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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.

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3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

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Cover: Snow bramble (*Rubus nivalis*). See article page 9. The B.C. Conservation Data Centre status report for the threatened understory plant species states that in 2000 the proposed ecological reserve in the Clack Creek headwaters on the Sunshine Coast contained “hundreds, perhaps thousands of individual plants” and urged protection “of all known populations”. In 2019, logging destroyed two patches and damaged two more. Photo: Elphinstone Logging Focus.

Well, then . . . what a year this has been so far! At times, it has been hard to be positive (err . . . not COVID 19 positive!), but as I’ve said before, we have much for which we can be thankful. Living where we do gives us many opportunities to be revitalized . . . to “reset” as it were. Taking time to absorb the calm of an old growth forest, discover a new (to you) lichen (or if really lucky, a fossil), enjoy our beaches (wind-swept as they can be), watch birds migrating—from warblers to Sandhill Cranes (sure are noisy!) . . . great to have such easy access to many of nature’s special places.

Speaking of special places, in the September/October newsletter, we learned about B.C.’s Ecological Reserves program and the push to add more reserves. In this issue, you will see that we have another article about E.R.s. This is not a repeat. Rather, this new article provides historical context for such reserves and descriptions of the proposed sites. Hopefully, this effort will be successful, and coupled with what we hope will be improved management practices for old forests, we will have these special places into the future.

Special places **very** close to home include the Greater Victoria Naturehood (see p.16). The aim is to connect residents with the amazing nature to be found in our own backyards, neighbourhoods and region.

Also in your own neighbourhood . . . we’d love to hear of your own experience with an unexpected “bonanza” (see p. 13), and don’t miss participating in the Christmas Bird Count (see p. 6).

Once again, it is time for nominations for the VNHS awards. Surprisingly, some years, we have not had any recipients. I am sure there are people you know that are deserving of these awards. Don’t forget to send in your nominations!

Evening presentations are going well (although alas, we cannot meet in person . . . for now), and many of you are taking advantage of Zoom to enjoy the varied presentations offered. See p. 20 for the “How To”—we encourage you to check out November and December presentations!

Last issue, we published a beautiful photo by Rick Hardy of a Sea Otter. This issue, in Salish Sea Creatures, the River Otter is featured. How many of these have you seen?

Happy Holidays, everyone! Take time to be kind and stay safe. “See” you next year!

GAIL HARCMBE

A Message from Your Board

Picking up the mail for the Society is usually either uneventful or pleasant: many members include a note of thanks for our efforts in their renewals, and the cards and even the stamps on the envelopes are invariably nature-themed, so they are enjoyable to receive. We are also always pleasantly surprised and grateful to receive donations of any amount to the Society. We feel privileged to be entrusted with spending it in ways that meet our mandate and facilitate nature conservation and education in the region.

A recent mail pickup was more notable still when we learned that a former member, Robert (Bob) Hadley, had gifted the Society \$15,000 in his will. It was not specifically allocated to one of our activities, but we do know Robert was a lifelong Victoria-area resident and a schoolteacher in the Greater Victoria school district for 30 years. His obituary mentioned he “was especially fond of the forests, fields, and beaches of the Saanich Peninsula” and “was devoted to birds”, so finding a way to honour his memory that fits with the activities of the Victoria Natural History Society will not be difficult. **If you knew Robert well and would like to write an article about him, please do get in touch with the magazine editor.**

You are all aware by now that the Society’s field trips are going ahead as usual but that we have moved all of our evening presentations to online Zoom talks. This past September was where we all had the steepest learning curve, but by all accounts it seems to have gone well, both from the host/speaker perspective and audience participation. We’re all getting the hang of it! Our very first speaker had to re-schedule due to illness, so we all can tune in for the rain-checked wolverine talk in January. Approximately 50 participants tuned in to Botany night, 61 for Birders’ Night, and 47 for Marine Night. A few people had a bit of trouble with the passcodes ending up in their junk mail—keep an eye out for that. And remember- you need to register if you’re coming in order to get the passcode. This keeps us from getting spammed during the presentations even though it adds a bit of hassle. Some things are hard to un-see, so let’s avoid them in the first place.

A reminder here that if you know of someone in a similar or compatible time zone that would make an excellent speaker—now is our chance to have them present to our membership without issues of travel, costs, etc. Think big and think far! Your Marine Night host has connected with a speaker from Western Australia for the November Marine Night. That is thinking outside the box. It will be 10:30 a.m. their time. Any and all ideas are welcome, just send them to the appropriate evening host.

A letter from the VNHS board has gone to Mayor and Council of the District of Saanich regarding the former Royal Oak golf course property. This land is zoned agricultural but is now owned by a developer with intentions other than farming. There are a number of rare and endangered species utilizing this area and many more that might be, so maintaining the farmland status or formalizing the area as a protected greenspace would be a much better outcome from the point of view of the Victoria Natural History Society. If you are interested in learning more about this issue or reading the letter that was sent, please get in touch with any board member.

Your Society has also signed on to a letter about bird window strikes directed to mayors and council of all the municipalities in the region. The letter draws attention to the issue for local governments and asks them to be more proactive to help ameliorate the risk to birds in any new construction and major renovations by making bird-friendly design mandatory. This is a problem that all of us can help resolve to some extent by making changes to our own homes. Willow English has written an article about the issue and some of the possible solutions—see page 14 for that.

At the September board meeting a request for \$6000 funding for Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) was approved. The outreach and education that RPBO provides, particularly the school field trips to the Pedder Bay banding station, is unique in the region. Anyone who has ever held a bird knows the lifelong impact that experience can have. Giving children an opportunity for a face-to-face encounter like that is something that they are sure to remember forever.

WELCOME TO NEW VNHS MEMBERS

Our Society grew by 10 new members since the last issue. The following have agreed to have their names published in this Welcome section.

Richard Kool Victoria

Marguerite Mousseau Victoria. Birding, conservation

Kate Romain Victoria. Birds, Garry oak ecosystems, native plant gardening, creating nature art and music

Wolfgang Wetzler Victoria. Birds

Joan Wilmshurst Victoria. Birding, flora and fauna

Jeremy Phillips Victoria. Photography, cycling, walking

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, 2021. All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by three 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 David 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
2020 Leah Ramsay

VNHS HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Mr. David Anderson, Mr. Bruce Whittington, Mr. Darren Copley, Mrs. Claudia Copley, Ms. Ann Nightingale



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2020 Christmas Bird Count—Can We Count Birds During a Pandemic?

By Ann Nightingale

In a word, tentatively! This article is being written months ahead of the counts, so much of what is set out is subject to change. Watch for updates on <http://christmasbirdcount.ca>

We will be following the Province's health guidelines, whatever they may be at the time. If permitted, here's what we expect.

Christmas Bird Counts have always been a blend of the science and the social. This year, the social will definitely be less than usual. To comply with the guidelines such as they are at the beginning of October:

1. No carpooling except with members of your own "bubble".
2. No meeting inside restaurants/coffee shops before the start of the counts or for lunch breaks.
3. Social (physical) distancing among counters who do not belong to an established bubble.
4. Virtual Post-count gathering on Zoom (which actually might allow more people to attend!)

I expect most team leaders will be assigning sections of their zones to individuals or existing teams. If we can do this in advance, it will give you a chance to scout your areas to get a sense of what is in the area. During the winter, most birds don't move around too much. We will likely have fewer than normal new participants, and if anyone is uncomfortable counting this year, we understand. No pressure!

That said, we'd love it if you would like to participate in a very different CBC this year. Fortunately, outdoor activities are not only permitted, they are encouraged! For the last few years, we have been testing using eBird as a way to return your results to your team captain. We'll be refining

our instructions this year, as eBird has made a few changes to how they report daily totals. Hopefully, even more people will be able to use eBird this year for their lists. We'll offer some Zoom training ahead of the count for those who would like it.

In 2019, the total number of birds seen on the Victoria count was about average at 79,054, 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. Despite the low number of species, it was still the highest of any of the counts in Canada.

We broke our own participation record, though, with 286 counters, thanks in no small part to the CBC4Kids event.

I'm hopeful that the increased attention that backyards are getting will provide an opportunity for us to finally boost our feederwatch numbers. Despite our fantastic field counters, we've always lagged behind most other counts with our feederwatch.

Even with the low number of species, 12 managed to break records in 2019: 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



Wood Ducks. Photo: Cathy Reader.

Count	Date	Coordinators
Victoria	Sat, Dec 19, 2020	Ann Nightingale 250-514-6450; victoriabc@naturevictoria.ca
CBC4Kids (to be confirmed)	Sat, Dec 19, 2020	Andrea Neumann cbc4kids@rpbo.org
Pender/Mayne/Saturna Islands	Sat, Dec 19, 2020	John Peetsma jfpeetsma@shaw.ca (Pender)
South Salt Spring Island/Sidney; North Salt Spring Island/ Galiano; Pender Island	Sun, Dec 20, 2020	Daniel Donneck 250 744-5615; sidneycbc@naturevictoria.ca (South Salt Spring/Sidney); Tim Marchant tim@timmarchant.com (North Salt Spring); Mike Hoebel mhoebel@telus.net (Galiano Island)
Sooke	Sun, Dec 27, 2020	TBA; sookecbc@naturevictoria.ca
Duncan (to be confirmed)	Fri, Jan 1, 2021	duncanbc@naturevictoria.ca

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. Maybe we'll find some of these this year.

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 19, 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>. 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 19** this year.

You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up (distanced) 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.



"Covid"
Christmas Owl

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 (<http://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—ZOOM

Since we'll be meeting from our own homes this year, we'll start the post-count a little later than usual at 6 pm. You can bring your favourite beverage, and even your dinner. If you have photos to share, I think we will be able to manage that as well. I've always loved the post-count because of the chance to share the stories of the day with each other. Even in these challenging times, we have a way to do this. We'll open it up to people who didn't get out to count if space permits (only 100 people can fit in the Zoom Room!)

If you've counted with us recently, and we have an email address for you, you will get information and 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 Zone details will be posted on the website. Feel free to invite a friend!

Area Name	Leader	Phone	Email
Butchart Gardens–N. Highlands	Andrew Harcombe	250-652-3508	cbc1@naturevictoria.ca
Central Highlands	Warren Lee	250-882-2238	cbc2@naturevictoria.ca
Goldstream–Finlayson Arm	Robin Robinson	250-391-5995	cbc3@naturevictoria.ca
Thetis Lake–Hastings Flat	Rhys Harrison	250-658-4152	cbc4@naturevictoria.ca
Langford Lake	Jennifer Armstrong	250-812-4213	cbc5@naturevictoria.ca
Albert Head–Triangle Mountain	Rob Gowan	250-361-5576	cbc6@naturevictoria.ca
Esquimalt Lagoon–Mill Hill	Rick Schortinghuis	250-885-2454	cbc7@naturevictoria.ca
Esquimalt Harbour	Don Kramer	778-678-4753	cbc8@naturevictoria.ca
Portage Inlet–The Gorge	John King/Patti McDonald	250-721-3814	cbc9@naturevictoria.ca
Victoria Harbour	John and Donna de Haan	778-265-9817	cbc10@naturevictoria.ca
Beacon Hill Park	Mary Robichaud	250-507-8760	cbc11@naturevictoria.ca
Oak Bay	Geoffrey Newell	250-598-0158	cbc12@naturevictoria.ca
University–Cadboro Bay	TBA	250-514-6450	cbc13@naturevictoria.ca
Ten Mile Point–Arbutus Rd	Agnes Lynn	250-721-0634	cbc14@naturevictoria.ca
Gordon Head–Mt. Douglas	Margie Shepherd	250-477-5280	cbc15@naturevictoria.ca
Swan Lake–Cedar Hill	Ann Scarfe	250-477-1986	cbc16@naturevictoria.ca
Blenkinsop Lake–Panama Flats	Carl Hughes	778-679-9224	cbc17@naturevictoria.ca
Elk Lake–Cordova Bay	Mike McGrenere	250-658-8624	cbc18@naturevictoria.ca
Prospect Lake–Quick’s Bottom	Dave Fraser	250-479-0016	cbc19@naturevictoria.ca
Martindale–Bear Hill	Ian Cruickshank/ Liam Singh	778-966-1652	cbc20@naturevictoria.ca
Zero Rock (ocean)	TBA	250-514-6450	cbc21@naturevictoria.ca
Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	250-477-5922	cbc22@naturevictoria.ca
Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ross Dawson	250-380-1691	cbc23@naturevictoria.ca

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New Ecological Reserves Needed in British Columbia

By Jenny Feick, PhD

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR ECOLOGICAL RESERVES IN B.C.

Between 1964 and 1974, Canada participated in a unique decade of focused biological research known as the International Biological Program (IBP), an inspiring worldwide endeavor involving 58 nations. As part of this endeavor, the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) mandated a subcommittee for the Conservation of Terrestrial Communities to establish a global system of representative terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. In Canada, the National Research Council funded the description of biologically important sites across the country using standard international check-sheets.

Scientists identified numerous IBP sites in British Columbia. Encouraged by the late Dr. Vladimir Krajina (then a professor at the University of British Columbia) and other scientists, the W.A.C. Bennett Government established an Ecological Reserves Committee in 1968 to assess the IBP sites and advise which ones merited protection as ecological reserves. After the *Ecological Reserves Act* became law in 1971, the Committee's recommendations became the nucleus for the present ecological reserves system. Bristol Foster

served as the first head of the Ecological Reserves program from 1974 to 1984 followed by Louise Goulet. The Province made great progress in establishing ecological reserves until 1985 (see Table 1) when the provincial government led

TABLE 1. ECOLOGICAL RESERVES IN B.C. ESTABLISHED BY DECADE

Decade	# Established	Cumulative Percentage	# Transferred to Other Agencies
1971-80	101	66%	
1981-90	29	84%	
1991-00	20	97%	
2001-10	4	100%	5
2011-20	0	97%	
Total	154		

The ancient old-growth yellow cedar forests of the proposed Dakota Bowl ecological reserve on the Sunshine Coast contains an extremely high density of Black Bear dens and hundreds of culturally modified trees used by Indigenous people since before 1846. Photo: Elphinstone Logging Focus.





This fossil wasp almost certainly belongs to the enigmatic extinct family Angarosphecidae. These were among the most abundant Hymenoptera of the early Cretaceous. Their earliest record is about 140 million years ago, and they thrived up until about 50 million years ago, with their last records here in the fossil beds of British Columbia and northern Washington. These deposits reveal the last records of numerous holdovers from the Mesozoic and the earliest records of the diversification of other groups that are important in modern ecosystems. The scale bar is 2 millimeters. Photo: Bruce Archibald.

A rare fossil of a 50 million-year-old wasp of the family Trigonidae. This small group of parasitoids have complex life histories consuming sequential hosts. First, a caterpillar eats their tiny eggs on leaves. They then enter, live within, and feed upon other parasitoids that are themselves inside and consuming the caterpillar. Some change hosts again to feed upon a predatory wasp that has eaten the caterpillar and its parasitoids. This is the oldest known occurrence of the family. The scale bar is 2 millimeters. Photo: Bruce Archibald.

by Premier Bill Bennett dissolved the Ecological Reserves Committee and placed responsibility for ecological reserves management with BC Parks. By 1991, BC Parks decentralized management of existing ecological reserves, leaving no one to champion the Ecological Reserves program. A volunteer group, known as the Friends of Ecological Reserves (see <https://ecoreserves.bc.ca/>), arose to fill that vacuum.

At that time, any member of the public could propose an area as an ecological reserve. Scientists, educators, government agencies and naturalist/conservation groups made numerous proposals. BC Parks reviewed these proposals to determine the significance of the natural values present, the relationship of the area to other ecological reserves and protected areas, and whether the proposal filled existing gaps in the ecological reserve system. Following the review, proposals were referred to all interested government ministries and agencies to ensure conflicts with other land or resource uses were not present. Where values were considered significant and land use conflicts were resolved, the proposed area was designated an ecological reserve by provincial order-in-council under the *Ecological Reserve Act*.

This changed in the 1990s when Premier Mike Harcourt initiated a province-wide program of integrative land use planning. At the regional and sub-regional level, multi-stakeholder roundtables were established that used consensus-based models of decision-making. As part of this process, the government developed and implemented the Protected Areas Strategy to fulfill two primary goals: to protect viable, representative examples of natural diversity in B.C.; and to protect special natural, cultural heritage and recreational heritage features. The land-use planning tables identified land use designations in set geographical areas. They had a specific mandate to select and designate

protected areas, including ecological reserves.

However, after Premier Campbell came to power in 2001, the previous model of land use planning ceased, and the provincial government established very few ecological reserves. The last ecological reserve designated in B.C. was Det San (the Wet'suwet'en name for "juniper"), which protects rare old-growth juniper forests. BC Parks purchased this 5.8 ha site from a private landowner in the fall of 2009. Since then, despite changes in government, no progress has been made to designate new ecological reserves under the ecological reserve system.

RECENT ATTEMPTS TO ADD NEW ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

In 2014 and 2017, following recommendations from local biodiversity conservation advocates, scientists, and community groups, the Friends of Ecological Reserves (FER) proposed seven worthy new ecological reserves to the provincial government (See Table 2) and requested an outline



The headwaters of the proposed Roberts Creek ecological reserve on the Sunshine Coast contains a unique grove of ancient Pacific yew trees growing in curious circular patterns around old-growth yellow cedar trees. Photo: Elphinstone Logging Focus.



The proposed ecological reserve on Pink Mountain in north-eastern B.C. contains a greater number of red-listed (in immediate danger of extinction in B.C.) and blue-listed (severely threatened in B.C.) plants than any other location of its size north of Vancouver, all of which are threatened by current ATV use and planned gas well and road development. Photo: Ron Long.

of the current ecological reserve establishment process. Due to a lack of response, FER tried again in the spring of 2020, learning that BC Parks had no current system plan for ecological reserves, nor any intent to develop one, and that it had no authority to establish new protected areas. An official in the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, the agency that has the authority to designate protected areas, stated that the modernized land use planning process introduced by the Horgan Government provided no mandate to look for, assess or designate any protected areas. The only way a protected area might be considered is if a First Nation or MLA championed it.

FER still hopes to entice the newly elected BC government to establish a few new ecological reserves in 2021, the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the *Ecological Reserves Act* and to make a concerted effort to improve the stewardship of the existing reserves. The VNHS and BC Nature support FER's work to establish additional ecological reserves to preserve representative examples of British Columbia's ecosystems; protect rare and endangered plants and animals in their natural habitat; preserve unique, rare or outstanding botanical, zoological or geological phenomena; perpetuate important genetic resources; and provide places to conduct scientific research and educational in a natural environment.

The seven candidates that FER nominated include areas possessing exceptional biological, ecological and geological features that had not yet been discovered when land use planning took place in the 1990s. They include:

- The rare alpine plant assemblage at Pink Mountain north of Fort St John. This area is unique in that no other site in B.C. has such a concentration of rare and endangered alpine plant species (see https://ecoreserves.bc.ca/portfolio_item/155-pink-mountain-proposed-er/). The site has been proposed as an ecological reserve in the land use planning process currently underway, but its status remains uncertain and the area faces imminent threats from natural gas and road development and ATV use.
- Three headwater areas on the Sunshine Coast that offer opportunities to protect fragments of old-growth forest (see <https://loggingfocus.org/>). These include a small stand of huge ancient Pacific yew trees at Roberts Creek; a subalpine basin replete with record-sized mountain hemlock, old-growth yellow-cedar and Pacific silver fir (*Abies amabilis*) with an astounding concentration of Black Bear dens and hundreds of culturally-modified trees at Dakota Bowl; and an old-growth Douglas fir forest containing a rare and endangered plant species, known as snow bramble (*Rubus nivalis*), at Clack Creek. Tragically, BC Timber Sales authorized logging in the Clack Creek headwaters resulting in the annihilation of two of the *Rubus nivalis* patches and damage to two more, leaving only five intact patches left. Like the region around Merritt, no land use plan has ever been done for the Sunshine Coast and less than one percent of that region is protected.
- Three of the internationally significant Eocene fossil sites featuring 50 million-year-old plant, insect, fish, and sometimes bird species in the interior of B.C. face a serious imminent threat from plundering by rockhounds and desperately need protection. Dr. Bruce Archibald, who has studied and advocated for the protection of B.C. fossils for more than 30 years reports that in spite of recent regulation by the B.C. government's Heritage Branch, there are constant reports of individuals continuing to remove fossil resources from B.C. Eocene fossil sites without interference. Fossils located in B.C.'s protected areas such as ecological reserves receive greater protection than is currently the case on other Crown lands.

In total, these proposals for new ecological reserves would alienate very little land from natural resource development as they total only 4390 ha (43.9 km²), roughly equivalent to the size of the City of Penticton, B.C. The proposed Pink Mountain Ecological Reserve comprises 96% of this. The total area of the other six sites that protect old-growth forest or fossils comprises only 190 ha (1.9 km²), which is half the size of Duncan, B.C.'s smallest city.

Protecting these seven sites would ensure that future generations would still be able to observe and study these outstanding biological, ecological and geological features of British Columbia. Consider contacting your MLA to lend your support to designating these sites as ecological reserves in 2021, the 50th anniversary of the *Ecological Reserves Act* of B.C.

TABLE 2. PROPOSED NEW ECOLOGICAL RESERVES IN B.C.

Proposed ER Name	Bio-, Eco-, or Geo- logical Rationale for Conservation	Approximate Size
Roberts Creek Ancient Forest Headwaters (Sunshine Coast)	Unique associations of yellow-cedar (<i>Chamaecyparis nootkatensis</i>) and Western or Pacific yew (<i>Taxus brevifolia</i>).	30 ha area between two existing Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs).
Dakota Bowl Bear Sanctuary (Sunshine Coast)	Subalpine mix forest stand of yellow-cedar (<i>Chamaecyparis nootkatensis</i>), Pacific silver fir (<i>Abies amabilis</i>), and mountain hemlock (<i>Tsuga mertensiana</i>); also high concentration of Black Bear dens and hundreds of culturally modified trees, some from pre-1846.	80 ha
Clack Creek Forest Gallery (Sunshine Coast)	Old-growth Douglas-fir forest underlain by the largest known population of the endangered, native plant snow bramble (<i>Rubus nivalis</i>) a blue-listed plant species, with several robust patches. Site lies between two proposed WHAs to protect the blue-listed coastal tailed and red-legged frog.	18 ha between two proposed Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs).
Pink Mountain Alpine Plateau (180 km north of Fort St John)	Highest concentration of red- and blue-listed alpine species in central and northern B.C. These species are unique to this deep soil limestone ridge.	4200 ha, an area approx. 1/3 of the Pink Mountain alpine ridge, adjacent to current Pink Mountain Provincial Park.
Eocene Fossil Site 1 (on private land)	Very significant Eocene (about 50 million years old) lakebed shales with extremely well-preserved fish, feathers, insects, flower, fruits, seeds, etc.	< 2 ha
Eocene Fossil Site 2 (on Crown land with physically challenging access)	Very significant Eocene (about 50 million years old) lakebed shales with extremely well-preserved fish, feathers, insects, flower, fruits, seeds, etc.	10 ha
Eocene Fossil Site 3 (on both Crown and private land)	Very significant Eocene (about 50 million years old) lakebed shales with extremely well-preserved fish, feathers, insects, flower, fruits, seeds, etc. Fossils are exposed along river banks due to erosion and undercutting by the salmon-bearing river.	estimated at 30 to 50 ha

A New Future for Old Forests

The report on Old Growth Forests has been released: *A New Future for Old Forests—A Strategic Review of How British Columbia Manages for Old Forests Within its Ancient Ecosystems*. (Available at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/563/2020/09/STRATEGIC-REVIEW-20200430.pdf>).

The Executive Summary (pp. 13-16) provides an overview, recommendations, and implementation advice for how we can improve management of our old forests. There are two companion documents: *A New Future for Old Forests: Summary Report* and *Old Growth Strategic Review: What We Heard*. All three reports and the written submissions received are posted on the Province’s Old Growth Strategic Review website at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/old-growth-strategic-review/>.

EXCERPT FROM THE STRATEGIC REVIEW:

Old forests, especially those with very large trees, are the product of ancient ecosystems, icons of British Columbia’s landscape, and a key aspect of the province’s unique identity. In addition to their intrinsic value, the timber

they provide is important to the provincial economy, and a primary source of income in many communities. These same forests anchor ecosystems that are critical to the wellbeing of many species of plants and animals, including people, now and in the future.

...

There is a near-unanimous agreement that managing the health of old ecosystems, especially those with old trees, provides many benefits. We believe the fundamentals to success for the Province’s forest management system are ecosystem health, effective forest management and public support. Our review identified weaknesses in each of these areas. To adequately manage and protect BC’s old forest biodiversity, attributes, values and benefits for future generations, these weaknesses will have to be addressed. Our recommendations are shaped by that understanding, and the recognition that society is undergoing a paradigm shift in its relationship and interaction with the environment, and the way we manage our old forests needs to adapt accordingly.

A Vancouver Island Shorebird Bonanza

By Val George

“The shorebird scene is getting a little absurd in our region.” You got that right Jeremy. It was Jeremy Gatten who made the comment in a recent *bcvbirds* posting. As I write (11 September 2020) we’re looking back at an amazing couple of weeks of sightings of rare and very uncommon shorebirds.

To begin at the end: Yesterday I was on a beach a few kilometres south of Campbell River looking at a Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*), a small shorebird similar to our common Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) but somewhat lighter in colour and lacking the complete dark brown breast stripe (see cover photo). It’s a bird that breeds in the southern United States; occurrences in Canada are very rare.

Birds this rare usually appear months or even years apart, but the day before I travelled up-Island an equally rare shorebird was sighted near Qualicum Beach, a Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), a Dunlin-like bird. Eurasia is its normal home and sightings anywhere in North America are rare, most being from the Atlantic coast.

These two real rarities were the icing-on-the-cake, so to speak. The two weeks prior to their appearances several other very uncommon shorebirds had been recorded on Vancouver Island. There was a Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) in Oak Bay, followed within days by a Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) and two Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) at Clover Point in Victoria; another Asian bird was found at Witty’s Lagoon in Mechosin, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*).

Though this article is about shorebirds, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention another rarity—in fact, a mega-rarity—that was recorded during the period. On September 6, Aziza Cooper discovered a Bell’s Vireo (*Vireo bellii*) at Island View Park on the Saanich Peninsular. This is the first record for the province. This small passerine is somewhat similar to our Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*), and its home is the southern and central States and Central America, so it is—it’s still present at the time of writing—at least a couple of thousand kilometres from its normal range.

To say that the past two weeks have been overwhelming for birders on the Island would be an understatement. And I haven’t even mentioned several other rare birds that occurred in the previous month or two. Certainly, in 60 years of birding in British Columbia I personally have never before experienced a couple of weeks like it.



Top to bottom: Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) at Clover Point.
Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) at Clover Point.
Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) at Campbell River.
Photos: Val George.

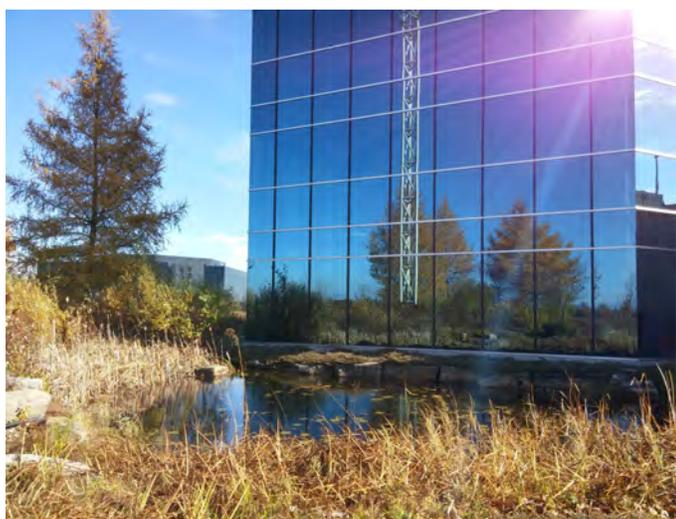
Window Collisions and How to Prevent Them

By Willow English, Safe Wings, Ottawa

If you have heard the sickening thud of a bird hitting your window, you are not alone. Each year, the average building kills between 1 and 10 birds through window collisions. When you consider how many buildings there are in Canada, it's no surprise that collisions are one of the leading sources of human-caused bird mortality. An estimated 25 million birds are killed by window collisions each year in Canada, and up to one billion in North America. While major collision events at skyscrapers receive most of the media attention, surprisingly they account for only 2% of all collisions; 44% occur at residential homes while the majority occur at low-rise buildings.

Why is glass so dangerous to birds? Because they do not understand it—there are no equivalent clear or reflective vertical surfaces in nature. When a bird sees trees reflected in a window, it thinks they are real, and will try to fly to them. If it sees vegetation on the other side of transparent glass, for example indoor plants or through parallel or corner windows, it does not know there is an invisible, lethal barrier. Many birds move as fast as 50 km/hour in regular flight. Think of a 215-pound hockey player hitting the boards at 20 to 30 km/hour without a helmet or other safety equipment. Now think of the damage to a 77g American Robin or a 10g Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

How do we prevent collisions? Bird-friendly design standards have been pioneered in Toronto and are now being adopted in an increasing number of cities. The Canadian Standards Association has also produced guidelines that



This building shows how real reflected vegetation can appear even to humans. Birds try to fly towards the reflections, only to hit the glass. Hundreds of collisions are documented annually at this Ottawa building. Photo: Safe Wings.



Examples of residential collision prevention treatments: from L-R, Acopter Birdsavers, Feather Friendly and ABC BirdTape. Photos: Safe Wings and Feather Friendly.

developers can use to ensure bird safety. These guidelines require that buildings have design features like patterned glass on lower stories where most collisions occur. You can help by urging your local municipality to adopt bird-friendly design guidelines, for all buildings or for specific developments, to help increase awareness of the problem and the solutions.

Making existing buildings bird-friendly is more of a challenge, and the available methods vary depending on the structure. Large commercial buildings can use products like patterned window films that break up reflections. Residential windows can be made bird-friendly with similar treatments that leave behind an array of dots, hanging lengths of cord in front of windows, or using oil-paint markers to draw a design on windows. While many people worry about the effect on their view, the regular spacing allows the eye to overlook the pattern just as you do with a window screen. To be effective, products must be applied to the outside of the window and have a dense, widespread coverage; for this reason, decals or silhouettes are not effective except in large numbers.

Despite prevention efforts, collisions can still occur, and any bird that survives a collision needs your help. It's a common myth that birds injured by collisions are just "stunned" and can recover given a short rest. Even if they are still able to fly, most birds who collide have head trauma, and may have other internal injuries that are best treated at a wildlife rehabilitation centre. If you find a bird injured in a window collision, put it in a box lined with a towel, and keep it somewhere warm, dark, and quiet while you organize transportation to a rehab centre.

You may notice collisions at your office or other buildings in your community. In many Canadian cities, there are groups who monitor buildings and work with property owners to reduce collisions through window retrofitting solutions. FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program), based in

Toronto, was one of the first such organizations. They manage a global collision tracker on their website where you can report collisions anywhere in the world. Similar groups exist in many cities, but not on Canada's west coast. The reason may be that seasonal patterns in collisions are very different in other parts of Canada. In less temperate areas, very high rates of collisions occur during spring and fall migration, which draws more attention on the issue. On the west coast, collisions occur at a lower rate throughout the year, making the problem less obvious. Victoria's birds would strongly benefit from the creation of a group to monitor collisions and advocate for bird-friendly design.

What can you do beyond treating your own windows? If you notice repeat collisions at a building, make your concerns known by contacting the owners or property management, provide information on steps they can take to reduce collisions, and record the collision in FLAP's online collision tracker. In most municipalities there are public consultations on new developments—a quick email stating your concerns and providing information on collisions can

go a long way.

Most of Canada's birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Convention Act, while others are protected by provincial or species at risk legislation. In a major victory, an Ontario provincial court found that building owners are responsible for the birds killed by their buildings, which sets an important precedent. However, unless properly enforced this ruling has limited effect.

Considerable progress is being made on the issue of window collisions, but regulations continue to be piecemeal, and buildings that are dangerous to birds continue to be built. Most regulations have been implemented at a municipal level, although some progress is being made to require federal buildings to be bird-friendly. You can help by making your own home bird-friendly, encouraging others to do the same, and by urging local politicians to adopt bird-friendly guidelines.

Additional information about collisions, and how to make your home bird-friendly is available at www.safewings.ca and www.flap.org



A Rose-breasted Grosbeak showing common symptoms of a bird injured in a collision: crouched posture, eyes closed, fluffed feathers. Birds who survive collisions have the best chance of survival if brought to a wildlife rehabilitation centre. Photo: Safe Wings.

Examples where glass transparency, not reflections, are a danger to birds. Birds don't realize that transparent glass is present, and will attempt to fly through it. Glass railing panels, plants located near windows, and areas where birds can see from one side of a structure to another through glass are especially dangerous. Stock photos.

The Canadian Museum of Nature's Natural Heritage Campus in Gatineau, QC, experienced high levels of collisions until it was retrofitted with Feather Friendly. For commercial applications, sheets of film are applied to windows then removed, leaving behind evenly spaced dots. The dots break up reflections and prevent collisions, without being unobtrusive to people. Photo: Safe Wings



The Greater Victoria Naturehood

By Rick Searle, Greater Victoria Naturehood Coordinator



Top left: Buffleheads.



Top right, top to bottom: Great Blue Heron, Black Oystercatcher.
Photos: Rick Searle

Something very exciting is happening on Southern Vancouver Island. There's a movement gathering momentum aimed at connecting residents of Greater Victoria with the amazing nature that can be found in their own backyards, neighbourhoods and region. The belief shared among the organizations involved is that connection leads to appreciation and respect which then gives rise to support for its protection.

The movement is called the **Greater Victoria Naturehood**.

It began quietly about six years ago with the Friends of Shoal Harbour—a registered charity based in Sidney and North Saanich dedicated to the protection of Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary. They learned of the naturehood program launched by Nature Canada and saw it as a way of gaining greater protection for Shoal Harbour MBS.

A naturehood is any place where people can connect with the wonders of nature. For many Canadians, this is nature encountered in their neighbourhood. The naturehood program was launched in response to a growing disconnect between urban Canadians and nature, coupled with the reality that there are many barriers (real and perceived) limiting people's access to nature, such as distance, lack of knowledge, perceived cost, lack of equipment and cultural perceptions.

In 2015, B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor presided over the expansion of the naturehood to encompass the entire Saanich Peninsula. Then two years later, Her Honor declared the grounds of Government House a naturehood. Encouraged by its progress, the Friends began discussions with other

like-minded organizations about the possibility of enlarging the naturehood idea to include the entire Capital Region.

The idea of more deeply connecting the residents of Greater Victoria with the nature found within it and around it was met with an enthusiastic endorsement. Today there are thirteen organizations actively engaged with achieving this mission. They are (in alphabetical order): the Bateman Centre, Birds Canada, Capital Regional District/Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, District of Saanich/Saanich Parks, Eagle Wing Tours, Friends of Shoal Harbour Society, Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Municipality of Esquimalt/Parks and Recreation, Municipality of Oak Bay/Parks, Recreation and Culture, NaturekidsBC, Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, Victoria Natural History Society and World Wildlife Canada. B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor serves as patron to the Greater Victoria Naturehood initiative.

The range of activities now being carried out under the Greater Victoria Naturehood banner is very exciting. At the time of writing, plans are well on the way to celebrate All Buffleheads Day starting Oct. 12th and running through to Oct. 18th. The Bufflehead is the world's smallest diving duck and perhaps the world's most punctual migrant. It invariably arrives in local waters on or very close to a specific date: Oct. 15th, which is the 297th day in the solar year. Its return offers an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about migrating birds, the importance of migratory bird sanctuaries (of which there are three in the region: Victoria Harbour,

Shoal Harbour and Esquimalt Lagoon) and their protection.

The Friends will host their annual ABD bird-watching event at Robert's Bay the morning of the 17th, since the 15th is a weekday. A video called "Celebrating the Return of the Bufflehead" featuring Kerry Finley, a biologist who has studied the Bufflehead for more than two decades, has been produced and will be released on Oct. 12th along with the launch of Greater Victoria Naturehood blog. B.C.'s Lieutenant Governor is scheduled to release a video message in support of ABD and all it represents on Oct. 12th. On the 18th, the Friends and Eagle Wing Tours partnered to provide youth from the Inter-Cultural Association with a tour of the Victoria Harbour and Esquimalt Lagoon MBSs. Further information on the ABD events this year can be found on the Greater Victoria Naturehood blog, the Inter-Cultural Association with a tour of the Victoria Harbour and Esquimalt Lagoon MBSs. Further information on the ABD events this year can be found on the Greater Victoria Naturehood blog (<https://www.gvnaturehood.com>).

Over the past two years, the partners have developed a Greater Victoria Naturehood map and brochure to help residents and visitors find and connect with nature in the region. It's scheduled to be released in November.

The Greater Victoria Naturehood initiative is not an organization. It has no board or executive. Rather it is a broad-based collaboration with the shared mission of deepening the connection with nature among the residents and visitors to the region such that they are likely to be strong defenders of it.



Top: Government House
Inset: Government House Naturehood sign.
Photos: Rick Searle.



Esquimalt Lagoon MBS sign.
Photo: Rick Searle.

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Salish Sea Creatures

By Tina Kelly

Near the top of the list of misleading common names might be this edition's species—the Northern (or North American) River Otter, *Lontra canadensis*. If a River Otter on the coast of B.C. had a nickel for every time it was called a Sea Otter!

The confusion is understandable; coastal River Otters inhabit the sea. They of course also live in rivers and other



freshwater systems. Northern River Otter range is vast—across Canada and much of the US. Across the continent there are at least seven subspecies.

River Otters are semi-aquatic and very agile on land; this differs from Sea Otters whose hind legs feature flippers instead of feet or paws. These flippers are reflective of their primarily aquatic life and make them a bit awkward on land.

Another difference being River Otters swim belly down and Sea Otters predominantly float on their back.

River Otters prey mainly on aquatic animals—fish, amphibians, crabs and other invertebrates. They are also known to take birds and bird eggs.

At Victoria Inner Harbour, I often see River Otters in the same harbour location and believe they may occupy a den along that particular shoreline. Though they den on land, their dens can have an entry point underwater. Photo: Tina Kelly.

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Field Trip Guidelines (for the COVID-19 environment)

In this “new abnormal environment”, when many events and activities are being cancelled, Dr. Bonnie Henry encourages us to get outside. For VNHS members, the preferred activity is a field trip. Yes, trips are still possible, if they can be done safely according to public health directives and using common sense.

Following are what we hope will be temporary guidelines for leaders and participants.

1. For now, trips are to be limited to 10 participants, including the leader. However, if there are more than 10, the leader has the option of splitting the group.
2. Please respect physical distancing, two metres apart, while on trails and in groups.
3. Please bring a face mask to be used if physical distancing is not possible.
4. Please ensure that your field trip waiver (attached to the membership application and renewal form) is current and signed. As stated on the form, you are attending field trips at your own risk.
5. Please do not carpool unless all occupants are from the same household.
6. Please bring your own binoculars and/or spotting scopes and avoid sharing them.
7. Please stay at home if you are feeling ill, especially if you have any possible COVID-19 symptoms, or even feel unsure about being with a group of people.
8. Please respect the trip leader’s right, and obligation, to limit the number of participants in any field trip. The leader also has the right to alter or even cancel a field trip. Please remember that our field trip leaders are volunteers, giving their time and knowledge freely and generously.
9. Finally, please check the VNHS website ahead of time to ensure that the trip is still scheduled to take place.

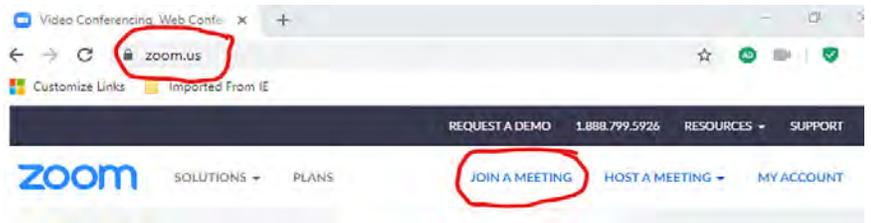
Zooming in to VNHS Presentations

[excerpt from September/October 2020 newsletter]

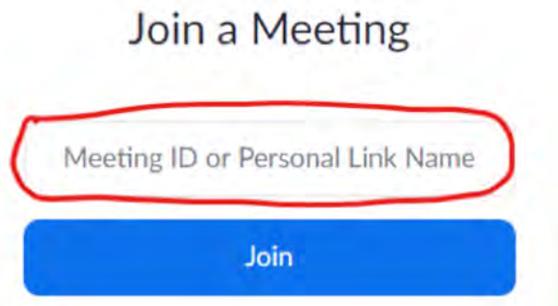
With UVic closed for in-person meetings in the fall, VNHS is going to use the Zoom platform. See the Calendar listings for meeting ID numbers and passwords for each of our presentations. If you have a computer, tablet, or even a smartphone, you can join in.

If this will be the first time you use Zoom, you will need to download a file to your computer, or to opt to use Zoom from your browser. Either will work, but the downloaded file will make this smoother. You can do this anytime before the presentation you wish to join.

Using your Internet browser, go to zoom.us and click on Join a Meeting.



Enter the meeting ID and click the **Join** button.



Follow the prompts from there. You will be asked for your name and email, but you don’t have to use your full or real name unless you want to. First names, initials, nicknames are all fine, if you’d prefer a bit of anonymity.

When you join the room, you will be able to see who else is there and will have an opportunity to use your computer microphone and webcam, if you’d like. Or you can just watch the presentation. If you have a computer that does not have speakers or a microphone, there will even be a way that you can dial in on your phone to participate in the audio.

We’ll make sure that there is a host present at least 15 minutes ahead of the meeting start time to explain how everything works for new users.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

In these unprecedented times, the VNHS is exploring alternatives for Board meetings and evening presentations. We will do our best to keep you informed as things develop. Because UVic will not be available to us for the foreseeable future, nor will Swan Lake Nature House, the VNHS is planning to use Zoom for our Board of Directors meetings and Presentation Nights (see page 19 for how to join). The schedule should remain the same as previous years, but please check the website to make sure you have up-to-date information. See the VNHS Calendar at: http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518 For meeting/presentation Zoom links, please see the calendar listings below and online for each one.

Board of Directors meetings: the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.

Natural History Night: the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

Botany Night: the third Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

Birders' Night: the fourth Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Marine Night: the last Monday at 7:30 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: EVENT DETAILS ARE ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION BUT CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS. 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.

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.

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.**

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.

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.

Please Note: Although some activities are listed here, they MAY NOT happen, so please check the website for up to date information. Please also be aware that new field trip guidelines have been developed according to public health recommendations and will be implemented. See page five.

NOVEMBER

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8

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. Although we will not cover a large distance, the ground will be uneven and occasionally steep. You must register for this event after Nov 1 and it will be limited to 10 people. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to register or if you need more information.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Bumble Bees of British Columbia: Big, Bumbly and Beleaguered

A short introduction to bumble bees, the bumble bees of British Columbia, and specifically some common bumble bees of Vancouver Island. Some species are at risk and are listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. Syd Cannings will talk about the declines of these species and the probable causes of the declines, and what we can do to change things. Many of you may participate in bird monitoring programs, and naturalists can help monitor the status of bees as well.

To join us, please register by entering this link in your browser and following the instructions. <https://zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/tjwqdeyoqT4oH9009D4qCDY-wR7rwhm5ImzQ> or go to the VNHS online calendar and click on the link in the November 10 Natural History Night description.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Presentation to be determined. Please go to the VNHS online calendar and click on the November 17 Botany Night description for the link and instructions on how to join. https://zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/tjMtceqqz8oH9a_5J4Jm_fy-OrG0S30jGwN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

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 gather 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 after Nov 1. Sorry no extra carpooling due to COVID and no van this time. Please register as number of cars is limited. VNHS members get preference. You can arrange to take as many in your car as is COVID safe. Please list names of those in your car. Costs will be ferry fare plus \$5.00 (\$3.00 for seniors) per person entry fee to Reifel. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information or to confirm attendance.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Celebrating Birds

This year marks ten years since Vancouver celebrated its first Bird Day. In the decade since Bird Day, the event grew to become Bird Week culminating into the largest gathering of bird enthusiasts in 2018 when the Vancouver International Bird Festival coincided with the International Ornithological Congress. **Rob Butler** will describe how the festival of birds grew to a region wide event and plans for a national celebration.

To join us, please register by entering this link in your browser and following the instructions https://zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/tj0sc-urrz4pG9TjPjXjsj5_vjTMSdlGrzU-N or go to the VNHS online calendar and click on the link in the November 25 Birders' Night description. Bring your own coffee (or whatever your preferred beverage might be!) Everyone is welcome.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

MARINE NIGHT

Deep Diving with RV Falkor off Western Australia

Dr. Lisa Kirkendale and colleagues from the Western Australian Museum led a deep-sea expedition to the Gascoyne Marine Park off the mid-coast of Western Australia in early 2020. They focused on the biodiversity of two marine canyons. The team completed 20 ROV dives and investigated a total of 16 stations over 5 weeks at sea aboard the RV Falkor supported by the Schmidt Ocean Institute, using the ROV SuBastian. Over 1000 samples were collected for the WA Museum. Highlights of these collections include the deepest fish records for WA (4470m), the first giant hydroids collected in Australia, significant communities of glass sponges in Cape Range Canyon and probably the longest animal (siphonophore) in the world. Along with new distribution and depth records of known species, this research also led to the discovery of an estimated 30 new species of marine animals.

Register in advance for this talk at: <https://zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/tjEkd--urT8oGN3-AY8NAcX0c6hlyRLK4iyU> After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing a URL link and a passcode. Make a note of the latter which is required to join the meeting at the appointed time. You can also go to the VNHS on-line calendar and click on the link in the November 30 Marine Night description.

DECEMBER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

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. **Jennifer Armstrong** will be your leader. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Bird and Fossil Feathers at the Royal B.C. Museum

The McAbee fossil beds tell the story of an ancient inland lake surrounded by a rich temperate coniferous forest bursting with life in the early Eocene epoch, approximately 52 million years ago. The Leahy-Langevin Collection is a diverse assemblage of about 18,000 fossils, including highly preserved plants, insects, fish, birds, and even species new to science donated to the Royal BC Museum

(RBCM). Now designated a Heritage Site by the BC government protected under the Conservation Management Plan, the site will provide research, educational, and recreational opportunities. **Alexis Bazinet**, an NSERC USRA student, will present the results of a research project investigating the fossil feather anatomy and extinct bird diversity at McAbee, in partnership with UVic and the RBCM.

To join us, please register by entering this link in your browser and following the instructions <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tjwqdeyoqT4oH9009D4qCDY-wR7rwhm5ImzQ> or go to the VNHS online calendar and click on the link in the December 8 Natural History Night description.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

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 at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

Botany Night

Presentation to be determined. Please go to the VNHS online calendar and click on the December 15 Botany Night description for the link and instructions on how to join https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tjMtceqgqz8oH9a_5J4Jm_fy-OrG0S30jGWn

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

Christmas Bird Count–Victoria

See article page 6 for details.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

Cbc4kids!

Christmas Bird Count for Kids at Beckwith Park

VNHS is once again partnering with Rocky Point Bird Observatory for this family-focused event. See article page 6 for details.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Christmas Bird Count–Sidney/Saltspring

See article page 6 for details.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27

Christmas Bird Count–Sooke

See article page 6 for details.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2021!

Christmas Bird Count–Duncan

See article page 6 for details.



CURRENT COURSES

Introduction to Biology and Natural History

Date: Available until March 30, 2021

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Delivery style: Online Asynchronous **Fee:** \$85 plus GST

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Northern Pintail, Esquimalt Lagoon MBS. Photo: Rick Searle.