



# The Victoria NATURALIST

MAY  
JUNE  
2014  
VOL 70.6

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the  
**VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4  
Contents © 2014 as credited.  
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

**Co-Editors:** Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508, Ken Sohm 250-658-6115  
**Desktop Publishing:** Frances Hunter 250-479-1956  
**Distribution:** Ken Sohm, Laura Gretzinger  
**Printing:** Fotoprint 250-382-8218

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

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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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Front cover photo: The Longfin Sculpin (*Jordania zonope*), also known as the “bandeye sculpin”, is found from southeast Alaska to central California, in rocky areas and kelp at depths from 2-38 m. *Photo*: Bob Orchard

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

In past months, I have been lucky enough to do some travelling, seeing new places and lots of new animals, birds, fish, and of course some amazing plants, too. And the more I see of this world, the more I realize that we need to take care of what we have if we hope to leave a healthy planet for future generations.

We viewed landscapes that included areas both natural and human-altered, from forested hillsides, lava fields, and coral reefs to rubber and tea plantations, fields of tapioca, and rice paddies. We saw big differences in what we think is “ok” and what other cultures think, as evidenced by such things as shellfish harvesting (hard to believe it is sustainable at such a rate) and the use (and discarding rather than recycling) of plastic bags and bottles. But all was not doom and gloom...we also saw many efforts to conserve, restore and manage natural areas and systems. Areas of exquisite beauty that are home to colourful fish or birds (even monkeys) are being protected, and efforts are underway to conserve and even increase populations of species such as shearwaters and albatross. Cultural differences make positive change difficult in many ways, but there appear to be people all over the world who are trying to make a difference...that was heartwarming to see.

Raising awareness of the fragility of what we have is a place to start making changes. And speaking of raising awareness... in April we had the pleasure of attending the wonderful concert “Land, Sea and Sky”. This concert featured music by local composers, and each piece was dedicated to one of the environmental groups working in our area (and beyond) to raise awareness and protect our natural environment. The piece dedicated to VNHS was exquisite...“Cotton Butterfly”, by Josh Layne, is a lovely piece for harp and cello. The music told the story of being in the dark cocoon, then emerging and the first tentative sweeps of new butterfly wings, to flying away into the distant sky. I think this concert showed that there are many ways to reach people and to instill in them an appreciation of and desire to care for the environment...perhaps not the usual way of speeches or showing pictures, but effective none the less.

With spring and summer coming, people will be thinking of being outside more...give some thought to different ways you might help others understand that this world is an amazing place and worth the effort to protect it. Every little bit helps...

*Gail Harcombe*

# News from the Board of Directors

Below is a summary of the Society's accomplishments in 2013, as presented at our Annual General Meeting in April. You'll be sorry you missed it!

## Donations:

Each year we give away money to a variety of organizations. In 2013 the following amounts were given out by VNHS:

- Scholarships and Science Fair: \$7000 (total) annually to the University of Victoria, Royal Roads, and Camosun for scholarships (undergraduate and graduate). We also support the regional Science Fair competition.
- Swan Lake: \$4,000 annually
- Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team: \$4,000 for the *Bringing Back the Bluebirds* project
- Rocky Point Bird Observatory: \$3,000
- *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region*: a copy of our book was donated to every public school in the region (97 books) = \$1,450 value
- The Ancient Forest Alliance for the Avatar Grove Boardwalk: \$500
- The McTaggart-Cowan Biography Project: \$500
- Metchosin BioBlitz: \$200

## Fundraising:

In addition to the generous donations from our members, we have a few different ways of raising money:

- Revised Bird Checklist for the region – with a big thank you Ann Nightingale!
- Book Sales: ~1,250 books sold to date (direct sales and through bookstores)
- Annual Valentine's Day Couples' Bird Count: This has been capably coordinated by Alan MacLeod and Jan Brown until now, but they are ready to welcome a new coordinator if someone is interested.
- Island Chef Challenge: we again collaborated with Madrona Farm as a fundraiser – \$260 from ticket sales to VNHS

## Events/Outreach:

Each year we host, co-host, and attend a variety of events to help spread the nature-lovin' gospel:

- Camas Day – this year is our 23rd year collaborating with the Friends of Beacon Hill Park.
- International Migratory Bird Day – join us again this year on May 10, 2014
- CRD and VNHS Hawk Watch and BBQ Social – join us in September
- Seedy Saturday
- Ocean's Day at Gorge Park

- Swan Lake Native Plant Sale
- Creatively United for the Planet
- Christmas Bird Count
- Butterfly Count
- VNHS Free School Programs: more than 800 children participated in 2013 – all ages and a variety of subjects. Bill Dancer and John Henigman co-coordinate this important undertaking.
- VNHS Field Trips – near and far: 100+ field trips including weekly Saturday and Tuesday birding trips.
- VNHS Presentations – local, provincial, global: monthly presentations totaling 30 over the course of the year.
- VNHS Magazine: six issues of *The Victoria Naturalist* per year. Approximately 147 are sent out as PDFs – members see everything in full colour AND save the Society postage. Extra copies can be given back to us, shared with a friend, or put in your doctor's office!

## VNHS Committees:

Board members and other Society Members represent the VNHS in a number of ways:

- Viaduct Flats Committee
- Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Board
- Rocky Point Bird Observatory
- Habitat Acquisition Trust
- BC Nature
- Young Naturalists Club

## VNHS Awards:

Last year we presented a coveted Honourary Life Membership to former Member of Parliament and Minister of Environment David Anderson.

Thank you to all the directors for their volunteer time in 2013. Five directors had one more year on their term: James Miskelly, Bill Dancer, and Phil Lambert, Melissa Frey, and Steven Roias and six directors agreed to be nominated to serve another term: Darren and Claudia Copley, Gordon Hart, Gail Harcombe, and Ken Sohm. We had two outgoing board members: James Clowater, Nancie Dohan, leaving room for anyone with an interest in joining the team. Let us know!

And finally: congratulations to the well-earned recipients of this year's Distinguished Service Awards. Both Jeremy Tatum and John Henigman are long past due on receiving recognition for their contributions to nature appreciation generally and more specifically for their efforts for the Society – thanks to you both!

# Distinguished Service Awards 2014

At the VNHS AGM held March 11, 2014, the VNHS Distinguished Service Award was presented to not one, but two people: John Henigman and Jeremy Tatum. Both John and Jeremy have contributed greatly to the Society, and it is our great pleasure to present them with this award.

John Henigman has contributed to the Society in a number of ways: serving on the Board of Directors for seven years; acting as the VNHS representative to BC Nature; leading field trips; and participating in many of the Society's activities. Perhaps his greatest contribution, however, is being instrumental in establishing and fostering the VNHS Schools Project. Together with Bill Dancer, John has worked to promote an interest in the natural world through his work with local schools, engaging young people directly with nature. The program has been very successful, receiving enthusiastic reviews from teachers, parents and the children themselves, and this success is due in large part to the energy and enthusiasm John has brought to the trips and the project as a whole.

Dr. Jeremy Tatum's career as Astronomy and Physics professor at University of Victoria seems a far cry from his hobbies related to natural history, but it is those hobbies that have made Jeremy an invaluable resource person for information about butterflies and moths and their host plants. Jeremy has managed and contributed to the Invertebrate Alert (hosted by VNHS since 2010). Another of his keen interests is birds, and the Society and Victoria area have benefitted greatly from this. Jeremy was area coordinator for the Christmas Bird Count for many years and continues to participate in the counts each year. He has been part of the VNHS Rare Birds Committee for many years, and helped produce the updated Checklist to Birds in the Victoria Area. His Annual Bird Report for the Victoria Area, an easy to read publication he creates by compiling data from many different individuals, has helped birders find the birds in which they are interested and also reports anecdotally on species abundance.

Presenting the VNHS Distinguished Service Award to these two gentlemen is one way in which we can show our appreciation and recognize their efforts toward increasing awareness and knowledge of the natural world, both in general and specifically in the Victoria area, and encouraging the protection of the natural environment. Congratulations, John Henigman and Jeremy Tatum!



Top: Darren Copley with John Henigman. Below: Darren and Jeremy Tatum. *Photos: Dave Robichaux*





## A Record Turnout for 17th Valentine Birdathon

By Alan MacLeod

*Photos by author*

**T**hey dodged a bullet. Wind and rain beat a tattoo on rooftops overnight and the weatherman promised more misery for the day of the VNHS Couples Birdathon, February 16. But a record thirteen intrepid couples shrugged off the forecast and were amply rewarded: the weather proved better than promised and everyone seemed satisfied with the volume of fun delivered in the seventeenth running of this annual event.

As usual couples gathered at the Swan Lake Nature Centre after the 6 a.m.-to-noon count period to swap war stories, exult in the finds they liked best and lament their 'big misses'. The organizer was gratified not just at the record turnout but with the fact that three of the couples were first-time participants. **Matthew and Courtney Cameron** found 65 species in their big morning. One of the finds that pleased the Camerons most were the Western Meadowlarks they spotted at Panama Flats; in the no-show department they counted Bushtit as their Big Miss. Enjoying their second straight

birdathon, **Ken Walker and Jenny Clark** felt well treated at Viaduct Flats, where Ruddy Duck and Turkey Vulture vied for the distinction of being their bird of the day.

Beginning their day in their Swartz Bay neighbourhood, **Doug and Lynda Bateman** found all three scoters and a Western Grebe at Patricia Bay, a Eurasian Skylark at the airport and – their best bird of the day – a Wilson's Snipe in the Dooley/Welch area of Central Saanich. The third first-time couple, **Liam Merrick and Kara Debrouck**, found 66 species in their inaugural Birdathon, counting three Brant Geese and a Barrow's Goldeneye at Esquimalt Lagoon as their birds-of-the-day.

Birdathon veterans both, **Jenny Feick and Ian Hatter** had their best count ever, 64, headlined by a dozen Brant Geese flying east past Clover Point and – get this – four woodpecker species in the same tree by the Beaver Lake ponds. **Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod** followed their established pattern: they walked out their James Bay door just past



Jeremy Gatten and Janean Sharkey

6 a.m., tramped 17 km in the neighbourhood and counted a Peregrine Falcon at Ogden Point and a gang of twenty American Goldfinches on Southgate Street as their best finds.

Another pair of Birdathon veterans, **Barb and Mike McGrenere** highlighted Steller's Jay at Royal Roads, California Gull at Clover Point and a Pacific Loon on Cadboro Bay among the best of their 72 species. **Agnes and David Lynn**, the defending Birdathon champions, had 70 species including White-throated Sparrow at Hyacinth Park and – at Queen's Park – a Dunlin and their bird-of-the-day, Greater Yellowlegs.

**Mike and Joanna Preston** won this event two years ago and came close again this time, with 72 species. Starting at 0600 hours sharp the Prestons had Great-horned Owl near Royal Roads, a Pileated Woodpecker behind the Juan de Fuca Rec Centre and – at Panama Flats – a Northern Shrike and the five Western Meadowlarks they counted as their day's best find.

Though having to endure a delayed start caused by others, **Daniel and Susan Dönnecke** enjoyed a highly successful day too, reporting 75 species. Daniel and Susan liked the Lincoln's Sparrow and Meadowlarks they found at Panama Flats, their Red-throated Loon in waters off Mount Douglas Park and the Merlin that bulletted by them at Dooley/Lochside. But what they liked best of all was the Greater

White-fronted Goose they found at Island View Road.

While some of the other early starters had to tangle with rain squalls, **Jeremy and Thea Kimm** endured worse at 6 a.m. in the Munn Road highlands – heavy wet snow. They were rewarded for their troubles with four Great Horned Owls. Among their 77 species Jeremy and Thea had – at Goldstream Park – Red-breasted Sapsucker and American Dipper, their best-bird nominee.

Only one couple can boast of having participated in every one of the seventeen Valentine Birdathons, **Jerry and Gladys Anderson**. Not just a long-time birder, Jerry is a master bird carver and the man who produced the Anderson Trophy, which aptly features a pair of snuggling Mourning Doves. One of the Andersons' early finds was one they couldn't count, a dozen Guinea Fowl walking along John Road, but they were well pleased with their 'count-ables' too: three Eurasian Collared-Doves in Sidney and a trio of Turkey Vultures at Viaduct Flats, their best-bird choice.

**Jeremy Gatten and Janean Sharkey** had a memorable morning, featuring Marbled Murrelet at Oak Bay, Gadwall and Northern Shrike at Oldfield Road, Ring-billed Gull by the legendary pig sty on Lochside Drive and – their bird of the day – Black Scoter off Island View Beach. Jeremy and Janean topped the field with 84 species and as a result will get to see their names inscribed on the revered Anderson Trophy, the prize of prizes in the Valentine Birdathon.

The aggregate total for the 2014 event was 114, five short of the record 119 listed in 2007. Always interesting to some of us is the roster of birds that were *not* spotted in the event, headlined this time by Sanderling, Common Murre, Barred Owl, Red Crossbill, and Pine Siskin.

Only one couple can have their names inscribed on the Anderson Trophy but a popular feature of the Birdathon is the prospect of winning one of the other attractive prizes on offer. The event organizer typically offers some of his mighty rare-earth fridge magnets, always adorned by bird stamps both Canadian and foreign. He offered two sets this time and they were selected by the Jeremy-Janean and Liam-Kara duets.

The Birdathon's principal sponsor is **Don Wuest** of **Wild Birds Unlimited** on Shelbourne Street in Victoria. Don was his usual generous self this time, providing three fine Hummingbird feeders in various sizes as prizes. The Kimms, Dönneckes and Andersons were the lucky recipients of Don's feeders. Don has been kind to our Birdathon for years. Those who run this show are grateful to him for being not just willing but *keen* to sponsor prizes for our little event. Don runs a terrific operation at his Wild Birds Unlimited store; we encourage VNHS members to give him their birding and bird-feeding business. After all, the Birdathon is not *just* about fun: every penny of the proceeds arising from the \$10 participation fee goes to VNHS and its habitat conservation initiatives.

For those who missed out on all the fun in the 2014 Birdathon, take heart: there's always *next* year.



# Fork-tailed Storm Petrel: Unusual Encounter on a Christmas Bird Count


By Marilyn Lambert

The day dawned bright, cold and clear for the South Saltspring Island/Sidney Christmas Bird Count on December 15, 2013. I have participated in the Victoria Christmas Bird Count since 1974, but this was my first foray into a new region. Ann Nightingale said there was a boat available to cover Saanich Inlet and observers were needed. She had me at "boat"! Any opportunity to spend time on the water is not to be passed up. I met James Clowater and the boat owner, Donald Stewart, at the boat launch in Brentwood, and we were off. Our route covered both sides of the inlet from Senanus Island to the end of the Saanich Peninsula and across to the Mill Bay side. We did not see many birds on the water that morning, and it was hard work to get the 22 species we did find. However, we did make one amazing observation – a Fork-tailed Storm Petrel! James has done an extensive survey of Western Grebes in Saanich Inlet over many years and knew that the flock is usually found between Pat Bay and Mill Bay. We had to find the flock, so we made our first stop at the mouth of Pat Bay, no grebes to be seen. Next stop, half way across the inlet. As James




Photo: Donald Stewart


scanned the water for the WEGR flock, a small grey bird popped up at the side of the boat. I looked at it and thought, Holy bleep! It's a-a-a-Petrel! Sure enough this beautiful little bird was a Fork-tailed Storm Petrel. The bird sat on the water long enough for Donald to get a photo, and we found out later that this was only the third time this species had been found on a Canadian Christmas Bird Count. When the Petrel tired of us gawking at it, it flew off toward Pat Bay. We carried on to the mouth of Mill Bay where we encountered 230 gorgeous Western Grebes. Soon it was time to head back to Brentwood and the end of a beautiful morning out in nature.

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Photo: Sofia Dönnecke

## Banded Birds, Birds with a Story

By Daniel and Leonard Dönnecke

During a cool but sunny day early in February of 2013 my son Leo and I were feeding the ducks at King's Pond when Leo all of a sudden shouted: "Hey dad, look at that Mallard! It has a ring around his leg". I tried to see what my son was pointing at but could not make out anything in the jumble of bright orange feet in front of me. Finally I spotted a shiny aluminum ring and looked at it through my binoculars. There were numbers, a whole bunch of numbers and I instantly grabbed the camera and took photos from all different angles until I had a complete look around. Later that day we went home and entered the nine digit number together with the details of our sighting on a website called [reportband.gov](http://reportband.gov) which maintains a databank of most birds banded in North America. We got an instant reply: banded in August of 2008 near Fairbanks, Alaska. We were both amazed at this. The Mallard, although a beautiful bird, is so commonplace that we often ignore it and I certainly did not think of it as a migrating species as much as Barn Swallows or flycatchers because it is here year round.

Well, that changed after this sighting. During the course of the year Leo and I revisited King's Pond many times. We also checked Beacon Hill Park and Esquimalt Lagoon and found a total of 20 banded Mallards. Table 1 summarizes these sightings.

Generally we seem to have a lot of Alaska Mallards here during the winter and a more complex spectrum of Mallards during migration with birds from Oregon, Washington, BC and Alberta showing up. During the summer the number of Mallards in Victoria is much smaller and thus few banded birds were seen. After a full year we are also re-sighting Mallards that were here the previous winter in the same location. So the next time you are out in the park looking at the Mallards look a little more closely. If you find a banded bird try to read the number and become a citizen scientist. You don't have to have a fancy camera. Most compact cameras will allow you to zoom in on the band and obtain reasonable photos. I have also read bands just with my binoculars. Next report your sighting to [reportband.gov](http://reportband.gov). They will usually

issue a certificate of appreciation which contains the banding history of the bird: who banded it as well as where and when was it banded. The information you provide will be shared with the bander. Resightings or recoveries of bands away from the place where the bird was banded are

extremely important aspects of bird banding programs. It's only by understanding the whole life history of bird populations that we can properly address their conservation.

Happy Birding.

**Table 1**

federal band #	encounter date	encounter location	banded on	banded at	sex
1837-22372	1-Feb-13	King's Pond	8-Aug-08	Minto Flats, Fairbanks, AK	male
1837-22541	4-Feb-13	Swan Lake*	14-Jul-09	Twelve Mile Lake, Fairbanks, AK	male
707-37413	14-Feb-13	King's Pond	31-Jul-10	Twelve Mile Lake, Fairbanks, AK	female
1827-90984	16-Feb-13	King's Pond**	18-Aug-10	Minto Lakes, Fairbanks, AK	male
1647-28277	20-Feb-13	King's Pond**	18-Aug-03	35 miles West of Fairbanks, AK	male
1717-56727	21-Feb-13	Beacon Hill Park	11-Aug-05	20 miles West of Peace River, AB	male
1917-42178	26-Feb-13	King's Pond	9-Aug-10	40 miles west of Fairbanks, AK	male
1797-68925	26-Feb-13	King's Pond	21-Aug-10	Lyndon, Whatcom County, WA	male
1737-17295	6-Apr-13	Esquimalt Lagoon	12-Jul-05	Sherwood, OR	male
1827-79975	14-Apr-13	Beacon Hill Park	3-Aug-12	40 miles west of Fairbanks, AK	male
1717-42x16	14-Apr-13	Beacon Hill Park	2004	AB	male
1827-47276	15-Apr-13	Beacon Hill Park	17-Aug-11	20 miles West of Peace River, AB	male
1797-81931	21-Apr-13	Beacon Hill Park	15-Aug-12	Guichon, BC	male
1797-9xx58	24-Apr-13	Beacon Hill Park	?	?	male
1917-58358	8-Aug-13	Esquimalt Lagoon	15-Sep-10	Sauvie Island, WA	female
1757-52127	11-Sep-13	Beacon Hill Park	7-Aug-07	George Lake, Fairview, AB	male
1717-92291	15-Sep-13	Beacon Hill Park	10-Aug-11	40 miles west of Fairbanks, AK	male
1667-34377	28-Oct-13	Esquimalt Lagoon	2003	35 miles West of Fairbanks, AK	male
1757-75823	16-Nov-13	Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary	8-Aug-13	40 miles west of Fairbanks, AK	male

\*Observed by W.Lee. \*\*resighted in Jan 2014

## ANNE HANSEN

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# Rocky Point Bird Observatory – Feature Bird

Swainson's Thrush SWTH (*Catharus ustulatus*)



By Scott Boyce

The Swainson's Thrush, named after English ornithologist William Swainson, is a migratory songbird that commonly nests in the Victoria area from late April to mid-October. It is a medium-sized thrush which can be identified from other similar thrush species by its conspicuous buffy "spectacles" – eye rings that protrude in front of the eye. While walking through wooded areas, you are more likely to hear the distinctive and beautiful singing of Swainson's Thrushes than to see one as these birds are known to be quite cautious and shy.

Male and female Swainson's Thrushes are similarly marked, making it difficult to sex these birds from sight alone. Even identifying a juvenile amongst adults can be challenging but it is possible if one observes the buffy tips of the juvenile wing coverts which will be replaced with uniformly brown feathers as these gorgeous birds reach maturity.

These birds are truly forest birds and are almost never seen away from a forest with a closed canopy. Swainson's Thrushes are omnivorous with a diet consisting mostly of insects, spiders, and other small arthropods but also supplement their diet with small fruits. They often forage on the forest floor or amongst the dense understory and can be viewed feeding as they hop across the forest floor in search of some tasty tidbits.

When choosing a breeding site, Swainson's Thrushes prefer coniferous and mixed deciduous forests but have also been known to nest in pure deciduous forests. They construct their nests in the shady forks of young trees or understory shrubbery. These nests are approximately 3.5-6 inches wide, 1.5-4 inches tall, and are compact with an open cup. It takes the female four days to build this nest, which she does on her own. Choice construction materials include small twigs, bark shreds, grass, and decayed leaves with a lining consisting of lichens, moss, and skeletonized leaves. When shaping her nest, the female Swainson's Thrush snuggles low within the cup and lunges her breast and feet at the inner wall until happy with the overall shape of the nest. Each breeding season she will construct a new nest.

There are two subspecies of Swainson's Thrushes known to frequent BC, the Russet-backed and the Olive-backed, where the Russet-backed Thrush nests along the Pacific coast of Canada and the US, and the Olive-backed Thrush nests throughout the interior and Atlantic coast of North America. The Russet-backed Thrush enjoys wintering in Mexico while the Olive-backed Thrush is known to migrate



Photo: James Kennersley

a further distance and winters in South America. Both subspecies are known to nest within BC but one is most likely to see the Russet-backed variety while birding in and around Victoria. Migration monitoring conducted by the Rocky Point Bird Observatory during the 2013 fall migration season resulted in 96 Swainson's Thrushes being banded at Rocky Point with another 153 individuals banded at Pedder Bay. In total, 285 Swainson's Thrushes were observed at Rocky Point and 546 at Pedder Bay.

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## Editors' note:

*This is one of a series of occasional bird profiles which one of the talented birders at RPBO compiles. Listen for this bird over the next few weeks. Good locations to locate it (amongst many others in our region) would be Mt Newton, Lochside Trail from Mattick's Farm north, and Munn Rd. Check the calendar for late May/early June Saturday birding trips to the Mt Newton and Munn Rd (the power-lines) locations.*



# Birding Boundary Bay and Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary: A VNHS Trip

By Val George

*Photos by author*

The day didn't look very promising when we left Swartz Bay on the 7.00 a.m. ferry to Tsawwassen.

It was well below zero, but more disturbingly it was very windy. Walking the exposed dikes at Boundary Bay and searching for raptors hunting over the windswept agricultural fields in Delta could make for a somewhat miserable experience. But our intrepid VNHS members were embarking on the annual winter trip to the Reifel Bird Sanctuary and Boundary Bay in the Fraser Valley, so we weren't going to let the weather deter us. However, by the time we reached the mainland, to our pleasant surprise and relief, the wind had died down to a light breeze and the temperature had warmed to above freezing.

Our first target bird was the Prairie Falcon that had been recorded in Delta for several weeks. This falcon species is rare in the Fraser Valley; in fact, it's rare anywhere in BC. We immediately headed to the location where it was being sighted.

On the drive we picked up a lone Rough-legged Hawk sitting in a tree in one of the fields beside the road. This was also one of the species we wanted to see. Rough-legged Hawks winter in the Fraser Delta but are very uncommon on Vancouver Island. The agricultural fields also produced a number of the commoner raptors like Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles. Here, we also saw a pair of Eurasian Collared-Doves, a bird that is becoming common on the coast of BC as a result of its remarkably rapid extension of range from the SE States where it was introduced from Europe about 40 years ago.

On arriving at the falcon location there was no sign of the bird. We hadn't seen any reports of it for several days, so after looking around for about twenty minutes we reluctantly suspected that it might have left the area. Just as we were talking about leaving someone shouted, "that looks like it might be the falcon". Sure enough, the bird flying in typical falcon-like flight was it; it flew to one of its favourite perches on top of a barn from which it could survey the fields that were its hunting grounds. A great start to the day – a life bird for almost all the 19 members of our group.

Next destination was Reifel Bird Sanctuary. This wildlife area never disappoints, though this year we did wonder about how many birds would be around with the cold weather having frozen everything. The Sanctuary consists of many ponds and sloughs with their adjacent marshes, as well as salt marshes on the ocean front. These attract thousands of migratory and wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, and marsh-loving species. Though numbers were down due to the frozen conditions we still saw most of the expected species: Mallards, Wood Ducks, Pintails, Northern Shovelers, Coots, Snow Geese, etc. The Sandhill Cranes that have become accustomed to being fed by visitors to the sanctuary were near the entrance gates to greet us. Also, near the entrance were three Black-crowned Night-Herons. This is the only place in the province where this species can regularly be seen; many in our group had not seen them before.

Reifel is also noted for the many small birds that come to the feeders that are strategically located around the sanctuary: sparrows, towhees, nuthatches, juncos, woodpeckers,



Left: This Snow Goose seemed quite comfortable standing on the ice. Right: One of our target species: a Black-crowned Night-Heron.



The show-stopper Virginia Rail.

Red-winged Blackbirds, to name a few. The abundant Black-capped Chickadees are a great attraction for young visitors as they come to their outstretched hands to take seeds. Vancouver Islanders of all ages certainly find them attractive because this species has never made it to the Island despite its close proximity to the mainland.

The highlight of our Reifel visit was, however, a Virginia Rail feeding in the open. These marsh birds are distributed widely in suitable habitat in the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island and are regularly heard calling; they're very rarely seen though because, like most rail species, they're very secretive and stay hidden in the reed beds. This one was in full view just a few metres from us, feeding in some dead vegetation beside a frozen slough. It seemed totally oblivious to the many cameras taking its portrait. We surmised that the frozen water in the marshes where it would normally skulk was obliging it to come into the open and softer ground. I don't think any of us had previously experienced such a rare treat.

Reluctantly, we had to leave the rail because we had not yet been to our other main destination, Boundary Bay, where we hoped for some additional target species. In particular, our leader Agnes Lynn had heard where a Long-eared Owl was roosting. These owls are rare anywhere in BC, and even where they do occur they're very difficult to see because they hunt at night, spending the day roosting well buried in a bush or camouflaged sitting on a branch close to a tree trunk. The one we hoped to find had been roosting beside one of

the dikes in Boundary Bay. When we arrived at the location we quickly located the bird because a couple of photographers were there. Though at first it was difficult to see in the middle of a shrubby bush, we all eventually got fairly good looks at it, being careful not to approach too closely and disturb it from its slumber – another “lifer” for most of the group.

Well satisfied with the owl sighting, we continued along the dike enjoying the several Northern Harriers cruising the salt marshes and fields looking for voles and other small mammals. Shorebirds were noticeably absent, the frozen mud flats having caused them to look elsewhere for more productive feeding. What we were particularly looking for were the Short-eared Owls that frequent the area; this is another raptor species that is scarce on Vancouver Island but relatively common in the Fraser delta. We were not disappointed. As the late afternoon shadows lengthened, several made an appearance, making a very satisfactory conclusion to our Boundary Bay visit.

Despite our initial reservations when we left home, the trip had turned out to be excellent. The numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds were less than we would normally expect, but we still ended the day with about 80 species, a very respectable count for a day's birding anywhere in the province. Almost everyone added at least two species to their life lists with some ticking off three or four.

Thanks to Agnes Lynn for once again organizing the trip.



# Amazing Antelope Brush

By Robin Rivers, Communications Manager, Nature Trust BC

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is working to acquire a 13.72 hectare (34 acre) property in the Okanagan at the south end of Vaseux Lake between Okanagan Falls and Oliver. Adjacent to The Nature Trust's Antelope Brush Conservation Area, this acquisition is home to more than 20 species at risk. Most notably, this land supports greater than 50% of the Canadian population of the Behr's Hairstreak butterfly. Other federally or provincially listed species at risk that are known to occur on the property include Bighorn Sheep, Pallid Bat, Desert Night Snake, Great Basin Spadefoot, and Lewis's Woodpecker.

Securement of this project will ensure the protection of critically important wildlife habitat and connectivity with other conservation areas for many species, providing greater opportunity for species to adjust to climate change over time.

The Antelope-brush conservation land complex is a top priority for securement by the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program because of its outstanding wildlife habitat and unique biodiversity values.

The region is recognized as one of the four areas with the most endangered natural ecosystems in Canada and has one of the highest concentrations of species at risk.

Located in the Bunchgrass biogeoclimatic zone the property is comprised of rare Antelope-brush and Ponderosa Pine ecosystems. There are less than 7,500 hectares of Antelope-brush remaining in the South Okanagan, the majority of which is under imminent threat.

The property is ideally situated in the valley bottom and adjacent to other conservation holdings and protected areas (Vaseux-Bighorn National Wildlife Area and White Lake Grassland Protected Area) thereby helping to complete the creation of a wildlife migratory corridor for species



Photo: Robin Rivers

moving east-west and north-south as it links protected areas and conservation holdings in the South Okanagan valley.

With a partial Ecological Gift donation by the landowners, along with support from other funding agencies, we have \$140,000 left to raise for this particular property. As well, we will be fundraising for an adjoining property over the coming year. Please know that every dollar helps. We would be grateful to receive your donations online at [www.nature-trust.bc.ca](http://www.nature-trust.bc.ca), by calling 604-924-9771 (toll free 1-866-288-7878) or by mailing a cheque to The Nature Trust of British Columbia, #260-1000 Roosevelt Crescent, North Vancouver, BC V7P 3R4.

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For more information or to receive our free bequest brochure, contact Deb Kennedy at [debkennedy@naturetrust.bc.ca](mailto:debkennedy@naturetrust.bc.ca) or call 604-924-9771 or 1-866-288-7878.

[www.naturetrust.bc.ca](http://www.naturetrust.bc.ca)





# Resident Non-migratory Canada Geese in Greater Victoria

## Seasonal Distribution and Populational Modelling

By Michael Simmons and Kate Hagmeier

Two years ago Ann Nightingale and Michael Simmons wrote an article for the “The Victoria Naturalist” on the origin of Canada Geese that breed in and around Victoria.<sup>1</sup> Using historical evidence we showed that all Canada Geese now breeding locally are descended from introduced birds. These introductions largely occurred through a Federal – Provincial program initiated in 1974 (smaller-scale, private introductions also occurred some years earlier). Our resulting resident birds are a mix of hybridised subspecies. Canada Geese historically did not breed anywhere on the south Island. At least 5000 resident, non-migratory Canada geese are now in the Greater Victoria area including the Saanich peninsula.

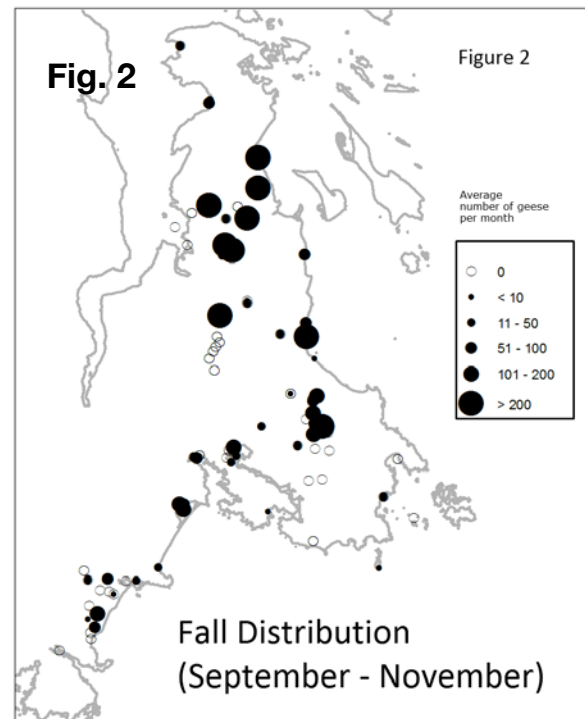
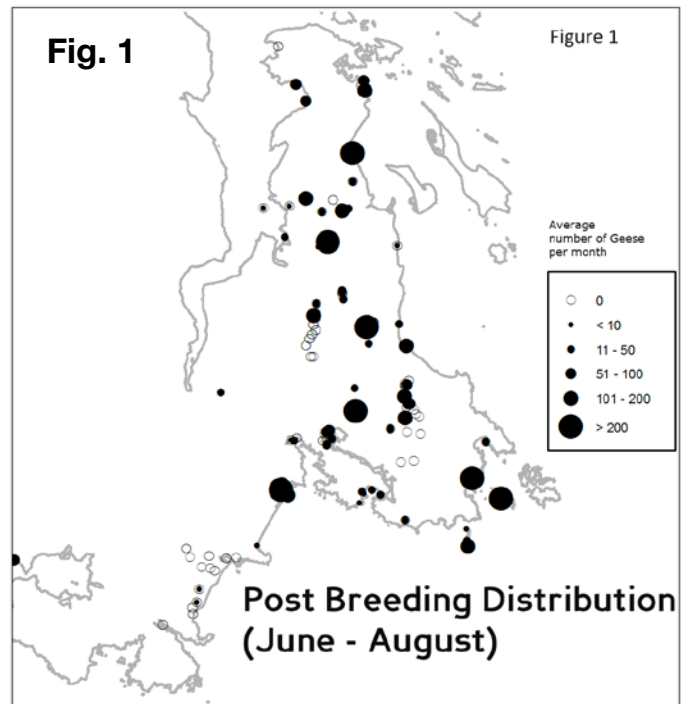
About the time the article was published public concern already existed regarding economic and environmental effects of this resident goose population. In response, preparation of a regional Canada Goose management strategy (RCGMS) was begun. Reports from the strategy can be found at <https://www.crd.bc.ca/plan/planning-other-initiatives/goose-management>

A first activity of the RCGMS was a year-long survey to identify locations of resident Canada Geese. Volunteers, many of whom are members of VNHS, conducted monthly surveys of the numbers of birds at specified locations on fixed routes. An example of results for the immediate post-breeding period (June–August) is shown in Fig. 1.

The survey data were compiled by the RCGMS Consultants (EBB Consulting) and reported in a series of monthly maps which are available on the web site. Counts were not designed to be a census of all resident geese year round, but rather to identify numbers at various critical locations and seasonal movements of the birds within our area.

Looking at the maps considerable seasonal intra-regional movements are apparent. In the June–August period, immediately after nesting and during moult, resident geese occur near lakes and ponds and in sheltered, near shore, salt water. Concentrations occur for example at Oak Bay islands, Esquimalt Lagoon, Elk Lake, Sidney waterfront and near the airport, and at the gravel pits in Central Saanich.

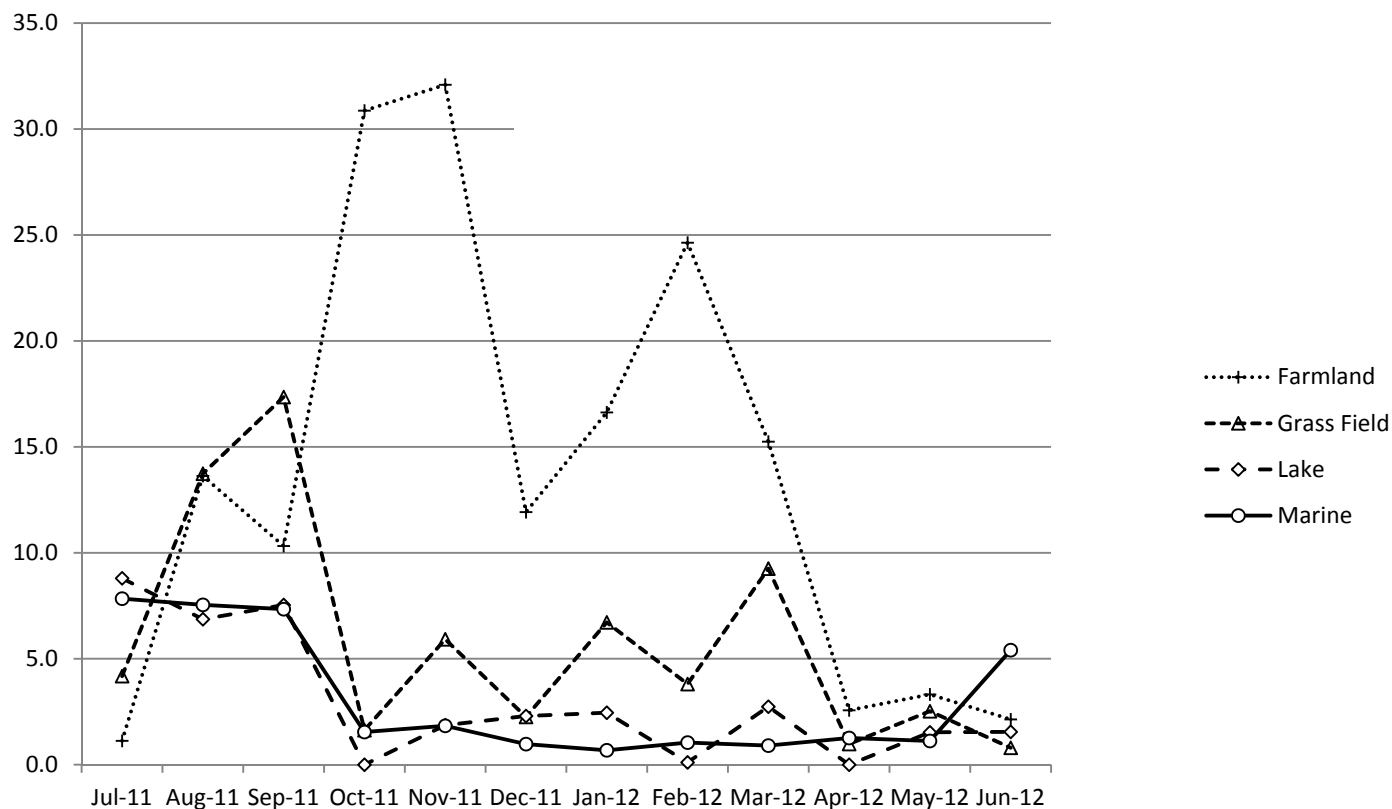
In the following three month period (September–November) the concentrations shifted to farmland in Central Saanich (Martindale and Maber flats, and adjacent to Hagan Creek in the Mt Newton valley), and Tod Creek flats and farmland in the Blenkinsop valley in Saanich (Fig. 2). A similar distribution remained through most of the winter.



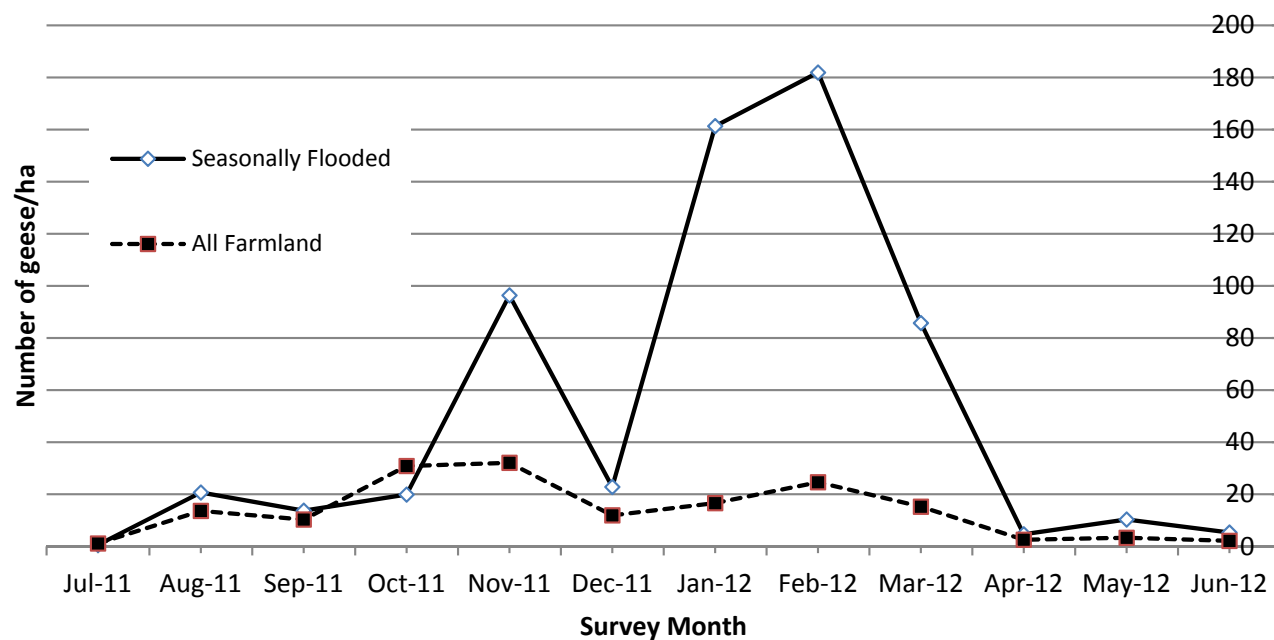
It is these farmland concentrations that explain why farmers have been so concerned about crop and pasture damage inflicted by resident geese. Results of research on farm impacts are found in the reports of the RCGMS. Survey results showed the strong preference for farmland exhibited by resident geese. A plot of annual use of various habitats showed densities of birds for different environments for all areas surveyed (Fig. 3).

Densities on freshwater were highest immediately after nesting, during moult, and until goslings became fully mobile. Densities on salt water showed a similar seasonal pattern of use. Grass fields (including playing fields, golf

**Fig. 3. Density of Canada Geese by Habitat (no/ha/month)**



**Fig. 4. Canada Goose use of Seasonally Flooded Farmland (#gees/ha; July 2011–June 2012)**



courses, and other open space) were also quite heavily used. For much of the year densities were highest on farmland – the early winter average was over 30 birds per hectare. High densities persisted on farmland until nesting began in late March and then resumed when goslings were mobile in August.

When seasonally flooded farmlands, such as the flats north of Victoria on the Saanich peninsula, were examined separately from other farmland, very high densities occurred (Fig. 4). Note that the y-axis (density/ha) is compressed in Figure 4, compared to Figure 3, as density exceeds 180 birds per hectare in February. For six months of the year, throughout the winter from November to April, the resident geese were heavily concentrated on these seasonally flooded fields.

Some of our most sensitive ecosystems have been reported heavily impacted by grazing resident geese. The Goldstream estuary was assessed following an oil spill in early 2011. The biologist in charge of the spill recovery reported that the area affected by resident Canada geese amounted to an area several hundred times larger than that impacted by the spilled fuel (Ian Bruce, RPBio, Executive Director Peninsula Streams Society, pers. comm). The warden of the Trial Islands Ecological Reserve reported that Trial Island has perhaps the highest concentration of plant species at risk compared to any similar sized location in Canada and the invasive [non-migratory resident] Canada geese pose the greatest risk to these rare plant communities (Matt Fairbairns, Warden, Trial Island Ecological Reserve, pers. comm.). Similar impacts have been documented in estuaries north of the GVA in Parksville-Qualicum by Dawe and others.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout North America efforts have been made to manage the rapidly increasing numbers of resident geese.

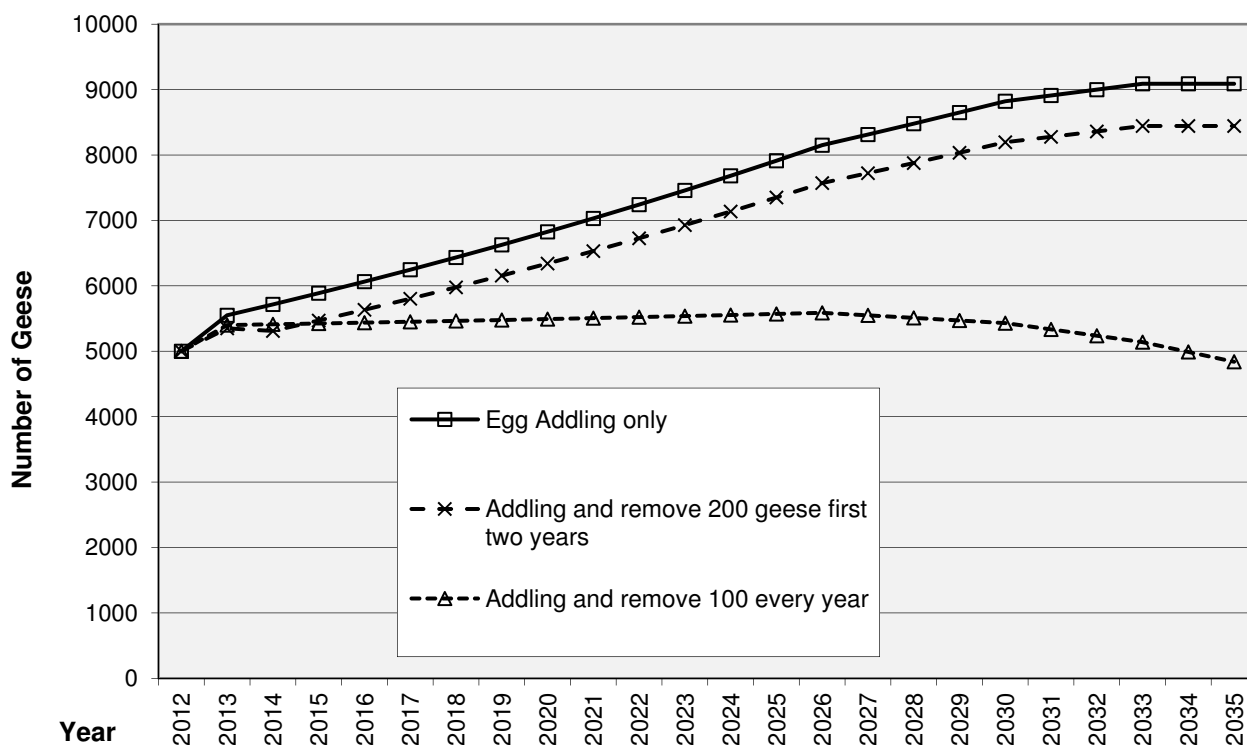
Strategies include habitat modification, relocation, hazing (scaring birds in one area so they move to another), hunting, egg addling and culling. Of these strategies the RCGMS has concluded relocation is not an option, but that all other potential interventions should be considered and most probably used in combination with each other. Reports on the RCGMS web site provides details on what is involved with each type of intervention.

Recently bag and possession limits for hunters and the timings of open seasons have been relaxed by the Canada Wildlife Service of Environment Canada to increase management through hunting. Advice on habitat modification is available from consultants and pamphlets<sup>3</sup> have been prepared to assist land owners considering changing land use and land cover (see the RCGMS web site). Hazing is used by managers of recreational facilities (especially golf courses and playing fields), but may unduly stress birds and only moves the problem to neighbouring lands.

The RCGMS reports include an analysis of effects various interventions could have on population numbers under several scenarios. Three published scenarios are shown in the graph below (Fig. 5), each assuming an initial number of 5,000 adult birds.

To understand the graph, knowledge of each type of possible intervention is necessary. Egg addling is the process of sterilizing eggs in the nest. By addling and not removing eggs from the nest, the female will continue to incubate until she is past the nesting season. If eggs are removed from a nest the female adult will lay more eggs and, in experimental situations, have produced up to 80 eggs in a season. The limitations of addling are that not all nests are found and

**Fig. 5. Projected Population Growth – Selected Management Scenarios**





timing is critical for success. In addition, to be effective, addling must be done every year without exception. Removal refers to lethal removal (through hunting or a kill program).

In the first scenario, addling alone, the rate of population increase is slowed, but as geese may live in excess of 20 years or more, the decline in population growth does not occur for at least 20 years, by which time the population has almost doubled to 9,000 birds.

The second scenario adds removal of 100 adults each year for the first two years only. Removal could be by hunting or a kill program. The population model shows almost no impact on total population if removal of birds is only done for the first two years. Similar to the first scenario the maximum number of birds is reached after 20 years, but with a slightly smaller total population of 8,500 birds.

The third scenario also assumes a continuing egg addling program and continual annual removal of 100 adult birds. The model suggests that this approach would immediately stabilize the population at about 5,000 birds. A small decline in numbers would occur each year starting after about 15 years. Removal of a larger number of birds each year would hasten the decline in numbers.

Once started, such programs have to be continued or population growth will quickly rebound. Recall that the numbers in Greater Victoria increased from approximately 100 resident birds in the late 1970s to 5,000 birds 25 years later in 2000.

The first RCGMS report was accepted by the CRD just over one year ago, and management actions are carefully being implemented. Since then a pilot egg addling program has been conducted and more are planned. A training workshop for land owners was held recently. Hunting bag limits have been increased and open seasons relaxed. The benefit of a cull is being explored. The effects of each of these approaches will be examined in an adaptive management framework. Combined with our baseline data, population modeling tools, and response from farmers and other stakeholders, we will be able to determine how to effectively manage and maintain a sustainable regional population of resident Canada Geese.

If you have comments or suggestions for the RCGMS please contact either of the authors at [simmonsm@telus.net](mailto:simmonsm@telus.net) and /or [hagmeier@ebbconsulting.ca](mailto:hagmeier@ebbconsulting.ca) or the Working Group Chair, Mike Waters [mwaters@crd.bc.ca](mailto:mwaters@crd.bc.ca)

<sup>1</sup> The Canada Goose on southern Vancouver Island – Is it An Alien and Invasive Species? Ann Nightingale and Michael Simmons. The Victoria Naturalist, 67-6 2011

<sup>2</sup> Botanical Electronic News – 450 [www.ou.edu/cas/botany-micro/ben/ben450.html](http://www.ou.edu/cas/botany-micro/ben/ben450.html)

<sup>3</sup> Managing Canada Geese in Urban Environments – Cornell University AE Smith 2000. <https://dspace.library.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/66/2/Managing%20Canada%20Geese>



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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 19 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column.

**Sylvia Tritthardt and George Moppett**

*All aspects of nature and nature photography*

**Courtney and Matthew Cameron**

*Birding, trail running, music*

**Russel Markel**

*Kelp forest ecology, conservation biology*

**Barry McKee**

**Julia Daly**

*Ecology, geography, botany, ornithology, marine biology, NATURE!*

**Brenda Montgomery**

*Birds, flowers, trees, water but not fish or insects, yet*

**Cierra Dahlquist**

*Healthy/local/organic/veg food, gardening, yoga, meditation, long walks and sits in nature, "slow zen jogging", writing, dancing, full moon celebrations, brewing non-alcoholic fermented beverages*

# What is the Gonys?

By Jeremy Tatum

If you look in the introductory pages of a bird book, you will often find a picture of a bird, designed to illustrate the technical names of the parts of a bird's external anatomy. Prominent in the illustration will be two words – "CULMEN" and "GONYS" – with bold arrows pointing prominently and apparently unambiguously to the upper and lower mandibles respectively of the bird's bill. One may surely be forgiven if one comes away with the impression that "culmen" means the upper mandible, and "gonys" means the lower mandible. Forgiven, perhaps, but it is not quite right.

The culmen is actually the uppermost ridge of the upper mandible. It is the fore-and-aft line at the very top of the upper mandible. The word is Latin for "roof", and from it we get the word "culmination", meaning "reaching the highest point".

The meaning of the word "gonys" is not quite so clear, and sometimes it seems to have as many meanings as there are people who use it. One could, I suppose, consult a professional avian anatomist, who could give you with complete confidence a precise formal definition – but the trouble with that approach is that you could quite easily find another equally prominent avian anatomist who, with similar confidence, would give you a quite different meaning.

The etymological derivation of the word is equally uncertain, for the word gonys with that exact spelling is not to be found in classical Latin or Greek, although it is at least plausible to suppose that it comes from the same Greek root that gave us "trigonometry", so that gonys refers to some angle. Although this explanation is very likely, it is not without difficulties. If gonys means "angle", then one has to ask what in the world is meant by "gonydeal angle" – a tautology if ever there was one!

If we accept, however, that "gonys" means "angle", then we also have to ask to what angle does it refer? I can suggest three choices, and I have heard or read the word used in all three senses. Perhaps it means the lowermost ridge, or keel, of the bird's lower mandible. This would make a comfortable convenience, for gonys would be to the lower mandible what culmen is to the upper mandible. A convenience, perhaps, but the word is not universally used in that sense.

Anyone who watches gulls will note that the lower mandible of many of the larger gulls has a prominent bulge or angle just before the tip. It is this bulge that some people refer to when using the word "gonys". Indeed the bird in our illustration of the bird's anatomy may well be a gull, and the arrow from the word "GONYS" will be seen to be pointing at this bulge. Thus, the arrow is not as unambiguous as we first thought it was. One will hear it said, for example, that a Western Gull has a prominent gonys, but a Black-legged

Kittiwake has no gonys. To those who believe that the gonys is the lower mandible, or the lowermost ridge of the lowermost mandible, it will come as a surprise to learn that a kittiwake doesn't have one! And if "gonys" does indeed refer to the bulge, the phrase "gonydeal protuberance" gives us another striking tautology.

There is a third possible meaning. If you look at the bill of a bird from beneath, for most birds (maybe with a few exceptions – ducks come to mind) it looks something like the letter Y. The angle, then, between the arms of the Y is the gonys. I believe this was the meaning of the word "gonys" in the earlier literature, though I don't think that many use the word in this sense today. Or, if the gonys means the point where the arms and the stem of the Y meet, then it would make some sense to talk about the "angle at the gonys".

So, really, then, what does the word mean? Until the International Ornithological Union (if there is such a body – which I don't think there is) comes up with a formal Resolution defining exactly what the word means, ambiguity will remain. Until then, what should we do? Whether or not we choose to use the word when writing about birds will depend on the purpose of our writing. If we wish to convey to our readers that we are persons of great learning and that we are familiar with the meanings of difficult words of which the uneducated masses are ignorant, then let us by all means use whatever impressive words we can find. If, on the other hand, we wish our readers actually to understand without ambiguity what we are writing about, we could either avoid the word altogether, or, on first using the word in an article, define exactly what we mean by it. Otherwise our readers may not understand or will misunderstand our otherwise carefully-crafted prose.

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# BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

## Native Plant Garden Tour, May 4

Join HAT for their annual Native Plant Garden Tour on Sunday afternoon, May 4th. Bring the whole family for a free tour filled with new friends, experiences, and ideas for your own property. You'll visit six public and four private gardens of all sizes and ages. Some gardens are strictly native while others incorporate native species with imported ornamentals. Shady forest gardens, sunny rock outcrops, wetlands, nurseries, ponds, and plants await your visit. Visitors will meet garden owners and professional native plant experts at each location. For more information, please contact Todd Carnahan, Land Care Coordinator, Habitat Acquisition Trust 250-995-2428 [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca)

## International Migratory Bird Day (FREE Drop-in Event)—All ages

**Saturday, May 10**

### Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park (Saanich)

Celebrate the return of our feathered friends! May 10 is International Migratory Bird Day. Join CRD Regional Parks, Rocky Point Bird Observatory and the Victoria Natural History Society from **9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.** to learn more about the journey that birds take from their summer and winter homes. This free drop-in event offers engaging activities for birders of all ages, expertise and abilities. Participate in guided walks, mist-netting demonstrations, hummingbird and passerine banding demonstrations, children's activities and presentations. And there will be **Raptors**. Look for the tents adjacent to the nature centre off the Beaver Lake Road. Contact Ann Nightingale at [ann@motmot.ca](mailto:ann@motmot.ca) or 250-514-6450 for more information.

## Metchosin BioBlitz II, May 23 and 24

A BioBlitz is an intense 24-hour census of wildlife populations in a given area. At Metchosin's third BioBlitz in 2013, 55 taxonomic specialists found more than 1200 different species. On Saturday, May 24, new teams of specialists will fan out over Metchosin to count, count, count. Members of the public are invited to join a search team. You don't have to be an expert to be on the teams – you can learn as you go. Meet us at the Mel Cooper cabin of the Boys and Girls Club at 8:30 a.m. and/or 1:00 p.m. The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be joining the Birding segment of this event. Birders meet at the Mel Cooper cabin (3900 Metchosin Rd) at 7:30 a.m. Join us also on Friday night, May 23th, at the Metchosin Council Chambers (7:00 p.m.) for slide presentations on Metchosin species. Further information and maps are on the BioBlitz web site at <http://metchosinbiodiversity.com>. Contact Moralea Milne, [moraleamilne@gmail.com](mailto:moraleamilne@gmail.com) or 250-478-3838, for further information.

## World Oceans Day

**Sunday, June 8 – 11am–3pm in Beacon Park (Sidney)**

[VNHS will have a booth at this event] This U.N.-designated holiday was established to raise global awareness on issues relating to the ocean. The Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre will be celebrating with a free event taking place on the grass

behind the aquarium/Pier Hotel building. Activities will include: marine-related games, face painting, a live performance from local band Cookeilidh. Bring your kids, your dog, and your desire to learn more about our beautiful oceans! As an added bonus, the Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre is offering a discount on admission for the entire day: one child (17 yrs or younger) admitted free with each paid adult. <http://www.oceandiscovery.ca/world-oceans-day>

## Trophic Cascade (Video)

We recommend this fascinating short film of how the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone Park had a transformative and beneficial effect on the ecosystem, an effect known as a trophic cascade. It is narrated by the distinguished journalist and author George Monbiot, whose latest book is *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding* <http://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/how-wolves-change-rivers/#.Uv-6bfojUYR.facebook>.

## 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.

## Young Naturalists' Club seeks: Adult with a big heart & love of the outdoors!

The Young Naturalists Club of BC is recruiting for two volunteer co-leaders for the Victoria Home Learners Family Club. Very rewarding volunteer position helping to organize a monthly 'Explorer Day' field trip, outdoors as much as possible generally during the week. YNC programs are designed to get children aged 5–12 years old and their families outside exploring nature! Contact Tammy Keetch, YNC Nature Clubs Coordinator at [coordinator@ync.ca](mailto:coordinator@ync.ca); [www.ync.ca](http://www.ync.ca). References required.

## For Sale!

A collection of good to excellent condition RBCM handbooks and Lewis and Clarke field guides are available for sale. Seller would prefer to sell as a collection, but will consider selling books separately. Prices range from \$2–16. Contact Gail Harcombe [g.harcombe@shaw.ca](mailto:g.harcombe@shaw.ca) for a complete list, prices, and shipping information.

## Wondering how you can receive The Victoria Naturalist as a PDF?

For the **electronic edition** of our newsletter, where you can see the scaup, saxifrage, sculpins, snakes and scenery in **glorious colour**, it's very easy – contact Darren Copley ([dccopley@telus.net](mailto:dccopley@telus.net)) or, when you renew your membership, just check the box on the form that indicates you would like to receive the newsletter as a PDF via email.



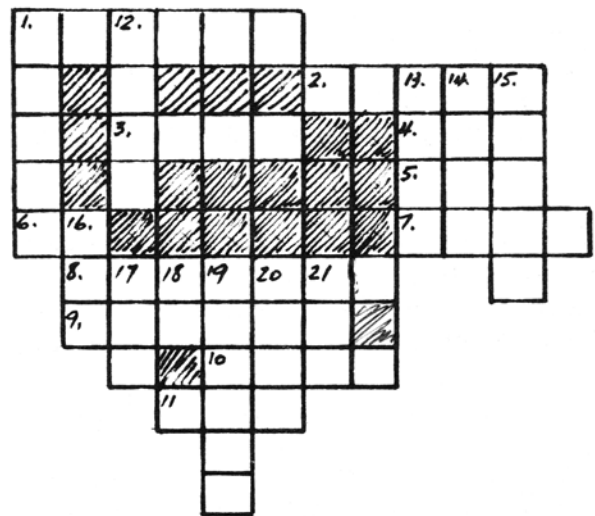
Reprinted from the Victoria Naturalist, 1976, Vol.32, No.5  
(originally from a 1953 issue).

ACROSS:

1. Australian bird (pet)
2. A number
3. Growth on your toe
4. Sighing noise
5. Cone-bearing tree
6. You
7. Biting insect
8. Idea
9. Middle
10. Mud
11. Small jump

DOWN:

1. Easter symbol
12. Water bird
13. Fishing tool
14. Frozen rain
15. Number
16. And so forth
17. Not him
18. Not off
19. Top limit
20. Hold
21. Same as 17



Look for the answers in the next issue of the newsletter!

## 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.**

**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 for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the society.

### SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Meets every Saturday morning, 7:30 a.m., rain or shine. Call the Rare Bird Alert (250-704-2555) or check <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/rarebird.html> on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. For more details, email **Agnes** at [thelynn@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynn@shaw.ca). Novice and experienced VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.

**NEW:** Note that for most of the field trips listed in the calendar, unless another name shows as contact person, email **Agnes Lynn** at [thelynn@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynn@shaw.ca) or phone her at 250-721-0634 for more information. Unless otherwise noted, birding leader is usually **Rick Shortinghuis**.

## MAY

### Saturday, May 3

#### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Birding Witty's Lagoon*

Join us on this visit to an important resting and feeding area for migrating birds. The trail at Witty's Lagoon drops quickly via a scenic waterfall to the beach. Enjoy the birds such as resident Brown Creepers in the woods on the way down mixed with the migrant warblers and vireos. Watch for shorebirds such as dowitchers or yellowlegs along the estuary and in the saltmarsh behind the beach. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the main parking lot on Metchosin Road (across from golf course). Contact **Rick Shortinghuis** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes Lynn** at [thelynn@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynn@shaw.ca) for more information.

### Sunday, May 4

#### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Enjoy the Birds at Panama Flats*

Join us at Panama Flats which is former farm land now owned by Saanich. It has berms holding water that provide waterfowl and shorebird habitat. It has proved to be one of the best spot in the region for shorebirds. The area is also surrounded by shrubbery providing habitat for good woodland birds as well. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking lot at Hyacinth Park on Marigold Avenue. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at [thelynn@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynn@shaw.ca) for more information.

## Saturday, May 10

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Early Birding Walk on International Migratory Bird Day**

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be joining in with the International Migratory Bird Day events this week. We will check out the trails and the lakeshore to see what migrants have joined the resident birds in this productive area. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the main parking lot at Beaver Lake. To reach this parking lot, turn on to Beaver Lake Road off Elk Lake Drive (parallels the Pat Bay Highway). There is a large park sign at this intersection. For other events planned for the day, see more information in the Bulletin Board (p.20) or on the VNHS web site <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>. Contact **Rick Schortinghuis** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Sunday, May 11

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### **Birding Viaduct Flats**

Join us in birding Viaduct Flats and the surrounding area, including up Broadcast Hill. Water birds are still coming through and migrant passerines are flitting about in the trees. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot at the foot of Viaduct Ave. which is off of Interurban Rd. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Friday, May 16

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Birding Along Lochside Trail at Blenkinsop Lake**

Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. Migrants such as swallows, Black-headed Grosbeaks and Yellow Warblers will have joined the residents such as Cooper's Hawks and Downy Woodpeckers. Meet at 7:30 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Saturday, May 17

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### **Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mountain Road**

Join us in this very productive birding area. This trail, mostly under power lines, is a great place to see warblers, vireos and flycatchers. This is the most reliable spot for MacGillivray's Warbler. Take the Trans-Canada Highway to the Millstream Road exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Road. Right at Stewart Mountain Road and meet at the mailboxes at 7:30 a.m. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Saturday, May 17 to Sunday, May 25

### 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](mailto:tanageraz@yahoo.com).

## Sunday, May 18

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### **Scramble up the Back of Mount Douglas**

Join us in birding and botanizing Mount Douglas. If the weather is sunny, it is also a great spot for butterflies. We should get a good number of warblers, flycatchers and vireos. Also Western Tanager, House Wren and Chipping Sparrow are likely. The late wildflowers such as Menzies' Larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*)

and Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) should still be good as well. Please note the trail is steep but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the new parking lot to the right off Blenkinsop Rd just north of Lohbrunner Road on the left. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Monday, May 19

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### **Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail from Sooke Potholes to Leechtown**

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds, and scenery along the way. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km along Sooke River Road (off Sooke Road). Bring a lunch. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 for more information.

## Friday, May 23

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Birding Mount Newton**

Join us on this leisurely loop on the south side of Mount Newton looking for spring migrants in this area of mixed forest and large rural lots. This is a great area to see Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-throated Grey Warblers, and Mourning Doves. Take East Saanich Road to Haldon Road. Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton Heights at 7:30 a.m. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Saturday, May 24

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### **Early Birding Walk at Metchosin BioBlitz**

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be joining the Birding segment of the Metchosin BioBlitz this week. Meet at the Mel Cooper cabin (3900 Metchosin Rd) at 7:30 a.m. You will fan out with a group from there. Or perhaps you might wish to take part with another segment such as with the botanists, mycologists or any of the other specialty groups taking part. See more details about the Metchosin BioBlitz in the Bulletin Board (p.20) as well as on the website [www.metchosiniversity.com](http://www.metchosiniversity.com). Contact **Ann Nightingale** at [motmot@shaw.ca](mailto:motmot@shaw.ca) or 250-514-6450 for more information about the birding.

## Sunday, May 25

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Saanichton Spit – a Rare Coastal Dune Ecosystem**

This spit is one of the best examples of an intact dune system in the province. Despite it being an excellent birding spot, we will concentrate this visit on the plants that are especially adapted to grow in this fragile environment. Also, maybe we'll see the rare Sand Verbena Moth while we are examining the patches of Yellow Sand Verbena that the moth must have to survive. **Bryce Kendrick** will be our guide. He is well known for his many talents but he still takes the time to be part of a team of volunteers who have been working to remove the invasive species such as Scotch Broom from the site. Not long ago, there was a significant project conducted to investigate the current status of the spit and determine guidelines as to how to best protect the natural environment as well as respect the Tsawout Nations traditional use of this land. You might wish to do some preliminary reading about this project at <http://tsawout.com/files/Lands/TIXEN%20-%20Rare%20plant%20report.pdf>. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. Out of respect for the Tsawout Nations whose

lands we must go through to reach the spit, contact **Agnes** for access details. We will carpool to the site. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for this information closer to the date.

### **Saturday, May 31**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Observatory Hill (Little Saanich Mountain) Birding Walk***

Join us on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain. Flycatchers, Western Tanagers, House Wrens and a variety of woodpeckers are some of the birds we might find. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the bottom of the road leading up the mountain (5071 West Saanich Road). Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## **JUNE**

### **Sunday, June 1**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Butterflies, Birds and Blooms on Mount Tolmie***

Join us for a natural history walk on Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Saturday, June 7**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

#### ***Birding the Power Lines and the Ponds at the Hydro Substation near Francis King Park***

Join us for a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the Hydro substation. This is a great place to hear or see most of the warblers, vireos and flycatchers that we have in our area. This is the most reliable spot for Black-throated Grey Warbler. This is a four-to-five hour walk. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Francis King Park Nature House on Munns Road. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Sunday, June 8**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Searching for the Native Grasses of the Garry Oak Ecosystem on Lone Tree Hill***

Join **James Miskelly** while he shows us some native grasses of the Garry Oak ecosystem in amongst the last of the spring wildflowers on Lone Tree Hill. 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 at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday, June 14**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Birding Jordan River Area***

Join us for a trip to Jordan River. In the past, it has been a hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall and it is a great place to hear Fox Sparrows singing in the spring. As well as beat the bushes for all the fresh migrants, we will scan the ocean and the shoreline. We never know what might be out there. Meet at

7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Bring a lunch. Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Sunday, June 15**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

#### ***Duncan Butterflies***

Join us on our search for the amazing array of butterflies in this area. This trip is weather dependent. It needs to be sunny to make it worthwhile. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park and Ride to car-pool or at 10:00 a.m. at the entrance to the boardwalk at Somenos Marsh in Duncan (off the highway north of Beverly). Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 if the weather is doubtful or for more information.

### **Saturday, June 21**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Birding the Duncan Area***

We will enjoy a walk along the productive Dock Rd and then we will try to find a Red-eyed Vireo plus other warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool or at 8:00 a.m. at Cowichan Bay Dock Road (north of the intersection of Cowichan Bay Road and Tzouhalem Road). Contact **Rick** at 250-885-2454 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Saturday, June 21 to Sunday, June 29**

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, June 22**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Tracking Animals***

We had such a great response to Gary's past trips that we are holding one more for those who have not yet taken part. Gary enjoys his adventures in the woods and has a great understanding of those critters that also inhabit these spaces. On this outing, he plans to share some of his knowledge with us so we can understand more of what is around us when we are out enjoying nature. We'll be looking for animal signs such as food caches, rubbing trees, scratch piles, scat, trails, tracks, and the like. We'll be talking about their ways of communication, habits, travel routes and their relationship with one another. To optimize our chance of seeing these signs, we plan to cover about 10 km over about 8 hours. This will include plenty of time for stops of interests and lunch. It will be a slower paced hike with possible small creek crossings. No big hills to climb but rather we'll be using existing trails in forested valleys and gullies where creeks and wetlands are found. These are typically the corridors that animals choose to use. His dog Shadow will be along. She is an integral part of our hike. He'll be talking more about how animals recognize one another's signs. That's where she comes in. But please no other pets. Bring a lunch for the all-day outing. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 8:00 a.m. **You must be a VNHS member to attend, and must register for this event as the number of participants is limited.** Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 after May 4 to register or if you need more information.





Few-flowered shooting star  
(*Dodecatheon pulchellum*)



Red columbine (*Aquilegia  
formosa*)

## **Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Spring Native Plant Sale**

**Saturday and Sunday**

**May 17 and 18, 2014 9:00 a.m., until 3:00 p.m.**

- Over 4,000 plants and hundreds of species
  - Pre orders over \$300 available – prepaid ONLY – call 250 479 0211
  - For more information, visit our website: [www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca)
- Gardening with native plants has many benefits – for you, your community, and wildlife. They adapt easily to residential gardens, use less water once established, and provide year-long habitat for wildlife. Many native flowering plants are true beauties – Menzies larkspur adds a deep intense blue, woolly sunflower spreads lemon yellow in dry hot rocky areas, and flowering red-currant adds a burst of crimson in the spring. Visit the Native Plant Garden at the Nature House. It has beautiful examples of established native shrubs and flowers.

**Please bring boxes or flats for your plants  
Carpool and check our website for additional parking locations**



Broad-leaved stonecrop  
(*Sedum spathulifolium*)



Camas (*Camassia  
leichtlinii*)