

The Victoria **NATURALIST**

JULY
AUGUST
2014
VOL 71.1

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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VICE-PRESIDENT: James Miskelly 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com
TREASURER: Gordon Hart 250-721-1264, gordh19@shaw.ca
SECRETARY: Melissa Frey 250-383-2836, melissa.a.frey@gmail.com

Directors and Committees

Darren Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net (*Membership*)
William Dancer 250-721-5273, w.dancer@telus.net (*Schools Project*)
Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508, g.harcombe@shaw.ca (*Publications*)
James Miskelly 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com (*BC Nature representative*)

Claudia Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net (*Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary representative*)
Ken Sohm 250-658-6115, ksohm@live.com (*Publications*)
Directors at Large:

Melissa Frey 250-383-2836, melissa.a.frey@gmail.com
Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, plambert@pacificcoast.net

Presentation/Field Trip Coordinators

Marine Night: Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, marinenight@pacificcoast.net;
Melissa Frey 250-383-2836, melissa.a.frey@gmail.com
Botany Night: Kristen and James Miskelly 250-544-0455, kristen.miskelly@gmail.com; james.miskelly@gmail.com
Natural History Night and Birders' Night: Claudia Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net
James Clowater (Host Birder's Night) 778-426-0166, clowater@shaw.ca
Field Trip Coordinator: TBA – contact Gail Harcombe until further notice.

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Deadline for next issue: August 1, 2014

Send to: Gail Harcombe

7368 Veyaness Road, Saanichton BC V8M 1M3

Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: g.harcombe@shaw.ca

[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

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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: Arrow-leaved Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*). Photo: Pauline Davis

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

This issue is perhaps more focussed on photographs than usual since our written submissions were somewhat leaner. Our reports vary from the whimsical to the ‘exotic’ – if the Okanagan merits that designation. Several of our members went this year to the annual Meadowlark Festival and we have a few stories from them. I went too as I always find this environment special. Whether you enter the region from the Merritt basin or down into Princeton you experience a difference in the air and more open vistas. You will probably see patches of Balsamroot in the meadows or forest if you take the Princeton route.

Several years ago when we were members of the Vancouver Natural History Society (now Nature Vancouver), I remember in April or early May Richard Cannings getting up at meetings to urge members to visit the Okanagan Valley – ‘what better place to be in May’ or ‘what could be better than doing a *Big Day* in the Okanagan’ sort of thing. And indeed many of us members listened, did go, and were enchanted.

We thank our authors for taking the time to put their thoughts to paper and sharing with us their great photos; remember, the newsletter is part of the glue that keeps our Society together. Keep the submissions coming and have a good summer.

Ken Sohm

Message from the Board

You could be forgiven for being tired of seeing the words *BC Nature AGM* again. However, it was such a successful and memorable event that some comments are appropriate. I was 'around' most days and witnessed a remarkably efficient and happy corps of volunteers. I also attended some excellent lectures. While I didn't go on any of the field trips, they were pretty well all full and I heard many good reports. The banquet was excellent, and the 'keynote speaker' Tom Reimchen was brilliant – that alone was worth the price of admission. On a personal level, I enjoyed meeting some people I hadn't seen in a long time. Thank you to all the great people from BC Nature. Congratulations Ann Nightingale, Ann Scarfe, the huge team of volunteers, and all the trip leaders and speakers who made a huge contribution.

Your board of directors has seen some changes recently. The most significant is that our president, Darren Copley, stepped down after a remarkable six years of duty in the position. Every club should be so lucky as to have such a capable person at the helm. We on the board thank him for handling the many issues that come up for clubs the size of ours; during that period Darren also was responsible for the membership file, a huge job, and will continue in that role. And, in the same breath a big thank you to Claudia Copley who helps our club in so many ways.

I have agreed to take over the president's position though

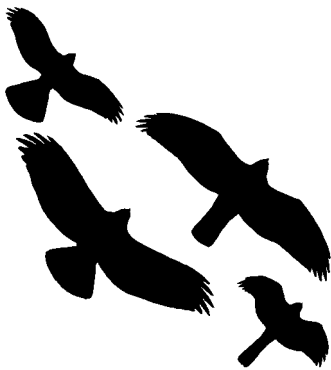
I have not yet seen any sign of the gavel. With or without, I will do my best to answer any concerns and respond to any suggestions that our members may have. With such a competent and hard-working team that we have on the board it should be smooth sailing.

It seems a long time since the last evening presentation, in fact, the end of April. Looking back at the series of talks from early September to late April I think we members are extremely privileged to have access to a variety of talks of such high calibre on nature topics. I hope members that are able to come out to some of those meetings agree. The talks are educational, usually spectacular, often entertaining; the speakers informed, clear and often amusing. In my view, such evenings are much superior to the fare on television, though a good book is also appealing.

On the topic of fall/winter presentations, it has been a long-standing tradition at some of the meetings to have tea, coffee and cookies on offer. Gail Fattore, who has been looking after the tea ceremony at birder's night for several years, has stepped down. We thank her very much for her past service and we are looking for a volunteer(s) to take this over; many members really do appreciate the coffee/tea break.

Enjoy the summer – nature in our region has so much to offer – and maybe you can include some of our many field trips. See you in September.

Ken



VNHS September Social *Saturday September 20, 3:00 p.m.* *following Hawk Watch* *You are invited!*

Join CRD Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for Hawk Watch and then join your fellow VNHS members for a BBQ get-together at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Park. Members are welcome to a free smokie (veggie option available), beverage, cake, and camaraderie! To RSVP, email or phone James: 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com before September 12. Bring a lawn chair.

A reply is only necessary if you plan to come. Please specify number of smokies and whether regular or veggie.

Spring in the Okanagan or “The Magic of Yellow”

By Jules Thomson, Anita Fownes, and Ken Sohm

“When you think about it, the Balsamroot, the Orioles, the Yellow-headed Blackbird, the Clouded Sulphur, the tumbleweed (at the moment, mustard) and one can go on, all are yellow and add greatly to the beauty of this region.”

This year, around twelve people from the Victoria region went to the Okanagan to enjoy the *Western Meadowlark Festival*. This event was started many years ago by a group of southern Okanagan naturalists. The original intent of the event was to sensitize local residents to the beauty, variety and yet fragility of their valley. Now it brings in visitors from far and near, though the bulk of the participants are still local.

This year, as usual, there was a huge variety of events over the four days of the event, covering everything from bats and butterflies to astronomy. Locations went from the valley bottom to high elevations. Some events attracted the energetic; some were designed for the ‘laid back’. In short, something for everyone. Here then are some comments from participants who have offered to share their thoughts:



Secret pathways lake to lake. Photo: Pauline Davis

From Jules:

Brilliant azure flashed against the brown/green rounded hills as the Mountain Bluebird snapped up insects on the wing and a melodious song filled the air. Springtime, for the Mountain Bluebird as it tended to its nest tucked inside a nest box, while the Western Meadowlark belted out a song whilst perched precariously on the tip of sagebrush, or the oft chosen fence post. Greenish, pinkish, salmon red, mixed with a scarf of gray was the stunning coat of the Lewis' Woodpecker flickering amongst the blackened trunks of a past burn.

This was the stuff of our five flora and fauna packed days of the Meadowlark festival in the rolling mounds that shape the Pentiction landscape. We found ourselves tweaking our knowledge of bats [how little we knew]; of approximately 1600 bat species in the world, there are about 16 species in BC. The European species *Plecotus auritus*, the Brown Long-eared Bat, is almost cute, with those huge rabbit-like ears half the length of the bat's body.

Then there was the late night to midnight chase for owls, searching for the Flammulated Owl, the Western Screech Owl, and the Great-horned Owl to no avail, although some distant calls were heard. Just listening to the owl recordings that our intrepid leader played seemed challenging to our ears as the muffled faint sound emitted from the recorder made us wonder who would be the most confused, the owls or us – but such anticipation!



Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). Photo: Jules Thomson

Traipsing round the hills with many a biologist/botanist we were impressed with the wild orchid, the Mountain Lady-slipper (*Cypripedium montanum*) hidden on the forest floor with long copper-coloured sepals twisting about the whitish pouch-like lip. And then the gem of the rose family, the *Geum triflorum*, or Old Man's Whiskers, showy seed clusters, bronze and purple styles in a plume, and of course, the ever prolific Balsamroot with their yellow faces tracking the sun.

We even spent part of a sunny afternoon chasing yellow and blue butterflies with arms swinging the large nets for elusive prey. What a delightful way to meld one's soul with the fascination and complexity of the natural world we live in.



Antelope-brush (*Purshia tridentata*). Photo: Pauline Davis

From Anita:

Musings on my first Meadowlark Festival.

For me, the highlight of the four events for which I registered was the Turnbull Creek Hike with Jim and Ann Ginns. The hike started from Sutherland Road in Naramata where we parked near the KVR trail. Jim and Ann were extremely knowledgeable about the bushes, flowers and invasive plants along the trail that led us to the turn off along Turnbull Creek.

A gentle slope alongside the rushing waters of this “run off water” creek leading to the gushing waterfall gave us more plant names. After a three hour meander our diversion to a cliffside view from the east end of Okanagan Lake and surrounding area was still not at the headwaters of the creek.

Taking in the splendour of the vista while we lunched was pure delight. Descending from there to the backyards of the residences and back to our cars at the KVR trail made a perfect loop for us.

A stunning hike!

Right, top: Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*). Photo: Jules Thomson. Right, bottom: Lewis’s Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*). Photo: Pauline Davis



Vaseux Lake. Photo: Pauline Davis

From Ken:

I chose to enter the region via the road which leads off Hwy 3A after passing Keremeos at the Twin Lakes Golf Course, a quiet road which meanders and climbs into the White Lake Basin. This is one of the best places to see bluebirds. Shortly after the turn off, right by the golf course entrance I stretched my legs after the drive from Princeton and was immediately struck by the Okanagan magic: lush clumps of Arrow-leaved Balsamroot, a glorious showy flower; movement alerting me to a Hoary Marmot scuttling to safety. (I was to see many more, even within the precincts of Penticton). Literally scores of whitish butterflies were busy on the bankside; on close inspection I found them to be Stella Orangetips, the Okanagan version of our Sara's Orangetip. Two sapsuckers hammered at a hydro pole and finches were singing overhead. An Osprey made a brief appearance overhead. Combined with the warm aromatic breeze, it made a great start to my trip.

During the festival I greatly enjoyed the butterfly and

plant walk near White Lake alluded to above by Jules with Dennis St John, who caught us many varieties, identified many flowers and discussed the butterfly/flower food plant associations. He figures about 112 butterfly species for the south Okanagan. The previous day he had noted 18 butterfly species and two moth species. The day we were out, slightly overcast at times, yielded seven species, commonest being the Silvery and Common Blues and the Clouded Sulphur.

Another great trip took us up via Kilpoola Lake to the mountain top close to the US border. On the way many ponds and lakes yielded good ducks including Cinnamon Teal; at the top the views are magnificent and the flowers and butterflies lovely.

Amongst my most memorable experiences was on one morning at Vaseux Lake where, with Carp splashing wildly nearby and constant music from the Marsh Wrens, I watched a couple of Red-necked Grebes – with lustrous necks now matching their names – building their well-screened nest in the reeds.



Upper left: Scarlet Gilia (*Ipomopsis aggregata* var. *aggregata*). Lower left: Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). Photos: Jules Thomson



Upper right: Yellow morel (*Morchella* sp.), Penticton
Lower right: Black morel (*Morchella* sp.), upper elevation.

Photos: Pauline Davis

BC Nature AGM and Conference a Big Success!

By Ann Nightingale



VICTORIA NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY

For the first time in twelve years, Victoria was the host city for the BC Nature Annual General Meeting and Conference in May. Jointly hosted by Rocky Point Bird Observatory and the Victoria Natural History Society, the conference was supported by more than 60 volunteers handling everything from registration to field trip leading. The event was launched with an all-day field trip to Avatar Grove and Botanical Beach on Thursday, followed by more than 20 field trips and presentations over the four-day conference. More than 200 participants, mostly from BC Nature member clubs, attended what has been touted as one of the best BC Nature Conferences ever!

On Thursday night, after a welcome reception, Dr. Briony Penn spoke of the work of Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, a legend in natural history circles in this area.

Friday was filled with field trips and presentations covering everything from botany to spiders to marine invertebrates. One of the biggest “complaints” was that there was so much going on, that mere mortals couldn’t take everything in! On Friday evening, a sold-out reception allowed 100 people to tour the new Robert Bateman Centre, to be joined for a special presentation by Mr. Bateman, who provided some insight into the inspiration for his artwork.

On Saturday morning, the field trips and presentations continued, followed by the official reason for holding the conference – the BC Nature AGM itself. Her Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, Judith Guichon opened the AGM. It’s great to have someone with a true interest in natural history in such a

Photos: Val George



Striped Coralroot (*Corallorhiza striata* var. *striata*).



From left: Menzies' Larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii* ssp. *menziesii*); Meadow Death-Camas (*Toxicoscordion venenosum* var. *venenosum*); Common Camas (*Camassia* sp.); Sea Blush (*Plectritis congesta*).

position of influence in the province! MLA Spencer Chandra Herbert, Environment Critic, also talked to the assembly about the importance of his role in the legislature. The AGM included the expected financial and administrative reports and the election of a new executive for BC Nature. After a very successful term in office, John Neville has become past-president, and BC Nature's new president, Kees Visser, was introduced. The full AGM report can be viewed at <http://www.bcnature.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2014-Annual-report-AGM-version-web.pdf>

A banquet was held on Saturday evening with about 150 participants in attendance. A local highlight was the recognition of Cam and Joy Finlay for their contributions to natural history education and study. Tom Reimchen was the keynote speaker, enlightening the group with details on how bears and salmon contribute to the health of the forest.

Sunday morning rounded out the event with several "going home" field trips. Feedback received from participants was overwhelmingly positive on all aspects of the event. Throughout the conference, a silent auction was held, featuring items that were generously donated by individuals and businesses. Special thanks go out to the organizing committee: Ann Nightingale, Claudia Copley, Donna Ross, Marilyn Lambert, Melissa Frey, John Costello, Ann Scarfe, Phil Lambert, Mike Motek, Jo Motek, Don Kramer and Mia Frankl, and to local business sponsors: Vancouver Island Brewery, Bateman Centre, B&C Foods, Spinnakers, Salt Spring Island Cheese, Oh La La Cupcakes, Birds and Beans, Cafe Brio, Royal BC Museum, Sea Cider, The Nature Conservancy of Canada, Shaw Discovery Centre, Rockfish Divers.

Funds raised from the BC Nature Annual General Meeting have gone to Rocky Point Bird Observatory and BC Nature. Because the Victoria Natural History often provides funding to Rocky Point Bird Observatory, it was decided that their portion of the proceeds would be the contribution for this year.



Photos: Sharon Godkin

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Brief Reports on Recent Field Trips

The following is not intended as a comprehensive species account – simply a subjective report on a few of the recent botany/birding trips in which all members may participate.

Mt Wells, early April: This was primarily to see the lush patches of Satin Flowers. It is a long walk though not overly steep and, as was promised, at a gentle pace. And the Satin Flowers were out in all their delicate glory. The top of the hill, the lunch stop, has great views and fortunately it was a mild, sunny day. The forest is exceptionally still and noise-free so that bird song such as that of the Pacific Wren carries. Many flowers were identified on the way up, the showiest being the Chickweed Monkey-flower and the Trailing Yellow Violet.

Honeymoon Bay April 21: A car-pooler trip from Helmcken Park & Ride. The weather was somewhat cloudy when setting out but warm. There were a few showers but not enough to spoil the experience. This small ecological reserve has a wide variety of outstanding flowers and good, level trails. Some of the showiest plants were Hooker's Fairybells, Pacific Bleeding Heart, Lyall's Anemone, and

banks of saxifrage and American Winter cress. For the first-timers, a large identification chart was available, showing the salient plants. Some interesting birds put on a display for us, notably a Dipper, two Red-breasted Sapsuckers, a singing Pacific Wren, and a flycatcher which we decided was probably the Pacific-slope Flycatcher.

Saanichton Spit, late May: led by Bryce Kendrick. Bryce has been doing volunteer work involving plant analysis and broom eradication on this delicate ecosystem for quite a while and it was our privilege to be invited along for a slow stroll along the paths through a dune habitat, returning via part of the salt marsh. Prominent here were Indian Consumption Plant, Beach Morning-Glory (already a few showy pink flowers out), Thrift (Sea-Pink), and Yellow Sand-verbena. The highlights for many keen botanists in the group were Salt Marsh Dodder and a spectacular example of Beach-Carrot (American Glehnia or Beach silvertop). The former is a spindly red, leafless parasitic plant which, if it doesn't find a host plant to adhere to, dies.

Birds were noted, amongst which Savannah and White-crowned Sparrows; however the exciting moment came as



Lilies and violets. *Photo: Agnes Lynn*

we were leaving the Spit: sharp eyes spotted a large shore-bird which, after some discussion was identified as the Long-billed Curlew, with a Greater Yellowlegs nearby. A good opportunity to compare sizes.

The big virtue of these trips, in my view, is that they are usually small groups of up to eight people; there is no



Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*). Photo: Sharon Godkin



Sand Verbena (*Abronia latifolia*). Photo: Ken Sohm

worry crowding the leader so as not to miss information. Even more important is that participants find out about some of the very special locations we have in our region. Agnes, often the leader, is sometimes apologetic that not more flowers are out but we know that our flower season encompasses several months. We can and should return to some of these sites later on to enjoy the development of our regional 'flower show.' The Honeymoon Bay outing involves car-pooling and is a good one to participate in so that our 'footprint' is lessened.



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Participate in the First Annual Bat Count!

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director,
Habitat Acquisition Trust

HAT is seeking volunteers to participate in the first Annual Bat Count in an effort to learn more about bats around Victoria and in B.C. In Greater Victoria, the Count is being coordinated by Habitat Acquisition Trust, while other B.C. Community Bat Projects and the Ministry of Environment are organizing counts in the rest of B.C.

Why count bats, and why now? Simply put, biologists don't know much about the population and distribution of bats in British Columbia, and as bat populations plummet in eastern North America, there is an urgent need to learn more if we are going to have the tools to conserve bats here. Bats have contended with severe habitat loss in Victoria for a long time. We have lost over 80% of the wetland and riparian areas where most of our bats feed and the majority of wild-life trees where they roost. But an even more deadly threat has emerged that is endangering bat populations across North America.

White Nose Syndrome, like bats themselves, is still poorly understood. It is a fungus that first appeared in 2007 in the eastern U.S., and its name comes from the characteristic "white nose" that bats affected by the disease have. Biologists still do not know where the fungus originated, or how it arrived here, but they have seen firsthand the effects it has on bats. In winter roosts infected with the fungus, 95% or more of the bats die, wiping out entire colonies in a single year. The fungus has spread into Canada, perhaps on bats migrating or on the clothing of people entering bat colonies, and it is now present in four provinces. The Little Brown Myotis was once one of the most common and wide-spread bats in North America, but has suffered so greatly from White Nose Syndrome that they were recommended for Endangered Species status in 2012, and some biologists predict they will be extinct in eastern North America within the next 20 years.

White Nose Syndrome continues to spread west. The bad news is that at its current rate, the fungus is expected to reach B.C. within the next 10 years. The good news is that it is not here yet. At least, biologists don't think so, but the reality is that we know so little about our bat populations in much of B.C. that we might not be able to tell if White Nose Syndrome has arrived.

What we do know about bats in B.C. reveals that they are fascinating animals that defy much of what people often intuit about them. There are around ten species of bats on Vancouver Island, including the Little Brown Myotis mentioned above. All of them are insectivores and are easily the most important nighttime predator of insects in Canada.



A Little Brown Myotis can eat 1000 mosquitoes and moths an hour!

Despite a superficial resemblance to mice, bats are not rodents, and their life history is almost the polar opposite of those most-maligned mammals. Bats live long lives, over 30 years for some local species. They reproduce slowly. Most species give birth to just one pup a year, though some species occasionally have twins.

Similarly, finding bats in buildings is nothing to be alarmed about. They do not chew insulation or wiring, and will not damage the house. Typically, a colony of bats in a building will be a maternity colony, often with two or more species gathering together. In these colonies, mother bats congregate to give birth and rear their young (we won't mention male bats – they are not great role models). After giving birth, the pups probably learn to fly in a few months.

Bats have often been accused of spreading disease,



Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*).

Below: Cori Lausen, a bat specialist.

Photos:
Christian Engelstoft



particularly rabies. It is true that a few bats carry rabies, and bats found on the ground should be treated with caution. However, it is extremely rare, with less than 1 in 1000 bats randomly tested in the wild being positive. If you find a bat in your house, use leather gloves or a container to gently remove it. The other disease sometimes associated with bats is histoplasmosis, a fungal lung infection. In tropical countries, this disease has transmitted from guano to people, but this has never been recorded in British Columbia.

There's a lot we don't know: where most of our bat colonies are, where our bats go in the winter, how the population of bats is changing. Which is where the Bat Count comes in. By volunteering your time, you can help establish baseline data about bats. Volunteers wait outside a known roost site, such as a bat house, barn, bridge or attic, and count bats as they fly out at twilight. Volunteers use a hand tally counter to count the bats. They record the final count along with some basic information on weather conditions. Ideally, two counts are done between June 1 and 21 before pups fly, and two more between July 21 and August 15 when pups are flying with their mothers.

Please participate in the Bat Count – it will help us learn more about these amazing creatures and there are worse ways to spend a summer evening than watching bats flit in the sunset. If you would like to participate, please call us at 250-995-2428 or email hatmail@hat.bc.ca. There are also other bat volunteer opportunities if you want to get more involved.



"Barbara". Photo: David Stirling

Excitement! Who Knew?

By Barbara Begg


We were having breakfast aboard the Grand Princess forty hours out of San Francisco, a third of the way to the Hawaiian Islands, when we saw seven small, darkish birds low to the water. They were swooping up as if to land on the ship. It was 28 October, 2013.

Binoculars in hand, we went to investigate. We found the birds on an upper deck in, where else, "The Sanctuary", a place of refuge for tired passengers (oxymoron?). Perhaps it was the potted palms and cycads that attracted them. What species were they? European Starlings! Had they been on the ship since our departure? Were they just testing their wings on a short flight from a lower deck when we saw them? Had they found our ship in the vast waters of the north Pacific? On subsequent days we searched the ship from stem to stern and talked to crew members but they had no information. We had no further sightings.


On the voyage, the Pacific lived up to its name – peaceful – few birds, fish or mammals except for the occasional flashing of flying fish, a pod or two of dolphins and some shearwaters close to Hawaii. In fact the only other ships we saw were a sailing yacht close to Hawaii and, on our return trip, a freighter north of Ensenada, Mexico.

Imagine, the biggest wildlife thrill was a group of European Starlings!


Thanks to David Stirling for input to this brief note.


GOES WITH ANYWHERE

A symbol of Canadian quality, Tilley hats are now available at Wildbirds Unlimited. Great for any of your outdoor adventures, from a day birding to 2 months in Africa these hats won't let you down.



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Visit our store for your
very best value!*

Eagle Cheats Dog of his Fun

By Joyce Harrison

Early one May morning my husband took our family dog down to Gonzales Beach. Until the end of May, dogs are allowed to play on the beach and frolic in the water. Little did they, dogs and owners alike, realize that there was, quite literally, an individual giving them the “eagle-eye” from a nearby Douglas fir.

One dog's owner was using a “chuck” ball to throw his golden lab's favourite toy, a red ball, into the water. After several successful retrievals, the dog again dashed into the water. This time to everyone's surprise, before he could reach the floating ball, out of seemingly nowhere, a bald eagle rose from the water with the prized object (his catch of the day?) firmly grasped in his talons. If he thought it was something to eat, HE also was in for a big surprise.

And an anecdote about a crow that chased a squirrel which was running along the sidewalk, fleeing the bird. I was driving and stopped the car. By the time I could get out of the car, I saw the crow on a rooftop pecking at something. I suspect it was the squirrel. I didn't know that crows would attack a squirrel.



Photo: Kim Capson

EAGLE POWER RETREAT HOUSE

Birch Bay, WA, on the shore of Drayton Harbor

Modern 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom
with Huge Great Room

RELAX – RESTORE – EXPLORE

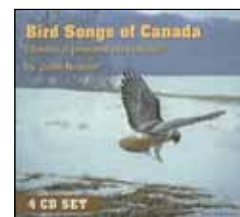
Surrounded by nature including 2 Eagle's nests

For rental info please contact Laura at 360-371-7330
or email eaglepowerhouse@yahoo.com

Bird Songs of Canada – Chants d'oiseaux du Canada

By John Neville

Would you like to review this recording? We received a copy of the 4-CD set described below for review. We would like to offer one of our readers the opportunity to also review the recordings, so if you are interested, please contact Gail Harcombe at g.harcombe@shaw.ca and we will arrange the review. First come, first served!



This 4-CD set is a compilation of hundreds of high-quality recordings from breeding birds – 435 species! Species and track lists are in English, French and Latin. Endorsements already received include:

Andrew P. Coughlan, Bird Studies Canada: Canada's diverse habitats are home to an extraordinary variety of breeding birds, nearly all of which are profiled in Bird Songs of Canada – a remarkable reference work bringing together many hundreds of high-quality recordings in a single 4-CD set. This exceptional collection provides a reconnection with nature, highlights our astonishing avian diversity, and offers a valuable tool to anyone seeking to identify birds by their songs and calls.

Charles M. Francis, PhD, Manager Bird Population Monitoring, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada: This well-edited collection of sounds is a pleasure to listen to, and will help beginning and expert birders learn the wonderful diversity of bird songs in Canada.

Greg Budney, Curator of Audio, Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Some are fortunate to find that passion that drives them to achieve much. John Neville found his in the myriad sounds that birds use to communicate and we are all the better for it. With this more than two decade-long pursuit he's secured his place in the pantheon of great bird recordists. From Surf Scoter to Gray-headed Chickadee, in his publication of “Bird Songs of Canada” John has created a work that anyone with an interest in the natural world will quickly understand is an invaluable tool for exploring it.

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 9 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column.

Kathie Snell

North Saanich

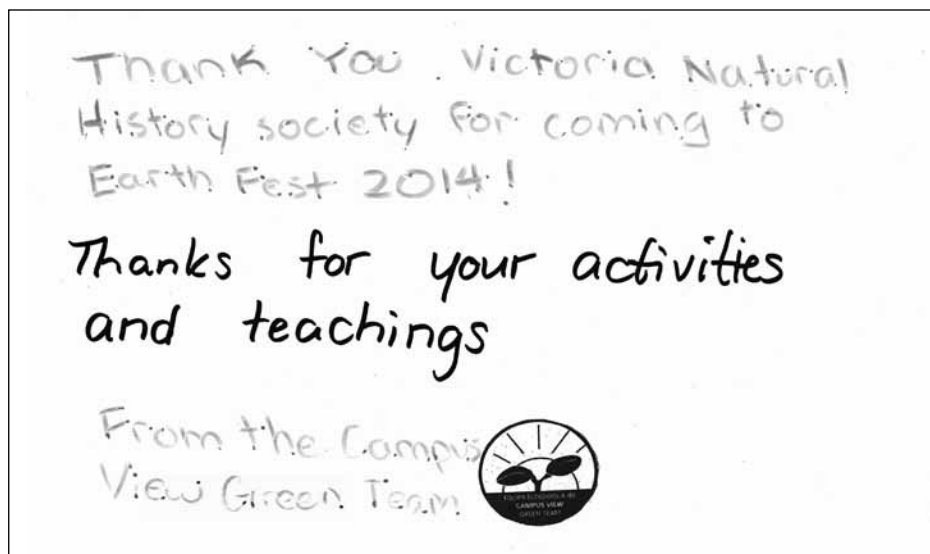
Birds, marine mammals, and botany

Letters

Thank you very much for the \$2,000 contribution to the HAT Conservation Covenants Program. This generous support has provided the opportunity to further monitor and maintain ecological integrity and protection of biodiversity on covenanted lands. We really appreciate the continued support of VNHS and could not do the work that we do without contributions from groups like the VNHS.

Much gratitude,

Paige Erickson-McGee, Community
& Development Coordinator,
Habitat Acquisition Trust



Answers to Crossword printed page 21 of The Victoria Naturalist, May June 2014 Vol. 70.6

ACROSS: 1. Budgie 2. Eight 3. Corn 4. AAH 5. Fir 6. Ye 7. Flea 8. Thought 9. Centre 10. Mire 11. Hop
DOWN: 1. Bunny 12. Duck 13. Gaff 14. Hail 15. Three 16. Etc 17. Her 18. On 19. Utmost 20. Grip 21. Her

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Gulf Islands National Park Reserve is now on Facebook and Twitter

The Gulf Islands are showcased as you've never seen them before, from the newest the park has to offer, including an overnight Learn To Camp program, new Trail apps and four high-powered viewing scopes on the islands, to the latest in conservation efforts by Parks Canada staff and awe-inspiring images of the park. Tips and advice for visitors planning their trip to the Gulf Islands this summer is also provided.

English Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPR>

French Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RPNilesGulf>

English Twitter: <https://twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPR>

French Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RPNilesGulf>

Volunteer for the BC Nightjar Survey!

WildResearch is seeking volunteers to survey for Common Poorwills and Common Nighthawks across British Columbia. Due to their nocturnal habits, little is known about nightjars in BC, and there is concern that both species may be declining rapidly. WildResearch needs volunteers to conduct nightjar surveys to help us understand and conserve these two unique species!

Signing up for a BC Nightjar Survey route will require two to three hours of surveying and one hour of data entry. Each route

is a series of road-side stops and needs to be surveyed once per year during the nightjar breeding season (approximately mid-May to mid-July depending on location). Anyone with a vehicle and good hearing is capable of conducting a BC Nightjar Survey! Visit the "Information for Surveyors" section of www.wildresearch.ca and click on "BC Nightjar Survey map" to sign up for a route near you!

If you're interested in participating in the WildResearch Nightjar survey, please visit us at www.wildresearch.ca for more information or email nightjars@wildresearch.ca.

Nature Conservancy of Canada Volunteer events

(non-VNHS events). Contact Katy Fulton to sign up or for more info Tel: 250-479-3191 ext. 248 bc@conservationvolunteers.ca

Wednesday, July 9

Weed & Wildflower Walk in Victoria's Inner Harbour
Matson Lands Conservation Area, Esquimalt 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Wednesday, July 16 & Sunday, July 27

Searching for Seeds: Native seed collection in Garry oak woodlands

Chase Woods Conservation Area, Duncan 8:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Thursday, July 24

Restoring the Sand Spit: Removing invasives from James Island, Sidney 8:45 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Volunteer(s) needed

It's been a long-standing tradition at Birders' Night and, more recently, at Natural History Night, that members bring a coffee mug (and a friend) and VNHS provides coffee, tea or hot chocolate (and cookies!). Our volunteer for Birders' Night has stepped down after putting in four years of service in this way – a very commendable contribution to the club. We do thank Gail for this and wish her well. For September we need one or two people to take this on for Birders' Night (third Wednesday of the month). We provide the equipment and any costs are paid by VNHS. Coffee needs to be ready by about 7.45, so the volunteer(s) needs to be at the auditorium about an hour before the evening gets under way at 7.30. Please contact Ken at ksohm@live.com or one of the board members (contact info p. 2) if you might be willing to do this (and for further information).

A fun filled family event!

The Galiano Conservancy Association is holding their **2nd Annual WALKALONG for Learning!** on **August 30, 2014**.

Sign up as a walker or a team. Come and walk our new ocean to ocean mid island trail in support of our Nature Education Programs and Learning Centre Development!

Amazing prizes for both walkers and donors!

Learn more at www.galianoconservancy.ca/walkalong or call (250) 539-2424.



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.**

NB. 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

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 thelynns@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.

NB. For most of the field trips listed in the calendar, unless another name shows as contact person, email Agnes Lynn at thelynns@shaw.ca or phone 250-721-0634 for more information.

JULY

Sunday, July 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join **Aziza Cooper** on the first of a series of Butterfly outings. She hopes to get out on the first Sunday in each month to search for butterflies. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This outing is weather dependent – it needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will meet near the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact Aziza at 250-516-7703 or email **Agnes** at thelynns@shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, July 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Talking the beach talk, walking the beach walk, Clover Point

Discover the diversity of the marine intertidal, from sponges to seastars, and learn what you can do to help protect our world's oceans. Join **Melissa Frey** (RBCM and VNHS) and **Natasha Ewing** (Ocean Networks Canada) at Clover Point, Victoria, from 10 a.m. to noon. Bring your water shoes or gum boots and a friend! For more information melissa.a.frey@gmail.com

Sunday, July 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Seashore Seaweeds

Normally we are studying the intertidal creatures when we have a seashore adventure. This time we are privileged to have retired

marine biologist **Tom Widdowson** take us on a seaweed trip. Most of us know a few common seaweeds but the diversity on our local beaches is phenomenal. We'll ask him to give us his thoughts about why the seaweeds are no longer as bountiful as when he was doing his studies of these local areas years back. We will probably meet to carpool from town about 7:00 a.m. and go to Whiffin Spit but firm plans are not in place as yet. Tides will determine where and when we need to be there. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 closer to the date for information on the time and location or if you need other information.

Saturday, June 19 to Sunday, July 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.

Saturday, July 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Dragonflies in the Wild

Last summer, entomologist **Gord Hutchings** took us out to the ponds at Elk/Beaver Lake and we enjoyed close-up looks at many of the dragonfly wonders that live here. This year we will head out to the wilds for an all-day outing. We'll also check out birds as we travel through the forest. Consider this a Dragonfly and Bird Extravaganza! Our planned location will probably be around the Nanaimo Lakes area but the final destination will be chosen closer to the date. Ideally we will be near a pond, a river and a lake to get the most diversity of species, birds and dragonflies. Gord has seen some rather uncommon dragonflies in that rich area. The success of this field trip depends on it being a sunny day as they are only active when it's nice out. We will be in some very rough terrain around the edges of waterways, so you might wish to bring your gumboots, and a hiking stick might be good as well. Bring a lunch for the all-day outing. We will probably meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to carpool. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or for more information.

Sunday, July 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Mount Washington Botanical Day Trip

This trip is planned for peak bloom time but the area is always interesting over several weeks with a succession of sub-alpine flowers. The plan is to walk around the Lake Helen MacKenzie-Battleship Lake loop. We will also fit in a tour around Paradise Meadows before, during or after our main adventure. We will leave Victoria at 7:00 a.m. and return late, probably stopping for a quick supper on the way home. We'll eat our lunch someplace out on the trail. Register by contacting Agnes after July 4. First 9 people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$35 for the day from Victoria. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation it could possibly be quite cool or it might rain, so be prepared. Also wear sturdy boots and hiking poles might be handy. Bring a lunch, snacks and lots to drink as we will not be near any facilities. Remember to bring money for a fast-food supper. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to register or if you need more information.

Sunday, July 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Olympic Park Hurricane Ridge High Elevation Wildflowers – Switchback Option

For several years, VNHS has arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us up the hill to the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Centre in Washington's Olympic National Park to enjoy the high elevation species of sub-alpine flowers at their peak. We start from the Visitor's Centre and this year we will follow the route that allows us to enjoy the mountain without too much elevation gain. We will go along a high ridge trail towards Mount Angeles on the Klahhane Ridge trail. This trail drops away quickly to give fabulous views as well as close-ups of many fascinating sub-alpine plants. Then we'll start downhill from there on the Switchback Trail. This goes down quickly through a sometimes damp lush area with an amazing variety of plants. The trail eventually meets up with the main road and we arrange for the bus driver to meet us there to take us back to the ferry. Do not book before July 4 or after July 20. First contact **Agnes** to reserve your spot.

Important information applicable to July 27 and August 10 trips to the Olympic peninsula.

Be prepared for travel on unpaved twisty roads. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation it could possibly be quite cool or it might rain, so be prepared. Also wear sturdy hiking boots (hiking poles would be an asset). Bring a lunch, snacks and lots to drink as we will not be near any facilities. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the M.V. Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket (about \$35.00 CDN return). The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH U.S. CUSTOMS.** We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). There is usually good birding from the ferry. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$60.00 CDN. Limited number of participants so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information. Pay through PayPal on the VNHS website (vicnhs.bc.ca) or by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces still remain on the bus.

AUGUST

Saturday, August 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Florence Lake & Langford Lake Birding

Join the Saturday Birding group for a trip to Florence and Langford Lakes. We will meet at the boardwalk at Florence Lake at 7:30 a.m. To reach our starting point, go out the Island Highway, past the Millstream overpass and take Exit 15 McCallum Rd. Keep right and you will be on McCallum Rd. In about a block, turn left on Springboard Place (formerly Brock Ave). Park at end of road (not in turnaround) where we will meet. It's about a half block to the boardwalk from there with a great view of the lake. Listen for Soras or Virginia Rails. Sometimes we'll get Steller's Jays and Band-tailed Pigeons and other birds not that common in town. Then we will convoy to Langford Lake, to the west end of Goldstream Ave. Meet at the parking pullout and the group will meander down to the

boardwalk from there. The marshy area often yields interesting birds as well as the walk through the forest to the lake usually gives us woodpeckers and other nice woodsy birds. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, August 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join **Aziza Cooper** for the second in a series of Butterfly outings. She hopes to get out on the first Sunday in each month to search for butterflies. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. The outing is weather dependent – it needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. Each month, we will meet near the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact **Aziza** at 250-516-7703 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Friday, August 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Investigating the Denizens of the Night

Most of us only have a cursory knowledge of bats. Our local bats may become infected with the deadly White-nosed Syndrome that has been devastating the populations of bats in the east. Our insect-eating bats are crucial to a healthy ecosystem. Let's take an evening to learn a bit more about these night visitors. **Joanne Burgar** will be our bat leader for the evening. She has just finished her PhD on bat ecology in Australia so she should be full of interesting information. Joanne is currently looking for a good location for us to visit. She will arrange for a bat detector as we do not have the one species of bat in Victoria that can be heard by the human ear. That is the Spotted Bat. She is also trying to get organized to set up a mist net to try to capture a bat for us to look at. There are permits and such required to get this to happen, a lot like mist-netting birds only in the dark! Limited number of participants. Register by contacting Agnes after July 4. We will meet around dark at a location to be determined. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 closer to the date for information on the time and location and to register or if you need other information.

Sunday, August 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Olympic National Park Obstruction Point Road

For a change of scenery in Washington's Olympics National Park, we have arranged for a bus in Port Angeles to take us up along the scenic high elevation Obstruction Point Rd. The timing of the trip is planned for peak wildflower displays. Rather than one long hike, we will stop at a number of places and do several short excursions in search of sub-alpine flowers not too far from the road. We hope to find some species endemic to Olympic National Park. The route may vary if conditions dictate. Do not book before July 4 or after August 3. Contact **Agnes** to reserve your spot.

The route may vary if conditions dictate. Do not book before July 4 or after Aug 3. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot.

Saturday, August 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Island View Beach & Saanichton Spit Birding

Join Saturday Birding at Island View Beach and Saanichton Spit. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the north end of the parking lot. It's the time of year that we might find some interesting shorebirds on their return migration but also there are still a few beach flowers in the dunes to check out as we go along. To reach Island View Beach, go north on the Pat Bay highway, turn right at the lights at Island View Rd (Michell's Market) and follow that to a left on Homathko Rd which leads to the parking lot. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, August 16 to Sunday, August 24

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.

Saturday, August 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Sidney Spit Birding

Each year about this time, we make the trek over to Sidney Spit to look for interesting shorebirds on their southern migration. There have been some good ones reported from there – Baird's Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plovers, Sanderlings, Whimbrels and we always hope for that illusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper! Also close-ups on Purple Martins and enjoy other passerines that nest on the island. **Mike McGrenere** will be our leader. Bring a lunch and your own drinking water. We will go over on the ferry from Sidney that leaves at 10:00 a.m. but you should be there about an hour early to buy your ticket as it can sell out. Cost is \$19 for adults (\$16 seniors). Ferry leaves from the foot of Beacon Ave. Allow enough time to find a place to park. Parking rates vary depending on how far you are willing to walk. The return ferry leaves the island at 1:00, 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. so you can choose how long you wish to stay. Contact **Mike** at 250-658-8624 or **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca if you need more information.

Sunday, August 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Sandcut Beach Meander

We will take a summer break and drive out the scenic West Coast Road to Sandcut Beach which is about 6 km this side of Jordan River. Interesting at any time of year, it is a nice cool walk down a coastal hemlock/cedar forested trail to the cobble beach and there is a waterfall at the end of the beach as well as interesting geological formations that Tom Cockburn showed us when he took us there a couple of years back. Late in the summer, it has a little more to offer. The water usually has dwindled enough so the interesting rock formations are revealed. We may reach the little cave up stream. Note that a short part of this is over very uneven and slippery ground and requires a bit of scrambling. Good boots and a hiking stick will come in handy. We should have time to look around Jordan River as well. Maybe we'll see some birds or whales. Both Sandcut Beach and a chunk of the old Jordan River town site are now within the new CRD Jordan River Regional Park which is still being defined. Bring a lunch. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information. shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.



Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*). Photo: Derrick Ditchburn