



The Victoria NATURALIST

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
2009
VOL 65.4

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, BC V8R 6N4
Contents © 2009 as credited.
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

Editors: Claudia Copley, 250-479-6622, Penelope Edwards
Desktop Publishing: Frances Hunter, 250-479-1956
Distribution: Tom Gillespie, Phyllis Henderson, Morwyn Marshall
Printing: Fotoprint, 250-382-8218

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

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Annual Dues, Victoria Natural History Society

Payable online – see website for details
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RARE BIRD ALERT: 250-592-3381

VNHS Website: www.vicnhs.bc.ca

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

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Deadline for next issue: February 1, 2009

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Guidelines for Submissions

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.

VNHS MEMBERSHIP

For membership information and renewal, please contact Darren Copley, 250-479-6622, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, BC, V8R 6N4. A copy of our membership form is available on our website <www.vicnhs.bc.ca>.

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We acknowledge the financial support of the government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program. PAP Registration No. 9841



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COVER PHOTO: Downy Woodpecker. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*

My suggestion for late afternoon on New Year's Eve day was going to be this:

Turn off the news and read your *Naturalist*.

Instead of doom and gloom, it is full of optimism – and a myriad of ways to get involved in nature-related activities.

But then this came across the wire:

Acorn, almond, apricot, ash, beech, beetroot, blackberry, bluebell, bramble, brook, buttercup, carnation, catkin, cauliflower, chestnut, clover, conker, cowslip, crocus, dandelion, fern, fungus, gooseberry, hazel, hazelnut, heather, holly, horse chestnut, ivy, lavender, leek, melon, mint, mistletoe, nectar, nectarine, oats, pansy, parsnip, poppy, primrose, prune, radish, rhubarb, spinach, sycamore, tulip, turnip, vine, violet, walnut, willow

Beaver, boar, cheetah, colt, cygnet, doe, drake, ferret, heron, herring, kingfisher, lark, leopard, lobster, magpie, minnow, mussel, newt, otter, ox, oyster, panther, pelican, piglet, plaice, porcupine, porpoise, raven, starling, stoat, stork, terrapin, thrush, weasel, wren.

These words are being removed by *Oxford Children's Dictionary* in favour of more technology-based words such as MP3, blog, and attachment. The reason given is that children are much more likely to encounter these new words than they are a buttercup.

What! Several of the words are *in* this issue of your magazine! We all use many of these words very regularly. And, while I'd like nothing better than for some of the items to *actually* disappear from our area (ivy, holly, starling), and others aren't easily integrated into our field trips (cheetah, leopard), and I even had to look one up (plaice= *Pleuronectes platessa*: a large flat-bodied ocean fish with brown skin and red or orange spots and native to European waters), we need to make it our collective resolution to ensure every child we know hears these words from us.

And don't forget to read your *Naturalist*.

Happy New Year!

Claudia

President's Message

By Darren Copley

Every two months, when I am “gently reminded” by the editor that my President's Message is late, I fret that I don't have anything to write about. However, as soon as I actually sit down and begin to write, I have to limit what I talk about. Should I mention all the things our board is working on, or the glowing feedback I get about our field trip leaders. There are also many important environmental initiatives that I'd like to mention.

As I discuss some recent board activities, I want you to consider whether you are interested in becoming our newest board member. At our latest board meeting (which is only a once-a-month commitment, and there are often snacks), Ann Nightingale found an effective solution for communicating with our members: a VNHS listserv. You will choose whether you would like to subscribe, and at what level. Do you only want to hear about our evening programs and field trips, or are you also interested in other nature-related non-VNHS events and opportunities? Watch for an e-mail with information on how to sign up, and be sure to do so if you want to stay in the loop and hear about all of our interesting speakers, our weekly field trips, special events, and any other updates.

Another new item discussed at our board meeting has to do with membership. You can now have your membership renew automatically when you pay online through PayPal – no more reminder notices (as long as your credit card information stays current). Another critically important function of the board is to look after the Society's finances. Gordon Hart has been our Treasurer for 12 years now, and rarely does he get the thanks he deserves. The Society's investments and your donations help fund \$3,350 of annual scholarships at the University of Victoria, Royal Roads University, and Camosun College; provide \$4,000 annually to

the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary; and contribute to conservation projects such as funding a telescope for the Viaduct Flats Viewing Platform. By supporting any of our fundraising initiatives (annual bird courses, field guide covers, gift memberships), or donating money when you renew, or even thinking over the long-term of endowments, you are helping to support our efforts. You can also donate items for our evening raffles, or your old digital camera to the school program (now that you received that fancy new one for Christmas).

Finally, I want to mention that I just returned from a workshop on community-based social marketing, which looks at how to foster sustainable behaviour. The overall theme of this workshop was that, to attain our goals, we need to identify all the behaviours we want to change, then select the most probable behaviour that will have the highest impact and determine the barriers and benefits to making this change. Strategies which either encourage a positive behaviour, or discourage a negative behaviour need to be developed and should include people making personal commitments. A good example is the Pesticide Free Pledge that the CRD and many municipalities have implemented. When you sign up you also place a sign in your yard showing your commitment. Apparently if you state something publicly you are much more likely to actually follow through. So I'd like us all to commit to do a behavioural change that is green and lasting. And to help make it stick, I also want you to tell a friend, or send us a note to include in the next issue of *The Naturalist* – a written and public commitment is usually much more successful than a simple verbal one. **To start things off, I'll state publicly that I will ride a bike or take the bus at least half of my work week.**

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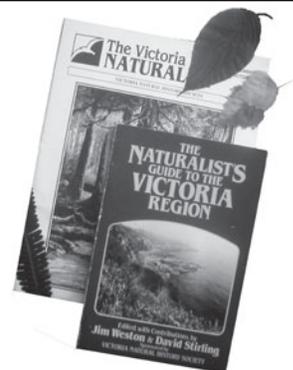
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VICTORIA NATURAL
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- VNHS membership
- VNHS Field guide covers
- VNHS Beginning Birding Course
- VNHS Beyond Beginning Birding Course
- VNHS *Naturalists' Guide to the Victoria Region*

Ask at a meeting, or contact Darren at 250 479-6622



VNHS Awards

Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways. Some write articles for the *Naturalist*, some lead field trips, others serve on the board or on other committees. There are some who go out of their way just to make sure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities, by visiting shut-ins, or driving others to Society functions.

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honorary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with the VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. **Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2009.**

All nominations must be in writing and should be signed

by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

- 1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
- 1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
- 1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
- 1994 Kaye Suttill
- 1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
- 1996 Gordon Devey
- 1997 Michael Carson
- 1998 No recipients
- 1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
- 2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
- 2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
- 2002 Norm Mogensen
- 2003 Bob Chappell
- 2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska
- 2005 Rick Schortinghuis
- 2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
- 2007 no recipients
- 2008 Ann Nightingale

VNHS Honorary Life Members

Dr. Bill Austin, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mr. Tony Embleton, Mr. Tom Gillespie, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling, Mr. Bruce Whittington



October 5, 2008 field trip to Race Rocks. *Artwork: Pat MacLeod*

2008 BCFO Award for Ornithology Recipient: David Stirling

The British Columbia Field Ornithologists Award for Ornithology recognizes an individual who has contributed to the knowledge and appreciation of ornithology in BC. At the November Birders' Night, David Stirling was awarded this provincial honour.

David was born in Athabasca, Alberta, and developed an early interest in natural history while growing up on a frontier homestead. He attended the Royal Military College in Sandhurst, England, graduating as a First Lieutenant, and served with the Canadian Army for five years. While in the military, he traveled to many countries and became interested in overseas birding.

David joined the British Columbia public service in 1959 and spent most of his career with the Parks Branch, where he was involved with nature interpretation programs, including the hiring and training of seasonal park naturalists. He kept detailed records of birds in the parks that he visited during his work, and encouraged others to do the same. One of his major contributions was the publication of bird checklists for many of the parks which had naturalists on staff, including Manning, Miracle Beach, Mitlenatch Island, Shuswap Lake (now called Scotch Creek), and Mount Robson Provincial Parks. Some of these checklists, such as the one for Manning Park, went through several editions. Many of the park naturalists hired and/or mentored by David went on to become noted ornithologists themselves, including Wayne Campbell, Douglas Dow (of the University of Brisbane in Australia), Rob Butler, and Dick Cannings, just to name a few.

David has lived most of his life in Victoria, and has made innumerable contributions to the Victoria Natural History Society. He has led scores of birding field trips, served on the Society's board for several years, and organized and compiled the Victoria Christmas Bird Count for approximately 10 years. He is one of very few Honorary Life Members of the Victoria Natural History Society, an honour which was bestowed on him in 1995. He has also been active in several other natural history and conservation organizations including the Federation of BC Naturalists (BC Nature) and the Canadian Nature Federation (Nature Canada), and he was one of the earliest members of BC Field Ornithologists.

A contribution of particular note was David's tenure as a director of the American Birding Association, where he served for several years and ably represented BC and Canadian birders. In addition, when the ABA held its annual convention in Vancouver in 1984, David did a great job of organizing all the field trips – a huge task considering that more than 400 people attended.

For many years, David wrote numerous articles for both



Photo: Bruce Whittington

scientific and popular journals and magazines, including the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, *The Murrelet*, *The Victoria Naturalist*, *Western Living*, *Westworld*, *Nature Canada*, and the *BC Naturalist*. The *Bibliography of BC Ornithology* Volumes 1 and 2, lists 53 articles authored or co-authored by David, and it doesn't include many of the articles in popular magazines. David also was co-editor and one of the authors of the *Naturalist's Guide to the Victoria Region*, published in 1986, and has contributed to several other books.

After his retirement from the provincial public service, David served as an international birding tour leader for several tour agencies. He has visited dozens of countries in the course of these tours, and has continued to lead a few tours until quite recently.

A significant accomplishment was his co-founding, with Wayne Campbell, of the Photoduplicate File for BC Vertebrate Records in 1971. This large collection of photographs, which continues to grow under the auspices of the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, was mainly intended to document the occurrence of rare birds and other vertebrates in BC and has served admirably in its stated purpose.

David has also had a strong interest in bird conservation, as evidenced by a report on rare and endangered bird species in BC that he wrote for the Federation of BC Naturalists in 1973.

Considering his lifelong dedication to documenting the bird life of various parts of BC, promoting conservation, and especially to public education and to fostering an appreciation of birds, birding, and natural history, British Columbia Field Ornithologists take pride in naming David Stirling as the winner of their 2008 Award for Ornithology.

2008 Daphne Solecki Award Recipient: Kerrie Mortin

The Daphne Solecki Award recognizes an individual who has contributed to nature education for children in BC. At the November Birders' Night, Kerrie Mortin was awarded this provincial honour.

Kerrie has been the Project Manager for Wild BC for many years. This BC government-sponsored program provides environmental education for teachers, park interpreters, and any other interested groups. Kerrie has been amazingly dedicated in supporting environmental education throughout many challenging years. She humbly persevered to keep Wild BC alive at times when her task has often seemed impossible, with cutbacks and a lack of political will for environmental education. Kerrie's ingenuity, perseverance, determination, and commitment to make the program work for teachers, leaders, children, facilitators, and funding agencies is admired by all who have contact with Wild BC.

Besides Wild BC, she manages a huge load of funding sources for other environmental education projects for the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. Through all these years, she has kept the ball rolling while also raising a family. Her energy and upbeat attitude are simply amazing. She deserves recognition for her role in bringing environmental education to the fore in many settings.



Kerrie Mortin (left) being presented the 2008 Daphne Solecki Award by Society president Darren Copley. Photo: Claudia Copley.

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 10 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our "welcome" column:

Mitchell D. Grant
Cook Street
birds, botany, fossils

Larry Licht
Grace Court
birds, botany, herpetology

Bonnie Campbell
Roberts Road

Laura Brandes
Tattersall Drive
*conservation, education,
birding*

Corey Davis
Cedar Hill Road
*conservation, education,
birding*

Jim Farrell 477-7291 jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca

VNHS Birding Trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary and Boundary Bay, November 22, 2008

By Ian Cruickshank

If the weather had followed the forecasts of a few days previous, it would have been raining sideways on November 22. Well, rather unusual for November, it did *not* rain sideways. To the pleasant surprise of the 17 birders going over to Reifel, it was a sunny, calm, and fairly warm day.

We began the day's birding near sunrise, on the ferry. The sea was nearly empty of birds until we reached the usually busy Active Pass, where many gulls, Harbour Seals, sea lions, and approximately 100 Pacific Loons were fishing in the tidal currents. The Strait of Georgia was quiet except for a few groups of Ancient Murrelets flying fast over the water. Our first stop on the mainland was to look for a regular Willet at the Tsawwassen jetty, which we did not find. However, the waters in the vicinity had ducks by the thousands.

Next we made our way to Reifel, but not without many

pull-offs to check out the raptors enroute. I was in the trip's second vehicle, and someone from the first vehicle said 'don't follow too close behind the van, as birders are prone to frequent stops without notice!' Good advice. Upon arriving in the woods at Reifel, the first subject of attention was a roosting Great Horned Owl, which quickly flew further into

My personal highlight for the day was looking into the shining black eye of a Black-capped Chickadee as it perched on my finger to take a sunflower seed.



Black-capped Chickadee. *Photo:* Tim Zurowski, <http://www.timzphotography.com/>



Top: The Reifel marshlands from the viewing tower.
Below: Sandhill Cranes. *Photos: Ian Crickshank*

the woods to get away from the droves of people peering at it. By contrast, the human on-lookers didn't seem to cause concern for four Black-crowned Night-Herons roosting on some tree branches near the path. We continued out to the viewing tower overlooking the Reifel marshes, where we were greeted by the calls of thousands of Snow Geese, quite a spectacle to see and hear. We watched several Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harriers hunting over the marshes. We had good looks at a nice mix of waterfowl and saw 90 dowitchers (the consensus was Long-billed) as well as the resident Sandhill Cranes. Some of us were delighted to have a brief glimpse of a Virginia Rail.

The afternoon was spent around Boundary Bay. We visited a barn with three Barn Owls roosting in the rafters. On our way back to the cars, someone spotted three Ring-necked Pheasants in the field. Along the shore of Boundary Bay there were uncountable thousands of Dunlin feeding on the mudflats. Seeing these massive flocks in flight was quite a sight. Other highlights at Boundary Bay included many more Harriers, two more Rough-legged Hawks (we saw more Rough-legged than Red-tailed Hawks throughout the course of the day), three Short-eared Owls circling over the fields on their butterfly-like wingbeats, a Northern Shrike, and three Western Meadowlarks.

All in all it was a delightful day. A total of 87 bird species were seen, several of which we don't often see in Victoria. My personal highlight for the day was looking into the shining black eye of a Black-capped Chickadee as it perched on my finger to take a sunflower seed.

Thanks to Rick Schortinghuis for leading a great trip.

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Connecting Children with Nature

By Donna Murray

In the President's message of the last issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*, Darren Copley noted that in spite of my late start in connecting with natural history, I had already become involved in several of the VNHS school field trips.

With very little natural history background, I have easily found a place where I have been able to expand my knowledge of birding and botany while supporting the VNHS' *Connecting Children with Nature* program. Not only do I get to help the experienced leaders with species identification and 'crowd control' – the teachers are always there and often accompanied by parent helpers – I also get to point out various insects, birds, flowers, and trees to the students while helping them understand the connections between all of these living things. Besides the simple fun of the interactions, one of the greatest pleasures in these outings has been the opportunity to have a positive impact regarding nature on the young children and teens.

The obvious delight that the children have during these trips – enthusiasm for not only the outing, but the excitement of being able to discover many simple things in the natural world immediately around them – underlines the importance of getting early participation for our next generation of naturalists and conservationists. The ease with which youngsters can be encouraged to pay attention to the outdoors is usually demonstrated quickly upon exit from the

classroom and onto the school grounds or into nearby parks. One recent trip had children calling out immediately when crows landed to examine school-ground treasures as soon as we came out of the school door – they could tick off the first item on the page their teacher had provided as a checklist – instant gratification. How wonderful it was that this trip ended with one of the students saying, "This was a great morning's adventure".

2008 saw more than two dozen outings, predominantly for the elementary grades, but also with a cross section of middle school visits. As well, a special set of visits were arranged for the international 'Round Square' Conference where grade 11 and 12 delegates from all over the world visited Victoria for a week this past autumn. In all, approximately 350 children benefited in 2008 from the leadership of the VNHS volunteers, who continue to emphasize the importance of conservation while offering an overview of our beautiful natural surroundings.

In order to expand the *Connecting Children with Nature* program, the Victoria Natural History Society is intending to offer volunteer training in the spring of 2009. A workshop will be scheduled to provide a tune-up for current leaders and to give newly interested volunteers a foundation in what to expect and do during these important school visits. Expressions of interest for the spring workshop should be directed to Bill Dancer (250-721-5273) or John Henigman



This photo was taken during the 2008 Robert Bateman *Get-to-Know* program. VNHS volunteers helped make it a success.
Photo: JoyAnne Krupa

The primary common area for improvement identified that, in spite of wide advertising – mostly directly to the schools – neither program seems to be getting the message right to the teachers.

(250-598-6326) the volunteer co-ordinators of *Connecting Children with Nature*.

A recent planning session for the program included a discussion with Kristine Webber-Lampa, coordinator of the *Nature Clubs in Schools* through the Young Naturalists' Club of BC. Some of the tools that this group uses coincide with the activities of *Connecting Children with Nature* and it will be part of the aims of both groups to share ideas, knowledge, and resources. It was clear in our meeting that the programs have common areas that need improvement and that in many ways one program's strength can help the other's weakness.

The primary common area for improvement identified that, in spite of wide advertising – mostly directly to the schools – neither program seems to be getting the message right to the teachers. Or, if the message is getting there, it doesn't seem to have enough weight to capture the imagination – or time – of the teachers. In 2009 we would like to introduce face-to-face meetings with teachers in as many schools as possible. There we would outline *Connecting Children with Nature* and what we would want to achieve grade by grade from K to 12. This would include the natural sciences in the lower grades with a discussion of ethics that relate to nature in the higher grades. Our dream is to have volunteers assigned to a nearby school or schools who would have a dialogue on, say, a twice-a-year basis, in order to keep our program alive and current.

The Young Naturalists' Club of BC's *Nature Clubs in Schools* is just in the start-up phase for the Victoria area but the family-oriented aspect of the YNC has been underway for several years in Victoria and would really benefit from having VNHS members assist with their programs. When visiting schools, our volunteers could publicize the Young Naturalists' Club of BC while conveying what *Connecting Children with Nature* has to offer. The cross pollination could easily give a chance for volunteers who are not available during school hours – when the vast majority of our current outings take place – to play a part in these vital outings.

Many of you have indicated conservation as one of your interests. Perhaps participation in school visits would allow you to help develop new environmental stewards. Consider reasserting your involvement in the VNHS by volunteering for *Connecting Children with Nature*. There are varying levels of participation and you might find a niche from which to encourage young naturalists.

Interested in getting involved? Contact Bill Dancer (250-721-5273) or John Henigman (250-598-6326), the volunteer co-ordinators of *Connecting Children with Nature*.

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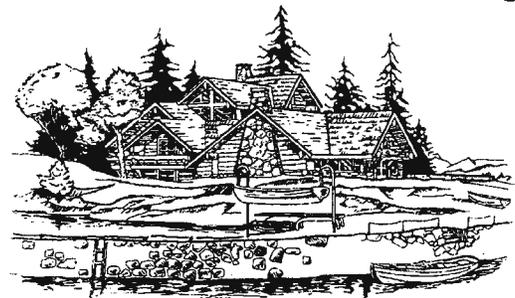
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Haliburton Community Organic Farm: Urban Biodiversity Enhancement Project

By Purnima Govindarajulu

Haliburton Community Organic Farm is a publicly owned farm within the Agricultural Land Reserve. Fifty years ago, Haliburton, or Four Winds Farm as it was then called, was a working farm growing fruits and vegetables for local markets. About 30 years ago, the land was zoned a Utility Zone and the Capital Regional District (CRD) constructed an underground water reservoir on part of the land and active farming ceased. In 2001, CRD wanted to divest itself of the property surrounding the reservoir but the farm was saved from development by the Land for Food Coalition, who envisioned a plan to restore Haliburton Farm to a working community organic farm. As a result of their efforts, the CRD transferred the Haliburton lands to the Municipality of Saanich. Saanich now leases the land to the Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society, a non-profit organization with a vision that includes local food security, economic stability for small scale organic farmers, education and outreach, and land stewardship.

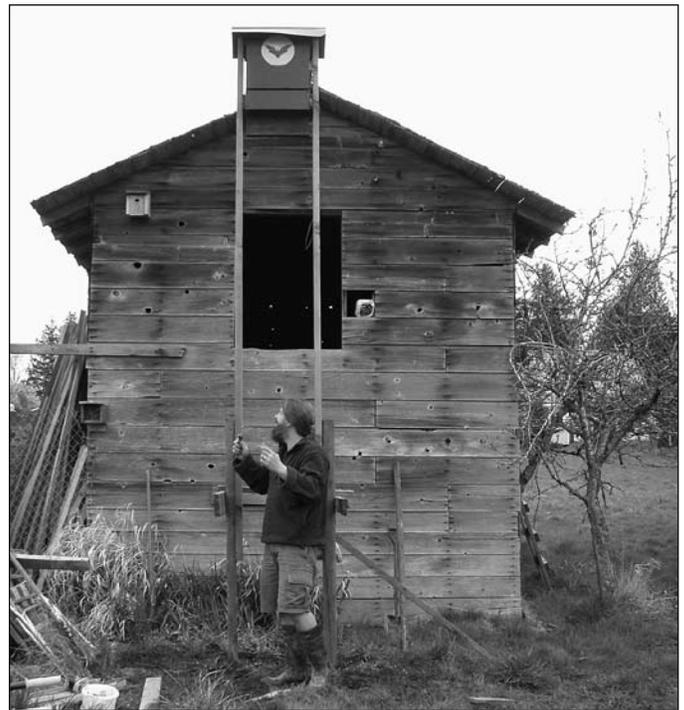
The Farm is 4.09 hectares and within its boundaries lies an increasingly rare landscape feature: a temporary wetland. There is also a small patch of associated forest, which

further enhances the ecological value of this wetland. Although the wetland itself is degraded and heavily invaded by reed-canary grass, the *CRD Natural Areas Atlas* (<http://www.crd.bc.ca/maps/natural/>) shows that it is possible to connect this small patch of natural area on Haliburton Farm to the larger Elk-Beaver Regional Park by restoring a narrow strip of riparian vegetation. Haliburton Community Organic Farm offers a great opportunity for ecological restoration and urban biodiversity conservation.

The *Urban Biodiversity Enhancement Project* on Haliburton Farm was initiated in 2007 by volunteers from the School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria. Since then the project has grown to include volunteers from the Victoria Natural History Society, biological consultants, landscape professionals, and members of the public interested in urban biodiversity projects. The goal of the project is to enhance the biodiversity value of a wildlife habitat patch within a developed area, and to use this enhancement and restoration process to learn and to teach land-stewardship techniques and ideals.



Planting a hedgerow. Photo: Stephen Price



Erecting a bat box. Photo: Stephen Price

Current Projects

In 2007-2008 funds from a Mountain Equipment Co-op *Urban Sustainability Grant* were used to buy materials for bird boxes, a bat house, salamander boards, and to provide matching funds towards purchase of a green house which will be partly used for growing native plants for restoration efforts. The 13 bird boxes installed in the spring of 2007 were all occupied during the nesting season by various birds, including Violet-green Swallows, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Bewick's Wrens, and House Wrens.

We found two Western Red-Backed Salamanders (*Plethodon vehiculum*) in the forest patch during surveys in the fall of 2007 so we installed salamander boards in the spring of 2008. This fall we were very excited to find a Wandering Salamander (*Aneides vagrans*) using these boards. Salamander boards compensate for the low availability of dead and decaying logs in urban environments and also offer a non-destructive method of surveying for terrestrial salamanders.

In early 2008, we installed a bat day-roost box close to the wetland. Possible bat species in our area that may use this artificial roost include Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*), Yuma Bats (*M. yumanensis*), Big Brown Bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*), and potentially Townsend's Big-eared Bats (*Plecotus townsendii*). We also installed native bee boxes throughout the farmed area, not only to enhance native bee populations but also to provide essential pollination services.

In late summer of 2008 we were awarded a *Public Conservation Assistance Fund Grant* that has helped us expand

our activities. The farm is currently very open, with limited refuge habitat for birds and other wildlife. There is a kilometre of chain-link fencing on the farm and the adjoining CRD lands. In cooperation with the farmers and permission from CRD Water, we plan to convert these extensive chain-link fences to hedgerows, which have been shown to enhance wildlife values. In the fall of 2008, we began by planting 120 meters of the most exposed chain-link fence with mature Pacific ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*), tall Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), Saskatoon (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), and thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*). In 2008 the farm attained Conservation Partner status from The Land Conservancy of BC in recognition of the biodiversity stewardship activities that have been initiated on the farm.

The next big project is the restoration of the temporary wetland. In the summer of 2008, Thomas Biebighauser (author of *Wetland Drainage, Restoration, and Repair*), assessed the site and has drawn up plans for restoration of the Haliburton wetland. The goal of this effort is to create a long-hydroperiod temporary wetland that will establish the necessary conditions for breeding of native Pacific Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) and Red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora*), but will not support breeding of the introduced American Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*). The wetland will also be used by a diversity of other native species.

Temporary ponds are being rapidly lost in our landscape because they are either filled in (temporary ponds are offered no protection under most provincial and municipal laws), or



Hedgerow species – left: Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) and right: Pacific ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*). Photos: Darren Copley



Amphibians species found on the farm – left: Pacific Chorus frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) and right: Western Red-Backed Salamander (*Plethodon vehiculum*). Photos: Stephen Price

they are dredged and converted to permanent ponds, usually with introduced fish and bullfrogs. These introduced generalist predators often lead to a decrease in native aquatic diversity. The wetland restoration will be conducted as a training workshop and will become a demonstration feature of our long-term biodiversity enhancement project at the farm.

Education and outreach are part of the vision of Haliburton Community Organic Farm Society. In keeping with this we will organize community events for bird box, bat box,

salamander board, and bee box construction and installation. We will also conduct native plant propagation and hedgerow planting workshops for the community. Over the past two years, students from the School of Environmental Studies *Natural Areas Restoration Program* have been involved in various aspects of the restoration plans. We hope to expand student participation and use the results of our efforts to study the long-term effects of various restoration efforts in supporting urban biodiversity.

Request for Volunteers

As the project has grown over the past two years, there is an increasing need for more volunteers to implement various aspects of the project. In particular, we are looking for VNHS volunteers who will adopt the farm as a site for a monthly bird or butterfly surveys, as well as help with the identification of plants, invertebrates and other organisms inhabiting the site. Data collected will become part of the long-term monitoring project, so we are looking for individuals to commit to at least one full year of participation. We are also looking for volunteers to help with administrative and coordination tasks.

If interested, please contact **Purnima Govindarajulu**, purnimap@uvic.ca.

For more information on **Haliburton Community Organic Farm** visit <http://www.haliburtonfarm.org/>



Tuning

By Christine Rhein

I try to tune out the boom! boom! boom!
from the shooting range two miles from my house,
and think of the people who live next door

to the targets, or in the din of London and Berlin
where nightingales now sing fourteen decibels louder
to be heard by mates, quintupling the pressure

in their lungs. I've never heard a nightingale,
but I know noise came from nausea, and bulls-
eye names the goal for some blurry desire.

Bullseye is a band in Norway playing gung-ho rock and roll,
like the kid down the street whose car speakers rumble
through his closed windows and mine,

drums pummeling our insides. If I told him I once hiked
among redwoods, heard ghostly calls in the stillness,
branches somewhere in the canopy sky

moaning as they swayed, would he say Cool
or Whatever, the way my sons have mumbled it,
intending that I shouldn't--or maybe should--hear,

all talk target practice, ricochet and sashay, headache
and heartache, duck and cover. In a fable, Lion realizes
too late his vulnerability, the tunnel of his ear,

tiny Mosquito zooming in. Out beyond Pluto, Voyager's
golden disc offers mud pots, thunder, footsteps,
a Brandenburg Concerto and Johnny B. Goode.

Was the very first song a hum or a shout, laughter
or weeping? When my friend, at forty, praised
her cochlear implants, she complained about work,

the ringing office phones--How do people concentrate?
I consider her vacations--wind surfing, rock climbing,
marathons--how different now that she hears

each splash and scrape, the huh of heavy exhalation.
I wish I could adorn my ears the way warriors in India did,
with metallic green beetle wings, an iridescent

clacking and tinkling at the Feast of Courage. Imagine
if we could hear bread rising, dew forming, the budding
of raspberries, the tear of a cocoon, a minnow's pulse,

our own cells growing, dying. When my husband
kisses my ear, I love the swoosh, the quiver, his breath
sand driven by wind, my whispered name.

"Tuning" by Christine Rhein from Wild Flight. (c)
Texas Tech University Press, 2008. Reprinted with
permission.

*The inclusion of this poem came at the suggestion
of VNHSer Gail Fattore: "I am a fairly new mem-
ber, however, I came across this item and thought
of our Victoria Natural History group."*

Lessons Learned as a Banding Assistant at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory

By Kelsey Low

For the past four months I have been working for the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) as a Banding Assistant, a position funded by the Science Horizons Youth Internship Program. This has been an amazing opportunity for me to experience the reality of working with birds. The field season is over now, and I can reflect on the lessons I learned during the first part of my internship.

The RPBO is a banding station involved in a number of bird study programs, including MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship), songbird migration monitoring, and Northern Saw-whet Owl migration monitoring. I am among the lucky few to have seen this relatively unspoiled Garry oak/Douglas-fir woodland, since the military restricts access to the site. I was able to appreciate the landscape and its amazing birdlife during the daily census, when I would do a bird count along a circular route around the banding site. I am a much better birder now because of the songs and calls I learned during census, and because of the tips I got from experienced volunteers.



Kelsey Low with Barred Owl. Photo: Tracy Anderson

My job wasn't all birding, of course. I also learned the joy of opening, closing, furling, de-tangling, repairing, setting up, taking down, and de-frosting mist nets, not to mention getting stuck in them. I also learned to extract birds from the nets, which is a fun but often frustrating task. I have a new respect for Chestnut-backed Chickadees – those little buggers are *feisty* – and I wake up in a cold sweat from nightmares of a net full of badly-tangled Winter Wrens. The ultimate challenge was extracting Northern Saw-whet Owls because they could actually grab me with their little talons. Imagine an excitable, feral kitten with fingers – ouch!

Actually *banding* a bird isn't that difficult, after the proper training and some practice. The real trick is aging and sexing! It takes careful observation, study, and experience. The most important lesson I learned about aging and sexing was that uncertainty is inevitable, and that if you aren't sure about a bird's age, call it unknown! That was a surprisingly difficult thing for me to do. Gabriel David, the eternally patient Bander-in-Charge, worked hard to teach me the importance of accepting my limitations and not trying to define every bird. He also taught me that the best way to weigh a Steller's Jay is to stuff it in a Pringle's can. What can I say? This is an unusual internship!

Probably the ultimate joy of field work was that I could have fun with birds and still contribute something valuable. As much as we goofed off in the banding shack, and snuggled the Saw-whet Owls and giggled whenever a thrush pooped on someone, we did take our core responsibilities seriously: ensuring the safety of the birds, the safety of the banders, and the collection of meaningful data. I learned that the sad reality of any banding effort is that some birds will get hurt, and some will die. It is up to us to minimize the casualties and ensure that the outcome of the study justifies any loss of life. My internship with the RPBO truly challenged me to accept the responsibilities of being a good biologist.

I want to thank all the wonderful people on the RPBO board for giving me this fantastic learning opportunity, and Gabriel David for being an amazing teacher. I also thank the volunteers who helped me get through the long days, particularly double-shift days when I probably wasn't much fun to be around. You are more appreciated than you'll ever know! My internship at the RPBO has been an amazing introduction to the reality of field work. The lessons I have learned will stay with me for the rest of my career, whatever it may be!



Black-throated Gray Warbler. *Photo: Kelsey Low*

Ten Easy Ways to Help Migrating Birds

(Modified from information on Nature Canada's website: <http://www.naturecanada.ca>)

Each year, billions of birds are on the move, making the annual migration to and from Canada to warmer climates in the United States, the Caribbean, Central and South America. About 40% of the world's bird species are considered migratory. In North America about 75% of bird species migrate, and in Canada roughly 90% of bird species migrate. There are many things you can do to encourage birds to visit your yard during their migration, and to ensure that their journey is a safe one. Here are ten:

Rein in your pets. Leash dogs in natural areas, and keep beaches Fido-free. Keep cats indoors.

Throw old bread in the bin. Old baked goods are prone to mould, and fill a bird's belly without meeting its nutritional needs. Mould can kill waterfowl. Instead of feeding old bread to the birds, offer dry seed, grains or fruits instead.

Put waste in its place. Birds become entangled in plastic bags, fishing line and other garbage, resulting in injury, strangulation or easy predation.

Break up your windows with stickers, decals or strips of colour. Unbroken reflections baffle birds, causing them to fly into the glass.

Drive carefully. Roadside birds take flight at an angle—possibly straight into your vehicle's path—so slow down.

Cap your chimneys and dryer vents. Wire mesh will keep birds from roosting or roosting in your furnace or fireplace.

Provide a water source. Bird baths need only be an inch or two deep and have a shallow slope. If you have cats that prowl the neighbourhood, it's best to mount the bath on a pedestal. Bird baths should be cleaned once a week with a stiff brush.

Plant native plants. They provide shelter, places to raise young, and food sources.

Don't use pesticides. These poisons get ingested into the food chain and washed into the waterways. If it says "-cide", avoid it.

Get the lead out. Sinkers cause acute or chronic lead poisoning of thousands of birds in Canada each year. Use non-toxic alternatives.

International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the incredible journeys of migratory birds between their breeding grounds in North America and their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central, and South America and takes place on the second Saturday in May each year.

Community Restoration and Protecting Ecologically Significant Lands



Creating Conservation Legacies

By Wendy Tyrrell, HAT Covenants and Acquisitions Coordinator

I have always believed that ecological restoration without community participation is nothing more than mitigation. Sort of like the gardener that comes twice a month to attend to your neighbour's lawn: "mow, blow and go". To restore a damaged ecosystem back to functionality takes much more than a weed-pull and planting a couple of shrubs – it takes a community! The reason? Time, commitment, passion, and perseverance. With all the best intentions in mind, no amount of funding will outlast a group of impassioned folks working to restore their favourite park or nearby greenspace.

Fortunately, our region has amazing examples of people that rally around an issue and go into action! The CRD had more than 70 people attend the first broom-pull of the 2008 season at Mill Hill Park – incredible!! When it comes to community habitat restoration we have many examples:

Norm Mogenson (Knockan Hill Park), Judy Spearing (Mt. Doug Park), Moralea Milne (Devonian Park), Patricia Boyle (Government House), just to name a few. All committed volunteers leading volunteers in an effort to bring health back to the land. I'll bet some of these names sound familiar? Of course they would – they are members of the Victoria Natural History Society!

You may remember that HAT was formed by the VNHS only 15 years ago. There was a need in the community to establish a regional land trust that focused on the protection of private and public lands in our region, and the VNHS was instrumental in creating it. HAT and the Victoria Natural History Society are working to bring the connection of our original relationship back and strengthen the partnership between the two groups.



Mt. Matheson covenant. *Photos provided by author*

As a regional land trust, we are mandated to perform annual compliance monitoring and maintenance on the private and public lands that we hold covenants on. However, we strive to do more than maintain these ecologically significant sections of land – we want to be active in assuring they are thriving and functional systems. This is where community comes in, and a wonderful opportunity for VNHS members to contribute volunteer time and skills assisting HAT in monitoring, maintaining, and restoring the lands that we have established protection on. Many of these properties are adjacent to, or part of a corridor of protected lands – vital to providing sufficient habitat. This includes not only public lands, such as Havenwood Park (City of Colwood and Langford), Oak Haven Park (District of Central Saanich) and the Sooke Hills (CRD), but also private lands, where the landowners are keen to involve the community in the restoration of their land. This directly benefits everyone: the ecosystem, the landowner, the local community, and future generations. Some of the activities will include invasive species removal, native planting, and monitoring for success. In addition, we are looking into developing a volunteer monitoring program and “adopt-a-plot” projects in the future, where local community members would adopt a small section of land to steward, and assist HAT in doing baseline studies on these covenanted properties.

If you are interested in participating in the conservation activities that HAT is involved in, we would love to hear from you! Please contact us at: 250-995-2428 or hatmail@hat.bc.ca.



Oak Haven Park

Thank You Victoria Natural History Society!

Habitat Acquisition Trust would like to thank the Victoria Natural History Society for their \$2,000 contribution to HAT’s Conservation Covenant Program. These funds will go towards supporting HAT’s annual compliance monitoring and maintenance for our existing covenants in the region.

We are also appreciative of the donation of the VNHS’ evening raffle proceeds towards this same cause.

Sincerely, HAT Staff and Board

What is a Conservation Covenant?

A conservation covenant is a voluntary written legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization in which the owner promises to protect the land in specific ways. They are designed for conservation purposes and provide the legal basis for protecting a broad range of ecological, cultural, and heritage values. Because covenants are registered on title and run with the land, they restrict activities of current and future landowners to sustainable use, uniquely defined in each covenant agreement. This can include prohibiting future subdivisions and development.

Why are Conservation Covenants a good tool for permanently protecting Private Lands?

With the rising costs of acquiring land, covenants provide a cost effective alternative to purchasing land for the purpose of protecting its important features. Covenants also promote proper and permanent stewardship and allow the local community and conservation organizations to play an important role in protecting critical habitat. Covenants are a flexible tool, each being tailored to address the unique ecological values and conservation objectives of all parties.

What are other options for contributing toward the protection of lands in our region?

Life estate: If you have land you would like to donate, but you would like to continue living there, you may want to consider a life estate. A life estate grants you (and your heirs) the lifetime right to live on your donated property but you receive tax benefits immediately, and the land trust becomes the residual trust.

Charitable annuities: If you have land you would like to protect by donating it, but need to receive income during your lifetime, you might use a charitable gift annuity. In a charitable gift annuity, you agree to transfer certain property to a land trust, and the land trust agrees to make regular annuity payments to one or two beneficiaries you specify for life.

- Leaving a legacy by donating:**
- Annual cash contributions
 - A life insurance policy
 - RRSP’s
 - Securities
 - Bequest in your will

What are the Tax Benefits?

Many of the options mentioned above have the potential for tax benefits. Each situation is unique, and we recommend consulting with a tax advisor and your family members when considering options to protect your land. For more information about conservation covenants, please contact Wendy at 250-995-2428.

Resources:

Habitat Acquisition Trust: www.hat.bc.ca

Land Trust Alliance of BC: <http://www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca/>

Ecological Gifts Program: <http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/egp-pde/>

Publications available on loan through the HAT Library by West Coast Environmental Law: *Giving It Away, Greening Your Title, Leaving a Legacy* and *Here Today, Here Tomorrow*

Letters

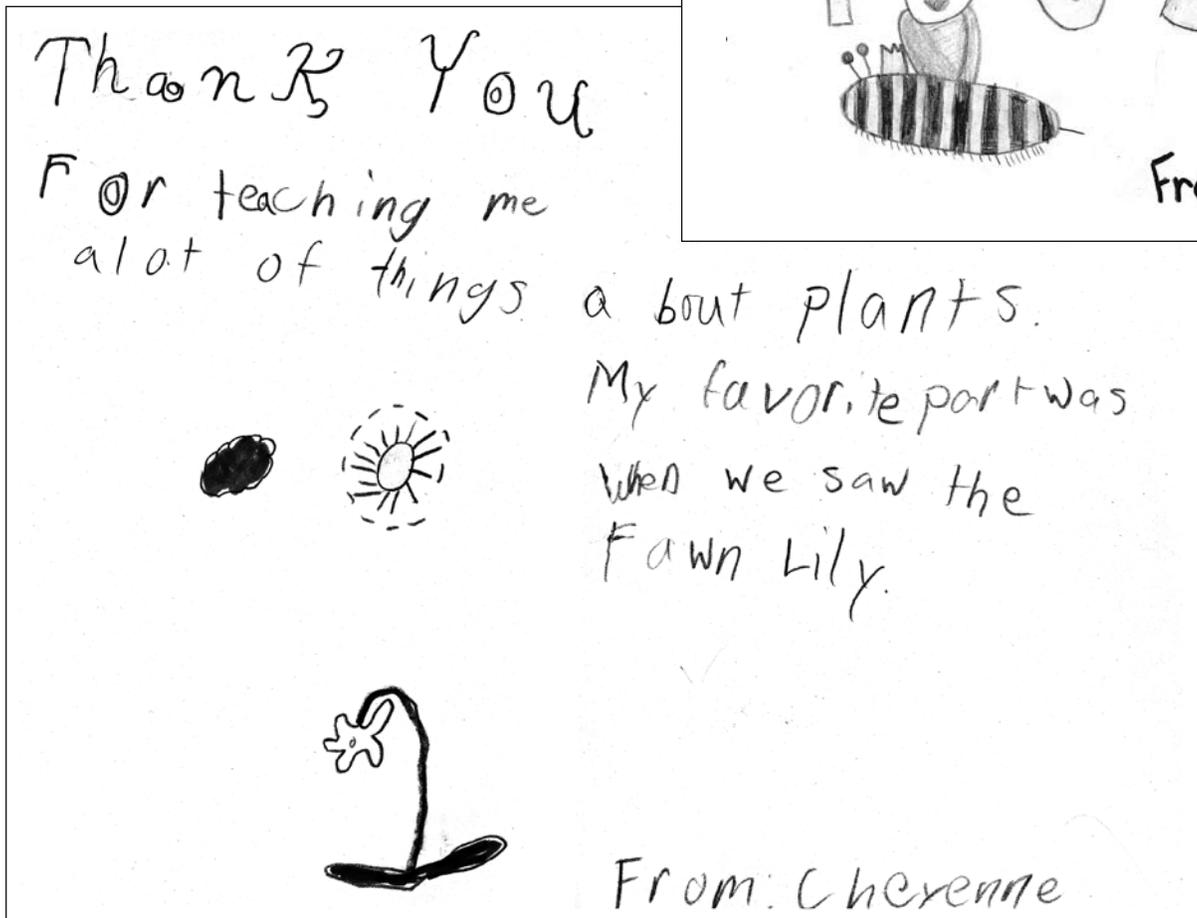
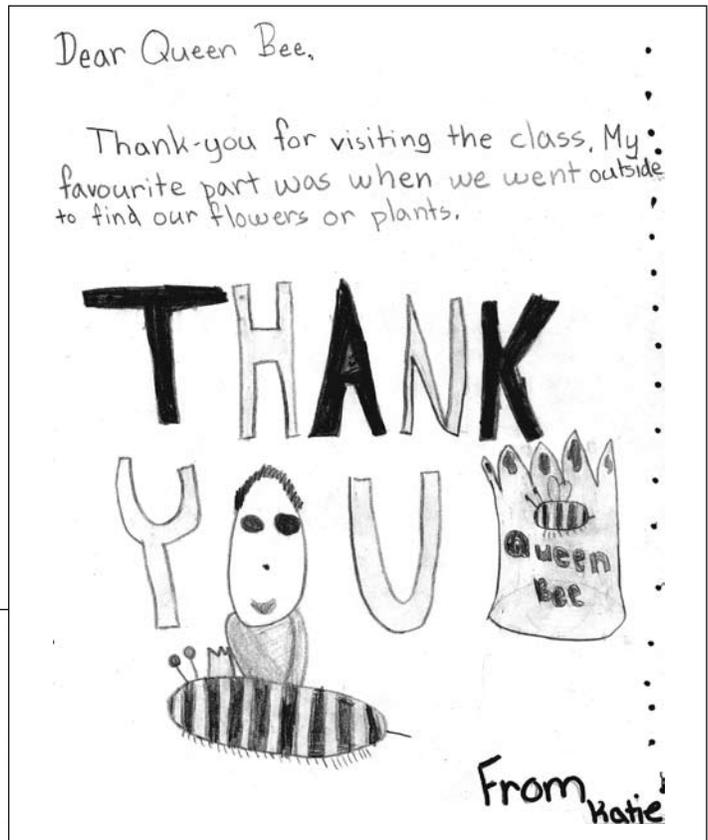
Letters of appreciation for programs provided by VNHS volunteers through our *Connecting Children With Nature* project.

Thank you so much to the volunteers from the Victoria Natural History Society that helped us with the 2008 International Round Square Conference: *Creating Sustainable Communities: Local to Global*.

We are pleased that you were part of our afternoon activity program. What a special service to be able to provide for young people from all around the world. VNHS volunteers did such an impressive and professional job. The binoculars were a wonderful extra bonus! The kids loved the experience.

It would be great if every student in Victoria got to spend an afternoon with VNHS naturalists – a wealth of education there for the asking.

Again, many thanks and warm regards,
Sue Pratt



Letters continued...

I am a third year biology student at the University of Victoria. This year I am the grateful recipient of the **Bev Glover Memorial Scholarship**. In addition to being a student, I am on the UVic Vikes rowing team. Receiving awards such as this one allows me to pursue both my academic and athletic goals.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated, and I hope to make good use of my education. I hope to eventually become a professor, and to be able to share my love of nature with others.

Thank you again!
Yours sincerely,
Willow English

Thank you very much for choosing me as the recipient of the **Freeman F. King Scholarship**. I am honoured that you selected me for this award and I am very grateful for this practical support as I continue my studies.

I've always had a deep love of learning and I find biology especially fascinating because I like trying to wrap my mind around how living systems operate and interact. Although I've mostly favoured the sciences, I really like languages and literature too, so among all my biology and biochemistry courses I've sprinkled a few Spanish, Latin, and English classes. My favourite thing to do in my spare time is curl up with a good novel, but I also enjoy baking, designing sewing projects, playing my Celtic harp, watching the tropical fish in my aquarium, and teaching Sunday School to a group of adorable three-year-olds at my church.

I just got married this June, so the timing of this award is perfect. My husband just graduated from UVic's biology program this spring. As I head into my fourth year in the same program, I'm beginning an Honours project in Dr. Choy's genetics lab. This is my first real taste of the world of research, and so far it's been a lot of fun. I'll be completing my undergraduate degree in April and hope to pursue graduate studies next year.

Thanks again for your generosity.
Sincerely,
Rebecca Jantzen

Congratulations and thanks to VNHS member Margie Shepherd! She raised more than \$300 through her participation in the 2008 Bird Studies Canada Baillee Birdathon. Monies raised support programs that advance the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. To find out more about Birdathon and how you can get involved in 2009, go to: <<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/organization/brdathon.html>>

BULLETIN BOARD

Important Publication – Free for the Asking

A VNHS member, Norman Fowlow, wanted to make us all aware of the publication: *Climate Change Impacts and Adaptations 2007*, produced by Natural Resources Canada. This 448-page government publication contains the most recent scientific information regarding climate change and its possible effects on Canada. It can be ordered free of charge from: Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Division, Earth Sciences Sector, Natural Resources Canada, 601 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E8. E-mail: adaptation@nrca.gc.ca. Also available through order form online: www.adaptation2007.nrca.gc.ca. It comes as a CD or in hardcopy.

Saturday Birding Group

We send out the time and location on the Rare Bird Alert (250-592-3381) on the Thursday and Friday before that week's walk. For more information, call Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454.

Year-round Tuesday Morning Birding Group

The Tuesday Birding Group meets every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the waterfront in Oak Bay, they then decide where they will go birding that morning. The Tuesday Birding group has been around for more than 50 years. Call Bill Dancer at 250-721-5273 for more information.

We're Moving!

After 17 years (ten in Cowichan Bay and seven in Sidney), it's time to pull the plug – *figuratively* speaking. The Marine Ecology Centre is not sinking, but rather expanding – to join the Whale Museum in the New Marine Centre at the Pier Hotel just one block away. The New Marine Centre, under the able leadership of executive director Angus Matthews, is due to open in mid June. In the meantime, the Marine Ecology Centre remains open for visitors and school groups. We will be moving out of the barge at the end of May, so it is for sale. If you know anyone who might be interested in purchasing it, please let them know. For more information, visit our website: www.mareco.org or email us to receive a detailed information package (baustin@mareco.org).

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Upcoming programs

Owls Are a HOOT! Friday, January 2,
1 - 3 pm. By donation – \$5 just pays for the pellet.

Nature Tales: Listen, Imagine and Create:
Saturday, January 3, 1 - 3 pm. \$3 per person

Tales from the Puppet Booth:
Sunday, January 4, 1 - 3 pm. \$3 per person

Way Cool Raccoon School:
Sunday, January 25, 1 - 3 pm. Donations appreciated.

Free Native Plant Gardening Workshops:
Monday, January 26, 1 - 4 pm

Saturday, January 31, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm,

Monday, February 9, 1 - 4 pm,

Sunday, February 22, 1 - 4 pm

Marine Birds: A Course For Naturalists And Enthusiasts:
February 12, 19, 26 and March 5, 12, 2009 7- 9 pm.

Cost: \$89.00 (Friends of the Nature Sanctuary \$80.00), payable at time of registration. Call Swan Lake for details and to pre-register at 250-479-0211

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 Christmas Hill 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. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>>, and is updated regularly.

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 requiring agility or steeper grades. LEVEL 4 — Very steep, insecure footing or longer hikes requiring good physical condition.

JANUARY

Thursday, January 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding Blenkinsop Lake

Come along for a New Year's Day bird walk around Blenkinsop Lake. Meet at the south end of Blenkinsop Lake off Lochside Drive (opposite Don Mann Trucking) at 9:00 a.m. Leader TBA. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 if you need more information.

Saturday, January 3

EVENT

Duncan Christmas Bird Count

If you would like to participate in the Duncan CBC, call **Derrick Marvin** at 1-250-748-8504.

Saturday, January 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding Saanichton Bay Park

Meet at Saanichton Bay Park at 8:00 a.m. This is off of Mount Newton Cross Road just east of Lochside Drive. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 if you need more information

Tuesday, January 13

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

San Miguel Island

Join **Thor Heinrich** as he shares his experiences of the natural history of the outermost of South California's Channel Islands. It has had a most interesting history involving the Chumash Indians, strange pleistocene mammals, an almost extinct species of fox, and elephant seal rookeries. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at the University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and your coffee mug.

Tuesday, January 20

BOTANY NIGHT

Rare Plants of Salt Spring Island: Research and New Discoveries

Robin Annschild, Staff Biologist, Salt Spring Island Conservancy, is conducting a research project on the impact of grazing by sheep on the Endangered Yellow Montane Violet and recently discovered a new population of Scouler's catchfly. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Admission free. Everyone welcome. Bring your friends.

Saturday, January 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Boundary Bay and Raptors

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a trip to Boundary Bay in Vancouver. We can expect to see large flocks of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. Car-pooling will reduce costs to approximately \$40-\$45 per person. Meet opposite the entrance to Beaver Lake Park on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. We will return on the 5:00 p.m. ferry. Dress warmly and bring a lunch. To register call Rick at 250-885-2454.

Monday, January 26

MARINE NIGHT

The Use of Ecological Design in the Development of Sustainable Coastal Aquaculture

Dr. Stephen Cross, Co-Director of the Coastal Aquaculture Research & Training Network at the University of Victoria, will report on the system design and performance trials for a sustainable approach to aquatic agri-food production. He will provide some of the background research leading to an integrated, multi-species approach for open netcage aquaculture and describe their current research program, facility, and the species involved. Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture represents an improvement to operational efficiencies, and the evolution of an industry currently set on the simplicity of monoculture. 7:30 p.m. Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, January 28

BIRDERS' NIGHT

The Classification of Birds

Every time we turn to a field guide we are using a classification of birds that no one really agrees on. Gary Kaiser will explain a possible new family tree for birds that is consistent with a common sense approach to avian biology. 7:30 p.m. in room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring your coffee mug.

Saturday, January 31

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Birding Jocelyn Hill

Join **Mike McGrenere** in birding Jocelyn Hill in the Highlands. This trip could produce some rarities such as Pine Grosbeak,

Townsend's Solitaire, or Golden Eagle. Meet at Millstream Road, just past Emma Dixon Road at 9:00 a.m. Bring a lunch. Call Mike at 250-658-8624 if you need more information.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Elk Lake and Beaver Lake

Join us for a leisurely 10 km stroll around the loop trail at Elk Lake/Beaver Lake Regional Park. This is a good location to find wintering passerines and waterfowl. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the main parking lot at Beaver Lake Park on Elk Lake Drive. For more information call **Rick Schortinghuis** at 250-885-2454. Leader TBA.

Sunday, February 8

EVENT

Valentine Couples' Birdathon

This event gives couples an opportunity to enjoy a morning of birding in friendly competition with other paired birders. The object of the exercise is to identify as many species as possible within the Victoria Checklist Area between the hours of 6 a.m. and noon. Couples meet right after noon at the Swan Lake Nature Centre to compare notes and swap stories about their adventures. Worthy prizes are typically provided for the highest count, "Best Bird", Most Entertaining Story, etc. Best of all, the pair of spouses or sweethearts having the highest count get to have their names inscribed on the beautiful Anderson Trophy. The entry fee is \$10 per couple, proceeds going to a good cause: VNHS conservation efforts. Contact **Jan Brown** or **Alan MacLeod** for further information at 250-382-3854 or leotaj@telus.net.

Tuesday, February 10

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

Galapagos Islands and the Ecuadoran Amazon

Mikhail Belikov has some fascinating stories and excellent pictures of his recent trip to this area of the world. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at the University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring your coffee mug.

Friday, February 13 to Monday, February 16

EVENT

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count: Count for Fun, Count for the Future

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

Tuesday, February 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Research on Noug in Ethiopia and General Meanderings of a Botanist in East Africa

Scott Black, UBC graduate student, will teach us all about

Noug (*Guizotia abyssinica*) a species that belongs to the Compositae family and is closely related to sunflower. It differs from domesticated sunflower mainly due to its high level of branching, numerous flower heads and small seeds. It is of economic significance not only for domestic consumption in Ethiopia, but also as an export commodity to North America and Europe, where it is mainly sold as bird-feed under its English names: niger seed or thistle seed. Many interesting plants have their origin in East Africa and it is amazing how plants and people interact in this high plateau region of East Africa. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Admission free. Everyone welcome. Bring your friends.

Sunday, February 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

The Winter Hummers of Cadboro Bay

Join **Dave and Agnes Lynn** at their home in Cadboro Bay from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to check out the Anna's Hummingbirds that stay all winter in the area. See what encourages them to hang around. You will also learn about their food plants, both native and non-native. There should be lots of hummers around. The males might still be doing their aerial shows although the females should be on their nests by then. Address is 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor Avenue in Ten Mile Point. No pets please. Dress warmly. Call Agnes at 250-721-0634 or email her (thelynns@shaw.ca) if you need more information.

Monday, February 23

MARINE NIGHT

Are Lingcod Too Tasty for Their Own Good?

Lingcod are a common fish in our local waters, easily observed by scuba diving. They are also sought by many fishermen. Following methods developed by the Vancouver Aquarium, local divers have been conducting an annual survey of lingcod spawning along the shores of Gowlland Tod Park. **Doug Biffard**, a long time diver and member of SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, has compiled and summarized six years of spawning observations. The talk will cover aspects of lingcod biology, management, and population trends of the lingcod in Saanich Inlet. 7:30 p.m. Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, February 25

BIRDERS' NIGHT

The Birds of Thailand

Chris Harris was in Thailand recently and took lots of pictures of birds in that region of the world. Come and see the beautiful species that call Thailand their home. 7:30 p.m. room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring your coffee mug.

Saturday, February 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding the Duncan Area

Join **Derrick Marvin** for some birding in the Duncan area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Helmcken Park and Ride to car pool or at 9:00 a.m. at Somenos Marsh off the Island Highway just north of Duncan. Bring a lunch. Call Derrick at 1-250-748-8504 if you need more information.



2009 Natural History Courses



Here's a chance to support the society while learning a bit more about natural history. These programs will be taught by experienced VNHS trip leaders who have volunteered their time. The proceeds will support VNHS conservation and education activities. Please note the lower prices for members (yet another reason to join!). We are interested in offering other courses but require more leaders to come forward. Please contact Darren Copley at 479-6622 if you have any suggestions.

Beginning Birding



An easy introduction to the pursuit of birding for those with little or no previous experience. The emphasis will be on bird identification in the field. We will start with an illustrated lecture on March 5, 2009 and follow with six Saturday morning field trips from March 7 to April 18. The cost will be \$75 for non-members and \$45 for members.

Take the next step beyond the basics of identification. Our group of local VNHS experts places an emphasis on birding by ear and the identifying field marks of those difficult groups and species. This course includes eight very diverse field sessions around Victoria led by eight different leaders. Sessions run on Sunday mornings, beginning on April 5, 2009, with the two long weekends skipped. The cost is \$95.00 for non-members and \$65.00 for members. The course is limited to 15 participants.

Beyond Beginning Birding



If you have any questions, or would like to register, please contact Darren Copley at 479-6622 or dccopley@telus.net. More detailed brochures will be available in the new year.



**Victoria Natural
History Society**

