



The Victoria NATURALIST

NOVEMBER
DECEMBER
2019
VOL 76.3

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
P.O. Box 24061 Royal Oak, Victoria, BC V8Z 7E7
Contents © 2018 as credited.
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

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Printing: Fotoprint 250-382-8218

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

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Deadline for next issue: December 1, 2019

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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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3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

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Cover Image: Rough Keyhole Limpet, side view of head extended and eating. (Coonstripe Shrimp atop it). Photo: Tina Kelly.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I think I say the same thing every year at this time...the past year has flown by, full of all kinds of interesting things. As you read this, we are likely preparing for Victoria’s version of winter (getting out an extra fleece/waterproof coat?), putting gardens to bed, and possibly planning a winter “get away”. Not so fast...

Lots happening here in the next couple of months, not the least of which is the annual Christmas Bird Count, once again with the added fun of the CBC4Kids (see page 9). Evening presentations and amazing field trips give lots of options to enjoy nature (vicariously at a presentation or in person outside). Remember, no such thing as bad weather...just bad equipment (time to upgrade)?

FYI. Rocky Point Bird Observatory has recently published the first five brochures in the ABC (About Bird Conservation) series. These cover a range of subjects from bird-friendly homes and gardens to how pets affect birds. Email rpbo@rpbo.org on how to receive copies.

On a light note...A while ago, I came across an article about Bird Idioms*. What is an idiom (in case you’re not sure)? An idiom is an expression that describes a situation in a creative or colorful way, rather than with literal, dryly factual descriptions. Idioms are often catchy phrases, easily remembered and commonly understood. Birds are part of every language, and many bird idioms are recognized by birders and non-birders alike. The author of the article says “Learning about the birds behind the idioms can help birders know more about not only the birds, but about how all birds are part of cultural expression and common languages”. The article gives the Top 20 Bird Idioms... here’s a taste. Don’t be surprised if you see others appearing in future issues...

1. Like a Duck to Water

Meaning: Natural and easy, not needing instruction

The Birds: Precocious ducks and geese can swim within hours of hatching without extensive instruction or parental guidance. These birds naturally know how to swim with ease.

2. Free as a Bird

Meaning: Easy freedom or escape without entanglements

The Birds: Because birds can fly, they are often symbols of freedom with their ability to quickly and easily escape from troubles, dangers, or complications.

3. An Albatross Around the Neck

Meaning: A heavy burden or difficult obstacle

The Birds: Albatrosses are large, formidable birds, can be difficult to identify, and are often nemesis birds for many birders.

Have a good winter and happy holidays.

Gail Harcombe

*Bird Idioms Explained. Clever Phrases About Wild Birds.
By Melissa Mayntz
<https://www.thespruce.com/bird-idioms-explained-386739>

A Message from Your Board

Another year's HawkWatch and VNHS BBQ Social are in the can—beautiful weather, good wildlife sightings, and pleasant socializing made the event a great success. Bill Dancer once again was the champion of the Society's display at the event, and Jim Cuthbert gave him a hand at the table and for take down. Their consensus was that people coming by came specifically for the Hawk Watch event, indicating that it was well-promoted, which is great to hear. Turkey Vultures were most numerous pretty early in the day, but the late afternoon saw Vaux's and Black swifts overhead. No migrating Green Darners this year- darn it!

Fifty-four members RSVP'd for the BBQ, and VNHSers were joined by a small contingent of Victoria NatureKids. Marilyn and Phil Lambert handled everything: from the RSVPs, purchasing all the food and supplies—including another magnificent cake!—and cooking the dogs, so next time you see either of them make sure to thank them. Cheryl and Bob Mackie and Darren Copley helped with the set up

at the site and Claudia Copley turned the ever-more popular veggie dogs until they looked ready.

Still on the topic of volunteers helping with Society functions—we now have a new volunteer, Kim Capson, entering our monthly talk information into several on-line calendars: *Times-Colonist*, *Monday Magazine*, *Saanich News*, Creatively United for the Planet, and *Harbour Living*. Phil Lambert still updates the VNHS website calendar and University of Victoria website calendar. Jim Cuthbert and others in the past have staffed a VNHS table at the monthly Swan Lake Special Event Sundays—most recently “Deer Day”, including a Great Horned Owl sighting next to Nature House! All of this publicity helps get the word out about us and our evening lectures and field trips, and may even prompt some participants to take out a membership, so thanks are due for those efforts as well.

In other news: the City of Victoria Participatory Budget funding came through for the Youth Pollinator Squad Project: \$18,000. This application was submitted by Lora Morandin of Pollinator Partnership Canada, in collaboration with the VNHS. We are contributing \$1500 to it, and it is hoped that members of the Society will provide expertise to the youth as part of their training, especially with a focus on butterflies. Lora will be our November Natural History Night speaker, so please come out and learn more about this new initiative, as well as pollinators in general. Check out the calendar page 21 for more details.

Other funding to which the Society has committed is \$1500 to Alison Moran to publish on the impacts of pesticides using data gathered through her research and through her coordination of the BC Hummingbird Project. We chose to specifically cover the publication costs of the peer-reviewed manuscript because the results of this research, made available through an open access journal, are a good fit with our education mandate. Alison has written articles for the Society's magazine and presented at Birders' Night in the past, and we hope she will continue to do so.

One last update about the current configuration of your board of directors: we have lost Stephanie Weinstein temporarily—she has gone to Portugal until the spring. Her connections to the nature interpretation community and NatureKids Victoria will be missed at the board meetings, as well as her thoughtful input when decisions are being made. Stephanie has also hosted Natural History Nights very capably for quite a while now, so she will be missed there as well. Board members Stephen Ruttan and Rick Searle have agreed to job-share the role of evening host in her absence. No comment about it taking two men to do the job of one woman...!



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VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations for 2020

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways: writing articles for the Naturalist, leading field trips, or serving on the board or committees. Some go out of their way to ensure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities by visiting shut-ins or driving others to Society functions. The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways, for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honorary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2020. All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
1994 Kaye Suttill
1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
1996 Gordon Devey
1997 Michael Carson
1998 No recipients
1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
2001 Tom Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
2002 Norm Mogensen
2003 Bob Chappell
2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska
2005 Rick Schortinghuis

2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
2007 No recipients
2008 Ann Nightingale
2009 No recipients
2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn
2011 Claudia and Darren Copley
2012 Bill Dancer
2013 No recipients
2014 John Henigman, Jeremy Tatum
2015 Hans Roemer
2016 No recipients
2017 No recipients
2018 No recipients
2019 Marie O'Shaughnessy

VNHS Honorary Life Members

Mr. David Anderson, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mr. Tony Embleton,
Mr. Bruce Whittington, Mr. Darren Copley, Mrs. Claudia Copley.



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Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Swallows

By Val George

Photos by author



Tree Swallow
(*Tachycineta bicolor*).



Purple Martin
(*Progne subis*).



Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*).

Swallows are classified in the family Hirundinidae. Our local species are some of our most common birds. They're also some of the most visible due to their spending most of their time in the air or perched on wires or fences and other exposed sites where they can easily be seen.

There are about 90 species of swallows in the world. They have a worldwide distribution, breeding on all continents except Antarctica. The largest diversity of species is in the African continent, which is where the family probably first evolved.

Most swallows in the temperate regions of the world are migratory. All seven species on the Victoria area checklist migrate to Central or South America for the winter.

Swallows feed mostly on the wing, scooping up insects with their wide gapes; their flying ability to accomplish this feeding behaviour is assisted by their streamlined bodies and long, narrow wings. This feeding behaviour classifies them as aerial insectivores, along with such other species as swifts and nighthawks. Insects form the major part of their diets, though some species also occasionally eat fruit and other plant materials.

Swallows as a family show some of the most diverse nesting behaviours of any family of birds. This is well illustrated by our local species. Northern Rough-winged Swallows (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) are usually solitary nesters, building their nests in burrows in gravel, clay or sand banks, or sometimes in natural cavities like holes in walls. Bank Swallows (*Riparia riparia*) are also burrow nesters but do so in colonies. Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) build nests of mud held together with grasses which they place on beams in buildings or under rocky overhangs on cliffs or plastered against a wall—this species nests singly or in small colonies. Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

also build mud nests that are plastered against the wall of a building or on a cliff. Cliff Swallows are highly colonial with colonies sometimes numbering many hundreds. Our other three species, the Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*), Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*), and Purple Martin (*Progne subis*), use crevices and holes in trees made by other birds such as woodpeckers; increasingly they're using nest boxes provided by us.

The clutch size for our local swallow species is normally four to six. Incubation takes about two weeks and is mainly done by the females, though the males may make some contribution. Regardless of which bird does the incubation, both female and male feed the young.

The populations of aerial insectivores, including swallows, have shown marked declines in Canada in the past forty or fifty years. In some cases these declines have been catastrophic. For example, Bank Swallow numbers are down about 90% in this period, and Barn Swallows are down to less than half their previous populations. The reasons for the declines are not fully understood, but some culprits are probably decreases in insect populations from use of pesticides, habitat loss, and climate change affecting seasonal availability of insects.

Despite all this gloomy news, we can conclude this article with a good news story. Purple Martin populations in our area have increased dramatically in recent years. Forty years ago, the breeding population on Vancouver Island was down to a handful of pairs. Now—due mostly to volunteer effort—nest boxes have been set up in many places along the east coast of the Island. This has led to a massive increase in the numbers of these swallows so that we presently have well over a thousand breeding pairs.

Salish Sea Creatures: Rough Keyhole Limpet

By Tina Kelly

Photos by author

An underwater look at a Rough Keyhole Limpet (*Diadora aspera*) never ceases to entertain me. A keen beachcomber may think limpets hunkered down, clinging to rocks are nothing to write home about but submerged in water the Rough Keyhole Limpet—with its protruding head and tentacles—looks somewhat like a cartoon character and always makes me smile.

Rough Keyhole Limpet accurately describes the appearance of this limpet—the shell has a rough lattice-like exterior with a small distinct hole at the shell's apex. Water is brought in under the shell, moved over the gills (where oxygen is extracted) and

then excreted through this hole. The hole also functions to remove the animal's waste. At times, this hole is the only visible portion of the limpet's body; the shell can become overgrown with other organisms such as bryozoans.

Speaking of bryozoans, this omnivore's favourite foods include bryozoans, sponges, and algae. In a limpet's mouth there is a tongue lined with very sharp teeth; this tongue or radula is used for rasping its food.

Look for Rough Keyhole Limpets under rocks at low tide, or maybe if you spot one while snorkeling or scuba-diving you'll find yourself smiling like me.



Side view of Rough Keyhole Limpet showing foot and lattice-like pattern of shell.



Rough Keyhole Limpet head, tentacles, and "keyhole".



View of Rough Keyhole Limpet mouth, foot, and organisms growing on shell.

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 20 members since the last issue. The following have agreed to have their name published in this Welcome section.

Christopher R J Kane
VICTORIA
Ecology, weather, botany and ornithology

Gerald McKeating
PENDER ISLAND
Nature in general but primary interest is birds

Kathleen Maxwell
VICTORIA
Birds

Carolyn Redl and Hans Boerger
VICTORIA
Birds and all natural history

Elizabeth Lovis
VICTORIA
Birds, flowers, etc.

Lorraine Scollan
VICTORIA
All types of field trips for birders, botanists and marine enthusiasts

David Simpson and Jeanne Gilbert
VICTORIA
Ornithology, astronomy, mammals

Elise Lemoine
VICTORIA
Everything nature!

A Salamander's Role in Mosquito Control

By Bill Merilees and William Wilhelm-Merilees

Photos by author



Photo 1:
Rainwater catchment pool.

was inadvertently left exposed for about a week. On examination after this period, it was 'jumping' with mosquito larvae (Photo 3). On 13 July 2019, with a good supply of both mosquito and salamander larvae available, I hatched an experiment. Assisted by my five-year-old grandson, William, we would test the question that long-toed Salamander larvae were indeed preying and controlling the mosquito larvae population. I supplied the mosquito larvae and he would catch the salamanders (each about 55 mm in length).

Into each of two, one gallon glass pickle jars, I placed 60 mosquito larvae: (20 @ 7mm; 20 @ 5mm; and 20 @ 3mm in length). At 10:00 p.m., once it was totally dark, one

Our home in Nanaimo is in the Departure Bay area where our large lot (33 x 137 m) faces due south. Our home is on the flat and our 'wildlife garden' then rises sharply up through a moderately steep wooded gully to a rocky ridge. With the onset of autumn rains, a small, ephemeral, underground stream can be heard flowing through the accumulated talus. To access this natural water supply, a cement wall (dam) was constructed directing water over a spill-way, into an artificial concrete pool about the size of a dining room table (Photo 1). A fear existed that this water source might become a mosquito infestation.

In early spring, after the pool had been filled with water for about six months, surprise, surprise, Long-toed Salamander adults (Photo 2) appeared and began laying their eggs. Where they had come from I have no idea, as there are no other permanent water sources in close proximity. Mosquitoes we have, a variety of species according to Belton (1983). As spring passed into summer the fear of a mosquito problem did not materialize. The question then became, "Why"? Were the salamanders responsible for keeping the mosquito larvae 'in check'?

This past spring, a plastic wash basin half-filled with water

salamander (Photo 4) was placed in the first pickle jar where it remained for 6 hours (under total darkness) until 4:00 a.m. The second pickle jar had its salamander added at 9:00 a.m., where it also remained for 6 hours, but under full sunlight. Both pickle jars were allowed to float in the pond where the salamanders had been caught. Upon completion of this experiment the salamanders were released back into their pond, while the surviving and surplus mosquito larvae were relegated to the compost.



Photo 2: Adult long-toed Salamander.



Photo 3: Mosquito larvae: largest 7mm; smallest 3mm.



Photo 4: Long-toed Salamander larvae 55 mm. Note: Four toes front feet—five toes back feet!

Result of this Experiment

Night Time	7 mm. Larvae	5 mm larvae	3 mm larva
No. Larvae placed	20	20	20
No larvae survived	0	1	3
Day Time			
No. Larvae placed	20	20	20
No. Larvae survived	6	5	8

Conclusions

Long-toed Salamander larvae feed during both night and day but are more successful at night. During daylight hours, mosquito larvae appear better able to elude salamanders, probably by using their vision.

Discussion

On the internet it was easy to find a number of articles relating to larval salamanders as effective predators of mosquito larvae—Watter et al. 2018, Brodman and Dorton 2006—to cite just two. Watter’s study determined that larval Eastern Spotted Salamanders consumed on average, 238 mosquito larvae in a 24 hour period and Brodman’s study reported the consumption of 144 larvae per day by Tiger Salamander larvae.

In our back yard pool, it appears that ‘our’ small population of Long-toed Salamander larvae is capable of almost completely controlling the mosquito larvae population, with one exception. The largest mosquito species, and among the earliest to make their appearance in spring, is believed to be *Culiseta incidens* (Rob Cannings, pers. com.). Its larvae gets to be about a full centimetre in length before pupation. These larvae are possibly too large for the younger salamander larvae to consume.

As stated by the authors in the studies cited below, larval

salamanders are well known for their importance and ability to consume large number of mosquito larvae. They are true allies in the ‘war’ to control mosquitoes and a welcome addition to natural backyard pools for this purpose. Goldfish and Koi are likely equally adept at keeping mosquito larvae under control.

However, if we flip the coin on this question; might we not also just have a few more salamanders because of the presence of mosquito larvae?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Rob Cannings for his assistance, and William for his excitement and enthusiastic participation in this experiment.

Selected references

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- Watters, A.M., F.E. Rowland and R.D. Selitsch. 2018. Larval Salamanders are as effective at short-term mosquito predation as mosquitofish. *Can. J. Zool.* 96(10):1165-1169.

2019 Christmas Bird Count—Onward and Upward!

Last year's Christmas Bird count kept us at the top of the Canadian heap in terms of number of species at 144. New records were set for Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Geese, Gadwall, Turkey Vulture, Common Raven, Rusty Blackbird and Swamp Sparrow. With the recent report of the decline of so many species, it's a bit of a mystery how every CBC keeps reaching new records for several species, but I think I know at least part of the reason.

At the time of writing, Audubon had not yet published last year's participation results, so I don't know where we ranked for participation, but I know it will be near the top of the charts for all of North America. I see the increase in interest in the CBC as one of our great successes. Here's a chart that shows our trend for both individual participation and "party hours", which I'll explain below.



Mostly Mallards. Photo: Ann Nightingale.

Count	Date	Coordinators
Victoria	Sat, Dec 14, 2019	Ann Nightingale -250-514-6450; victoriacbc@naturevictoria.ca
CBC4Kids	Sat, Dec 14, 2019	Andrea Neumann, 778-678-5691, cbc4kids@christmasbirdcount.ca
South Salt Spring Island/ Sidney; North Salt Spring Island/ Galiano; Pender Island	Sun, Dec 15, 2019	Daniel Donnecke 250 744-5615; sidneycbc@naturevictoria.ca (South Salt Spring/Sidney); Tim Marchant timspsm@gmail.com (North Salt Spring); Mike Hoebel mhoebel@telus.net (Galiano Island); Gerald McKeating geraldmckeating@shaw.caa (Pender)
Sooke	Sat, Dec 28, 2019	Charlene Lloyd and Travis Muir sookecbc@naturevictoria.ca
Duncan	Wed, Jan 1, 2020	Derrick Marven 250-748-8504; marven@shaw.ca

We have seen a fantastic growth trend in our participation since the start of the Victoria count circle. I've put together a chart of our efforts since 1970. The dashed participant line is based on head count. If you showed up, you counted as one. The solid black line represents our "party hours". This means the number of hours that were spent out in the field by our various counting groups. Whether someone was on their own or in a group of 20, one hour of counting would equal one party (or group/team) hour. The dips in the chart for party hours, even though the number of participants is increasing, can be caused by new counters joining experienced birders to learn the ropes, bad weather, or an actual drop in participation, but as you can see, overall we are heading up on both counts! This is wonderful, as it shows increasing interest both in the fun side of birding and in the serious side of conservation and citizen science.

As you can see from the list at the beginning of this article, there are several other counts pretty close to home. They all need volunteers, too, and the Duncan count has spots open for new leaders. If you love counting birds, consider adding another count (or two) to your annual tradition!

CBC4Kids

We will again be partnering with Rocky Point Bird Observatory for a special Christmas Bird Count for Kids in conjunction with our regular count day. This family-focused event is meant to encourage young birders to become engaged with citizen science, and we are delighted to include their observations in our official CBC results. The event will be held on Saturday, December 14, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm at Beckwith Park in Saanich.

We'll be looking for a few adults to help out in the afternoon. If you are interested, please contact RPBO's Lead Educator, Andrea Neumann, at cbc4kids@rpbo.org.

Feederwatchers needed

Special thanks to Laura Gretzinger who has taken on the responsibilities for the feederwatch component of the count. More on that closer to the count! You don't even have to leave the comfort of your own home. If you'd like to participate in a feederwatch on the count day, a feederwatch list (with photos) and report form are posted at <http://christmasbirdcount.ca>.



Golden-crowned Kinglet often seen in winter.
Photo: Kim Beardmore.

If you would prefer to wander beyond the confines of your yard to count the birds, please join a count team so that we don't double count! It's possible to assign a small patch to an individual if it's not being counted by the group.

Everyone is welcome!

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is on **Saturday, December 14** this year.

You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Most teams spend all of the daylight hours out in the field, but there is room for people who can only spend part of the day too. Come out for as long as you can! There are a few "keeners" who go out looking and listening for owls in

the pre-dawn hours. There may be boats on the water again this year (weather permitting), so if that is your particular specialty, please let me know.

If you are curious, interested, would like to see lists and pictures of the region's winter birds, or just need more information, please check out our local CBC website (christmasbirdcount.ca) and the official Christmas Bird Count site (birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count)

If you have a preference to count in a specific area, you may contact the team leader for the area directly.

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

Post-count gathering—Scout House

At the end of the day, as many people as can, will attend our post-count gathering to total up the events of the day. We'll be returning to the Scout House at 505 Marigold Rd.

We'll be meeting up at around 5 pm on count day to warm up, share stories and find out how the day went. You are welcome to join us, even if you don't come out on the count itself. If you can bring a plate of goodies, so much the better! We'll be all done by 7:30 for those who want to get home relatively early after a long day in the field.

If you've counted with us recently, and we have an email address for you, you will get some instructions soon. Otherwise, if you'd like to be a bird counter this year, please contact the leader for the zone you'd like or register at christmasbirdcount.ca. The updated leader list and meeting times and places will be posted on the website. Feel free to invite a friend!

	Area Name	Leader	Phone	Email
1	Butchart Gardens – N. Highlands	Andrew Harcombe	250-652-3508	cbc1@naturevictoria.ca
2	Central Highlands	Warren Lee	250-478-7317	cbc2@naturevictoria.ca
3	Goldstream – Finlayson Arm	Robin Robinson	250-391-5995	cbc3@naturevictoria.ca
4	Thetis Lake – Hastings Flat	Rhys Harrison	250-658-4152	cbc4@naturevictoria.ca
5	Langford Lake	Jennifer Armstrong	250-652-3358	cbc5@naturevictoria.ca
6	Albert Head – Triangle Mountain	TBA	250-514-6450	cbc6@naturevictoria.ca
7	Esquimalt Lagoon – Mill Hill	Rick Schortinghuis	250-885-2454	cbc7@naturevictoria.ca
8	Esquimalt Harbour	Don Kramer	250-995-9369	cbc8@naturevictoria.ca
9	Portage Inlet – The Gorge	John King/Patti McDonald	250-721-3814	cbc9@naturevictoria.ca
10	Victoria Harbour	John and Donna de Haan	778-265-9817	cbc10@naturevictoria.ca
11	Beacon Hill Park	Mary Robichaud	250-507-8760	cbc11@naturevictoria.ca
12	Oak Bay	Geoffrey Newell	250-598-0158	cbc12@naturevictoria.ca
13	University – Cadboro Bay	TBA	250-514-6450	cbc13@naturevictoria.ca
14	Ten Mile Point – Arbutus Rd	Agnes Lynn	250-721-0634	cbc14@naturevictoria.ca
15	Gordon Head – Mt. Douglas	Margie Shepherd	250-477-5280	cbc15@naturevictoria.ca
16	Swan Lake – Cedar Hill	Ann Scarfe	250-477-1986	cbc16@naturevictoria.ca
17	Blenkinsop Lake – Panama Flats	Carl Hughes	778-679-9224	cbc17@naturevictoria.ca
18	Elk Lake – Cordova Bay	Mike McGrenere	250-658-8624	cbc18@naturevictoria.ca
19	Prospect Lake – Quick's Bottom	Dave Fraser	250-479-0016	cbc19@naturevictoria.ca
20	Martindale – Bear Hill	Ian Cruickshank	250-382-1652	cbc20@naturevictoria.ca
21	Zero Rock (ocean)	TBA	250-514-6450	cbc21@naturevictoria.ca
22	Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	250-477-5922	cbc22@naturevictoria.ca
23	Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ross Dawson	250-3801691	cbc23@naturevictoria.ca

Koksilah Trees Worth Saving

By Brenda Sopow

Photos by Dave Lynn



In 1989, two loggers were working along a stretch of the Koksilah River valley when they came upon a grove of magnificent giants in the old growth forest. Recognizing the value and beauty of what they had discovered, they put down their chainsaws and refused to cut any further. And so the story begins with the effort to preserve this Southern Vancouver Island treasure.

We were a group of seven from the VNHS heading up-island to the north of Shawnigan Lake to meet Warrick Whitehead at the trail head. He joined the effort to save this forest in 2006. His passion for and knowledge of the woods was very impressive. There are some large mounds of earth placed at the beginning of the trail to discourage motorcycles and other vehicles that could do damage. After that, the trail follows the path of an old logging road and then goes on to a single track (maintained by Warrick and others) down into the valley. This is all privately-owned land.

Along the way, we walked through what looked like a very

healthy forest with lots of young saplings of pine, fir, hemlock and maple. There was an abundance of Vanilla Leaf, some Prince's Pine and all kinds of native berries. We also saw a number of fungi, including Russula, Calocera and Lichen mushrooms, but not as many as we might have expected considering the recent rains. Evidence of Downy Woodpecker and Sapsucker were on many of the trees. Our only downpour was in the deep woods, so we did not care that much and otherwise we enjoyed lovely weather.

As we descended into the valley, we began to see the tops of the big trees, some of which are said to be taller than almost any building in Vancouver! Primarily they are Douglas-fir, Western Red Cedar, Western Hemlock and Grand Fir. The understory is quite open, so we were able to see the trees in their entirety, from the base to the upper canopy, and get a close look at the amazing bark of the Douglas-fir, being careful to stay on the trail and away from the base and roots of the trees. Standing in this peaceful grove among these

ancient giants was an awesome experience for all of us. Lunch was enjoyed by the river in the sunshine. There were trees that towered over us across the river as well, but sadly we could see a very large clearcut behind them.

The Ancient Forest is about 75 hectares but the area most important to protect is about 300 hectares.

This would include the River Recreation Area that would connect to the existing parts of the Koksilah River Provincial Park. It is important to establish buffers and riparian zones, especially with climate change. Without these buffers, the big trees will not be preserved in perpetuity. Warrick continues to bring interested parties from all over the world to expose the value of this forest. It is very much hoped that the provincial government will see its way to setting this area aside for future generations.



Cowichan Bring Back the Bluebirds Project— 2019 Summary Report

Project Lead Change: 2019 marks the ninth field season that the Cowichan Bring Back the Bluebird Project has operated within the Cowichan Valley. The project was initiated by the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT), transferred to the Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society (CVNS) in 2017, and this September, has been transferred to the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF). BCCF has an excellent reputation for supporting conservation projects.

Translocations Planned for 2020: Western Bluebirds (WEBL) (*Sialia Mexicana*) were translocated to Vancouver Island for the first four years of the project and then monitored to evaluate the need for more translocations. This international project is supported and advised by Gary Slater, Ph.D., of the Ecostudies Institute of Olympia, Washington. Gary is an experienced ornithologist and reintroduction specialist focussed on conserving at-risk songbird populations. He also supervises the Bring Back the Bluebirds Project overseen by San Juan Preservation Trust. It has been determined that more translocations need to be carried out and it is hoped that funds can be raised for this in 2020.

Population Summary: Nine individual, adult WEBLs were identified throughout the Cowichan Valley during the breeding season of 2019. This small population (three females and six males) were all born in the Cowichan Valley in nestboxes supplied by this project. Among these nine adults in the Cowichan Valley, six nests were attempted and four were successful at producing fledglings (eight successful nests in 2018). By the end of August, a total of 14 WEBL fledged successfully from their respective nestbox. While the number of fledglings produced was low (*one third* of 2018's count), this may be attributed to one random nest failure and a nesting female being preyed upon during her second clutch.

In Victoria, a first-year female fledgling was observed on Mount Tolmie Park. This bird was born only two months prior to this sighting on the San Juan Islands as part of their bluebird recovery project. This sighting is the first confirmed movement of a bluebird between these two populations within the same season! Sightings in the greater Victoria are particularly exciting as they demonstrate connectivity between the Cowichan Valley and San Juan Island populations. Such connectivity may play a critical role in the long-term viability of WEBL around the Salish Sea. Visit <https://sjpt.org/> to learn more about their bluebird recovery efforts.

Nestbox Stewardship and Citizen Science: Upon taking ownership of the bluebird project in 2017, the CVNS developed a keen and skilled community of volunteers to monitor



Nesting bluebird. Photo: CVNS.

nestboxes. Volunteers attend a monitoring workshop early each spring and have regular access to project personnel for advice. Monitoring nestboxes is a huge component to this project as nearly 250 nestboxes are dispersed among 67 properties throughout the Cowichan Valley. Over the 2019 breeding season, volunteers collected nearly 1000 data points on the occupancy and status of these nestboxes. This dataset also contains information on the breeding status of many native passerines, such as the House Wren, Tree Swallow, Violet-green Swallow, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and (of course) Western Bluebirds. This massive data collection was submitted to the *Project NestWatch* database. While monitoring nestboxes, nearly 50 House Sparrow (HOSP) (*Passer domesticus*) nests were removed in an effort to mitigate the growing population of unwelcome, invasive HOSPs in the Cowichan Valley. Volunteers were fantastic at maintaining a strong, supportive relationship with the many private landowners who host our nestboxes.

Protecting Bluebirds: With a small population of WEBLs, even small, random predation events can be extremely detrimental to the recovery of this species. As a result, project personnel and volunteers implement several *predator-guarding* techniques to deter a variety of carnivores from accessing our nestboxes. For instance, 55 nestboxes were equipped

with a stucco-wire mesh guard on the roof functions to deter raptors (particularly owls) from harming nestlings. This stucco-wire guarding technique was provided by Bruce Cousens and Charlene Lee of the Western Purple Martin Recovery Foundation who have had success with this method at deterring raptors from killing juvenile Purple Martins. Additionally, 23 boxes were equipped with a sealed PVC sleeve that prevents mammalian predators (raccoons, cats, squirrels, etc.) from climbing up and accessing the nestbox. These efforts are critical in ensuring that the nestboxes provide a safe nesting habitat that will not increase the likelihood of predation. To better understand predation threats to bluebirds, several nestboxes were monitored with a trail camera over the summer. Trail camera footage revealed domestic cats roaming in front of nestboxes at night on many occasions. Trail cameras were also used to assess the efficiency of the mealworm feeding trays and revealed, on one occasion, that European Starlings were consuming most mealworms. This allowed project staff to modify the feeding tray and effectively exclude starlings. House Sparrows continue to pose a significant threat to nesting bluebirds and thus we encourage monitors to remove HOSP nests during construction. When bluebirds are nesting, nestboxes are equipped with a *Sparrow-spooker* that flutters on the top of the nestbox and deters HOSPs from accessing the box and harassing the bluebirds. Many of these techniques have been inspired by groups such as the North American Bluebird Society and Bet Zimmerman's website www.Sialis.org, and have been refined by project staff over the years. Supplemental mealworms were provided by a group of highly dedicated volunteers to nesting bluebird pairs daily, for up to five weeks per nest.

Greater Victoria Activities: We have been in touch with HAT re nestboxes in the Metchosin area and hope to work further on this in the future. Julia Daly continued to work part-time with CVNS as a coordinator for the Greater Victoria bluebird recovery efforts, assisted by several Victoria Natural History Society members, talking with landowners about establishing bluebird trails in the Victoria area. Over 20 nestboxes were monitored throughout the breeding season in Victoria, and more than eight new boxes were installed. Outreach was conducted with several landowners regarding establishing nestbox trails, and nestboxes at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory were checked for signs of bluebird nests. Sadly, Julia has had to step down. Over the winter we hope to plan more engagement in the Greater Victoria and surrounding area. Please let us know if you are interested in being involved.

Outreach and Education: As over 95% of Garry oak ecosystems have been lost completely or significantly degraded, it is imperative that the remaining habitats are appreciated, studied and protected. The Western Bluebird is a very charismatic species that, through conservation, draws attention to the many rare and often endemic plants, insects and other biota that thrive among Garry oak ecosystems. By inspiring the public to become involved in WEBL conservation, we hope to encourage the restoration and preservation of the remaining



Bluebird nestlings. Photo: CVNS.

Garry oak habitat the Cowichan Valley is so fortunate to have. To do this, project staff and volunteers hosted (or presented at) 11 free, publicly accessible events in 2019 that include Cowichan River Days, Beer and Burger Fundraiser at the Cowichan Bay Pub, the In Bloom Festival at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve (CGOP), a Garry Oak Restoration Workshop, monthly Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable Presentations, the Garry Oak Ecosystem Symposium in Victoria, the BC Naturalists' AGM and field trip, our annual year-end appreciation event, and CGOP tours for a local elementary school and a restoration class from Trinity Western University. A talk was provided to UVIC Adult Extension Field Programme at Yellowpoint Lodge. Discussions and presentations at these events focussed on avian conservation, natural history and ecology of the imperilled Garry oak ecosystem. Through these events the bluebird project directly interacted with over 600 members of the project, all of whom met the project with support and interest. The Pacific Raptor Centre is a keen supporter of the project and supplies us with a display area, where hundreds of pamphlets are taken during the year and several hundred dollars of donations are raised from the donation pot.

Sharing Information: Project staff wrote weekly blog posts during the field season that discussed project updates and interesting information. These updates were distributed through our email list (130 individuals), Facebook (330 followers) and website (120 visitors per month). Staff and volunteers attended monthly Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable Meetings to share project updates to local stewards and concerned citizens. Project personnel published two articles outlining recent project happenings that were featured in the Victoria Naturalist Newsletter and the CVNS's Newsletter. Over the summer of 2019, the bluebird project developed strong connections with local wildlife biologist Sally Leigh-Spencer, Gillian Radcliffe of the Pacific Raptors Centre and members of the western Purple Martin Recovery Foundation and the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Foundation. These groups generously

donated a significant amount of time in project advisement and logistical support through meetings with the CVNS board and steering committee.

Community Building: Many members of the CVNS contributed directly to the annual Beer and Burger Fundraising event, which was a successful and fun evening attended by nearly 140 individuals who raised over \$4500 for the project. This fundraiser was graciously supported by donations from over 20 local businesses and 30 volunteers. In addition, trail monitors and mealworm feeders attended several meetings over the season to provide project feedback, advice and ask questions. These meetings were always constructive and encouraged all volunteers to have input in project happenings. Our annual end-of-season appreciation event was held at a nestbox host's property who assisted us by having a barbecue potluck event. The appreciation event was attended by more than 20 individuals, all of whom received a gift, dinner and dessert. This event focussed on appreciating our phenomenal network of volunteers, who were individually highlighted for their efforts throughout the season.

A very special thank-you to our volunteers and supporters:

In 2019, our volunteer community contributed over 2600 volunteer hours to the success of the Cowichan Valley's Western Bluebirds. Sixty-seven landowners continue to promote the project by hosting nestboxes on their property. A huge thank-you to the project advisor, Genevieve Singleton, for all her volunteer time, and to our paid staff—project manager Hannah Hall and Braden Judson, technician, for their hard work. Thanks to our diligent steering committee: Cheri Beaulieu, Treasurer; Phil Cheffins, Human Relations; Barry Hetschko, Field Operations; CVNS co-presidents Carol Milo and Gail Mitchell. Thank you to our entomologist, Ted Leischner, for his many hours culturing high-quality mealworms for our bluebirds. We greatly appreciate our many trail monitors, mealworm feeders and other field-workers: Carol Blackburn, Carol Milo, Barry Hetschko, Hazel Nielsen, Angela

Atkins, Bob and Helen Nation, Gill Radcliffe, Genevieve Singleton, Deb Cleal, Caroline Deary, Jim and Lyn Wisnia, Willie Harvey, Theresa Middlemiss, Jennifer Goodbrand, Dave Brummit, Barry and Joy Beck, and Ron and Moira Elder. Thank you to both our past and present staff, including Ryan Hetschko, Hannah Hall, Braden Judson, Julia Daly and Jacquie Taylor. Thanks to Laurel Circle and Paul Ruszel for providing music at our events. Thanks to the VNHS volunteers who monitored their nestboxes and responded to the bluebird sighting in Victoria, including Ann Nightingale, Bryan Gates, Jody Wells and others.

Acknowledgements: We would like to extend sincere thanks to the following funders for their financial contributions that supported this project in 2019: TD Friends of the Environment Fund, Victoria Natural History Society, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Municipality of North Cowichan, Pacific Industrial Marine, BC Nature Federation and the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund. Many local supporters donate supplies, storage space and in-kind support including: Nature Conservancy of Canada, Polster Environmental Consulting, Ecostudies Institute, CopyCat Printing Ltd., Pacific Northwest Raptors, the Cowichan Land Trust, the North American Bluebird Society, the Cowichan Bay Pub, and Keating Heritage Farms. The Cowichan Valley Naturalists' recognizes the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and anglers, hunters, trappers and guides who contribute to the Trust, for making a significant financial contribution to support the Bring Back the Bluebirds Project. Without such support, this project would not have been possible.

For additional information visit www.cowichanbluebird.ca or contact us at cowichanbluebird@gmail.com. Follow us at facebook.com/CowValleyNaturalists and you can also donate to the project online. To learn about the history of the project, visit <http://www.goert.ca/activities/bluebirds/> and to learn about the work of Ecostudies Institute, visit <https://www.ecoinst.org>



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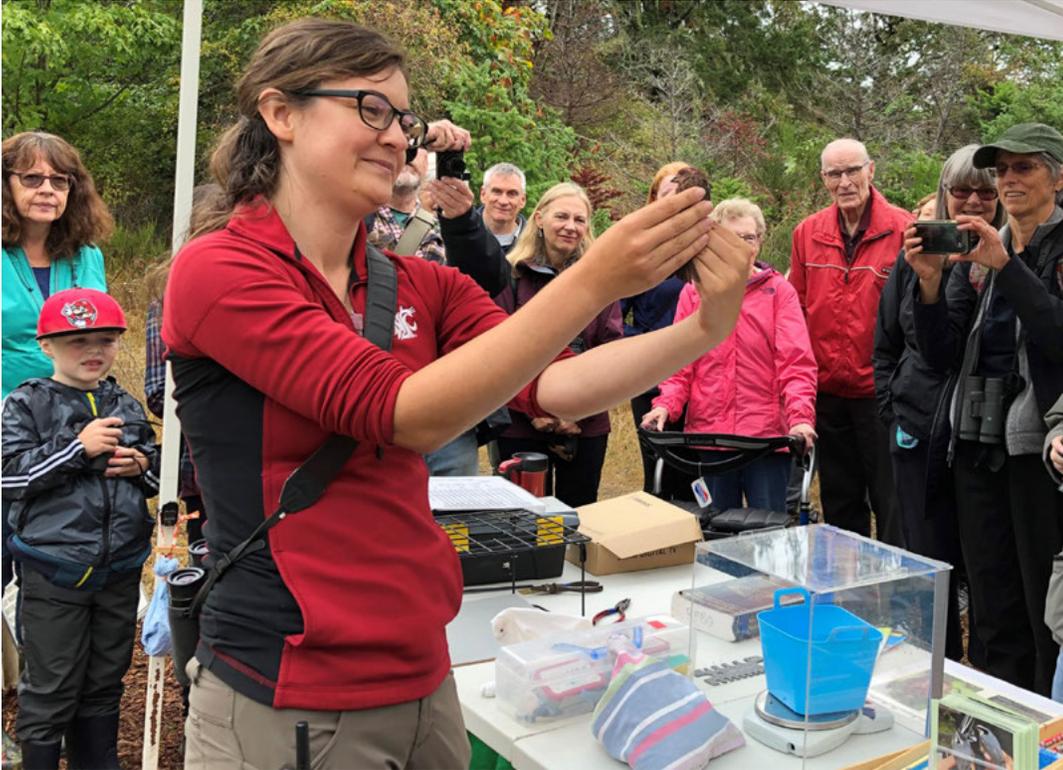
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Rocky Point Bird Observatory— A Year of Milestones!



Bander Siobhan Darlington welcomes visitors.

From its launch as a project of the Victoria Natural History Society in 1994, to becoming a registered society in 2000, joining the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network in 2001, and now being recognized as one of the most effective bird monitoring organizations in North America, RPBO has a lot to celebrate!

This year we celebrate our longevity, with thanks to hundreds of volunteers, financial supporters, friends and staff. During passerine (songbird) monitoring, we banded our 100,000th bird and in October, we banded our 10,000th Northern Saw-whet Owl. Data gathered through our targeted research is used to monitor bird population trends, investigate declines and recommend actions to protect the health of ecosystems on which we all depend. In addition to data collection and other research efforts, we produce a variety of publications, including peer-reviewed scientific papers. Given the alarming, large-scale decline in bird populations and the loss, fragmentation and degradation of native habitats, the need for rigorous bird monitoring programs is greater than ever, and we take great pride in leading this work on Vancouver Island.

To commemorate this year's achievements, our 25th Anniversary Celebration was held at Pedder Bay on Saturday, September 14th. Over 120 people joined guided bird walks, and a VIP reception took place at the lovely Glenrosa Farm Restaurant. Visitors learned about our education programs and were able to watch banding operations. Many thanks to our RPBO team who pulled together a fantastic event to educate our supporters about the work of RPBO.

RPBO is an increasingly important source of birding and bird conservation information. We are proud to announce the completion of an important project designed to help the public understand some of the issues facing birds and educate them on the simple steps everyone can take to protect birds. The first five in a series of brochures have been produced, covering a range of subjects from bird-friendly gardens to ethical consumerism. These "ABC – About Bird Conservation" brochures are available to the public at our banding stations, at any of our public education and outreach events or you can email rpbo@rpbo.org for information on how to receive copies.

RPBO hosted their first Livestream event on Thursday, October 3rd. Naturalist Connel Bradwill moderated a lively



Livestream event panel. *Photo: Zenon Kozak.*

series of presentations of examples of our research, public education and monitoring activities. Lead Educator Andrea Neumann reviewed some of the programs we offer and encouraged families to join us for upcoming community events such as the Christmas Bird Count for Kids. Dr. Alison Moran shared her recent work on the surprising diet of hummingbirds (through her analysis of baby hummingbird poop!) Ann Nightingale offered excellent tips on how to ready your yard for winter birds. A highlight of the presentation was a series of videos showing our banding practices, including the banding of an adorable Northern Saw-Whet Owl.

We would like to thank Stream of Consciousness and their sister company Sunset Labs for their generosity in making this opportunity possible. It is not too late to view this excellent presentation! The Livestream video is available for viewing at <https://streamofconsciousness.ca/event/2020-vision-rpbo/>

RPBO is happily busy planning the next 25 years of banding. A new strategic plan is being prepared to help us reach our long term goals. Plans include enhancing our banding station, growing our membership, and warmly welcoming more volunteers to help in many different areas. If you are interested in learning more, or becoming an important part of the next phase of RPBO, please contact us at rpbo@rpbo.com.



Northern Saw-whet Owl. *Photo: Glenn Bartley.*

The Best to Verse

By Al Grass

[Excerpts from article in The Victoria Naturalist Vo.32, No.1 September 1975. Contact the editor for the full article]

Once upon a time, it was quite proper to express thoughts and emotions in the form of poetry. This was especially true of nature writing, as reference to many of the nature-study books of half a century ago will prove. This passed out of fashion as we moved to a more scientific approach to nature writing. I thought it might be fun to look at the ways poets have described some of our plants and animals.

The common dandelion, is, to many, a hated plant. One has only to look at the vast sums of money spent every year on so-called weed killers. Joseph Wood Krutch has called the dandelion, “a gay little miracle”. He draws our attention to the words of Walt Whitman:

“Simple and fresh and fair from winters clothes emerging,
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever been,

Forth from its sunny nook of sheltered grass—innocent,
golden, calm as the dawn,

The spring’s first dandelion shows its trustful face.”

Spring is the time of bird song. Visit any marsh in the early morning and you will be amazed at the dawn chorus. The

poet Tabb gives us these words:

“Ere yet the earliest warbler wakes, of coming spring to tell,

From every marsh a chorus breaks, a choir invisible,
As if the blossoms underground, a breath of utterance had found.”

Remember the words of R.W. Emerson when next you see a bumblebee buzzing:

”Thou, in sunny solitudes,
Rover of the underwoods,
The green silence dost replace
With thy mellow breezy base.”

Cleaning cobwebs out of a basement or attic is not a pleasant job. Perhaps the words of Elizabeth Akers will make the task a little easier. In fact, after you read these lines you may want to leave the cobwebs where they hang:

“Here shy Arachne winds her endless thread,
And weaves her silken tapestry unseen,
Veiling the rough-hewn timbers overhead,
And looping, gossamer festoons between.”

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

BULLETIN BOARD

Birder's Night coffee-making volunteer needed!

Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) is looking for a volunteer to take over the Birder's Night coffee-making duty. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Marilyn Lambert (250-477-5922) for instructions and equipment. Thank you.

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

November 10 and December 8 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. These 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

CRD's Christmas Bird Count Training with Geoffrey Newell

Join Geoffrey Newell at Island View Beach on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019, 9:00–11:00 a.m. Please meet at the kiosk on the grass field. Bring a friend and binoculars. It is always good to learn or to review your birds on the water, if you are going to participate in the count. All levels of birders will find this training very rewarding. Please bring a friend and binoculars. Extra binoculars will be available.

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 <https://www.swanlake.bc.ca/programs/adult-programs-2/>

Know your bird sounds...not just their songs!

Prep for the Christmas Bird Counts by 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

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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 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, one block south of the foot of Bowker Ave on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) at 9:00 a.m. or at the foot of Bowker Ave at 9:30 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) on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. Novice and experienced VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society. For more details, contact Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454 or Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Pelagic Birding on the MV Coho

Mike McGrenere will lead this trip on the MV Coho on its usual sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. He has been doing this trip for many years now and he says this is the best opportunity to see bird species that are usually found further out to sea, including shearwaters, fulmars and phalaropes. The crossing takes 90 minutes each way. We

will be birding from the bow of the boat so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. sailing. We will return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket. There is some free street parking farther down Belleville St. past Oswego St. and also on Oswego St. Check in with Mike inside the terminal before buying your ticket. Return ferry fare is about \$50 CDN. **You will require a Passport or enhanced driver's license to go through US Customs.** Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, November 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Mushrooms at Metchosin Wilderness Park

This area has a diverse selection of mushrooms so it is always a great place to wander around at this time of year. A member of both South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (www.svims.ca) and VNHS, **Kem Luther** will lead us, assisting us in identifying what we see. Bring your favourite field guide and we will help you learn more about these mysterious fungi of the forest. Please note this is an observation trip, not intended for collecting. However, a few selected specimens will be chosen by the leader for closer examination. Meet at 1:00 p.m. There is a sign indicating the entrance to the park just past 940 Clapham Drive which is off Rocky Point Road. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Monday, November 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Fungi Observations in John Dean Park

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

Tuesday, November 12

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Pollinators and Partnerships in the CRD

In this talk, **Lora Morandin** gives an overview of pollinators, focusing on bees and their importance, who they are, misconceptions about pollinators, current status and trends, issues surrounding health, drivers of decline, gaps in our knowledge, and how to help. She will touch on some of Pollinator Partnership programs and partnerships in British Columbia and introduce the new City of Victoria, Participatory Budget funded Youth Pollinator Squad program, a Pollinator Partnership-led collaboration with Royal B.C. Museum staff and the Victoria Natural History Society. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone is welcome. Parking for the evening is now \$3.50.

Saturday, November 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Snow Geese at Reifel Bird Sanctuary

Come and see the annual Snow Goose spectacle at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. Every November, thousands of Snow Geese stop-over in this part of the Fraser River delta. There is normally time to visit Boundary Bay or another site as well.

Past trips have produced up to 70–80 species of birds for the day. Bring a lunch and drinks as we will not be stopping for refreshments. Dress warmly as it can be windy near the water. We go rain or shine. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We plan to return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes. First 8 people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement as number of cars is limited. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$70 for the day from Victoria plus \$5.00 entry fee to Reifel. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information or to confirm attendance.

Tuesday, November 19

BOTANY NIGHT

What are the mycoheterotrophs... and what are they doing?

Andy Mackinnon describes mycoheterotrophs—plants that lack chlorophyll and so can't manufacture their own sugars through photosynthesis—hence 'heterotrophs'. These plants are dependent on mycorrhizal fungal partners for at least part of their life cycles. Most plant guides erroneously describe mycoheterotrophs as saprobes, meaning that they derive their nutrition from decaying organic matter. The truth is much more interesting. This presentation will explore the nature and meaning of mycoheterotrophy (and mixotrophy), and illustrate concepts with local examples. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, November 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Esquimalt Lagoon Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at the bridge at Esquimalt Lagoon at 8:00 a.m. for a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip will cover the ocean birds along the lagoon and will go into the fields back behind the lagoon to provide a variety of birds. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Wednesday, November 27

BIRDERS' NIGHT

What We Can Learn from Land-based Seabird Observations

Rocky Point Bird Observatory may be synonymous with bird banding in the Victoria area, but there is another very important aspect to their monitoring. Daily observations are recorded at the banding stations, and since 2016, sea watches have been taking place at Beechey Head and other locations on southern Vancouver Island. **Daniel Donnecke** will present some of the findings from the sea watch observations, and give us some tips on turning those dark specks into identifiable species. We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Come early to socialize! Presentation begins after VNHS announcements and coffee. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

Monday, November 25

MARINE NIGHT

Recent Warm Anomalies in the Ocean: The Blob and Links to Climate Change

In late 2013 the Northeast Pacific Ocean gradually warmed relative to our historic records. By February 2014, a patch of over a thousand square kilometers and 100 metres deep was nearly three degrees Celsius warmer than usual. **Dr. Richard Dewey** of Ocean Networks Canada will review the causes and consequences of this event, and suggest possible links to climate shifts in the entire northern hemisphere, including the role of significant changes occurring in the Arctic. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone is welcome. Parking for the evening is now \$3.50.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Langford Lake Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at Langford Lanes parking lot on Langford Parkway at 8:30 a.m. for a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip will cover the area around Langford Lake. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. Ann Nightingale will be your leader. Contact Ann at (250) 514-6450 or motmot at shaw.ca if you need more information.

Tuesday, December 10

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

British Columbia's Coastal Wilderness in Photographs and Stories

For over a decade, VNHS member **Mikhail Belikov** has been exploring coastal British Columbia. More often than not he travels solo, disappearing into the wilds for up to two months and experiencing their wonders without interference from the usually impatient companions. In this talk, Mikhail will share photographs and stories from an upcoming book about of his adventures in British Columbia's coastal wilderness. For more

information about Mikhail Belikov and his book, please visit www.focusonwild.com We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone is welcome. Parking for the evening is now \$3.50.

Saturday, December 14

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—VICTORIA

See article page nine for details.

Saturday, December 14

CBC4KIDS

We will again be partnering with Rocky Point Bird Observatory for a special Christmas Bird Count for Kids in conjunction with our regular count day. This family-focused event is meant to encourage young birders to become engaged with citizen science, and we are delighted to include their observations in our official CBC results. The event will be held on Saturday, December 14, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at Beckwith Park in Saanich.

Sunday, Dec 15, 2019

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—SOUTH SALT SPRING ISLAND/SIDNEY; NORTH SALT SPRING ISLAND/GALIANO; PENDER ISLAND

See article page nine for details.

Tuesday, December 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Members Night: Botany Night Year-end Party

Join us for informal gathering to share pictures, stories, and snacks. Bring along photos you'd like to show off or photos you'd like identified. Treats are appreciated but not required. If you have something to present, please contact james.miskelly@gmail.com (250-544-0455). Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, Dec 28, 2019

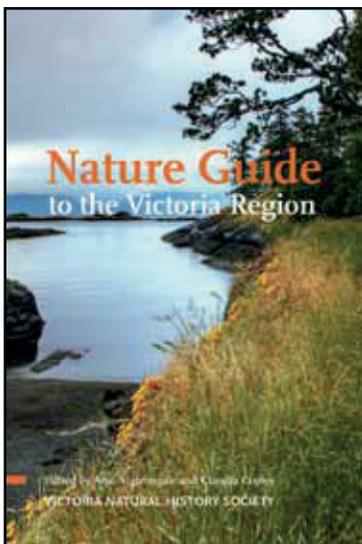
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—SOOKE

See article page nine for details.

Wednesday, Jan 1, 2020

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—DUNCAN

See article page nine for details.



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.

Available at Society evening presentations. Look for them in your local bookstores!

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NATURALIST**

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Agreement Number 40045722



White-crowned Sparrow in winter. *Photo: Kim Beardmore.*