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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

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**Deadline for next issue: April 1, 2019**

Send to: Gail Harcombe  
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Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: [publications@vicnhs.bc.ca](mailto:publications@vicnhs.bc.ca)  
[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

3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

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Cover Photo: Super Blood Wolf Moon, Lunar eclipse 2019. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy.

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

So...I may have jinxed us...  
In the January/February issue of the naturalist, I wrote "Enjoy the next couple of months...our winter is hardly considered winter by the rest of Canada. Lucky us!" And now, as I am writing this note, I am looking out of my window at the glistening snow and the 40+ cm that has fallen. Guess we shouldn't be so complacent—or at least, we shouldn't boast about it...

That said, hopefully by the time you are reading this issue of The Victoria Naturalist, the grey and damp of winter will be behind us and we can start enjoying the wonders that spring brings to our part of the world. Whether you were able to "escape" to somewhere sunnier/warmer or not in the past few months, now is a great time to take advantage of presentations and field trips brought to you by VNHS. Topics and trips are varied and interesting, and a good way to be outdoors—better than time spent inside, don't you think?

Interesting tidbit...Most of us are familiar with scientific names based on the names of people, e.g., Townsend's Warbler, *Setophaga townsendi*. I recently came across an article about Latin names drawn from fictional characters. The article is written by Stephen Heard, evolutionary ecologist and entomologist at the University of New Brunswick, whose chapter in his new book links Latin names to Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings books, among others. Names like *Harryplax severus* (a crab) and the sorting-hat spider, *Eriovixia gryffindori*, and two weevils *Macrostyphlus frodo* and *M. Gandalf* ("...both from the Colombian Andes. *M. frodo* has a body length of 2.8 mm, while *M. gandalf* is just 1.9 mm long (Morrone 1994). *M. gandalf* is, therefore, the lesser of two weevils"). Names even come from the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and others from Shakespeare's plays (hermione being one of them). Fascinating...and yet another reason to learn something new by investigating the source of each name. Article at <https://scientistseessquirrel.wordpress.com/2019/01/22/lets-all-relax-about-latin-names-from-pop-culture/>

Don't forget...articles on birding, botany, marine, general natural history, travel and environmental matters are welcome, as are images from field trips and other special sightings/events. Stories, short (as short as a photo caption) or long (no more than 2000 words) are appreciated.

Until next time...Happy Spring!

Gail Harcombe

# A Message from Your Board

Your Society made the news more than we expected in the early part of the new year: it turns out the topic of controlling cats with some of the same rules that apply to dogs was considered newsworthy by the local media. The board, in response to a complaint about cats bothering wildlife at Mystic Pond, decided to write a letter to all the local mayors and councils on the topic of free-roaming cats and their impact on natural environments. A very similar letter was sent to mayors and councils in 2011. It is very interesting how much has changed in the eight years since that first attempt to draw attention to this issue- this time several newspaper articles were written, past and present board members gave radio interviews, and there was quite a bit of response from the public. The good news is that much of the response was in favour of controlling pets, protecting birds, and responsible pet ownership in general. So far we have not swayed all councils to amend their bylaws or even consider our suggestions, so we haven't quite managed a sea change, just a small eddy!

Another couple of letters that were sent out by the board should be much less controversial: they were in support of grant applications by TLC The Land Conservancy for a

new initiative intended to encourage a young generation of naturalists through mentoring, training, and employment opportunities. At this point there is no expectation of the VNHS or even BC Nature, but eventually it would be ideal if there were more collaborations between the various organizations trying to teach people about the natural world.

The scanning of the back issues of the magazine is complete—on time and under budget! There are a few missing issues, so if you have any of those that are listed in the Bulletin Board on page 19, please get in touch with board member Stephen Ruttan. When we have these online, these back issues will be a treasure trove of natural history information, so we will be sure to let you know.

Also now available is the second edition of the *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region*. They are identical except for minor edits. The reprint was solely because the museum had sold all of the first editions, and the reprint is slightly more expensive.

Those of you that have been reading the Message from the Board faithfully will already know about the NatureHood of Greater Victoria initiative that aims to encourage all of us to appreciate our wonderful natural surroundings. Jacques Sirois has been championing this project, and in particular

the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, through his work with the Friends of the VHMB. This sanctuary—one of three in Greater Victoria—covers the Gorge Waterway and Inner Harbour, as well as the rest of the shoreline from Ten Mile Point to Macaulay Point. Through Jacques's efforts, there are now 100 signs that will go up in strategic locations to inform residents and visitors about the importance of this region for birds, but also other wildlife. The Victoria Natural History Society paid for these signs (~\$4700) and our logo is included on them (see left). See also the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary "primer" page 17.



# Super Blood Wolf Moon

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Photos by author



A lunar eclipse usually generates a great deal of excitement, especially for those with a passion for celestial events in the night sky. This past January's lunar eclipse was epic. It was given the title, a Super, Blood, Wolf Moon. The Super label is due to the close approach of the moon to the earth at this time, while on transit around the sun. The rusty red colouration assigned to this month's lunar eclipse is only seen at totality, when the moon is completely covered by the earth's shadow. The amount of dust particles in the earth's atmosphere contributes to the red/rusty colour. Volcanic eruptions that are occurring on earth definitely influence the amazing colours, seen not only in sunrises and sunsets, but also at the time of total lunar eclipses. The Wolf designation for January's full moon comes from the belief by Native Americans that wolves howl longer and louder in January due to the difficulty of finding their food. It has been determined that both February's full moon (Snow) and March's (Worm) moon will also appear larger than normal due to the moon's proximity to the earth.

Not only did we see a beautiful lunar eclipse in Victoria the evening of January 20th, due to clear skies, but something else was going on as we gazed skyward. According to a National Geographic bulletin, a few keen photographers and astronomers witnessed a probable meteor pummel the moon. A tiny flash of bright, white light that was only captured at totality, when the red moon was dominant in the night sky could be seen on some observer's photographs. That knowledge has set off a new and exciting search. An earth-orbiting satellite that takes photographs of the moon's surface is given the task of finding the moon's newest crater. It will take some time, no doubt.

When it comes to meteors, they are always bombarding the earth and the moon, but not generally seen during daylight hours. Lucky for us earthlings, our atmosphere protects us from most harmful consequences of space debris, but the moon is constantly pummelled and left scarred. I felt sure in one of my photographs of January

20th's lunar eclipse, I found a tiny pin-point of white light on the left side of the moon, as was described by others, when the moon glowed red at totality. Now how amazing is that when one looks to see the stars and planets at night, and not always the birds by day!



**VICTORIA NATURAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY**

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

**March 12, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Rm 159, Fraser Building,  
University of Victoria**

**Evening presentation to follow AGM:**

### ***Tales from Guyana***

*Ever seen a Harpy Eagle? How about a Giant Anteater? Join Andrew Harcombe for pictures and stories from a recent trip to Guyana*

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

# Southern Vancouver Island 2018 Christmas Bird Count Results



Golden-crowned x White-crowned Sparrow.  
Photo: Ann Nightingale.

In keeping with our strategy introduced last year, 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>

*Dates for the 2019 counts are: Victoria December 14; Sidney/South Salt Spring December 15; Sooke December 29 (tentative); and Duncan January 1, 2020. Mark your calendars now!*

## **Victoria (BCVI): December 15, 2018** **Ann Nightingale, Compiler**

Another year, another Christmas Bird Count under our belts!

Victoria is always among the count circles with the highest field participation. (Yeah, Edmonton is still killing us when it comes to feederwatchers!). This year, with the inclusion of the Christmas Bird Count for Kids (CBC4Kids), offered in partnership with Rocky Point Bird Observatory, we had 285 counters in the field, a new record for us!

The RPBO team of organizers and leaders hosted 31 kids and parents at Beckwith Park. Together, they counted a total of 243 birds from 26 species. Here are some excerpts from Lead Educator Andrea Neumann's report of the event:

"After everyone was registered, we gathered together to recite the Birdwatchers' Code of Ethics, as listed in the Junior Bird Guides supplied to us by Cats and Birds, and participants learned they would be joining in a citizen science tradition that was over 100 years old. Before the wind could scare anyone off, participants were divided into groups roughly according to ages, and assigned a bird walk leader. We had participants as young as 4 and as old as 10.

The event began under wind gusts of 35 km/hr, which were relatively tame compared to the 70-90 km/hr gusts forecast

the previous evening. The wind died down shortly after the participants began their walks. Leaders had a strong start, with two of the groups finding a Downy Woodpecker within the first 10 minutes.

The duck pond proved to be a highlight for both the adults and children. During site visits by multiple volunteers to Beckwith Park in the weeks leading up to the event, the duck pond consistently had 60-80 Mallards, and 5-12 Wood Ducks. However, on December 15th, bird walk leaders observed over 100 Mallards on the pond, and one single male Wood Duck. He received plenty of admiration that day, as participants admired his strikingly unique plumage among the familiar green and brown Mallards. As participants fed the ducks with the supplied bird seed, finding the Wood Duck became a dynamic game of "Where's Waldo." Eventually, a second male joined to share the spotlight—as well as the bird seed.

Despite the popularity of the Wood Duck, the event was more than just a one-bird show. Participants were also treated to Hooded Mergansers on the larger pond. There were also many species participants were likely to see in their own backyards, including Dark-eyed Juncos, House Finches, and Golden-crowned Sparrows. There were also several species even the newest beginner could recognize, such as the Anna's Hummingbird or Chestnut-backed Chickadee."

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](mailto:cbc4kids@rpbo.org).

Victoria counters found a total of 144 species, the highest total in Canada this year. Despite the challenging weather that kept two of our three boats at the dock, we managed to see almost 75,000 individual birds!

New records were set for Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose (all but one seen in the North Highlands/Butchart Gardens zone), Cackling Geese, Gadwall, Turkey Vulture (seen in 15 zones), Common Raven, Rusty Blackbird, and Swamp Sparrow.

We counted a number of known rarities in the area including Marbled Godwit, Winter Wren, Palm Warblers, Northern Mockingbird and Rusty Blackbirds, but didn't discover any new rare birds on the count day.

Misses included Mute Swan (now extirpated from the Capital Region), Ring-necked Pheasant, Eared Grebe, Sanderling, Barn Owl, Skylark (previous high count 960). Admittedly, three of these species were introduced to Vancouver Island, but it is still disconcerting to see numbers decline so drastically. A Harris's Sparrow was seen at the Cedar Hill Golf Course within Count Week, but not on the count day itself.

The FeederWatch results were predictably low, but I am optimistic that this may be the last year I say that. A few



Photo: CBC4Kids.

people have expressed an interest in taking on management of the FeederWatch, which can only make that aspect of our count better.

Overall, it was a very good count, and with the addition of the CBC4Kids, I wouldn't be surprised if we break the 300 mark for field participation next year. Wouldn't it be something if we could reach 100 FeederWatchers at the same time?

Thanks to all of the volunteer leaders, boat captains, counters, scribes, and post-count gathering organizers. It's an honour to be a part of such a wonderful tradition.

**Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS):  
December 16, 2018  
Daniel Dönnecke, Compiler**

The 2018 Sidney-South Salt Spring Island Christmas Bird Count started out with a blow. Winds gusting from the southeast saw three of our four boat parties cancelled. David Bell's team was the only boat to get out in the relatively protected waters of Saanich Inlet, while I traded the Parks Boat for the Pender Island Ferry to ensure that at least some of the other waterways got a little coverage. The sailing to Otter Bay is almost all within the count circle. Counting birds from a ferry is a lot more challenging though as the captain isn't slowing down or changing course for the birds. Everything has to be identified and tallied as you are sailing by.

As the day went on, the weather improved and the wind let up allowing for some nice afternoon birding. Overall 21,014 birds of 115 species were tallied by 82 participants.

Highlight birds included a Harris's Sparrow found by Jody Wells, a Rusty Blackbird found by Ann Nightingale and a Black Scoter found by Allan MacLeod's team. Also remarkable were a Band-tailed Pigeon found by Mary Robichaud, and three Eared Grebes, which made an appearance off Lochside Drive north of Saanichton Bay.

Overall numbers were below average. Dicky birds were in hiding during the high winds. Some species we usually

see on count day were missed entirely: Northern Shrike, any warbler, Sanderling, Surfbird, snipe, Marsh Wren and Hermit Thrush. Compared with the 13 year history of the count, we had lowest counts for several species, including Song Sparrow with 90 individuals (previous low count was 151 in 2007), House Sparrow with 116 individuals (previous low count was 219 in 2017), Northwestern Crow with 158 individuals (previous low count was 271), Pileated Woodpecker with 5 birds (previous low was 9 in 2017) and White-winged Scoter with only 7 birds (previous low count was 12 in 2017).

Despite the weather we also set some new high count records: Common Mergansers with 705 birds (previous high count was 460 in 2015), Eared Grebe with 3 birds (previous high count was 2 in 2005), Western Grebe with 617 (previous high count was 380 in 2013\*), Mourning Dove with 31 birds (previous high count was 22 in 2009), American Pipit with 40 birds (previous high count was 30 in 2015) and Brewer's Blackbird with 535 birds (previous high count was 385 in 2009).

A special thanks goes out to all the zone leaders, captains and counters in the field. This Christmas Bird Count would not be possible without you. It was great to see so many of you out there and to catch up and share stories at the post count gathering at the White Spot. I hope I will see many of you again for the 2019 season.

\*The count does not go back long enough to document the rafts of thousands of western grebes that used to winter around here.

**Sooke (BCSO): December 30, 2018  
Charlene Lloyd and Travis Muir, Compilers**

The Sooke Christmas Bird Count almost didn't happen this year, but as the deadline for go or no-go approached, Charlene Lloyd and Travis Muir stepped in to make it all happen. Everyone was most grateful! There were 56 participants, who tallied 18,152 individuals of 103 species.

Record-breaking counts were made for Cackling Goose, Bald Eagle, Black Oystercatcher, Anna's Hummingbird, and Hutton's Vireo. Our second ever Snow Bunting and third ever Swamp Sparrow were the most unusual birds seen on count



Photo: CBC4Kids.

day. Surf Scoter numbers were the lowest they've been in the 31-year history of the Sooke count.

The biggest miss was two small alcids near Race Rocks. The looks were good, but short, and the experienced observer felt 95% certain that they were Parakeet Auklets. However, he couldn't get back on them after they dove, so no photos and no confirmation. Keep your eyes out for them, though!

### Duncan (BCDU): January 1, 2019 Derrick Marven, Compiler

We had 56 people in the field with half of these volunteers with the BC Land Conservancy. Only six feeder watchers took part this year, very disappointing for the co-ordinator. Three routes were not covered this year due to falling numbers of good birding participants. We did have one boat out, and without their participation our final tally would have been a lot lower.

Weather conditions were ideal with hardly any wind, mild temperatures and dry conditions. Our great group of people found 109 species and approximately 22,000 individual birds.

Several new highs were recorded: Snow Goose (20), Brandt's Cormorant (92), Barred Owl (3), Anna's Hummingbird (172), Western Bluebird (5), and White-crowned Sparrow (92). No real rare species were found except a hybrid White-crowned x Golden-crowned Sparrow. Also an introduced Ring-necked Pheasant was found. Many species were low in numbers, with Steller's Jays leading the low mark with just 19 birds recorded.

Next year will be the 50th anniversary of Duncan Christmas Bird Counts. We can definitely use more counters and especially a few people to take on leadership of a zone. If you are interested or want to know more about what's involved, please contact Derrick Marven (marven@shaw.ca).



Photo: CBC4Kids.

### Species and Counts (new records in bold):

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Snow Goose	<b>61</b>	3		29
Gr. White-fronted Goose	<b>202</b>	2		
Brant	2	5		
Cackling Goose	<b>1254</b>	91	<b>280</b>	12
Canada Goose	5146	1457	1007	2037
Mute Swan		14	3	6
Trumpeter Swan	197	80	1	462
Tundra Swan	1	1		
Wood Duck	<b>183</b>			72
Northern Shoveler	94	9		351
Gadwall	<b>419</b>	2	5	43
Eurasian Wigeon	11	1		4
American Wigeon	2564	1019	292	1643
Mallard	4837	496	223	1211
Northern Pintail	478	2		288
Green-winged Teal	1312	95	9	322
Canvasback	31			
Redhead	1			
Ring-necked Duck	354	62	12	228
Greater Scaup	31	19	12	5
Lesser Scaup	49	9	1	491
Harlequin Duck	140	36	31	
Surf Scoter	991	238	63	55
White-winged Scoter	44	7	29	1
Black Scoter		1		
Long-tailed Duck	16	26		2
Bufflehead	1404	1187	777	385
Common Goldeneye	201	378	66	120
Barrow's Goldeneye	94	72	2	124
Hooded Merganser	329	137	110	128
Common Merganser	1593	<b>705</b>	180	1336
Red-breasted Merganser	308	1274	129	58
Ruddy Duck	2			21
California Quail	99	46	142	117
Ring-necked Pheasant				1
Pied-billed Grebe	41	6	13	8
Horned Grebe	191	173	118	35
Red-necked Grebe	53	23	68	2
Eared Grebe		<b>3</b>		
Western Grebe	11	<b>617</b>	174	
Rock Pigeon	798	298	126	51
Band-tailed Pigeon	2	1		2
Eurasian Collared-dove	72	64	31	87

**Species and Counts (new records in bold):**

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Mourning Dove	27	31		
Anna's Hummingbird	1067	<b>197</b>	<b>234</b>	172
Virginia Rail	2		2	1
American Coot	1071			108
Black Oystercatcher	64	<b>11</b>	102	
Black-bellied Plover	60	2		
Killdeer	98	5	11	2
Marbled Godwit	1			
Black Turnstone	199	<b>18</b>	<b>67</b>	
Surfbird	27			
Sanderling			1	
Dunlin	116	8		100
Wilson's Snipe	22		1	3
Spotted Sandpiper	4		1	1
Greater Yellowlegs	7		1	
Common Murre	172	36	4264	
Pigeon Guillemot	52	47	10	
Marbled Murrelet	30	48	8	21
Ancient Murrelet	12	19	95	
Rhinoceros Auklet	21	1	14	
Bonaparte's Gull	1			43
Mew Gull	2036	861	1038	1142
Ring-billed Gull	1			
Western Gull	9			1
California Gull	7	3	5	1
Herring Gull	2	1		1
Iceland Gull	163	22	154	156
Glaucous-winged Gull	6410	1173	666	1077
Red-throated Loon	19	14	20	2
Pacific Loon	43	36	85	3
Common Loon	15	69	14	13
Brandt's Cormorant	637	329	261	92
Pelagic Cormorant	354	224	146	10
Double-crested Cormorant	1108	199	314	122
Great Blue Heron	81	42	12	41
Turkey Vulture	<b>73</b>	6	22	
Golden Eagle	1			
Northern Harrier	4	4		5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	16	2	2	1
Cooper's Hawk	49	11	3	16
Bald Eagle	430	62	<b>100</b>	142
Red-tailed Hawk	67	17	14	30
Barn Owl				

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Western Screech-Owl	2			
Great Horned Owl	29	1	3	3
Northern Pygmy Owl	2			
Barred Owl	13		1	3
Short-eared Owl	1			2
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1			
Belted Kingfisher	35	26	20	13
Red-breasted Sapsucker	7	1	5	11
Downy Woodpecker	181	45	17	40
Hairy Woodpecker	31	6	13	7
Pileated Woodpecker	25	5	3	12
Northern Flicker	499	106	93	92
American Kestrel	3	5		1
Merlin	14	6	3	5
Peregrine Falcon	14	5		4
Northern Shrike	5			2
Hutton's Vireo	5	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	
Steller's Jay	21	20	33	19
Northwestern Crow	3718	158	193	398
Common Raven	<b>600</b>	133	103	259
Sky Lark		1		
Chestnut-backed Chick.	2354	580	413	259
Bushtit	1286	184	91	260
Red-breasted Nuthatch	429	109	60	65
Brown Creeper	147	53	42	17
Winter Wren	1			
Pacific Wren	279	107	107	30
Marsh Wren	20		3	23
Bewick's Wren	254	45	14	43
American Dipper	2			
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1131	519	414	95
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	243	73	70	47
Western Bluebird				5
Varied Thrush	78	55	92	21
Hermit Thrush	8		8	
American Robin	3818	776	338	567
Northern Mockingbird	1			
European Starling	2548	1243	712	1116
American Pipit	99	<b>40</b>		
Cedar Waxwing	50	88		11
Evening Grosbeak	4			
House Finch	1035	174	98	236
Purple Finch	168	38	16	84



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Species and Counts (new records in bold):

	Victoria	Sidney/ South Salt Spring	Sooke	Duncan
Red Crossbill	161	28	85	4
Pine Siskin	1765	900	623	2145
American Goldfinch	53	8	1	36
Fox Sparrow	386	117	94	79
Dark-eyed Junco	4472	1095	682	1004
White-crowned Sparrow	458	88	44	92
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1018	371	247	208
Harris's Sparrow		1		
White-throated Sparrow	14		1	2
Savannah Sparrow	4	2		
Song Sparrow	429	90	135	109
Lincoln's Sparrow	28	1	1	3
Swamp Sparrow	11		1	1
Snow Bunting			1	
Spotted Towhee	935	276	173	246
Western Meadowlark	17	29		
Red-winged Blackbird	1003	393	160	360
Brown-headed Cowbird	15	3		
Rusty Blackbird	<b>2</b>	1		
Brewer's Blackbird	518	535	179	241
Orange-crowned Warbler	2			
Palm Warbler	2			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	17			5
Townsend's Warbler	1		9	
House Sparrow	1174	116	102	383
Green-winged Teal (Eurasian)	2			
Western gull X GWGU	59		1	
Herring Gull X GWGU	3			
Common/Barrow's Goldeneye		19		
White-crowned x Golden-crowned Sparrow				1
Unidentified duck			2	
Unidentified scoter	12			
Unidentified gull	3824	163	845	152
Unidentified loon			1	
Unidentified cormorant	1171	13	111	
Unidentified alcid	4		111	
Unidentified sparrow	6		1	
Unidentified passerine	4			
<b>Total individuals</b>	<b>74,925</b>	<b>21,014</b>	<b>18,152</b>	<b>21,864</b>
<b>Total species</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>109</b>

# Odds and Ends

## The Canadian Christmas Bird Count

[reprinted from *The Victoria Naturalist* April 1959...  
interesting to compare then and now]

In the January to March issue of the Canadian Field-Naturalist, fifty-two Christmas Bird Counts are listed, made in areas ranging from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast.

Our own members recorded 37,974 individuals representing 100 species as published in the February "Naturalist".

Vancouver had the largest number of both species and birds with 104 different species and 102,698 individuals. They had 49 observers in the field. Their list includes 610 song sparrows, but only 14 Bewick wrens, which is odd. Their count of starlings was 30,683, but only 152 of the Japanese starling, the mynah.

Vernon had a good count of 75 species and 6766 individuals.

Glenevis, Alberta, with one observer, recorded seeing 18 species and 115 birds, and he worked from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., with ten inches of snow on the ground.

Hamilton, Ontario, managed to get a wonderful winter count in a 7 ½ mile radius—77 species and 12,366 individuals.

Toronto had 126 people in the field in 28 parties, and accounted for 79 species and 28,242 individuals.

In the extreme east, St. John's, Newfoundland, recorded 21 species and 3707 individuals, the observers working in a temperature from 12 to 23 [Fahrenheit] degrees and in two to four feet of snow.

# Salish Sea Creatures

By Tina Kelly

Photo by author



Agassiz's Peanut Worm—taken at low tide on Russell Island.

## Agassiz's Peanut Worm!

Gardeners and puddle-jumpers are familiar with Earthworms and those with composters know Red Wigglers. But most worm species live out of sight and marine

worms are no exception, found between sand grains, burrowing among rocks, or living symbiotically (mutualism, commensalism, or parasitism) with another animal. Worms vary in size and colour, and can be segmented or unsegmented. They can even come shaped like a peanut! These aptly named worms are small burrowing worms resembling unshelled peanuts. In the Pacific Northwest, there is thought to be 21 species!

One species is Agassiz's Peanut Worm, *Phascolosoma agassizii*; differentiated from others by the dark splotches or streaks on its introvert (extendable neck), which can sometimes be spotted protruding from under a rock. A mouth at the end of the neck features many short simple tentacles to capture detritus. The body of *P. agassizii* can be various shades of brown, light to dark, and feels thick and rough in texture. Agassiz's Peanut Worm grows to 15 cm and lives intertidally down to 220 m.

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# Tales from the HAT BC Community Bat Program

By Teresa Hall, guest writer and HAT Habitat Steward

Submitted by Paige Erickson-McGee, Stewardship Coordinator,  
Habitat Acquisition Trust



“It was after dark in the summer and I was looking for a straggler chicken in the barn. I heard bats squeaking, which wasn’t unusual for that time of the year because of the multitude of bats in the loft, but was unusual for that time of the day as they should have been out for the night. The squeaking seemed to be coming from the lower barn area as well as from the loft. I didn’t pay these squeaky anomalies a lot of attention as I was searching for the hen, but my brain was quietly putting these pieces together as I was looking around. As I shone my phone light along the hay bales that were stored along the wall (looking to see if the chicken had squeezed herself in there) I realized the lower squeaking was coming from there. I then saw this tiny, hairless, baby bat clutching the side of the barn where the wall met the floor. I guessed it had fallen from the loft through the eaves to the floor. That’s when I realized the squeaking above wasn’t usual for that time of night and surmised that there was a distressed parent or others of



the colony responding to the baby’s distress calls. I considered leaving the baby where it was in hopes the mother would find it there, but then thought that if it hadn’t happened yet, it might not. It was an awkward place for a bat to fly into.

I decided to put the baby in the loft as the adults seemed to be looking for it there. I put on a work glove so it would have something to cling to and it readily climbed onto the finger of the glove. I climbed up to the loft, took off the glove with baby still attached, and put it on the floor of the loft well away from the ladder entrance. Baby squeaked and there were some answering squeaks from at least one bat flying around in the loft so I crossed my now glove-less fingers and left. When I checked the next morning the glove was there but baby was gone so I am hopeful that the mum was able to fly down and get it.”

Teresa is the proud steward of a Townsend’s Big-eared Bat maternity colony in her barn. Townsend’s Big-eared Bats are at risk because they are confined to small regions of suitable habitat at low elevations in the southern part of British Columbia—precisely the areas that humans prefer to occupy. Townsend’s Big-eared Bat—*Corynorhinus townsendii*—is easily distinguished from other British Columbia bats by its enormous ears, which measure about half its body length. They actually roll up their ears like a cinnamon bun during hibernation to contain body heat!

HAT is raising funds for their bat program through the sale of bat houses that hold up to 200 bats. The houses provide a summer home for nursing female bats, so we call them “Maternity Boxes”—they are \$128.50 with tax and all funds go towards HAT conservation programs. Call 250 995 2428 or email [bat@hat.bc.ca](mailto:bat@hat.bc.ca) to support wildlife conservation in Victoria.

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# Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Corvids

By Val George

Photos by author

This is the first of a series of short articles about some of the more interesting and conspicuous bird families found in the Victoria bird checklist area. Other articles will focus on owls, hummingbirds, gulls, etc.

As a family, corvids (Corvidae) are some of the most widespread birds in the world, being present and widely distributed on all continents except Antarctica. Fossil records suggest that the family branched from the evolutionary tree some time in the mid-Miocene, about 15–20 million years ago. It probably originated in Australasia and dispersed from there.

The corvid family includes such birds as crows, ravens, jays, magpies and nutcrackers, together with others not represented in Canada. About 120 species exist in the world; about two dozen of these are present, or at least have been recorded, in North America. The Victoria area has seven on its checklist.

By avian standards, these birds are some of the most intelligent. For example, some of them hide food for future use and remember exactly where they put it several months later. Some use tools like twigs to get at food. And some, like the New Caledonian Crow made famous in documentaries and the literature for its superior intelligence, can even fashion special tools from twigs and leaves to extract insects from crevices.

Regarding their food, members of the corvid family are generally omnivorous, eating everything from seeds and berries to carrion and bread fed to them by humans. This ability to be opportunistic in their food preferences, together with their abilities to figure out what's best for themselves, has made them quite comfortable living with humans. And these behaviours are some of the main reasons why many corvids are increasing in numbers despite everything we've done to degrade habitats for other species of birds.

The most common member of the corvid family in the Victoria area is the Northwestern Crow (*Corvus caurinus*), very familiar to everyone, birders and non-birders alike. However, what most non-birders don't realize is that our crow is not the same species as the very similar American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) seen everywhere else in North America other than the narrow strip of Pacific Northwest coast from Alaska to Puget Sound. The Northwestern Crow is found only in this narrow strip of coast.

Northwestern Crows are some of the most intelligent birds and are noted for their complex social behaviours and vocal communication patterns. One very obvious aspect of these behaviours is their nightly roosting in fall and winter when they congregate in large flocks, sometimes numbering many thousands.

Two other corvids also very familiar to us in the Victoria



Common Raven  
(*Corvus corax*).



Steller's Jay  
(*Cyanocitta stelleri*).

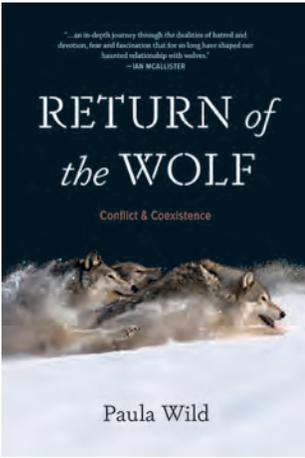
area are the Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) and the Common Raven (*Corvus corax*). The Steller's Jay is, of course, our official provincial bird. This is another bird that seems very comfortable living with us and is a regular visitor to garden feeders.

The Common Raven is the much larger relative of the Northwestern Crow (about three times as large by weight). Though less numerous than the crow, it's still a familiar sight in our area where it's often heard before it's seen due to its great variety of loud and far-reaching calls.

Ravens have a very special significance for Northwest Coast indigenous people and are often depicted in their art. In Haida folklore, for example, it was Raven that brought light to the world by releasing the sun from a box, and many of us have seen or at least heard of the magnificent sculpture by the famous Haida artist, Bill Reid, of Raven finding humans in a clamshell.

Two gray and black corvids are occasionally seen in our area—the Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) and the Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*). In recent years there has been a concerted effort by birders, and also many non-birders, to have the Canada Jay declared the official Canadian bird.

The remaining two corvids on the Victoria checklist are the Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) and the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica hudsonia*). Both are rare visitors, the former from east of the Rockies, where it's the common jay, and the latter from the interior of the province where it's widely distributed.



# Return of the Wolf

By Paula Wild

Presentation April 9, 2019

**W**olves were once common throughout North America and Eurasia but by the early twentieth century, eradication programs had drastically

reduced their numbers. Now wolves are returning to their ancestral territories and encounters with humans, livestock and pets are becoming more frequent. In her new book, *Return of the Wolf: Conflict & Coexistence*, award-winning Paula Wild explores our evolving relationship with wolves and how human attitudes affect the behaviour and conservation of the predator today.

On April 9 at 7:30 p.m., Wild will present “In Search of the Real Wolf,” an illustrated talk featuring remarkable images, fascinating facts and incredible stories. The presentation takes place in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at the University of Victoria. All ages are welcome. Wild will discuss wolf howls, the predator’s amazing sense of smell and hearing and how far and fast they can travel over land and water. She also examines the carnivore’s diet which can include anything from a mouse to a moose, as well as fish, seals and shellfish.

Wolves generally live in family units and work together to raise their young and hunt. Under certain circumstances, they will breed with coyotes. In what some scientists call high-speed evolution, these hybrids, sometimes called coywolves, can be found in many areas of eastern North America. Wild also examines the unique relationships wolves have with

ravens, bears and coyotes. But the wolf’s most complex relationship—and most dangerous—is with humans. As a highly social, intelligent animal, the wolf is proving adept at navigating the challenges of an ever-changing landscape and sharing habitat with people. But are humans adapting to wolves? Combining ancient myths, natural history, science and personal stories, Wild gets to the heart of what makes wolves so intensely compelling, yet so eternally controversial.

*Return of the Wolf* and Wild’s previous book, *The Cougar: Beautiful, Wild and Dangerous* will be available for purchase at \$35 each. For more info visit [www.paulawild.ca](http://www.paulawild.ca).



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# Delights of Over-wintering Rare & Unusual Birds, 2019

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Photos by author



The West Coast of Canada, beautiful British Columbia, can usually boast of mild winters any year, but this one has been exceptional. With ample sunshine, above normal temperatures and low precipitation most days, the past two months have been most enjoyable. With longer daylight hours too now, the need to get outside and

explore has been a driving force during my winter routine. It feels good to participate in daily walks and marvel at Nature's surprises. Already we have been given a colourful glimpse of an anticipated early spring's arrival, but we may be fooled, for a frigid Arctic blast is in the forecast for the next few days. That surely will have an impact on both flora and fauna and even the human population.

Meanwhile, in Victoria during the balmy weather of December and January, birders have been surprised and delighted with good views of not only several Harris's Sparrow, but also Palm Warbler. The two rather dashing Harris's sparrows that have been seen, in the Capital district are somewhat secretive individuals, preferring to hide among the thickets, and forage along the roadside. They are seen at certain times of the day in the company of other sparrows particularly around the Cedar Hill Golf Course trail, near the Club House. Their larger size, white belly, light brown head and pink bill coupled with black face and throat at maturity, make them quite distinctive. Alternatively, another sighting has been reported from the Saanich farm area off Wallace Road. Lovely to see this species as not every year we are this lucky with so many staying over the winter months.

The influx of the Palm Warbler appears to be quite unusual for the Capital Region. They have been seen and photographed by numerous birders, at places such as Whiffin Spit, Royal Bay/Latoria Gravel Pit, as well as on the hillside behind the Cedar Hill Recreation Centre. Evan Martindale Flats bordering the Garcia Nursery, can boast of several sightings of possibly two individuals. Lately Brentwood Bay and Doncaster/ Rowan Street have had sightings too. The probability of more individuals over-wintering around town is quite possible. It is conceivable that the changing weather/ temperature patterns and distribution of food are having an influence on different species and greater numbers are being observed. These sightings have nevertheless created



(far left) Harris's Sparrow (immature).

Harris's Sparrow (mature).



Palm Warbler.



Townsend's Warbler.



Redhead. This handsome fellow was still at Beacon Hill Park as of February 4th.



Northern Mockingbird.

fascination and delight for the observer. Most often, the Palm Warbler is seen pumping its tail as it forages on the ground or flits from branch to branch of a leafless Oak. This rather drab, winter plumaged, little brown warbler has flashy yellow tail coverts, a dark crown that colours rufous in the spring, a black eye line and white supercillium.

Predominately an eastern species, the western variety of Palm Warbler, is a much duller brownish bird. They generally spend their breeding season in the northern Spruce bogs of the Boreal forest, and should winter further south. Like many Boreal breeders, including the Harris's, they should spend their winter months where it is warmer. Observations of other more familiar warblers have shown up, in the Victoria region including, Townsend's and Orange-crowned.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention our other over-wintering, uncommon visitor, the Northern Mockingbird. It truly is most elusive, but delights those who have chanced a sighting. It has spent several months already in Uplands Park and continues to be seen sporadically. It too should have departed in the all for warmer climes when the Grey Catbird, who also made an appearance in the same Park took a south-bound flight. The above mentioned birds are listed in our Checklist of Birds as rare for this area, but sightings usually occur most years. I am sure we can look forward to many more unusual visits. Even the annual sighting of a REDHEAD can be considered unusual. The one individual that seems to have limited fear of humans has "wowed" its admirers at Swan Lake for several days. It then recently appeared at Beacon Hill Park to muscle in among the Mallards and American Wigeon to get its share of the spoils. It is conceivable that the two sightings are the same bird since each one appears quite unafraid of humans.

Amazingly, as this article goes to print, it is worth reporting that a Tufted Duck has now been sighted in the Portage Inlet area of the Capital District... Now that is yet another real rarity and one worth viewing! Many birders have taken up the challenge and been rewarded, including me.

We can surely anticipate more visits given the changing environmental conditions that are now upon us. The question is, what will grace our sky, seas and land, and create more 'delights' in 2019.

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# Historic Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS)

## A revitalization primer and factsheet for dummies

*“a lot more than Victoria Harbour, a lot more than birds, a NatureHood in the glorious marine front yard of the capital city of British Columbia”*

1) The oldest MBS in Pacific Canada, established on October 27, 1923 to control hunting, including market hunting of waterfowl like Brant, then a favourite Christmas meal. Established in light of dwindling bird numbers which, for various reasons, remain a concern today. [Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, Sequim, Wash., across Juan de Fuca Strait, was established for similar reasons in 1915, before the Migratory Bird Convention (1916), the Canadian Migratory Bird Convention Act (1917) and the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty (1918).]

2) **One of three historic MBSs in Greater Victoria** with Shoal Harbour MBS (April 10, 1931) and Esquimalt Lagoon (December 12, 1931). Historic cores of the new Greater Victoria NatureHood, recognized by Nature Canada on July 12, 2017, to highlight one of the best natural environments in urban Canada, a perfect place to connect with nature in the city and confront nature-deficit disorder.

3) **A reversal of situation linked to urban renewal.** Forgotten, ignored and neglected for decades but now benefiting from decades of deindustrialization, restorations, cleanups, rewilding and the recovery of some species delivered by various public, private and volunteer organizations at numerous sites (e.g. Trial Islands, Victoria Harbour, Selkirk Water, Gorge Waterway). As a result, the water in and near Victoria Harbour has not been this clean in more than half a century, for example.

4) **Several challenges remain**, some indefinitely, including water pollution, lack of (overfished) Pacific Herring, multifaceted human disturbance, dogs and cats, invasive Canada Geese, non-enforcement of regulations. A historic MBS in a major, modern-day, multijurisdictional urban centre is a complicated matter.

5) **28 km long encompassing 1840 hectares of seafront waters**, below the high-water mark, from Cadboro Bay to the Trial Islands, Victoria Harbour and Portage Inlet. Surrounded by 5 municipalities: Victoria, Oak Bay, Saanich, Esquimalt, View Royal. Includes a valued “working harbour”: Victoria Public Harbour (Six Harbour Agreement, 1924).

6) **Over 50 viewpoints and points of access**, including Gyro Park, Cattle Point, Kitty Islet, Clover Pt., Ogden Pt. Breakwater, Westsong Walkway, parks on the Gorge Waterway and Portage Inlet, Cuthbert Holmes Park. The Ogden Point Breakwater alone has 400,000 visitors per year.

7) **Diverse habitat** including: fast-moving tidal waters; tidal flats and marshes; a reversible fall in the Gorge Narrows; islands, rocky



shores, sandy beaches; eelgrass, surfgrass, kelp forests; vast beds of clams and seven small estuaries (e.g., Gorge Creek, Cecelia Cr., Bowker Cr.); coastal waters with forage fish (herring, sandlance, smelt); two trout- and salmon-bearing streams (Colquitz River & Craigflower Cr.); one Rockfish Conservation Area around the Trial Islands; a large maritime meadow on the Trial Islands (a B.C. Ecological Reserve in the MBS) with 20 rare plants, many endangered; mall maritime meadows with rare plants and Garry Oak ecosystems on contiguous shores at Cattle Point, Gonzales Pt., Harling Pt., Macaulay Pt. and Matson Lands.

8) **Remarkable, unusual biodiversity for urban Canada**, including: 270 species of birds, 28 mammals and at least 95 species-at-risk (mostly rare plants); birds year-round with relatively high diversity and numbers in winter; whales, seals, otters, fishes year-round; species like Pigeon Guillemot, Rhinoceros Auklet, Common Murre, Marbled Murrelet, Pacific Great Blue Heron, Pacific Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Brant, Harlequin Duck, Bufflehead, Surf Scoter, American Wigeon, Heermann's Gull, Brandt's Cormorant, Western Purple Martin (5 colonies), Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, Rock Sandpiper, Anna's Hummingbird, Bald Eagle, Butter Clam, Olympia Oyster, Northern Abalone, Giant Pacific Octopus, Puget Sound King Crab, Coho Salmon, Cutthroat Trout, Tiger Rockfish, Pacific Herring, Pacific Sandlance, Pacific Harbour Seal, Steller Sea Lion, Northern Elephant Seal, Orca (southern resident & transient), Humpback Whale, River Otter (common), Sea Otter (rare), Vancouver Island Ringlet, golden paintbrush, Macoun's meadowfoam, seaside birds-foot lotus & Victoria's owl-clover.

9) **A tool** to share a vision, promote ecological restoration, discuss solutions to nuisance created by wildlife and pay attention to our precious urban, natural environment (Greater Victoria's greatest asset according to the Victoria Foundation Vital Signs report).

10) **A great location** in a busy “wildlife corridor” at the southern tip of Vancouver Island. A central location in the Capital Regional District and the Salish Sea, in Lekwungen traditional territory: “the place to smoke herring”.

Thanks to the Victoria Natural History Society for helping fund the production of outdoor sanctuary maps that will be installed throughout the entire sanctuary as we prepare to celebrate its centenary on Oct. 27, 2023.

*Jacques Sirois, chair, Friends of Victoria Harbour MBS, rep., Greater Victoria NatureHood, jjs@telus.net tel.250-595-4421*



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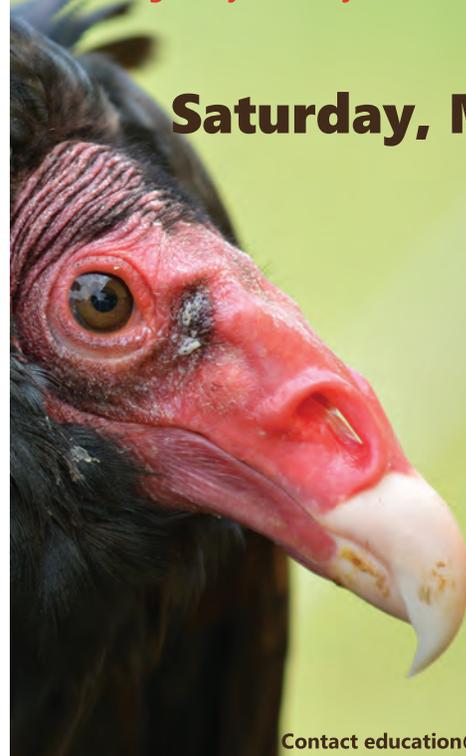
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## Save the Date

World Migratory Bird Day 2019 will take place on

### Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>



Contact [education@rpbo.org](mailto:education@rpbo.org) for details

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Issues of The Victoria Naturalist from the early years—to complete our scanning project...We are looking for copies in good condition of the following issues: May 1945, October 1946, April 1951, May 1951, September 1951, May 1954, September 1954, December 1955, January 1956. If you have these files away in a drawer or cupboard somewhere and are willing to let us scan them, please contact Stephen Ruttan at 250-472-2406 sfruttan@gmail.com

### Patagonia: Penguins, Parrots and Pumas Wednesday March 13th

Join us for a trip to Patagonia (presentation following Rocky Point Bird Observatory's AGM). Andrew Harcombe will delight you with pictures and stories of a recent trip to Argentina and Chile. Everyone welcome—you don't have to be an RPBO member to attend. AGM at 7pm, March 13, at the First Unitarian Church of Victoria, 5575 West Saanich Road. For more information, contact rpbo@rpbo.org

### Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks Sundays March 10 and April 14 at 9:00 a.m.

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

### Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair Contribution April 7-8, 2019

It is just under 2 months to the 58th consecutive Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair (VIRSF), taking place at the University of Victoria. The Fair is run by the Society for the Advancement of Young Scientists (SAYS), who promote science to students in the school system. The fair provides a way for students to come together and share their accomplishments with other students from other schools and the public. Each year, students participate in the VIRSF and projects are selected to go on to the Canada-wide Science Fair (CWSF). Students going to the CWSF benefit greatly from the exposure to other excellent young scientists and learning from the projects around them. The Victoria Natural History Society is proud to once again support the Science Fair, as we have

in past years, by providing judges and by contributing to the prizes. For more information and to register, go to [www.virsf.ca/](http://www.virsf.ca/)

### Sunday April 14, 12-3pm

The Boys and Girl Club Wilderness Camp Property in Metchosin is co-hosting an Earth Day BBQ and Natureblitz with Habitat Acquisition Trust and Metchosin Biodiversity. Discover the 99 acres of wonderful wilderness through expert-led talk and walks on plants and fungi, including Kem Luther, Andy MacKinnon, and many more! HAT will be offering introductory training on the use of iNaturalist phone app, for beginners. Free event, food is by donation, everyone is welcome. Address: 3900 Metchosin Rd, contact HAT for more information 250-995-2428 or check the website for more information [hat.bc.ca](http://hat.bc.ca)

### Monday April 22, 10am-2pm

Earth Day in the Gardens at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific in Saanich. An enviro expo for all things eco! FREE admission to the gardens, children's activities, and a free HAT workshop on Creating Frog Friendly Habitat with Native Plants. Check [hep.ca](http://hep.ca) for more info.

### Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Guided Bird Walks Every Wednesday and Sunday 9:00 a.m.

Bring binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal and informative walk around the lake area (usually led by VNHS members). Donations are appreciated. For information, see <http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php> Download the sanctuary bird checklist: <http://tinyurl.com/birdchecklist>

### Never stop learning new things...

Consider buying yourself or a birder friend *A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island* (CD/booklet set) by Rocky Point Bird Observatory. This guide provides an introduction to call notes of common birds found on southern Vancouver Island. When learning to bird by ear, many people concentrate on learning the songs because songs tend to be complex and often beautiful. However, songs are generally only by breeding males in the spring and summer, and there is a whole world of simpler sounds given year-round by songbirds of all ages and sexes. Being familiar with these could enhance your birding year-round! For information or purchase (discount for RPBO members), contact [rpbo@rpbo.org](mailto:rpbo@rpbo.org)

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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 32 new members since the last issue. Only the following has agreed to have their name published in this Welcome section.

**Amy Clinton-Baker**  
Shawnigan Lake

**Gwyneth Evans**  
Victoria  
*Birds, native plants*

**Alyse Frampton**  
Victoria  
*Birdwatching*

**Danica Gleave**  
Victoria  
*General natural history,  
youth education (I am a 20  
year Scouts Canada volunteer  
and am working towards my  
certification as a Forest  
School practitioner)*

**Nancy and Pierre Lambert**  
Victoria

**Gaylia Lassner**  
Victoria  
*Birds, Bird-friendly yards,  
native plants*

**Yvonne Mendel**  
Victoria

**Susan Wilson**  
Victoria  
*Birding*

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**REGULAR MEETINGS** are generally held September–April on the following days: **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Night:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: [http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518) and is updated regularly. PLEASE NOTE: EVENT DETAILS ARE ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION BUT CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS.

*Remember that if you want to do a talk or know someone who might, please contact one of the presentation night coordinators. If you have an idea for a field trip or wish to volunteer as a leader, please contact the Field Trip Coordinator Claudia Copley. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share! See page two for email addresses and phone numbers.*

**Codes for Field Trip Difficulty Levels:** LEVEL 1—Easy walking, mostly level paths. LEVEL 2—Paths can be narrow with uneven terrain. LEVEL 3—Obstacles in paths or steeper grades, requiring agility. LEVEL 4—Very steep, insecure footing, or longer hikes requiring good physical condition. **Please—no pets on VNHS field trips.**

*NB. While evening presentations are open to the public, field trips are designed for members. If space allows, guests may participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.*

*Despite our best efforts to schedule events in advance, changes are inevitable. Please check the website close to the date for any changes. We sometimes also schedule additional events due to unexpected opportunities. Please be sure that VNHS has your up-to-date email address to receive these changes or notice of additional events. If you do not use the internet, team up with someone who does to keep up with changes.*

## TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING

Meets every Tuesday at the foot of Bowker Ave on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) at 9:00 a.m., rain or shine. Birding activities take place at various locations around Greater Victoria. For more information call Bill Dancer at 250-721-5273. Novice and experienced VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.

## SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Meets every Saturday morning, usually at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. Check the Calendar page of the VNHS website ([http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518)) on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. Novice and experienced VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society. For more details, contact Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454 or Agnes Lynn at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or 250-721-0634.

## MARCH

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### Saturday, March 9

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 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 Rd. Follow Homathko Road to the end. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) for more information.

### Tuesday, March 12

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT AND VNHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

#### *Tales from Guyana*

Ever seen a Harpy Eagle? How about a Giant Anteater? Join **Andrew Harcombe** as he presents pictures and stories of these and more from a recent trip to Guyana. Evening presentation to follow AGM. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome. Note UVic Parking is \$3. Come early (7:00 p.m.) to socialize. Come for the AGM and stay for the presentation!

## Sunday, March 17

### 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 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 4. 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 \$20.00 per person. Participants will be limited to minimize number of cars. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.

## Tuesday, March 19

### BOTANY NIGHT

#### *Plants and landscapes in the Wakhan Corridor, Afghanistan*

On request, **Hans Roemer** agreed to repeat this presentation, originally given on a Botany Night in 2007. This is a PowerPoint compilation of colour slides taken during an expedition in 1964 when Hans was a young man. It shows a remote part of Afghanistan in the eastern Hindukush Mountains, wedged between Pakistan, Tajikistan and China. Be prepared for a long show. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

## Sunday, March 24

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Exploring Mary Lake Native Trees and Shrubs before Spring Flowers Burst Forth*

One of the most exciting new properties to come under protection from development is Mary Lake in the Highlands. The lake sits in the midst of a large parcel of carefully conserved and endangered Dry Coastal Douglas Fir ecosystem. The property provides habitat for several mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians as well as a diverse array of plant species. Lying between Gowlland Tod Provincial Park and Thetis Lake Regional Park, the Mary Lake property provides an important wildlife corridor between these two large areas of parkland and could provide future hiking trail connectors for humans as well. Check out the Greater Victoria Green Belt Society website ([www.marylakeconnections.ca](http://www.marylakeconnections.ca)) to find out how you can be a part of this valuable investment by becoming members or providing tax-deductible donations. We have partly chosen this time of year for our outing to challenge ourselves to identify the native shrubs and trees on the property before the leaves give away the plant identities. And of course we will be listening and looking for birds as well. This is also a unique opportunity for those who like to enjoy the natural surroundings but have difficulty with challenging terrain. There are many gentle trails already in existence for us to follow but good walking shoes will make your visit more comfortable. We will meet at the gate at 1772 Millstream Rd at 10:00 a.m. Parking is alongside Millstream Rd. To get there, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to the Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. The property is just past the Finlayson Arm

Rd turnoff. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

## Monday, March 25

### MARINE NIGHT

#### *The Magnificent Sebastes*

Biologist, scuba diver and author, **Andy Lamb**, will focus on the species of Pacific Northwest rockfish that are available to recreational SCUBA divers, sport anglers and interested members of the public. This group of fascinating fishes represents “the poster children” for the establishment of NO TAKE marine protected areas. This talk will present the relevant information on their biology and ecology. Prior to Andy’s talk Sarah Patton will give a brief announcement about the Ocean Wise Marine Mammal research program. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome. Note UVic Parking is \$3.

## Wednesday, March 27

### BIRDERS’ NIGHT

#### *West Papua New Guinea and Birds of Paradise*

**Don Cecile** will share the experiences of a small group of birders that spent nearly a month exploring the jungles of West Papua New Guinea in search of the most elaborately plumed birds in the world. Their courtship rituals are nothing less than extraordinary! 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.

## Saturday, March 30

### 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 am 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 31

### 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 maples (*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*). We start at

Goward House and wander around their 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. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Goward House, 2495 Arbutus Rd, and we'll go from there. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## APRIL

### Saturday, April 6

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 birds. 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 at shaw.ca for more information.

### Sunday, April 7

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 and 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 like the Yellow-rumped Warbler 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 at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Tuesday, April 9

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

#### *In Search of the Real Wolf*

As our territories increasingly overlap and our interactions with wolves grow evermore frequent, author Paula Wild examines the evolving relationship between humans and wolves in her new book, *Return of the Wolf: Conflict and Coexistence*. In a presentation featuring stunning images and incredible stories, Wild weaves together everything from natural history and interviews with conservationists to centuries-old mysteries and legends from around the world, and traces attitudes toward wolves that once led to near-extinction. We meet in Room

159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

### Saturday, April 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Birding Royal Roads & Esquimalt Lagoon*

Join **Dannie Carsen** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. We should see a good variety of migrating shorebirds and passerines. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of Esquimalt Lagoon by the washrooms. This is about a five-hour walk. Bring a drink and a snack if you wish. Esquimalt Lagoon is on Ocean Blvd, off the Old Island Highway. Contact Dannie at (250) 544-2117 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### Sunday, April 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *28th Annual Camas Day*

For the past 28 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 7:00 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 ([friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca](http://friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca)) for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, email [royraf@outlook.com](mailto:royraf@outlook.com) or phone 250-380-5023.

### Tuesday, April 16th

BOTANY NIGHT

#### *Ten Million Years per Minute: The Story of Plant Life on Earth*

Land plants evolved roughly 500 million years ago. Since their humble beginnings, land plants have evolved roots, leaves, seeds, and diverse physiologies. **Barbara Hawkins** will discuss the morphological and anatomical developments in plants that have allowed them to diversify and cover most of the Earth's land surface. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

### Good Friday, April 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

#### *Early Spring Flowers and Birds at Gore and Oak Haven Parks*

What better way to spend Good Friday 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 at shaw.ca for more information.

### Saturday, April 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

#### *Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to Offer*

Join **Rick** to enjoy the wildflowers and the birds as well. 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 at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Easter Sunday, April 21**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Leisurely Walk up Lone Tree Hill***

This little knoll is a treasure trove of spring wildflowers and interesting birds. The trail is a gradual climb but we take it at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. It's also a good opportunity on the way up to practice listening for the different birds. As well as the residents, a few of the migrating birds are back on the hill by now. We should be able to enjoy the returning Orange-crowned Warbler singing his heart out. It's a bit early for the full diversity of plant species but it's fun to see which flowers are the early ones in the long progression of blooms that we enjoy in Victoria. We also get to take in the fantastic views from this high viewpoint when we reach the top. Starts at 9:00 a.m. To get to the park, 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 to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Easter Monday, April 22**

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. 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 at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Tuesday, April 23**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Macaulay Point intertidal walk***

We will meet at the Fleming Beach boat launch parking lot at the foot of Lampson St. in Esquimalt at 12:00 noon and walk

out to the rocky intertidal zone on the point. The footing can be slippery and wet so please wear appropriate shoes or rubber boots. The 2 ft tide should expose many of the common critters and hopefully, some rarer species. For more information contact **Phil Lambert** 250-477-5922.

### **Wednesday, April 24**

BIRDERS' NIGHT

#### ***The Old Man and the Vultures***

Pender Island's **Dave Manning**, a birder for over 50 years, became hooked on vultures when he stumbled upon a Turkey Vulture chick peeking from its nest cave. His program includes the three vultures of North America, with a special emphasis on a Turkey Vulture nest site he monitored from mating to fledging of the chick and migration of the family. He has recently published a book on his experiences with these often misunderstood birds. 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.

### **Saturday, April 27**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

#### ***Birding Along Lochside Trail at Blenkinsop Lake***

Join our leader **Kevin Slagboom** on a walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. We will check to see if migrants such as swallows, warblers or maybe an early Black-headed Grosbeak have joined the residents such as Cooper's Hawks and Downy Woodpeckers. If we try to spot these birds before the leaves fill in completely, they might be easier to see, but each year is different. If it's a nice day, we will continue along Lohbrunner Road to the lower reaches of Mount Douglas and walk back south through the park to reach Mt Douglas Cross Road, which will take us back to where we started. Meet at 7:30 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Sunday, April 28**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Walking Around James Bay's Urban Forest***

Join us on a walk around these old heavily-treed James Bay streets with arborist **Michael Marcucci**. We'll talk about how these street trees add to the important Urban Forest in our area. These trees will be mostly non-natives but we will talk about the benefits and the challenges of trees in the urban environment. Michael will also encourage us to put on our "tree goggles" and do some tree identification as well. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at Irving Park, Michigan at Menzies. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Monday, April 29**

MARINE NIGHT

#### ***How storms impact the coasts***

**Dr. David Atkinson**, Department of Geography at UVic, will discuss how storms affect the ocean and impact the coast. How does the nature of the coast—water depth, type of beach material, coast shape—affect how a storm can cause impact? What are special features of the Arctic coastal zone? Why are there bigger waves in winter? To hear the answers to these questions, meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome. Note UVic Parking is \$3.



## **28th Annual Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat Camas Day**



**Sunday, April 14, 2019**



For the past 28 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 [friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca](http://friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca) for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, email [royraf@outlook.com](mailto:royraf@outlook.com) or call



**250-380-5023**