



The Victoria **NATURALIST**

MAY
JUNE
2007
VOL 63.6

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
Contents © 2007 as credited.
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

Editors: Claudia Copley, 479-6622
Penelope Edwards, James Miskelly
Desktop Publishing: Frances Hunter, 479-1956
Distribution: Tom Gillespie, Phyllis Henderson
Printing: Fotoprint, 382-8218

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John Henigman, 598-6326, henigman@pacificcoast.net
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James Miskelly, 477-0490, jmiskelly@telus.net (*Swan Lake Rep.*)
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Clare Aries, 858-2900, indiaaries@yahoo.com
Wendy Tyrrell, 598-7276, wendyct@telus.net

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Deadline for next issue: June 1, 2007

Send to: Claudia Copley

657 Beaver Lake Road, Victoria BC V8Z 5N9

Phone: 250-479-6622

Fax: 479-6622 e-mail: dccopley@telus.net

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We request submission of typed, double-spaced copy in an IBM compatible word processing file on diskette, or by e-mail. Photos and slides, and diskettes submitted will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material. Digital images are welcome, but they need to be high resolution: a minimum of 1200 x 1550 pixels, or 300 dpi at the size of photos in the magazine.

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COVER PHOTO: I realized that in all the time I have been doing the magazine, no reptile had ever been on the cover – a serious oversight. Fortunately there have been stories on the inside about snakes and lizards, or I might have been called out before now for showing a bias. Others might say that birds are just feathered reptiles, and they're in every issue! While no longer reported from our region (this photo was taken in the Okanagan), a coastal subspecies of Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), has been collected in the past – rarely (twice!) and a long time ago. But I could not resist this photo because it has what I hope for in a cover shot: portrait format and very high resolution. *Photo: Gavin Hanke*

The news one morning gave some recent survey results of an opinion poll. Apparently the majority of the Canadians surveyed felt that none of our three levels of government are doing enough about climate change. Interestingly, the same poll found that the majority also felt that their quality of life would improve if climate change initiatives were implemented. I agree with both points.

The thing that boggles my mind is how conflicted we appear to be regarding the role of government. Most people seem to really resent being told what to do, when to do it and how to do it by “government”. And yet, when we need to, we default to the blame game when it comes to the choices we're making. How convenient.

We all know the *what*, *when* and *how* of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and apparently the majority of us feel that things would be better for *us* if we took the initiative.

So why are we waiting to be forced by “government” to change our behaviour?

Claudia

P.S. Please note when you are sending in submissions that my email address has changed.

Errata: Moralea Milne should have been given credit for the cover photo, the photo from the top of Camas Hill (page 18) and the skipper photo (page 19), all in last issue (vol 63 issue 5).

A Plan for the Canadian Nature Network

By John Henigman and Sarah Weaver-Kipp

The Canadian Nature Network is achieving momentum. Nature Canada, with the support of BC Nature (Federation of BC Naturalists), has sponsored Sarah Weaver-Kipp to visit all naturalist clubs in the province and get from the clubs what they vision would be an effective role for an emerging Canadian Nature Network. Information on the Canadian Nature Network can be seen at: http://www.naturecanada.ca/nature_network.asp.

Last fall Sarah visited Victoria and conducted an evening workshop with members of the Victoria Natural History Society to get our input to the purpose of a Canadian Nature Network. At the workshop were five directors of the VNHS, as well as other members and representatives from Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, and the Cowichan Valley Naturalists. The following is a summary of our comments to Sarah regarding the future role of a Canadian Nature Network.

Our priorities

Here are the priorities that the group identified that could be worked on by a Canadian Nature Network. The priorities are wild spaces, government relations, adult and child education, and last but not least, the joy of nature.

Wild Spaces: We need increased numbers of protected areas, corridors for native and migratory species, and effective management of "protected" areas. There must be increased natural values in urban and residential areas. Nature should not be somewhere you have to drive to.

Government Relations: We need a unified strong voice of naturalists, and a real consultative role with government.

We must support habitat legislation that has teeth and that works. We need transparency of priority and processes of government decision-making that considers peoples' ecological, economic, and social values.

Education (Children and Adults): We need regionally relevant education that covers the importance of nature; and involves kids in a direct experience of nature. We also need to increase awareness of urban toxins and their cumulative effects.

Exploring our opportunities

For Wild Spaces: We want more land, better treatment of wild space, more linkages, and wilder tame space. And, to achieve these things we will need more money, legislative support, and a fundamental shift in public psyche and culture.

In Government Relations: A Canadian Nature Network could raise the profile of nature and organizations that support it. It could have a greater influence and credibility with government, and it could educate politicians and managers about nature. There needs to be a dedicated Canadian Nature Network person responsible for government relations who can speak on behalf of naturalists.

In Education: Early childhood education nature programs should be supported by provincial and federal governments and in particular by Health Canada. All teachers should be schooled in nature. School curricula need increased time devoted to nature awareness. Field trips with direct outdoor experience should be part of the curriculum, supported by school districts, provincial guidelines and teacher resources.

The group saw many current policies of Health Canada as too much stressing sports and adversarial to natural experience. Nature is not dangerous to your health, rather the opposite. An alliance of Health Canada with Nature Canada is recommended to include media promotions, incentives, and support of outdoor nature programs. "To create healthy kids we have to have kids who are connected to nature."

The Canadian Nature Network can help us get a bigger voice to achieve our goals.

Sarah Weaver-Kipp is now in the process of completing her survey of clubs and will be providing BC Nature and Nature Canada a report of her findings.



Jim Farrell 477-7291 jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca

JUNE 20 ~ 24

WORKSHOP

Cortes Island Natural History: A Gaian Perspective

GEORGE SIRK



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George Sirk incorporates both James Lovelock's theory that our planet is a self-regulating supra-organism and Rupert Sheldrake's views on morphogenesis. From Australasia and Papua New Guinea, he synthesizes the world's great bioregions for a unique global perspective. George pioneered and led the Hollyhock naturalist program for six years and appears regularly on CBC Radio. He is also the host of "Nature Boy" at the University of Victoria. In the past nine years he was in the political arena representing Cortes Island. During his tenure he relished in the struggle to champion for the creatures and habitats that needed attention and protection. George's refreshing perspective, enthusiasm and passion for the wonders of nature are highly contagious.

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Making Great Field Notes

By Ann Nightingale

Field notes are useful for identifying plants and animals that are not familiar to you, whether they are rare or common. Writing the notes for plants can be a little easier, since they tend to sit still a little better than birds or other animals, but the principles are the same.

Write on what you have at hand. While it's handy to have a notebook or journal for your records, don't let the absence of one stop you from taking notes. A scrap of paper, the back of an envelope, or even a paper napkin will do in a pinch!

Write what you observe. Start with the general, and then go for the details. Pretend you are describing your subject to someone who has never seen one of these before. Use comparisons rather than precise measurements, unless you are very good at your estimates. Don't worry about sounding silly. Write what comes to your mind.

Write what you don't observe. If you have looked for a feature, and it is absent, be sure to note that as well. A note that says that a bird didn't have wingbars or that an insect didn't have an exposed proboscis could be helpful in identification.

Look for key features. For birds, this includes things such as the colour of the various body parts, including the beak and the feet. For plants, it includes the shape of the leaves and the pattern of the veins on them. For insects, the features of the wings and type of antennae may be clues to identification.

Make notes about habitat. Often the habitat can offer some suggestions to the identification of your subject. Most plants and many animals are limited to certain environments.

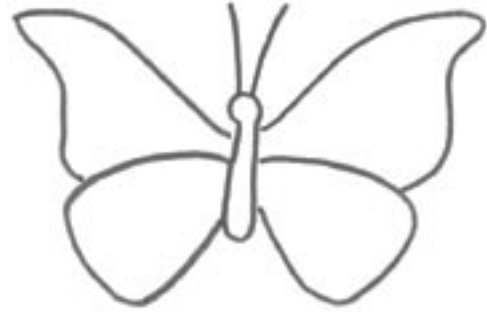
Count. It's important to note the number of wings on an insect, the number of wingbars on a bird, and the number of petals on a flower.

Compare. Even on an individual subject, it's possible to make comparisons. Are the butterfly's upper wings larger or the same size as the lower wings? Are all of the petals on the flower about the same size, or do they vary? Do the bird's wings reach halfway down the tail when they are folded, or are they shorter?

Use all your senses. Well, almost all of your senses. Don't forget to note a scent or texture if it is present. Use caution for taste, though! Don't eat anything that you have not identified. Smell is often as diagnostic as taste. Describe

any sounds the subject was making, and the source if you can determine it. For instance, was it a vocal noise, or the sound of wings flapping?

Be sure to note behaviour, even for plants! Were there tendrils that wrapped around adjacent plants, or was the flower facing toward the sun? Did the bird walk or hop? Did the insect hover, fly in a straight line or zigzag through the air? What kind of posture did your subject have?



Draw a sketch. It needn't be a work of art, but it will help remind you of the features you saw in the field when you get a chance to go back to your guides. If you have no sense of scale, you can always carry around "generic" line art of your usual subjects, and fill in the details.



Keep going. If your subject stays around, keep refining your description until you can't find any more to write about.

What can you reject? If you have eliminated a similar species, make a note of why you eliminated it. This may be important later if someone asks how you knew it wasn't the other species.

Consult the field guides or other naturalists. Other naturalists may be able to narrow your options based on your description. If you can find your subject in the field guides based on your notes, you are well on your way!

Practice, practice, practice! Writing great field notes is something that improves with practice. Try writing field notes for birds, plants, insects or other animals that you know well. You might surprise yourself with what you learn!

Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS)

Summary of 2006 Breeding Season in the CRD

By Gwen Greenwood and Wendy Tyrrell

As many of you know, the WiTS program has been monitoring wildlife trees with nesting Bald Eagles, Osprey, and a few other species on Vancouver Island since 2001. The program now includes the Lower Mainland and South Okanagan. In addition to establishing a baseline for the breeding population of eagles amidst many habitat changes, WiTS also focuses on community education and habitat protection through landowner contact and working with municipalities.

The eagle nests that were active in 2006 were very successful!

A total of 40 trees were monitored:

30 active territories monitored

25 eaglets fledged from 14 nests

16 nest sites failed or did not successfully produce young.

The remaining mystery is the number of nests that recorded early activity but did not produce any young. This scenario was evident also in 2005.

One of the notable events of 2006 was the rescue, prompted by Wild ARC, of a mature eagle on one of the tiny islands near Sidney. Wild ARC cared for this adult initially, treating her primary injury and nursing her back to health. Wild ARC knew that once she was flying again she would require months in a flight pen and, having only one pen that they would need to house other patients this summer, Wild ARC sent her to OWL Rehab in Delta. Initially, the female eagle showed no sign of significant injury or detectable illness. Her malnourished state and inability to fly remain yet another mystery. Likely there was trauma to her wing and soft tissue damage. The good news is that she recovered fully and was released in September, back on the same island. She took her time, atop a nearby Douglas-fir, to familiarize herself and calm down. You could see her gradually straighten up more and more and regain her regal presence. She then flew across the adjacent body of water to perch near a nest on the next island. How heartwarming to watch that return to freedom! Special thanks to Reg Kirkham from "Island Camping" for donating his time and boat for this rescue!

There are many small islands within an 8 km radius of Sidney. We know of 23 nest trees, and, while our monitoring of those islands is still a bit sporadic, we have confirmed at least seven young fledged in 2006.

While the number of young eaglets produced some years can appear to be fairly high, it must also be remembered that only about 10% survive to adulthood, which translates into the addition of potentially only three adult bald eagles from 2006 in our region. Food supply and the availability of



Photo: Gwen Greenwood

secure nesting sites remain a critical issue for these magnificent birds.

Other species monitored include:

Great Horned Owl: Two sites produced five owlets

Osprey: Three sites produced six young

Red-tailed Hawk: No active nests monitored this year.

Does anyone know of any nest sites?

We are *very* fortunate to have Wendy Tyrrell join the CRD WiTS team this year.

Wendy has a BSc in Ecology and Systematic Biology and has worked as a restoration ecologist in California since 2003. Wendy will be coordinating the Metchosin to Saanich area and Gwen will continue to do the Saanich Peninsula, islands near Sidney, and DND lands.

If anyone has any eagle or other raptor nest sightings, or if you are interested in being a monitor, we would love to hear from you. There are always new nests cropping up!

Thanks to all our dedicated monitors, FBCN, and to all who make this program viable!

Contact information:

Wendy Tyrrell, 598-7276, wendyct@telus.net

Gwen Greenwood, 652-2876, tggreenwood@telus.net

There's a Bewick's in my BBQ!

By Bill Dancer

For the past two weeks I have watched as a pair of Bewick's Wrens – a very focused pair – have been filling up my barbeque with a very interesting mix of items. To quote from a number of references: “they fill their chosen nesting cavity with sticks, leaves and other odds and ends, and then line with feathers and other soft material”.

Well, we have had two weeks of twigs and dead leaves. The odds and ends that I have observed going in are about one third of a hair comb, clumps of lichen and most notably a letter sized piece of 3 mm clear plastic sheeting that one of them pinched out of our greenhouse.

The placement of this last item was very interesting. It was hauled to the nest site, where one bird went into the barbeque and pulled while the partner kept a hold of the plastic and slowly guided it in. Once inside the barbeque both birds spent five or so minutes, I presume, adjusting this object into position (what else could have been going on? – I slyly ask myself).

From my observations to date I have to conclude that Bewick's Wrens work on a “job and finish” day's work routine or that they are unionized. I conclude this because on full working days they are remarkably consistent in the hours they work (right now 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.) and they do not work in the rain.

I was tempted to come down on the side of being unionized. However, it soon occurred to me that every item brought to the nest without exception was dry – no rising damp or leaky condo worries in their home.



Bewick's Wren at the barbecue. Photo: Bill Dancer

If the pattern of weather we are presently experiencing keeps up and they do indeed “fill the cavity” it is going to be a no-BBQing spring. However, the joys of watching these little fellows' antics will more than make up for that.

I look forward, neighbours' cats and raccoons permitting, to seeing the young fly off. But more than that, to dissecting the nest and seeing just what the ‘odds and ends’ of this particular nest consisted of.

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The Bird that Came Back

By Emma Barber

Kelowna BC, 1984. One day in late spring, coming home from school, my sons, William and Greg, found a baby bird on the front lawn with an injured wing. They took it in the house, made a little bed (nest) in a little box, and fed it worms and insects. They would take it out on the deck for fresh air and sit it on the railing. One day, while on the railing, it flew away. The boys were sad/happy to see their friend go.

In October, while having a cup of coffee on the deck, a bird flew down to the railing, singing lustily and chirping. When it dipped its beak into my coffee cup I was startled and thought somebody's pet bird had escaped. Then it hopped onto my arm and started pecking at the buttons on my blouse. I jumped a little and the bird flew onto the roof just a few feet away.

At this point I called William and Greg to come see this crazy bird. As they came out, the bird flew down to the floor of the deck and they recognized it as the baby they had looked after. William brought out a bowl of water, which the bird then hopped into and had a bath, chirping the whole time –much to our delight. Greg brought out some bread crumbs which it pecked at, still chirping and singing. We concluded that it came to say goodbye before going south for the winter. I had taken a photo of it as a baby, but in the excitement didn't take one of the adult. After looking in a field guide I am sure that it was a Varied Thrush.



Photo: Emma Barber

GEORGE SIRK

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Communing with ‘Gentle Giants’

By Marie O’Shaughnessy

The history of Beautiful British Columbia is intrinsically woven with the sea. Its diverse coastline embraces the shallows and the depths. Its mountain ranges stand tall, watching over the ebb and flow of the tides, while its shores are bathed by the relentless waves of the Pacific Ocean. The sapphire sea makes this province the jewel of the Pacific North West. And within these nutrient-rich waters live a host of fascinating sea creatures. One of the mammals among these creatures is the mighty humpback whale. Its epic journey is rated as one the longest annual migrations within the animal kingdom. From the warm waters of Hawaii, where it mates, calves and “sings” during the winter, it sets off to the cold waters of Alaska to feed during the summer months. Across the vast Pacific Ocean the endangered humpback whale may travel as much as a 1,000 miles per month to reach its destination.

My introduction to these so-called “gentle giants” was during their migration in late September 2006. In ten weeks

I was to able to embrace and experience a new passion for all things marine. As late as December 6, 2006, I was on the water and able to observe and photograph possibly the last two humpback whales on migration from Alaska, foraging just off the Victoria waterfront. Who would have thought that the whales from Alaska would still be seen so close to our shores?

As a young girl I had dreamed of becoming a marine biologist. The bountiful ocean, full of enchanting creatures, had a certain allure. Growing up in the big city of London, England just didn’t allow me the luxury of a life close to the sea. However, when the urge to see, hear and smell the ocean took hold, I would hop a train and arrive at Brighton, Sussex with my study books. Here I would spend time on the beach luxuriating in the clean, fresh air that blew across the English Channel. In retrospect, I was never quite sure why my career choice led me in a different direction.



Photos: Marie O’Shaughnessy

Sometimes it takes years to come full circle and find oneself at just the right place again. British Columbia, with its abundance of wildlife for the viewing is the quintessential place. "Home" at last, I was now able to reconnect with a past longing and indulge my senses in viewing the variety of marine life our diverse offshore habitat has to offer. This was a new beginning for me. During the past 20 years, my life and camera lens have always been focussed on birds. A visit to Race Rocks in September no doubt partially influenced my decision to add a new horizon to my love of Nature. A year ago the exposure to the magic of Dr. Paul Spong's "Orca Live" heightened my awareness of the world at sea. On crutches and confined to barracks at that time, I had hours of opportunity to watch and listen to, through my computer, the northern resident killer whales. The cameras and hydrophones from Hanson Island, home of the Spongs, relayed entrancing videos of undersea life in one of BC's most picturesque locations. "Orca Live" was the research tool for study of the northern resident orca pods travelling through Johnstone Strait. The seeds of passion for orca and other marine life blossomed at that time and left a lasting impression. My enthusiasm for these wonderful and intelligent mammals led me to various web sites on the computer. Knowledge is everything, and leads to understanding and conservation. Observing, documenting and recording the behaviours and sounds of the marine life in these

waters is a full time career for many scientists. Research has enabled us to learn much more about these vulnerable and endangered creatures, and that includes the baleen whale populations that ply the waters off Victoria.

Observing and photographing humpback whales over two months as they migrated through our waters to either Mexico or Hawaii was remarkable. As many as 18 individual whales were sighted during the months between September and December. These 40 to 50 foot giants with their distinct humped dorsal fin and shades of dark grey and white colouration would ply the waters just off our harbour. Several mothers and calves remained in the waters for six weeks or more. Although that figure doesn't sound extraordinary, it represented an all-time high for this area. Ten years ago one would have seen none. Humpbacks had been virtually eliminated by commercial whaling in the early years of this past century. Now their numbers amount to 10,000-15,000 worldwide. In 1986, the International Whaling Commission finally placed a moratorium on whaling, as some species had seen a 90% reduction in their numbers. But even now, certain countries continue to slaughter these magnificent creatures under the guise of research. Newer and more advance methods of determining age and gender are currently available without killing the mammals of the ocean. One has to ask the question, "How is it possible that rogue nations can continue to kill while an international mandate exists that is designed



to protect species at risk?” These rogue nations comprise one of the biggest threats to whales worldwide. The whales’ presence in shallow waters and predictable migration routes make them extremely vulnerable to man’s occupation of the sea. Continued threats from man include small and large-scale whaling, entanglement in fishing gear, pollution, heavy boat traffic and now naval sonar testing. Natural predators of humpback whales include the killer whale (mammal eating orca) and some species of shark. Combined with man’s impact, these threats contribute to declining numbers of whales throughout the world. Their recovery is very slow since female whales may calf only every two or three years.

Choreographed, social foraging is a unique form of hunting that the humpbacks have mastered. Several whales group together to feed creating a curtain of bubbles called a “bubble-net”.

The waters off Victoria this fall posed little threat to migrating mammals. My time of observing and documenting the humpbacks was most rewarding. I was able to observe the same individuals, females with their calves, over time as they cruised gracefully off shore. I would see them locally near Race Rocks or out in the Juan de Fuca Strait. The big bull sea lions that haul-out at Race Rocks seemed to enjoy the company of these visitors and at times appeared to hunt cooperatively with them. Food appeared plentiful as I watched these mammals during feeding forays. When they weren’t feeding, the whales would thrill us with their many behaviours, which included logging, kelping, breaching, spy-hopping, tail-lobing and pectoral flipper slapping. These behaviours are thought to be ways of communicating, concentrating food or removing parasites. Or they may simply be enthusiasm, acrobatic display, or playfulness. The young ones are much more active it seemed, rather like humans. Their pectoral flipper, which can be as long as a third of their body length, would rise then slam back to the surface with a loud thunk. These flippers are the big-wings that the scientific name for the humpback refers to (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). It is interesting to note that the aeronautics labs in the USA are conducting research by experimenting with the shape and form of the humpback whales’ flipper. Apparently the design of this appendage, when applied to aircraft, has proven to reduce drag, provide more lift, and withstand stall at certain angles.

Breaches by humpbacks were always the most spectacular behaviours observed. A huge wave of water would rise around the descending whale. Breaches are considered

extreme powers of strength, for it takes the whale’s mighty, 15 foot wide tail fluke to generate enough force to propel the whale upwards. Approximately 40 tons and more of whale would often burst through the surface, much to the amazement of the onlookers. At other times the whales appeared as curious about us as we were of them, which, when viewed from the shore, might give the wrong impression that boaters are harassing the whales. These are wild creatures that have the intelligence to make decisions either to stay close or move off. They would often move closer to the stalled boat to take a look at us, then disappear beneath the craft, only to break the surface with a huge “blow” several yards away. Rising from their paired nostrils, a 15-20 foot plume of mist would announce that this was indeed a humpback whale. Each whale species has its own signature blow. Markings on pectoral fins, humps, and flukes also individualize these giants. Reaching 40 to 45 feet long and weighing as much in tons, these streamlined yet somewhat bulky animals are toothless. They belong to the family of rorqual whales, Balaenopteridae. Instead of teeth they have a mouthful of baleen, a keratin substance that resembles human nails. A row of baleen plates, dark gray in colour and 2 to 2.5 feet long, grow from each side of the roof of the mouth. A rounded protuberance near the tip of the lower jaw is anchor for 14 to 35 broad throat grooves. These two adaptations create the huge throat that gulps krill or small fish. The action of the tongue against the roof of the mouth squeezes gallons of seawater out before the whale swallows its prey.

Choreographed, social foraging is a unique form of hunting that the humpbacks have mastered. Several whales group together to feed creating a curtain of bubbles called a “bubble-net”. It is believed that each individual whale maybe responsible for a certain action during this behaviour. “Big-mouth” is an understatement for these behemoths. This unique system of feeding can be accompanied by loud sounds and flashing pectoral flippers. It is believed that during a dive, several humpback whales produce a circular curtain of bubbles by expelling air from their lungs. This barrier forces the fish or krill to herd together so that the whales can then lunge upwards while scooping and swallowing huge mouthfuls of tiny fish. It takes a lot of fish to provide a daily intake of a ton of food for these whales. For only six months of the year the whales feed in the cold waters off Alaska. The remainder of the year they live off their substantial fat reserves called blubber.

Another stunning behaviour is “high fluking.” They can raise their powerful tail fluke in an impressive display of “parting water.” During this action, the sea cascades over the raised flukes like a waterfall. The raised fluke usually indicates a deep dive, and one can then watch the “footprint”, a flattened, calm area of water left on the surface as the whale submerges for several minutes. Never sure where the whale is going to resurface, one must watch in every direction for the familiar blow. Each individual fluke of the humpback is like a fingerprint. It has distinct markings, scratches, spots, tears and even bumps on its underside. The flukes have been photographed and catalogued for many of these whales.



High fluking

Just as pigmentation within the saddle patch is unique to an orca, so are the subtle patches of colour on the humpback's fluke. Using photographic records, researchers worldwide are compiling an identification database.

Another unique adaptation is the ability for males to sing. During the breeding season, in the warm waters off Mexico and Hawaii, specialized songs, which can last for hours, are now being recorded and studied. From a web site in Maui one is able to hear live the breeding songs of the humpbacks. This complex vocalization is thought to be a language not only for attracting breeding females, but as a form of communication between rival males. Each year the songs change in complexity, a sort of variation on an original theme. The warm waters of their winter playground entice the males to sing and create the right environment for finding a breeding partner. Here the gentle giants perform a ritual to win a mate. Females and their calves, whose bonds remain strong until weaned, gracefully ply the winter waters with one or more male escorts. It is here in Hawaiian or Mexican waters that the one ton, 10 foot long calves are born and for 11 months the females nurse their young with high fat content milk. Gestation for humpbacks is approximately 11 to 12 months, so many females are pregnant when leaving their winter breeding grounds. In spring, when migration

commences again, females with new calves travel slowly to return to the feeding grounds in Alaska. In order to achieve the position of escort, a bull has to do battle with other male humpbacks. At this time, the male whales become anything but gentle giants. Their battle behaviours of slapping and bashing with flippers and flukes can inflict bloody wounds on an opponent. The barnacles that grow on the leading edges of the pectoral flippers and flukes are used during these skirmishes. The term gentle giants seems to be a misnomer for our humpback whales.

Not only are these world migrants adept at singing, but their keen eye sight, large brain, and extraordinary acute hearing help them navigate their way across the vast expanse of any ocean. Studies are now being conducted on the earwax of these creatures and ages of individuals are being determined from this waxy substance.

The notion of a hazard-free crossing for these behemoths, while migrating the vast oceans, can easily be refuted. As recently as January 17 2007, the 29th dead humpback whale washed ashore from the Atlantic onto a Florida Beach. This number represents three times the usual numbers of dead humpback whales seen in any given year. While research scientists carve up the blubber for investigation of the death, other whales are needlessly being caught in high-sea driftnets. As other toxic deaths occur do we, the human race, need to be concerned with the state of the health of the oceans? I believe we do, and we need to act in a timely fashion.

Although humpbacks are found in all the major oceans of the world, the ones we see here are presumed to be specific to the Hawaiian, Mexico and Alaskan migration corridor. As spring occurs, the phenomenon of migration and the need to feed creates an urgency for these animals to once more move from warm waters of the tropics to the rich, cold temperate waters. With each passing year, and more individual identification, marine scientists throughout the world are able to predict with increasing accuracy which whales will appear in any given location. I will be watching for some of my favourite visitors to return to our local waters again in Spring and Fall 2007.

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Victoria Birds – Plus and Minus

Changes in the Status of Some Bird Species in the Checklist Area from 1974 to 2006

By David Stirling and Bill Merilees

After a cursory scan of the *Revised 1974 VNHS Bird Check List* (pictured below), found in Stirling's checklist compost heap, we thought that a short note regarding the changed status of some species might be of interest. We picked out a baker's dozen of the species whose status has changed noticeably since 1974 and made a few comments.

One thing is certain: change happens.

Victoria Natural History Society
Victoria, B. C.

BIRD CHECK LIST
Revised 1974
VICTORIA A. B. R. AREA

Locality

Date 19..... Time to

Weather Temp.

Observer(s)

Totals for the day--Species Indiv.

EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS

Regularity with which species is found in suitable habitat and at right season:

c ---common---almost always found.
f ---frequent---not every time out, but often found.
u ---uncommon---recorded annually, but could be missed by many.
ra ---rare---not usually recorded every year.
va ---vagrant---few records. Outside normal range.
acc---accidental---far from normal range. Unlikely to occur again.

Seasonal Status
R---resident, present all year.
S ---summer.
W---winter.
M---migrant.

Int---introduced.

AREA COVERED

South from 49°N latitude at Ladysmith and East of a line from Ladysmith to Otter Point, including Canadian Gulf Islands and all Straits to U.S. border.

Species	Status then	Status now
Trumpeter Swan	uM, uW	plus. cW CBC — 230
Turkey Vulture	cM, uR	plus. cS, cM, raW CBC — 5
Cooper's Hawk	M, fW, uR	plus. cR CBC — 42. The suburban hawk.
Blue Grouse	fR	minus. uR Seldom recorded on CBCs but was a common spring hooter.
Mountain Quail	raR	extirpated
Ring-necked Pheasant	cR	minus. uR CBC — 3. Seen or hear a pheasant lately?
Band-tailed Pigeon	cR	minus. uS, raW CBC — 0
Screech Owl	cR	minus. raR CBC — 0. Once common.
Barred Owl	acc	plus. cR CBC — 10. Now the common owl. Perhaps the total "owl biomass" has increased.
Common Nighthawk	cS	minus. uS, uM
Anna's Hummingbird	raR, uW	plus. cR CBC — 320
Homed Lark	uM, raR	minus. raM
Western	uS	minus. raM Any "Blue Bluebird birds on your window sill?"

* CBC = Christmas Bird Count results

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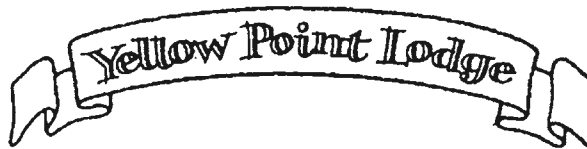
VNHS Field Trip to the Reifel Bird Sanctuary and Boundary Bay – February 11, 2007

By Bonnie Moro

Well before dawn on Sunday, Feb. 11, 14 keen birders met by Beaver Lake Park to car-pool over to the mainland. The ferry ride itself is always an opportunity to bird, so the list of the day's sightings began with Common Murres. Once on the mainland, we headed for the Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary in the Fraser River estuary. Our main aim for the day was to find as many raptors as we could. Our leader, Rick Schortinghuis, had in mind a list of possibilities to tantalize us. The first bird we sought out at the Sanctuary was a Long-eared Owl. A "lifer" for several in our group, this beautiful owl was well settled for the day in a small and densely-branched conifer, but scopes brought it into view in spite of the branches. Next we sought out two Saw-whet Owls, and got glimpses of them through the thickly needled branches they choose as cover. They know how to hide! Meanwhile, we were not

oblivious to a Peregrine Falcon, a Merlin, Black-capped Chickadees, assorted ducks, and another great sighting: four roosting Black-crowned Night-Herons. One in particular was close to the path and was considerate enough to wake up and give us a good look at his face and the lovely white plumes draped across his breast.

A little further on, we climbed the observation tower and watched a half-dozen Sandhill Cranes fly elegantly in. We identified ducks, and watched in the distance over the water as enormous flocks of Dunlins drifted and wheeled like fascinating animated clouds. We walked along a dike that separates the canals and islands of the Sanctuary from the wild marsh and the sea. Four of the Sandhill Cranes came hurrying to meet us, looking a little menacing with their sheer size, red head patches and long sharp beaks. But they apparently had come simply to mooch, and happily accepted some wheat that one of our foresighted members had brought. What sheer pleasure to see these magnificent birds at such close quarters, and to be able to study the beautiful grey and rusty shadings of their feathers. Awesome, in the original sense of the word as well as more recent slang! We continued along the path until we reached a pond area with diving scaups. There, we spent a few



3700 Yellow Point Road,
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Great Blue Heron. Photo: Derrick Ditchburn

minutes establishing that these were lesser rather than greater because of the helpful clue to be noted in the narrow black stripe at the front centre of their beaks. A few steps further on we found a recently deceased Cooper's Hawk, cause of death unknown. It had begun to rain more seriously, so we hurried on to a hut where we could eat our lunch. A few of our more determined members walked in the rain and spotted a couple of live Cooper's.

We left the Sanctuary and drove to the flat lands that edge Boundary Bay. A stop at the well-known barn of a very friendly farmer enabled us to see two roosting barn owls. As we prepared to leave, sharp eyes spotted several Greater Yellowlegs across the road on a wet field. We drove up and down the many small roads that grid this area, seeing so many Bald Eagles and Red-tail Hawks that it became a running joke, "Just another eagle," "Just another Red-tail." At one spot we saw two handsome mature eagles at the top of a small conifer, and hanging on a branch below, a gull's wing. Lunch was over! We also made several sightings of Northern Harriers, both streaky brown females and grey males. We stopped by one shrubby field and had the great good fortune to see two Short-eared Owls flapping and cruising low over the grass, back and forth, around, and occasionally diving to the ground. One of those dives brought an interloper, a Northern Harrier, which appeared to make off with whatever small prey the owl had nabbed. So long as we were there watching the owls, a Harrier too kept watch from a fence post.

We then walked along a dike between a golf course and the marshy land reaching out to the bay, looking across at the immense mud flats that had been exposed by the outgoing tide. The flats were covered with birds, most remarkably, by close to sixty bald eagles at regular intervals across the mud. A little further along, we came upon an incredible sight; seven snowy owls were roosting here and there next to some buildings and on pieces of machinery! How unconcerned these lovely creatures seemed, nodding off in such close proximity to the uglier trappings of civilization, now and then looking nonchalantly around as if they had nothing in the world to fear.

We tore ourselves away from these wonderful creatures, since Rick had at least one more bird on his list that there was a chance we might see. Did we drive up and down every single road in this area? I think we must have, until finally, the time was approaching when we must head for the ferry. One small dead-end road remained. We debated. Shall we drive down it or call it a day and make sure we don't miss out ferry? You know which vote won. We headed down the road, stopped near the end, and, unbelievably, one of our excellent spotters got in his scope exactly the bird we were looking for, a Rough-legged Hawk! It was a light morph, beautifully marked, and gave us an utterly splendid way to close our list. We rushed to the ferry – but had to wait for another sailing. Worth it! Our grand total? Close to 80 species of birds for the day. But I don't think anyone could top my personal record. On this terrific day of birding I logged seven new "lifers," including every single one of the owls. What a day, what a day!!

New on the Internet – a Website for Nature Lovers

By Derrick Ditchburn

You are invited to become part of a new online community of nature lovers: www.dereilanatureinn.ca

You may have visited cyber-cafes or restaurants. Well, this is a virtual inn or hotel and you are invited to drop by and stay for a while. Like real inns there are lots of attractions, activities and things to do. For example, you can snuggle up in the Bird's Nest Lounge and enjoy pictures, stories and trivia about our feathered friends. Then you can always stroll along (virtually, of course) the inn's Lagoon Trail (which might be hauntingly familiar to Victoria residents!) and meet a world of fascinating flora and fauna. For plant lovers, there is the Wildflower Garden to explore, with galleries of flowers and visitors to the garden. Another interesting section is the Woodlands Pathway, which leads up to the forests and the mountains. Here there are articles, photographs and galleries featuring mosses, lichens, mammals and other wonders. Throughout the site you'll find online jigsaw puzzles to do, some crosswords and other interactive activities. More and more content is being added and updated constantly, including the bug, bird, and wildflower of the month.

The purpose of the project is to create a fun, easy to navigate and appealing online community for nature lovers. You'll find the site features photography by member Derrick Ditchburn and was created with his son, Stephen. Your input, comments, and suggestions are valued and will help improve the site. Hopefully you'll be able to visit soon. See you at the inn!



Top right: orchid. Above: a hover fly from the genus *Sericomysia*. Photos: Derrick Ditchburn

With or Without Wheels, 2007 Valentine Birdathon a Roaring Success

By Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod

It is challenge enough to think about finding 75 species of birds by noon on a mid-February morning even with the aid of a motor vehicle. Imagine embracing the challenge *entirely by foot*. Well, Claudia and Darren Copley imagined just that, then marched ahead and did it in this year's 10th annual Valentine Couples Birdathon, February 11. The Copleys share the kudos this year with Barb and Mike McGrenere who would ordinarily have enjoyed the event the two-wheeled way – by bicycle – but an injury forced them to do their birding by car this year. They too found 75 species and as a result their names and the Copleys' are engraved on the Anderson Trophy as co-winners of this year's valentine bird quest.

Everyone who participated in the February 11 event seems to agree it was great fun. And lucrative too. Despite a poor forecast the weather was good. The aggregate total of species found by the nine participating couples was 119, an all-time high, and participants' picks for their bird-of-the-day produced a long list of first-rate nominations.

The point of this event is to give pairs of valentine birders a good excuse to get outside and spend up to six hours indulging their shared passion for birding. Darren and Claudia stepped out their door near Beaver Lake, followed a route designed to bring them within earshot or sight of as many birds as possible and walked all the way to Swan Lake by noon. For their troubles, in addition to seeing their names on the Anderson Trophy, Claudia and Darren won a \$40 lunch-for-two gift certificate donated for this event by **Swans Brew Pub** of Victoria. Barb and Mike get to dine out too; their prize is a breakfast-for-two gift certificate donated by the **Dakota Café** at the Victoria airport.

Ann Nightingale and Christian McCarty finished the morning with 74 species, just one behind the winners. Their reward was a 20-pound sack of deluxe bird seed donated by **Wild Birds Unlimited** of Saanich.

There was stiff competition for the best-bird award. Was the top find the McGreneres' Short-eared Owl at Martin-dale Flats? Either the Red-breasted Sapsucker or Peregrine Falcon Gladys and Jerry Anderson found in North Saanich? Maybe the Tufted Duck, Tundra Swan or Blue Jay Ann and Christian listed in the course of their morning's effort? Or was it the two Whimbrels Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod found near Cattle Point in Oak Bay? All worthy candidates to be sure, but in the end the consensus choice was the first-for-the-year Violet-Green Swallow spotted by long-time birding pals Marilyn Lambert and Colleen O'Brien at Cattle



Winners, left to right, Mike and Barb McGrenere, Claudia and Darren Copley. Photo: Alan MacLeod

Point. Their reward was a gift certificate for a choice valentine selection of the finest chocolates to be found anywhere in Victoria, Fort Street's **Chocolat**.

The winning didn't stop there. Draw prizes also went to Jenny Feick and Ian Hatter; they collected a sack of black-oil sunflower seed and a tray feeder from the **Victorian Bird House** of Sidney. David and Beverly Catrall won a \$25 gift certificate donated by **Science Works** of Oak Bay.

As organizers of this event we doff our caps to all the couples who participated and we particularly express our gratitude to the business people who generously sponsored prizes this year. In beating the bushes for prizes we only canvass businesses we actually like, so we're happy to recommend that VNHS members support our sponsors.

Couples participating in the valentine birdathon enjoy the friendly competition. They get a shot at the trophy and a range of choice prizes. They also get the satisfaction of supporting a worthy cause. Money raised by couples' \$10 entry fee goes to the important work carried out by the Victoria Natural History Society.

If you and your birding valentine have not yet participated in a valentine birdathon, you don't know what you're missing. We hope to see you next year!

HAT Tricks

Swallow Boxes and the Bigger Picture at Rithet's Bog



By Geoff Huber, Outreach Coordinator, Habitat Acquisition Trust

A resident male bird stakes his claim with an elegant territorial song. In and out, in and out, nesting birds prepare their homes using cattails and grasses. Hungry chicks chirp for mouthfuls of delicious bugs. Newly fledged songbirds perform the first rites of flight while taking to the skies. These are all truly enjoyable events that happen every spring around nest boxes and tree holes in our yards and neighbourhoods.

As part of our ongoing Good Neighbours Outreach Project, Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) is working with the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society (RBCS) to improve and increase swallow nesting habitat in and around Rithet's Bog this year. Cub Scouts of the 5th Tsartlip Troop worked hard to build swallow nest boxes for use around the Rithet's Bog Conservation Area (RBCA). Darren Copley supplied the design, and Keating X Road Home Hardware donated the wood. HAT and the Cub Scouts hope to have all the nest boxes installed in time for this year's nesters. We expect two different types of swallows inhabiting the boxes by the time this article goes to print.

Building and hanging the swallow nest boxes is one of several HAT initiatives to involve the community in habitat

preservation and protection. From Camosun students testing storm drains and water quality, to children painting yellow fish on the roads, local people are making a difference for the threatened bog ecosystem.

Rithet's Bog and other peninsula wetlands are like the "kidneys of the earth" because they clean water run-off for salmon in the Colquitz River. Ongoing community action is necessary to keep Rithet's Bog healthy and functioning properly, and you can be part of the solution. If you live in the Broadmead area or by any peninsula wetland, please keep pets under control during nesting season (April to July), keep toxic products out of storm drains, and come and make some friends at upcoming land care events with HAT and RBCS!

Find out how you can improve water quality and habitat for nesting birds – call HAT for your own free Good Neighbours land care package!

Habitat Acquisition Trust

PO Box 8552, Victoria BC V8W 3S2

Phone: 250-995 2428

www.hat.bc.ca Email: hatmail@hat.bc.ca.



Testing water at Rithet's Bog. Photo provided by the author

Letters

Thank you so much for selecting me to receive the Freeman F. King Scholarship. The award helped me to complete my undergraduate degree in Biology in December of 2006.

I have lived in Victoria since I was a toddler and I have found it to be the perfect place to study the environment. I spent last summer studying at Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre where my love of nature and the west coast blossomed further.

Throughout my undergraduate degree I have had many varying visions of what my career path might be, and I have finally settled on pursuing graduate studies in natural history, avian zoology and climate change. After reading Freeman King's story I am confident that he would be happy with my future goals.

The scholarship allowed me to work less during school and focus much more on my studies, and my grades prove that this was a significant advantage. I am so thankful that you selected me for the award and that you shared with me Freeman King's inspiring story.

Best Wishes,
Rachel Field, B.Sc.

My name is Heather English and I am writing to express my gratitude for receiving the Samuel Simco Bursary from the Victoria Natural History Society. I am truly thankful for your support of students who are working towards the protection of the natural environment and find myself very flattered to receive such an award.

I grew up in Prince George, a city known for its forestry industry. This has given me a unique perspective on the relationship between industrial workers and the natural environment in which we live. I lived on the outskirts of town, where my backyard was a forest and it wouldn't be unusual for bears, deer or moose to find their way onto my family's property. I was raised with the maxim "the bear isn't in our backyard, we're in hers" and still find the truth in these words. It certainly didn't surprise anyone to see me go off to UVic to study biology and environmental studies. I have had the pleasure of working with many fantastic and inspiring professors such as Kara Shaw, Neville Winchester and Michael M'Gonigle, and community leaders such as Ken Wu, from whom I've learned about the natural and political history of B.C.

Your award will help me to continue to volunteer my time with environmental organizations such as the UVic Sustainability Project and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee while I concentrate on my studies instead of trying to work. In the future I hope to continue with my studies in the environmental field, where I will work towards the

protection of the earth's ecosystems. I thank you for your support in achieving these goals and for your work towards preserving the knowledge base and natural ecosystems here in Victoria.

Sincerely,
Heather English

I would like to thank the Victoria Natural History Society for the bursary they awarded me. I am completing a degree in Environmental Science at Royal Roads University. I am looking forward to finishing and applying my knowledge to the environmental field.

I have a strong passion for environmental science and in the past have volunteered for the Vancouver Aquarium and for the City of Port Moody's Environmental Protection Committee.

This bursary is really valuable to me. As you can imagine, university is expensive when you have no income. I am going to use the money towards books next quarter.

Thank you again. It is really encouraging to know that even strangers care and encourage us to complete our degree.

Yours truly,
Tricia Bloomfield

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 16 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our "welcome" column:

Mike Price
Pachena Place
*conservation,
natural history*

Wendy Tyrrell
Linwood Avenue
*ecology, botany,
birding, wildlife
trees, outreach*

Elly Knight
Moss Street
*primarily birding,
but all biology*

Anita Lacey
Third Street
*writing, hiking,
natural history,
drawing*

Tanya Lequesne
Walfred Road

Tyler Innes
Bennett Road
*ecology, native
plants, Sandhill
Cranes*

Don Buskirk
Newbury Street
*wetlands, flora
and fauna*

Wendy Smith
Qu'appelle Street

Dorian Nickells
Carnarvon Street
*birds, botany,
marine*

Letters of thanks from school children who have visited Goldstream Provincial Park during the annual salmon run. The VNHS contributes financially to these programs.

Thank-you Victoria Natural History Society

Thanks for supporting the Salmon Programs at the Goldstream. W

Thanks from,
Gr. 5+4
Salt Spring Elem.
Salt Spring Isl.

Thank you for supporting this valuable program. We teachers appreciate it.
Stella Weenert

Dear Victoria Natural History Society

On behalf of all of us in grade 6 at Pacific Christian School, I would like to thank you for donating money to keep the Eagle Extravaganza Goldstream program running. I really liked seeing the eagles soaring through the air! I also thought all the animals in the nature house were amazing, and my whole class loved it!

Sincerely, David

Dear Victoria Natural History Society,

Thank-you for giving money to help the Goldstream Nature House. We liked it when Adam dissected the salmon and we saw the milt, the heart, the liver and the brain. We learned that the male salmon fight for the female salmon.

Thank you again for sponsoring the Goldstream salmon run!

From Mrs. Lee and Division 9 at Keating Elementary



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 Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Presentations:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Murray and Anne Fraser Building, Room 159, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature House; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Murray and Anne Fraser Building, Room 159, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., in Murray and Anne Fraser Building, Room 159, University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>, and is updated regularly.

MAY

Saturday, May 5

EVENT

16th Annual Camas Day

Co-sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park, this celebration of one of our region's special places starts at 9:00 a.m. and continues all day. Guided Walks (each 1-2 hours long) all start at the flagpole on top of Beacon Hill. See the back cover of this issue for details, or call **Helen Oldershaw** (592-6659) or email **Agnes Lynn** (thelynns at shaw.ca).

Saturday, May 5

FIELD TRIP

Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. You should see a good variety of shorebirds and passerines in their migration. Meet at the south end of Esquimalt Lagoon by the washrooms at 7:30 a.m. This is a five hour walk. Bring a snack and a drink. Call Ann at 652-6450 for more information. No pets please.

Sunday, May 6

FIELD TRIP

Witty's Lagoon Songsters

Join **Dannie Carsen** for a foray around Witty's Lagoon for some great ear birding and good views of warblers and vireos. Meet at the parking lot off Metchosin Road at 7:00 a.m. Bring your lunch and a beverage, we will stop at the picnic tables after the walk is over. For further information, contact Dannie at 544-2117 or dcarsen@shaw.ca

Friday, May 11

FIELD TRIP

Birding Viaduct Flats and Quicks Bottom

Please join **Cheryl Mackie** in birding Viaduct Flats and Quick's Bottom. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the foot of Viaduct Avenue, which is off of Interurban Road. Call Cheryl at 479-4083 if you need more information.

Saturday, May 12

FIELD TRIP

Birding Mt. Douglas

Please join **Mike McGrenere** in birding Mt. Douglas. Meet at the trail entrance off Blenkinsop Road near Lohbrunner Road at 7:30 a.m. Park on Blenkinsop Road or Lohbrunner Road. Please wear good hiking boots; it's a fairly strenuous hike. We should get a good number of warblers, flycatchers and vireos, also Western Tanager, House Wren and Chipping Sparrow. Call Mike at 658-8624 if you need more information.

Sunday, May 13

FIELD TRIP

Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mt. Road .

Meet at the mail boxes on Stewart Mountain Road, which is off Millstream Road, at 7:00 a.m. It's a great place to see warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Call **Rick** at 652-3326 if you need more information.

Tuesday, May 15

BOTANY NIGHT

Plants and Poetry

Andy MacKinnon will present a second instalment of his poetry night. The last Botanical Poetry Night was a feast for the few courageous who attended. "Little bit of poetry does not kill you," says a Czech popular song of the old, good 1960's. Contact Andy if you want to include your own poetry or your own choice. His e-mail is metchosinmacs@yahoo.ca. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome, bring your friends.

Friday, May 18

FIELD TRIP

Birding Blenkinsop Lake

Join **Bill Dancer** in birding the Blenkinsop Lake area and Lochside Trail. Meet at the south end of the bridge at the end of Lochside Drive at 7:00 a.m. Call 721-5273 for more information. No pets please.

Saturday, May 19

FIELD TRIP

Birding Mt. Tolmie and UVic

Mt. Tolmie has always been a great place to see spring migrants; sometimes you strike gold and get large numbers. Please meet at 7:30 a.m. in the gravel parking lot just below the summit. Afterwards we will go down to UVic. Call **Rick** at 652-3326 if you need more information.

Saturday, May 19 and Sunday, May 20

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guide! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 477-0490.

Sunday, May 20

FIELD TRIP

Birding Elk and Beaver Lakes

Join us for a birding walk in Elk Lake Beaver Lake Regional Park. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the Rowing Club boathouse on Elk Lake. Bring a drink and a snack; it should be about a three-hour walk. Call **Rick** at 652-3326 if you need more information.

Monday, May 21

FIELD TRIP

A Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail (Sooke Potholes to Leechtown)

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds and scenery along the way. Meet at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km up Sooke River Road at 8:00 a.m. Bring a cool drink and a lunch. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

Friday, May 25

FIELD TRIP

Birding Mount Newton

Join **Sheila Mosher** for a birding walk on Mount Newton's south slope. We should see Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Tanager as well as many other migrant and resident birds. Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton Heights at 7:00 a.m. No pets please

Saturday, May 26

FIELD TRIP

Birding Little Saanich Mountain (The Observatory)

Come and join **Ed Pellizzon** on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain; this is an excellent place to see lots of migrant species of birds, some in the process of building nests. Meet at 7:30 a.m. Call Ed at 881-1476 if you need more information.

Sunday, May 27

FIELD TRIP

Birding Buttertubs Marsh and Pipers Lagoon in Nanaimo

Please join **Bill Merrilees**, well known naturalist and author, on a walk around Buttertubs Marsh and Pipers Lagoon in Nanaimo. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park and Ride to car pool or at 9:00 a.m. at the entrance to Buttertubs Marsh off Jingle Pot Road. Turn right on to Jingle Pot Road off the Nanaimo bypass, it's a fairly quick left into the parking lot at Buttertubs Marsh. Call Rick at 652-3326 if you need more information. Bring a lunch.

JUNE

Saturday, June 2

FIELD TRIP

Birding the Duncan area

We will try to find a Red-eyed Vireo and other warblers, vireos

and flycatchers. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:30 a.m. or at the Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 9:00 a.m. Call **Rick** at 652-3326 if you need more information.

Sunday, June 3

FIELD TRIP

Butterflies in the Duncan Area

Join **Derrick Marvin** in looking for butterflies in the Duncan area. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. to car pool. Others can meet Derrick at Somenos Marsh at 10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and a drink; we are going to take up most of the day. Call Derrick at 250-748-8504 if you would like more information.

Saturday, June 9

FIELD TRIP

Birding The Power Lines and the Ponds at the Hydro Substation alongside Francis King Park

Join **Barry Gatten** and **Rick Schortinghuis** on a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the hydro substation. We will be stopping to look at the flowering shrubs, butterflies and birds along the way. This is a great area to hear or see most of the warblers, vireos and flycatchers we have in our area. Bring a lunch and a drink and meet at the nature house on Munn's Road at 7:30 a.m. This will be a 4-5 hour walk. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

Sunday, June 10

FIELD TRIP

Birding the Jordan River area

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a trip out to Jordan River. In the past it has been a good hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall. It's a great place to hear the Fox Sparrow's singing in the spring. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:00 a.m. Please bring a lunch. Call Rick at 652-3326 if you need more information.

Saturday, June 16 and Sunday, June 17

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers, so get out your field guide! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 477-0490.

BULLETIN BOARD

Saturday Birding Group

Meet opposite the entrance to Beaver Lake Park on Elk Lake Drive (between Haliburton and Royal Oak) at 8:00 a.m. Birding location will be decided at the meeting point. For more information, call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 652-3326.

Bird Walks at Swan Lake

There are regular guided bird walks at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary on Wednesdays and Sundays. Meet at the main parking lot at 9:00 a.m.

Year-round Tuesday morning birding group

Meet at the foot of Bowker Ave. at 9:00 a.m. Birding activities take place at various locations around Greater Victoria. For information, contact **Bill Dancer** (721-5273) or dcdancer@shaw.ca.



16th Annual CAMAS DAY

WHEN: Saturday May 5, 2007, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

WHERE: Beacon Hill Park (walks begin at flagpole on top of Beacon Hill)

Guided Walks (each 1-2 hours long)

Rick Schortinghuis, Victoria Natural History Society

7:30 am, Birding Walk

Tom Gillespie, Victoria Natural History Society

9:00 am, Birding Walk

Brenda Beckwith, Ecosystems Scientist (Ethnobotany)

11:00 am, Wildflower Walk

Matt Fairbarns, Plant Ecologist (Garry Oak Ecosystems)

11:00 am, Wildflower Walk

Michelle Gorman, Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, Victoria Parks

11:00 am, All About Bugs Walk

Grant Keddle, Curator of Archaeology, Royal BC Museum

11:00 am, Native History of Beacon Hill Park

Brenda Beckwith, Ecosystems Scientist (Ethnobotany)

1:00 pm, Wildflower Walk

Michelle Gorman, Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, Victoria Parks

1:00 pm, All About Bugs Walk

Grant Keddle, Curator of Archaeology, Royal BC Museum

1:00 pm, Native History of Beacon Hill Park

Agnes Lynn, Friends of Beacon Hill Park & Victoria Natural History Society

1:00 pm, Heritage Trees of Beacon Hill Park

