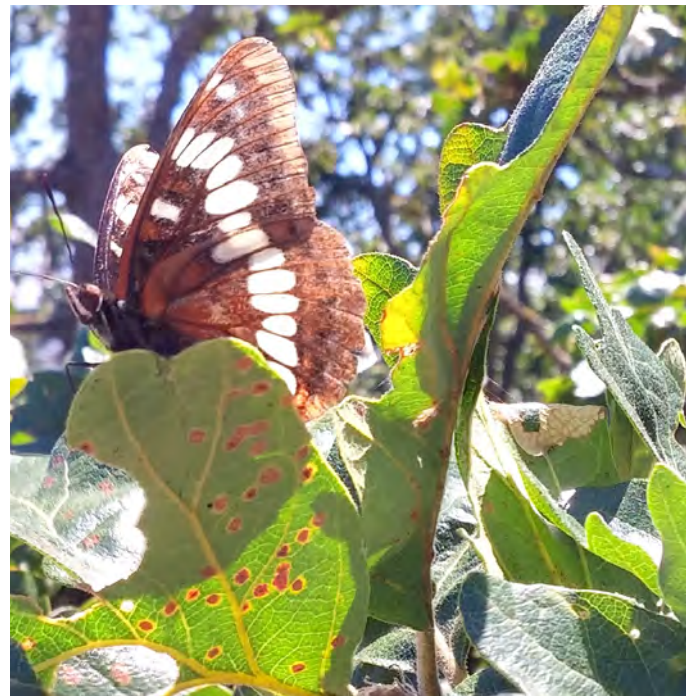
HAT Volunteers Cedric and Lissa Zala removing invasive grasses.

You can walk the length of Victoria's bustling harbour where the sea meets the land, but the only place you'll find the once plentiful Garry Oak ecosystem there is at the Matson Conservation Area. Head down the Westsong Walkway from the direction of Westbay Marina, Esquimalt, and you will find this precious protected place. This conservation-covenanted land is bisected by a great elevated staircase, designed to provide passage, but not trampling, for people above and native species below. Overlooking the natural scene is Swallow's Landing, a testament to how development and conservation don't have to be at odds. Joggers, birdwatchers, photographers, and visitors from around the world often enjoy the Matson Lands.

On July 15th, a team of 20 Habitat Acquisition Trust volunteers and staff met for the first ever Matson Pull & Pour. What's that you say? Well, the "pull" portion refers to restoring the land by pulling and extracting invasive plant species. The "pour" half involved the team enjoying the hospitality of Spinnakers Brew Pub and their freshly poured beer.

That day a few of us met early to set up. It was warm and we took in the view of the glistening harbour from behind a frame of plump Oregon Grapes. It wasn't long after that that mother Raccoon and her sweetly bumbling babies kindly skittered away as if to say, "we'll keep our distance, thank you."

The regular coming and goings of Raccoons and River



A Lorquin's Admiral (*Limenitis lorquini*) on a Garry Oak at Matson Conservation Area.



(above) The Restoration volunteer team enjoys the “pour” portion of the Matson Pull & Pour at Spinnakers Brewpub.

Otters has left a gently flattened path through the dried grass. If you’d like to picnic in the presence of otters, Matson is the perfect place. A watchful picnicker can learn about their diet, and crab-cracking techniques. You may also be delighted by butterflies like the Lorquin’s Admiral, hummingbirds, and Great Blue Herons. It is part of a Migratory Bird Sanctuary, after all.

After the restoration team came together and received an introduction, we set about identifying and removing invasive grasses, as well as English ivy. Much of the Scotch broom at Matson has been removed thanks to repeat HAT work parties and the regular restoration work of a local team from the surrounding neighbourhood called the Matson Mattocks from the surrounding neighbourhood.

Two of the major troublesome grasses we focused on were Orchard Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Rip-gut Brome (*Bromus rigidus*). While grass identification can be a challenge, Orchard Grass is recognisable by its robust tufts atop a tall stem (as high as 1.5 m). Rip-gut gets its visceral name from the way small barb-like hairs on its seeds can cause it to snag. A great strategy for seed dispersal, but a danger to animals that get bits of the plant hooked and imbedded in them. It must come as no surprise that one identifying feature of Rip-gut is its rough-to-the-touch seed heads. When it comes to removing weedy grasses effectively, it’s key to take out the entire above-ground clump called the root crown.

In the end, we removed just over 12 cubic metres of invasive plant material. That’s a pretty big deal when it comes to the detailed and finicky work of weeding out grasses.

Restoration outings are a great way to get to know the community and your neighbours, an ideal place for newcomers. At Matson we had a special opportunity to welcome a Syrian family, new to Canada and to the community. When it comes to tending the Earth and socializing, language barriers soften with careful demonstrations and conversation. As we consulted over patches of grass, Douaa told me,

“Victoria is beautiful. All of it is beautiful. The city, the trees, the forests, the sea.”

It is a pleasure to share and protect this beautiful region with each of you. That beauty is in part because of the

selfless work of volunteers, of those who protect our land with covenants, and the benevolence of the community. If you know someone new to Victoria, perhaps they’re learning English too, we’d love to meet them. The wild and beautiful life of places like Matson are possible thanks to your donations. If you would like to sponsor or give to keep projects like this going we welcome your support: alanah@hat.bc.ca or 250-995-2428. You can also send your support online at hat.bc.ca/donate or in the mail to PO Box 8552, Victoria BC V8W 3S2.



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Confessions of a Leaf Scrounger

By Robert Shepherd

Around 1970 on our street the city of Saanich planted European hornbeams, which shed oodles of leaves in November. Homeowners rake the leaves to the edge of the street (wind often disperses the piles.). City trucks gather the collections twice each Fall. You can pay Saanich to deliver the compacted leaves. The stuff Saanich delivers has branches & plastic bags in it. It is straightforward to collect clean leaves when they fall.

Hornbeam leaves are small and easy to handle, and compost more quickly than Garry oak leaves (maybe worms don't like the tannic acid in the oak leaves.). In the past, a farmer from North Saanich came to our street in late November to fill banana boxes with hornbeam leaves, packing his truck with the boxes. I asked him what he was doing. He said he mixed the leaves with chicken manure to make soil for his kiwi trees.

I stuff the leaves into a plastic garbage bin on a wheelbarrow, then pack leaves around the wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrow has limited volume. I tried making a leaf pile on a tarpaulin, tying the edges of the tarpaulin to make a bag, then wrestling the bag onto the wheelbarrow.

The tarpaulin method takes more time than it's worth, and time is short in November, rehearsing for December performances with the choir. The leaves go onto a garden plot in the back yard. Initially the pile is a meter and a half tall, spilling over the chicken-wire fence onto the lawn. It subsides, and by summer is only 35 centimeters high. Weeds don't grow on the leaves, and we use the material for compost. Birds land on the leaf piles in the spring and summer, probably eating worms and insects.

I smile and say "hi" to passersby as I collect the leaves. A lot of people respond in kind. Dog owners chat. One of the people who raked a leaf pile encouraged me to take the leaves. Another owner ignores me with disdain. One homeowner snarled, "If you're going to take the leaves, you should rake them!"

The only environment where topsoil is created is under a forest. Fallen leaves add to local biodiversity—fungus, bacteria, invertebrates. Leaf piles might look messy, but they protect the soil from erosion by rainfall, add organic material, and disappear in a year or two.

Welcome to New VNHS Members

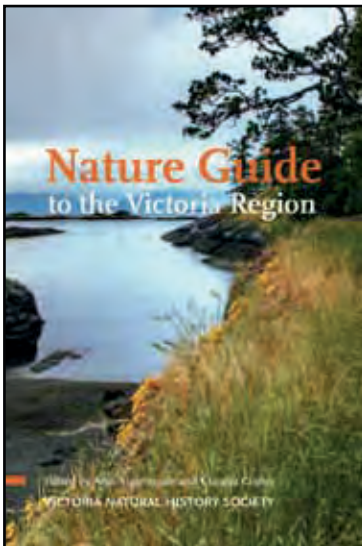
Our Society grew by 4 new members since the last issue and all agreed to have their names published in this Welcome column.

Julie Elizabeth
VICTORIA
*All!!! Flora and
Fauna—identification*

Blaise Salmon
VICTORIA
Climate change

Leslie Kerr
Tagish, Yukon
Birds, medicinal plants

Jemma Green
VICTORIA
*Wildlife biology, ecology,
conservation and habitat
restoration; environmental
advocacy; botanical illustration*



Nature Guide to the Victoria Region

Edited by Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley

With chapters by David Stirling, Alan MacLeod, James Miskelly, Robert Cannings, Bryce Kendrick, Philip Lambert, David Nagorsen, Anna Hall, Gavin Hanke and Leon Pavlick.

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

\$15 at Society evening presentations. Look for them in your local bookstores!

BULLETIN BOARD

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Guided Bird Walks Every Wednesday and 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 (usually led by VNHS members). Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Store in Shelbourne Plaza posts the bird reports from the Sunday walk. 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/On-line%20bird%20checklist%208.5X11.pdf

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks Sundays, September 11 and October 9 at 9:00 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 9:00 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

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 (discount available for RPBO members), contact RPBO at rpbo@rpbo.org

Interested in becoming a caretaker of a protected area? Some BC IBAs (Important Bird Areas) still need Caretakers!

The BC IBA program is coordinated by BC Nature (the Federation of BC Naturalists) with support from national partners Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada. BC's 82 designated sites form a significant portion of the network of ~600 IBAs across Canada, which is not surprising considering 76% of Canada's bird species are found in BC. Volunteer Caretakers are the eyes, ears, and hands on the ground at Important Bird Areas. They monitor birds, assess

habitats, and conduct outreach and conservation activities within IBAs. For info and to view a list of areas that still need Caretakers, please visit <http://www.bcnature.ca/projects/iba/list-of-ibas-and-caretakers/>

Fernwood Hydro Pole-Painting Sat, September 10, 10:00 a.m.– 4:00 p.m., Fernwood Neighbourhood

Victoria's Fernwood neighbourhood has an annual pole-painting project where community members adopt and paint a hydro pole. It's free, fun, and a great medium for long-lasting science outreach and street art. Are you feeling artsy? This year HAT wants your help to paint nature-themed poles. No experience necessary, join in the fun! volunteers@hat.bc.ca

Bamfield Fungus Festival! Thursday, September 15 through Sunday, September 18

Join experts Orla Osbourne, Shannon Berch and Andy MacKinnon for this fun-filled festival—learn about mushrooms and explore the outdoors while fungus hunting. This fungus festival is free! So tell your friends and everybody you know about it, the more people who participate the more successful the event and the more it will grow in future years. It's also for all ages so bring the kids too! For information, email Orla Osbourne at bamfieldfungusfestival@gmail.com or get in touch by visiting our facebook page, Bamfield Fungus Festival 2016. Here you will be able to coordinate ride shares, and group bookings for accommodation.

Wildlife Info and HAT Volunteer Appreciation Night Wednesday, September 21, 6:30–8:00 p.m. 1831 Fern St, Friends Meeting House

In appreciation of the people powering local citizen science, Habitat Acquisition Trust is hosting an evening highlighting our wildlife programs. See your crucial part in the overall results and what that means for the species and places you care for. There will be treats! Bring people you know curious about volunteering and local wildlife!

What does it MEAN? Mycorrhizas, mushrooms, & plants Wednesday, September 28

One benefit of living in the oceanic climates of BC is that we enjoy two springs in one year. In March and April we are treated to a magnificent show of local wildflowers. In October, our soils thrust up an equally colourful bloom of matchless (and often munchable) mushrooms. This talk, based on a chapter of Kem Luther's new book, *Boundary Layer*, explores the science, scientists, and scenery of the wild mycorrhizal mushrooms that live in symbiosis with local plants. Free admission. Everyone welcome. East Sooke Community Hall, 1397 Coppermine Road, East Sooke, BC, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

UVic Continuing Education course on Fungi and plants!

Four evening presentations and one field trip. For information and to register: <https://continuingstudies.uvic.ca/science-and-ecological-restoration/series/fungi-and-plants-series>

1) Tuesday, September 27

Mycorrhizas, mushrooms, and plants

The most active and fascinating area of current research in mycology deals with the way that fungi, including our local forest mushrooms, interact with plants. Two centuries ago, fungi were thought of as peculiar plants. Over the course of the 20th century, mushrooms were moved into their own kingdom. In the last 30 years, we have begun to realize that the kingdom of plants and the kingdom of fungi, though completely separate kingdoms, are not independent. They form complex partnerships and the partnerships take many different forms. In a University of Victoria Continuing Education course, four Victoria scientists lead students through this world between the plants and fungi. For the first lecture, Kem Luther presents an overview of the world of mycorrhizal mushrooms, focusing on the major types of fungal symbiosis and examining the networks that fungi establish with and between plants. Harry Hickman Building, Room 116, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Registration required for all evening presentations and the field trip: <https://continuingstudies.uvic.ca/science-and-ecological-restoration/series/fungi-and-plants-series>

2) Tuesday, October 4

Truffles: fungal economies and ecosystems at the root of BC trees

Shannon Berch looks at truffles and related fungi and the role they play in the life cycles of the plants that are their hosts. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

3) Tuesday, October 11

The strange life of mycoheterotrophic plants

Andy MacKinnon looks at a special group of plants, the mycoheterotrophs. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

4) Tuesday, October 18

System thinking and the balance in BC forests

Richard Winder examines how the study of mycorrhizal fungi change the way we view and the way we work with BC forests. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

5) Saturday, October 22

Field trip to look at mycorrhizal mushrooms

Instructors will take members of the class on a field trip through Mystic Vale to look at the fall efflorescence of mycorrhizal mushrooms. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Class starts at Harry Hickman Building, Room 116.

CRD Beechey Head Birding with Geoffrey Newell

Saturday, October 1, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Join expert birder, Geoffrey Newell, at Aylard Farm Parking Lot at 9:00 a.m. We will hike up to Beechey Head, searching and listening for a variety of forest birds, then spending time at the Beechey Head Look-out to enjoy raptors in their fall migration.

Musical HATs Charity Gala

Tuesday, November 8, 7:00–9:00 p.m., location TBA

The beginning of Habitat Acquisition Trust's 20th anniversary celebrations featuring the musical stylings of Andy Mackinnon, a fundraiser silent auction, foraged and local food canapés by Nature's Chef Tom Kral, and organic wine sponsored by DeVine Vineyards. You won't want to miss this one! Enjoy yourself, and benefit nature preservation. Contact alanah@hat.bc.ca about tickets.

Do you know someone who might like to reach the public and support conservation by sponsoring our silent auction or the event? We'd love to connect: alanah@hat.bc.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



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.

SEPTEMBER

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Saturday September 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Waterfront Birding

This is a good time to check out the waterfront for birds. **Marie O'Shaughnessy** will be your leader. Meet at Cattle Point (Beach Dr between Rutland Rd and Dorset Rd) at 7:30 a.m. We will wander around Cattle Point and make a few stops between there and Clover Point. Finally we'll end up at the Ogden Point Breakwater. There will be birds on the water as well as shorebirds to watch for. Contact Marie at (250) 598-9680 or email Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday September 4

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. 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. Contact Gordon at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Saturday September 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Pedder Bay Birding

Come join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group at Pedder Bay Marina. To reach Pedder Bay Marina, go out Rocky Point Rd and watch for a left onto Pedder Bay Rd. There is a big sign for the marina. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the grass parking lot behind the RV registration kiosk on the right. Rocky Point Bird Observatory operates a banding station there and several interesting birds have been reported from there. We will walk around the area for a couple of hours and after that you will have an opportunity to visit the banding operation if you are interested. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, September 13

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Eat Prey Love: the lives of the black widow spiders

Black widows are notorious for being venomous, but there are far more reasons to be fascinated by these spiders than to fear them. In this talk, **Catherine Scott** will provide a window into the private lives of black widow spiders by sharing some of their little-known natural history and remarkable sexual behaviour. She will share stories from her field observations of the dense population of black widows at Island View Beach, and some of her research focused on their sexual communication via chemical and vibratory messages. Along the way, she will correct some commonly held misconceptions (spoiler: males rarely get eaten after mating). Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Free. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Saturday, September 17 to Sunday, September 25

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, September 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Sooke Potholes Meander

Join **Rosemary & Sid Jorna** of the Juan de Fuca Community Trails Society who will show us the way around the Sooke Potholes area to enjoy the grandeur of the Sooke River. The water is low at this time of year so we can explore the amazing geology of the river course. Also the habitat is amazingly diverse. Rather than just the alder and western red cedar that you would expect out that way, there are also pine and arbutus and many interesting shrubs on this mostly well-drained rocky site. We'll look for a rather uncommon fern as well. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:15 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch so that we don't need to hurry on our adventure. Please note pay parking still in effect. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, September 20

BOTANY NIGHT

Plants of the Cordova—Sidney Landscape

Nick Page is a biologist who has had the good fortune of working on rare plants and insects found in the coastal sand ecosystems of Cordova Shore, James Island, and Sidney Island. His presentation will highlight some of the common and rare plant species that characterize this unique coastal landscape, and their adaptations to harsh environmental conditions. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Saturday, September 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

HawkWatch

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will join the combined VNHS and CRD HawkWatch event at East Sooke Park. To come to the vantage point above Beechey Head to watch for raptors, meet at the Aylard Farm parking lot at the end of Becher Bay Rd at 9:30 a.m. (earlier than when the crowds appear!). **Mike McGrenere** and **Daniel Donnecke** will lead the way up to the lookout (although the route will be marked if you wish to come later) and they will be available up there to help you find those illusive raptors till about 3 p.m. The hike up to the viewpoint requires a 20-minute trek up a steep and rocky trail. Bring binoculars, water and perhaps a lunch if you plan to stay

for the day. You can stay as long as you like and then return to the parking lot whenever you wish. If you do not want to make the trek up to the hill, there are good opportunities in the field near the parking lot to look for raptors as well. After 11:00 a.m. there will also be live raptor demonstrations and other activities and displays right near the parking lot as well. You may wish to stay for the BBQ for VNHS members following the main event at 3 p.m. but please pre-register for this (see ad on page four for details on BBQ). Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, September 26

MARINE NIGHT

Glass sponges—the problems and rewards of spending time with these fascinating ancestral animals.

Dr. Henry Reiswig has studied glass sponges for 40 years. Glass sponges or *Hexactinellida*, one of four classes of the phylum Porifera, consist of about 625 known living species characterized by a skeleton of siliceous spicules with triaxial symmetry. They have been around since Precambrian times and are arguably the first group of animals to have evolved. They have had their periods of geological importance during the Mesozoic where they built impressive, expansive deep-sea reefs and continue to form living reefs along the west coast of North America. Dr. Reiswig's present work, at UVic and the Royal BC Museum, focuses on documenting the diversity of glass sponges in deep-sea communities and the evolutionary history of the group. He is about halfway through a collection from New Zealand where 35 species (74%) are new to science. The less extensive Hawaii collections are about 90% new species. Forty years ago he says there was little interest in this group of sponges. Times have indeed changed. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Free. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Wednesday, September 28

BIRDERS' NIGHT

The Bald Eagle: from Victoria in 1953 to Today.

Few species have responded to human attention as have the bald eagles. When **David Hancock** started watching eagles in the early 1950s in and around Victoria they were rare, distrustful and darn right hard to find. Today some people consider them overabundant in specific locations. That story of change is really due to the change in human attitudes—we have adapted to eagles and they have accepted us. David's 65 years of following this mutual befriending is the story of his illustrated talk. Bring your favorite eagle story. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Free. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan de Fuca Pelagic Birding

We have once again hired the boat *Fantasea II* to go from Victoria Harbour out into the Juan De Fuca Strait and towards Race Rocks to find some of the pelagic species that feed there. We repeat this popular tour each year as it always turns up something to keep us interested in going again. We will follow the tide debris line that occurs between Victoria and Race Rocks as the currents cause an upwelling of nutrients from the bottom, resulting in the best feeding spots for the birds. Possible birds include shearwaters, murrelets, auklets, jaegers, Northern Fulmar, many species of gulls, phalaropes and other pelagics. We generally are able to go through Race Rocks to see close-up the variety of sea lions and seals who laze on the rocks

there. We are sometimes treated to views of whales if they are in the area. There is room for 20 people. The cost is \$70.00 per person for VNHS members, \$90.00 for non-members. The trip is 5 hours (9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.). Please book as soon as possible, by Sept. 23 at the latest. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through PayPal (details when you register) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. See more details about the trip at <http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html>. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

Sunday October 2

FIELD TRIPS (LEVEL 1)

Spider Sunday: Two Choices!

If you would like to learn about spiders then there are two opportunities for you to do this: in the morning from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for ages 12 and up, and, for the younger set from 2 until 3:30 p.m. Join **Claudia and Darren Copley** as they partner with the Royal BC Museum and CRD Parks and demonstrate some common local species, dispel as many myths as possible, and then head into the “wilds” of Beaver Lake Park to look for more “bugs”, including spiders. Bring along any live spiders you have for us to identify, and your curiosity. We’ll meet at the picnic shelter by the filter beds parking lot in case of rain, and head off from there.

Sunday October 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join **Gordon Hart** on the last of the season’s monthly Butterfly events. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. 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 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 butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Sunday, October 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Royal Roads Big Trees

Hans Roemer will share his knowledge of the Big Trees on the Royal Roads University and neighbouring Department of National Defense (DND) properties. Hans has been researching these trees for several years and it is delightful to enjoy a walk through the woods with him, admiring these giants that include Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Grand fir (*Abies grandis*) and other natives. Several of these trees are considered exceptional due to their size. Hans will explain how they have reached these huge proportions as well as talk about other interesting natural features in the area. Although we will be walking at a slow pace, this will be an outing for those who are comfortable clambering up and down hills on uneven ground. Wear sturdy shoes and you might want to bring a walking stick. Starts from the Cedar Building at 10:00 a.m. Turn into Royal Roads University at traffic light, take first right that winds down to stop sign at bottom, then right to Cedar building. Parking is right & left of stop sign. Fee for parking in all lots. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, October 11

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

The Trouble with Wilderness: Romantic Wildness in a Post-Colonial World

Current ideas about wilderness lands and wilderness preservation are heavily influenced by nineteenth century romantic notions of nature.

Recent discussions of wilderness issues have identified these older ideas of wilderness as a problem to be overcome. The resulting “new wilderness debate” has been vigorous and confrontational. What ideas of wilderness will guide land conservation in the twenty-first century? Join **Kem Luther** as he presents on this topic and launches his new book, *Boundary Layer*, to the Society. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Free. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Sunday, October 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Juan de Fuca Pelagic Birding

See October 1 trip for details. Please book as soon as possible, by October 8 at the latest.

Tuesday, October 18th

BOTANY NIGHT

Propagating Vancouver Island’s Rare Vascular Plants

Since 2012, **Nathan Fisk** has been working for Parks Canada to recover endangered plant species associated with the Garry Oak ecosystems of southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Recovery efforts for deltoid balsamroot, contorted-pod evening primrose and yellow montane violet will be highlighted during our evening. Join us, fellow plant nerds, for fine photography and tales of propagating plants on the edge of extinction. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Saturday October 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding at Viaduct Flats

Come join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group at Viaduct Flats. The birds will be back enjoying this area by now after its quiet summer season. As well as good birds on the water, there should be lots in the surrounding woods. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the viewing platform. This is near the intersection of Interurban and Viaduct. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Wednesday, October 26

BIRDERS’ NIGHT

Bird Songs of the Boreal Forest: Cradle for Billions of Songbirds

John Neville’s presentation features the Boreal Forest and some of its inhabitants. The sound recordings are from John’s collection and blend with PowerPoint images of the forest habitat of Canada’s Boreal Forest. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Free. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Monday, October 31

MARINE NIGHT

No Mother Could Give More

British Columbia is known as the home of the world’s largest octopus, the giant Pacific octopus. Come and hear **Jim Cosgrove**, a retired Royal British Columbia Museum biologist, talk about his 45 years of observations on this fascinating animal. Jim will use slides and video to document much of the life history of these animals with emphasis on their reproduction. Jim will also have a limited number of copies of his book *SUPER SUCKERS—The Giant Pacific Octopus and other Cephalopods of the North Pacific*, available for sale. \$25, cash only please. Come and celebrate Halloween with the “Devilfish”! Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Free. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!



Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*). Photo: Derrick Ditchburn