



# The Victoria NATURALIST

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

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**Editor:** Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508  
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**Honorary Life Members:** Mr. David Anderson, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mr. Tony Embleton, Mr. Bruce Whittington

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**VICE-PRESIDENT:** Warren Drinnan 250-888-9328, drinnan99@telus.net  
**TREASURER:** Gordon Hart 250-721-1264, hartgordon19@gmail.com  
**SECRETARY:** Stephanie Weinstein 250-598-3622  
srweinstein2@yahoo.com

### Directors and Committees

Claudia Copley dccopley@telus.net (*Membership, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Representative*)  
William Dancer 250-721-5273, w.dancer@telus.net (*Schools Program*)  
Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508, gail.harcombe@gmail.com (*Publications*)  
Gordon Hart 250-721-1264, hartgordon19@gmail.com (*BC Nature Representative*)  
Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, plambert@pacificcoast.net (*Publicity*)  
Vicki Metcalfe 46metcalfe@gmail.ca (*Volunteer Coordinator*)

### Directors at Large

Stephen Ruttan 250-472-2406 sfruttan@gmail.com  
Rick Searle 778-533-0266 rick.searle@gmail.com  
Jim Cuthbert 250-896-6379 jimcuthbert33@gmail.com  
Penelope Edwards 250-382-2251 piedward@telus.net

### Presentation Hosts

Marine Night: Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, marinenight@pacificcoast.net  
Botany Night: Kristen and James Miskelly 250-544-0455, kristen.miskelly@gmail.com, james.miskelly@gmail.com  
Natural History Night: Stephanie Weinstein 250-598-3622 srweinstein2@yahoo.com  
Birder's Night: Cohosts David Bird 778-351-7760 david.bird@mcgill.ca and Ann Nightingale 250-514-6450 motmot@shaw.ca

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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

### Guidelines for Submissions

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 requested. E.g.,

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Cover Image: American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*).  
See article page seven, "Bird Families of the Victoria  
Area: Falcons." Photo: Jody Wells.

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this, April showers are falling, but flowers are blooming and it is not cold, and the sunshine and even more flowers are on their way. With the end of April comes the end of our evening presentations until September. But don't despair, there are a host of field trips and other events put on by VNHS and partners occurring over the next few months, and I hope you will take the opportunity to join other members and friends for these activities.

In this issue, the article about the geology of Vancouver Island is a bit different than some we have published—Neil (author) gives us some great suggestions for reading and guides/references, as well as some ideas of how to increase your enjoyment of the geology while on your walks. Interesting and useful!

I was recently going through our collection of books, thinking that some may end up donated to the Times Colonist book sale, and I found one from 1970 by Gwen Frostic (1906-2001)—*A Place on Earth*. It is a delightful book, with exquisite block print illustrations, minimal text, and deckled-edge pages that almost feel like feathers. The book not only looks beautiful—it feels lovely. Her verses describe natural cycles and the small things in nature and she gives us beautiful images with her artwork, leaving the reader with a feeling of serenity. What better way to feel in springtime!

*Each frog...and insect  
bird...and tree  
and everything that lives and breathes  
Somehow creates its place on earth...*

*From the time the first skunk cabbage  
pushes its way through the snows of spring...  
...until snow comes again and covers the last  
dandelion of fall...  
the glory of flowers is everywhere  
wondrous in its loveliness  
and its diversity...*

The final story in the book tells of the life of a tree, from the time the *little brown nut cracks open* to the time when *seasons and the years will pass...until at last it too shall fall*

...  
*Mushrooms and moss will cover its trunk and it will return  
to earth where another nut will open and another tree will  
grow.*

*Happy Spring!  
Gail Harcombe*

# A Message from Your Board

Thank you to everyone who attended this year's Annual General Meeting- it was great to have the social time beforehand to mingle and re-connect with members. We hope you enjoyed the presentation by your president Phil Lambert on the good works of VNHS over the past year, and that Gordon Hart's Treasurer's report reassured you we are in excellent financial health! Andrew Harcombe's talk about Guyana had many making travel plans!

Your current board of directors is short two members after Warren Drinnan and Bill Dancer stepped down—thank you to both of them for their contributions on the board and to the Society more generally. Bill Dancer has agreed to continue with his true love: leading field trips for the young and the not-so-young (the VNHS “Connecting Children With Nature” program and the weekly Tuesday Group outings, respectively), so everyone who may be worried about those activities can rest assured Bill's cheerful visage will still be seen!

Three members of the Society were honored at this year's AGM by receiving awards: Marie O'Shaughnessy was acknowledged for her long involvement in the Society with a Distinguished Service Award, and Claudia and Darren Copley were recognized for their decades of dedication to the well-being of the organization through the Society's highest honour: Honourary Life Membership. The nomination letters for these recipients can be read in this issue of the magazine on pages five and six.

The 2019 Science Fair had a call out for judges, and board member Jim Cuthbert agreed once again to do this important task. Each year we also contribute money to the event: \$700 (four \$100 prizes and \$300 for the administration of the event). If you have an interest in helping with the judging next year, please be in touch.

The VNHS received \$393 in Purple Martin nestbox project funding from BC Nature through an application championed by member Larry Dill. The pilings at West Bay Marina were in terrible shape and DFO had plans to replace them, providing an opportunity to build and install new Purple Martin nestboxes using volunteer labour and having the material costs covered. Larry wrote the application and it was submitted



via the Society. BC Nature funded all the applicants at approximately 75% of their request so that each of the projects submitted could be successful, so the Society made up the difference in his request by contributing the remaining 25% of the cost. Next time you are at West Bay Marina have a look at the boxes, and, after May, watch for the returning martins.

Spring is always a busy time for nature and conservation activities. Since the last issue of the magazine, your Society has participated in numerous outreach activities and more are in the works. Bill Dancer staffed a VNHS table at a Family Day event at the Shaw Discovery Center in Sidney and had a well-visited table, attributed, in part, to its proximity to the octopus. The Friends of Shoal Harbour had a public event—bird watching and tea—on Sunday March 10 and again it was Bill Dancer who helped them out with the bird watching component of this event. There was also the annual Camas Day celebration at Beacon Hill Park on April 14 (co-sponsored by the VNHS and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society), as well as the Garry Oak Meadow Celebration on April 28 hosted by the Friends of Uplands Park. Volunteer groups, activities, nature walks, food, and a band were all there. We had a small table, natural history objects and brochures, and board member Penney Edwards staffed it for us.

We have also signed on to two letters on conservation issues, one initiated by Nature Canada invoking the federal government remain accountable to their goal of protecting 17% of lands and 10% of waters by 2020 (Aichi Biodiversity Targets), as promised as part of the Convention on Biological Diversity our government signed onto in 2010. The other was requesting the suspension of the herring fisheries harvest in the Georgia Strait that many other organizations have also signed.

CRD Parks and Environment Committee held a very well-attended meeting for public presentations about rerouting the Malahat through the Sooke Hills Regional Park. Board member Rick Searle attended and spoke against this proposal. In fact, everyone who attended the meeting spoke against it. The CRD Parks committee voted *almost* unanimously against it. Your board intends to send a follow up letter to the Province to express that this road should not be built through the park, citing habitat fragmentation, setting a precedence of development in parks, etc., and we will suggest other more viable, lower impact, and lower cost options.

On May 11 join us for Migratory Bird Day, hosted by RBPO—details on page 21 and in the calendar, page 26. There will be bird walks, bird-banding demonstrations, presentations by The Raptors, and displays from community stewardship and conservation organizations.

# VNHS Awards 2019



Marie O'Shaughnessy receiving the Distinguished Service Award from Phil Lambert, President, VNHS.

## Nomination for Marie O'Shaughnessy for Distinguished Service Award

As a current member of the Victoria Natural History society, I would like to nominate Marie O'Shaughnessy for the Distinguished Service Award. Marie has been a long-time member of the Society (since the 1980's) and has contributed in many ways over the years as well as having a long list of personal achievements.

Her contributions to the Victoria Natural History Society have been many as she has volunteered for varied positions and also reaches out to support fellow members. Marie was one of the directors for seven years. At one point she was the director of publicity and promoted the society at a variety of venues. Marie has also been a team leader for the Christmas Bird Count for Swan Lake and Cadboro Bay. She also participated in the marine survey for the annual count for many years. Marie was also involved with Birders' Night by presenting programs and filling in as MC when needed. Marie has also led many field trips such as a yearly tour of Rithet's Bog as well as her annual shorebird field trip that starts at Cattle Point and ends at Ogden Point. She has also contributed to The Victoria Naturalist newsletter by writing articles as well as providing many photos not only for her own articles but for other articles as well. Her photos have appeared on ten different cover pages for The Victoria Naturalist. Marie also has been assisting me with the newsletter distribution every two months. Lastly, Marie also makes time for other members that need a lift to see a rare bird so they don't miss out on birding opportunities.

As well as all her contributions to the Society, Marie also volunteers on other related projects. She has been

volunteering with the Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program, before I started, and has monitored Bald Eagle nests in Oak Bay for a couple of decades. She is also a regular contributor to e-bird as a citizen scientist, sending in lists of the birds she sees on her many birding outings. Marie also contributes data regarding marine life that she monitors whenever she is on the ocean. She has been volunteering for the Prince of Whales whale watching company as a photographer for 10 years. When she's on board she often shares her knowledge of birds with fellow passengers.

As well as her many accomplishments, Marie is well known for her photography and has had many achievements in this regard. Her photos have been published in papers, magazines, nature journals, the Birds of BC and she also contributed photos for the revitalization of the 100 years old Victoria Harbor Migratory Bird Sanctuary coordinated by Jacques Sirois. She also has 25 photos in the new and revised Nature Guide that the Society has published and was one of the original three that began the project. Her photos also graced the previous VNHS brochure. She also has slideshows at community events and meetings.

Marie O'Shaughnessy was born in Birmingham, England and grew up in London, England with the exception of four years in Australia when she was six years old. At 18 years of age she was trained as a registered nurse and emigrated to Canada at age 24. She has always had a love of birds and was at one time interested in becoming a marine biologist, hence her current love of marine life. After listening to David Fraser's lectures at the University of Victoria, her love of birds took hold and her passion for birding began. Her love of photography was fostered by her father and after she took a course at Camosun College she bought her first camera and began capturing birds and marine on film.

Marie is a good friend and an inspiration to those around her.

Signed:

*Laura Gretzinger*

*Kay Steer*

## Nomination for Claudia and Darren Copley for Honorary Life Membership

We, the undersigned would like to nominate Darren and Claudia to receive the VNHS Honorary Life Members Award. They have been active members of the Society since the early nineties and perhaps longer and have contributed to the Natural History community in so many ways. In recognition of their service they were awarded the VNHS Distinguished Service Award in 2011.

Beginning in 1991 Darren wrote or co-wrote at least five articles for the Victoria Naturalist. In 1998 he became

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Claudia and Darren Copley, winners of the 2019 Honourary Life Membership Award.

the Programs Director on the VNHS Board and in 2003 he took over the recording of memberships and has been doing that until the present day as well as a ten-year stint as President of VNHS from 2008 to 2016. He was also the host of Natural History Night for a number of years. In 2018 he stepped off the Board but still looks after our 750+ membership list.

In 2000 Claudia took over membership duties on the VNHS Board. Since that time, she has been intimately involved with the Board of our Society. Claudia took over Programs as well as being Vice-President from 2003 until 2007. She also wrote many articles for the magazine from 2000 with book reviews and reports on H.A.T. activities and then in 2004 she took over as Editor of the Victoria Naturalist for eight years until April of 2012 with Note from the Editor in each edition. She represents VNHS on the board of BCNature and has been our rep on the Swan Lake board for many years. From Dec 2013 until present day Claudia has obtained speakers for Natural History Night and filled in that duty for Birder's night until a regular host was found.

Both Darren and Claudia are active members of the local natural history community by leading field trips for the Society, building and distributing bird boxes, organizing and helping build observation decks, and volunteering their expertise in bio-blitzes around the province. They organized the Goldstream Art show in the 90's and Darren led many field trips to reveal the wonders of salmon spawning in Goldstream to young and old. He also inspires many students when he teaches vertebrate labs at UVic and he also works half time at RBCM preparing vertebrate study skins and half time with Saanich Environmental Services. Claudia is Collections Manager of Entomology at RBCM documenting the insect biodiversity of the province. They have been tireless advocates for the environment for many years and no doubt will continue to do so.

Signed:  
*Philip Lambert  
Marilyn Lambert  
Gordon Hart*

# Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Falcons

By Val George

Photos by author

Members of the Falcon family (*Falconidae*) have had a special relationship with people for thousands of years. One of the major gods of the ancient Egyptians, Horus, was depicted as a man with the head of a falcon, and it was also thousands of years ago that falcons were used to hunt birds for food, an activity that morphed into the sport of falconry. In more modern times we birders consider it to be a highlight of any birding walk to see a Peregrine Falcon or Merlin chasing down a bird or patiently sitting on a favourite lookout tree waiting for an opportunity to pounce on a meal.

The family has about 60 species. It includes the Caracaras and Forest Falcons of Central and South America and the true Falcons like the ones we have in B.C. Five members are on the Victoria area checklist.

Most of the members of the Falconidae are strictly carnivorous, though some of the caracaras include fruit in their diets. Prey can range from large insects that form a significant part of the diets of the smaller falcons to birds and mammals as large as ducks and marmots for the largest species; a major part of the diet of the caracaras is carrion and other falcons will utilize this source of food opportunistically.

Of the five falcon species on the Victoria checklist, three are regularly seen; the other two are rare. None of the species in our area can really be said to be common. However, the most likely to be encountered is the Merlin (*Falco columbarius*). A Merlin may be seen at any time of year, but the species is more common in the Fall when our resident birds are joined by migrants.

Merlins are found across the northern hemisphere from the arctic regions to as far south as northern South America. Some of the Merlins we see around Victoria are resident, but birds in other parts of the world generally move south in winter. As with most other falcons, Merlins are very fast and agile flyers, using this ability to catch small birds that form the major part of their diet; occasionally, they'll take on prey larger than themselves like pigeons.

The second most frequently encountered falcon in the Victoria area is the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). This species has a global distribution and is, in fact, one of the most widely distributed bird species in the world. Peregrine Falcons have the distinction of being the fastest recorded birds. Their spectacular dives to strike birds in the air have been recorded at well over 300 km/h. In fact, they feed mainly on birds, from those of songbird size to shorebirds to larger ones like ducks, pigeons and grouse. The Peregrine Falcon is a species that has learned to live with us in urban areas. Here they'll nest on buildings and take advantage of feral Rock



Merlin (*Falco columbarius*).

Pigeons and urban waterfowl for food. Outside cities, they typically nest on inaccessible cliff faces.

The American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), which is somewhat smaller than the Merlin, is the smallest North American member of the Falconidae. It's also the most colourful with its bright rufous back and slate-blue wings.

Kestrels can usually be observed either sitting on a post or power line scanning the ground below for potential prey or hovering a few meters above the ground ready to drop on to an unsuspecting victim. Unlike our other falcons, the victim is often a large insect, such as a grasshopper or dragonfly, though it might be a small mammal such as a shrew or vole.

The other two much rarer species on the Victoria checklist are the Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) and the Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). The Gyrfalcon is the largest member of the Falconidae. This

is a magnificent bird that is prized by falconers; in fact, in medieval times only kings and aristocrats could fly this species. The Prairie Falcon is a lighter-coloured version of the Peregrine Falcon. In B.C., it is found in the interior of the province but there are a few records for the Victoria area.



Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).

# Exploring the Geology of Southern Vancouver Island

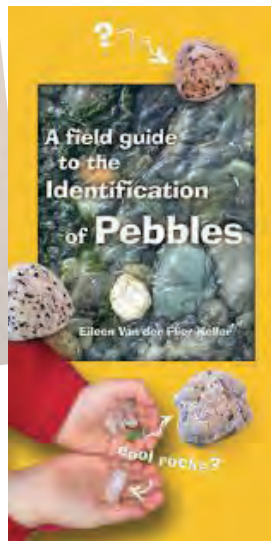
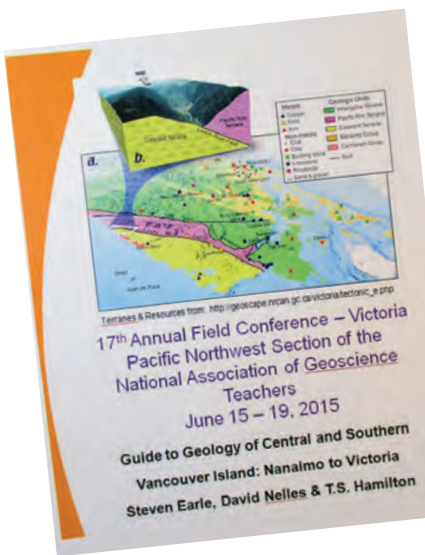
By Neil Carleton



South shore beach pebbles and granite exposure with dark gabbro fragments.

**Shoreline walks are a great way to explore some of the unique geological features of the Victoria area.**

During family visits to Victoria in recent years, I've enjoyed my geological outings across the Capital Regional District. On my beach walks, hikes, and car outings, I carry two field guides and two geological maps in my backpack.



## FIELD GUIDES

**Guide to the Geology of Central and Southern Vancouver Island: Nanaimo to Victoria.** S. Earle, D. Nelles, T.S. Hamilton. 2015. Spiral bound, 39pp. Includes charts, diagrams, colour photos and maps. Published for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Field Conference, in Victoria, of the Pacific Northwest Section of the National Association of Geoscience Teachers, June 15-19, 2015.

Available as a DOCX from Professor Tark Hamilton's Camosun College website. <https://sites.camosun.ca/tarkhamilton/about/pacific-northwest-section-national-association-of-geoscience-teachers/>

To inquire if paper copies are still available for \$20 US, postage included, payable to NAGT Pacific NW Section, contact Eriks Puris, Geology and General Science Instructor, Science, Math and CTE Division, SE SCOM 214A, Portland Community College, Southeast Campus, 2305 SE 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Portland, OR, 97216, USA. [eriks.puris@pcc.edu](mailto:eriks.puris@pcc.edu)

**A Field Guide to the Identification of Pebbles.** E. Van der Flier-Keller. 2006. Colour, laminated, accordion-folded, with great photos of British Columbia pebbles from beaches and rivers. 2009 recipient of the Geological Association of Canada Neale Medal.

Ask for it at your favourite bookstore. To inquire if copies are still available from the University of Victoria, contact the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, Bob Wright Centre A405, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700, STN CSC, Victoria, BC. V8W 2Y2, 250-472-5133, [seos@uvic.ca](mailto:seos@uvic.ca)



Bedrock  
geological map.



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geological map.



## GEOLOGICAL MAPS

**Geology, Victoria, West of Sixth Meridian, British Columbia.** 1983. Geological Survey of Canada map 1533A.

Encompasses the southeastern part of Vancouver Island, most of the southern Gulf Islands, and the westernmost San Juan Islands of the State of Washington. Colour, scale 1:100,000. Available as a PDF or JPG.

<https://geoscan.nrcan.gc.ca/starweb/geoscan/servlet.starweb?path=geoscan/fulle.web&search1=R=119507>

**Quaternary Geological Map of Greater Victoria.** 2000. P.A. Monahan and V.M. Levson. Geoscience Map 2000-2, Geological Survey Branch, B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines. Shows the thickness and distribution of sand, peat, clay, sand and gravel, and till that overlie the irregular glacially-scoured bedrock surface. Colour, scale 1:25,000 (approximate). Available as a PDF. [http://cmscontent.nrs.gov.bc.ca/geoscience/PublicationCatalogue/GeoscienceMap/BCGS\\_GM2000-02.pdf](http://cmscontent.nrs.gov.bc.ca/geoscience/PublicationCatalogue/GeoscienceMap/BCGS_GM2000-02.pdf)

Although there is no longer a way to order or purchase these as paper maps, there may still be free copies available in Vancouver at the Geological Survey of Canada via Warren Wulff, Library Manager, Natural Resources Canada, 1500 – 605 Robson Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1500, Vancouver, BC, V6B 5J3, 604-666-3812, [warren.wulff@canada.ca](mailto:warren.wulff@canada.ca)

## BRING A SKETCHBOOK

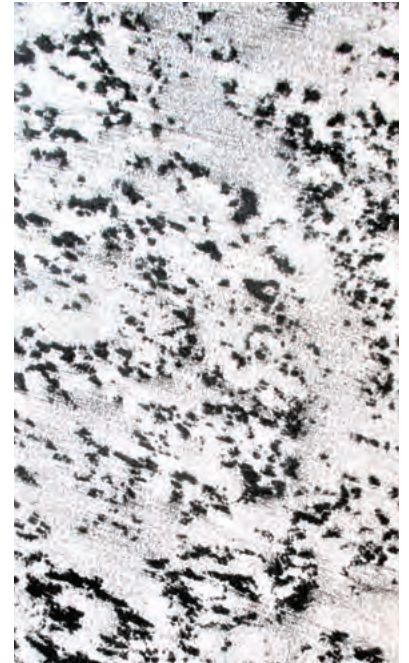
On each hike I also like to make pencil or pen drawings, and black crayon rubbings, of things that catch my eye.



Flowers sketch.



Beach rock study.

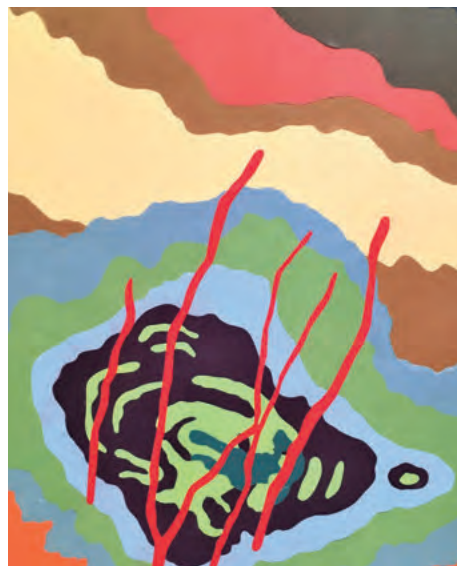


Rock outcrop rubbing.

Some of my Victoria outings have been the inspiration for geological collages back home.



Canada 22. Glued papers on painted 16" x 20" canvas. Rock thin section postage stamp.



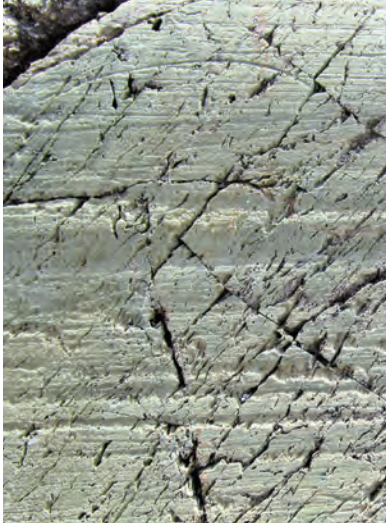
In Plain View. Glued papers on 18" x 24" canvas. Geological map of igneous intrusions.



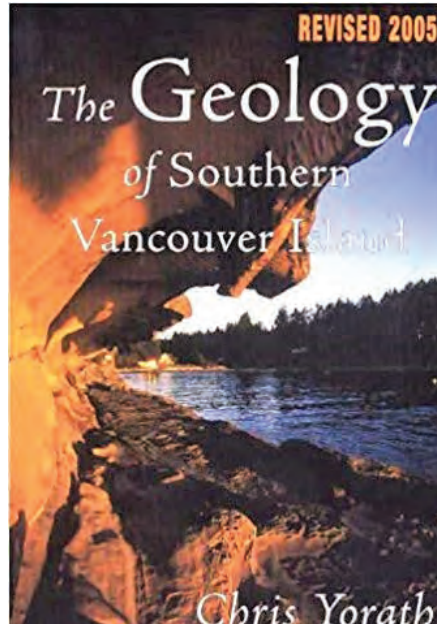
Fault Finding II. Glued papers on 18" x 24" canvas. Cross-section of faulted bedrock.

## OTHER RECOMMENDED READING

**Victoria Area Geotour.** 2016. J. Lesemann. This guide was prepared for a field trip of classroom teachers with stops at i) Cordova Bay, Saanich; ii) Cattle Point, Oak Bay; iii) Harling Point, Oak Bay; iv) Mt. Newton, Central Saanich, Saanich; v) Beach Drive seashore, Sidney; vi) Roberts Point, Sidney; and vii) Island View Beach, Central Saanich. Many colour maps and photos with full explanations. Available as a PDF. [https://www.mineralsed.ca/site/assets/files/3451/victoriaareageotour\\_2016web.pdf](https://www.mineralsed.ca/site/assets/files/3451/victoriaareageotour_2016web.pdf)



Glacial striations, Harling Point.



Folded intrusions, Holland Point.

**Geology of Southern Vancouver Island.** 2005, rev. ed. C.J. Yorath. Paperback, 205pp. Ask for it at your favourite bookstore. “This book is tailor-made for the keen amateur geologist wishing to learn more about geology and apply it to a particular landscape with which he or she is familiar or can readily relate to.” *Jeremy McCall, BC Naturalist*



## METCALFE GEOHERITAGE PARK

Should your travels bring you to the greater Ottawa area, you're invited to visit Canada's first municipal geoheritage park in nearby Almonte, my hometown on the Mississippi River.

<https://millstonenews.com/2017/09/geoheritage-park-inaugurates-qr-code.html>

*Neil Carleton, VNHS member, lives in Almonte, Ontario, and is a founding member of Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists, Almonte, ON, and a community volunteer at Metcalfe Geoheritage Park.*

# Neither Wind nor Threat of Snow Deter Valentine Birders

By Alan Macleod



Couples in the 2019 Valentine Birdathon, L-R: Agnes and David Lynn; Gail and Andrew Harcombe; Ashlea Veldhoen and Bob Addley; Susan and Daniel Donnecke; Daphne Nugent and Trevor Bulmer; Cathy Reader and Warren Lee; Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod.

The organizers ought to have known better. The day before the 2019 Valentine Couples Birdathon, a Saturday, a fierce gale blew all day in the Greater Victoria area. Trees were knocked down, power knocked out. On the day of the event itself, Sunday February 10, Environment Canada predicted snow. The organizers worried that no one might turn out for the 22nd annual running of an event that gives birder couples an opportunity to celebrate the Valentine season by happily birding their brains out for half a day in fabulous February.

They needn't have fretted. Sunday morning was sublime: windless and snowless with abundant sunshine and terrific viewing. Seven couples took part, not the best turnout ever, but certainly not the worst either. The seven bino-wielding pairs included five veteran participants, couples who view the birdathon as one of the events of the season, and some 'new blood' as well: two couples for whom valentine birding was a 'lifer'—one they clearly felt was worth their time and trouble.

As always, couples gathered in the noon hour at the Swan Lake Nature Centre to swap war stories, celebrate their best finds and lament the birds that got away. Agnes and Dave Lynn, long-time aficionados of the valentine count and two-time former winners, felt, despite the glorious weather, the birds had been uncooperative. They counted 46 species for their morning's effort, the best of which were Greater Yellowlegs at Oak Bay and Western Gull and Savannah Sparrow at Cattle Point.

In the fashion of good boy and girl scouts, the Donneckes,

Susan and Daniel, prepared two plans of attack, one for good weather, the other for bad. Given the weather that materialized, Plan B—the good-weather one—prevailed. Among the birds Susan and Daniel liked best: Lincoln's Sparrow at Patricia Bay and Long-tailed Duck in Sidney Channel. They added Brant and Western Meadowlark at Saanichton Bay, then White-fronted and Cackling goose at Martindale Flats. Elk Lake delivered Canvasback and a dozen Pied-billed Grebes. The Donneckes' payoff for their morning's work: 77 species.

The Harcombes—Gail and Andrew—are another pair of long-time devotees of the valentine count. They had a good start at the Vantreight bulb fields in Central Saanich—not one but *two* male Northern Harriers. McIntyre Reservoir off Island View Road yielded a quartet of Snow Geese. California Gull turned up at Patricia Bay, Wood Duck at the Elk Lake boat launch, and Sharp-shinned Hawk at Swan Lake. Andrew and Gail's count for the morning: 67.

Cathy Reader and Warren Lee are another couple who can look back on a long history with the valentine count. They got away a little late, delayed by the necessity to warm the water in which their tadpoles swim. It is a long time since Evening Grosbeak was an everyday bird in the Victoria checklist area but they counted that species early in their own Durrance Lake neighbourhood. The Tufted Duck they added at Christie Point was something special. Despite the forecast of snow, Horned Grebes off Clover Point engaged in display behaviour

suggesting that breeding season is already here. Cathy and Warren counted 59 species for their morning's endeavour.

The birdathon organizers, Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod, did as they always do in recent years: they just walked out their James Bay door in the early pre-dawn and started birding. They were surprised that the vocalizing owl at Beacon Hill Park was Great Horned, not the Barred Owls customarily heard in the park. Green-winged Teal is not given to hanging out in the Clover Point-Ross Bay area, so Jan and Alan were surprised to see three at the bay's east end. Brown-MacLeod were entirely happy with the 59 species counted in their James Bay-Fairfield walkabout.

Birdathon rookies Daphne Nugent and Trevor Bulmer found the same Great Horned Owl in Beacon Hill Park but had a bigger haul at Clover Point: Brant, Eared Grebe and Iceland Gull. The young birders found as many as thirty Canvasback at Viaduct Flats, and while Panama Flats turned out to be a "massive bust", that normally birdy location did turn up Lincoln's sparrow, Western Meadowlark and Northern Harrier. Daphne and Trevor matched the Harcombes' count with 67 species.

Another first-time couple, Ashlea Veldhoen and Bob Addley, were the last to deliver their Swan Lake report. "I tend to get a bit too intense for Bob," Ashlea allowed. Perhaps that was the reason they decided to break up the morning's birding with a leisurely breakfast at the horticultural centre by Viaduct Flats. One of the highlights of their morning was the wren sweep they had at Swan Lake: Pacific, Bewick's and Marsh wrens all contributing to their 38-species count.

The aggregate count in the 22nd birdathon was 104 species. Rarities and "good" birds—Redhead, Tufted Duck and Snow



Susan and Daniel Donnecke, 2019 Valentine Birdathon winners, holders of the Anderson Trophy.

Goose—are all well and good but some of us are always interested to contemplate the *misses*. The absentees this time included both White-winged and Black scoter, Surfbird and Sanderling, both Northern Pygmy Owl and Barred Owl—and not a single falcon of any persuasion.

The bottom line: the couple who get to see their names engraved on the treasured Anderson Trophy—for a second time—are Susan and Daniel Donnecke. That's not all. Don Wuest of Wild Birds Unlimited remains the birdathon's loyal sponsor: Don donated 'world's-best' hummingbird feeders and bird-themed greeting cards to each of the top three finishers.

Meanwhile, aside from all the fun, each of the participant couples get to feel satisfied about the good their ten-buck admission fee will do for VNHS conservation efforts: the event proceeds go entirely to that cause.

An advertisement for Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. The background is a close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small turtle. The turtle has a distinctive red and black pattern on its shell. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, featuring a stylized swan and the text "SWAN LAKE CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY". To the right of the turtle, there is text in a serif font: "In the end you're either endowed... or extinct." Below this, in a larger, bold, serif font, it says "BEQUESTS, SECURITIES, LIFE INSURANCE, and RETIREMENT PLAN DESIGNATIONS". At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a line of text: "To discuss the possibility of leaving a planned gift to Swan Lake, please contact kburton@swanlake.bc.ca or phone: 250.479.0211 today."

# Crab Sponge, Snail Fur and Horse Feathers

By Bill Merilees



PHOTO 1:  
Live hermit crab  
in sponge 'snail'.  
Photo: Rick Harbo.



PHOTO 2:  
Hermit Crab 'home'  
within crab sponge.  
Photo: Bill Merilees



PHOTO 3:  
Three crab  
sponges of  
similar shape.  
Photo: Bill Merilees



PHOTO 4:  
Snail Fur with  
a Grainyhand  
Hermit Crab 'in  
residence'.  
Photo: Rick Harbo.



PHOTO 5:  
Four stages in Snail  
Fur development  
on snails utilized by  
hermit crabs.  
Photo: Bill Merilees

In the natural world there are more curiosities than you could shake a stick at. These three 'tickle my fancy'.

During my scavenging for new and interesting molluscs, every once in a while I come across something that is truly intriguing. The first two of the above are situations involving snail shells occupied by hermit crabs.

In the first instance a sponge (possibly *Suberites domuncula*—the Hermit Crab Sponge) (Lamb & Hanby, #PO22, page 66) settles on the hermit crab's shell and begins to grow, not only does it end up covering the entire shell (Photo 1), but it also absorbs the shell's calcium content until the shell is totally dissolved away. In this process the hermit crab ends up with a home customized to the size and shape of its body. (Photo 2). As the sponge continues to grow it must certainly tax the hermit crab's strength and stamina lugging this home around. It is interesting that as the sponge grows to maturity it appears to take on a common general 'shape' (Photo 3).

The second instance is similar to the first but instead of a sponge it is a species of hydroid that attaches to the shell. Quite possibly this is *Hydractinia aggregata*—the Snail Fur Hydroid (Lamb & Hanby, #CN68, page 100). This imparts a distinctly furry look to the hermit crab's home, hence the name 'snail fur'! As with the sponge, the snail shell is slowly dissolved away but since the hydroid is quite thin, the crab's home slowly becomes distorted from its natural shape (Photo 4).

Now, how does 'Horse Feather's' get into this narrative. Well, I mentioned the proposed title for this article to my wife, in the presence of our four-and-a-half-year-old grandson. His very quick response was, "Don't be silly, Poppa—horses don't have feathers!" Somewhat dumbfounded—I decided to Google 'Horsefeathers'. While horse feathers usually refers to something being 'silly or ridiculous', I also learned that horses have fetlocks which are sometimes referred to as being feathered, i.e., tapered! It just goes to show an old dog can learn something by being challenged by a young pup! Amen!

P.S. The term "horse feathers" is now considered to be archaic. *Horse Feathers* was also the name of a comedy film starring the Marx Brothers in 1932! (Wikipedia)

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Rick Harbo for his photos of the live species.

#### Reference:

Lamb, A., and B.P. Hanby. 2005. *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest—A Photographic Encyclopedia of Invertebrates, Seaweeds and Selected Fishes*. Harbour Publishing. 398pp.

# If There's a Rustle in Your Hedgerow... It Might Be a Pollinator!



By Paige Erickson-McGee and Ashlea Veldhoen

**H**edgerows have become a lot more mainstream since Led Zeppelin confounded fans everywhere by using the word in their hit song *Stairway to Heaven* all those years ago.

## So, What Is a Hedgerow and Who Wants One Anyway?

A hedgerow is just what it sounds like: a dense hedge, made up of a variety of different plants lined up in a row. And we are not talking about the overdone cedar hedge along every other property in the region. Depending on the type, size and density of the plants used, a hedgerow can not only provide pollen, nectar and habitat for pollinators, but also serve as 'living fences' between properties, windbreaks, catch dust and block noise, and even increase carbon storage. That is why HAT has begun to include hedgerow plantings as part of our Good Neighbours Program, which focuses in the Wildwood Creek Watershed in Metchosin, part of HAT's Three-Year Wildlife Corridor Project linking habitat on private land from East Sooke to the Sooke Hills.

Sea Bluff Farm in Metchosin is investing in nature for a long term pay off for their farm and pollinators, a win-win relationship that can result in improved pollination, increased crop yields and thus economic benefits for the farmers, all while improving habitat for local pollinators.

Farm Managers Sasha Kubicek and Robin Tunnicliffe accepted an opportunity to partner with HAT's pilot program for land managers to co-pay for habitat installations as part of the HAT Good Neighbours Program. Already a certified organic farm, Sea Bluff is an ideal location for planting a pollinator hedgerow by offering a sheltered space away from pesticide use, which would otherwise compromise its effectiveness as pollinator habitat.

On March 25 2019, HAT, Sea Bluff Farm, and Saanich Native Plant co-hosted a hedgerow planting across a 300-foot (90-m) fence line where 17 volunteers planted over 223 native shrubs and perennial wildflowers. Plant species were selected to provide the longest continuous bloom possible, from February to October with native species such as June plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus*



Volunteer crew excited to plant native shrubs.  
Photo: Ashlea Veldhoen.

*discolor*), Saskatoon berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*), woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*), and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). Bob Mitchell, second generation Metchosin farmer and operator at Sea Bluff since 1982, is thrilled to support pollinator stewardship on the farm, noting its educational benefits for local schools. "It will be great for the kids on the school buses who drive by on their way to Witty's Lagoon" says Bob. "They can stop to look at the hedgerow and learn about them on class field trips."

## For the Bee's Sake

BC has more than 450 species of native bees. That is more than the number of birds in all of Canada! So identification to species can be challenging and often isn't possible from a photograph. Most of our native species (about 70%) do not live in hives but are solitary, living in the ground or hollow stems. Solitary meaning that after mating, they prepare and provision their nests without cooperation with other bees. Although they often will nest together in numbers when a good nesting area is found, the bees are only sharing a good nesting site and not cooperating, including the Blue Orchard Mason Bee (*Osmia lignaria*). None of them make honey (the honey bee—*Apis mellifera*—is not native to North America). Many of them do not sting. Our native bees come in a rainbow of colours including iridescent blues and greens, with only a very small number of species sporting the more familiar black and yellow bands. All bees evolved to use pollen for their protein source instead of animal prey. Think of them like wasps turned vegetarian, you'd virtually never expect to see a bumblebee (*Bombus* spp.) or any other bee visit the meat grilling on your backyard barbecue.

Currently, bee populations across the country are declining. Without enough food and nesting habitat on the landscape,



Paige Erickson-McGee and Robin Tunnicliffe. Photo: Ashlea Veldhoen.



Mason Bee on Oregon Grape.  
Photo: Lori Weidenhammer.

habitat loss to agriculture and development in combination with increased pesticide use and new diseases from introduced pollinator species.

Since insects are the basis for many food webs, their loss is likely causing chain reaction population declines in species that rely upon them – including our birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Faced with this knowledge, it seems only logical that we have a responsibility to support the recovery of our pollinators. Fortunately, conservation organizations including HAT are making it easier to do just that. HAT has begun a new initiative in partnership with local farmers and volunteers to plant or maintain hedgerows consisting of native trees, shrubs and plants that produce flowers and fruit—valuable food for bees and other pollinator insects.

## For Better Crops

Over a third of our native pollinating insects, such as leafcutter bees (*Megachile* spp.) and sweat bees (*Halictidae* spp.), provide important pollination services for fruit, vegetable and other crop growers on Vancouver Island. Over one-third of our total diet is dependent, directly or indirectly, upon insect-pollinated plants, so inviting them into our farms using hedgerows makes sense from a social, economic and ecological perspective. Almost 90% of flowering plants need pollinators to reproduce, so bees are a critical element to ecosystem stability. Hedgerows on farms supplement pollinator habitat to feed, shelter and reproduce, but benefits of these hedges or not limited to pollinators.

“Hedgerows are very important from the point of view of shelter, for nesting birds, and especially migratory songbirds. We’ve had a lot of storms over the last few years and I think a lot of farms would have benefitted greatly from a higher hedgerow near them to provide shelter for their buildings and crops. Hedgerows are very important sites for pollinators, as nesting sites as well as for their safe cover and pollen and nectar sources”—Bob Maxwell, Co-chair of the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission (retired) and owner of Fieldstone Farm.

Now during spring on Sea Bluff Farm, bees and other pollinators will be able feed on the hedgerow’s wild flowering plants all season long. In late summer and autumn, the hedgerow’s “messy and wild” appearance means that they also provide vital safety for late season birds and queen bumblebees that must fatten up to hibernate over winter.

pollinators are unable to find the resources necessary to survive. And bees are not the only ones. Right now, it is estimated that over 40 percent of all of Canada’s insects are also currently in steep decline. This reduction in bee and other insect populations can be attributed to wide-scale

Robin and Sasha sum it up perfectly by describing their motivation, “To us the many benefits of the hedgerow more than compensate for the small cost of installation and maintenance. It’s a small way for us to honour the insects and creatures who give us so much.”

## HAT offers tips on managing a pollinator-friendly hedgerow:

- Site preparation is extremely important, but not difficult. Removing undesirable vegetation like Himalayan blackberry, and laying down cardboard topped with thick mulch will reduce maintenance in the future.
- Plant as densely as you can: planting 3-5 gallon-sized shrubs or perennial wildflowers per metre will result in a beautiful and functional hedge in 2-3 years.
- Keep at least one mature native tree within each hedgerow – dogwood, Scouler’s willow, or even Garry oak.
- Where possible, cut hedgerows back on a three-year cycle - cutting no more than a third of hedges in any year. Cutting annually stops the hedgerow flowering and fruiting.
- Where possible, cut in rotation rather than all at once as this will ensure some areas of hedgerow on your farm will always flower.
- Hedges managed for pollinators should ideally be cut between November and January, in an A-shape. If they must be cut outside this, cut in rotation, so some areas remain undisturbed.
- Let some plants grow “wild and messy” in hedgerows on top, side-trimming only. All those nooks and crannies are key nesting spaces for birds and hibernating bumblebees.
- Where hedgerows must be cut along the roadside for safety, allow the inside to flower.
- Aim for a hedgerow that is as high as possible, but ideally 2.5m above ground level.
- Avoid spraying any herbicide near the hedgerow. Use mechanical weed control such as a weed-eater or hedge trimmer only when necessary.
- Create a mulched buffer margin at the hedgerow base to prevent grasses and weeds from sprouting up and competing with planted stock.

To find out more about how to manage hedgerows for pollinating insects, and download the Designing and Planting Hedgerows (link to PDF). Guide published in partnership with Pollinator Partnership Canada, Saanich Native Plants, and HAT.

**Want to be a Good Neighbour to Nature and plant your own hedgerow? Visit [hat.bc.ca](http://hat.bc.ca) for more information or get in touch with us. Call: 250-995-2428 or E-mail: [hatmail@hat.bc.ca](mailto:hatmail@hat.bc.ca).**

The HAT Good Neighbours Project is funded by people like you, and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Metchosin Foundation, EcoAction Community Fund, and sponsorship by Saanich Native Plants Nursery and Consulting.



# YOU Can Make a Difference!

Developing a Land Ethic of Environmental Stewardship with the Native Plant Study Group

By Sylvia Samborski

Photos by author

*Environmental stewardship* refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices. Aldo Leopold (1887-1949) championed environmental stewardship based on a land ethic “dealing with man’s relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it.” (Wikipedia)

In September, the Native Plant Study Group (NPSG.ca) launched a series of talks focused on the theme “**You can make a difference!**” and the question “How can we learn and work together to sustain the health of our natural environment?” There is general consensus among our members that our outdoor environments, whether gardens, boulevards or parks, are suffering from severe degradation. This is a common problem across North America, and is being actively and successfully managed, especially in some eastern communities, through education and sustainable practice.

In order to take action on a local level, we felt it was important to become informed about the broad ecological picture, and then work to help coordinate and support decisions and actions with other credible organizations and professionals from every level of government. The Victoria Natural History Society is a stellar example of an organization that works continuously to involve adults and children in science-based nature education. Many academic leaders are willing to share their experience and advice. Victoria is also blessed with well-founded organizations such as HAT, the Green Team, Saanich’s Pulling Together Program, and other groups that embody sound environmental stewardship. The Native Plant Study Group decided to draw on the expertise of some of our key environmental stewards.

Accordingly, in September, forest ecologist and lead steward of Goward House Grounds, Everett Peterson, spoke to the group about his concerns for our native trees and shrubs in the Cadboro Bay area. He noted the absence of regeneration of these native species due to overabundance of deer, especially in the vicinity of illegal deer feeding stations. After decades of heavy feeding on commercial dairy formula, sunflower seeds, fruits and vegetables—put out by well-meaning neighbours who value deer over all other native biodiversity—the deer population has grown exponentially. In the absence of predators and hunters, the deer population has been gradually dispersing to other communities as local browse is consumed. Dr. Peterson noted that the deer have become the principal architects of the Queenswood urban forest, browsing down every young native tree, shrub and native wildflower in the forest



This cluster of a double- and triple- flowered *Erythronium oregonum*, is growing inside a deer-fenced area in the Queenswood/ Telegraph Bay Area.

understorey. As a result, we are losing our songbirds and pollinators that rely on these plants for food and nesting. Without deer fencing, mature native trees and shrubs will age and die without seedlings and saplings surviving to replace them. Everett uses the example of the cottonwoods at Goward House grounds. (See page 19 for Cottonwood and Deer).

In October, Ann Nightingale, award-winning birder and naturalist, gave us a colourful presentation about our incoming fall birds, addressing the degradation of the forest understorey by deer browsing and the effects on our bird populations. Ground-nesting birds such as juncos, towhees and Orange-crowned Warblers, are especially negatively affected.

November’s speaker, Restoration Ecologist Dave Polster shared with us the complexity of restoring severely-disturbed sites. In Saanich, Dave’s ecological restoration team can achieve success only if deer fencing protects a restoration site. If the fencing were removed, the young willow, aspen and other native species would be rapidly browsed and unable to reach maturity.

In January and February, biologists Andy MacKinnon and Terry McIntosh dedicated their talks to the memory of their friend and environmental steward, Moralea Milne. Moralea was an inspiration to the whole community and



Everett Peterson sharing his stewardship project with naturalists and Native Plant Study Group members.

worked tirelessly for the environment. She left us with a powerful legacy, through her dedication as a Metchosin councilor and organizer of the “Walk and Talk” series, her beautiful Camas Hill (a conservation jewel she set aside for perpetuity), and through the knowledge that we can follow

in her footsteps and truly make a difference to our natural environment. She epitomized how we as individuals could make a difference.

In March, James Miskelly described the Victoria area as home to the highest diversity of vascular plants in B.C. However, some of these native species are endangered or extirpated because of changing ecological conditions. Others are “hiding in plain sight”. We might think we have one native buttercup, the dramatic western buttercup that blooms along with camas in Garry oak meadows, but there are actually nine native buttercups in our area, as well as the invasive creeping and tall buttercup. Some native plants are hard to find, such as bastard toadflax (*Comandra umbellata*) or the delicious anise-flavoured herb yampah (*Perideridia gairdneri*); others, such as tarweeds, look “weedy” and can be overlooked. Several plants are in decline or have disappeared from our area, such as the delicate pink wildflower *Phacelia linearis*, familiar to Okanagan naturalists. James shared various factors that have resulted in the high diversity of native plants, as well as three factors that threaten this diversity: invasive plants, overabundant deer, and loss of fire. Carbon record indicate that indigenous people used fire to manage the southern Vancouver Island Garry oak meadows for at least 5000 years. An early European observer also noted that over 230,000 acres of ground were managed by fire from Nanaimo through Victoria, or about 1000 square kilometers of burnt “prairie land”. James emphasized that the three notable problems threatening our biodiversity have relatively simple solutions. He suggests that we need to employ individual and group social action, and engage all levels of government in an action plan based on science.

A wealth of up-to-date information on stewardship and the particular challenges facing our urban environment is available, both in libraries and online. E.g., Deer Overabundance. Wildl. Soc. Bull. Vol. 25, No. 2, Summer 1997. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i292242>



## Leave a Lasting Gift

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# Cottonwoods in Saanich: An Uncertain Future

By Everett Peterson, Lead Steward, Goward Woodland

Photos by author



Figure 1. Mature cottonwoods in Goward woodland.

**B**lack cottonwood is one of thirteen tree species naturally present in the woodland surrounding Goward House at 2495 Arbutus Road in Saanich. In 2019, there are approximately 50 live cottonwoods in this urban forest, all of them mature trees—not old-growth but mature (Figure 1). Stem diameters of these deciduous trees suggest that most of them were regenerated 60 or more years ago. In this 2.4-hectare woodland, there is only one known cottonwood of a stem diameter small enough to indicate establishment after about 1985. These mature cottonwoods will gradually be lost by natural-occurring stem decay and windfall. Among the thirteen native tree species present in this woodland, cottonwood has the greatest natural ability to regenerate new stems in three different ways: by seed, by suckers from near-surface mature roots, or by rooting of branch tips broken off from upper tree crowns during wind storms. Yet this great reproductive capacity has not allowed cottonwoods to establish any cohort of new young cottonwoods on site. Why is that?

Residents of the Cadboro Bay/Queenswood neighbourhood began noticing browsing Columbian Black-tailed Deer in their gardens in the early 1990's. Ecological restoration initiatives in Goward woodland began in 2004, and from that date to the present there have been many observations of deer browsing new cottonwood suckers wherever these new shoots appear. Figure 2 is an example of three clumps of cottonwood suckers that emerged from a root system in spring 2018. In May 2018 one of these clumps was protected by a mesh-wire ring and

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Figure 2. New cottonwood suckers in 2018 with sucker clump on right side protected from browsing but left side unprotected clumps repeatedly browsed over the summer.



Figure 3. By end of first growing season, this protected cottonwood sucker was over 1 meter tall.



Figure 4. By end of second growing season, the same sucker shown in Figure 3 was over 3 meters tall. Measuring pole is 2 meters.



Figure 5. Eagle nest in branches of mature cottonwood on Beach Drive in Oak Bay.

inside that protective ring a new cottonwood stem was able to develop in 2018. The two unprotected clumps of emerging cottonwood suckers, on the left of the image in Figure 2, were repeatedly browsed by deer to ground level during summer 2018. Without a barrier around them, new young cottonwood stems are simply unable to develop because of repeated browsing by deer. In contrast, with protective screening, young cottonwood suckers can quickly achieve a one meter height in the first growing season (Figure 3) and three meters by the end of the second growing season (Figure 4).

Residents of the Greater Victoria region have a choice. They can accept abundant Columbian black-tailed deer at a population density that will deny the future presence of mature black cottonwoods in local urban forests. Alternatively, they could support steps to achieve a balance between regenerative capacity of native tree species and browsing pressure from deer. The future presence of mature cottonwoods involves more than just cottonwoods and deer. For example, although mature cottonwoods are majestic in their own right, the open and horizontal orientation of branches in mature cottonwoods makes this tree species a

favoured perching and nesting location for urban eagle populations (Figure 5). In Goward woodland, the most conspicuous deer influence on vegetation ranges from ground level to about two meters, as in the image of standing height deer browsing of *Symphoricarpos albus* (Figure 6).

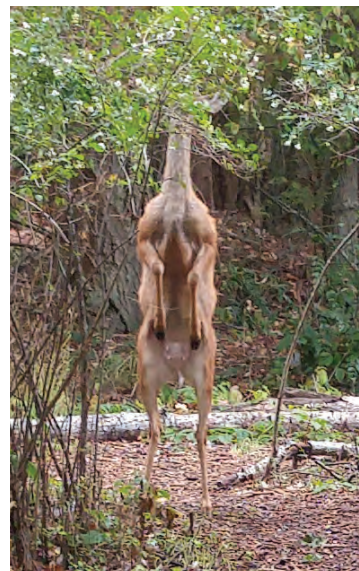


Figure 6. Browsing of *Symphoricarpos albus* by standing height of deer.

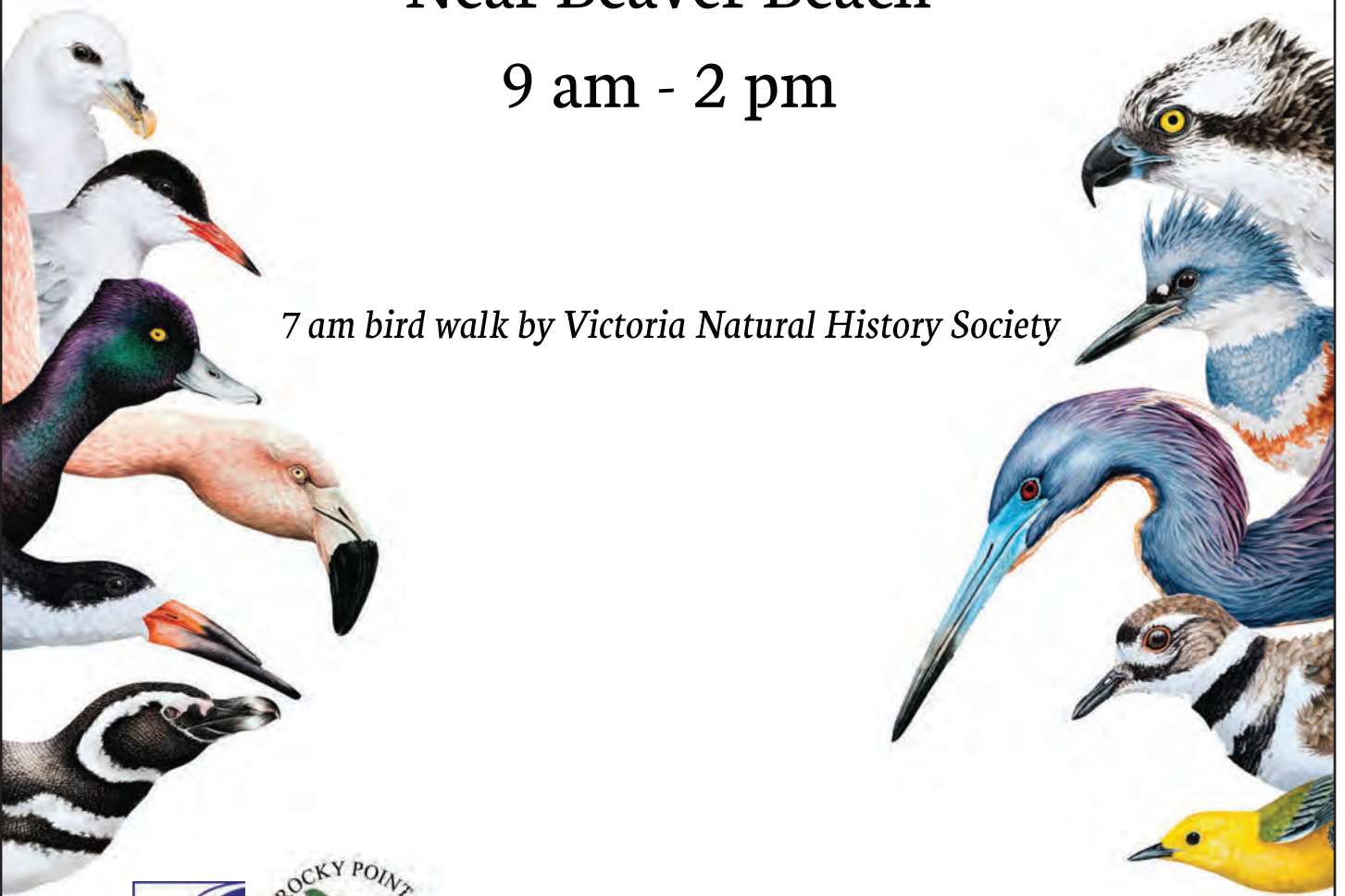
# World Migratory Bird Day 2019

## Saturday, May 11, 2019

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park  
Near Beaver Beach

9 am - 2 pm

*7 am bird walk by Victoria Natural History Society*



Hosted by Rocky Point Bird Observatory

Contact [education@rpbo.org](mailto:education@rpbo.org) or visit [rpbo.org](http://rpbo.org) for details



## Memorial for Kathleen Ward

A joyful and enthusiastic birding spirit was lost this year when my friend and VNHS member Kathleen Ward passed away on 12 February 2019. She retired from her position as Executive Director for the B.C. Government Freedom of Information Branch and Road Safety BC after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer three and a half years ago. During these last years, she travelled extensively, always searching for new “lifer” birds and sharing her excitement with friends and family members. Kathleen was a welcome addition to the many birding field trips she attended with the VNHS, and posted her sightings for all to share on eBird. We met through our mutual love of the natural world through the Kootenay Nordic Outdoor Club in Cranbrook in the early 1980s. She was a great companion, helping with breeding bird surveys, bird inventories in Kootenay National Park and the first Cranbrook Christmas Bird Count in 1983. Regarded as a “force of nature” for her positive outlook and optimism, I shared many adventures hiking, ski mountaineering and canoeing throughout the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Purcell Mountains and Baffin Island. Kathleen’s baking and cooking was legendary, sustaining all of her friends and family on every birding, skiing and backpacking adventure. We enjoyed birding and boating the Gulf Islands during the past two summers. She was determined

to share in the Christmas Bird Count season and had two wonderful days on the Victoria count in Oak Bay and the Sooke count at Aylard Farm. We parted after searching for Virginia Rails and she went into the hospital for the last time. Kathleen left behind a loving husband and family, and many friends who will miss her.

Marion Porter

## Salish Sea Creatures

By Tina Kelly

Photo by author

### Northwestern Ugly Clam!

Exploring for clams? Usually one thinks about mucking in the sand but some clam species prefer rocky habitats. Enter the Northwestern Ugly Clam. Was this common name created by a bully? Although not the prettiest of clams, let’s note the less insulting names for this species—Rock-dwelling Clam or Rock Entodesma. The two valves of *Entodesma navicula* are covered in a brown to green covering or periostracum—looks wrinkly or like sagging skin—and do not fully close; there is a gap at the posterior end. The overall body shape can vary as this clam adjusts to the shape of the hole or crevice it grows in; they are sometimes described as deformed. Outside of cracks and crevices, they are also known to grow attached to kelp holdfasts or Giant Acorn Barnacles. Their maximum size is 12 cm across. A distinguishing feature of this clam is its siphons; when covered with water, you may spot the extended siphons that are orange-tipped with blue tinges.



*Another lesser known species members can learn about—I didn’t know about it until I spotted it at a Bioblitz—TK.*

Low-tide at Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Site.

# LETTERS

*Excerpt from letter to VNHS from Royal Roads University*

Thank you for your support of student awards at Royal Roads University. We are pleased to provide you with this note of appreciation from the most recent recipient of the Victoria Natural History Society Bursary.

Jordi Fisher is an undergraduate student of our Environmental Science—BSc program.

Advancement Office  
Communications and Management  
Royal Roads University

Re: VNHS Freeman F. King Scholarship

Thank you so much for your generosity! I was honoured and pleasantly surprised to receive the scholarship. I very

much appreciate your donation as this allows me to continue studying at such a great university.

I am currently in my fifth year studying biology and economics. For my first four years at UVic, I studied biology with interest in ecology courses, such as Chordate Zoology and Vertebrates of British Columbia. In my free time, I love to apply, practice, and refine my knowledge while birdwatching at Swan Lake Sanctuary and during invasive plant removal with the Mount Douglas Pulling-Together team.

Thank you again,

Sincerely  
Ms. Brianna Perry  
4<sup>th</sup> year student, Biology and Economics  
Home town: Victoria

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## BULLETIN BOARD

### STILL WANTED!

Issues of The Victoria Naturalist from the early years—to complete our scanning project. We are looking for copies in good condition of the following issues:

May 1945  
October 1946  
April 1951  
May 1951  
September 1951  
May 1954  
September 1954  
December 1955  
January 1956

If you have these files away in a drawer or cupboard somewhere and are willing to let us scan them, please contact Stephen Ruttan at 250-472-2406 [sfruttan@gmail.com](mailto:sfruttan@gmail.com)

### Saturday June 29th

#### UBER Hali Wetland Birthday Party

The constructed wetland at the Urban Biodiversity Enhancement and Restoration Project (UBER) at Haliburton Community Organic Farm (741 Haliburton Road) is turning 10 years old. Come see how a hole in the ground has evolved into a thriving wetland supporting a diversity of wildlife and plants. Tours and activities starting at 10 a.m. There will be a birthday cake. For more information: [halibiodiversity@gmail.com](mailto:halibiodiversity@gmail.com); <https://www.facebook.com/HaliburtonBiodiversity/>

### Naturalist and Cloud Watcher

Well-known local naturalist **David Stirling** passed away 11 August 2018, and there is an extensive biography now available, titled “Naturalist and Cloud Watcher”, Vol. 14, No.1. It is very reasonably priced at \$20.00, which includes postage and shipping. It can be ordered through the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies (BCFWS) website [www.wildlifebc.org](http://www.wildlifebc.org) using PayPal or by cheque to BCFWS, 3825 Cadboro Bay Rd., P.O. Box 55053, Victoria, BC, V8N 6L8.

### In Nature’s Realm— Available October 2019

In this companion piece to his previous two books, Michael Layland presents a fascinating aspect of B.C.’s history.

*In Nature’s Realm* gathers the early reports, recorded histories, and personal accounts left by early naturalists who visited Vancouver Island to study the region’s flora and fauna. For more information, see <http://michaellayland.com/>

### Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

#### Sundays May 12 and June 9 at 9:00 a.m.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory hosts guided bird walks at Outerbridge Park in Saanich on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The easy walks, suitable for people with mobility concerns, begin at the parking area off Royal Oak Drive. For dates and details, see <http://rpbo.org> Download the bird list [http://www.rpbo.org/outerbridge\\_park.pdf](http://www.rpbo.org/outerbridge_park.pdf)

### Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Guided Bird Walks

#### Every Wednesday and Sunday 9:00 a.m.

Bring 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). Donations are appreciated. For information, see <http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php> Download the sanctuary bird checklist: <http://tinyurl.com/birdchecklist>

### Spring has sprung...

Although spring has sprung and bird songs abound, you can enhance your birding experience year-round by learning the OTHER sounds that birds make...not just their gloriously musical songs. Consider buying yourself or a birder friend *A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island* (CD/booklet set) by Rocky Point Bird Observatory. This guide provides an introduction to call notes of common birds found on southern Vancouver Island. When learning to bird by ear, many people concentrate on learning the songs because songs tend to be complex and often beautiful. However, songs are generally only by breeding males in the spring and summer, and there is a whole world of simpler sounds given year-round by songbirds of all ages and sexes. For information or purchase (discount for RPBO members), contact [rpbo@rpbo.org](mailto:rpbo@rpbo.org)

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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 23 new members since the last issue. Only the following has agreed to have their name published in this Welcome section.

### Lynnen Walker

Victoria  
*Marine birds*

### David and Doris Sanders

Victoria  
*Cat bylaws*

### Matthew Hiscock

Victoria

### Kevinn Bélanger

Victoria  
*Geology, geomorphology, tectonics, sea-level change*

### Christinan Ianniciello

Victoria

### Neil Carleton

Almonte

### Kellie Wyllie

Victoria  
*Birds and trees*

### Maureen Mitchell

Victoria  
*Gardening, birding*

### Robert and Janice Walker

Victoria  
*Birding*

### Pauline van den Driessche

Victoria

### Mark Byrne

Victoria  
*Birding, sea kayaking, camping*

### Selena Rhodes Scofield

Victoria  
*Plants, marine mammals, birds, photography, books*



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# 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/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518) 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 the Field Trip Coordinator Claudia Copley. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share! See page two for email addresses and phone numbers.*

**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. If space allows, guests may participate 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 the Calendar page of the VNHS website ([http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518)) 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.

## MAY

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### Friday, May 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Birding Panama Flats*

Bonus Friday event! Join us at potentially one of the best spots in the region for shorebirds if the timing is right. Lots of other birds around the edges too. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the small parking lot near the playground. To reach this meeting place, turn off Interurban Rd at Hyacinth and follow the road to the end. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Saturday, May 4

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Bird BioBlitz in HAT Ty Mynydd Covenant Area on Blinkhorn Mountain*

This is a VNHS Saturday Birding Group visit to private property in Metchosin. We will be collecting names of bird species to add to the inventory for the Habitat Acquisition Trust's Ty Mynydd Covenant property on Blinkhorn Mountain. Please note that the event will be on potentially steep terrain. It will be good practice in 'ear birding' as most of the area is in the woods so we will be identifying a number of the birds only by songs or calls. Start time will be 7:00 a.m. Details on the exact starting location will be given when you register. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to register or if you want more information.

## **Sunday May 5**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### ***Monthly Butterfly Outing***

Join us 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 start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Rd). Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the lot by the reservoir where we will have an initial look for Butterflies and then decide where to go from there. The meeting time may change. Check website closer to the date for updates. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

## **Saturday, May 11**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### ***Early Birding Walk on World Migratory Bird Day***

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be joining in with the World Migratory Bird Day events planned for this day at Elk/Beaver Lake. We will check out some of the trails and the lakeshore to see what migrants have joined the resident birds in this productive area. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the main parking lot at Beaver Lake. To reach this parking lot, turn on to Beaver Lake Road off Elk Lake Drive (parallels the Pat Bay Highway). There is a large park sign at this intersection. Afterwards you may wish to join in the other drop-in events planned for the day from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information on the early bird tour.

## **Sunday, May 12**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### ***Scramble up the Back of Mount Douglas***

Join us in birding and botanizing on Mount Douglas. If the weather is sunny, it is also a great spot for butterflies. We should get a good number of warblers. Also Western Tanager, House Wren and Chipping Sparrow are likely. We can always hope for a Lazuli Bunting singing above us in the trees as we slowly climb around to the viewpoint. The late wildflowers such as woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) should still be good as well. Please note the trail is steep but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trail marker off Blenkinsop Rd (south of 4411 Blenkinsop Rd). Parking is just north of Lohbrunner Road if no safe spots at the side of the road. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## **Saturday, May 18**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### ***Birding Witty's Lagoon***

The trail at Witty's Lagoon drops quickly via a scenic waterfall to the beach. Enjoy spring migrants in the woods and shorebirds along the estuary and in the saltmarsh behind the beach. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the main parking lot on Metchosin Road (across from golf course). **Dannie Carsen** will be your leader. Contact Dannie at (250) 544-2117 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## **Sunday, May 19**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### ***Birding Mount Newton***

Join us on this leisurely loop on the south side of Mount Newton looking for spring migrants in this area of mixed forest and large rural lots. This is a great area to see Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-throated Gray Warblers and Mourning Doves. Take East Saanich Road to Haldon Road. Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton Heights at 7:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## **Monday, May 20**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### ***Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail from Sooke Potholes to Leechtown***

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds and scenery along the way. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km along Sooke River Road (off Sooke Road). Bring a lunch. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## **Friday, May 24**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### ***Goldstream Heights—Higher Elevation Birding***

Bonus Friday event! We will go up the Malahat to the area high above Shawnigan Lake to see what birds are enjoying the wide open spaces in an area that has been clear-cut a number of years back. Each year as small trees and shrubs come back, so do more birds. It's one of the few spots that you may hear or see both species of grouse that we have locally. Also lots of the migrant flycatchers, vireos and warblers lurk in the bushes. Several different sparrows should be singing everywhere. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## **Saturday, May 25**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### ***Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mountain Road***

Join us in this very productive birding area. This trail, mostly under power lines, is a great place to see warblers, vireos and flycatchers. This is the most reliable spot for MacGillivray's Warbler. Take the Trans-Canada Highway to the Millstream Road exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Road. Turn right at Stewart Mountain Road and meet at the mailboxes at 7:00 a.m. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## **Sunday, May 26**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### ***Observatory Hill (Little Saanich Mountain) Birding Walk***

Join us on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain. Flycatchers, Western Tanagers, House Wrens and a variety of woodpeckers are some of the birds we might find. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the bottom of the road leading up the mountain (5071 West Saanich Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## Friday, May 31

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### *Birding Calvert and Logan Park*

Bonus Friday event! We will be going birding in the area around Trevlac Pond and part of Prospect Lake, then back through Logan Park. Meet on Trevlac Place which is off Hector Road at 7:30 a.m. We will also explore a relatively newly acquired Saanich property Goy Park which has a small pond. Maybe we'll hear the young Barred Owls hissing in the woods on the final part through Logan Park. Look for the brown park hiking post on Trevlac Place as our starting point. Park along one side of Trevlac but don't block the end of the cul-de-sac. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## JUNE

### Saturday, June 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

#### *Birding the Power Lines & the Ponds at the Hydro Substation near Francis King Park*

Join us for a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the Hydro substation. This is a great place to hear or see most of our warblers, vireos and flycatchers. This is the most reliable spot for Black-throated Gray Warbler. This is a four to five hour walk. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Francis King Park Nature House on Munns Road. Bring a drink and a snack. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Sunday, June 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Monthly Butterfly Outing*

Join us 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 start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Rd). Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the lot by the reservoir where we will have an initial look for butterflies and then decide where to go from there. The meeting time may change. Check the website closer to the date for updates. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

### Saturday, June 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Birding Jordan River Area*

Join us for a trip to Jordan River. It has been a hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall and it is a great place to hear breeding Fox Sparrows singing in the spring. As well as beat the bushes for all the fresh migrants, we will scan the ocean and the shoreline. We never know what might be out there. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Bring a lunch. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Sunday, June 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Birding Viaduct Flats*

Join us in birding Viaduct Flats and the surrounding area, including up Broadcast Hill. Not many water birds are still

around but as well as the residents, lots of migrant passerines are flitting about in the trees. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the viewing stand near the parking lot at the foot of Viaduct Ave. which is off Interurban Rd. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Saturday, June 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

#### *Duncan Area Butterflies & Birds*

We will venture farther afield to the Duncan area this week to do some birding and perhaps enjoy some of the area's butterflies. The morning will mostly be spent birding, starting with an enjoyable walk along the productive Dock Rd and then we will try to find a nearby Red-eyed Vireo plus other warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Bring a lunch and we will spend time in the afternoon searching for the amazing array of butterflies that are around the Duncan area. It needs to be sunny to make this part worthwhile. Otherwise we'll continue birding in other spots nearby. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool or at 7:45 a.m. at Cowichan Bay Dock Road (north of the intersection of Cowichan Bay Road and Tzouhalem Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Sunday, June 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

#### *Birding Blenkinsop Lake*

Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. Enjoy spring migrants such as Black-headed Grosbeaks and Yellow Warblers. If it's a nice day, we will continue along Lohbrunner Road to the lower reaches of Mount Douglas and walk back south through the park to reach Mt. Douglas Cross Road which will take us back to where we started. Meet at 7:00 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Sunday, June 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *High Jordan Ridge Bogs*

We plan to investigate an area high above Jordan River that contains unique sphagnum bogs usually only found at much higher elevations. Plants include round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), common butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), bog blueberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*) and labrador tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*). We will also be checking out the birds on this trip, although there is not a great diversity at this elevation. Be prepared in case of cold and/or wet weather due to the elevation, and bring high rubber boots (hiking boots not good enough). Also a hiking stick is a good idea due to the very uneven ground. Bring food and drinks for the all-day outing. You must pre-register for this trip due to transportation limitations and potential change of plans due to road conditions. Number of participants will be dependent on availability of high-clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicles for carpooling. Starts from Victoria around 8:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.



# The Victoria NATURALIST

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- 5 Dallas Waters
- 6 Ross Bay
- 7 Gonzales Bay
- 8 McNeill Bay
- 9 Oak Bay
- 10 Cadboro Bay
- A Macaulay Point
- B McLoughlin Point
- C Ogden Point Breakwater
- D Brothie Ledge
- E Holland Point
- F Finlayson Point
- G Clover Point
- H Harling Point
- I Kitty Islet
- J Gonzales Point
- K Trial Islands
- L Turkey Head
- M Willows Beach
- N Cattle Point
- O Gyro Beach
- P Ten Mile Point



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Core Creative Design 2019

1916: Migratory Bird Convention. 1917: Migratory Bird Convention Act.

1923: Victoria Harbour MBS, the oldest in Pacific Canada, soon 100 years old.

Established to control hunting and protect migratory birds, this Sanctuary is still home to birds, rare plants, fish, whales, and other wildlife in a busy urban area. **We have been talking about declining bird numbers for 100 years—now is not the time to stop talking—** nor to stop efforts to protect and revitalize the MBS. Contact the Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary for more information on how you can help: <http://friendsofvhmbms.org/>