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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, book reviews, etc., up to 2200 words.

Please note: If you are concerned about protecting your privacy when submitting an item, please notify the editors at the time of your submission and indicate whether or not you wish to have your name withheld or use a pseudonym.

We prefer electronic submissions – these can be submitted in either PC or Mac compatible word processing format – but hardcopies are also accepted. Please include photographs or illustrations if possible, along with a suggested caption and photo credit. If digital, images need to be high resolution: a minimum of 1200 x1550 pixels, or 300 dpi at the size of photos in the magazine. Once scanned/input, hardcopy materials will be returned to the sender if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

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Cover photo: Adam Taylor
Blue-grey Taildropper found at Chase Woods.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year – I can't believe it is 2014 already! Also hard to believe is that it will be 2 years this coming spring that I have now been co-editor of the newsletter. Over that time, I've seen many examples of members contributing to conservation efforts in the area, including VNHS projects and activities. In light of that, and in keeping with tradition at this time of year, I'd like to encourage you to make a New Year's resolution or two.

Make a resolution to get engaged in citizen science (examples of which are found in the Brandt's Cormorant article on p.6 and HAT's citizen science program, p.12), natural history projects and activities of the Society, such as presentations and field trips. Take it a bit further and think about leading a field trip (we'll have more about the new VNHS field trip guidelines in the next issue). You could contribute by submitting articles, stories or pictures to our newsletter, and thus share your experiences with our members. Perhaps consider continuing to help the Society's activities through planned giving.

Make a resolution to get out and experience the natural world more, and get your kids and grandkids out, too. Sharing your passion and knowledge for natural history is one of the best gifts you can give to them. It could help the younger generations continue to care for our environment and all the wonders it holds.

I hope the coming year brings renewed interest and joy in (re)discovering the natural world in this amazing place we call home.

Gail Harcombe

CORRECTIONS TO NOV/DEC NEWSLETTER

1. "Davey" in poem is A.R. Davidson not David Stirling... my apologies for any concerns this may have raised.
– G. Harcombe.
2. Corrected email addresses for Thalia Grant from "A Fairy Shrimp Worth Searching For", Nov/Dec 2013 issue:
kthaliagrant@telus.net OR
kthaliagrant@gmail.com

VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways: writing articles for the Naturalist; leading field trips; or serving on the board or committees. Some go out of their way to ensure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities by visiting shut-ins or driving others to Society functions. The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways, for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2014.

All nominations must be in writing and should be signed

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

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman

1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve

1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof

1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve

1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock

1994 Kaye Suttill

1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington

1996 Gordon Devey

1997 Michael Carson

1998 No recipients

1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson

2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce

2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol

2002 Norm Mogensen

2003 Bob Chappell

2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska

2005 Rick Schortinghuis

2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess

2007 No recipients

2008 Ann Nightingale

2009 No recipients


2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn

2011 Claudia and Darren Copley


2012 Bill Dancer

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Tom as he was – always working. Tom and Charlene Lee putting up Purple Martin nest boxes at Royal Roads University (April 2013). Photo: Ann Nightingale

Tom Gillespie (1945 – 2013)

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of an integral member of our Society and Honourary Life Member, Tom Gillespie. Since joining the Victoria Natural History Society in 1989, Tom immersed himself in our activities. His first formal involvement was with membership, and he soon after became responsible for the distribution of *The Victoria Naturalist*, as well as picking up the mail. Tom continued to do all of these activities until just days before his passing: literally decades of commitment to essential behind-the-scenes tasks that keep our Society running smoothly. Tom has been a Board Member, our representative to the BC Nature, a field trip leader, a leader for the annual Christmas Bird Count, and our President. He was awarded Honourary Life Membership in 2006 for his long and dedicated service to VNHS. Tom was also involved in many other conservation-focused organizations: Friends of

Beacon Hill Park, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, Garry Oak Meadows Preservation Society, Friends of Ecological Reserves, the Purple Martin Recovery Project, and The Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team. Tom carried on all his volunteer efforts in his own quiet way, never seeking a stage and never looking for recognition.

A celebration of life was held for Tom at the Pacific Forestry Centre on December 17, 2013, 1:30–4 pm. Here friends were invited to speak about their memories and thoughts about Tom, and share pictures of him doing what he loved. It was a well-attended event, where everyone spoke of his commitment to conservation, and the unassuming way he went about helping the various causes he was involved in.

He was a valued member of the conservation community that we all admired and respected. He will be sorely missed.

Breeding of Brandt's Cormorant at Mandarte Island in 2013

By Harry R. Carter, Marilyn A. Lambert, and Daniel Donneck

In 2013, we documented the first breeding of Brandt's Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) at Mandarte Island, B.C., east of Sidney Island in Haro Strait.

While kayaking and bird watching on 30 June, Daniel Donneck photographed an adult Brandt's Cormorant on a nest. He posted the photo at BCVIBIRDS, a Yahoo Group where birders can post sightings and information on local



Figure 1. Adult Brandt's Cormorant at nest #2, Mandarte Island, 30 June 2013. Photo: D. Donneck

birds. Marilyn Lambert saw Daniel's posting and knew that Brandt's Cormorant had not been recorded nesting at Mandarte Island in the past and did not currently nest in B.C. Marilyn passed Daniel's record on to Harry Carter who had been surveying population size of Double-crested Cormorants (*P. auritus*) and Pelagic Cormorants (*P. pelagicus*) at Mandarte Island in recent years, at times assisted by Marilyn. Harry and Mike Shepherd had conducted a cormorant survey at Mandarte Island on 22 June without detecting nesting Brandt's Cormorants. Between 9 July and 8 November, the three of us (assisted by Emma Carter, Luke Halpin, Chris Lee, Victoria McKean, and Kyra Parker) documented a total of three Brandt's Cormorant nests with adults in incubating posture on the west cliffs (Figure 2). We monitored these nests every 2-3 weeks to determine timing of breeding and fledging success. Egg-laying occurred in late June and early July. On 10 August, the first chicks were visible in nest #1 (Figure 3). Two chicks and one chick fledged from nests #1 and #3, respectively, but no chicks hatched at nest #2. On 5 October, a flying juvenile was last recorded at nest #3. Carter et al. (2013) provides additional details on 2013 observations and timing of breeding.

Although nest building by Brandt's Cormorants had been previously described at Mandarte Island (Drent et al. 1964), no records of egg-laying are known, despite intensive monitoring and surveys of cormorants and other seabirds in many years since the 1950s. B.C. occurs near the north end of the breeding range (Wallace and Wallace 1998). Breeding was first reported in B.C. in 1965 (Stirling and Buffam 1966). During the late 1960s to mid 2000s, small numbers of Brandt's Cormorants bred primarily on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island between Long Beach and western Barkley Sound; only one other breeding record in the Salish Sea is known at Race Rocks, off the southern tip of Vancouver Island, in 1987 (Campbell et al. 1990). By the early 2000s, population decline was evident. From 2008 to 2012, no active nests were documented in B.C. Mandarte Island is the only currently active breeding location of Brandt's Cormorants in B.C.

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- Carter, H.R., M.A. Lambert and D. Donneck. 2013. Observations of breeding Brandt's Cormorants at Mandarte Island, British Columbia, in 2013. Unpublished report, Carter Biological Consulting, Victoria, BC. 10pp.



Figure 2. West cliffs at Mandarte Island, 19 September 2013. Brandt's Cormorant nests were found on the left end of the broad ledge located in the center-right of the photo (i.e., less than halfway up the cliffs with the long line of over 10 Pelagic and Brandt's Cormorants). Double-crested Cormorants are visible at the top of the cliff and Pelagic Cormorants occur widely on the cliff face. *Photo: M. Lambert*

Drent, R., G.F. van Tets, F. Tompa, and K. Vermeer. 1964. The breeding birds of Mandarte Island, British Columbia. *Canadian Field Naturalist* 78:208-263.

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Harry R. Carter (carterhr@shaw.ca) is a contract seabird biologist at Carter Biological Consulting in Victoria. Marilyn A. Lambert (marilynambert@pacificcoast.net) is a citizen scientist with the Rocky Point Bird Observatory and volunteer warden for Oak Bay Islands Ecological Reserve. Daniel Donneck (daniel.donnecke@yahoo.com) is an instructor at Camosun College and volunteer at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory.



Figure 3. Adult Brandt's Cormorant and the heads of two chicks at Nest #1, Mandarte Island, 10 August 2013. *Photo: D. Donneck*

Coastal Connections – BC Nature 2014 Annual General Meeting in Victoria in May

By Ann Nightingale

About once every ten years, Victoria serves as the host city for the BC Nature Annual General Meeting, and 2014 is the year. This time, Rocky Point Bird Observatory and Victoria Natural History Society, have joined forces to put together a nature festival to outshine any that we've seen on the southern island! The conference will run from May 1 to 4 and is chock-full of amazing speakers and field trips to many of our favourite destinations.

There are enough activities to keep everyone engaged, whether their preference is to attend the presentations, go on

the field trips, or do a bit of both. An optional full-day trip to Botanical Beach and Avatar Grove will start the event, and we've got social activities, including an evening with Robert Bateman at the new Bateman Centre and 17 top-notch speakers at the Harbour Towers Hotel. Field trips will start with early morning birding followed by several half-day options on Friday and Saturday.

The Annual General Meeting on Saturday will have additional speakers, and the program will be capped with a buffet dinner and keynote speaker, Tom Reimchen. The full schedule follows:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Thursday, May 1 | Registration Desk and Display area open 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm |
| 6 am to 4 pm | Botanical Beach/Avatar Grove extension trip (extra fee) |
| 3 to 5 pm | BC Nature Executive Meeting |
| 6 to 8:30 pm | Casual social evening at the Harbour Towers Hotel Club Directors' Meeting Dr. Briony Penn will speak on <i>The Real Thing: the Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan</i> . |
| | |
| Friday, May 2 | Registration Desk, Hospitality Room and Display area open 8:00 am – 5 pm |
| 6 to 8:15 am | Early Birding |
| 8:30 to 8:55 am | Welcome and Announcements |
| 9 am to 12 pm | Field Trips: Intertidal Explorations– Fleming Beach, Mill Hill Spring Flowers, West Victoria Birding, East Victoria Birding, Saanich Peninsula Birding |
| | Speakers: Dr. Richard Hebda – <i>Origins and Development of our Modern Terrestrial Coastal Ecosystems</i> Dr. Purnima Govindarajalu – <i>Citizen Science and Naturalists: The Challenge of Addressing Knowledge Gaps Currently Hampering Effective Conservation Actions</i> Dr. Brenda Beckwith – <i>There is No Wilderness But Home: Re-storying the Lost Camas Meadows of the South Island</i> Dr. Neville Winchester – <i>Life in a Raindrop and Beyond: Microarthropods to Grizzly Bears – A Celebration of Coastal Biodiversity</i> Dr. Thomas Pedersen – <i>Compromising the Future of Humanity: Why Global Warming is More than an Assault on Nature</i> Mr. Jim Cosgrove – <i>Giant Pacific Octopus – No Mother Could Give More</i> |
| | Lunch on your own |
| 1:30 to 4:30 pm | Field Trips: Beacon Hill Meadows, Thetis Lake Mosses, West Victoria Birding, East Victoria Birding, Saanich Peninsula Birding |
| | Speakers: Dr. Robb Bennett – <i>British Columbia's Spiders: Surveying the Province's Diversity</i> Dr. Eileen van der Flier-Keller – <i>How Vancouver Island Came to Be: The Rock Story</i> Mr. David Nagorsen – <i>Islands, Mountains and Glaciers-The Land Mammals of Coastal British Columbia</i> |

| | |
|--|--|
| Supper on your own (4:30 pm – 7:00 pm) | |
| 7 to 9 pm | Reception at the Robert Bateman Centre (with Robert Bateman) |
| | |
| Saturday, May 3 | Registration Desk, Hospitality Room and Display area open 8 am – 4 pm |
| 6 to 8:30 am | Early Birding |
| 8:45 to 8:55 am | Announcements |
| 9 am to 12 pm | Field Trips: Victoria Breakwater: Diving for Diversity, Witty's Lagoon Nature, Upland Park Wildflowers, East Victoria Birding, West Victoria Birding, Saanich Peninsula Birding |
| | Speakers: Dr. Brian Starzomski – <i>Biodiversity of British Columbia's Central Coast</i> Dr. Jeremy Tatum – <i>Moths of Southern Vancouver Island</i> Dr. John Ford – <i>Marine Mammal Conservation</i> Ms Ann Nightingale – <i>How Technology is Changing the Way We See Birds</i> Dr. Cori Lausen – <i>As the Bat Flies: Understanding Seasonal Patterns of Bats in Light of Wind Energy Developments and White Nose Syndrome</i> Mr. David Denning – <i>Get a Grip on It – Life at the Sea's Edge</i> |
| Lunch on your own | |
| 1:30 to 4:30 pm | BC Nature – Annual General Meeting |
| 5:30 to 6 pm | Pre-Banquet Social – Cash bar |
| 6 to 10 pm | Banquet, Awards, Silent Auction and Keynote Speaker – Tom Reimchen : <i>Ecosystems without Borders: The Role of Salmon and Bears in Forest Biodiversity</i> |
| Sunday May 4 | Farewell Field Trips (\$ indicates additional fee) |
| 9 am | Fantasea II Marine Charter – Juan de Fuca – Race Rocks (5 hours)\$, Cowichan Garry Oak-Elkington Preserve (Duncan), Whale Watching \$, Victoria Harbour Tour (Pickle Boats)\$, Goldstream Park, Mt. Newton (Saanich Peninsula) |

You can register for the entire conference, or for single days if that works better for you. We've set up an online registration site with more details about the speakers and their topics, and additional information on the other activities at <http://rpbo.org/bcnatureagm.php>. You'll also find any updates or changes to the program on the site. For those who prefer paper, a registration form can be downloaded from the site and is also published in the BC Nature magazine that you receive as part of your VNHS or RPBO membership. We'll also have them available at VNHS and RPBO events.

We'd love to have Victoria well-represented at this major event. It's a great way to meet fellow naturalists and celebrate VNHS's 70th and RPBO's 20th anniversary years.

Help wanted: We are looking for donations for the silent auction. If you have a nature-related item, gift certificates that you won't be using, or other items that you'd be willing to donate, please contact Ann Nightingale at motmot@shaw.ca or by phone at 250-652-6450. We'll also need volunteers to help at the registration and silent auction desks. If you are willing to pick up a shift or two, please contact Ann Scarfe at volunteer@rpbo.org or by phone at 250-477-1986.

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Black-necked Stilts on Maber Flats. *Photo courtesy of Stuart Clarke.*

NCC Needs Your Help

The Nature Conservancy of Canada and the District of Central Saanich have joined forces on a land use project that will restore a vibrant wetland while substantially contributing to the improvement in storm water management and agricultural potential within the District. The Maber Flats Wetlands Restoration Initiative will create a fully-functioning wetland and nature reserve on a 68-acre property known as Maber Flats. The Nature Conservancy of Canada will manage the southern portion of the property with the objective of maximizing the benefits to ducks, shorebirds and other wildlife and ecosystems. The northern section of the wetland will be engineered by the District as a storm water retention facility.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada has begun fundraising \$5.7 million to purchase the property. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to NCC, 200-825 Broughton St., Victoria, BC. V8W 1E5. Please indicate monies are for Maber Flats.



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Hat Tricks

Slugs and Snails at Chase Woods: Seven-year-old gets dirty, discovers endangered species



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

My seven year old son Malcolm was excited about going on the Slug & Snail Walk at Chase Woods. He loves hiking, and I hadn't the heart to tell him that there likely wouldn't be a lot of actual hiking on this field trip. Slugs and snails move pretty slowly you see.

For me it was a work trip. I'm the Executive Director of Habitat Acquisition Trust, a small land trust that works on southern Vancouver Island. One of my staff had agreed to help lead a walk at the Nature Conservancy of Canada property, and asked me to come along. I seldom get to share my work with my children, so after swimming lessons, Malcolm and I rushed over to the property. Dr. Kristiina Ovaska, a HAT biologist who specializes in terrestrial molluscs, was leading the walk (crawl?) with Kate Wilson of the Nature Conservancy.

After a brief introduction, the group started off. After the first half-hour we'd travelled approximately 20 feet, exploring the forest floor as we went: every log, leaf pile, and old stump was examined for slugs, snails, and the other small denizens of the forest floor. Malcolm was beginning to get frustrated – he wanted to *hike*. I managed to direct his energy to searching an old stump for slugs, buying me at least a few more minutes of time. The call from Malcolm and Kristiina to “*come over and look at this...*” came at almost the same time. It turns out that each had independently discovered a small, slender bluish-grey slug about 2.5 cm long: the Blue-grey Taildropper. Kristiina's excitement was palpable – Malcolm's too, even though he didn't yet know the significance of his find.

The value of the small and slimy

The name of the Blue-grey Taildropper tells you lot about the species. It's a small slug, less than 3 cm long, blue to grey in colour, and it can autotomize (drop) its tail when threatened by a predator. While the predator, perhaps a beetle or carnivorous snail, is feasting on the lost – but still wriggling – tail, the Taildropper makes a slow getaway. When unthreatened, the Taildropper spends its time foraging among fallen leaves for fungi. It seems to particularly like mycorrhizal fungi – a beneficial fungus that helps trees and other plants extract nutrients from the soil, and the Taildropper spreads the fungus' spores through its scat.

Sadly, the Blue-grey Taildropper is endangered. It is only



Blue-grey Taildropper found at Chase Woods. *All photos by Adam Taylor*

known from about 10 locations in Canada – all on southern Vancouver Island. Its preferred habitat at the edges of stands of moss-draped maples and oak meadows in the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone (say that 10 times fast) on southeastern Vancouver Island has been largely converted into homes and roads. For the slow moving Taildropper, a road is an impassable barrier, a house a mountain, and a lawn an ocean. The known populations are small, and isolated by development. The discovery at Chase Woods is important for a number of reasons: it is the furthest north the species has ever been found and the first observation of Blue-grey Taildroppers in 2 years. To the great benefit of the slug, the forest is protected.

Protect the habitat, and the species will follow

When the Nature Conservancy of Canada acquired Chase Woods they can't have known about the Blue-grey Taildropper. Nevertheless, it's not an accident that the species was protected there. The habitat at Chase Woods – the oak, maple, and Douglas-fir forest falls from the cliffs of Mt. Tzouhalem to the bottom of the Cowichan River Valley – is home to dozens of endangered and threatened species. You



The entrance to Chase Woods with Mt. Tzouhalem in the background

may not see these species-at-risk, but they are there, living in last refugia of natural forest.

Of course, biologists still want to know exactly which species are where – even in protected areas. Land managers can ensure that priority sites, such as the location of the Blue-grey Taildropper in Chase Woods, are kept free of invasive species, and that trails are not constructed through particularly sensitive areas. It helps conservationists determine which properties are the most urgent to protect. It can re-assure all of us that there is at least one more place where the Blue-grey Taildropper can contend with threats from beetles and snails, for which it is equipped, and not with bulldozers and chainsaws, for which it is not.

Citizen science: Everyone can participate

The great thing about this process of discovery is that everyone can participate and make a significant contribution to conserving endangered species through citizen science. There are citizen science projects across the country working to understand and protect bears, bats, birds, butterflies, and of course slugs. There are a range of benefits: it is outdoors, in nature, and let me tell you it can be fulfilling. As fulfilling as the smile on a child’s face when you tell them they found a rare biological treasure few have ever seen. Just don’t mind the slime.

Habitat Acquisition Trust runs a citizen science program to monitor for Blue-grey Taildroppers, among other species. Learn more at www.hat.bc.ca.



(Top) Malcolm finds a predatory beetle under a log in Chase Woods. (Below) Kristiina shows the group some of the snails found.

Did You Know Mushrooms Had Parasites?

By Gail Harcombe

In the latest issue of BCnature magazine [Fall 2013 51(3):13], there was an interesting article by Terry Taylor on *Myco-heterotrophs, Parasite of Mushrooms*. Myco refers to fungi and heterotroph refers to plants that cannot manufacture their own food. I read this article with some fascination as I, like most people, have seen Indian pipe, pinesap and coralroot growing under trees in coniferous forests, and had been told that these were saprophytes (plants that gain nourishment directly from dead or decaying organic matter). I learned that genetic research has now shown that these flowering plants actually live on mushrooms – the ones that grow with the tree roots – and are therefore parasites (gaining nourishment from another living

organism). These beautiful plants belong to two families, the heather family [e.g., Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) and pinesap (*Monotropa hypopithys*)] and the orchid family (e.g., coralroot – *Coralorhiza* sp.). Unlike the other plants in those families, since these have no chlorophyll, they cannot make their own food and must get it from some other source. Terry describes how fungi collect nutrients and water and supply this to the trees and the trees in turn, supply sugars to the mycorrhiza (root fungus). Some of these mycorrhiza produce the mushrooms on which plants like Indian pipe feed. Terry's closing paragraph gives one a different perspective for when next walking in the forest:

“Some of the mushrooms which appear in the fall are the Brittlegills (*Russula* sp.). Indian Pipe and our two most common Coralroots ... are all parasites of *Russula* or its close relatives the milky caps (*Lactarius* spp.) ... One of the most common of these species is *Russula brevipes*. This is a large white mushroom which is very common in coniferous forests, and is the principal host of Indian Pipes. If you see an Indian Pipe think about the fact that it is made of carbon that it stole from the big white *Russula*!”



Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) on Portland Island.
Photo: Tina Kelly



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Guerilla Interpretive Messaging

By Ann Nightingale

Social media is often criticized for keeping people indoors, restricting communication and being full of mindless clutter. While that *can* be true, it can also be a way to discover what is happening in the broader community, be marvelled by stories and videos of wildlife, and to get inspiration.

I consider myself blessed to have a wide circle of Facebook friends who send me links to wonderful news pieces. Recently, I received a link to a story about an artist in Los Angeles who goes by the name “Elkpen” www.elkpen.com. In addition to commissioned artwork such as the “Birds of Hollywood” series, Christian Kasperkovitz has become a self-appointed wildlife interpreter in the inner city. It turns

out she has a B.C. connection, having gone to school at Simon Fraser University and spent some time in the great outdoors here.

Her art runs the gamut from sculpture to fabric to paper to discarded cardboard. What she has been doing with her media may just open the minds and hearts of people who generally don’t give nature a second thought.

A panel from an old cardboard box tied to a stick carries the message “Bell’s Vireo is a very small bird who once was here but has not been for a while.” The makeshift sign will also disappear, but not before provoking a little thought about the changes we are making to our environment. Other signs contain little bits of natural history: “Generations of a crow family stay together to help raise young”, “This is a sycamore tree”, “Dragonflies can fly 30 miles an hour”.

Christian is an artist, and many of her signs carry paintings of the animals and plants she describes, but the messaging itself doesn’t require artistic skill. This is something we can do as individuals. If you have a special place, an observation, or a thought you’d like to share with the community, why not make a nice little sign and post it for everyone to enjoy? To quote Elkpen “Change begins with knowledge and love: spread the word, spread the wonder!!”



All photos by Christian Kasperkovitz



Letters

Re: Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair

On behalf of the organizing committee (SAYS – the Society for the Advancement of Young Scientists), I would like to thank the VNHS very much for the donation in support of the Regional Science Fair. This year we sent seven exhibitors to the Canada Wide Science Fair in Lethbridge, and they came back with three gold and two silver medals. In addition, as you may have seen in the media, one student won first place at the Google Science Fair in California, and another has secured a place on Dragon's Den to look for financial support to put her project into practice. A most remarkable set of students, I am sure you will agree.

We are most grateful for this contribution, and the interest which it shows in the Science Fair movement and the youth of the district. Without the continued support of Societies such as yours, we would not be able to provide as many prizes and awards to the students who participate. It is this kind of recognition that keeps them coming back, and we very much appreciate it.

I take pleasure in enclosing a tax receipt.

Once again, thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Poulton, Treasurer, SAYS

Hi, Darren

Thanks so much for VNHS

hosting my cougar presentation.

A great venue & great questions from the audience.

I really enjoyed the evening.

All the best,

Paula

To all the members of the Victoria Natural History Society

I would like to send an enormous

THANK YOU!

And to let you all know how much

I appreciate being the recipient of

the Victoria Natural History Society

bursary this year. I would like to

assure you that I will be using it

well to help me continue my studies

in Environmental Science at Royal

Roads University. The funds will help

me buy the books I need for my

classes! Thank you for making the

Victoria Natural History Society bursary

possible – it means a great deal to me

and I am extremely grateful.

With sincere thanks,

Heather Meszaros

BSc. Environmental Science Candidate



Photos: Aziza Cooper

Chestnut-collared Longspur Sighted in Victoria!

By Gordon Hart

October 25, 2013

Several birders, including Gerry Ansell and I, saw the Longspur at close range by the vernal ponds until around 2 p.m. A crow chased it away and it landed near the boat ramp. Then a Northern Shrike dashed over and almost got it, but it did escape to the far side of the boat ramp. The shrike returned to the small clump of trees near the fenced enclosure and was chased by a second shrike. Minutes later, while we were looking for any of the birds, a Tropical Kingbird appeared and did some fly-catching sallies from the oak trees by the parking lot. When I left several birders were

searching for any of the birds to return. Lots of fun and nice to see many birder friends at the same time!

*(Editors' Note: The Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) was first sighted at Cattle Point Thursday Oct. 24 by Aziza Cooper. According to reports, the celebrity bird was not at all bothered by the cameras and was happily wandering around scratching for food near the birders' feet. The Chestnut-collared Longspur, also sighted at Panama Flats, is classed as 'Accidental' in our region and to the best of our knowledge, there is only one other record.)*

Seaweed Harvesting: A New Industry that Needs Better Regulation

[News update December 5, 2013 from Environmental Law Centre, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C.
<http://www.elc.uvic.ca/>]

As global demand for seaweed expands, a new commercial seaweed harvesting industry is emerging on Vancouver Island. An ELC report by student Piet Brusse warns that this harvest could have serious impacts on fisheries and sensitive coastal ecosystems if government oversight does not improve.

Contrary to its own policies, the provincial government is approving harvest licences without adequate study of environmental impacts. And the federal government has failed to adequately investigate and address scientists' concerns that some harvesting activities are likely non-

compliant with Fisheries Act habitat protection provisions. Hampered by cutbacks in staff, DFO has failed to seriously consider the scientific issues that have been raised and to gather relevant evidence.

The ELC report analyzes the failures of governments to ensure that all harvesting is sustainable and recommends measures that need to be implemented before a commercial harvest industry is established. For the full story check the website:

<http://www.elc.uvic.ca/publications/documents/2013-02-05-SeaweedHarvestReport.pdf>

How Do Boreal Chickadees Survive the Winter?

[From Audubon Magazine, published: 11/26/2013
<http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/birds/how-do-boreal-chickadees-survive-winter>]

This story comes to you through a partnership between Audubon and BirdNote, a show that airs daily on public radio stations nationwide.

At the edge of the Arctic lies the vast boreal forest. In summer, it's home to legions of nesting birds, from warblers to loons. In early autumn, nearly all these birds depart for warmer points south. By November, this dark land of spruce and firs is a cold, forbidding place. Yet one remarkable songbird stays behind: the Boreal Chickadee. This tiny, dark-capped fluff-ball lives here year-round. How do Boreal Chickadees survive the harsh winter?

First, during summer, they cache a great deal of food, both insects and seeds. Moths and beetles and even aphids are stashed away in bark crevices, and under the rough edges of lichens. The chickadees also store a lot of spruce seeds.

Then in fall, the birds put on fresh, heavier plumage. And their feathers are denser than those of most birds, creating a comfy down parka for the chickadee. And most impressive,

the chickadees adapt to deep cold by lowering their body temperature at night from 108°F to just 85°F. In this way, the birds conserve their stores of insulating fat.

So hats off to the Boreal Chickadee, a truly rugged bird – even if it weighs only 1/3 of an ounce.

[Also of interest, an article on how to “Winterize Your Yard for Birds”, by Steve Kress, published November-December 2013. <http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/living/winterize-your-yard-birds>]



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**Where the Forest Meets the Sea—Explorations
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The Joy of Birds: March 27

Birding Basics I—Songbirds: April 17 to May 8

Deepening Our Relationship with Place: April 19

Spring Explorations at Yellow Point Lodge:
April 21 to 25

Seed Saving Your Garden: April 26

Register now for Spring 2014! Call 250-472-4747 or visit www.continuingstudies.uvic.ca/

Odds and Ends

By Gail Harcombe

From The Victoria Naturalist February 1974

The longest horns of any animal belong to the pre-historic giant deer (*Megaceros giganteus*) which lived in Northern Europe and Northern Asia as recently as 50,000 B.C. It stood seven feet at the shoulder and had antlers measuring an incredible fourteen feet across.

The biggest jellyfish ever recorded was a specimen washed up on the coast of Massachusetts around 1870. It had a bell seven and a half feet in diameter and tentacles measuring 120 feet. This gave it a theoretical tentacular span of some 250 feet.

[Editor's note: apparently this is longer than a blue whale, which is generally considered the longest animal in the world! It is also rumoured that these mystical creatures have been floating around in the oceans even before the dinosaurs arrived...that was 650 million years ago.]



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From The Victoria Naturalist November 1974

Edible Plants

By Cheryl McGavin

Mahonia (Oregon Grape)

These berries should be ripe after the first frost, sometime between September and November. They can be eaten raw.

Kinnikinnick (Bear Berry)

Kinnikinnick is a red mealy berry. It can be eaten raw between September and December. It is a low spreading plant and has tough glossy green leaves half an inch long. The leaves grow alternately on a reddish coloured stem. Kinnikinnick is an Indian word meaning smoking mixture.

Rosehips

Wild rosehips can be found in great profusion at this time of the year. If you eat a rosehip you should eat the outside of the hips. Rosehips make very good jelly also. They are found on the bush from September on.

For the non-birders...from September 1976

Practical Bugwatching

By Al Grass

For years we've heard about birdwatchers. Now there's a new kind of watcher – the bugwatcher. Bugs are not as easy to watch as birds which may account for the fact there are no bugwatching clubs (there are, of course, many learned entomological societies). Some insects such as crickets and cicadas are “vocal” but most go about their business in a more or less silent fashion (at least to our ears). Birds on the other hand are noted for song.

A birdwatcher and hers/his binoculars are seldom far apart. If binoculars are symbolic of birdwatching let me advocate that a magnifying glass be symbolic of bugwatching.

Bugwatching tries to get away from the old idea of an insector. Insector is the bugwatcher's equivalent of birder. The alternative using the root word bug seemed inappropriate here. Today's insector does not go madly dashing about the countryside waving a butterfly net to acquire a good selection of “cabinet specimens”. Instead he wants to pry into the secret lives of insects to learn of their fascinating ways.

The bugwatcher does his collecting with a camera. Photographing bugs can be quite a challenge especially if they are to be photographed “free and wild”. There exists a certain group of “nature photographers” who actually take pictures of dead insect – for shame! Some people advocate putting insects into a refrigerator to “slow them down”. How much more fun it is to stalk the insects. A useful set-up for capturing insects on film is the combination of a 105 mm

lens, bellows unit and electronic flash. This allows you to fill a good portion of the picture with the subject and the flash gives good depth-of-field and stopping of action. This method has proven to be very effective in photographing butterflies.

One place you will often see the modern bugwatcher is in a flower patch. Here he can see and study beautiful creatures like the hummingbird moth, bee fly, and syrphid fly (a fly that looks like a wasp).

In the flower patch the bugwatcher will be astonished at the various kinds of mimicry. You think you're looking at a wasp when it's a moth. Mimicry is the protective similarity of one species with another. There are examples of one of the two species being distasteful; and where both species have similar warnings. Look for bugs that resemble bumblebees. After you get to know a little about the "masquerade party" you will want to impress your friends. Pick up a syrphid fly on the end of your finger and show them how you can pick up a *wasp* and not get stung. You can be like one naturalist who found a "beestie" and proudly announced "watch me pick up this *wasp*." In his smug confidence he thought to himself, "heh, heh" they think it's a wasp but it's only a fly". Right in the middle of explaining the difference between a wasp and a fly to a gathering of people the naturalist was stung on the finger. His finger wasn't the only part of him that turned red.

Bugwatchers are very fond of following ants about and trying to make some sense of what appears to be chaos. If you take up "anting" don't give up in despair and say "uncle"; just remember it takes a lot of patience. In the summer a good place to look for ants is on young cottonwood trees where you will frequently find them "milking" aphids. You will watch in udder fascination as the ants stroke (milk) the aphids to obtain the sweet liquid called honeydew. Understanding ants may lead you to a new kinship with nature.

We can't fight bugs – there's over a million different kinds! Only a few of the million could be called real pests and with a little understanding maybe we could learn to love the rest.



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Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 13 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column.

Anne Franklin
Michigan Street
Marine wildlife, forests, restoration, edible plants and herbs

Katherine Connolly
Hollywood Crescent
flora, fauna

Cathy and Ted Carlson
Shirley
Birding and all nature subjects

Patricia Parkins
Pilot Street
The entire natural world

ANNE HANSEN

www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com

<https://picasaweb.google.com/anitabike>



See Anne's art in
Esquimalt Library throughout January

anitabike@gmail.com (250) 381-7313

'Green' the Federal Budget, Says Coalition of Environmental Groups

[Press release November 26, 2013]

OTTAWA – A large coalition of leading Canadian environmental groups, the Green Budget Coalition (GBC), today unveiled their final recommendations for the federal government's 2014 budget. The GBC's feature recommendations offer a way for Canada to 'green' its budget without adding a nickel to the federal debt.

The GBC represents fourteen of Canada's leading environmental and conservation organizations. The GBC's three feature recommendations for Budget 2014 – reducing subsidies to the oil, gas, and mining sectors, implementing the national conservation plan, and protecting Canada's fresh water – would create important environmental, economic and human health benefits, and also provide direct and ongoing net financial savings for the federal government.

"These recommendations are prime opportunities for the Government to realize its Throne Speech goal that we must seize this moment to secure prosperity, for Canadians now, and the generations to follow," said GBC Chair George Finney, the President of Bird Studies Canada.

The GBC's final recommendations also highlight ten complementary opportunities for the federal government. These include sustainable energy for northern and remote communities, energy storage, infrastructure resilience and infrastructure for First Nations communities, achieving Canada's

climate target, global climate action, electric vehicles, liability regimes for the Arctic offshore and nuclear power, science capacity, and principles and strategies for a green economy and sustainable Canada.

With Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and Minister of State (Finance) Kevin Sorenson hosting pre-budget consultations across Canada this month, GBC representatives will be meeting this week with key policymakers, leading MPs and senior government officials, to discuss these Budget 2014 recommendations.

"These recommendations provide the chance to honour Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017 by creating transformative progress towards an environmentally sustainable, prosperous Canada," explained GBC Manager Andrew Van Iterson.

For more information on the Green Budget Coalition and its recommendations for the 2014 Budget, please see the detailed Recommendations document at www.greenbudget.ca/2014/main.html or contact: Andrew Van Iterson, Manager, Green Budget Coalition; 613-562-8208, ext. 243, avaniterson@naturecanada.ca; or George Finney, Chair, Green Budget Coalition; and President, Bird Studies Canada; 1-888-448-2473, ext. 116, gfinney@bsc-eoc.org

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Introductory Bird Monitoring and Banding Workshop March 28-30, 2014 Royal Roads University

The Rocky Point Bird Observatory is offering a bird monitoring and banding workshop at Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC. 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. There will be some opportunities to work with specimens as well as with live birds to learn safe bird handling and basic banding techniques. Skills practiced in this workshop will be beneficial for a variety of projects including productivity, survivorship and migration monitoring field work. Enrollment is limited to 18 people. Cost: \$350 (\$330 for RPBO members), students \$300 (\$280 for student RPBO members). For more information or to register: <http://www.rpbo.org/rpbworkshop14.php>

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Royal BC Museum, now until April 6, 2014

Experience the wonders of nature through the amazing images –

"each photo tells the astonishing stories of our natural world". Tickets available at www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

Olympic Birdfest 2014/San Juan cruise April 4-6, 2014, Sequim, WA

Visit the rain shadow of the *Olympic Peninsula* to discover the birds of the coastal Pacific Northwest – Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Harlequin Ducks, dippers, Black Oystercatchers, Long-tailed Ducks, and more. Guided field trips, a boat cruise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, silent auction, and a gala banquet. Our featured speaker is Noah Strycker: "Bird World: the fascinating parallels between bird and human behavior". The festival with the most spectacular setting! See ad on page 10.

April 6-8, 2014. Immediately following BirdFest, join us for a three-day, two-night birding cruise of the San Juan Islands. Website address: www.olympicbirdfest.org
E-mail address: opas.birdfest.info@gmail.com.
Contact name: Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society,
360-681-4076

WANTED!

VNHS is getting ready to launch a new web site, and we are looking for volunteers to assist as **web administrator** and **content contributors/managers**. The site is set up in a very user-friendly content management system, so if you have

organizational skills and familiarity with computers, websites, and entering data (basically typing) into a form field (all the technological skill needed), you could be the one(s) we need. If you are interested and/or would like more information, please contact Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508 g.harcombe@shaw.ca

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held September-April on the following days: **Board of Directors**: the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Night**: the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria; **Botany Night**: the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House; **Birders' Night**: the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. **Marine Night**: the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., University of Victoria. Locations are given in the calendar listings. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>, 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 or steeper grades, requiring agility. LEVEL 4 – Very steep, insecure footing, or longer hikes requiring good physical condition. **Please – no pets on VNHS field trips.**

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 – Claudia Copley; Marine Night – Melissa Frey and Phil Lambert; Botany Night – Kristen and James Miskelly. Email/phone numbers on p.2 of the newsletter. If you have ideas for field trips, please contact Steven Roias 250-588-0433, coastalcutty@hotmail.com

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meets every Tuesday at the foot of Bowker Ave on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) at 9:00 a.m., rain or shine. Birding activities take place at various locations around Greater Victoria. For more information, call **Bill Dancer** at 250-721-5273. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP

Meets every Saturday morning, usually at 8:00 a.m., rain or shine. Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check the Rare Bird Alert on the web (<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/rarebird.html>) on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. For more details, call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca. Novice and experienced birders all welcome.

JANUARY

Wednesday, January 1, 2014

2013 Christmas Bird Count

Duncan – Start the new year off right by joining us for the Duncan Christmas Bird Count! You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. For more information, and lists and pictures of the region's winter birds, check the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/) and the Christmas Bird Count site (birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count).

Saturday, January 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Esquimalt Lagoon

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be going to Esquimalt Lagoon and surrounding area. It's a great area to get a good leg-up on your new Year List if you do one, or to simply enjoy the amazing diversity of water birds and passerines that this area provides this early in the year. We have got counts in the 70's of species in past years. Dress warmly as it can be windy. Meet at 8:00 a.m. near the bridge. Esquimalt Lagoon is on Ocean Blvd, off the Old Island Highway. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca for more information. Everyone welcome!

Tuesday, January 14

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

"Peace Out" – Film Screening of an Award-winning Documentary

Join Sierra Club BC and the Victoria Natural History Society for a screening of the award-winning documentary *Peace Out*. *Peace Out* has been hailed by critics as "... not just another environmental movie...", "a thoughtful, clear-eyed exploration of an issue that always ends in costs, trade-offs, and least-bad options" and "a generously inquisitive film, made with an open mind and a fierce sense of commitment." We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Sunday, January 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding via Gulf Island Ferry

We are going to try a new adventure and hop on a Gulf Island Ferry and spend about 4 hours birding by boat. There are usually a lot of birds on the water at this time of year so we should get a good look at the water birds that we generally strain to see from land. We will leave on the 9:35 a.m. ferry and return to Swartz Bay at 1:15 p.m. The ferry will stop at Pender, Galiano, Mayne and again at Pender before returning to Swartz Bay. Bring a

lunch as food services are minimal on the ferry. Don't forget your binoculars and dress warmly as we will be outside as much as possible. Fare is \$12.00 for a foot passenger. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more information. To confirm attendance, contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634.

Tuesday, January 21

BOTANY NIGHT PRESENTATION

A Restoration Overview – 12 years of Trial by Fire & Adaptive Management at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve

Irvin Banman – The Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve is the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC) flagship property in the Cowichan Valley and a haven for rare and endangered species. NCC has been working for 14 years to preserve and enhance the natural features of this globally important site. Join Site Manager Irvin Banman for a discussion of the lessons learned from adaptive management and experimentation. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, January 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT PRESENTATION

Rocky Point Bird Observatory – Past, Present and Future

RPBO has been monitoring birds migrating over the southern tip of Vancouver Island for 20 years. **Ann Nightingale** will take us down memory lane to remember the station's humble roots and bring us up to date on their many projects: Migration monitoring, Northern Saw-whet Owl and hummingbird banding; breeding bird studies (MAPS and hummingbirds) and their public education programs. She'll also give us a peek at what's coming up for one of the most successful stations in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Saturday, January 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Saanichton Bay Park

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be going to Saanichton Bay Park. As this is a birding hot-spot for wintering waterfowl, we should see loons, grebes, diving ducks and dabbling ducks. It is also a good area for passerines. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot off Mount Newton Cross Rd just past the four-way stop with Lochside Drive. Watch for the small sign. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information. Everyone welcome!

Monday, January 27

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION

The Pacific Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*); an Occasional Canadian Resident

Dr. Kenneth T MacKay is a marine biologist with considerable research experience working in the South Pacific on fisheries, coral reefs and marine turtles. His talk will outline the life history, migration, feeding, threats and current status of the highly endangered Pacific Leatherback Turtle, including videos of nesting in the South Pacific and feeding on jellyfish. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Saxe Point and Macaulay Point Parks

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be going to Saxe Point Park & Macaulay Point Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the end of the road in Saxe Point Park. To reach the park, turn south off Esquimalt Rd on to Fraser St which ends in the park. We can enjoy the ocean birds as well as some that are tucked away close to shore in protected water. There are also some good bush birds and often we see the resident Cooper's Hawk. Macaulay Point is more open and surprises there have included Spotted Sandpiper and a Meadowlark even at this time of year. The challenge is to find the California Quail who hide in the thickets and it is a known hangout for an American Kestrel but no guarantees. Dress warmly as the breeze off the ocean can be chilly. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information. Everyone welcome!

Sunday, February 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Enjoying Metchosin in Winter

Metchosin's Devonian Park is a great place to meander in winter to enjoy the evergreen foliage and to challenge ourselves to identify the bare branches of the deciduous shrubs and trees. The mosses and lichens are lovely as well at this time of year. There will be birds to enjoy too as we walk along towards the sea shore. As we poke along the beach, we'll stop to enjoy the fabulous views of the Olympics if it's a clear day and see if we can spot any of the river otters, harbour seals or orcas that are common in this area. Afterwards, if it's reasonable weather, we'll go along to a nearby location for a bonfire on the beach and have hot dogs, marshmallows and hot chocolate to warm up. Who says that adults can't enjoy these things! Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the parking lot at the entrance to the park. Devonian Park is on William Head Rd. To reach William Head Rd, either continue to the end of Metchosin Rd or use Happy Valley Rd. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Saturday, February 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Boundary Bay and Raptors

Join us for a trip to Boundary Bay in Vancouver. We can expect to see large flocks of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. There should be time for a quick trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary as well. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We will return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. Cost should be about \$60.00 per person with carpooling. Bring a lunch, snacks and a drink. Dress warmly as it is windy on the dyke. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more information. To confirm attendance, contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

Tuesday, February 11

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

The Dead Keep Talking

Museum natural history collections are vital for providing historical and current data to help assess the conservation status of a species. This talk will focus on what kind of information can be garnered and how it is used. **Leah Ramsay** is the Program Zoologist at the BC Conservation Data Centre...but she'll talk about plants too! We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.

Sunday, February 16

EVENT

Valentine Couples Birdathon

Looking to share some good outdoor fun on the Valentine day weekend with your spouse or sweetheart? If so the 17th annual Couples Birdathon may be right up your alley. This event gives couples who love birding an opportunity to engage in friendly competition with like-minded couples, the object being to find as many bird species as possible between the hours of 6 a.m. and noon in the Victoria checklist area. The event is open to birders of all skill levels and participants are free to walk, ride or drive their way to glory. Event organizers extend a particularly eager invitation to 'greenhorn' birders and to first-timers. Couples gather at the Swan Lake Nature Centre immediately after noon to revel in their successes and seek consolation for their failures. The couple having the highest species count can look forward to having their names inscribed on the coveted Anderson Trophy. Fun is not the only payoff in this event: the \$10-per-couple entry fee goes to supporting VNHS conservation initiatives. For more information contact **Alan MacLeod** at bigadore@gmail.com.

Tuesday, February 18

BOTANY NIGHT PRESENTATION

Death on Trial

Matt Fairbarns – Trial Island has one of the greatest concentrations of rare plants in Canada as well as stunning spring wildflower displays. Too bad it's also got a serious problem with invasive species. Fortunately, Trial Island has a long history of volunteer weed removal projects that are turning the table. Gorse, Scotch Broom, Daphne and English Ivy are being cleared from camas meadows and with the death of these invaders the native plants are flourishing. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, February 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Birding Elk Lake and Beaver Lake

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** in this 10 km birding walk around Beaver and Elk Lake. Elk Lake is a great place to see Canvasbacks, Redheads, and Ruddy Ducks in the winter. Meet at the main parking lot at Beaver Lake at 8:00 a.m. To reach this parking lot, turn on to Beaver Lake Road off Elk Lake Drive (parallels the Pat Bay Highway). There is a large Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park sign at this intersection. Call **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca if you need more information. Everyone welcome!

Sunday, February 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

The Winter Hummers of Cadboro Bay

Join **Dave & Agnes Lynn** in their garden in Cadboro Bay from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to check out the Anna's Hummingbirds that stay all winter in the area. We will have special guest Cam Finlay to tell you about his banding of hummingbirds over the past few years as well. See what encourages them to hang around. You will also learn about their food plants, both native and non-native. There should be lots of hummers around. The males might still be doing their aerial shows although the females should be on their nests by then. Address is 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor Ave in Ten Mile Point. Dress warmly. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Monday, February 24

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION

From Boat to Beach: Using Drift Cards to Improve our Knowledge of Ocean Currents and Oil Spill Trajectories

In October, 2013, Raincoast Conservation Foundation and the Georgia Strait Alliance initiated a study that used over 1600 drift cards to improve our understanding of potential oil spill trajectories and ocean currents along the Salish Sea shipping route to and from Vancouver. The project is generating technical information while actively engaging public citizens in the broader issues of critical habitats, climate change and ocean health. **Andy Rosenberger**, a marine biologist and researcher with Raincoast Conservation Foundation, will lead you through the project and why it's important. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

Wednesday, February 26

BIRDERS NIGHT PRESENTATION

Raptors of Canada

John Neville (Neville Recording and BC Nature president), presents the sounds and images of the raptors of Canada. With the kind permission of Robert Bateman, John has linked the images of these fabulous paintings with his authentic sound recordings, and captivates audiences with his vivid descriptions of the special biological features that allow raptors to be successful birds of prey. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and a coffee mug.



On a bird walk at Swan Lake, this Cooper's Hawk occupied a perch which seemed to say something about the bird's capability. Photo: Michael Webb



Nature Conservancy of Canada Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area, southern interior of B.C. *Photo: Gail Harcombe*