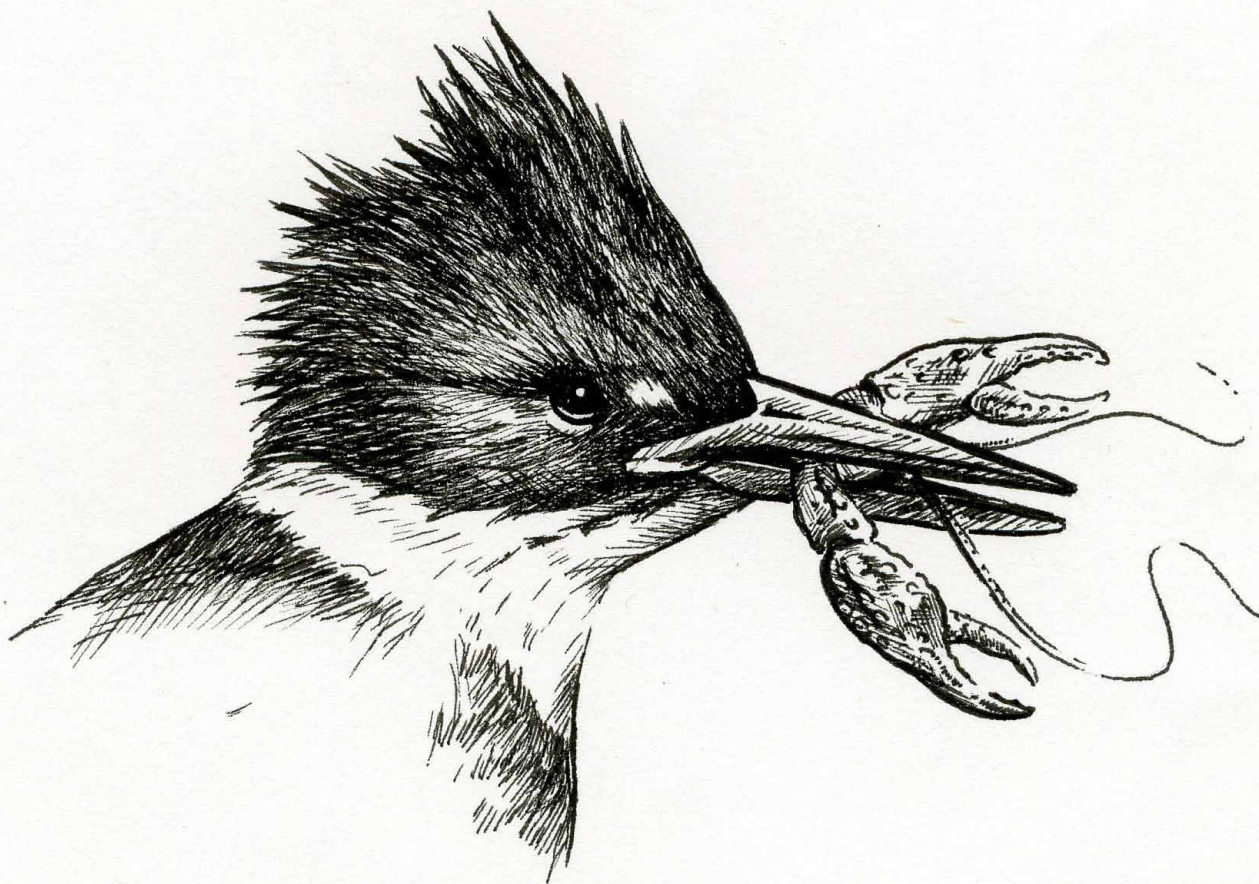




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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, book reviews, etc., up to 2200 words.

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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 x 1550 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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Front cover: Belted Kingfisher by Scott Crawford.



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News from the Board of Directors

Despite some of our key members being on holiday, the remaining board members met as usual. Matters you may be interested in include:

The **Guidelines to Field Trips** is progressing. Steven Roias, designated Field Trip Coordinator, organized a meeting in early January of committee members; the committee consists of a few volunteer members and a few board members. Many controversial points were ironed out and the proposed waiver was discussed. More meetings are planned and we hope to have a document ready to present to all members later in the year.

Schools Program. As of early February Bill Dancer reported that 61 children had been taken out so far. Sounds like April will be a busy month for the volunteers as ten trips are already booked for that month. Up to 400 children could be involved, in one case the whole elementary school over a number of days!

BC Nature AGM in May. Melissa Frey, our liaison on the RPBO/VNHS organizing team, emphasized that the earlier members book the better their chances of securing a place on trips or presentations that they prefer. This is an unrivalled opportunity for our members; it is not every year that a 'big show' like this comes to town!

Evening Presentations at UVic. I have been present at all the evening presentations so far this year, a rewarding experience. Though **Natural History Night's** film "*Peace Out*" was not screened due to a technical hitch we did get a good substitute called "*One Drop of Water*" which tracked the water of the Athabaska River from its pristine source to the murky tailing ponds of the Athabaska Tar Sands. **Botany Night** had a full house for an illustrated talk by Irvin Banman, the site manager for an NCC Garry Oak property in the Cowichan Valley. Many of the audience are or have been volunteers at this Duncan area site (volunteers are welcome every Wednesday morning). Great before and after pics and explanation of controlled fire management. Some poetry as well! Ann Nightingale on **Birders Night** regaled us on January 22 with an excellent overview of the habitat, volunteers, and species found at the RPBO locations. A big crowd for that one, with many of RPBO's enthusiastic volunteers present. Finally, we learnt a lot about Leatherback Turtles, their long travels, and the threats to this species, at **Marine Night** from Dr. Kenneth MacKay. Dr. MacKay recommended that week's *Nature of Things* which happened to be on the very same species. Many thanks to the speakers and organizers at these great evenings.

Finally, a very few editorial comments on this March issue. The most exciting for our birders will be the CBC reports and data. Apart from that there is considerable variety, from a 'plug' for volunteering to the action at Bill Merilees' ponds (remember the wandering crayfish story a few issues ago?) Enjoy!

Compiled by Ken Sohm



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

By Ann Nightingale

Rocky Point Bird Observatory and Victoria Natural History Society have joined forces to put together a nature festival for the BC Nature AGM 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. Field trips will start with early morning birding followed by several half-day options on Friday and Saturday. The full schedule and paper registration form are available in the BC Nature magazine you receive as part of your VNHS membership and on RPBO's website at rpbo.org/bcnatureagm.php.

Registration is coming along nicely and a few field trips are close to full. 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.

How's this for an impressive speakers list?

Thursday evening, **Dr. Briony Penn** will speak on *The Real Thing: the Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan*.

On Friday, we have **Dr. Richard Hebda** – *Origins and Development of our Modern Terrestrial Coastal Ecosystems*, **Dr. Purnima Govindarajulu** – *Citizen Science and Naturalists: The Challenge of Addressing Knowledge Gaps Currently Hampering Effective Conservation Actions*, **Dr. Brenda Beckwith** – *There is No Wilderness But Home: Re-storying the Lost Camas Meadows of the South Island*, **Dr. Neville Winchester** – *Life in a Raindrop and Beyond: Microarthropods to Grizzly Bears – A Celebration of Coastal Biodiversity*, **Dr. Thomas Pedersen** – *Compromising the Future of Humanity: Why Global Warming is More than an Assault on Nature*, **Mr. Jim Cosgrove** – *Giant Pacific Octopus – No Mother Could Give More*, **Dr. Robb Bennett** – *British Columbia's Spiders: Surveying the Province's Diversity*, **Dr. Eileen van der Flier-Keller** – *How Vancouver Island Came to Be: The Rock Story*, and **Mr. David Nagorsen** – *Islands, Mountains and Glaciers-The Land Mammals of Coastal British Columbia*

Saturday features **Dr. Brian Starzomski** – *Biodiversity of British Columbia's Central Coast*, **Dr. Jeremy Tatum** – *Moths of Southern Vancouver Island*, **Dr. John Ford** – *Marine Mammal Conservation*, **Ms Ann Nightingale** – *How Technology is Changing the Way We See Birds*,

Dr. Cori Lausen – *As the Bat Flies: Understanding Seasonal Patterns of Bats in Light of Wind Energy Developments and White Nose Syndrome* and **Mr. David Denning** – *Get a Grip on It – Life at the Sea's Edge*

The BC Nature Annual General Meeting on Saturday will feature **Her Honour, Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon**, and the weekend will be capped with a buffet dinner with keynote speaker, **Tom Reimchen** – *Ecosystems Without Borders: The Role of Salmon and Bears in Forest Biodiversity*.

You can register for the entire conference or for single days. Online registration with more details about the speakers and their topics and additional information on the other activities is at rpbo.org/bcnatureagm.php. You'll also find any updates or changes to the program on the site.

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.

BC Nature AGM: Volunteers needed for

- Hospitality room
- Silent Auction Set-up
- Registration Assistants
- Sign maker(s)

Please contact **Ann Scarfe** at 250-477-1986 or email rams@pacificcoast.net

The Rewards of Volunteering

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

With the upcoming BC Nature 2014 Annual General Meeting being held in Victoria in May, it is appropriate to share with the membership how truly valuable volunteering can be. Many successful outcomes have culminated because individuals have risen to the challenge to share their time and expertise. A few hours of involvement here and there provides a foundation for growth for this or any organization. Most non-profit organizations couldn't survive without volunteers. Consider a Natural History Night presentation. Who found a speaker? How did the coffee and cookies find their way there? Who sets up the projector and introduces the speaker? Who takes your renewals if needed? All volunteers.

Over the years I too have volunteered in many ways for the VNHS and have enjoyed the camaraderie that has resulted. One thing that I am certain of is that volunteering provides individual growth and development.

As a member of the VNHS for over 20 years, I served as a Board Director for seven years. My volunteer activities have included guest speaker, alternate host for meetings, program teacher, field leader, a Citizen Science contributor and a participant on several committees. My hours of volunteering have taken me to many venues in and around the city that had a focus for Nature. My interests in all aspects of nature have been systematically awakened by the knowledgeable people I have met along the way. Beginner and Advance Birding Courses offered by the VNHS have given me the opportunity to share with participants my true passion, *birding*. I participate in the CBC and was twice volunteer area leader.

Volunteering has provided me and many others with opportunities that we might never have chanced upon if we had not made the decision to join, participate, and volunteer. When I consider the wealth of knowledge I have gleaned along the way and the fabulous people I have met, I am amazed at how interesting life has become and continues to be.

I hope members of VNHS and RPBO will support these organizations in a volunteer capacity as it hosts a most memorable event. Remember, volunteering can be as simple as making sure there is fresh coffee or registering attendees for field trips.

As I continue to discover so much of the fascinating aspects of Nature, I can only say that my time as a volunteer has been most rewarding. My life has been enriched in so many ways by volunteering. It's an ever expanding pathway to discovery and knowledge.



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Victoria Regains the Top Count Title! Victoria's Christmas Bird Count 2013

By Ann Nightingale

The weather was great, the winds were calm, and both the birders and the birds came out in impressive numbers for the 2013 Victoria Christmas Bird Count.

A total of 146 bird species were observed on the Victoria count in 2013, the highest total we have had since our record-breaking result in 2004. Congratulations and thank you to all participants! Our number of individual birds was 79,877, one of the better counts in recent years. Even before all of the counts for the season were completed, the word was out – Victoria had the highest number of species in Canada, soundly beating our friendly rival Ladner for the first time in years. Woo-hoo!

Of course, whatever the numbers, the credit goes to the counters, and especially to the 23 zone leaders. This year, we had 238 field participants (another record!), including three teams of boaters covering the Victoria waterfront and offshore areas. The removal of the participation fee has had the desired effect across the continent, with more and more people getting out to contribute to their local counts. In 2012, despite a record 230 participants, we fell to third place for “bush-beaters”, and to 6th place overall. Below is a table showing the participation rates of the top ten cities from the Audubon Society's 2012 annual summary, American Birds:

The full report can be found at <http://birds.audubon.org/113th-christmas-bird-count-0>.

A surprising number of species broke their previous records this year: Wood Duck, which seem to be setting a new record every year (219), Double-crested Cormorant (1,181), Black Oystercatcher (111), Surfbird (78), Eurasian Collared-dove (more than doubling the previous record



Rock Wren. Photo: Ann Nightingale

with 63), Mourning Dove (70), Great Horned Owl (49), Northern Flicker (645), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (2, 812), Pacific Wren (587), Marsh Wren (57), Hermit Thrush (58), Fox Sparrow (951), Swamp Sparrow (10), White-crowned Sparrow (384), and Golden-crowned Sparrow (1,937). Anna's Hummingbird numbers rebounded to 972, our second highest total for this species.

Rare and uncommon birds were also enjoying the weather and being cooperative this year. A Red Knot on Trial Island was the first Victoria CBC record for this species. A Rock Wren that had been on Christmas Hill for more than a week before the count put in an appearance; two Palm Warblers and a Rusty Blackbird were great additions to the Martin-dale Valley list, the Swan Lake Bittern was seen, and a Sora was found at Rithet's Bog. Two expected species failed to show: Ruddy Duck and Sanderling. We managed to pick up Ruddy Duck for the count week, but Sanderling evaded us for almost all of December. A Harris's Sparrow on Summit Hill and a Sandhill Crane in the Blenkinsop Valley were discovered too late to be included in this year's count. We also received a report of a Mountain Chickadee (which would have been the first record on southern Vancouver Island) in the Highlands, but the bird could not be relocated or photographed for confirmation, so is not included in this year's results.

Results for all of the counts, including those from the southern part of Vancouver Island can be found on the Audubon Society's site. birds.audubon.org. You can review statistics going all the way back to the very first

Circle	Total	Field + Feederwatch
Edmonton, AB	472	(130 + 342)
Portland, OR	390	(238 + 152)
Tacoma, WA	364	(74 + 290)
Concord, MA	306	(159 + 147)
Santa Barbara, CA	270	(266 + 4)
Victoria, BC	269	(230 + 39)
Eugene, OR	255	(157 + 98)
Calgary, AB	249	(136 + 113)
Guntersville, AL	245	(18 + 227)
Oakland, CA	216	(201 + 15)

official Christmas Bird Count, graphs, maps and find all sorts of other cool information. If you want to search by count circle, the codes for the local counts are BCVI (Victoria), BCSO (Sooke), BCSS (Sidney/South Salt Spring), BCGS (Galiano/North Salt Spring), BCPI (Pender Island) and BCDU (Duncan).

So what about next year? Our count will be on Saturday, December 20. 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. What do you

think we could do to celebrate VNHS's 70th anniversary in 2014? Clearly, one area with room to grow is our feeder-watch. If each of our current participants could persuade just one friend to submit a feederwatch report, we could potentially take the overall CBC participation title! Or do we go for another species record? That takes a combination of a lot of planning and a lot of luck. If you have any thoughts about how we can end our 70th year with a special celebration, please see Ann Nightingale at the presentation nights, or email her at atmotmot@shaw.ca.

List of Participants

Micah Alders	Margaret Dohan	Ann Keir	Kristen Miskelly	Juliet Simon
Arnold Adlkirchner	Neal Donegani	Christian Kelly	Marilyn Misner	Laura Simons
Dave Aldcroft	Daniel Donnecke	John King	Rod Mitchell	Liam Singh
Diana Aldcroft	Leo Donnecke	Barb Kirby	Marion Moore	Cathy Slack
Mary Andrews	Warren Drinnan	Jim Kirby	Glen Moores	John Slack
Tom Austin	Don Eastman	Robin Kite	Judy Moores	Doug Smith
Doug Bateman	Mike Edgell	Linda Knox	Mary Morris	Norma Smith
Brent Beach	Mary Egan	Adrian Koolman	Jo Motek	Marlin Smyth
Sylvia Beacom	Christian Engelstoft	Rhonda Korol	Mike Motek	Ken Sohm
Barb Begg	Willow English	Ed Kowalyk	David Newell	Joan Sommers
Fred Beinhauer	Sue Ennis	Don Kramer	Geoffrey Newell	Judy Spearing
Louise Beinhauer	Jessie Fanucchi	Vanessa Kramer	Jean Newell	Don Spencer
Scott Boyce	Jenny Feick	Barbara Lake	Jeff Newman	Evelyn Spencer
Bill Bradley	Cam Finlay	Bob Lake	Mike Newman	Margaret Stevens
Jill Bradley	Joy Finlay	Christina Lam	Rae Ann Newman	Tom Stevens
Terry Branscombe	Sharon Forster	Marilyn Lambert	Ann Nightingale	Don Stewart
Janice Brown	Tessa Frame	Warren Lee	Melissa Nowicki	Dan Stirling
Karen Brown	Dave Fraser	Kelvin Leung	Brian Nyberg	David Stirling
Daniel Bryant	Rheanna Fraser	Shawna Littlewood	Hennie Nyhof	Lauren Strachan-Hall
Martha Burd	Chris Fretwell	Eric Lofroth	Mark Nyhof	Jack Sutherland
Barb Burnside	Melissa Frey	Agnes Lynn	Cheryl Oattes	Ken Sutill
Carol Callahan-Maureen	Terry Gagne	David Lynn	Morrrough O'Brien	Jeremy Tatum
Cynthia Callahan-Maureen	Jeff Gaskin	Pat MacAllister	Danat O'Connell	Kim Taylor
Bob Carroll	Bryan Gates	Melissa Macarthur	Gladys Olgivie	Mark Taylor
Dannie Carsen	Jeremy Gatten	Valerie MacDevitt	Marie O'Shaughnessy	Mitchell Temkin
Corey Cartwright	Tracee Geernaert	Susan MacIsaac	Marion Porter	Andy Teucher
Olivia Cavanagh	Val George	Andy MacKinnon	June Pretzer	Nigel Teucher
Jannica Chick	Braxton Glass	Mairi MacKinnon	Stephen Price	Jules Thomson
Jenny Clarke	Sharon Godkin	Alan MacLeod	Leah Ramsay	Michael Tripp
James Clowater	Rob Gowan	Pat MacLeod	Jean Randall	Heather Tronsden
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Claudia Copley	John Harper	Ron Mathews	Rebecca Reader	Alistair Urquhart
Darren Copley	Margaret Harrison	Donna Matthews	Wallis Reid	Carmen Varcoe
Jeannie Cosgrove	Rand Harrison	Trevor Matthews	Wayne Robertson	Joyce Vezina
Jim Cosgrove	Evelyn Hart	Kim McCrory	Dave Robichaud	Leo Vezina
Pat Cownden	Gordon Hart	Patty McDonald	Mary Robichaud	Ken Walker
Doug Craig	Ian Hatter	Nicola McDonnell	Robin Robinson	Rob Walker
Nancy Craig	Elaine Hebda	Barb McGrenere	Steven Roias	Lea Walsh
Elizabeth Cross	Richard Hebda	Mike McGrenere	Donna Ross	Kathleen Ward
Ian Cruickshank	Bud Henning	Barry McKee	Amélie Rousseau	Sarah Weber
Paul Cumberland	Nathan Hentze	Dana McKee	Katherine Rowe	Stephanie Weinstein
David Dahl	Geoff Huber	Bill McMillan	Mary Sanseverino	Bruce Whittington
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Ross Dawson	Hugh Judd	Kirsten Mills	Margie Shephard	Lorrie Wood
Meredith Dickman	Maria Judd	Carol Milo	Brian Simmons	Mark Yunker
Larry Dill	Bill Katz	James Miskelly	Michael Simmons	

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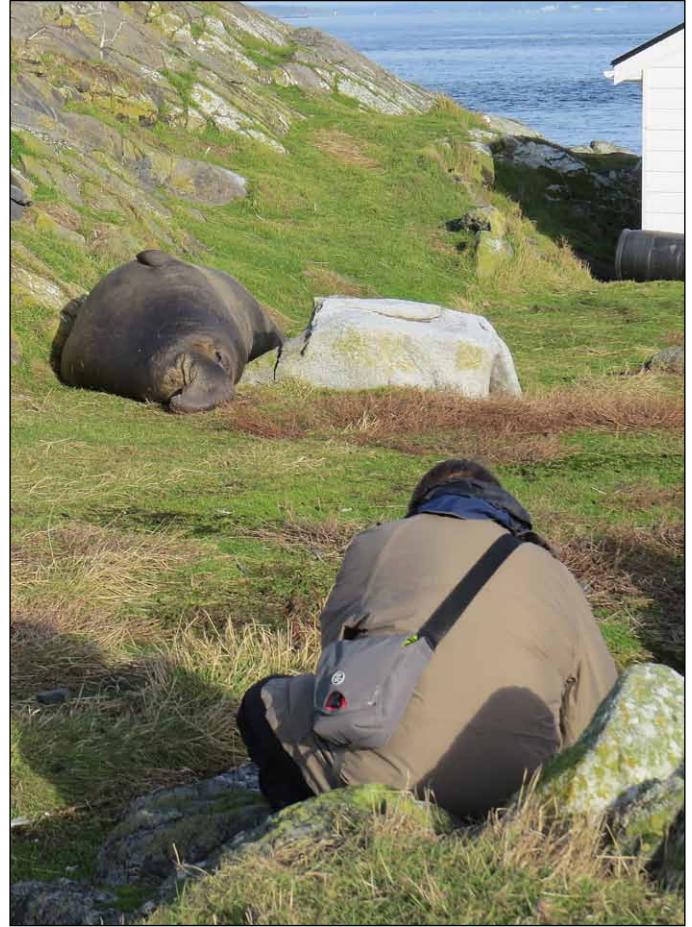
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Elephant Seals

Story and photos by Tina Kelly

Meet “Chunk”, a male Elephant Seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) lounging about at Race Rocks Ecological Reserve in December. This big boy was named by the Ecoguardians who staff and care for the reserve; the name appears to describe both his size and the scars along his backside. Male Elephant Seals can reach four meters in length and weigh a whopping 2000 kg.

To see videos and more pictures of Chunk and other elephant seals at the Reserve – including a pup born January 14 – visit racerocks.ca.



Correction to the Chestnut-collared Longspur sighted in Victoria item on p.16 of the Jan/Feb issue

The editors apologize for two errors in this story. There is no confirmed report of this rare bird being seen at Panama Flats. As well, the photos we included were not of the rare longspur, but of the Lapland Longspur. The Chestnut-collared Longspur was however reported at Cattle Point by Aziza Cooper and seen by many of our birders. Here is the correct photo by Aziza Cooper.



Belted Kingfisher Observations

By Bill Merilees

Our garden backs onto a small gulley, which, during heavy rains, flows as a small intermittent stream. Taking advantage of this water source, four concrete pools were constructed. The upper and smallest one acts as the catchment basin for the three below. These are terraced allowing surplus water to spill directly into the pond below. In size these pools are approximately 10 metres long, 3 to 5 metres wide, and a metre deep. In the Barbara Frum 'tradition' of a Canadian Garden, our garden is somewhat manicured at its centre and transitions outward into the natural surrounding forest. Native for the most part, aquatic, bog, and riparian vegetation has been imported to make these pools quite natural.

Long-toed Salamanders and Pacific Treefrogs have established small populations here. Brassy Minnows (under Provincial permit), the semaphore Crayfish, Pumpkinseed Sunfish, Brown Catfish and Goldfish have been imported. The minnows are in the highest pool, crayfish in the middle, and the others co-habit the lowest. Piscivorous predators such as the Great Blue Heron, Hooded Merganser, Belted Kingfisher, and one River Otter have been noted fishing in these artificial ponds. Racoons, Mallards, and Wood Ducks also appear intermittently. As recorded in my book "Attracting Backyard Wildlife", our garden has an "orderly presence verging on chaos"! It also provides tremendous enjoyment. Observing, keeping notes, and recording observations are important parts of this enjoyment process. Two of our more memorable observations have been associated with Belted Kingfishers.

The kingfishers usually announce their arrival with their loud rattling call. From a prominent perch, often the garden tri-light, they survey the ponds below. Then in a flash, into the water they go. Sometimes they are lucky, often they are not. Crayfish are their most common prey and watching them bash and manoeuvre their victim into a swallowing position can take time as well as being quite comical. Unlike fish which kingfishers swallow head first, crayfish are swallowed tail first. Larger crayfish often 'linger' in the kingfisher's gullet before disappearing (see front cover). Brassy Minnows flash 'silver' as they wriggle to escape. Once a 10–12 cm Long-toed Salamander was observed as the prey.

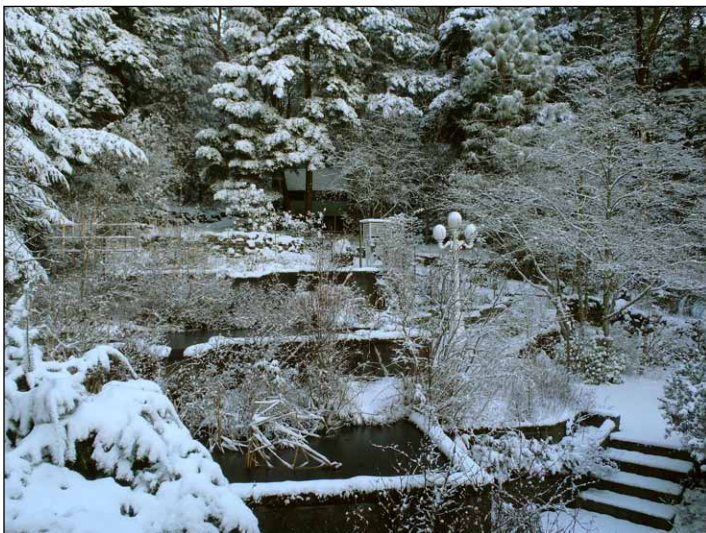
On the occasion that led to the sketch (Nov. 30, 2010, see front cover), careful note of the kingfisher's trajectory was made as it plunged into the pool. Examination of the pool at this location revealed a 30 cm wide crater and a water depth of 75 cm (30"). A fresh broken off crayfish pincer was observed in the crater.

Alan Poynter, former VNHS member, now residing on the Sunshine Coast, has kindly passed on to me another interesting observation he made some years ago. With his permission I repeat it here. A Belted Kingfisher was observed to capture a Coho smolt that had a 5-6 cm Giant Water Bug attached to it. In the struggle that ensued, the smolt got free and escaped. The kingfisher then ate the Giant Water Bug!

My last observation of interest, made on Nov 4, 1995, involves the reaction of a Golden-crowned Kinglet to the arrival of a kingfisher in a tree overhead. The kinglet, foraging more or less in the 'open' immediately froze when the kingfisher announced its presence with its call. The kinglet stayed frozen for the next few minutes. When the kingfisher moved on, the kinglet made a dash for shelter in the nearby Douglas-fir. A number of references mention small or juvenile birds being eaten by this kingfisher.

Acknowledgements – I would like to thank Scott Crawford for his sketch and Alan Poynter for permission to add his observation to this account.

Photos by author



Hat Tricks

Let's Mess the Place up: Logs added to Swan Lake



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



Keeping a clean house is a good thing, but the same isn't true for wetlands. Habitat in many of our streams, creeks, rivers, and lakes has suffered as a result of past efforts to tidy-up. Today, I believe that most people know about the importance of "large woody debris" in water bodies, but there are still many areas where little or no such debris remains. Case in point: Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary.

Fallen trees and floating logs were removed from the lake and shore decades or more in the past – probably during the period when the lake and surrounding area were devoted to agriculture. Although the area is now protected as a nature sanctuary, there is precious little opportunity for natural recovery of this important habitat feature. For Western Painted Turtles in the lake, the lack of logs makes life more difficult.

There were two species of native turtles on Vancouver Island, and they have had a rough go of it as wetlands have been degraded or disappeared. The Western Pond Turtle (*Emmys marmorata marmorata*) is now extirpated from Vancouver Island (and Canada unfortunately), and the Pacific population of the Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*) is endangered. Swan Lake, as well as nearby Elk-Beaver Lake, are home to some of the last populations of Western Painted Turtles on Vancouver Island. Even in these protected parks, the turtles compete with introduced turtles (usually released pets), are predated on by introduced Bullfrogs, and have their nests dug up by curious dogs. On top of all that, they are lacking basking logs – an important habitat feature for the turtles.

Being ectotherms (cold-blooded) turtles rely on basking in the sun to thermoregulate and get their metabolism moving. This allows them to digest their food, forage, and

Left, above: Visitors to the Nature House can watch a remote camera trained on one of their basking logs! In this photo from 2012, we can see four turtles including two with tracking devices. HAT research into their movements will help to secure the future of our rare turtles by identifying significant threats such as road crossings and poor nesting sites.

Below: June Pretzer of Swan Lake blesses the floating logs as HAT biologist Christian Engelstoß looks on. Volunteer Kristy (in red) came all the way from Germany to help out. Note the cuts around the logs to help anchor them to shore structures. Photo: Todd Carnahan



ultimately to mate, produce eggs, and find nesting areas. Nor are turtles the only species that use basking logs. Amphibians and bird species also use the logs to rest or get some sun.

To address the problem of missing logs, HAT and Swan Lake have been installing basking logs for the past several years, and this year we were able to install 65 whole logs. Our hope is that the whole logs will last longer than the boards or half-logs, which had an unfortunate tendency to sink after a winter or two.

Of course we also hope that the turtles use the logs.

However, while we will have to wait until the days are longer and warmer to find for sure, past experience leads us to believe that the turtles will adopt the logs quickly, as will many other denizens of the lake.

And if you see us with cut down trees in the middle of the Nature Sanctuary, know that we aren't logging the park, but adding logs to the park.

Our thanks to the Shell Environment Fund and Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program who provided funding for this project.

Happy Birthday, RPBO! 20 Years and Counting!

By Christian Kelly

2014 marks a true milestone for Rocky Point Bird Observatory, as it is the 20th year our organization has been in operation. As we take time to reflect on our humble origins, we are very pleased with all that we have accomplished in two decades of hard work.

This past fall marked RPBO's 19th season of fall migration monitoring on Southern Vancouver Island. During our 90-day monitoring period we managed to band 68 species of birds! Of those 68 species, 3189 birds were banded at the Rocky Point banding station, and an additional 3290 birds were banded at the Pedder Bay banding station. This is only the second full year that our Pedder Bay station has been in operation, and we are thrilled at how productive this site has turned out to be.

In addition to passerine migration monitoring, RPBO conducted its 11th year of Nocturnal Owl monitoring. Our main quarry during this six week banding period is the ever so cute Northern Saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*). A total of 254 banded during the field season, which by comparison to last year's total of 814 banded owls may seem like a drastic decline and cause for concern. However, we believe that the decline matches the natural ebb and flow of the four-year population cycle of Northern Saw-whet Owls, and should not be viewed as a reason to be alarmed.

One of RPBO's greatest accomplishments over the past year was the initiation of the Pedder Bay School Education Program. This hands-on, interactive field trip program was developed by Stacey Hrushowy and Marianne Dawson to introduce Grade 7 students to the world of migratory birds, adaptations, and the scientific basis for long-term ecological monitoring. We are thrilled at the overwhelming success of the program's first year! We have received excellent feedback from the schools that took part in the program, and we are using this information to further develop a program that

we hope will help to inspire a future generation of young scientists.

As we march headfirst into our 20th year, RPBO has no intention of letting old age slow us down. Our first order of business is to prepare for our annual *Introduction to Bird Monitoring and Banding Workshop*, which will be taking place on March 28-30, 2014, at Royal Roads University. The workshop has been developed as an introductory course in bird handling and/or banding, and will focus on topics like bird identification, sexing and ageing birds, mist-netting, data collection, monitoring procedures and techniques, and of course bird banding. We encourage those who may be interested to visit our website (rpbo.org) for a more detailed description, as well as our Facebook page to view photos of past workshops.

Our annual raffle is underway, and tickets are available from RPBO board members and volunteers. Five for \$20 or one for \$5 will give you a chance of a \$1000 main prize or one of a good number of secondary prizes. The full details and list of prizes can be seen at http://rpbo.org/raffle_2014.php.

On May 1-4, we'll be co-hosting the BC Nature AGM with the VNHS. The next week, on Saturday, May 10, RPBO, VNHS, CRD Parks and others will team up for International Migratory Bird Day at Beaver Lake Park. Details are available elsewhere in this issue.

May is also the month for the Baillie Birdathon, a long-standing fundraising event that supports Bird Studies Canada and RPBO. If you'd like to help by doing a birding big day, or by sponsoring one of us, please send us a note at birdathon@rpbo.org.

We are looking forward to the exciting year 2014 is shaping up to be. We are always looking for more people to bring their talents to RPBO. Please check out the volunteer links on our website and come along!



2013 Butterfly Count Report and How-to Guide

By James Miskelly

The Victoria Butterfly Counts began in the early 1990's and are now entering their third decade. During that time, Society volunteers have documented the ebb and flow of the various resident species, witnessed spectacular explosions of migrants, grimly recorded the impacts of Btk spraying, and even observed the arrival of a new alien species (the European Skipper). The participation of a critical mass of volunteer counters is the foundation of the counts. Without adequate participation, count data suffers and is viewed as less indicative of real trends in local populations. So, I am often asked, how do the counts work, and what is required of these invaluable volunteer counters?

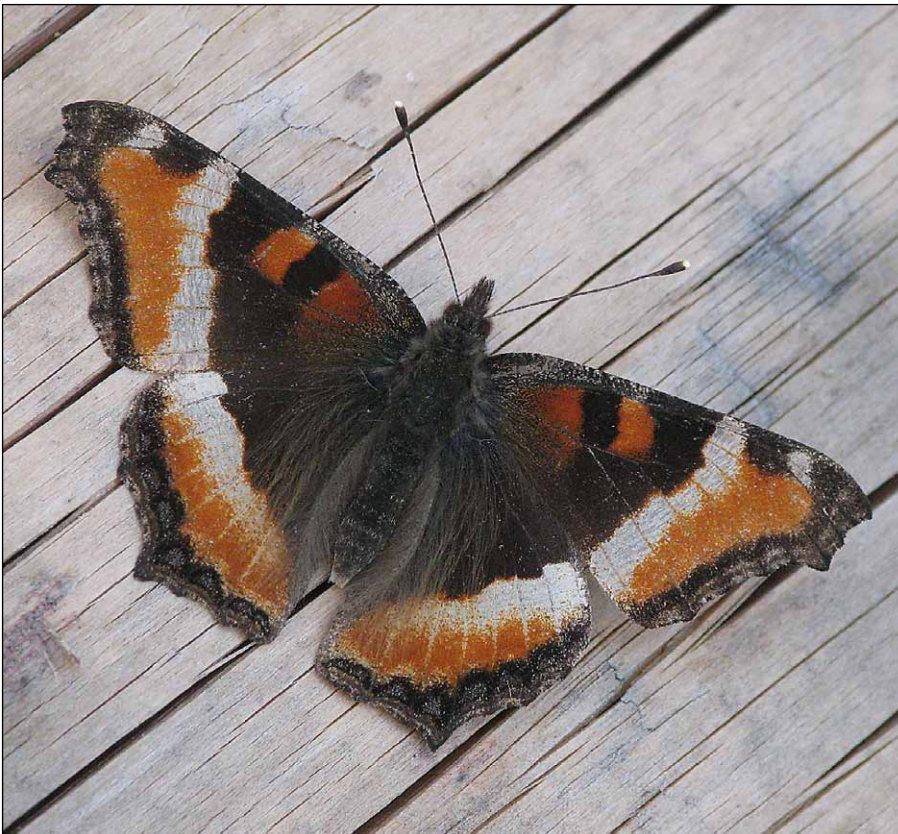
The Victoria Butterfly Counts record local butterfly numbers in a series of count periods that begin the third weekend of every month from April through September. During a count period, a counter heads out to a favourite park, walks through his or her own neighbourhood, or observes his or her own yard. These counts can only be

conducted when weather is suitable. For butterflies, this generally means that sunshine should be sufficient to cast a distinct shadow, air temperature should be at least 12 degrees, and winds should not be too strong. In addition, especially in the spring, counts should be conducted between about 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. These times can often be extended in warm weather. Because weather is so important, the count period starts on a weekend and lasts through the following weekend. This is intended to allow each counter the maximum flexibility to conduct a count while the weather is good. Some people count a given area every month without fail. However, most people either submit counts less frequently or submit counts from a number of locations depending on what they were doing in that month.

The simple goal of each session of a butterfly count is to record everything you see. At the end of a count, records are entered into an electronic form and sent in to the count coordinator. Of course, in practice, not everything that flies by is identifiable or countable.

There are many good butterfly books available to people who would like to learn the local species and participate. A list of all the local species can be found in the Nature Guide to the Victoria Region, and photos and other information can be found on efauna.bc.ca or other websites. I am happy to announce that there will be a new count coordinator for the 2014 butterfly season. Aziza Cooper has stepped up to fill the role. If you would like more information or are interested in volunteering, you can contact Aziza at tanageraz@yahoo.com. Now, on to the 2013 results:

The 2013 butterfly year got off to an auspicious start, with unusually high numbers of Mourning Cloaks and, especially, Milbert's Tortoiseshells. The latter species is often absent from our counts, though at least a few are seen on Vancouver Island every year. This year, it seemed like there were almost everywhere; certainly they were reported from many areas where they hadn't been seen before. The final count here (9 individuals) may seem to understate



Milbert's Tortoiseshell. Photo: James Miskelly

the flurry of 2013 tortoiseshells, but it actually is a high count for Victoria.

As the year progressed, butterfly numbers in general turned out to be below average. A few common species, including Cabbage White and both European and Woodland Skippers, were at extremely low levels. Others, however, including Western Tiger Swallowtail and Satyr Anglewing, were more abundant than they had been in recent years. Despite the lower numbers overall, only one species

represented a new low count, the Common Ringlet.

On a sad note, the Stelly's Cross Road location of Field Crescent has been destroyed, apparently for a new gas station. This was the last robust population of Field Crescent in the Victoria Area, and possibly the last on Vancouver Island. A few individuals had been reported a little separated from the main population in previous years. It is important that butterfly watchers get out in 2014 to see if any population remains in the neighbourhood.

2013 Victoria Butterfly Count Results

Species	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total
Proterotus Duskywing	1	16	0	0	0	0	17
Two-banded Checkered Skipper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
European Skipper	0	0	2	9	0	0	11
Woodland Skipper	0	0	0	14	130	3	147
Clodius Apollo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anise Swallowtail	0	1	5	2	1	0	9
Western Tiger Swallowtail	0	5	108	17	3	0	133
Pale Swallowtail	0	6	11	1	0	0	18
Pine White	0	0	0	38	46	0	84
Cabbage White	9	65	65	57	24	2	222
Sara's Orangetip	18	8	0	0	0	0	26
Purplish Copper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cedar Hairstreak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brown Elfin	4	6	0	0	0	0	10
Moss' Elfin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Pine Elfin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grey Hairstreak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Spring Azure	3	82	6	0	0	0	91
Silvery Blue	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Satyr Anglewing	8	6	0	0	0	0	14
Green Comma	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
Mourning Cloak	21	19	8	2	1	0	51
California Tortoiseshell	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	3	6	0	0	0	0	9
Painted Lady	0	3	12	2	0	0	17
Westcoast Lady	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Red Admiral	0	0	1	2	1	0	4
Field Crescent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mylitta Crescent	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Lorquin's Admiral	0	0	100	80	3	0	183
Common Ringlet	0	4	2	0	5	0	11
Common Woodnymph	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Arctic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	71	232	321	224	215	5	1068

The Return of the King's Pond Interloper

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

On Jan 17th, I decided to check King's Pond to see if I could find the little California Quail that had intrigued me last year with its strange behaviour.

When I arrived it took a while to locate it, but to my surprise it was alive and well, preening within the thickets atop the berm that divides the road from the pond area. I had visited the area throughout the summer and early fall of 2013 but had failed to locate the quail. However, there it was to my surprise, looking well and agile. My observations determined that it had matured and wasn't obviously associating with, or so dependent on, one particular female Mallard. In fact it appeared to be an "unwanted guest" to the duck population.

Relative to size, one would have thought that this diminutive interloper would hide away from the throngs of ducks, but instead it would scurry along as fast as those little legs would carry it, determined to glean the remainder of the scattered seed from the muddy ground. At times, those ducks that were satiated and were now resting, especially the male Mallards, would rise to avoid contact, giving the quail a wide berth. Perhaps that sharp little bill that was used as a poker, was more than they could tolerate. It is fascinating to know that this smallish member of the avian family had established its own pecking order and that the majority of the hefty duck population at this locale were intimidated by its presence.

Subsequently I was unable to locate it. A Peregrine Falcon had been seen in the area on the 17th. I would be saddened to think that this little celebrity might have met its demise in the talons of a predator. Perhaps the quail was exploring greater horizons or just hiding, while "mama" was taking a well deserved swim!



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From *The Victoria Naturalist*, April 1975, Vol. 37, No. 8

Common Plants Revisited

By Stephen Mitchell

Day length is slowly increasing, providing the trigger for early spring flowering. At the end of February many buds will be erupting into extra-ordinary forms of flowers. Some showy flowers around Victoria, such as *Erythronium*, *Sisyrinchium*, *Saxifraga*, and *Dodecatheon*, have textbook parts. These are sepals, petals, (alike in the first two genera), stamens, and pistil. Good basic botany here, and an inspiration to anyone who appreciates color and gentle form. When the warm sun is on one's back consider-

ation of the hypanthium of *Saxifraga* or the partially fused petals of *Dodecatheon*, may vanish!



In a landscape colored so intensely, many common flowers are almost overlooked. Two come to mind immediately. Consider the "pussy-willow", or catkin of *Salix* (willow). This is an elongate arrangement of flowers, which have no sepals or petals. The absence of these structures facilitates wind pollination. Each flower

is located above a scale and consists of stamens (male) or a pistil (female). A catkin is either all male or all female, and further, the catkins on any single shrub or tree are of one sex. These features are readily apparent when the flowers are mature. A hand-lens will reveal the nature of scale hairs and floral glands.

Another plant deserving more attention is skunk cabbage, *Lisichitum*. The yellow flag, which emerges in spring, is termed the spathe. This leaf-like structure partially encloses the fleshy spike of tiny flowers. Close inspection reveals that the flowers have four lobes representing the sepals and petals, four stamens, and one pistil. Skunk cabbage emits a foetid odor during flowering and this is probably responsible for the appearance of numerous staphylinid beetles on the spadix. Pollination is probably aided, if not effected entirely, by this insect.

The avid botanist will have many plants to ponder in the next few months. "Big and beautifuls" are an excellent start, but the small and nondescript have their rewards, usually a hand-lens away.

Skunk cabbage photo: Mikhail Belikov

Letters

In pursuing the “Education” portion of the Victoria Natural History Societies mandate it was decided to gift each school in the three School Districts in that area with a copy of our *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region*. 97 copies were delivered to the three Resource Centers involved. The resource centers were asked if they would include a letter with the books which detailed the goals of our Society, and the importance of making teachers aware of both these goals and that the VNHS runs a free program for children that is essentially a partner to the book. We quickly received very positive emails from schools in each of the School Districts including requests for more copies of the book (at cost) and outings; a reflection on both the value of the book and the efficiency of School District Resource Centers.

Following are just a few of the letters of appreciation:

Thank you

January 28

On behalf of the staff and students at View Royal School I just wanted to say thank you for providing us with a copy of “Nature Guide to the Victoria Region”. I know the staff and students will enjoy it. Thank you for your generosity!

Sherri, Teacher-Librarian, View Royal Elementary

January 17

Thank you so much for the wonderful “Nature Guide to the Victoria Region”. It is an amazing resource. Would it be possible to buy more copies? Some staff would like to have a personal copy.

Mrs Julia Sahota

Principal, Millstream Elementary School

To Bill Dancer

Thank you!

January 21

As the teacher librarian at Frank Hobbs Elementary School, I was delighted to receive your generous donation of the “Nature Guide to the Victoria Region.”

I will be glad to share this beautiful and informative book with the staff and students in our school before adding it to our library collection.

Please forward my thanks to the other directors and members of the Victoria Natural History Society.

Yours truly, Nancy Taylor

(on behalf of all of us at Frank Hobbs)

Thank you

January 28

On behalf of the staff and students at View Royal School I just wanted to say thank you for providing us with a copy of “Nature Guide to the Victoria Region”. I know the staff and

students will enjoy it. Thank you for your generosity!

Sherri, Teacher-Librarian, View Royal Elementary

Editor’s note: *From the content of these letters the positive results of this program are clear. Bill Dancer and John Henigman are in their eighth year of the schools program; they and their co-volunteers have put countless hours into this. Bill tells me that for French Immersion Schools they now have three volunteers who lead en français.*

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 26 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column.

Morgan Davies

Lonsdale Place

Botany and Birding

Mathew Drake

Cook Street

Invertebrate, coastal and Marine biology

Cole Burton

Damelart Way

Juliet Pendray and James Holkko

Botany, mycology, marine biology, birding, and all lifeform categories. Photography, field identification, microscopy, ecological relationships, and ethnobiology.

Barrie Bird

Epsom Drive

Birding, Nature in general

Sharon Patton

Richmond Avenue

Ana Simeon

Fernwood Road

Birding, Botany, Conservation

Frances Stuart

Quadra Street

Mammalogy, behaviour, genetics, conservation

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Rocky Point Bird Observatory AGM. Thursday, March 13, 7 pm, Greater Victoria Public Library, 735 Broughton St. Spring and Summer in the Far South: *The Falklands, South Georgia, and Antarctica*. RPBO board members Marilyn Lambert and Ann Nightingale made separate trips to the Southern Ocean just two months apart. Join us for a slide illustrated talk about this amazingly beautiful part of the world, highlighting the differences just a couple of months can make.

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>

“Land, Sea and Sky” A concert with music by local composers on an environmental theme. **One of these pieces is dedicated to the VNHS.** April 4, 7:30 p.m., First Unitarian Church, West Saanich Rd, and April 26, 7:30, p.m. Swan Lake Nature House. Harpist Josh Layne will be featured along with a cellist and a sax quartet. Info: Diane Berry, 250-472-2590.

Advance notice of the International Migratory Bird Day; celebrate the return of our feathered friends! again at Beaver Lake main beach on May 10, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Details in the next issue.

Advance notice of the annual Swan Lake Native Plant Sale May 17 and 18

Volunteer Opportunity Newsletter Distribution

The Goal: For one or two people to be able to do the job and to be able to take over from Laura Gretzinger and myself in case of sickness, holiday, or burnout.

- Location: at my home near the corner of Shelbourne/Cedar Hill X Road
- When: every two months throughout the year
- Time spent: total 8-10 person hours but can be split up into different tasks
- Perks: fresh ground coffee and cookies (donuts preferred – Tim’s is close)

The work consists of

- Creating a label list (experience with Excel an asset)
- Picking up the print job near the corner of Pandora and Vancouver Street
- The actual labelling, involving inserts
- Taking the bulk mailout to the postal depot at Glanford/Valman
- Taking a few out of country issues to a conventional postal outlet

Before you respond, consider your location and how convenient it is for you given the various locations listed above. If interested, email me at ksohm@live.com or phone 250-658-6115

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

NEW: Note that while evening presentations are open to the public, field trips are designed for members. Guests may join if invited by members for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.

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. Note that this activity is free for VNHS members. Non members can participate free for two trips and will be charged nominally for any further participation.

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 VNHS members all welcome.

SWAN LAKE GUIDED BIRD WALKS

Every **Wednesday and Sunday at 9:00 a.m.** Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal and informative walk around the lake area. Walks are generally led by Victoria Natural History Society members. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is at 3873 Swan Lake Road, off Ralph Street. Note that the Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Store in Shelbourne Plaza posts the bird reports from the Sunday walk.

NEW: Note that on most of the following field trips, unless another name shows as the contact person, email Agnes Lynn at thelynns@shaw.ca or phone her at 250-721-0634 for more information. Unless otherwise noted, birding leader is generally Rick Shortinghuis. Also, for a more complete description of the following events and presentations go to our website www.vicnhs.bc.ca/ and click on Calendar.

MARCH

Saturday, March 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Esquimalt Lagoon

We will be going to Esquimalt Lagoon and surrounding area. There is an amazing diversity of water birds and passerines here at this time of year. Meet at 8:00 a.m. near the bridge. Esquimalt Lagoon is on Ocean Blvd, off the Old Island Highway.

Saturday, March 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Patricia Bay & Coles Bay Park

We will go first to Patricia Bay. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the small parking lot on West Saanich Rd (between Willingdon Rd and Mills Rd) on the ocean side near the west end of the airport runway. We'll also wander around some wooded areas nearby.

Then, to get to nearby Coles Bay Park, go south on West Saanich Rd to turn right on Ardmore Dr, then left on Inverness. Park sign is on the right. We'll take a short walk down to the water with a quick loop through the productive woods.

Sunday, March 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Parksville

Come to see the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn. Massive number of sea ducks and gulls follow the herring in 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. If you still have the May/June issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*, check pages 12-13 for a blow by blow account of last year's trip. Bring a lunch. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 7:00 a.m. Carpool expenses will be about \$20.00 per person. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register.

Tuesday, March 11

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION AND AGM

'Bear Witness': a film by B.C.'s Coastal First Nations on the state of bear conservation in the Great Bear Rainforest

Join **Jess Housty**, an elected councillor for the Heiltsuk First Nation and member of the Central Coast First Nations Bear Working Group, **Christina Service** and **Megan Adams**, biologists from the Raincoast Conservation Foundation's lab at the University of Victoria for this film screening and a discussion of natural history and conservation efforts surrounding coastal carnivores. We will meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Bring friends, family, and a coffee mug.

Sunday, March 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Enjoying Native Trees and Shrubs before Spring Flowers Burst Forth

It should be feeling a lot like spring by this time with buds bursting open and most leaves starting to show but it will still be challenging to identify the native shrubs and trees. We will wander around Ten Mile Point, visiting Konukson and Phyllis Parks and walking along the cliffs near the water to check for early flowers and of course birds. We'll visit a Bald Eagle nest. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Lynns at 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor Ave. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, March 18

BOTANY NIGHT

BC Plants at risk: Recent activities of the CDC

Jenifer Penny will talk about ongoing activities and special projects of the CDC including ranking and mapping plants in BC, field work for the Nature Conservancy of Canada in the Okanagan and the Kootenays, work updating the BC flora list, listing and mapping of macro-lichens, mosses and hepatics, inventory training sessions and more. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, March 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Centennial Park

We will go to Centennial Park in Central Saanich. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Hovey Rd entrance off Wallace Drive. Meet at the main parking lot by the lawn bowling club.

Sunday, March 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Viewing Wildlife Nests

WiTS or the Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program is an environmental citizen science program that coordinates a network of community stewards who monitor wildlife tree habitats in southern BC. Join **Gwen Greenwood**, one of the coordinators, as she shows us some Eagles' nests, a Heronry and an Osprey territory. She'll talk about the habitat required for these birds to survive. For more details on WiTS, check out the web site at www.wildlifetree.org. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. and car-pool from 2111 Keating Cross Rd. Call **Gwen** at 250-652-2876 or email **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca for more information.

Wednesday, March 26

BIRDERS NIGHT PRESENTATION

Changing Birds, Changing Birders

The updated bird checklist for southern Vancouver Island resulted in significant changes. Join **David Fraser** and **Ian Cruickshank** as they explore these changes in Victoria's avifauna and discuss ways birders can contribute data that will help document those changes. 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, March 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Leisurely Walk up Lone Tree Hill

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. 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. **Starts at 10:00 a.m.** To get to the park, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd to the park entrance on the right. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Monday, March 31

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION

Mysteries of BC's Marine Molluscs

Join long-time naturalist **Bill Merilees** to learn about BC's marine molluscan fauna, from the minute to the mysterious to the madness of malacology. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

APRIL

Saturday, April 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding at Rithet's Bog

Join **Marie O'Shaughnessy** for a walk along the level loop trail around the bog. There should be early migrants besides the considerable resident population of birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m.

along Dalewood Lane (just off Chatterton Way) at the northwest corner of the Bog. Call **Marie** at 250-598-9680 or email **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca for more information

Sunday, April 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy the Wildflowers on Mount Wells

Wildflowers, eagles, Sooty Grouse, breath-taking views! Investigate Mount Wells, a gateway to the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve. We still should see the early Satin Flowers but several of the other wildflowers will be out by now as well. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. We will come down on the Sooke Rd side and transportation will be arranged back to the starting point. Bring a lunch. Meet at 10:00 a.m. To reach the start, 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 Rd. Turn left on to Humpback Rd. At the intersection with Irwin Rd, stay right. Follow Humpback Rd to the park entrance and watch for the parking lot on the right. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, April 8

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

Blue Ice, White Bear – The Raw, the Bleak, the Beautiful

Join **George Sirk** to learn about the Inuit, their deep knowledge of wildlife and their intuitive ability to adapt to unimaginable cold (-60C), ice, permafrost, and sudden summers. George will explain how animals and plants have adapted to the harsh Arctic environment. Over a period of 8 years he has worked as a naturalist guide and covered 20,000 nautical miles of the High Arctic.

Saturday, April 12

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 flowers including Satin Flowers without the big effort. Meet at Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre (Westshore Parks & Recreation), 1767 Old Island Highway, at 9:00 a.m. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to town.

Sunday April 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Common Mosses of the Victoria Area

Our trip leader **Kem Luther** has stated that if we learn just 20 of the common mosses in the area that we will have covered about 95% of the total number of mosses in the Victoria area. Kem will show us most of the 20 at Matheson Lake Park. Meet at the main parking lot at 10:00 a.m. To reach the park, take Sooke Rd, turn left on Happy Valley Rd, then right on Rocky Point Rd and right again on Matheson Lake Park Rd which leads to the park entrance. Please note that it is possible that this event will need to be rescheduled till later. Closer to the date, check the VNHS website or contact **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for confirmation of the date.

Tuesday, April 15th

BOTANY NIGHT

Domestication and Ethnobotany of some Asian melons

Dr. Kendrick Marr. Ethnobotany is the science of describing the interactions between plants and people. Royal BC Museum botanist **Ken Marr** lived in China for 2½ years while studying the domestication process of several species of the squash/cucumber family. He will discuss what he learned about how humans have changed the biology of these plants and some of the traditional stories that villagers have about them. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Friday, April 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Two for One Bargain – Horth Hill and Bear Hill Wildflowers

Despite the close proximity of these two areas, the flora is quite different. Horth Hill is sunnier and drier and the Chocolate Lilies should be great there. If we are lucky, we'll see some Pink Fairy Slippers at Bear Hill. Please note the trails are steep but we will walk at a leisurely pace. Bring a lunch. Meet at the parking lot at Horth Hill at 10:00 a.m. To get to Horth Hill, take the Pat Bay Highway north to the Wain Rd exit. Follow Wain Rd west, then turn right on Tatlow Rd 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 Rd, left on Saanich Cross Rd to Central Saanich Rd. Continue south on Central Saanich Rd to right on Keating Cross Rd, left on Oldfield Rd and left on Bear Hill Rd to the parking area. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, April 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to Offer

Wildflowers and birds! An array of other flowers and great views! Our goal is to see the Gold Stars in bloom. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Bring a lunch. **Meet there at 9:00 a.m.** To reach the start, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd. Go past Lone Tree Hill Park on your right and watch for Emma Dixon Rd on the left. The trail head is on Millstream Rd just past that intersection. Park on the right-hand-side of the road. Call Rick at 250-885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Saturday, April 19 to Sunday, April 27

VICTORIA BUTTERFLY COUNT

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers to submit butterfly records. If you would like to participate, please contact **Aziza Cooper** at tanageraz@yahoo.com.

Sunday, April 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

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

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 strenuous or long. Meet at 9:00 a.m. 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.

Monday, April 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Visit to Mount Tzouhalem Wildflowers

Join us to enjoy your Easter Monday off. This area is one of the best preserved examples of a Garry Oak Ecosystem. There is a small patch of the rare Deltoid Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza deltoidea*) as well as many other choice wild flowers. We also plan to visit another Garry Oak area close by to see the Prairie Violets (*Viola praemorsa*). Bring a lunch. Car-pool and start from Victoria at 9:00 a.m. **You must register for this event** as the number of visitors is limited due to the fragile ecosystem. VNHS members get preference. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 after March 4 to register or for more information.

Wednesday, April 23

BIRDERS' NIGHT PRESENTATION

Paraguay Birding

Paraguay provides some of the best birding in S. America, yet it is relatively unknown to N. American birders. The great diversity of bird species is due to the variety of habitats, from the wetlands of the remote southern Pantanal to the dry thorn forests of the Chaco and the grasslands and Atlantic forest in the east. **Val George** will share his experiences from a recent trip to the country with a small group of avid BC birders. 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, April 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

23rd Annual Camas Day at Beacon Hill Park

This annual event will include guided walks (about 1-2 hours each) about Birds, Wildflowers, Archaeology and First Nations. Check details on the back cover. Contact **Roy** at 250-380-5023 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, April 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Visit to Honeymoon Bay Wildflowers

Join us on our visit to the Pink Fawn Lilies (*Erythronium revolutum*) at Honeymoon Bay. We will stop as well to explore other areas along the Cowichan River. Bring a lunch. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 9:00 a.m. **You must register for this event** as the number of visitors is limited due to the fragile ecosystem. VNHS members get preference. **Contact Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 **after Mar 4 to register** or for more information.

Monday, April 28

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION

Risky Business: Identifying Priorities for Ecosystem-Based Oceans Management

Miriam O is a biologist with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. She has worked in the marine mammal research group, the geoduck stock assessment group, and is currently working on Marine Protected Areas and ecosystem-based research. She will speak about the ongoing work within the department to develop research and monitoring plans for Marine Protected Areas and Large Ocean Management Areas. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.



22nd Annual CAMAS DAY Saturday, April 26

All walks start at the flagpole on top of the hill.
Rain or shine, a great day to get out locally to
admire and learn about our meadows!

7 a.m. and 9 a.m.: bird walks

First Nations walk: 11 am and 1 pm.

Wildflower walks: at 11 am and 1 pm

Archaeology walks at 11 am and 1 pm

For details of any additional walks such as tide
pools etc., closer to the date please check the
website: www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca

Camas Day has been co-sponsored with Friends of
Beacon Hill Park and VNHS for the past 22 years



Photos: Mikhail Belikov