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# The Victoria NATURALIST

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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

Coho salmon returning to spawn at Goldstream River. To read about how you can help wild salmon, see the article on page 10. *Photo:* copyright Mikhail Belikov/ <[www.focusonwild.com](http://www.focusonwild.com)>

True confession time: during the summer of 1989, I worked on a fish farm. I was young! The farm was in the Sechelt Inlet – among the first farms established there, and the last farm to still raise Pacific Salmon (both Coho and Chinook). I was from the Interior and it was my first coastal experience, so aspects of it were incredible and unforgettable. But it also gave me a perspective not everyone has: first-hand experience. And I was participating in a fairly early phase of the expansion of the industry in British Columbia, when the concerns were only just starting to be discussed.

So, with first-hand knowledge I can tell you that we fed antibiotic-laced feed to the fish as often as we were allowed, because diseases were already prevalent. They were the same antibiotics people take, like oxytetracycline. I can also tell you that fish escaped during every net change, and that predators in any form were not tolerated. I still feel horror at the treatment of the dogfish sharks that got trapped in the nets while they were trying to get at the dead salmon that were there.

A lot can change over 20 years, but nothing appears to have improved. This issue has two stories about how your actions can reduce the impact of industrial farming (p. 8 and 10).

*Claudia*

Erratum: On page 12 of the July/Aug 2010 issue (vol. 67.1) the butterfly is incorrectly labeled a West Coast Lady when it is actually a Painted Lady. Sorry Jeremy!

# President's Message

By Darren Copley

Although many things have remained the same in our sixty-something years as a Society, there has been change over the years, and we'd like to give you a chance to let us know if we're going in the right direction. The easy way to do this is by surveying the membership. I know there has been quite a bit in the media lately about the Canada census, but hopefully ours will be much less controversial. It is not mandatory, but it would help a lot to know your thoughts and ideas. Using the internet, we can offer a survey that uses no paper and there will be almost no delay in seeing the results. But if you don't wish to do an on-line survey, we can mail you a paper copy. Your participation in our Society's efforts can create the type of club you want

to support for a lifetime. We will announce the survey at our meetings, and please watch our website for links to it.

Like all of the recent development, where we quickly forget what was lost, I'd like to remind you of a few of the changes since I've been a member. For many years, the VNHS had a very active conservation committee, which was a watchdog for local development. However, with more than 100 conservation organizations in Victoria, the VNHS has stepped back from this role, supporting these other organizations in their efforts. Some support comes in the form of providing members to sit on committees like the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, the Viaduct Flats



*VNHS*  
*September Social*  
*You are invited!*

Join other VNHS members for a BBQ get-together at Aylard Farms in East Sooke Park after the Hawkwatch. Members are welcome to a free smokie (veggie option available), beverage, cake, and camaraderie!

*Saturday September 25, 3-5 p.m.*

(see calendar for more details about the Hawkwatch)

Email or phone: [wendyct@shaw.ca](mailto:wendyct@shaw.ca)/250-598-7276  
before September 22 to RSVP


Committee, and the Swan Lake Board. And, thanks to the volunteer time committed by members in the past, we can also sometimes provide surveys of plants and animals to local government when areas are threatened with development. An excellent example of this is Viaduct Flats, where bird survey results were essential in the establishment of the covenant on the wetland. Many of our members that want to support conservation and stewardship efforts are also members of these other organizations, and spend many weekends bashing broom or removing ivy. We are provided with a provincial voice through our umbrella organization, the Federation of BC Naturalists/BC Nature, but this too is because of a dedicated cadre of volunteers (you could be one of them!); constantly reminding the provincial government and industry that the environment is worth protecting.

Our club has always put education and field trips in the forefront, but in the past we've had Young Naturalist sections and articles in our newsletter. As often is the case, this type of effort is usually the result of one dedicated volunteer (hint, hint) who takes a project on. We haven't had a youth component to our club in many years. The Young Naturalists Club, originally an offshoot of the Vancouver Natural History Society but now an independent organization, has put together a program and magazine that targets young people throughout BC. The most successful chapters have a strong connection with the local naturalist club. It would be nice to have this connection again, and it just so happens that the local Young Naturalists Club needs volunteers to help run the program, as well as do some field trips, so please let me know if you are interested.


Another really important aspect of our club are the opportunities to socialize with other like-minded people. We do this regularly at evening presentations, the Christmas Bird Count, and field trips, but in the past we actually had a board member dedicated to a Social Committee. This included organizing an annual banquet, where we all got to dress in our finest, and mingle with other members, while being entertained by a great speaker during a fabulous dinner. As the times changed, our numbers attending this event dropped, so it was cancelled. More recently, we had picnics to try and fill in the gap, but they haven't seemed to have caught on. So this year we thought we'd combine a very popular field trip (the Hawk Watch) with a barbeque: September 25 at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Regional Park. It is a long way to drive, but since many of us would head out there anyway to see the spectacle of migrating birds of prey, it seemed like a good match. Please join us for this opportunity to meet other club members and chat with your Board of Directors. For more info, and to RSVP, check out the bottom of page 4 and the calendar on page 18. I look forward to seeing you all there!




Carmella meets a blue-eyed damer on the August 2, 2010 dragonfly field trip. *Photo: Maureen Funk*


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# Portland Island Exploration

By David Riedel

The VNHS held a day trip to Portland Island on the 27th of June. Twenty-four participants travelled to Portland in two groups of 12, by private ferries.

Portland Island is within the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve of Canada, which was established in 2003 to protect a representative area of the coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem, one of the rarest in Canada. The Park Reserve includes 36 square kilometres of land and marine area, and 26 square kilometres of submerged lands (for more detail see the Parks Canada website at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/gulf/index.aspx>) Several former provincial parks are included in the Park, including Portland Island, which was previously known as Princess Margaret Provincial Marine Park,

reflecting the island's alternate moniker. Portland Island is one of the largest parcels of land in the Park. It is situated between Salt Spring Island, Moresby Island, and Vancouver Island's Swartz Bay.

The primary purpose of the day trip was to compile breeding evidence for the *BC Breeding Bird Atlas* project, now in its third year of five (<http://www.birdatlas.bc.ca/english/index.jsp>) We also enjoyed native wildflowers and other plants, and a scenic hike on a Gulf Island that is not accessible by public transportation.

Parks Canada regulations stipulate a maximum group size of 15 people, which was the reason we split into two groups. In the event of an especially interesting find, the



Photo: Copyright Mikhail Belikov/[www.focusonwild.com](http://www.focusonwild.com)



Top: Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*).

Below: Everyone loves oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*).  
Photos: Darren Copley



groups could communicate by walkie-talkie. Many participants were novice naturalists, so we ensured that each group included experienced birders and botanists, who shared their knowledge.

In regard to the *Atlas* project, the trip was a success. At the end of the day, Agnes Lynn, our tour coordinator and chief cat-herder, reported that we had added or upgraded breeding evidence for ten species, compared to data previously entered in the *Atlas*.

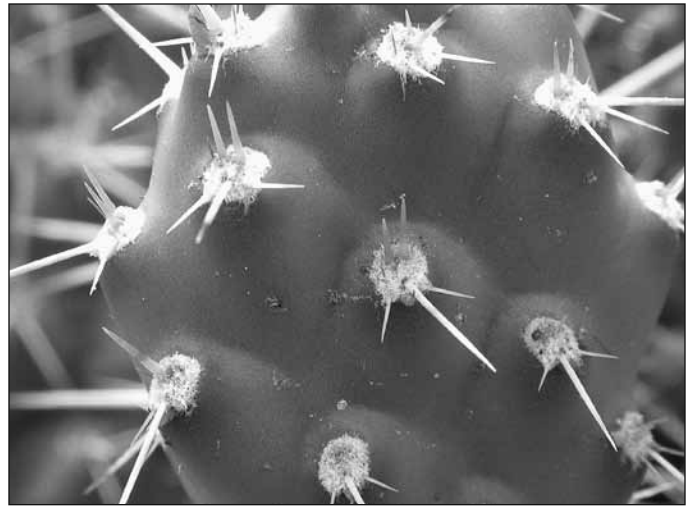
Notable finds included confirmation of breeding for Wilson's Warbler, indicated by an adult carrying food. Breeding was also confirmed for Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Orange-crowned Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco, indicated by the presence of recently-fledged young. In addition to our findings, we observed volunteers who are conducting research on the breeding success of Song Sparrows. More information about the Song Sparrow project can be found at <<http://publish.uwo.ca/~lzanette/volunteer/index.html>>.

Probable breeding was recorded for Belted Kingfisher. An agitated adult loudly protested our intrusion, as we hiked on a cliff along the shoreline. A nesting cavity was likely under our feet, on the cliff bank.

The prevalence of blonde raccoons was noted. The hair colour results from a recessive gene; some individuals had a striking, nearly golden appearance. Among Portland's healthy population of raccoons, at least four or five blonde ones were noticed.

Agnes was surprised at how many flowers were still in bloom. On the coastal bluffs were several grassy meadows containing colourful wild onions, both Hooker's onion (*Allium acuminatum*) and nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*). There were still traces of death camas (*Zigadenus venenosus*) in flower, as well as seed heads from true camas (genus *Camassia*). The small blue harvest brodiaea (*Brodiaea coronaria*) were everywhere in the tall, dry grass. Level with the top of the grass was false onion (*Triteleia hyacinthina*), a white flower arranged in little clumps.

Likewise in the cool forest, lots of woodland treasures were still in bloom. Agnes commented that the understory



Prickly-pear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*). Photo: Darren Copley

had come back amazingly well, compared to the close-cropped ground cover all over the island when she and husband, Dave Lynn, regularly visited in the late 1970s and early 1980s, not long after the feral sheep were removed, relics of the island's agricultural past.

Oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), also known as ironwood, was at its peak. Several spectacular specimens of this gorgeous shrub induced expressions of awe. Stonecrop (*Sedum spathulifolium*) was likewise beautiful; it displayed a wide range of colours in the sun.

As we waited for the ferries to return us to Vancouver Island, we enjoyed looking at the brittle prickly-pear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*), a fairly uncommon plant in this area but one that the sheep would not have disturbed.

It is good to know that this Gulf Island gem is protected in perpetuity.

Thanks are due to Agnes Lynn for coordinating a rather complicated day trip, and to Dave Lynn for driving us to and from the meeting location.



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# Coffee with an Ethical Buzz

By Bruce Whittington

In the pre-dawn of a January morning in the early 1990s, our vehicle entered the little village of La Bajada. We were slowed to a crawl by the large round cobbles which make up the main street. Typical of villages in the hills of the state of Nayarit, in western Mexico, there were chickens at the roadside, and the sound of brooms sweeping away the dust that settled overnight. In a few bouncy minutes, we moved through La Bajada and pulled over at a wide spot in the dwindling roadway. We were now in an open woodland, with an understory of shrubs and a canopy of tall trees.

Arriving just after dawn, we found the birds already on the move. There was a mixed flock there, typical of subtropical forest habitats. Rufous-backed Robins worked the understory, much like their North American cousins. Overhead, Golden-cheeked Woodpeckers and Orange-fronted

Parakeets were noisy, and a group of Streak-backed Orioles was feeding in a flowering tree.

Beneath our feet were stones laid hundreds of years ago by the Spaniards, to carry their wagons of plunder to the seacoast at the old colonial capital of San Blas. Alongside the old road, known as the Camino Reale, we saw shrubs with glossy green leaves, and berries of green and red. These were coffee plants, here in the forest, yet cared for and harvested just like any other crop. Like many plants, these coffee bushes grow best in the shade of taller trees. The berries, each with two developing beans, mature slowly, and are picked, one by one, as they ripen to a bright red.

Overhead, in the shade-producing canopy, Blue-rumped Parrotlets, sparrow-sized jewels with voices like peacocks, vanishes in the foliage. A pair of Grey-collared Becards joined our mixed flock, and then we saw a tanager, yellow with black wings, and a red head; it was a Western Tanager, the same bird that moves through Vancouver Island backyards in the middle of May. There were warblers, too, Orange-crowns, and Black-throated Greys, and down among the coffee plants were Wilson's Warblers and Nashvilles, bound for Canada in a month or so.

As we crested the hill we entered a banana plantation. The canopy disappeared, and the birds were gone, too, or rather, they were now behind us, where the forest lingered at the edge of the coffee plantation. It was a startling change.

North Americans love bananas, but banana plantations make very poor bird habitat. On the other hand, coffee – that warm, dark friend of our mornings – grows in the shade of a forest that is home to hundreds of species of birds, both residents and North American breeders which winter there.

Since the 1990s this situation has rapidly changed, as new



A "rustic" coffee plantation in La Bajada, Mexico, with coffee plants growing under a mixed canopy of shade trees. *Photo:* Bruce Whittington



A "sun coffee" plantation in Costa Rica. *Photo:* David Stirling



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Sun-grown coffee puts a severe demand on the soil, and so it requires fertilization, with all its consequent problems of runoff and leaching. Without a canopy of trees to support a population of birds, there are more insect pests, and so these sun coffees are often sprayed with pesticides.

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strains of coffee have been planted which are sun-tolerant. They produce more rapidly and more abundantly, and are more profitable, but there are problems.

Sun-grown coffee puts a severe demand on the soil, and so it requires fertilization, with all its consequent problems of runoff and leaching. Without a canopy of trees to support a population of birds, there are more insect pests, and so these sun coffees are often sprayed with pesticides.

Research in Mexico and Colombia has found 90% fewer bird species in sun grown coffee plantations than in shade coffee plantations. This tremendous diversity of bird species includes both resident populations, and those birds known as the neotropical migrants that we North Americans like to think of as “ours”. Fortunately, the solution to slowing the destruction of this habitat lies partly in our hands, or rather, our wallets.

Coffee is the second most valuable commodity traded legally in the world today (after oil.) Some 70% of the world’s coffee is produced in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in many of the countries in which it is grown, it accounts for 40% of exports. North Americans are very important customers, consuming about 30% of world coffee production. By choosing coffee with consideration for its environmental merit, as consumers we can influence how coffee is produced. Just as we would not consider buying tuna that was not “dolphin-friendly”, we can select coffee that is labeled “bird-friendly.” Many coffees are now independently certified as being “shade-grown”, an indication that they are grown in shade coffee plantations. Coffees that are certified as “organic” or “fair trade” are also good, as they are likely shade-grown.

The situation has become a little more complex in the last few years. Organizations that promote “shade-grown” coffee now report that some coffee is grown on an industrial scale, under the shade of monoculture forests of certain trees. Shade-grown? Technically, yes, but the diversity of a natural shade coffee plantation is missing, and so is the diversity of bird species.

Many of us have made the change to “ethical” coffees – coffee grown organically, “fair trade” coffee that pays the producers a fair return for their product, and shade-grown coffees. It’s time to tweak or demands as consumers and start

insisting that the stores we shop at carry coffee that is certified “bird-friendly.” The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Centre offers this certification, and it would be great if some local local retailers would sell this bird-friendly coffee. Second-best? Organic coffees are likely to be bird-friendly but shade-grown coffees need a closer look. Fair trade coffees are the right way to go no matter what.

How does bird-friendly coffee taste? Coffee connoisseurs favour shade-grown coffees, and they are no more expensive than other high quality coffees. Look for them where you shop, and ask for them if you don’t see them. The next time you see a Western Tanager, you’ll feel warm inside, all over again.

BRUCE WHITTINGTON *is a freelance writer, photographer and naturalist who lives in Ladysmith, BC. His book Seasons With Birds was published in 2004 by TouchWood Editions.*



The Victoria Natural History Society will have bags of coffee for sale at our September meetings that are certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center as “bird-friendly” – the only choice for naturalists! Pick up a bag of ground or whole

bean, medium, dark, or decaffeinated for just \$10 a bag. To find out more about the coffee go to <[www.birdsandbeans.com](http://www.birdsandbeans.com)>.

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# Federal Pacific Aquaculture Regulations

## Input Needed Before September 12!

By Alexandra Morton

The federal government has released its proposed Federal Pacific Aquaculture Regulations with a sixty-day public input period. These regulations roll back the safe-guards we have in British Columbia to prevent heavy industrialization and privatization of the coast at the expense of our communities. Once these regulations pass there will be no further public input on how each salmon feedlot licence is written, how many wild fish they can take and what diseases they must report. The federal licences will be issued without First Nation or other consultation and can be expanded without an environmental assessment. I feel

there has to be enormous response or else we all lose, even the people working in the industry, because no retailer is going to want to be in possession of a seafood product authorized to "Harmfully Alter, Disrupt and Destroy" parts of the North Pacific. Oddly these regulations will not apply to the east coast of Canada, where the Minister of Fisheries resides.

There are several options for you to act by the deadline September 12:

- See my letter to Ed Porter on the < [www.salmonaresacred.org](http://www.salmonaresacred.org) > website,
- Write to Ed Porter, the team leader of Regulatory



Operations, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada with your views: <PAR-RPA@dfo-mpo.gc.ca >

- Follow the link on the <[www.salmonaresacred.org](http://www.salmonaresacred.org)> website and sign the online petition,

I know it is very hard to react to everything that comes at us, so I have tried to make this easy for you. However, I can't turn this looming disaster alone; it requires each and every one of you and your friends and family. Please pass the petition to all you know.

The *Get Out Migration* protest brought thousands of people together, but government does not want to hear from our communities nor of our need for good health in our environment and our bodies. Clearly there needs to be more public response. That is all that is required to fix this. I will continue to push for protection for salmon feedlot workers, as this is a government mistake and they need not bear the cost of this to our coast.

I think we will have a good Fraser sockeye run this summer and that should tell us the ocean and the river are still highly capable of feeding this coast! This generation of sockeye has shown one of the least declines and we need to investigate why this run is good and the others have failed so badly. If we allow government to let salmon feedlot companies hide their disease outbreaks this investigation will be incomplete. If there is no salmon feedlot disease problem, there should be no reason for secrecy.

Hundreds of people have said "I am behind you Alex," but this is not working. We have to stand shoulder to shoulder, where we are all peacefully and strongly visible. This is the only way to save ourselves and our planet.

The Fraser sockeye decline began at the same time government failed to cull millions of IHN virus infected feedlot salmon on the Fraser River migration routes. Government ignored federal scientists who state infected Atlantic salmon should not be permitted in pens (Traxler et al 1993). The federal government also ignored warnings from their scientists that would have saved the North Atlantic cod. When the cod went extinct the Hibernia Oil wells appeared on the Grand Banks – the most generous food-producing area humanity will ever have was exchanged for oil.

#### Literature Cited

Traxler, G.S., J.R. Roome, and M.E. Kent. 1993. Transmission of infectious hematopoietic necrosis virus in seawater. *Diseases of Aquatic Organisms* 16: 111-114.

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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by two new members since the last issue. Hana Masata of Nelthorpe Street agreed to have her name published in our "welcome" column. Her interests include birding, photography and native plants.

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# Walking on Water

By Terry Morrison, Executive Director of Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Ask any VNHS member who has visited the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary what was so special about the place, and they will eventually get around to talking about walking on water. Yes, the peace and serenity of the natural surroundings, the rich and varied parade of birds, river otter, mink, and muskrat leave a lasting impression. It is the floating boardwalk trail, however, that brings you into their world, and creates an intimate connection to this amazing community of nature in the middle of a busy urban area.

The new generation of children, raised with so much television and computers as a tool for their learning and entertainment, are the ones impacted the most by a walk on the floating boardwalk. "I've never seen a Great Blue Heron

in my life before," says Grade Five visitor, Alice. "I really liked seeing the swan and duck and eagle chasing after them." Magical moments like this are made possible by the floating boardwalk trail that extends into the habitat of birds and wetland creatures.

Sadly, the boardwalk, built of wood in 1991, is soon to be closed for safety reasons. Weathered beyond repair, the floating classroom and essential link to our trail systems needs to be replaced by 2012 at a total cost of \$450,000.

Closing the boardwalk will greatly hinder the work of the Nature Sanctuary Society, which is *to provide a diverse and enriching experience with a focus on natural history, education, and ecological restoration to inspire personal action in stewardship activities*. Since 1975, trained staff



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Sadly, the boardwalk, built of wood in 1991, is soon to be closed for safety reasons. Weathered beyond repair, the floating classroom and essential link to our trail systems needs to be replaced by 2012 at a total cost of \$450,000.

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and volunteers have guided more than 390,000 school children and families from the Greater Victoria area to experience first hand the wonders of nature almost in our own backyard. Many students have gone on to careers in ecology, environmental education, and biology, thanks in a large part to their early experiences at Swan Lake.

In the future, walking on water will be on a long-lasting, non-slip composite decking material and galvanized cable. The use of cedar for the top railing, the siding and some decking maintains the warmth and aesthetics of the boardwalk in a natural surrounding without sacrificing structural integrity and durability.

Phase One of the campaign is already completed. Generous donations from Nature Sanctuary supporters and members raised the \$46,000 required to replace the wharf below the Nature House in June. The new wharf will be highlighted on September 18, 2010 during the 35th anniversary celebrations, when it will be dedicated to the original founders of the Nature Sanctuary.

The new wharf also paves the way for Phase Two of the campaign, to replace the remainder of the aging floating boardwalk system – the wharf on the south side of the Lake and the 755-foot floating walkway across the Lake. The Sanctuary Society's goal is to raise the required \$450,000 by 2012.

You can help the Nature Sanctuary Society replace this unique community facility. Drop in to the Nature Sanctuary and take a walk on the new wharf. Stop by the Nature House office and make a donation. Visit our web site <[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca)> to give securely online through Canada Helps, or phone 250-479-0211 to find out more on how you can help.

*The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary preserves and protects 154 acres of Saanich's natural heritage, with a rich variety of habitats ranging from a significant urban wetland around Swan Lake to the endangered Garry oak highlands of Christmas Hill. The Nature Sanctuary is operated and maintained by a registered charitable organization, with support from the generous citizens of the Greater Victoria area and an annual grant from Saanich Municipality.*



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# Dee Bailin

By Jina Mousseau, Habitat Acquisition Trust

“You can’t wait to save land,” says Dee Bailin. With ferry horns sounding in the distance, Bailin and her dog Rusty take a leisurely walk on her eight acres of sun-dappled forest in North Saanich every day, sometimes twice a day. One sees very quickly why she can’t wait – the area that surrounds her land is almost completely developed in one-acre parcels; hers is one of the last properties of its size left in North Saanich.

“Everyone has got to subdivide; I feel that there is enough land elsewhere that isn’t in as desperate need of protection. This land, these trees, they need protection,” says Bailin.



Dee Bailin. Photo: Jina Mousseau



# HAT

Creating Conservation Legacies

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Bailin’s neighbours have thanked her for protecting their property through her covenant. “I’m just thrilled it’s done,” says Bailin. “I know my children will enjoy living here, and they will continue to protect this land.”

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This is what led Bailin to put a conservation covenant on her land in 2000. Having purchased the land in 1965, Bailin and her family emigrated from Los Angeles and built their home in 1971. Two trails are the only remnants of the former turn-of-the-century logging site; the land hasn’t been cleared in more than 100 years.

“My husband and I always wanted to protect this land. We used to sit out under two maples and look at the trees and talk about how old they were. When my husband Eugene died in 1987 I thought about donating my land to the municipality, but I realized that I needed more formal protection if I wanted to keep the land safe.”

Bailin started thinking about conservation covenants in 1998, and invited The Land Conservancy to come out and survey her property. Bailin sat down with them to write the covenant in 1999, and in 2000 the covenant was signed, with Habitat Acquisition Trust as the secondary holder. “You have to work with good organizations,” says Bailin.

Bailin’s property is made up of both Western Redcedar and Douglas-Fir ecosystems. “I don’t know the name of maybe three quarters of the plants – there are so many of them! – but I know they are beautiful. It is so peaceful here, I love looking up at the tall trees,” says Bailin. “When my husband died, I needed to get back out into the woods. I used to dig up these little tiny trees, and when I saw an open or low area, I went out and planted the trees. I’ve planted hundreds of trees, and only those from the property. Not all of them, but some have grown.”

Bailin’s neighbours have thanked her for protecting their property through her covenant. “I’m just thrilled it’s done,” says Bailin. “I know my children will enjoy living here, and they will continue to protect this land.”



# Missing from the Conservation Toolbox...

By Adam Taylor, Habitat Acquisition Trust

I took a phone call recently from Dee Bailin, one of HAT's conservation covenant holders. She was phoning to find out if there was any property tax relief available for her protected property. After all, she has a signed covenant with two conservation organizations that protects her Saanich peninsula property in perpetuity. Even though the public has no access to the land, it benefits the entire region by providing habitat for flora and fauna, as well a host of "green infrastructure" services, such as storm water reduction and pollution absorption – services that would cost the municipality (and tax-payer) if the land were developed.

Unfortunately, I had little good news for her. Private land owners protecting high value ecosystems at very low cost to public seems to be a win-win situation that governments should encourage. And in fact, if Dee's property happened to be in the Gulf Islands, Nova Scotia, or Ontario, she would be eligible for a significant property tax savings. But not here – at least, not yet.

People who sign conservation covenants protecting their land are asked to give up a lot. The covenant process can easily cost thousands, and their property's resale value is often reduced. Financial incentives are few. The *Ecological Gifts* program helps some conservation land owners with a tax receipt. In the Islands Trust area, the *Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program* (NAPTEP) provides a substantial annual property tax reduction to covenant holders – but only if you live on certain Gulf Islands. Otherwise, covenant holders get little financially for their efforts.

Other jurisdictions are moving towards rewarding conservation land owners who legally protect their property with large property tax reductions. Nova Scotia recently passed the *Conservation Property Tax Exemption Act*, and Ontario has the *Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program*. But most conservation land owners in British Columbia continue to be left out.

The contributions of individuals like Dee are important, particularly in Victoria. Unlike most of British Columbia, we have virtually no crown land on southeastern Vancouver Island. Combine that with the high cost of acquiring land and it becomes obvious that encouraging private landowners to protect their land is an important part of conserving ecosystems in the region. Every tool counts, and property tax reduction is a tool that has been successful in other jurisdictions. Hopefully the BC government will follow the lead of Nova Scotia and Ontario and implement a property-tax incentive for those who choose to protect natural habitats.



## Kowa Donates a Scope to Rocky Point Bird Observatory and VNHS

Thanks to Jim Danzenbaker of Kowa Optics <kowascope.com>, Rocky Point Bird Observatory now has an excellent scope to monitor the offshore birds and raptors during fall migration. Kowa has donated a new Prominar TSN-663 20-60x spotting scope for use by RPBO during the banding season and by VNHS for the rest of the year. Kowa scopes are among the top brands according to tests done by Cornell University. "We are very grateful", says Ann Nightingale, president of Rocky Point Bird Observatory. "Our last scope literally fell apart a few years ago, so we've been relying on volunteers' gear ever since." During the late fall, winter, and spring, VNHS will have custody of the scope for use on field trips, school outings, and birding courses.

RPBO intern Jessie Fanucchi using the donated Kowa scope. Photo: Brian Pomfret

# Letters

Dear Members of the Victoria Natural History Society I would like to thank you for choosing me as one of the recipients of the VNHS Science Fair Award. I was very surprised, grateful, and honored to receive your award. Your acknowledgement of my project was reward in itself and has given me even more incentive to plan another project for next year's Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair. Your very generous cheque will most likely be utilized for future science projects or put in my savings account for University. I also very much appreciate your support of the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair and students such as myself. Thank you again for your kind acknowledgement, generous Award and for all your support.

With appreciation,  
Emily Groseth

The following thank-you letters are from teachers who participated in the VNHS' *Connecting Children with Nature* project, where member volunteers lead school groups into nearby natural areas.

Bill was fantastic with the kids – and I learned a lot as the teacher! Thank you for accompanying our class on a nature walk at Christmas Hill. Many of us had never been to that park before. We saw lots and learned a lot more with you

there to guide us. Here are some things that the schoolchildren had to say about the trip:

I learned that a long time ago, Christmas Hill used to be a farm.

I learned that licorice ferns taste sweet.

I saw some camas.

I saw Oregon grape.

I liked learning about the plants that Indians used.

I touched a spitbug.

I learned that that yellow plant (broom) is an invasion to the native plants.

I liked learning about 'death' camas.

I had a good time.

Bill, Donna, and Elena were wonderful with the Cubs. The material was presented in an interesting way and was age-appropriate. I will recommend them to my school.

Claudia Smith  
5th Tsartlip Cub Pack – Cordova Bay

Thank you Ann and Bill so much for sharing your time and knowledge with us at the beach.

We had a great time!

Mrs. Fraser, Mrs. MacDonald, and Mrs. Peel

Division 6, Grade One, James Bay Community School

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## BULLETIN BOARD

### 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.

### The 1st World Seabird Conference

The 1st World Seabird Conference takes place 7–11 Sept. 2010 at the Victoria Conference Centre and we need volunteers to help us run it! The 1st World Seabird Conference has been developed by an international consortium led by the Pacific Seabird Group and 25 other professional seabird and research organisations from around the world. The primary goal of this Conference is to put seabird management and conservation into a worldwide perspective, through a strong conference programme that includes five concurrent oral presentation sessions, more than 400 posters and a series of workshops, bringing 800-900 participants from more than 40 countries together. Topics will cover important issues such as climate change, demography, fisheries bycatch, managing forage fisheries, marine debris, global data-sharing, spatial ecology and protected areas, island ecology and restoration, pollution, phenotypic plasticity, evolutionary and conservation genetics, and technological advances related to seabird research. Check

out our website at <<http://www.worldseabirdconference.com>>.

We are offering a 50% reduction in registration fees for two "shifts" (i.e., a full morning and full afternoon or equivalent), and a full 100% off registration for four shifts (i.e., two full mornings and two full afternoons or equivalent). The main roles for volunteers include technician in charge of loading oral presentations onto the AV systems we are using at the Victoria Conference Centre, an AV "rover", registration table assistance, poster session assistance, coordinators for field trips and EXPO, media coordinator, and ticket takers at film festival and banquet. We will also be looking for someone to act as the assistant for our Conference Secretariat. If interested please contact Shelagh Bucknell ([Shelagh.Bucknell@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Shelagh.Bucknell@ec.gc.ca)) or Patrick O'Hara ([paddio@uvic.ca](mailto:paddio@uvic.ca)). Volunteer spots will go on a first-come first-serve basis and we will be contacting volunteers based on when we received your email.

### Butterfly Information Needed

Contribute your knowledge to a broad scale phenology project! We are looking for help in identifying plant species used by adult butterflies as nectar sources. As part of a larger project being carried out at the University of British Columbia, we are interested in potential phenological changes in butterflies and their host plants (i.e. changes in peak flight dates and peak flowering dates) across BC due to recent climate change.

Specifically, we are looking for help with putting together a list of the most common plant species in a particular habitat or region that are thought to be used by adult butterflies for nectar. If you know of specific plant species whose flowers are often visited by butterflies and/or would like to learn more about the project, please contact Heather Kharouba: [kharouba@zoology.ubc.ca](mailto:kharouba@zoology.ubc.ca)/604-827-3250.

### Every Wednesday and Sunday Bird Walk

Meet at the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary parking lot: 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. For everyone!

### Wild Mushroom Workshops at Swan Lake

Identifying, Cooking, and Photographing Vancouver Island Fungi. Weekly sessions, on three Wednesday evenings and a

Saturday afternoon, will look at our local mushrooms through the eyes of a scientist, a chef, a photographer, and a field naturalist. All sessions take place at the Nature House of the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: October 13, 20, 27, and 30. Pre-registration is required: \$80 for Swan Lake and South Vancouver Island Mycological Society members – \$100 for non-members. Call 250 479-0211 or visit [www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca) for more information and to register.

### Capital Regional District Parks

CRD Parks offers programs for nature lovers of all ages. See [www.crd.bc.ca/parks](http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks) for more information. Programs are 1 to 1½ hours long and free unless otherwise noted. Pre-registration is not required for free programs unless otherwise noted.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held September-April on the following days: **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Presentations:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>, 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.

## SEPTEMBER

### Saturday, September 4

FIELD TRIP

#### *Saturday Morning Birding*

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website ([www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca). Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### Saturday, September 11

FIELD TRIP

#### *Saturday Morning Birding*

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website ([www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca). Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### Tuesday, September 14

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

#### *Wolverines: A Story of Ecological Myths and Economic Realities*

Wolverines have a tough reputation as a dauntless and tenacious icon of untamed wilderness. But as untamed wilderness declines, what does this mean for wolverines? Wolverines used

to range across Alberta's Rockies, Prairies, and boreal forests, but they have declined significantly in the last century. With extensive oil and gas development, the remaining suitable habitats for wolverines may be dwindling as well. Wolverine ecology in Alberta was a blank space on the map before we started a five-year study of these elusive and rare predators. We used camera trapping and non-invasive genetic research to examine wolverines in a protected mountain forest landscape, and in an adjacent foothills forest landscape with extensive forest harvesting and energy development. We found that the myth of wolverines' resilience is built on unsteady ground: economic development has clashed with this icon of wilderness. The outcome for all western Canadian wolverines from Ontario to BC may be uncertain, but dispelling the myths and embracing a true understanding of wolverines and their ecological requirements can help conserve this species across their range. Join wildlife ecologist **Dr. Jason Fisher** as he takes us on a remarkable scientific and photographic journey to reveal hidden insights into this largely unknown animal. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

### Saturday, September 18

FIELD TRIP

#### *Saturday Morning Birding*

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website ([www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick**

at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### **Saturday, September 18**

#### EVENT

#### ***Don't Panic, Grow Organic***

As part of the District of Saanich Pesticide-Free Gardening Series, **Carolyn Herriot** demonstrates through her own garden the fact that you can have a beautiful healthy landscape without using products that are harmful to nature or wildlife. Come and discover some simple natural techniques to keep your garden in balance, allowing Mother Nature to take over, while you enjoy the garden. 11:00 a.m. at the Pearkes Recreation Centre, Ross Room.

### **Saturday, September 18**

#### EVENT

#### ***Life After Pesticides: Beautiful Yards and Healthy Gardens***

**Dr. Linda Gilkeson** will give an illustrated talk on how to have lovely yards, food gardens, and lawns, without resorting to pesticides. She will change how you think about dealing with weeds, insects, and other pests with her emphasis on prevention and low-cost, simple methods. She shows why it is essential to correctly identify pests, how to know when to treat and the right way to use organic treatments. Part of the District of Saanich Pesticide-Free Gardening Series: 1:30 p.m. at the Pearkes Recreation Centre, Ross Room.

### **Sunday, September 19**

#### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Endangered Avatar Grove***

We will visit the magnificent but endangered "Avatar Grove", home to ancient redcedars and now rare old-growth Douglas-fir trees. The Grove is flagged for logging despite its potential to become a major tourism destination. **TJ Watt** from the Ancient Forest Alliance will show us the way around the grove, explain its significance, and what we can do to help. We will stop at spots along the way and return via Lake Cowichan. Please note that the area where we will be walking is rugged and irregular. Be prepared to climb over large logs and scramble over big roots, obstacles, and steep terrain. Limited number, VNHS members only. Leaving Victoria at 8:00 a.m. and returning late, possibly with a quick supper stop at a restaurant so have some cash for that. Pack a lunch as we will not be stopping near food facilities until evening. Preregister by contacting **Agnes** between Sept. 1-15. The first eight people have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement only. Road is paved except for a few short sections of good gravel road. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$25 for the day. No pets please. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

### **Tuesday, September 21**

#### BOTANY NIGHT

#### ***Some Interesting Ferns And "Fern Allies" of British Columbia***

There are several puzzles among the more than 100 species of British Columbia ferns and fern allies, and some taxonomical problems have been swept under the carpet. **Adolf & Oluna Ceska** will try to expose some of them. You might be surprised that even the most common BC ferns hide some deep secrets. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

### **Wednesday, September 22**

#### BIRDERS' NIGHT

#### ***Birds of Vancouver Island***

Join **Mike Yip** as he takes us on a photographic journey off shore of Vancouver Island. In 2006 he spent 13 days at sea on a fishing boat sighting pelagics. This trip was filled with albatrosses, shearwaters, and the first sighted and documented Lesser Nighthawk in BC. Mike will also present photos of other uncommon birds seen since 2006. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

### **Saturday, September 25**

#### FIELD TRIP

#### ***Hawk Watch***

Join CRD Regional Parks, the Victoria Natural History Society, as well as staff from Pacific Northwest Raptors for live displays and activities at Aylard Farm. Experts with spotting scopes will be at the viewpoint above Beechey Head. The hike up to the viewpoint requires sturdy footwear and a 20-minute trek up a steep and rocky trail. Bring binoculars, water, and a lunch. Drop in anytime between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the parking lot off Becher Bay Road. **VNHS Members! – Stay afterwards for a BBQ Social – check out the invitation on the bottom of page 4 in this newsletter.**

### **Sunday, September 26**

#### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

#### ***Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding***

We have hired a boat (the *Fantasea II*) to go from Victoria Harbour out into the Juan de Fuca Strait and to Race Rocks to find some of the pelagic species that feed there. We will follow the tide debris line that occurs between Victoria and Race Rocks as the currents cause an upwelling of nutrients from the bottom, resulting in the best feeding spots for the birds. Possible birds include shearwaters, murrelets, auklets, jaegers, Northern Fulmar, Tufted Puffin, many species of gulls, phalaropes, and other pelagics. Sea mammals, including whales, are also possibilities. There is room for 20 people; the cost is \$60.00 (including HST) per person for a five-hour trip (9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.). You must pre-pay on the VNHS website or by cheque to VNHS and pre-register by phoning **Ann Nightingale** at 250-652-6450 or emailing her at [motmot@shaw.ca](mailto:motmot@shaw.ca).

### **Monday, September 27**

#### MARINE NIGHT

#### ***Whales, Satellites, and Cold Lunches on the Edge of Antarctica***

In 2007, **Charles Short** and a small group of researchers studied Antarctic killer whales and humpbacks, using satellite tags to track their movements and migratory behaviour. Prior to that he studied eastern Pacific Gray Whales off Vancouver Island. He will present aspects of both these projects. These studies have helped biologists to understand the role of marine protected areas for wide ranging species such as whales. Charles is presently with the Integrated Land Management Bureau in BC where he focuses on the design of marine protected area networks. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

## **OCTOBER**

### **Saturday, October 2**

FIELD TRIP

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website (<www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### **Saturday, October 9**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

#### ***Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding***

Please see description under Sunday, September 26.

### **Saturday, October 9**

FIELD TRIP

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website (<www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### **Tuesday, October 12**

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

#### ***Sea Otters and Persistent Organic Pollution***

MSC. candidate **Cait Nelson** will discuss her research into the impacts of persistent organic pollutants on a population of marine foraging river otters on southern Vancouver Island. Previous research has established that river otters are being exposed to high levels of environmental contaminants, particularly PCBs, through their diet. There is however limited knowledge of coastal river ecology in this region. As a top predator species, the river otter plays a critical role in ecosystem stability and as such is well suited as a sentinel species for environmental monitoring. The goal is to begin to quantify contaminant exposure in these animals by first defining home ranges, habitat use and movement patterns. The study employs a multi-disciplinary approach, including non-invasive genetic techniques, to better our understanding of river otter and ecosystem health in the study area. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

### **Saturday, October 16**

FIELD TRIP

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website (<www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### **Tuesday, October 19**

BOTANY NIGHT

#### ***Identification Blitz***

Clean off your computer folders or slide binders and bring your jpeg's and slides that you cannot identify. In case that you do

not have any unidentified botanical photos, bring your best stuff to challenge the others. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Admission is free. Bring a friend!

### **Saturday, October 23**

FIELD TRIP

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website (<www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

### **Sunday, October 24**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

#### ***Juan De Fuca Pelagic Birding***

Please see description under Sunday, September 26.

### **Monday, October 25**

MARINE NIGHT

#### ***The Effect of Ocean Acidification on Intertidal Mollusks***

The increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide is leading to increased acidity in the ocean surface. In the next 90–100 years this may have a dramatic influence on the species that inhabit the intertidal zone, particularly those that secrete shells of calcium carbonate. Most studies of this phenomenon have been limited to the adult stage, however early development may also be impacted as mollusk shells often begin forming within days of fertilization. **Heather Stewart**, a Masters student at UVic, has been studying the disruptions at this early developmental stage and will present some background and report on her findings. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

### **Wednesday, October 27**

BIRDERS' NIGHT

#### ***Birds at Sea***

Marine birds are among the most spectacular and diverse members of the marine environment. They are also among the most vulnerable to human activities. Beginning in 2005, Raincoast Conservation Foundation has undertaken extensive at-sea marine bird surveys in the waters that stretch from Dixon Entrance south through Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound. With major industrial developments, including oil supertankers, being proposed for these waters, marine bird conservation concerns are growing. Join **Caroline Fox**, Marine Bird Program Coordinator, on a seasonal journey with the marine birds that inhabit the waters lying adjacent to the Great Bear Rainforest. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

### **Saturday, October 30**

FIELD TRIP

#### ***Saturday Morning Birding***

Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or click 'Rare Bird Alert' on the VNHS website (<www.vicnhs.bc.ca>) on the Thursday or Friday before to find out this week's location. Starting at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.



VNHS field trip to the Olympic Mountains, July 25 2010. *Photo: Anne Hansen*