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The Victoria NATURALIST

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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.,

7.5" (2 columns) wide 2250 x 1600 pixels

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Cover Photo: Chestnut-crowned Antpitta. Ecuador.
Photo: Edward Gelnicker

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Not sure how many of you realize it, but last year, VNHS turned 75! Formed in 1944, VNHS has provided an opportunity for those interested in the natural world to come together to share their ideas and experiences. I thought you might enjoy reading the Foreword that was published in the very first issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*, 76 years ago (see page 4). The newsletter has undergone some pretty big changes over the years, but all these years later, I agree with the words of Robert Connell, the president at the time, and wish to express my gratitude to all of you who have made, and continue to make, our Society, our newsletter, and our shared experiences that much more meaningful and enjoyable. Note that past issues of our newsletter, *The Victoria Naturalist*, are accessible on our website—see <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?p=9388> PDF indices are available on that page, and there is also an index for issues 1944-2004 available in Excel at http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1439

As often happens, this issue is quite diverse, but a bit more bird-oriented than some. Who among you has seen all the woodpeckers Val talks about? And then there is one article that will have you making travels plans (likely from the photos alone)—about Ecuador and Galapagos (see cover photo and article page 7). But don't forget about those tiny creatures most of us haven't seen—check out the cool Salish Sea Creatures (page 21). And then there are the spring flowers...may seem far away when you first read this, but spring in the Victoria area is already happening!

Keeping with the bird theme...here are a couple more bird idioms that come with interesting info at the linked websites:

Happy as a Lark

Meaning: Cheerful and joyful

The Birds: Larks have very melodious songs with cheerful notes and happy tunes, and they are often cultural symbols of joy, good fortune, or cheerfulness.

<https://www.thespruce.com/why-birds-sing-386221>

Crazy as a Loon

Meaning: Insane or nutty

The Birds: Many loons have strange, haunting calls that can resemble crazy or disturbed laughter, distinctive vocalizations that can help identify loons easily.

[https://www.thespruce.com/](https://www.thespruce.com/what-types-of-sounds-do-birds-make-387332)

[what-types-of-sounds-do-birds-make-387332](https://www.thespruce.com/what-types-of-sounds-do-birds-make-387332)

And while we are thinking about meanings of idioms—how about “in the pink” and “fit as a fiddle”? “In the pink” relates to the dianthus flower, popular in the 16th century, meaning “peak of perfection”. “Fit as a fiddle” dates from the 17th century and meant “suitable or fit for purpose” A fiddle required a lot of care and attention to keep it in shape.

So over the next while—may your experiences in the natural world make you happy as a lark, encourage you to do your best to be fit as a fiddle, and help you be in the pink to get the most out of the outdoors. If someone thinks you are crazy as a loon for enjoying nature, just smile.

Happy Spring!
Gail Harcombe

Editor Note:

Excerpted from Volume 1, Number 1. Published in April 1944—76 years ago!

THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

Vol.1, No. 1, April 1944

Published by The Victoria Natural History Society

A Foreword:

It is with the heartiest pleasure I address the members of the new Natural History Society in the first copy of the Magazine. May it be the precursor of a long line.

The need of an association of all who are interested in the study and enjoyment of nature has been felt by many of late years, and I have often been asked by new-comers for the whereabouts of our Natural History Society and heard them express surprise that none existed. But the need has not been confined to them. Most of us seek the companionship of common interest and helpful intercourse and are pleased to find it in an organization whose members find release from the pressure of a mechanical world in the observation and study of our natural and aboriginal environment. And indeed in these days of private and public pressure there is a genuine and thoroughly defensible relief in the observation of wild life in its various forms.

I am sure I speak for all our members when I say we look forward to many happy and profitable hours both out-doors and in-doors in our particular group or groups and in the larger forum of the Society. Our success depends on the enthusiasm of each flowing into the common stream. We have about us a beautiful countryside and a varied shoreline to delight the hearts of naturalists. We hope to learn to know these better ourselves and to share our learning with many others.

Robert Connell, President

A Message from Your Board

It's time again to remind every member of the Society that our Annual General Meeting is on Tuesday, March 10, and it is great to get as many people as possible to attend. We do our best to entice you by starting at 7 p.m. with complimentary snacks and hot drinks—bring your mug and come socialize over sweets and savories! The AGM officially starts at 7:30, where we roar through the year-in-review reports and follow that up with an excellent speaker. This year, Rory Fogarty, from the Ministry of Environment, will report on findings to date of the carnivore surveys that have been taking place in the Jordan River watershed (see Calendar page 24 for further details).

Gordon Hart and Claudia Copley are the VNHS representatives on the Viaduct Flats Committee, and they are pleased to report that the five-year plan for the wetland is in final editing with Saanich staff and it will then be presented to Saanich Council for approval.

In previous messages from the board, we have mentioned our collaboration with the Pollinator Partnership Canada and their *Youth Pollinator Leadership Team* program. Thirty-three youth applied to participate in the pollinator leadership team, 17 were shortlisted, and all were invited to the first event on February 22, held at the Royal B.C. Museum (another partner). This introductory session on pollinator topics was free, open to the public, and attendees could just drop-in or stay for the day. Most of the funding for this project came from the City of Victoria's Participatory Budget,

so a representative from the City of Victoria gave introductory remarks, and they invited their Parks Department volunteers to attend. Topics ranged from an introduction to pollinators, focussing on bees, butterflies of the Victoria area, creating space for pollinators, learning how to tell the difference between bees, flies, wasps, and other pollinators, and learning to identify the major bee groups.

In other Society news, the VNHS has received a bequest of \$1000 from the estate of David Stirling and your board is discussing ways to use the funds in a way that is a good fit for David's interests: birds and nature education. If you have any ideas, please don't hesitate to submit them to a board member for consideration.

The Society has a table at the monthly Swan Lake events (last Sunday of every month), but we are always looking for other events to get the word out about who we are and what we do. For example, Board members Rick Searle and Jim Cuthbert represented the VNHS at a STEAM event (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Design and Math) on 18 January at St Margaret's School. In order to have a presence at events like these we do need more volunteers to help out, so please get in touch with Vicki Metcalfe, our volunteer Volunteer Coordinator. Upcoming opportunities include the Wild Arc Open House (28-29 March), and an Earth Day event (22 April) hosted by Esquimalt in Cairn Hill Park (a.k.a. High Rock Park).

Hope to see you all at the Annual General Meeting!

Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Woodpeckers

By Val George



Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*).
Photo: Gordon Hart.

Woodpeckers are placed by taxonomists in the family Picidae. There are about 240 species in the family, and they occur throughout the world except Australasia, Antarctica and Madagascar. Ten of the species are on the Victoria checklist.

Most woodpeckers have some anatomical features not normally found in our other bird species. They have zygodactyl feet—i.e., two toes pointing forward and two backward—and stiff tail feathers that allow them to easily grip the bark of trees to feed and excavate their nests. Feeding is accomplished by drilling into trees with their powerful bills and specialized skulls that spread the impact and cushion their brains. Many have long sticky tongues—up to 10 cm (4 inches) long—to aid in extracting insects.

As well as feeding on insects, some woodpeckers also eat fruit, nuts and berries, and they'll often come to suet feeders; sapsuckers extract sap from trees.

Drumming on trees and other hard objects serves to communicate and advertise their territories. Often, they'll choose the loudest sounding board they can find, such as the side of a house—to the annoyance of the occupants—or the metal on a telephone pole. The drumming sounds are also associated with drilling into trees for insects and boring holes for nesting.

Another general feature of most woodpeckers is their undulating flight pattern. This makes them easy to identify, at least as woodpeckers, when seen in silhouette or at some distance.

As noted above, there are ten species on our local checklist. The Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) is our most

common species. It's our smallest woodpecker and, in fact, is the smallest North American member of the family. It's a permanent resident here though there is some dispersal in winter from northern and higher elevation regions. Like other members of the family, they normally nest in holes they drill in trees, but they are known to nest inside walls as well.

The Hairy Woodpecker (*Leuconotopicus villosus*) is another fairly common species. It's almost identical in plumage to the Downy, but it's significantly larger and has a larger bill relative to its head size. Taxonomic authorities disagree about the genus of this species, some placing it in the same genus as the Downy, though it does not seem to be very closely related but is thought to have developed similar plumage and habits by convergent evolution.

Our largest woodpecker—and the largest North American species—is the Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*). This spectacular bird is a striking sight with its mainly black plumage except for the boldly patterned black and white head capped by a large red crest.

Pileated Woodpeckers bore characteristically large rectangular-shaped holes in dead trees to search for carpenter



**VICTORIA NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY**

Notice of Annual General Meeting

**March 10, 2020 7:30 p.m.
Rm 159, Fraser Building,
University of Victoria**

Evening presentation to follow AGM:

***Evaluating Furbearer Populations on
Southern Vancouver Island***

*Rory Fogarty, Mesocarnivore Project Biologist,
BC Ministry of Environment and
Climate Change Strategy*

*Learn about the study of coastal marten,
mink and ermine populations taking place
in the Jordan River area.*

Come early (7:00 p.m.) to socialize

ants and other insects; they also eat fruit and nuts, though the ants can form up to 60% of their diet.

Sapsuckers are members of this family. Our common species is the Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*). This species was at one time considered to be conspecific with the other two sapsuckers on the Victoria checklist, the Red-naped Sapsucker (*S. nuchalis*) normally found in the southern interior of the province and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S. varius*) of the northeast, but all three are now classified as separate species. The latter two are occasionally recorded in our area but only as rarities.

Sapsuckers, as their name implies, drill holes in the bark of trees—in characteristically neat rows—to allow sap to seep out, which they then eat along with any insects that get trapped in it. As well as getting insects this way, sapsuckers also get them in more woodpecker-like fashion by direct excavation.

Our other common species is the Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). This species is unusual for a woodpecker because it's often seen on the ground where it looks for insects, especially ants; ants can form half the diet of the Northern Flicker. Flickers also eat fruit, seeds, berries, and nuts.

The other three species on the Victoria checklist are rarities: Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*); American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*); and Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*).



Hairy Woodpecker (*Leuconotopicus villosus*). Photo: Val George.



Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*). Photo: Gordon Hart.



Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). Photo: Val George.

ECUADOR November 2019

By Vicki Metcalfe



Moss-backed Tanager.

When my friend Ed suggested I join him on a bird photography trip to Ecuador, I jumped at it (I don't own a camera). And then, out with the Victoria Natural History Society one Saturday, I was chatting with a fellow birder who said if I went to Ecuador I absolutely had to go to the Galapagos. So I did.

The trip to Quito wasn't easy: Victoria to Seattle to LA (where I met up with Portland resident Ed), then overnight to Bogata and on to Quito. About 24 hours total. We were met at the airport and taken to the Puembo Birding Garden hotel, where we met the others in the group and our leader, Juan Carlos Vindas. Juan Carlos is a Costa Rican who leads bird photography trips in Central and South America through his company Neotropic Photo Tours (neotropicphototours.com). Ed had traveled in Costa Rica with Juan Carlos and spoke highly of him. With good cause, as I found out.

There were seven of us along with Juan Carlos and our drivers. Two American couples and my friend Ed from Oregon plus me and one other Canadian. All good company. We went into Quito the first afternoon. What a city! 75 km long by 25 km wide with a population of about 1.5 million at an altitude of 2850 metres. We spent time in the old city with all its Spanish Colonial. There were vendors everywhere in the city (and in fact in the country—even fruit stands beside busy highways). Several of us bought beautiful llama-cotton scarves from Indian vendors at five for ten US dollars. The women were in their native dress, including the ever-present hats, and there was a two-year-old sleeping peacefully wrapped onto the back of his grandmother.

And then off to the rainforest. Despite expert drivers the roads were often a challenge, even scary, and it wasn't helped that it was heading into the rainy season. (Oh, and it was cold—sometimes bone-chillingly cold.) First west and then east. There was another in the group who is not a

photographer—travelling with her husband—and Juan Carlos made sure we were looked after with various side activities but all about the birds.

Juan Carlos had arranged stays in several lodges but never less than three nights in each. They varied in sophistication—in fact at one spot we were presented with hot water bottles after dinner because there was no heat in the rooms—but the food was always plentiful and often excellent. Lots of soup and often a potato soup with cheese and half an avocado! Unimaginable quantities of fruit and the ever-present fruit juice was not only fresh-squeezed but actually fresh-picked.

Juan Carlos is a bird photographer who goes to extreme lengths to help his clients. Some of the set-ups were amazing. At one spot the lodge had set up white tarps vertically in the forest and left lights on all night; at daybreak we were in the blind to see the incredible quantity and variety of birds come to feast on the moths attracted by the light. For the hummingbird shots, he hid all the nearby feeders and arranged a ring of flashes on tripods around a photo of blurred greenery and then clipped fresh flowers in front. The photographers, one by one, synced their cameras to the flashes and took shot after shot, freezing the birds in action.

I counted 235 birds, including 49 species of hummingbird and innumerable brilliantly coloured tanagers. 202 life birds. Juan Carlos's trip report was 292 species of birds plus monkeys, kinkajous, rabbits, squirrels, and Andean deer. Highlights were, of course, the amazing hummingbirds and tanagers but also the saffron-coloured Andean Ibis, the toucans with their astonishing beaks, the well-described pearled treerunner, and the strange little antpitta (five species) that lives in deep forest but scurries out to grab the worms it's fed by its admirers. And having a Moss-backed Tanager eat banana from my hand.



Flame-faced Tanager.



Plate-billed Mountain-Toucan.



Pale-mandibled Aracari.

Most of the group continued into the Amazon for yet more sights but I went back to the Puembo Birding Garden hotel Quito before my trip to the Galapagos. I had extra time and was delighted to spend it with the owner Mercedes, a businesswoman full of energy who runs the hotel and offers tours in Ecuador and other parts of South America.

And then onto the Galapagos. I flew from Quito to Isla Baltra to meet our guide Harry and fellow cruisers. Although the catamaran Ocean Spray had a capacity of 16, we were only five, with 11 crew and Harry. Needless to say, great service and I was upgraded to a double cabin.

We hiked and snorkelled every day, with walking sticks and wetsuits supplied. Luxury means having one's wetsuit looked after while enjoying hot towels and hot chocolate. Each day we had three wonderful meals with a choice of meat or fish/seafood at lunch and dinner. The five of us all tended to go with the fish or seafood selection, and it was delicious—the seafood grill was amazing with tender octopus.

We swam with the Galapagos Penguin, sea lions and sea turtles. Thankfully, we weren't joined in the water by huge sea-going iguana! Birds are not as plentiful on the Galapagos



Violet-tailed Sylph.



Ochre-breasted Antpitta.



Red-headed Barbet.



Blue-winged Mountain Tanager.

*Photos 1-9:
Ed Celnicker.*

as in the Andes, but I did see 25 species. We hiked to a Waved Albatross colony and saw Blue- and Red-footed boobies. I could have reached out to touch them, though of course, touching is not allowed. The wildlife, including the birds, have no reaction to humans. Harry explained it's because there are no predators to fear; the only large animal is the ubiquitous sea lion that only eats fish. We also visited the giant tortoise sanctuary to watch the enormous creatures lumber around.

The whole thing was that old cliché, the trip of a lifetime. Thanks to Ed and Andrew. I can't say enough good about CNH Tours, Neotropic Photo Tours and the Puembo Birding Garden, Ecuador and the Galapagos.



Sword-billed hummingbird.



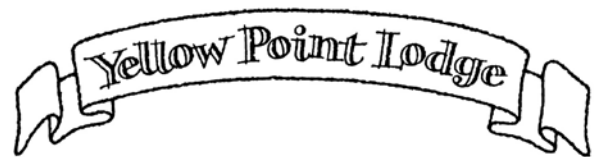
Strong-billed Woodcreeper.

(above)
Galapagos
Islands.

(right)
Blue-footed
Booby,
Galapagos.



Galapagos Tortoise.



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Southern Vancouver Island 2019/20 Christmas Bird Count Results

By Ann Nightingale

Reports from four southern Vancouver Island counts are presented below. Species and counts for all four events follow the written reports. To see a zone by zone accounting of the Victoria CBC, please visit <http://christmasbirdcount.ca> To look at detailed results over all time, check out the Audubon historical site here: <https://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/Historical/ResultsByCount.aspx#>

Expected dates for the 2020 counts are Victoria: December 19, Sidney/South Salt Spring: December 20; Sooke: December 27; and Duncan: January 1, 2021. Mark your calendars now! (If the change to Daylight Savings Time happens, you'll even be able to sleep in a little!)



Rusty Blackbird. Photo: Tim Zurowski.

Victoria (BCVI):

December 14, 2019; Ann Nightingale, Compiler

We headed into the count with high expectations. The weather was fair, there were a number of rare birds around, and the CBC4Kids, especially, had received a lot of publicity from the local media. But at the post-count, it seemed that most groups felt that it was pretty much just average, or maybe even a little below. As it turned out, the total number of birds seen was about average at 79054, but the number of species was well below our recent average at only 135, the lowest it's been since 2007! This was despite some good rarities in the mix: our first (and only the CBC's 5th) Red-throated Pipit, one definite and one possible Palm Warbler, a Rusty Blackbird and a record number (3) of American Tree Sparrows. Many other counts also noted a reduced number of species, and much to my surprise, it looks like we will have the high count for Canada again this year.

In 2018, our record 285 was the highest number of field

counters on a team anywhere. That was a tough target to beat this year, and I went on record saying we were probably a little shy of that in 2019. As the reports trickled in though, we snuck past and have a new record of 286, thanks in no small part to the CBC4Kids event. We'll probably end up around 5th overall, though, because we still have trouble getting significant feederwatch participation. Laura Gretzinger has taken up the challenge to build our feederwatch pool, which typically has about 30 participants, so watch for improvements in the future. We were shorthanded on the water this year, but Ean Maxwell came to the rescue with his fine vessel, and with Marilyn Lambert and Donald Stewart aboard, they were able to visit all three ocean zones.

Even with the low number of species, 12 managed to break records: Cackling Goose (1454; previous record 1254), Wood Duck (255;234), Anna's Hummingbird (1256;1139), Black Oystercatcher (132;112), Pigeon Guillemot (341;323), Downy Woodpecker (251;240), Hutton's Vireo (14;8), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (3143;2812), Brown Creeper (232;171); White-crowned Sparrow (562;478), Townsend's Warbler (8;4) and American Tree Sparrow (3;2). Species we might have expected and didn't find include Tundra Swan, Ring-necked Pheasant, Sanderling, California Gull, Barn Owl, Western Screech Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Sky Lark, Evening Grosbeak, and Red Crossbill. It was raining pretty hard during the early morning, which undoubtedly affected owling. The Lesser Goldfinches, seen before and after the count, took the day off and deprived us of another record bird. Maybe next year! Count week birds included Golden Eagle, Rock Wren and Red Crossbill.

This was the second year that we've teamed up with Rocky Point Bird Observatory to offer a Christmas Bird Count for



Red-throated Pipit. Photo: David Bell.



CBC4Kids. Photo: Andrea Neumann.

Kids. Although the number of participants was only a little higher than last year, they found more than twice as many birds. Lead educator, Andrea Neumann, offers this report:

“As part of the Victoria CBC, Rocky Point Bird Observatory hosted a Christmas Bird Count for Kids (CBC4Kids) event in Beckwith Park, Saanich from 1-3 p.m., supported by funding from the Peninsula Co-op. This event, with its stroller-friendly trails and lively duck pond, is an accessible, family-friendly way for kids of all ages to participate in the CBC tradition. Participants as young as preschoolers, along with their families, were paired with bird walk leaders to explore Beckwith Park. They could contribute to the count by recording tallies on dry-erase checklists, helping to identify birds using a basic picture guide, or simply enjoy the mild winter afternoon while they looked for birds. The CBC4Kids participants counted a total of 591 individual birds from 28 species. The high number of individuals included a murder of 184 crows, as well as 100 Red-winged Blackbirds and 87 Mallards. The highlight of the event for many is the duck pond, where kids could learn to identify and compare three different duck species in a single area. In all, there was plenty to see for our next generation of CBC volunteers.”

We expect the CBC4Kids to grow as the word gets out. If you are interested in helping with promotion or on the day of the event, please send a note to Andrea at cbc4kids@rpbo.org.

The post-count gathering was organized this year by Don and Evelyn Spencer and Purnima Govindarajalu. Their management of this part of the event is greatly appreciated by all those birders who come in from the cold at the end of the day.

Thanks to everyone who participates in the field, at the feeders or with our CBC events!

Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS):

December 16, 2019; Daniel Dönnecke, Compiler

The 15th Sidney/South-Salt Spring Island Christmas Bird Count will be remembered. For one thing, we had amazing weather. Just a light breeze on the water meant all of our four boat parties could actually go out as planned. Filtered sunlight and fairly mild temperatures ensured that our 82 participants in the field could enjoy a wonderful day either out alone or with friends or family counting 26292 birds of 118 species.

Highlights include a Barn Owl, found by a farmer on count day (in his barn) and communicated to the zone leader. Two Black Scoters found by Mary Robichaud, a Ring-billed Gull and an Eared Grebe found by David Fraser, two(!) Townsend's Warblers, one found by Bill Dancer and one by Derick Marven and David Alcroft. Worth mentioning also is an incredible flock of 264 Bonaparte's Gulls that was spotted from our pelagic boat party venturing all the way out to Swanson Channel between Moresby and Pender Island.

With that much pelagic effort covering a total of 180 km in 19.5 hours, it is perhaps not surprising that we broke records for many of our pelagic species. New high count records were set for Pelagic Cormorant (809;725), Horned Grebe (322;268), Red-necked Grebe (115;49), Common Murre (263;160), Pigeon Guillemot (583;213), Marbled Murrelet (165;73), Rhinoceros Auklet (49;6), Bonaparte's gull (265;1), Black Oystercatcher (103;53) and Black Turnstone (169;125).

On land we also set some new high-count records for Snow Goose (10;3), Trumpeter Swan (192;87), Tundra Swan (2;1), Cooper's Hawk (14;13), Downy Woodpecker (60;55), American Kestrel (10;9), Northern Shrike (5;3), Bewick's Wren (82;81), American Pipit (146;40), Townsend's Warbler (2;1), Spotted Towhee (540;437) and American Goldfinch (45;31).

There were also some misses and low counts. A Sanderling could not be found on count day and only one Mourning Dove was seen. New record low counts include Lesser Scaup (1), European Starling (849), American Robin (371), Pacific Wren (95) and Green-winged Teal (27)

I would like to send out a special thank you note to all the zone leaders, captains and counters in the field. This Christmas Bird Count would not be possible without you. It was a wonderful day and I enjoyed listening to all the stories that were shared at the post count gathering at the White Spot. See you again for the 2020 count.

Sooke (BCSO):

December 30, 2019; Charlene Lloyd, Compiler

There were 61 intrepid counters in the field and a handful of feederwatchers for the Sooke Christmas Bird Count this year, tallying 13,113 birds of 106 species. That was about 5000 lower than last year's count, most of which can be attributed to a single species: the Common Murre. The weather forecast kept a boat from plying the waters near Race Rocks, where



CBC4Kids. Photo: Andrea Neumann.

most of the murres are typically counted. We did get a boat out on the other side, though, in Sooke Basin and beyond.

Record-tying or breaking counts were made for Snow Goose (3;3), California Quail (224;215), Pied-billed Grebe (16;16), Northern Harrier (1;1—only the third record for the Sooke count), Rhinoceros Auklet (26;17), Anna's Hummingbird (278;234), and Swamp Sparrow (1;1). Misses included Greater White-fronted Goose, Dunlin, Peregrine Falcon, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, and Lincoln's Sparrow. We would have missed Red Crossbill for the first time in this count's history, except that a single bird was found in the westernmost part of the count area.

The best bird of the day, though, didn't even count as a species! Jeremy Gatten and Jody Wells were diligently picking through a flock of Pine Siskins in the East Sooke area, in the hopes of finding a redpoll and came across a bird that neither of them recognized. Fortunately, they had cameras at the ready and managed several shots. On close examination, they concluded that it was likely a hybrid between Pine Siskin and American Goldfinch. While this cross has been documented in eastern North America, this is the first documented record for the west coast! Photos can be found on their eBird checklist at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S62711119>.

Thanks to all the counters and leaders, and especially to Charlene Lloyd, who has spearheaded the count for the last two years. Charlene is stepping down this year, so we are looking for someone to take the leadership role on for 2020. There is lots of help, both from the long-time counters and the leaders of the other nearby circles. If you are curious/interested, please let Ann Nightingale know.

Duncan (BCDU):

January 1, 2020; Derrick Marven, Compiler

The 50th Duncan CBC went off without a hitch. 105 species were recorded by around 41 field counters and 12 sit at home feeder watchers. The final count of birds was 22500. There were no real rarities encountered, but a few new high counts were recorded: 8 Western Meadowlarks and an amazing 271 Anna's Hummingbirds, 30 American Pipits, 2 Turkey Vultures and 219 Cackling Geese. The latter two could have been doubled-counted in different places. It was one of our best days weather-wise with temperatures reaching near 15C in the Maple Bay Area. Finch numbers were noticeably low, and many commented on hardly any nuthatches, chickadees and kinglets. The roundup was well attended where a wonderful cake donated by Dave Aldcroft to celebrate our 50th count was well received and scoffed up in no time. It was a shame for the compiler (who was celebrating his 30th anniversary of leading the Duncan count) to cut it. If we are to continue with these high temperatures on January 1st, we will have to reconsider the food at the after count gathering. We will do away with soup, chili and sandwiches and have salad, fresh fruit and ice cream. Just a wonderful day enjoyed by all. Thanks to all our counters and especially to the roundup ladies who put on a wonderful spread. To participate in the Duncan count, contact Derrick at marven@shaw.ca.

Save the Date

World Migratory Bird Day 2020 will take place on

Saturday, May 9th






For details, please contact
education@rpbo.org

Table 1. 2019 Christmas Bird Count Results
Species and Counts (new records in bold; CW= Count Week):

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Snow Goose	14	10	3	2
Gr. White-fronted Goose	10	3		1
Brant		19		
Cackling Goose	1454	53	7	219
Canada Goose	4584	2689	637	3005
Mute Swan	2	13	3	6
Trumpeter Swan	193	192	1	548
Tundra Swan		2		
Wood Duck	255			76
Northern Shoveler	57	5	1	303
Gadwall	236		13	35
Eurasian Wigeon	14	5	2	1
American Wigeon	2600	1859	262	1047
Mallard	5278	483	285	2311
Northern Pintail	491	2		717
Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)	1			
Green-winged Teal	747	27	21	138
Canvasback	51			
Redhead	2			
Ring-necked Duck	344	27	28	218
Greater Scaup	19	69	3	
Lesser Scaup	105	1	19	616
Harlequin Duck	204	111	32	
Black Scoter		2		
Surf Scoter	868	618	270	59
White-winged Scoter	188	9	74	
Long-tailed Duck	132	152	20	
Bufflehead	1796	1771	1096	687
Common Goldeneye	196	500	84	100
Barrow's Goldeneye	114	125	10	60
Hooded Merganser	313	166	95	72
Common Merganser	643	202	99	1161
Red-breasted Merganser	614	1613	60	47
Ruddy Duck	4			17
California Quail	178	100	224	90
Ring-necked Pheasant				
Pied-billed Grebe	69	4	16	7
Horned Grebe	481	332	73	39
Red-necked Grebe	255	115	64	10
Eared Grebe	2	1		
Western Grebe	25	129	19	12
Rock Pigeon	588	271	119	172
Band-tailed Pigeon	2			
Eurasian Collared-dove	113	78	11	74

Species and Counts (new records in bold; CW= Count Week):

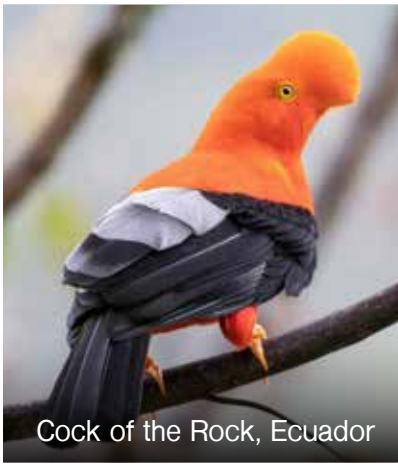
	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Mourning Dove	84	1	2	
Anna's Hummingbird	1256	260	278	273
Virginia Rail	7		2	1
American Coot	1007			146
Black Oystercatcher	132	103	41	
Black-bellied Plover	5	1		
Killdeer	69	33	19	14
Black Turnstone	149	169	101	22
Surfbird	3	20	18	
Sanderling				
Dunlin	18	22		
Wilson's Snipe	11	3	14	CW
Spotted Sandpiper	2	1	2	CW
Greater Yellowlegs	18			
Common Murre	1464	263	801	
Pigeon Guillemot	341	583	7	
Marbled Murrelet	178	165	3	10
Ancient Murrelet	523	77	28	
Rhinoceros Auklet	39	49	26	
Bonaparte's Gull		265		
Mew Gull	1006	790	218	647
Ring-billed Gull		1		1
Western Gull	2			
California Gull		5	6	7
Herring Gull	1	1		1
Iceland Gull	376	60	285	77
Glaucous-winged Gull	4797	943	541	1538
Red-throated Loon	31	25	13	1
Pacific Loon	107	112	29	2
Common Loon	56	70	28	12
Brandt's Cormorant	2047	420	76	4
Pelagic Cormorant	274	809	178	12
Double-crested Cormorant	507	200	641	196
Great Blue Heron	76	33	26	58
Turkey Vulture	45	1	26	2
Golden Eagle	CW			
Northern Harrier	6		1	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	7	1	3
Cooper's Hawk	57	14	8	8
Bald Eagle (adult)	78		23	144
(immature)	24		15	65
(unaged)	188	126	46	
Red-tailed Hawk	50	20	9	20
Barn Owl		1		

Species and Counts (new records in bold; CW= Count Week):

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Great Horned Owl	27	6	4	1
Northern Pygmy Owl	4		1	
Barred Owl	15	2	3	CW
Short-eared Owl	1			1
Belted Kingfisher	38	36	19	21
Red-breasted Sapsucker	24	7	14	8
Downy Woodpecker	251	60	41	41
Hairy Woodpecker	34	17	20	17
Pileated Woodpecker	38	17	4	3
Northern Flicker	528	123	95	78
American Kestrel	7	10		3
Merlin	21	4	4	3
Peregrine Falcon	15	4		7
Hutton's Vireo	14	4	3	4
Northern Shrike	4	5		2
Steller's Jay	346	156	114	127
Northwestern Crow	4678	160	124	296
Common Raven	440	134	130	326
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	3143	734	449	432
Sky Lark				
Bushtit	1226	122	76	71
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1387	400	282	195
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	247	89	73	55
Red-breasted Nuthatch	509	132	82	39
Brown Creeper	232	50	42	57
Rock Wren	CW			
Pacific Wren	378	95	128	37
Marsh Wren	32	1	1	7
Bewick's Wren	355	82	18	70
American Dipper	1		1	
European Starling	3839	849	687	1566
Varied Thrush	144	47	78	22
Hermit Thrush	33	3	5	
American Robin	2436	371	186	124
Cedar Waxwing	53			6
House Sparrow	1703	228	149	415
Red-throated Pipit	1			
American Pipit	16	146		30
Evening Grosbeak				
House Finch	1340	331	69	236
Purple Finch	42	15		30
Red Crossbill	CW		1	
Pine Siskin	1962	261	1277	208
American Goldfinch	83	45		6

Species and Counts (new records in bold; CW= Count Week):

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
American Tree Sparrow	3			
Fox Sparrow	603	187	87	59
Dark-eyed Junco	4984	1622	762	1048
White-crowned Sparrow	562	161	51	58
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1505	426	265	220
White-throated Sparrow	10			2
Savannah Sparrow	18	4		
Song Sparrow	774	300	128	184
Lincoln's Sparrow	51	8		3
Swamp Sparrow	5		1	
Spotted Towhee	1366	540	173	312
Western Meadowlark	13	27	2	8
Red-winged Blackbird	720	32	139	188
Brown-headed Cowbird	25			2
Rusty Blackbird	1			
Brewer's Blackbird	617	212	38	238
Orange-crowned Warbler	3		1	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	14			1
Townsend's Warbler	8	2	5	
Palm Warbler	1			
Pine Siskin x American Goldfinch			1	
Herring X GWGU	1			
Western gull X GWGU	53		47	3
Scoter sp.	64		1	
Shorebird sp.				20
Cormorant sp.	777	147	25	3
Grebe sp.	4			
Loon sp.	1		2	
Sparrow sp.	2			8
Finch sp.	40			
Passerine sp.	34			
Eagle sp.	1			4
Gull sp.	2823	454	23	195
Swan sp.	4			
Duck sp.				325
Alcid sp.	36			
Goldeneye sp.		6		
Hawk sp.			1	
Blackbird sp.			12	
Kinglet sp.			1	
Scaup sp.			3	
Total individuals	79054	26292	13113	22592
Total species	135	118	106	105



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Habitat Acquisition Trust—A Year in Review

By Ronna Woudstra



Volunteers pose at Sea Bluff Farm before planting a hedgerow. *Photo: Ashlea Veldhoen.*

“It’s been another big year at HAT and our team has been busy from hilltop to shoreline and from soil to classrooms to boardrooms, delivering HAT’s diverse conservation programs. This year, we bade farewell to our colleague Ashlea Veldhoen as she pursues her dream of bird banding. We welcomed new talented team members Chris Perrin and Ronna Woudstra, two people who embrace HAT’s community-based conservation mission every day. Like any healthy organization, HAT is adapting to meet the needs of the time. As climate change reveals itself in local ecosystems, we’re working to change our land management practices. And as reconciliation with Indigenous communities drives collective priorities, we are finding opportunities to practice active reconciliation through new land conservation models. None of this work would be possible without the support of our members, partners, donors and volunteers. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for sharing the journey as part of the HAT community.”—Katie Blake, *Executive Director*.

Land Protection

HAT is part of a multi-partner effort to create an Indigenous Protected Area on ecologically significant treaty settlement lands. This initiative seeks to protect more than 15% of the world’s supply of oldgrowth Coastal Douglas-fir forest and habitat for more than 20 rare species. We look forward to sharing more information as the initiative progresses. We held our second annual bioblitz on a 4 ha covenant in Metchosin, and with the help of experts from a variety of disciplines, identified more than 200 unique species of plant, fungi, lichen and bryophytes (36 of which not noted before on this property) and 27 species of birds. With funding from the

Victoria Foundation, we have been able to start important research into *Best Management Practices* for protected lands and conservation covenants—research including enforcement costs, legal defense funds, reducing enforcement risks, and the complexities of multiple covenant holders. We also began research into addressing the risk of wildfires on protected lands with the hope of minimizing risks while maintaining the ecological integrity of these protected lands.

Habitat Management

Our fantastic volunteers made a huge difference to nature this year. 1590 hours were spent by 150 dedicated individuals

managing 13 of our conservation covenants, including members of the Greater Victoria Green Team. There were 80 m³ of invasive plants removed from 50 hectares of sensitive habitat on HAT protected lands. We installed 240 native plants (trees, shrubs and wildflowers) on two HAT covenanted lands. Stewardship group Friends of Havenwood Park dedicated 900 volunteer hours, removing more than 500 m³ of invasive plants at Havenwood Park. The Matson Mattocks stewardship group contributed 370 hours removing 250 m³ of invasive plants at the Matson Conservation Area. We again partnered with the Global Perspectives Students from Stelly's Secondary School in a habitat restoration day at Oak Haven Park.

Habitat Stewardship—Good Neighbours

As our Wildwood Wetland Wildlife Corridor (WWWC) Good Neighbours Project continues, we were thrilled to partner with three landowners across 24 acres of land to create a protected and ecologically significant 6-acre wildlife corridor. We visited 33 property owners in the Metchosin and Sooke districts as part the WWWW project and generated 15 personalized land care packages to make stewardship easier for property owners, signed up 29 property owners to become Habitat Stewards, committing to going above and beyond in their stewardship efforts, and sent out over 500 surveys to addresses in the WWWW project area in July assessing what property owners value about their land and their knowledge about stewardship. The survey received 75 responses, with 22 people interested in site visits, eight of which were completed this summer. We completed 19 restoration events and engaged with 23 volunteers, and took part in 12 community events including Metchosin Day, during which we hosted a mapping workshop with youth from the area.

Habitat Stewardship—Species of Concern

As part of the BC Community Bat Program, HAT received over 763 calls from concerned citizens, sent two bats and six samples of guano for White Nose Syndrome testing. HAT performed 54 bat-related site visits and completed 24 exclusions with 16 new bat boxes being installed. Bat volunteers counted 25 roosts involving 72 volunteers and community members. In the Western Screech-Owl program, we received the exciting news that one of our owl boxes was in use with three chicks hatched to the clutch. Built, monitored and cleaned 12 boxes in Camp Barnard, thanks to dedicated local Scouts and community volunteer efforts. Fifty-four Screech-Owl nest boxes were checked and eight transects surveyed to locate individual territories over four evenings with 27 volunteers. The Boys and Girls Club of Victoria co-hosted a turtle nesting habitat restoration initiative. Thanks to HAT's wildlife cam, they were able to watch turtles bask on their newly installed logs.

Outdoor Education—

Goldstream Chums and Green Spots

Over 5000 students participated in the Goldstream Nature House salmon run school programs. Over 20,000 visitors

visited the Nature House during the salmon run season. Summer interns helped run nature education programs and the Jerry's Rangers Program (encouraging conservation ethics in children), which combined reached over 4000 people. There were 400 students (19 classes) from Margaret Jenkins School who planted 375 native meadow plants. Westshore Alternative School planted 100 bulbs in their Camas garden and replaced invasive shrubs with 210 native plants. In partnership with Beangka Elliot of the WSÁNEĆ Nation and Project Reclaim, UVic and Saanich Native Plants, we supported the planting of a native pollinator garden (with 110 wildflower plants) in front of the Tsartlip Health Center.

Community and Development

HAT had a great time participating in the Moss Street Paint-In, meeting people and growing our community. Our HAT-branded merchandise has grown to include HAT T-Shirts designed by artist Estraven Lupino-Smith. We were grateful to be a part of the Victoria Native Friendship Center's 50th anniversary—a wonderful day of art, culture and community. We applied for 31 grants, with 22 approved (for a total value of \$237,983), focusing on diversifying our fundraising we've built and strengthened partnerships with local businesses like One Yoga and Saanich Native Plants.



Ruby Creek Volunteers plant shrubs HAT. Photo: Karen Mann.

Beacon Hill Spring Flowers

Photos by Agnes Lynn

Watch for these and many more spring flowers on Camas Day, 2 May 2020. Prairie Violet (1. *Viola praemorsa*) is only found in a few spots in Victoria. Note the feltly leaves. Dwarf Owl's Clover (2. *Triphysaria pusilla*) is usually less than two inches high. Note the hard to see tiny flowers. Death Camas (3. *Zygadenus venenosus*) flowers later than true Camas. Not that many in the park because they were weeded out when the Camas were farmed many years ago by the native people. Spring Gold (4. *Lomatium utriculatum*) comes out early and flowers when it's very close to the ground. It eventually reaches about eight inches and has very attractive seed pods.

UPCOMING COURSES

Woody Plant Care

Date: March 4 **Time:** 7 to 9 pm

Location: UVic campus **Fee:** \$28 plus GST

Backyard Botany

Date: April 18 **Time:** 10 am to noon

Location: UVic campus **Fee:** \$28 plus GST

Love Them or Loathe Them: Insects in Human Culture – Series

Date: May 23 to June 6 **Time:** 10 am to noon

Location: UVic campus **Fee:** \$79 plus GST

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Salish Sea Creatures: Scaleworms

By Tina Kelly

Photos by author

Scaleworms are as it sounds, worms with scales. The dorsal surface of these segmented worms is covered in scales, or elytra, and the number of elytra helps identify one species from another. Worldwide there are more than 900 scaleworm species.

Some scaleworms are commensal. In commensal symbiotic relationships, two species are associated in a way that at least one of them benefits but neither is harmed. Salish Sea scaleworms include *Arctonoe vitatta*, or Red-banded Commensal Scaleworm, that lives under the mantle groove of the Rough Keyhole Limpet, *Diadora aspera*. At times the worm protects the limpet from predators; should a hungry sea star approach, the scaleworm pokes out and bites at its tubefeet causing the star to retreat. This worm may also live symbiotically with sea stars, abalone and worms.

Arctonoe fragilis, Fragile Ruffled Scaleworm, lives commensally with many species of sea star, including the Mottled Star, *Evasterias troschelii*. Camouflaged with the star's ventral surface, it often appears to be part of the star.

The Eighteen-scaled Worm, *Halosydna brevisetosa*, is a symbiont with bristle worms and hooded nudibranchs, or can be found nestled around animals (e.g. mussels) attached to hard surfaces such as pilings or rocks.



Fragile Ruffled Scaleworm.



Red-banded Commensal Scaleworm.



Eighteen-scaled Worm.

WELCOME TO NEW VNHS MEMBERS

Our Society grew by 16 members since the last issue. The following have agreed to have their name published in this Welcome section.

Gail Harrington

Victoria
Birds, botany

Rodrigo Inostroza

Victoria
Bird watching, hiking

Christopher Glen

Vancouver

Anthony Barlow

Victoria
Birds, seabirds, trees

Jan Paul Dudzic

Brentwood Bay
Birds, invertebrates

Sue Askew

Victoria
*Birds, invertebrates,
botany, restoration*

Martha Burd

Victoria
Birdwatching

LETTERS

Dear Natural History Society members:

We'd like to thank you, once again, for so generously supporting the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary and our monthly special events. As you know, fostering a deep connection with nature at a young age is crucially important to the health of our planet; your support allows us to continue with this important work.

With warm nature wishes,
Denise, *Donor Relations Volunteer*



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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

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

March 15 and April 12 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

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/>

Don't miss "From Eilat to Antikythira: Bird Banding in Israel and Greece"

Rocky Point Bird Observatory's AGM, 7:00 p.m., Wednesday March 11, at the Rogers Society auditorium located at 765 Rogers Ave in Saanich. The AGM will begin with a short business meeting, followed by a special presentation by RPBO Board Member and 2019 Owl Bander, Jannaca Chick. Everyone is welcome! You do not have to be an RPBO member to attend. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided.

Join The Nature Trust of BC for a special Brant Wildlife Festival presentation on Migration

Ecology of Pacific Brant, March 27, 6:00–8:00 p.m. At the Bayside Oceanfront Resort, 240 Dogwood Street, Parksville. Bird expert and researcher Sean Boyd, a scientist in the Wildlife Research Division of the Science and Technology Branch of Environment Canada and Climate Change and adjunct professor at Simon Fraser University, will share the latest information about Brant geese, with a special emphasis on those that rest and feed in Parksville-Qualicum in the spring. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A. \$10 per person including

light refreshments. For more details and to pre-register by calling toll-free 1.866.288.7878 or email egroundin@naturetrust.bc.ca

Olympic Birdfest 2020—April 17-19, 2020

Grab your binoculars and join the 17th annual Olympic BirdFest 2020 celebration at the Dungeness River Audubon Center, Sequim, Washington. Experience the magic of the North Olympic Peninsula...enjoy guided birding trips, boat tour, and a gala banquet. Precede your BirdFest weekend with a birding cruise of the spectacular San Juan Islands on April 14–16, 2020. Visit San Juan and Sucia Islands, and more. Stay at the historic Roche Harbor Resort. And/or extend your Birdfest weekend with the Neah Bay post-trip, April 19–21, 2020, exploring northwest coastal Washington, a region rarely seen by birders. Check out the offerings by going online (www.olympicbirdfest.org). Phone 1-360-681-4076 or email info@olympicbirdfest.org

Save the date: 23rd Annual Tofino Shorebird Festival—MAY 1–3, 2020

The Tofino Shorebird Festival celebrates the spring migration of shorebirds with a series of educational birding activities throughout the Tofino region. For more info: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/event/tofino-shorebird-festival/>

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

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. To help year-round birding, buy 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. 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.

MARCH

Saturday, March 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Birding Island View Beach & Saanichton Spit

We will walk along beside Island View Beach and continue out to Saanichton Spit if the weather is reasonable. There are still a lot of birds on the water as well as other good possibilities on land. Brant Geese may be resting at the water's edge at this time of year and we always can hope for a Black Scoter as it's one of the few locations where they are found in the Victoria area. We'll walk back along the trail away from the water to check for a Northern Shrike or maybe a Northern Harrier. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the north end of the parking lot. To reach Island View Beach, go north on

the Pat Bay highway, turn right at the lights at Island View Rd (Michell's Market) and follow that to Homathko Road near the water. Follow this road to the end. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Tuesday, March 10

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT AND AGM

Evaluating Furbearer Populations on Southern Vancouver Island

This presentation, by Mesocarnivore Project Biologist **Rory Fogarty** from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, will provide information regarding the non-invasive survey of Pacific Marten, American Mink, and Vancouver Island Ermine (a.k.a. Short-tailed Weasel) taking place in the Jordan River area, a representative watershed of southern Vancouver Island. These mesocarnivores are critical to the health of the forests and

waterways where they occur, yet very little is actually known about the basic ecological relationships of these species in coastal ecosystems. The objectives of this highly collaborative project are to increase our understanding of coastal marten, mink and ermine populations, the human activities and threats that face them, and to engage trappers, land managers, First Nations and others that play critical roles in the conservation of furbearers on Vancouver Island. We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Come early to socialize! Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

Sunday, March 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Parksville

Come to see the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn. Massive numbers of sea ducks and gulls follow the herring in close to where we can observe the birds feeding on the herring roe. We can also enjoy the beginning of the congregation of the Brant Geese in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area and vicinity. Bring a lunch and drinks. Dress warmly as it is often chilly by the water. We will carpool and start from Victoria at 7:00 a.m. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes after March 5. First 8 people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$25.00 per person. Participants will be limited to minimize the number of cars. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.

Tuesday, March 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Native orchids of Vancouver Island through the seasons

As an orchid grower and judge, **Sasha Kubicek** spends a lot of time enjoying the native species in the wild. This presentation will show the seasons of our local orchids, when to see them in bloom, and variations in colour and form. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, March 25

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Vancouver Island University's Bird Monitoring Program

While there are no formal ornithology programs at any Vancouver Island post-secondary schools, undergraduate students at Vancouver Island University have run a bird monitoring and banding project in the Nanaimo area since 2013. **Dr. Eric Demers** will highlight some of the projects, including the banding station at Buttertubs Marsh and tracking of Canada Goose movements. 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.

Saturday, March 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Birding around Viaduct Flats

Viaduct Flats has an excellent viewing platform to highlight all the water birds that we enjoy over the winter and early spring months. We will start there and proceed along near the water for more views of the ducks before meandering into the nearby woods and fields. There is always a good variety of passerines to enjoy. Some years a Great Horned Owl has nested in the area and the babes may be out and about. Just be warned that the paths may be mucky. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the viewing platform. The parking lot is near the intersection of Interurban and Viaduct. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, March 29

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Signs of Spring at Last

It should be feeling a lot like spring by now with buds bursting open and most leaves starting to appear. We will wander around the waterfront areas from Cadboro Bay to Oak Bay to check for early flowers. A good number of the bulbs will be in full bloom, such as the White Fawn Lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*). The yellow Swamp Lanterns (*Lysichiton americanus*) are starting to emerge in the wetlands. The Big-leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) should be leafing out and showing their interesting flowers. The Orange-crowned Warblers like to check for bugs about then and perfectly blend in with the new foliage and flowers. We'll look for the Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) and hopefully we can find a newly arrived Rufous Hummingbird checking out these flowers. These birds' arrival time is synchronized with the flowering of the Salmonberry and the Flowering Red Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) which we should also see along the way. We will start with a wander around the Goward House woodland area (see <http://gowardhouse.com/woodland-2>). Retired forester Everett Peterson and his wife along with other volunteers have been working for several years to remove invasive species and introduce more native plants in the area. After that, we will check out where the delicate Satin Flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) will be out in an area right near the water. Good water birds there as well. Then we'll stop at a spot in Oak Bay where we can see the rare *Sanicula arctopoides* which has the magical common name of Footsteps of Spring. It should be showing its almost yellow leaves that turn back to green in a few weeks. You never know what we'll find in a sheltered spot to give us a taste of what is to come. We will start on Haro Rd just southwest of Arbutus Rd at the small parking area near Goward Park at 1:00 p.m. and we'll go from there. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, March 30

MARINE NIGHT

The Ecology of Transient (Bigg's) Killer Whales

In the eastern North Pacific, three ecotypes of killer whale have been identified: resident, transient, and offshore. Transient killer whales are apex predators that specialize in foraging for marine mammals. This specialization shapes all aspects of their ecology, from foraging and acoustics, to social structure and genetics! **Josh McInnes** is a Canadian ecologist who grew up on Vancouver Island British Columbia, Canada. He studied marine biology and ecology with a focus on food web, and community dynamics at the University of Victoria. Over the past decade Josh has traveled to remote locations off British Columbia, Washington, Alaska, California, Australia, Antarctica and South Africa to study killer whale populations. He currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia and is a seasonal resident of the Monterey Bay region of California. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome. Note UVic parking is \$3.50.

APRIL

Sunday April 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join us on our first monthly Butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local Butterflies. This count should have some spring butterflies. These outings are weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make them 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.

Good Friday, April 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Satin Flowers and Birds at Juan de Fuca

This outing is a great chance to look at the Satin Flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) and other early wildflowers without having to climb a big hill. It's just a short easy walk up to enjoy the flowers as well as the birds who are telling us that spring is here in earnest. The Shooting Stars (*Primula hendersonii*), Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), Spring Gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*), Monkey Flowers (*Mimulus alsinoides*) and White Fawn Lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*) should be in bloom by now. It is also a great place to check out the birds at the same time, like the Yellow-rumped Warblers at the tops of the nearby trees. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre (Westshore Parks & Recreation), 1767 Old Island Highway. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to town. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, April 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding at Rithet's Bog

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

Easter Sunday, April 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Early Spring Flowers and Birds at Gore and Oak Haven Parks

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

Easter Monday, April 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3/4)

Magnificent Wildflowers and Birds at Mill Hill

Enjoy a visit to Mill Hill for an excellent spring show of wildflowers, and also listen for the birds as you climb through the varying habitats. Soak up the colours of spring as the progression of wildflowers gets well underway for another year. It's also a good place to check for birds as you look down over the tree canopy near the top. Note that the route is steep, and also rough on the way down, but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. We may also split up and some of us may take an easier shorter

route. Meet at the Mill Hill Regional Park information kiosk at 9:00 a.m. To get to the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge, then left on to Atkins Road. Turn left at the four-way intersection to continue on Atkins Avenue that leads to the park entrance on the right. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca for more information.

Tuesday, April 14

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Unsung Stories of Insects and Their Fungal Associates

Earth's most diverse multi-cellular groups are largely unknown to science. Yet, what we do know of them is the stuff of dreams... and nightmares! Join **Dr. Cara Gibson** (scientist, educator and illustrator) to discover and delight in wondrous tales of insect-fungal symbiosis. Learn more about Cara's work on her website: <http://www.CaraGibson.com> We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome. Note UVic parking is \$3.50.

Saturday, April 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to Offer

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

Sunday, April 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Leisurely Walk up Horth Hill

Horth Hill starts out in the lower forested area before opening up to the sun at the top. The Chocolate Lilies (*Fritillaria affinis*) should be great there. If we're lucky, we'll see some Pink Fairy Slippers (*Calypso bulbosa*) as well. The trail is a gradual climb but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Most of the flowers are near the top. Meet at the parking lot at Horth Hill at 10:00 a.m. To get to Horth Hill, take the Pat Bay Highway north to the Wain Rd exit. Follow Wain Rd west and then turn right on Tatlow Rd to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, April 21

BOTANY NIGHT

The Sea Inside a Cycad

Green algae, ferns and mosses all have sperm. They'll swim in saltwater or fresh, but when the seed habit evolved in plants, reproduction in a puddle was out. The secrets of how sperm keep swimming in these ancient seed plants are revealed by **Patrick Von Aderkas** in a study of Japanese cycads. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, April 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Birding Festivals: To Go or Not to Go

The last Birders' Night of the spring will have up to 10 mini-presentations by members who have attended birding festivals, large and small. From Vancouver Island to exotic locations, festivals can be a good way to see a lot of birds and hotspots but can also be crowded and costly. Come to hear about festivals you may wish to attend or may wish to avoid! If you have a story you'd like to share, please contact Ann at motmot@shaw.ca. 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.

Sunday, April 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Visit to Mount Tzouhalem Wildflowers

Join us in this area which is one of the most well-preserved examples of a Garry Oak Ecosystem. There is a small patch of the rare Deltoid Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza deltoidea*) as well as many other choice wildflowers. We also plan to visit another Garry Oak area close by if we have time. Bring a lunch and drinks. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 9:00 a.m. You must register for this event as the number of visitors is limited due to the fragile ecosystem. VNHS members get preference. Contact Agnes at thelynns@shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 after Mar 4 to register or for more information.

Monday, April 27

MARINE NIGHT

Chinook Salmon ecology in the Salish Sea—

novel approaches and new insights

Declines in the marine survival of Salish Sea Chinook Salmon have had grave cultural, economic and ecological consequences. As part of a drive to understand these declines, **Will Duguid** and colleagues in the Juanes Lab at the University of Victoria have been developing new approaches to investigate Chinook Salmon and the ecosystem that supports them. Economical, small vessel sampling programs; citizen science-based diet monitoring; and integration of electronic tagging technology are providing novel insights into Chinook Salmon ecology. Will Duguid is a PhD candidate in the Biology Department at UVic. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome. Note UVic parking is \$3.50.

WATCH FOR THIS FUTURE EVENT

Saturday, May 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

29th Annual Camas Day

For the past 29 years, the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society and the Victoria Natural History Society have co-sponsored this event in Beacon Hill Park. Each year, there is a wide choice of hourly walks starting with Birding at 7 a.m. till early afternoon. Themes such as Birds, Wildflowers, Archaeology, First Nations culture and other aspects of the Garry Oak Habitat will be covered. Final subjects and leaders are still not confirmed but you can check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website (<http://friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca>) now for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, email info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca or call 250-592-6659.

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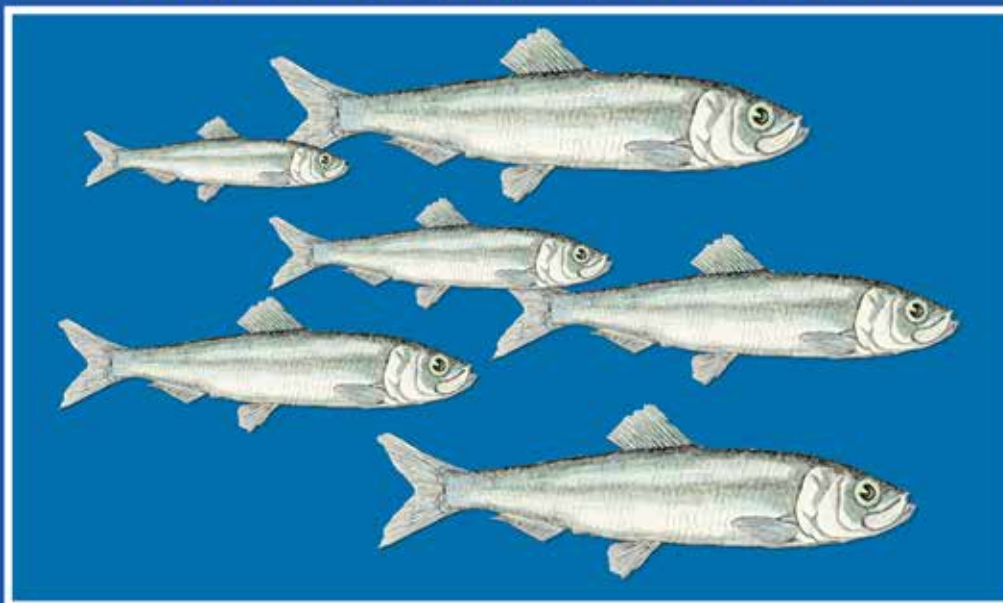
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