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The Victoria NATURALIST

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

This month we received more input than we had room for so I am going to focus on an item that was left out. This item is a new book put out by the Environmental Law Group, which works out of UVic.

If you aren't familiar with this group, access their website at <http://elc.uvic.ca/>. This group consists of lawyers and students of law researching laws that govern our environment – our forests, streams, flora and fauna and of course us citizens: what are our rights with respect to clean air, water, and our environment? Read chapter 30 for the answer to that one.

The book is called *Maintaining Supernatural BC for our Children* and discusses how effective our laws are in keeping our province 'green'. Not very effective, as it happens. The book is non-partisan; it shows how many of our laws are inadequate and often archaic; how they are sometimes poorly implemented and enforced; and what we can do to improve the laws. The latter recommendations are not 'pie in the sky' ones, but strategies that are already in place in countries around the world and in many North American States and Provinces. I found the 35 chapters a revelation. The book is a 'wake-up call' and the timing of the book shortly before the election is no accident. The book can be read on line. Search under the book title and then scroll down to the PDF.

At the time of writing there were a few hard copies left obtainable at the ELC office in the Fraser building. A meeting is planned before the election, to be held in the auditorium at the Fraser building room 159. Date is not available at this time.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed to this edition, writers, photographers, events organizers and compilers, and advertisers. Keep the interesting articles coming.

Ken Sohm

COVER PHOTO by Marie O'Shaughnessy

A fellow birder and I were watching for the usual sightings of Killdeer and Greater Yellowlegs at Oak Bay Marina, late afternoon, when all of a sudden a large River Otter waddled up the slope of the beach. Its obvious intent was to roll and slide in the sand. This unusual sighting kept us both entertained for some time. The furry creature would disappear at times, beneath overturned, beached dinghies. It would then emerge between the wooden vessels, to roll around in the sand and mud, often surfacing with a comical look, 'a face full of sand.' After pleasing itself it was soon time to head back into the water, but curiosity got the better of this creature. It headed toward us, albeit cautiously at first, but the intent was there, to check us out! I was convinced it was going to come right up to us, but Nature intervened. I was able to get full framed head shots, before it lumbered back down the slope and slid gracefully into the water with its tail trailing behind.

Marie

President's Message

By Darren Copley

“**B**lue is the new Purple”. Is your president losing it? Nope, this is my new catchphrase for the Bring Back the Bluebirds project. We were successful at getting Purple Martins back, and now, with your help, we’re going to be welcoming Western Bluebirds back to Vancouver Island. After last year’s reintroduction to the Cowichan area, which couldn’t have happened without \$10,000 from the VNHS and its members, the various project partners are continuing the effort.

Because of the VNHS’ history with bluebirds, and the fact that this project is a perfect fit with our Society’s goals, I’d like to again ask for your support to Bring Back the Bluebirds. If you donate to this cause, the Society will match your donation, up to \$4000 total. To donate, please visit our website (www.naturevictoria.ca), and click “donate” from the main page where you can select the Bluebird Project and pay by Paypal. You can also donate by mailing in a cheque to our regular address. Remember that the Society will match your donation, and all donations above \$10 are

eligible for a tax receipt. And then all you have to do is help watch for returning bluebirds from last year’s program. Cross your fingers.

After our recent board meeting, we find that once again we are looking for volunteer help. I’m going to use a different angle this time, and hopefully we can find one special volunteer who will act as a volunteer coordinator. Our club is definitely ready for this idea, and hopefully someone is out there. Our member database has information on what members have said they’d be interested in volunteering for, so it would simply be a matter of asking those in the correct category. This way our committees could tell the coordinator what help they need, and then they can ask members. The only really successful volunteer programs that I know of have a great volunteer coordinator. You also get the special designation of being a volunteer volunteer (or volunteer²) coordinator.

Oh, and in case you’re wondering, we had an amazing trip to Guyana. All I really need to say is that we saw a JAGUAR. In the daytime!!! But there was so much more. Giant Anteater, Giant River Otter, 300+ birds, including great looks at Giant Potoo (my wish bird). Guyana has 80% of its forests intact – it is incredible to see. The indigenous communities are managing eco-lodges where everyone works on a rotation so that each person can be involved. Plan on visiting Guyana – it helps maintain the habitat. Let’s show them that Canadians care about more than just mining. Please contact me for details about our itinerary.

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Local Scientists' Follow-up to Carnivorous Sponge Discovery

By Henry Reiswig and Bill Austin

Last month the *Victoria Naturalist* featured the “harp sponge”, *Chondrocladia lyra*. It is one of some 135 described species which are considered to be carnivorous among a total of about 8,000 known species of sponges. Almost all 135 species belong to one family, the Cladorhizidae. There are about seven genera recognized world wide of which three are recorded from the NE Pacific (*Chondrocladia*, *Cladorhiza* and *Asbestopluma*). Dramatic differences in body form occur between species even within the same genus. We want to give you first a time line of how the “harp sponge” was discovered and described and then share our somewhat speculative ideas on what may be behind the differences in body form among the cladorhizids.

Time line October 2000. As the remote submersible “Tiberon” glided across the soft green mud bottom west of the Gorda Ridge, N. California, two miles below the research vessel, the ghostly white image of an upright branching creature moved onto the video monitors of the shipboard control room, constantly scanned by David Clague, Chief Scientist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) with a primary research interest in submarine volcanism. In his many years surveying deep sea bottoms, Dave had never seen the likes of this bizarre creature anchored onto the mud. Following MBARI’s protocol, collect anything “new” if space allows, Dave collected most of that first “harp sponge”, although he was not convinced it was indeed a sponge until it was examined after retrieval. The sponge was preserved and passed into the MBARI collections for conservation.

October 2005. A second specimen was encountered by “Tiberon” a few miles from the first, and Dave Clague, again at the helm, fortunately decided to collect part of it; it turned out to be the eventual species holotype.

2006-2008. Lonny Lundsten, MBARI’s senior research technician in charge of their video archive system, deposited the two “harp sponges” to the California Academy of Sciences (CAS) in San Francisco and circulated their images to local spongologists. Welton Lee (CAS) and Henry Reiswig (U. Victoria and Royal B.C. Museum) had just published the description of a different carnivorous sponge and were finalizing publication of the “Sponges of California”. They decided to work together on review of all known carnivorous sponges (family Cladorhizidae) of the NE Pacific coast, and targeted the new “harp sponge”, then in Welton’s lab at CAS, as the first step. Meanwhile Bill Austin (Khoyatan Marine Lab, Sidney, B.C.) had been working with Henry on another unrelated sponge project. The three came together by



Figure 1. The “harp sponge” from central California. Photo: © MBARI, printed with permission.

invitation to a meeting on benthic fauna at MBARI (Moss Landing, California) and agreed to work together on the cladorhizid project and prepare a poster of the new “harp sponge” for the 2010 World Sponge Conference in Spain.

May 2009-2010. The preserved “harp sponge” was finally sent from CAS to Henry in B.C. where work on dissection and internal anatomy took place. The three researchers deliberated on several possible names for the species with Greek root “lyra”, reflecting the harp-like structure of the radiating vanes, winning hands down. The poster presented in Spain won the best poster prize.

2010-2012. Welton organized the work of each participant and, because of his many contributions to the project, we invited Lonny to be fourth author in the final publication. It has been a long hard journey for all of us.

Body form variation

Scientists at MBARI have been exploring the Monterey Bay canyon and offshore waters with Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) for 25 years. They have obtained some superb images of carnivorous sponges alive in their habitat. It was the 12 observations of harp sponges which led us to erect a new subgenus, *Symmetrocladia*, to reflect a radial symmetry from two to at least six rays. This symmetry, together with the precisely aligned branches supporting lateral filaments, maximizes the hook-covered surface area for passive capture of copepods.

The “harp sponge” structure is very different from the thin spherical balls on the “short ping pong tree sponge”,



Figure 2. The preserved “harp sponge” holotype as sent to the local scientists. Photo: H. Reiswig.

Chondrocladia lampadiglobus (Fig. 3). It was found during an MBARI expedition to the Gulf of California. Based on observations in other species with similar external morphology, the thin globes are expanded through the action of a reduced but functional plumbing system. They are covered by barbed hooks, and crustacean debris has been observed on the surface with their bristles lodged under these barbs. In museum specimens retrieved by trawl or dredge the globes are collapsed, and the sponge bears little resemblance to its appearance alive on the bottom.

Another unidentified species, here dubbed the “elongate ping pong tree sponge” (Fig. 4), probably feeds in the same way. A relative in the north Atlantic may be up to ½ meter high. The large size of members of the genus *Chondrocladia* may be related to the presence of a plumbing system which, although not used for feeding, can still serve to irrigate interior cells in supplying oxygen and removing wastes. A plumbing system is completely lacking and sponge sizes are, typically, small or thin in the other genera discussed below.

The absence of a plumbing system was remarked on by authors of a report on sponges from the Challenger Expedition some 125 years ago. They surmised that “these [cladorhizid] sponges have some method of obtaining their supplies of nutriment which is quite different from that found in



Figure 3. The short ping pong tree sponge. Photo: © MBARI, printed with permission.

other sponges; this is, however, extremely unlikely.”

There are a number of *Cladorhiza* species which look alike. This one has been dubbed the “sputnik sponge” (Fig. 5) pending a detailed description. A biologist in Alaska determined that a similar *Cladorhiza* species occurring in the Aleutians was clearly a carnivore based on the number of copepods undergoing varying degrees of digestion within cavities formed by sponge cells. However, he found no evidence that the abundant hooks were directly involved. He hypothesized that a fluid in the sponge acted like a glue, entrapping the copepods.

The “feather sponge”, *Cladorhiza pteron* (Fig. 6), was described six years ago from a single collected specimen and photographs taken at most of 17 locations it was seen. The two sides are identical but the front and back differ (bilaterally symmetrical). Egg production occurs in the upper stalk in “back” while sperm production occurs on the other side, the “front”. Food capture and processing is restricted to the lateral filaments. Extrapolation from the number of copepods being processed in each filament provided an estimate of 700 copepods in the whole single individual.

The “pipe cleaner sponge”, *Asbestopluma occidentalis* (Fig. 7), is the most common carnivorous sponge in the NE Pacific; it ranges from 20 m down to 8,000 m. It was a related species in shallow waters in a cave off southern France which was first unequivocally shown to be a carnivore 22 years ago.

Branching is another way to increase surface area (Fig. 8). Several species branch and we will need to examine this species in detail.



Figure 4. The elongate ping pong tree sponge. Photo: © MBARI, printed with permission.

Also a still undescribed “leaf sponge” (not shown) was a surprise collected by NOAA in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (S. Calif) in relatively shallow water (365 m). The expanded surface area is coupled with being so thin that internal cells are close to the surface. Flatworms also lacking a circulatory system would be an analogue. Crustaceans could easily be seen embedded in the transparent sponge and covered over by sponge cells to varying degrees.

So we have our work cut out for us. There are about five additional species from the NE Pacific which need to be described. And these are the ones we know about. Not long ago a biologist came back from an expedition in the south Pacific. He collected six specimens of carnivorous sponges. They represented six new species.



Figure 8. The branching pipe cleaner sponge. Photo: © MBARI, printed with permission.



Figure 5. The sputnik sponge. Photo: © MBARI, printed with permission.



Above left: Figure 6. The feather sponge, *Cladorhiza pteron*. Photo H. Reiswig.

Right: Figure 7. The pipe cleaner sponge, *Asbestopluma occidentalis*. Photo: H. Reiswig.

2012 Butterfly Count Report


By James Miskelly

Butterfly migration made the news in 2012, but not thanks to the usual suspects. Usually when there is a news story of an explosion of migrating butterflies, the location is California and the subjects are Painted Ladies. What a change in 2012, when the story was a spectacular influx of Red Admirals to Ontario! The butterflies spread from there across the prairies and seemed to be heading our way. Alas, they turned north at the Rocky Mountains. North-eastern B.C. was awash with Red Admirals, the number of Yukon records increased one hundred-fold, but very few found their way to Victoria. However, a few possible southward migrants were seen here very late in the year, so we should keep an eye out this spring for any that may have overwintered.


Monarchs were also unusually abundant through much of their range in 2012, and several were seen on southern Vancouver Island. Though they were not recorded by the Victoria Counts, any Monarch in our area is counted as something of a triumph. And speaking of unusual records, an Oreas Anglewing was photographed in the Highlands by Gordon Hart. As far as I can tell, this rarest of the anglewings had not been

confirmed in the Victoria area since the 1940's. Maybe this was a wanderer from known populations in the San Juan Islands, but I prefer to think that there must be a small population that has escaped notice all this time, perhaps occasionally being mistaken for Satyr Anglewings or Green Commas.


Overall butterfly numbers were somewhat higher in 2012 than in 2011. A few things stand out. In particular, what happened to the timing of the European Skippers? In 2012, their flight season was virtually identical to that of the Woodland Skipper. In every other year on record, the European has been a full month earlier. In other years I've had to blink if I see a European Skipper in August. This year I saw one in September. Very strange. A number of species that are known residents in our count area escaped notice during these counts, including Two-banded Checkered Skipper, Moss' Elfin, and even Grey Hairstreak. If you think you can find them in 2013, we can always use more counters. You can count in all months, or just seek out something special. If you want to help, please contact me at james.miskelly@gmail.com or 250-544-0455.

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A late-season Red-Admiral seen in Saanich November 8, 2012. *Photo: James Miskelly*

2012 Victoria Butterfly Count Results

Species	April	May	June	July	August	September	Total
Proterpius Duskywing	9	4	1	1	0	0	15
Two-banded Checkered Skipper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
European Skipper	0	0	0	45	110	0	155
Woodland Skipper	0	0	0	41	249	7	297
Clodius Apollo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anise Swallowtail	2	3	1	0	2	1	9
Western Tiger Swallowtail	0	6	35	12	0	0	53
Pale Swallowtail	0	5	8	1	0	0	14
Pine White	0	0	0	0	203	2	205
Cabbage White	60	67	94	57	79	18	375
Sara's Orangetip	35	6	0	0	0	0	41
Purplish Copper	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cedar Hairstreak	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Brown Elfin	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Moss' Elfin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Pine Elfin	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Grey Hairstreak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Spring Azure	65	67	3	0	0	0	135
Silvery Blue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Satyr Anglewing	4	6	2	0	0	0	12
Green Comma	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mourning Cloak	1	2	0	0	0	3	5
California Tortoiseshell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Painted Lady	0	3	2	2	0	0	7
Westcoast Lady	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Red Admiral	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Field Crescent	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Mylitta Crescent	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Lorquin's Admiral	4	0	11	27	9	0	51
Common Ringlet	0	26	0	5	0	0	31
Common Woodnymph	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Arctic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	184	204	164	203	660	41	1417

Rare Asian Birds

By Val George

So what's up with these Asian teenagers? Have they figured it's time to leave home and get away from their parents, or have they wandered out-of-bounds and got lost? I'm referring to the two mega-rarity birds that have appeared in B.C. recently, the immature Citrine Wagtail in Comox and the immature Red-flanked Bluetail in New Westminster. Both are first records for Canada.

The Citrine Wagtail (*Motacilla citreola*) was found by Dave and Adele Routledge from Cumberland on November 14, 2012. It was at first thought to be an Eastern Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla tschutschensis*), understandably because this species has been recorded before in B.C., but Citrine Wagtail has not; also, the dozen or so species of wagtail in the world are fairly easy to identify when in their adult plumages, but the immature plumages of some of them are very similar – immature Eastern Yellow and Citrine Wagtails are almost identical. When some good photos were obtained, the bird was positively identified as the much rarer species.

Citrine Wagtails breed across northeast and central Asia and winter in southeast Asia, southern China and India. The occurrence here was obviously a bird that had gone badly astray. It was a first for B.C. and Canada and only the second for North America.

At Comox, the bird found an ideal little piece of habitat in a swampy field on some private farmland, conditions it would have frequented back home. Here it could walk around on the ground, constantly bobbing its tail in a characteristic wagtail behaviour, looking for insects and other invertebrates that constitute its diet. Since it was on private

land with limited access, it didn't suffer any disturbance from the hundreds of birders that came from all over North America to see the mega-rarity.

Rarities of this magnitude don't show up very often, so it was a major surprise and delight for birders when another rare Asian stray showed up two months later. On January 13, 2013, a New Westminster birder, Colin McKenzie, found a bird in a large urban park in the city that he couldn't identify. Photographs soon allowed experienced birders, George Clulow, President of the B.C. Field Ornithologists, and Mike Toochin to identify it as a Red-flanked Bluetail (*Tarsiger cyanurus*). Like the wagtail, this is – it's still present at the time of writing in early February – an Asian stray and also a first record for B.C. and Canada; in fact, there are only two previous records for North America outside Alaska.

The Red-flanked Bluetail is a member of the Old World Chat family (Muscicapidae), so it's related to the European Robin, a bird very familiar to those of us brought up in Europe. In some places in its native range it's known as the Orange-flanked Bush-Robin. It's not related to our North American Robin, though, which belongs to the Thrush family (Turdidae). It's similar in size and build to the European Robin and, as its name implies, has a blue tail and orange-red flanks.

The bird in New Westminster was relatively easy to find and see because it feeds on the ground most of the time, picking up insects and seeds. Unlike the wagtail which, once located, tended to stay in a small area, the bluetail constantly moves around over a fairly large area of the park.

The Red-flanked Bluetail is also from Asia. It breeds across northern Asia and into northern Europe, wintering in southeast Asia.

That's not the whole story for Asian strays in B.C. this winter. In Saanich, a Brambling has appeared recently, and there have been three other Bramblings in southern B.C. The species is a Eurasian finch that does occasionally get recorded in B.C., but to have four within a period of a few months is quite remarkable. And that's not all, either. In December 2012, an exotically-coloured Asian duck, a Baikal Teal, was briefly seen in Delta.

To conclude, I should mention that a few days before the wagtail was found in Comox – November 11 to be exact – a Cave Swallow was seen and hung around for several days at the Iona sewage ponds in Richmond. This was also a first record for B.C., having strayed from its normal range in the southeast States and Mexico. New birds for the B.C. checklist are recorded only every several years, so to have three additions in the space of a couple of months has been truly astounding and a huge bonanza for local birders.



Citrine Wagtail. Photo: Daniel Donneke

The Red-flanked Bluetail, Possibly the Rarest Bird in Canada

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Fog is a constant companion on the west coast of British Columbia during the fall and winter months. Monday, January 21st, was no exception. Undeterred by the weather, my friend and I headed to Queens Park, New Westminster, to join birders and 'big-lens' photographers from far and wide. We all had a mission: to view the little English robin-sized rarity at this location.

It was cold and damp in that stand of evergreens, bordering the west side of the park. In some areas, remnants of snow and ice remained underfoot. The gloom of lingering fog that hung between the spaces of towering trunks made for challenging photography. The human element gathered close together, watching and waiting for a fleeting glimpse of this incredibly rare bird. This was a first record of this species for Canada. Its winter migration from Siberia should have taken it to Southeast Asia and Japan.

We curious folk waited 45 minutes before we caught a glimpse of this little visitor. The bird was all a' twitter, and always in motion, making it difficult even with binoculars to observe. We could see the flash of the blue tail in the filtered light as it foraged on bugs, down in the leaf litter. The coloured mantle of this bird blended so well with the fallen leaves, making it difficult to see while on the ground. It would fly repeatedly to the overhanging low branches of the firs, and then suddenly disappear. Only the changing behaviour of the Juncos that were present at the darkened base of trees indicated to me that the Bluetail had joined them and

was foraging again. Between its feeding forays, the Bluetail would alight fleetingly on a stump, before it was on its way again. Hardly an ideal situation for that perfect picture.

My friend and I gave up the 'waiting game' as the light faded, but vowed to return the next morning when conditions and light had improved. Indeed, a good choice on our part. With slightly better ambient light for photography, we waited for the bird to reappear. Anticipation was high for those of us that stood among the damp understory below the canopy of firs. Another hour of waiting was required. Cold fingers and toes kept us company. Then suddenly it was there, all alone, flitting from branch to branch in the same area. This tiny bird had first been observed January 13 2013, so we were delighted that morning when it showed again. As the morning progressed, more and more birder/photographers began to appear.

It was our turn to leave and as we did so, I couldn't help marvelling at the incredible distance these little creatures undertake, albeit often in the wrong direction. Sadly, it may never make it back to Siberia or even find a member of the same species on this side of the Pacific, but one can only hope. We hope too, that nature will be kind so that the bird may continue in the same location for many more weeks, bringing delight to other long distant migrants, the human observers! I was so pleased that I had made the trip over from Vancouver Island, to see this little curiosity, the Red-flanked Bluetail.



Red-flanked Bluetail. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

The Victoria Stray

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

According to reports posted on B.C. Rare Bird Alert, there have been four sightings of this rare bird in British Columbia. This colourful bird has been observed in the Vancouver area, another in the southern interior, one in the Okanagan, and of course the one that many of us birders and curious local bystanders have seen, is here in Victoria. It took me four attempts at different times of the day, to finally view this long-distance migrant. It is most often observed at the base of a bird feeder on private property.

The Brambling is a member of the finch family and is a fairly common, seed-eating species in Eurasia. The adult

breeding males have a striking black head and back with orange breast and shoulders. Their bellies are buffy white with black spotted flanks. They breed in the northern coniferous and birch forests of Europe and Asia, as well as in high Arctic scrub. These birds migrate in winter to southern Europe or to China and Japan. Sightings here are generally accidental. Their migration can take them further south where they have been found in grain fields in the south-western States. The Victoria bird was still at Dean and Cochrane in early February and could be viewed from the street at the corner house, junction of Cochrane and Dean Avenue.



Brambling. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*

Intertidal Wanderer

By Tina Kelly

I don't suffer from ophidiophobia but walking along the shoreline at East Point on Saturna Island, I may have jumped just a little when a snake slithered up from the low tide line and crossed my path. A snake is not what I expected to find among the barnacles, sea stars, rockweed and sea lettuce but with some research, I learned the Wandering, or Western Garter, Snake (*Thamnophis elegans vagrans*) is not an uncommon visitor to the area exposed by a receding tide. Coastal populations of this species are highly aquatic and often forage in and around tide pools. Apparently known for eating anything that fits in their mouth, what they are looking for along the edge of the sea are fish – hiding under rocks or living in tidepools such as gunnels, pricklebacks, and sculpins!



Wandering, or Western Garter Snake. Photo by author

Restoration Walks in Victoria

By Agnes Lynn

Dr. Val Schaefer is a biologist and ecologist who has developed unique expertise in the emerging field of Urban Ecology. For the past five years, he has been offering restoration walks in Victoria around several themes. These have now been compiled into a book written with Jessica Miles who coordinated the walks with Val. It is available on his web site at <http://www.urbanecology.ca/documents/Books/RestorationWalks.pdf>

Dr. Schaefer is involved with the Restoration of Natural Systems Program in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. His web site www.urbanecology.ca highlights many of the projects undertaken by RNS Program students. Spend some time browsing through this web site to see what amazing projects have been undertaken, mostly in the Greater Victoria area.

We are fortunate that Dr. Val Schaefer has agreed to do a Restoration Walk for VNHS on Sunday April 7. See the Calendar of Events for more details.



Mystic Vale wattle fencing to control water flow. Photo: Dave Lynn

That was a Windy One! Victoria's Christmas Bird Count 2012

By Ann Nightingale

It was a foul wind that blew in on the morning of December 15, the day of the Victoria (BCVI) Christmas Bird Count. Although we had found two boat captains willing to help with the offshore counts, it was clear that wasn't going to happen this year. Despite the crashing surf and powerful winds, an amazing 230 participants braved the weather and headed out to count Victoria's birds. This is a record number of counters for us, and we may well be near the top of the international list again for 2012. Victoria was the #1 circle for field participants in both 2010 and 2011. Our feederwatch numbers have a long way to go to catch up, but about 40 people counted birds from the comfort of their homes this year. The youth contingent is growing, too! As you saw in the last issue, Bill Dancer has taken on a Christmas Bird Count for the Kids project and some young counters have become regulars during the official count. Jean and Geoffrey Newell have become well-known birders in the area and I'd like to give a special nod this year to



Shea Wyatt, Kristina Kezes and Chris Winstanley look for birds in the only snow they could find – behind the Westshore Recreation Centre hockey rink. *Photo: Ann Nightingale*

Jordyn Yuson, who, at 11 years old, has participated in five Victoria Christmas bird counts already. Congratulations and thanks to everyone who helped!

A total of 140 bird species were observed on the Victoria count in 2012, exactly the same number as the last two years. One reported rarity, a Rufous Hummingbird on Millstream Road, did not get included in our final list as we were unable to confirm it. Our number of individual birds, 61,084, was one of our lowest counts in the last ten years, and well short of our record of 125,518. For those who are keeping score, our traditional rival, Ladner, soundly beat our species total this year, with at least 144.

Despite the low number of individuals, several species marked new records. Not surprisingly, these included Brown Pelican (19), thanks to a group that had been hanging out in Victoria's Inner Harbour for more than a month. Other 2012 record-breakers were Canada Goose, Heerman's Gull, Barred Owl and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Anna's Hummingbird numbers were way down – less than half of last year's total – but this isn't a cause for concern. As noted, the weather was very windy – less than ideal conditions for hummingbird spotting. Several common species are still being seen but in declining numbers. A quick look at the record high numbers next to the totals on the results pages will show the shocking decreases in many species. Other than the pelicans, the most unusual bird for Victoria's 2012 count was the Harris's Sparrow at Hyacinth Park, which was ticked by the counters at the beginning of the day. Unfortunately, other rarities were not as cooperative.

People often ask why I don't report record low numbers for the species. Simply put, the low for most of the species we get is zero; only about half of our "regular" species have been seen on every count. Even such expected birds as Red-winged Blackbird, Steller's Jay, American Dipper and Cedar Waxwing have been missed on a few occasions. A different view of our history is to consider which birds have become "regulars" and which are fading away.

Looking at the last five decades, more species have been increasing in frequency than have decreased. However, some



Harris's Sparrow. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*

of the species that have fallen off used to be present in very large numbers and have suffered huge population crashes. Among those that have increased are birds which were once rare and now are regularly present, but still in small numbers. Only the Anna's Hummingbird and Trumpeter Swans are now usually reported in the hundreds.

Most of those that have fallen in frequency have also been present in small numbers, but the Bonaparte's Gull and Band-tailed Pigeon have seen serious decreases in numbers as well as in frequency.

Count week birds included Tundra Swan, Golden Eagle, Greater Yellowlegs, Red Knot, Short-billed Dowitcher, Bonaparte's Gull, Townsend's Warbler, Palm Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow. All species were seen both before and after the count, but eluded detection on the count day. The Short-billed Dowitcher is especially rare in Canada this time of year and photos were carefully scrutinized by several shore-bird experts. Of course, the Red Knot is a rare bird here any time of year. The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher that had hung out at Swan Lake for most of the fall missed the count by a week.

Victoria isn't the only count on the block, and neighbouring circles are attracting plenty of helpers, too. Christmas Bird Counts were held in Sooke (coordinated by Daniel Bryant), South Salt Spring/Sidney (coordinated by Karen Ferguson), and Duncan (coordinated by Derrick Marven). Results for these counts can be found on the Audubon Society's site <http://birds.audubon.org>. You can review statistics going all the way back to the very first official Christmas Bird Count, graphs, maps and find all sorts of other cool information.

Thanks go out to everyone who participates in one or more of the Christmas Bird Counts. Your contributions to citizen science have made the CBC the shining example of how all of us can do so much more together than any of us could do on our own.

So what about next year? Our count will be on **Saturday, December 14**. Ten years ago, we made a concerted effort to break the Canadian Christmas Bird Count record, and succeeded with 154 species seen on count day. Anyone up for a challenge in 2014?

Species which are seen more frequently on the Victoria Christmas Bird Count now than in the past. Totals indicate number of counts on which this species was seen in the specified ten-year period.

Years	1963-1972	1973-1982	1983-1992	1993-2002	2003-2012	Record high
American Pipit	5	4	10	10	9	272
Anna's Hummingbird	2	10	10	10	10	1063
Barred Owl			7	10	10	12
Brown-headed Cowbird	5	4	5	8	10	31
Brown Pelican				1	2	19
California Gull	6	6	5	9	9	130
Eurasian Collared-dove					4	29
Gadwall	3	9	10	10	10	170
Greater White-fronted Goose	5	6	8	10	8	68
Lincoln's Sparrow	4	4	9	10	10	137
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	3	5	8	10	6
Pine Grosbeak	3	1	1	4	4	44
Savannah Sparrow	5	6	10	10	10	112
Trumpeter Swan		5	10	10	10	458
Turkey Vulture			2	8	10	17
Virginia Rail	3	9	10	10	10	14
Wood Duck	2	3	6	10	10	156
White-throated Sparrow	4	6	10	10	10	13
Yellow-rumped Warbler	3	6	9	10	10	25

Species that are seen less frequently on the Victoria Christmas Bird Count than in the past. Totals indicate number of counts on which this species was seen in the specified ten-year period.

Years	1963-1972	1973-1982	1983-1992	1993-2002	2003-2012	Record high
Black Scoter	6	6	9	9	3	16
Bonaparte's Gull	5	9	8	6	5	5004
Brant	6	3	2	5	1	5
Band-tailed Pigeon	10	10	10	9	2	417
Eared Grebe	10	9	10	7	6	123
Rock Sandpiper	10	7	7	3	3	70
Ruffed Grouse	7	7	6	6	2	10
Western Screech-owl	9	10	10	7	6	23

2012 Victoria Christmas Bird Count including Feeder Watch

Count Areas	Butchart Gardens / Northern Highlands	Central Highlands	Goldstream	Thetis Lake / Hastings Flats	Langford Lake	Albert Head / Triangle Mtn	Esquimalt Lagoon / Mill Hill	Esquimalt Harbour	Portage Inlet / The Gorge	Victoria Harbour	Beacon Hill	Oak Bay	UVIC/ Cadboro Bay	10 Mile Point	Gordon Head / Mount Douglas	Swan Lake / Cedar Hill	Blenkinsop / Panama Flats	Elk Lake / Cordova Bay	Prospect Lake / Quicks Bottom	Martindale / Bear Hill	Albert Head / Esq Harbour (offshore)	Feeders	Victoria Count (Field & Feeder)	Prev High ** indicates record in 2012
Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	23		Total #	
Greater White Fr. Goose.												8									15		23	68
Snow Goose																	1				1		1	17
Cackling Goose	45						20						9				1				50		125	381
Canada Goose	1117	1	35	560		30	243	40	671	53		25	61	36	115	152	766	121	164	1800	7	10	6,007	**5156
Mute Swan						4	28		4														36	77
Trumpeter Swan	103			13			1					2	26		10	18	15	8	63	23			228	458
Wood Duck																		25					94	156
Gadwall						17			15										41	6			79	170
Eurasian Wigeon									3								1						5	28
American Wigeon	125		7	12		45	143	26	234	102	202	15	106	33	346	190	190		49	631			2,266	14,889
Mallard	484	8	123	178	29	68	262	51	232	79	636	8	288	33	188	325	191	248	101	797		9	4,338	10,336
Northern Shoveler	31		1	26					45			1				3	28	10	15	10			105	476
Northern Pintail	33						72									4	315			276			773	2,690
Green-winged Teal	268							31	56				2			4	229	10		33			637	2,436
Canvasback	1				2													27	1				31	302
Redhead																		6					6	8
Ring-necked Duck	25	8	1	11	27	8	10	5	4		10					16	44	58	108	10			345	663
Greater Scaup					5		85									91			1				91	3,100
Lesser Scaup	2					3	70		53							1				1			134	1,012
Harlequin Duck								2													15		39	410
Surf Scoter						4	57	6															290	1,478
White-winged Scoter																							44	834
Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw)										3					40								1	577
Bufflehead	89	2	63	21	17	30	208	47	181	293	34	92	12	66	118	3	16	157	17	170	2		1,638	2,863
Common Goldeneye	8					4	55	41	8	14	1	2		1	1			22		6			163	745
Barrow's Goldeneye	2		13																				15	361
Hooded Merganser	7	2	2		4	10	39	33	9	28	1	26	27	23	77	29	33	12	35	11			406	662
Common Merganser	2	2	32	8	5	5	18	24	41	46	6	20	3	3	22	3	3	46	45	4	2		337	1,600
Red-breasted Merganser	14					10	44	62		60	1	10	4	2	2	5		53		2	15		279	791
Ruddy Duck					15																		20	429
California Quail	2	1		24		13	20		1			5			5	1	3		73			11	159	580
Red-throated Loon							1	2		2					2			6		1			14	140
Pacific Loon								1		4		5		1	2			2					16	488
Common Loon						3		2				3		2	4			2					16	109
Pied-billed Grebe	2				2		1		6							2	1	3					17	100
Horned Grebe						2	8	1		1			1	1	5			35		1			55	1,100
Red-necked Grebe							4	2			3	7	1		2								19	671
Western Grebe							3	1		1				1	2								10	3314
Brandt's Cormorant							1				8	2											13	3549
Double-crested Cormorant	8	1	5	5	23	17	11	39	32	96		11	2	18	6	4	1	281	26	14	8	2	608	1,004
Pelagic Cormorant							1	23		20	1	16	2	18	5			19		1	3		109	2,300
Great Blue Heron	2		3	2	1		4	26	5	7	12	2	1			2	3	5		4			79	162
Turkey Vulture						5	3	1															13	17
Bald Eagle (adult)	9	12	16	1	8	4	12	5	6	1		3	6	7	5	3	4	11	24	12			149	448
Bald Eagle (immature)	2		5	3		7			2	1					2	1	2	4	8	7			44	incl above
Unaged Bald Eagle			32						6												2		40	incl above
Northern Harrier																	2						3	6
Sharp-shinned Hawk		2		1							1					1		3		1			11	30
Cooper's Hawk	3	2		2				1		3						4		3		4	3	1	26	62
Red-tailed Hawk	6	4	3	4	2	2	4	7	1						3	1	3		9	5			54	79
Merlin		1	1				3	1					1			1			3				11	30

2012 Victoria Christmas Bird Count including Feeder Watch

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Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	23		Total #	12	15
Peregrine Falcon	1	1				1	1									4	2		3	4			12	15	
Virginia Rail																							7	14	
American Coot	3				61											5		340		1	27		410	1712	
Black-bellied Plover										2		4											33	282	
Killdeer			3		1			2		1		17											42	370	
Black Oystercatcher										5		6											11	96	
Spotted Sandpiper																							2	70	
Black Turnstone			1			1		17	2		45	6	19	11	3					3			106	370	
Surf Scoter												1	7										8	70	
Sanderling										2													5	67	
Dunlin													2							4			6	1073	
Wilson's Snipe	2		5	16		1	14		1							1				1	3		44	110	
Heermann's Gull										3													3	**1	
Mew Gull			3			75	114	52	1	78	3	54		6				82					548	16375	
Ring-billed Gull																							1	4	
California Gull								2					1			4		3					12	130	
Herring Gull	1		1					1	1								1	1					6	288	
Thayer's Gull									1	1			1	2		3					5		25	3110	
Western Gull								2					1								2		5	18	
Glaucous-winged Gull	234	17	245	11	28	40	306	286	372	288	318	200	190	92	56	178	148	164	177	308	10	29	3,697	16794	
Common Murre						10		1										9			10		30	9938	
Pigeon Guillemot						5	2			2		3	1	5					1				19	323	
Marbled Murrelet							2	2		3		12		3				3					25	290	
Ancient Murrelet						15							5	3									23	6401	
Rhinoceros Auklet						1		3		12		1		1									18	113	
Rock Pigeon	50	3		1	12		49	43	81	130	69		4		24	50		38	1	106			661	1198	
Eurasian Collared-dove				8			2					1								7			18	29	
Mourning Dove		4																		36			49	55	
Barn Owl																					1		1	6	
Western Screech-owl																				1			1	23	
Great Horned Owl																				4	3		8	44	
Northern Pygmy Owl			1	2																2			5	5	
Barred Owl		1														1				1	2		12	**11	
Short-eared Owl									1	4													1	2	
Northern Saw-whet Owl		1																		1			2	4	
Anna's Hummingbird	14	9	3	2	7		35	24	30	11	12	11	6	52	29	10	8	20	56	19		59	417	1063	
Belted Kingfisher						9	2	5		1			2	2	2								26	71	
Red-breasted Sapsucker		1						1					1					1					1	6	
Downy Woodpecker	6	2	4	3	1	2	8	6			3	2	2	5	1	11	2	9	15	6		28	124	212	
Hairy Woodpecker		5	1		4		1						1							1			6	19	
Northern Flicker	18	9	9	7	2	9	21	17	13	7	4	6	4	8	27	14	10	11	57	26		30	309	607	
Pileated Woodpecker	5	1	3				4	1						1	2	1		1	10	3		4	36	56	
Northern Shrike							1	1		1								2					6	11	
Stellar's Jay	9	12	12	2	10	3	10	4						1	6	1			25	2		8	105	659	
Northwestern Crow	35	99	16	1	14	1	79	36	207	102	33	20	149	92	1511	906	73	836	95	120		12	4,437	10002	
Common Raven	48	12	20	22	10	5	17	20	2	1		3	3	19	17	16	6	20	88	36		12	377	420	
Sky Lark																							8	125	
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	133	75	83	83	20	78	162	121	82	19	26	44	76	129	179	82	48	66	567	45		146	2,264	2312	
Bushtit	63	23		5			22	10	133	27		65	15	106	12	83	54	16	138	30		256	1,058	2522	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	38	32	10	23	13	26	48	41	15	1	4	2	9	57	57	12	9	32	279	11		49	768	**647	
Brown Creeper	2	5	3	11	2	7	7	10	1		8		4	4	18	3	4	4	18			6	126	171	
Bewick's Wren	4		2	7	8	2	7	24	14	6	6		4	11	6	16	6	8	20	5		15	171	365	

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Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	23			Total #			
Pacific Wren	18	48	29	14	4	17	24	11	7	2	6	8	1	15	31	12					6			5	297	569	
Marsh Wren	1				2		4									2			7					21	52		
American Dipper			6					1																	7	11	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	77	39	147	45	12	46	108	75	51	7	30	14	6	8	109	28	28	58	350	48					1,286	4000	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4		8	2	6	3	11	24	19	1			5	5	9	14	18	9	10	7				3	158	402	
Townsend's Solitaire																			1						1	6	
Hermit Thrush	2					1	1		2		1					1			2						11	51	
American Robin	138	174	110	51	34	25	117	63	263	153	89	86	29	169	200	323	141	124	352	422				38	3,101	14327	
Varied Thrush	14	14	9	6	2	15	14	5	20		2	3	3	7	9	2	13	3	24	3				28	196	1200	
European Starling	223	39		64	4	8	72	101	310	173	127	2	3	63	74	36	78	8	97	919				66	2,467	18183	
American Pipit																					30				30	272	
Cedar Waxwing	2							4	1					10					19	6				2	69	600	
Orange-crowned Warbler																									3	6	
Yellow-rumped Warbler												3													5	25	
Spotted Towhee	89	37	12	14	19	24	29	22	31	5	5	8	14	51	40	34	23	32	165	46	2			47	749	1247	
Savannah Sparrow																									11	112	
Fox Sparrow	24	12	11	3	3	8	29	29	30	5	9	4	5	77	30	35	42	28	70	41				43	538	923	
Song Sparrow	53	3	11	1	3	5	31	33	31	10	2	16	14	50	13	32	36	24	81	40				19	508	937	
Lincoln's Sparrow																2	10	2	7	2					23	137	
White-throated Sparrow								1								1	2	1							5	13	
Harris's Sparrow (*)																										5	
White-crowned Sparrow	4		1				10			9						2	47	5	27	153				10	293	376	
Golden-crowned Sparrow	179	4	22	13	28	76	44	47	123	19	6	8	45	33	98	75	78	37	198	122	4			60	1,319	1482	
Dark-eyed Junco	463	113	47	65	120	88	259	163	160	70	69	48	37	282	228	92	63	269	655	372				389	4,052	8823	
Red-winged Blackbird	35			20	2	15	23		15							26	136	1	67	28	2				370	2160	
Western Meadowlark																									19	126	
Brewer's Blackbird							75						11			56				241				18	401	1377	
Brown-headed Cowbird																									2	31	
Purple Finch	1	5	6			5	1	6	4			7		2	1	2	8	1	5	2				23	79	505	
House Finch	40	20	7	1		18	30	35	41	25	2	55	5	70	63	15	43	35	69	56	8			72	710	1973	
Red Crossbill	46	178	24	24	2	32	9	94	40					42	66	2		27	329	36				18	969	1830	
Pine Siskin	376	208	368	75	80	20	898	441	100	60		4	82	105	307	310	159	345	1332	189				114	5,573	9386	
American Goldfinch									6	1	7													4	18	240	
Evening Grosbeak			2																						2	187	
House Sparrow	43	66		1	16	49	92	95	302	182	7	40	6	13	65		26	28	87	75			1	95	1,288	2975	
Snowy Owl													1												1	13	
Pine Grosbeak		5	3																						8	44	
Brown Pelican								1		18															19	2	
Common Redpoll													1												1	1	
GWGXWEGU																									1	1	
MallardxPintail																									1	1	
Unidentified Gull								20	32	18															269		
AMWII/EUWI Hybrid									1																1		
Count Totals	4,895	1,323	1,590	1,482	673	1,037	4,248	2,467	4,170	2,372	1,798	1,164	1,305	1,823	4,090	3,453	3,224	3,943	6,350	7,790	142	1,746		95	1,288	2975	125518
Species Totals	63	48	51	48	45	57	79	72	57	59	44	64	53	55	54	65	59	72	67	89	20		38			154	

Participant List, Victoria CBC 2012

Dave Aldcroft	Jim Currie	Brian Hume	Barb McGrenere	Rick Schortinghuis
Diana Aldcroft	Daniel Dahl	Doreen Hunter	Mike McGrenere	Donna Scott
Mary Andrews	Mathew Danby	Sandra Jacobsen	Barry McKee	Mel Scott
Ralph Archibald	Bill Dancer	Lynda Jamison	Dana McKee	Margie Shephard
Gail Austin	Mike Davis	Colin Jennings	Andy McKinnon	Michael Simmons
Tom Austin	Meredith Dickman	Hugh Judd	Bill McMillan	Laura Simons
Lonny Bate	Margaret Dohan	Maria Judd	Kirsten Mills	Doug Smith
Doug Bateman	Daniel Donnecke	Bill Katz	Don Milne	Norma Smith
Sylvia Beacom	Leo Donnecke	Martha Keller	James Miskelly	Marlin Smyth
Barb Begg	Kerry Drescher	Kristina Kezes	Marilyn Misner	Tim Snieder
Fred Beinhauer	Warren Drinnan	Jason Kimm	Nicole Missing	Joan Sommers
Louise Beinhauer	Veronica Druce	Jeremy Kimm	Rod Mitchell	Don Spencer
Mike Bentley	Julian Dunster	John King	Shirley Montgomery	Evelyn Spencer
Terry Biedak	Randy Dzenkiw	Barb Kirby	Marion Moore	Jessica Steele
Bill Bradley	Mike Edgell	Jim Kirby	Glen Moores	Margaret Stevens
Jill Bradley	Christian Engelstoft	Robin Kite	Judy Moores	Ann Stewart
Janice Brown	Willow English	Linda Knox	Ken Morgan	Don Stewart
Karen Brown	Sue Ennis	Adrian Koolman	Mary Morris	Dan Stirling
Lynette Browne	Jessie Fanucci	Rhonda Korol	Jo Motek	David Stirling
Daniel Bryant	Ulana Farmer	Ed Kowalyk	Mike Motek	Lauren Strachan-Hall
Martha Burd	Jenny Feick	Don Kramer	David Newell	Patti Sullivan
Barb Burnside	Bill Feyer	Vanessa Kramer	Geoffrey Newell	Jack Sutherland
Carol Callahan-Maureen	Ro Fife	Audrey Kyle	Jean Newell	Ken Sutill
Cynthia Callahan-Maureen	Cam Finlay	Barbara Lake	Jeff Newman	Jeremy Tatum
Ian Cameron	Joy Finlay	Bob Lake	Rae Ann Newman	Kim Taylor
Sid Cannings	Maija Finvers	Christina Lam	Ann Nightingale	Mark Taylor
Muriel Carlson	Dave Fraser	Marilyn Lambert	Derek Nurse	Mitchell Temkin
Bob Carroll	Melissa Frey	Warren Lee	Brian Nyberg	Andy Teucher
Jan Carroll	Jeff Gaskin	Kitty Lloyd	Hennie Nyhof	Jules Thomson
Dannie Carsen	Tracee Geernaert	Eric Lofroth	Mark Nyhof	Carmen Varcoe
Corey Cartwright	Val George	Agnes Lynn	Morrough O'Brien	Joyce Vezina
Naitong Chen	Sharon Godkin	David Lynn	Marie O'Shaughnessy	Leo Vezina
Sally Chen	Rob Gowan	Art Macgregor	Leah Ramsay	Silvia Vilches
Jannica Chick	Barbara Haley	Betsey Mackenzie	Jean Randall	Fern Walker
Paul Chytk	Poul Hansen	Cheryl Mackie	Jen Riddell-Matte	Rob Walker
Rosalind Coleman	Andrew Harcombe	Alan MacLeod	Wayne Robertson	Ted Walker
Aziza Cooper	John Harper	Pat MacLeod	Dave Robichaud	Lea Walsh
Claudia Copley	Kristen Harrison	Carol Madsen	Mary Robichaud	Anita Watts
Darren Copley	Margaret Harrison	Doug Magnuson	Robin Robinson	Sarah Weber
Pat Cownden	Gordon Hart	Jane Marsh	Steven Roias	Bruce Whittington
Doug Craig	Ian Hatter	Jeanne S. Martin	Donna Ross	Chris Winstanley
Nancy Craig	John Henigman	Shelagh Martinusen	Amélie Rousseau	Barb Winters
Elizabeth Cross	Bud Henning	Donna Matthews	Katherine Rowe	Maureen Woodward
Ian Cruickshank	Jo Henning	Trevor Matthews	Tim Rutherford	Shea Wyatt
Paul Cumberland	Nathan Hentze	Margie Mayfield	Mary Sanseverino	Lars Yunker
Helen Currie	Geoff Huber	Patty McDonald	Chris Saunders	Jordyn Yuson



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Hat Tricks

HAT Meeting Good Neighbours on the Peninsula



By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT)

In 2013 HAT will bring our Good Neighbours community outreach program to the Mt Newton Valley on the Saanich Peninsula. If you, or someone you know, lives in the Mt Newton Valley and would like to learn more about environmentally friendly ways of maintaining your landscape, please let us know! For your free and confidential consultation please call Todd at 250-995-2428 or email todd@hat.bc.ca.

The Hagan and Tod Creek Valleys on the Saanich Peninsula have well-known pastoral beauty, but they also feature trout streams, old growth Douglas-fir forest, and endangered Garry Oak meadows. Farms, people, and wildlife such as Cutthroat trout rely on the clean water of Hagan and Graham Creeks, which flow through farms and neighbourhoods in the Valley to the Saanich Inlet. The beautiful Garry Oak ecosystems here are among the rarest ecosystems in Canada.

Unfortunately, there are many threats to Mt Newton Valley's biodiversity and water quality, and they are increasingly complex. Urbanization eliminates habitat directly, and affects streams, adjacent parks and natural spaces in less visible but equally harmful ways. Water pollution and increased storm flows from intensified land use and impervious surfaces limits trout habitat. Water impacts combine with invasive species, increasing recreational pressure, and climate change to create a recipe for accelerated habitat degradation. The woodland and forest habitat under threat is already fragmented, and like our wetlands, less than five percent remains. Urban habitat loss results in reduced quality of life in our community, and loss of free ecological services. Engineered storm catchment infrastructure is but one example of the high cost associated with our loss of free ecosystem functions provided by healthy wetlands.

As nearly all of the land outside of parks (which is most of it) in the Valley is privately owned, residents play an important part in providing wildlife with habitat and in maintaining water quality for trout. Our goal is to engage the community in practical solutions to significant local conservation issues and to promote community appreciation of their watershed's fish and wildlife

values. Residents want functional and attractive landscapes and HAT's Good Neighbours Project helps them achieve their land use objectives without compromising water quality or sustainability. New residents (often from distant places) benefit most from a visit which helps them to recognize and interpret the existing values of their land before they make costly decisions. We also provide guidance and resources to long term residents already recognized by their peers for best practices in conservation.

Call HAT today to reserve your spring or summer land care visit by calling 250-995-2428 or email todd@hat.bc.ca.



Activities of Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO)



By Jessie Fanucchi

Although we aren't doing much fieldwork during the winter months, RPBO is far from inactive. Winter is the time for planning, fundraising and training. Our annual general meeting is coming up March 14, 2013 at the downtown branch of the Victoria Public Library 6–9 pm. Along with the meeting, we will also be holding an information session, so if you have ever been interested in volunteering with RPBO this is a good event to attend and get information. Our spring banding and monitoring workshop will once again be taking place at Royal Roads University March 29-31, 2013. For more information and to register, please visit <http://www.rpbo.org/rpbworkshop13.php>. This year we are also running a raffle with a \$1000 grand prize. Tickets may be available from board members at Birder's Nights and at the AGM. The prize will be drawn at International Migratory Bird Day in May (more information in the next Naturalist).

March and April also bring the return of Rufous Hummingbirds on their way to their breeding sites and also the return of our field season. Our hummingbird monitoring program will be starting its 15th year this year. This past season over 2500 new birds were banded in addition to the many returnees! If you are interested in learning more or volunteering, please contact us at hummingbird@rpbo.org.

"Psssst! Do you need Aleutian Tern for your list?" Check out this amazing fund-raising trip for Rocky Point Bird Observatory

Birding the Tatshenshini-Alsek River by Raft June 21-July 4, 2013

Ptarmigan, Aleutian Terns, icebergs, glaciers and more. Rocky Point Bird Observatory and Canadian River Expeditions have teamed up to develop this exciting birding and rafting trip. We will travel through some of the most spectacular and rugged scenery in North America and will have a chance to find some of the iconic birds of the St. Elias Mountains.

The naturalist/birder on the trip is biologist Dave Fraser who has birded the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers for the past 18 years. Dave's bird list and more information are available here: http://www.rpbo.org/cre_tatshenshini_trip_2013.php or contact Marilyn Lambert at 250-477-5922.



ALEUTIAN TERN PHOTO: NICK HADJIKOVICH/USFWS

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Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 18 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column:

Heather Leech

McBriar Avenue

Birding, terrestrial wildlife, vegetation

Mia Frankl

Redfern Street

Birds, botany, conservation

Ray and Janet Kiff

Trutch Street

Duncan and Pat Currie

Pender Park Drive

Birds

Jasper Lament

North Vancouver

Conservation

Kassia Holland and family

Swan Street

Birding, conservation, native plants, endangered species, photography, stewardship, native fauna, boating

Bruce Kellett

Cook Street

Birding and nature in general

Letters

Our Chapter of the Audubon Society will be holding its annual BirdFest in April of 2013. As in the past, we would like to provide you with information and offer an invitation to join us. The website for our event is: <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org/>

I have been looking over your website and I send my compliments. It seems you have a lot going on. Birds and Nature seem to generate their own enthusiasm, given the least bit of momentum. I like your broad goals about nature.

Dan Stahler

Hi Darren & Claudia, I am attaching a paper which was recently published regarding some results from my Cooper's Hawk study. In this paper we acknowledge the support of the Victoria Natural History Society. The VNHS greatly assisted me (us) by administering the PCAF funding which I

received for the nest camera aspect of this prey work. Many VNHS members also assisted in prey collection and in setting up the nest cameras. Many thanks to the VNHS and its membership for their valuable assistance in this Cooper's Hawk prey research.

Andy Stewart

(Editor's note: An article by Andy Stewart on this research may be in a forthcoming edition.)

Dear Victoria Natural History Society

I would like to thank you for donating money to the Victoria Natural History Society Award for the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair.

Helena Radisavljevic



OLYMPIC PENINSULA **BirdFest**
April 5-7, 2013 *Come bird with us!*

Events:

- ◆ San Juan Island Cruise
- ◆ Guided Birding Trips
- ◆ Bird Drawing Class
- ◆ Auction & Raffle
- ◆ Totem Tour
- ◆ Photography Workshop
- ◆ Gala Banquet,

with Featured Speaker:
Photographer Kevin Schafer

For more information:
www.olympicbirdfest.org
info@olympicbirdfest.org
or 360-681-4076

Logos: JAMESTOWN SKALAM TRIBE, SEQUIM WASHINGTON, DUNGENESS RIVER Audubon CENTER, OLYMPIC PENINSULA VISITOR BUREAU, Kalemelli GRILL, and a logo for the event at Railroad Bridge Park.

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Metchosin BioBlitz III, April 26 and 27

A BioBlitz is an intense 24-hour census of wildlife populations in a given area. At Metchosin's second BioBlitz in 2012, fifty-five taxonomic specialists found more than 940 different species. On Saturday, April 27, new teams of specialists will fan out over Metchosin to count, count, count. Members of the public are invited to join a search team. You don't have to be an expert to be on the teams – you can learn as you go. Meet us at the Mel Cooper cabin of the Boys and Girls Club at 8:30 am and/or 1:00 pm. Join us also on Friday night, April 26, at the Metchosin Council Chambers (7:00 pm) for slide presentations on Metchosin species. Further information and maps are on the BioBlitz web site at <http://metchosinbiodiversity.com>. Contact Moralea Milne, moraleamilne@gmail.com or 250-478-3838, for further information.

Field Trips – Near and Far

Check out the once in a lifetime opportunity to raft the Tatshenshini! See info on page 20. And nearer to home:

The Olympic Peninsula BirdFest. See ad, p.22.

International Migratory Bird Day

Advance notice of this event, again at Beaver/Elk Lake Park on May 11. Details will be in the next issue.

Introductory Bird Monitoring and Banding Workshop March 29 -31, 2013 Royal Roads University

The 3-day workshop will focus on bird identification, monitoring procedures and techniques, sexing and ageing. Also included are an owl monitoring and banding demo and an optional session on specimen preparation. The program has been developed for people with little or no bird handling and/or banding experience, but those with intermediate skills will also find the workshop a good way to build knowledge. Enrollment is limited to 18 people. Cost: \$300 (\$280 for RPBO members), students \$250 (\$230 for student RPBO members). For more information or to register: <http://rpbo.org/rpboworkshop13.php>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held September-April on the following days: **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 pm); **Natural History Night:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 pm, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 pm, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 pm, 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.

Members! Remember that if you want to do a talk or know someone who might, please contact one of the talk night coordinators. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share. Contacts: Birder's Night and Natural History Night – Christina Ball; Marine Night – Phil Lambert; Botany Night – Kristen and James Miskelly. Email/phone numbers on p.2 of the newsletter.

MARCH

Saturday, March 2

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Meets every Saturday morning at 8:00 am. Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check the Rare Bird Alert <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/rarebird.html> on Thursday/Friday before for this week's location. For details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2452 (evenings) or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders welcome.

Sunday, March 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Royal Roads Big Trees

Hans Roemer will share his knowledge of the Big Trees on

the Royal Roads University and neighbouring Department of National Defense (DND) properties. Hans has been researching these trees for several years and it is delightful to enjoy a walk through the woods with him, admiring these giants that include Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), grand fir (*Abies grandis*) and other natives. Several of these trees are considered exceptional due to their size. Hans will explain how they have reached these huge proportions as well as talk about other interesting natural features in the area. Although we will be walking at a slow pace, this will be an outing for those who are comfortable clambering up and down hills on uneven ground. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick. Dress for the weather. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. No pets please. Starts from the Cedar Building at 10:00 am. Turn into Royal Roads University at traffic light; take first right that winds down to stop sign at bottom, right to Cedar building. Parking is right and left of stop sign. NOTE there is a fee for parking anywhere down there. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, March 5

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meet Tuesday at 9:00 am at the foot of Bowker Avenue on the

waterfront (off Beach drive) in Oak Bay. For more information call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273.

Saturday, March 9

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details, see March 2.

Sunday, March 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Parksville

Come to see the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn. Massive numbers of sea ducks and gulls follow the herring, close to where we can observe the birds feeding on the herring roe. We can also enjoy the beginning of the congregation of the Brant Geese in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area and vicinity. This will be an all day trip so bring lunch and snacks. No pets please. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:00 am. Carpool expenses will be about \$20.00 per person. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 (evenings) for more information or **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register.

Tuesday, March 12

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Tuesday, March 12

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT AND AGM

Long-term Change and Parks Management: A Repeat Photographic Perspective of Our Changing Rocky Mountains

The Canadian Rocky Mountains are vast, and offer rich cultural and ecological histories, resources and opportunities. While the majority of direct impacts are limited to population centers and industrial resource extraction, the weight of our activities are nonetheless felt across the landscape. While remote areas are often protected to maintain ideals of undisturbed wilderness, these areas are often influenced by human activities directly (e.g., fire suppression) or indirectly (e.g., climate change, invasive species). Join **Jenna Falk** for a discussion on two protected areas in the Canadian Rockies, Willmore Wilderness Park and Mount Robson Provincial Park. Repeat photography forms the heart of this discussion, which highlights an assortment of photos from several extensive historic survey collections and recent work by the Mountain Legacy Project. Through a diverse and panoramic slideshow of mountain photographs, we will discuss how long-term landscape changes over the past century continue to shape these two parks and challenge management, from the wild and windy Willmore to the lush slopes of Mount Robson. We meet at 7:30 pm in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Saturday, March 16

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details, see March 2.

Monday March 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

RBCM Herbarium Tour

Erica Wheeler, Botany Collections Manager at the Royal BC Museum, was the speaker at a recent Botany Night. She spent time telling us about the importance of the specimens in the Herbarium where samples of the entire flora of BC are bundled up in precious packages. We wanted to see the actual specimens and see how they are preserved and stored so Erica has agreed to give us a tour. The RBCM Herbarium was established in 1886 and has approximately 200,000 specimens. The collections, including vascular plants, bryophytes and lichens are a comprehensive collection of British Columbia species. We are fortunate that BC has the richest flora of all the provinces. We

will get a chance to see actual specimens and learn about how they are organized and accessed, how they are prepared and documented plus how they are stored for those long periods of time. We will meet at 10:00 am in the lobby near the big map. Don't be late as we must all go in together. Allow plenty of time to find a parking spot. You must register for this event as the number of visitors is limited. VNHS members get preference. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 after March 3 to register or for more information.

Tuesday, March 19

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Tuesday, March 19

BOTANY NIGHT

Growing Mediterranean Fruits in the Victoria Area

Bob Duncan's presentation will explore the types of Mediterranean and subtropical fruits that can be grown on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Cultural techniques developed to successfully grow these fruits in a cool summer-mild winter west coast climate will be described. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 pm. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, March 23

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details, see March 2.

Monday, March 25

MARINE NIGHT

Invisible Brazilian clam fisheries - adventures in international development and social justice with tiny biological superheroes

In Brazil, low tech fisheries for tiny clams that are a sought-after dish help to sustain people living in poverty. These fisheries, primarily carried out by women, are generally invisible because of the social stigma associated with the activity. **Yogi Carolsfeld**, Executive Director of World Fisheries Trust, will describe their project about resource management, conservation, stock enhancement, and depuration but, mainly, to bring the fishery into a positive light, helping to change the relationship between these women, society, and government. Join us at 7:30 pm in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome.

Tuesday, March 26

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Wednesday, March 27

BIRDERS NIGHT

Social raptors versus social wasps, studies on the Red-throated Caracara in French Guiana

Like the Old World Honey Buzzards, the Red-throated Caracara is a specialist predator of social wasps. Because social wasps are well defended with stings and are avoided by many birds, we were interested in determining how caracaras deal with the defensive wasps. Using video traps to observe caracara predation on social wasps we found that they use several behavioral strategies to avoid wasp defenses. Separate work using nest cameras found that up to 7 adult birds were involved in the feeding of a single chick, possibly making the species one of the most social of the Falconidae. Join **Sean McCann** as he talks about his 5 years of research in the South American rainforest on the unique foraging biology of this species. We meet at 7:30 pm in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Friday, March 29

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Good Friday Walk up Lone Tree Hill

This little knoll is a treasure trove of spring wildflowers and a great place for an Easter weekend walk. It is a bit early for the full diversity of species on this hill but it's fun to see which flowers are the early ones in the long progression of blooms that we enjoy in Victoria. We can certainly take in the fantastic views from this high viewpoint as well as listen for birds such as the Orange-crowned Warbler singing his heart out. Last year we were treated to great views of a Townsend's Solitaire at the top so don't overlook that bird just because it looks like a Robin from the back. Please note the trail is steep near the top but not as challenging as some of the other areas. The walk is at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Starts at 10:00 am. Follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Road exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Road. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Road. Keep left to continue on Millstream Road to the park entrance on the right. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Saturday, March 30

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details, see March 2.

APRIL

Monday, April 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Easter Monday Tracking Animals

Gary enjoys his adventures in the woods and has a great understanding of those critters that also inhabit these spaces. On this outing he plans to share some of his knowledge with us so we can understand more of what is around us when we are out enjoying nature. We'll be looking for animal signs such as food caches, rubbing trees, scratch piles, scat, trails, tracks and the like. We'll be talking about their ways of communication, habits, travel routes and their relationship with one another. To optimize our chance of seeing these signs, we plan to cover about 7–10 km over about 6 hours. This will include plenty of time for stops of interests and lunch. It will be a slower paced hike with possible small creek crossings. No big hills to climb but rather we'll be using existing trails in forested valleys and gullies where creeks and wetlands are found. These are typically the corridors that animals choose to use. His dog Shadow will be along. She is an integral part of our hike. He'll be talking more about how animals recognize one another's signs. That's where she comes in. But please no other pets. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all-day outing. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 8:00 am. You must register for this event as the number of participants is limited. VNHS members get preference. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 after March 3 to register or if you need more information.

Tuesday, April 2

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Saturday, April 6

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING. See below.

Saturday, April 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Satin Flowers and Birds at Juan de Fuca

For those of you who are not up to the strenuous walk up Mount Wells, this outing is another chance to see masses of the early satin flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) as well as other emerging spring flowers without the effort. The shooting stars (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*), blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), spring gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*) and fawn lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*) should be in bloom or at least starting now. Plus it is an excellent place to check out the birds, so this trip will have some of each. There will be some changes in elevation and the ground will be uneven in spots so sturdy footwear is recommended. You might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. No pets please. Meet at Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre (Westshore Parks and Recreation), 1767 Old Island Highway, at 9:00 am. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to town. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 (evenings) or **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, April 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

UVic Ecological Restoration Walk

Join **Dr. Val Schaefer** as he takes us around the UVic Campus. (For more details on Dr. Schaefer, check the article in this newsletter entitled Restoration Walks in Victoria). Both staff and students have taken part in many restoration projects throughout the campus. We will go from the University Club pond (headwaters of Bowker Creek), past the Social Sciences and Mathematics Building with its rooftop garden (we won't be able to go to the roof though) and inner courtyard with representative ecosystems, past the Lorene Kennedy Naturescape Garden, then through Mystic Vale (Hobbs Creek) and end up at the orchard at the Cedar Hill Corner. We will start at 10:00 am from the University Club Parking Lot #9 (turn off McGill Rd by the stadium, go around the edge of parking Lot #8 on West Campus Way and turn right at the Club). Parking is free on Sunday. There will be some changes in elevation and the ground will be uneven in spots so sturdy footwear is recommended. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, April 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Rithet's Bog

Join us as we enjoy a birding walk along the level loop trail around the bog. Rails and Anna's Hummingbirds, wetland-loving warblers, swallows, migrating Teal and other ducks are all possibilities. There should be a number of early migrants around now as well as the considerable resident population of birds. Meet at 7:30 am along Dalewood Lane (just off Chatterton Way) in the northwest corner of the Bog. No pets please. Leader is **Marie O'Shaughnessy**. Call Marie at 250-598-9680 if you need more information.

Tuesday, April 9

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Tuesday, April 9

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

What on Earth is in Our Stuff? Non-renewable Resources and Us

Join **Dr. Flier-Keller** for this hands-on presentation which

explores the links between products (at home, school, work and outdoors) that we use every day, and the non-renewable resources that are needed to produce them. We meet at 7:30 pm in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Saturday, April 13

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING – see below

Saturday, April 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Enjoy Early Spring Flowers and Birds at Gore and Oak Haven Parks

What better way to spend an early spring morning than in these two delightful Saanich Peninsula parks with their exquisite spring wildflowers and plenty of birds. To allow more people to partake in the level section in Gore Park, we will do this park first. Oak Haven Park has a climb to the summit but it is not terribly strenuous or long. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick for the Oak Haven section. You might also want to bring binoculars. Bring a snack and drink if you wish. No pets please. Meet at 9:00 am at the entrance to Gore Park. To reach Gore Park, proceed along Benvenuto Dr towards Butchart Gardens. Turn right on Amwell Dr. Follow Amwell Dr to reach Greig Rd. Turn right to the park entrance on the right. We usually walk to Oak Haven from Gore Park and return. Contact Rick at 250- 885-2454 (evenings) or **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250- 21-0634 for more information.

Sunday, April 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy the Extended Season of Wildflowers on Mount Wells

Investigate Mount Wells, a gateway to the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve. We normally go earlier in the season to view the satin flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) but this year we will go on a date that should include several of the other wildflowers as well as the lingering satin flowers. Enjoy views of Juan de Fuca Strait and the Sooke Hills. This location also offers a good chance to see a Golden Eagle soaring above us and we may hear or see a Sooty Grouse. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. We will come down on the Sooke Rd side and will arrange transportation back to the starting point. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all-day outing. No pets please. Take the Trans-Canada highway towards Goldstream Park. Turn left at the new Westshore Parkway (traffic light) shortly before you get to Goldstream Park. Turn right at the roundabout and carry on left when you reach Sooke Lake Road. Turn left on to Humpback Road. At the intersection with Irwin Road, stay right. Follow Humpback Road to the park entrance. Meet at the parking lot on the right at 10:00 am. Don't be late as we may be ferrying people to the start point. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, April 16

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Tuesday, April 16

BOTANY NIGHT

Botanica Poetica – Botany in Poetry

Andy MacKinnon (a.k.a. Andreas mackinnonii Misk.), Poet

Laureate of the Victoria Natural History Society, will moderate an evening that will combine the beauty of plants with poetry. Audience participation is encouraged! Bring a poem, song, or other botanical interpretation to share with the group. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 pm. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, April 20

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING – see below

Saturday, April 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to Offer

Join us to enjoy the wildflowers and the birds as well. Our goal is to see the gold stars (*Crocidium multicaule*) in bloom but we will not be disappointed if we miss them as there is an amazing array of other delights and great panoramic views from the ridge. We might see a Golden Eagle on the ridge or a Townsend's Solitaire or hear a Sooty Grouse. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all-day outing. No pets please. Follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Road exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Road. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Road. Keep left to continue on Millstream Road. Go past Lone Tree Hill Park on your right and watch for Emma Dixon Road on the left. The trail head is on Millstream Rd just past that intersection. Park on the right-hand-side of the road. Meet there at 9:00 am. Contact **Rick** at 250- 885-2454 (evenings) or **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, Sunday, April 20, 21

VICTORIA BUTTERFLY COUNT

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers to get out their field guides! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 250-544-0455.

Saturday, Sunday, April 20, 21

Native Plant Sale at Swan Lake – see details in this issue

Sunday, April 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Fantastic Diversity of Wildflowers at Thetis Lake Park

This park is overflowing with wild flowers, common and uncommon. Pause to enjoy the ferns, lichens, mosses and other supporting cast as well. Our walk will only cover a small fraction of this fantastic park. We hope this visit encourages you to come again on your own. Please note the trail is a gentle climb, not as challenging as some of the other areas. The walk is at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick. To reach the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge. Continue on this road when it goes under the highway and you will come to the Thetis Lake Park parking lot. Meet at the main parking lot at 10:00 am. Pay parking in effect. Bring a snack and drink if you wish. No pets please. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, April 23

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.

Wednesday, April 24

BIRDERS NIGHT

The Birds of India

India is a vast country with many different climates and diverse habitats, from humid forest locations to dry deserts. This contributes to the great diversity of birds and wildlife found on the Indian sub-continent. Join photographer **Suzanne Huot** for this slide show of the birds of India. More information on Suzanne and her photography can be found on her website: www.suzannehuot.com. We meet at 7:30 pm in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Friday, April 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Somenos and Cowichan Garry Oak Preserves

To make the drive to Duncan worthwhile, we'll pack in several adventures. We will stop at the Somenos Marsh Conservation Area to check out the birds from the boardwalk that extends along the side of the marsh. Then we'll stop at the Somenos Garry Oak Preserve to see the mother-load of prairie violets (*Viola praemorsa*) and chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria affinis*) that look like they are on steroids. Plus there is a good birding area along the creek there. Then we'll carry on to Art Mann Park on Quamichan Lake which is another excellent birding spot. Finally, we have arranged a visit to the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve which is not generally open to the public. You will see the wildflowers that have emerged after the enormous restoration efforts of taking out massive quantities of invasive Scotch broom. They also have an interesting nursery area where they grow the native plants that they have been using to fill in any bare areas. Wear sturdy footwear and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Bring a lunch, snacks and drinks for the all-day outing. No pets please. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 9:00 am. You must register for this event as the number of visitors is limited. VNHS members get preference. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 after March 3 to register or if you need more information.

Saturday, April 27

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING – see below

Saturday, April 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Magnificent Wildflowers and Birds at Mill Hill

Enjoy a visit to Mill Hill for a spectacular spring show of wildflowers and listen for the many birds as you climb through the varying habitats. Since 2000, CRD Parks' staff and volunteers have been battling invasive Scotch broom in the park's Garry Oak ecosystem. Soak up the glorious colours of spring and admire the results of this restoration. We are hoping to see, perhaps, a Townsend's Solitaire at the top as you look down over the tree tops as well as listen all the way up and down for the birds. Please note the route is steep and rough on the way down but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Bring a snack and a drink if you wish. No pets please. Meet at the Mill Hill Regional Park information kiosk at 9:00 am. To get to the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge, then left on Atkins Road. Turn left at the four-way intersection to continue on Atkins Avenue that

leads to the park entrance on the right. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 (evenings) or **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, April 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Intertidal Exploration

Examine the marine life at Macaulay Point in Esquimalt with **Phil Lambert**. A low tide of 0.7 ft should reveal some interesting flora and fauna. Meet in the parking lot of Fleming Beach boat ramp at the foot of Lampson Street at 11:00 am. From there we will walk out to the Point and scramble down to the rocky shore. The tide-pools are wet and the rocks are slippery so wear rubber boots or hiking boots. Walking poles are useful if you have them. For more information, call **Phil** at 250-477-5922.

Sunday, April 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Two for One Bargain – Horth Hill and Bear Hill Wildflowers

It is hard to fit all the good wildflower areas into the short period when they are at their peak so we'll give you two treats in one day. Despite the close proximity of these two areas, the flora is quite different. Horth Hill is sunnier and drier. The chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria affinis*) should be great there. Bear Hill is more woody and doesn't get as much sun. If we are lucky, we'll see some pink fairy slippers (*Calypso bulbosa*). Please note the trails are steep but not as challenging as some of the other areas. The walks are at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Wear good hiking boots and you might want to bring a walking stick and binoculars. Bring a lunch and drinks and we'll eat it between walks. No pets please. Meet at the parking lot at Horth Hill at 10:00 am. To get to Horth Hill, take the Pat Bay Highway north to the Wain Road exit. Follow Wain Road west, then turn right on Tatlow Road to the park entrance on the right. To get to Bear Hill from Horth Hill, return to the highway and go south. Turn right at Island View Road, left on Saanich Cross Road to Central Saanich Road. Continue south on Central Saanich Road to right on Keating Cross Road, left on Oldfield Road and left on Bear Hill Road to the parking lot. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Saturday, Sunday, April 26, 27

METCHOSIN BIOBLITZ III. See details on the bulletin board.

Monday, April 29

MARINE NIGHT

A Sense of Place on a Changing Coast: an Arctic Perspective

Maeva Gauthier recently graduated from the University of Victoria with a Masters in Marine Ecology. Last summer, a coastal mapping project took her to the Arctic of Alaska to facilitate a film workshop with youth in two small villages. Young Inupiat students made movies about the coast and interviewed elders in their community about their coastal knowledge, stories, and observations of change. Maeva will show recent aerial imagery of the North Slope coast from this survey and will also discuss people's perspective of these dramatic cultural and physical changes. She will also show the short film 'Weather or Not' produced by Tracy Burns, 18 years old, from Kaktovik. Join us at 7:30 pm in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome.

Tuesday, April 30

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING. For details see March 5.



Prairie Violet (*Viola praemorsa*), one of the rare wildflowers that occurs in Beacon Hill Park along with the millions of Camas. Photo: Agnes Lynn

21st Annual CAMAS DAY

At the time of writing, no date has been set for this event, although it is likely to be April 28. In any case, it will be late April or early May. Please check the website at www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca or call 250-592-6659 for date and details. Camas Day has been co-sponsored with Friends of Beacon Hill Park and VNHS for the past 21 years. There will be a wide choice of walks to suit all tastes, from 7 am to early afternoon, some repeated. Themes such as birds, intertidal sea life, flowers, mosses, First Nations culture, and more are planned (leaders of these walks to be determined).