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# The Victoria NATURALIST

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**Co-Editors:** Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508, Ken Sohm 250-658-6115  
**Desktop Publishing:** Frances Hunter 250-479-1956  
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**PRESIDENT:** Ken Sohm 250-658-6115, ksohm@live.com  
**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: Claudia Copley 250-479-6622, dccopley@telus.net  
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Send to: Gail Harcombe

7368 Veyaness Road, Saanichton BC V8M 1M3

Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: [g.harcombe@shaw.ca](mailto: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 2000 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 use a pseudonym or have your name withheld.

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 300 dpi for all sizes is requested.

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Front cover photo: Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*). Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

### *The lazy, hazy days of summer...*

might be drawing to a close, but sitting here on our deck, looking at the blue sky studded with wisps of white cottony cloud, being dive-bombed by a hummingbird (apparently I am sitting a bit too close to the feeder), I was reflecting on what an amazing summer this has been, and how very lucky we are to live here. Just the other day, it was fascinating to watch a European Wall Lizard (I know, an introduced species...) sunning itself on our paving stones, and then the next day to go to Rocky Point and find Rough-skinned Newts, bold as brass, walking the same paths as the people do on net rounds at the banding station. The summer months bring different species, large and small, to view (and photograph), especially butterflies, and every day can bring a new and different “sighting” if you are lucky enough to be in the right place (and are watching). Reports (in this issue) on VNHS field trips near and (not so) far, and stories in the news of sea otters and orcas making appearances and captivating viewers reassure and reinforce how incredibly beautiful and diverse the natural world is, even close to home.

I am looking forward to the “new year” (I tend to think of September as a new year because so many things start then), and want to draw your attention to the marvelous selection of presentations and trips/events VNHS has lined up –everything from spiders to whales, hummingbirds to microbes, not to mention the chance to “travel” from Alaska to Costa Rica to Galapagos.

I hope you take advantage of these great opportunities, and I encourage you to send us (the newsletter editors) your stories, photographs, scholarly articles... so much is happening in the natural world every day, it will be great to share, and the newsletter is a great way to do that. Hope you have had a good summer... Happy “New Year”!

*Gail Harcombe*

# Message from the Board

## Board News

For most of us on the board, this is a quiet time...except for Bill Dancer. We asked him to give us an idea of his recent activities as both bird leader and with the Schools program.

## Tuesday birding

"The Tuesday Birders, a VNHS institution whose birth was in the mid 1950s, is still going strong, with participants ranging in numbers from 25 to a singular low of five. For all intents and purposes, these outings have followed the same format throughout all these years: meet at Bowker Avenue where it meets Willows Beach, sometime between 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. and bird that area first. The number of species found in this small area is surprisingly large, with counts of over 40 in migration time.

We then carpool to bird other areas. 'Other areas' consider the requests of members present, otherwise they are chosen by myself. I usually consider the latest news from the rare bird alert, the weather conditions, and what we have done in previous years. Over the last five years, our average species count has been in the order of 55 with highs of 70 plus.

This is a social birding group rather than a 'twitcher' type, and the pace is in the main unhurried; we go on well-marked

trails. Of late we have had participants newly arrived in town from places east, and visiting birders from all over, and this has led to new members for our Society.

At noon we stop for lunch and then depart for home, or, for the carpoolers, back to Bowker. For anyone wanting a relaxing and friendly morning birding this would be a good place to start."

## Schools Program

"At the time of writing, the program since Jan 1 has involved 600 children from schools, scouting, and summer camps. If the previous two years' figures hold good, we should again attain about 850 by year-end. We can call on about 30 volunteers. The majority of our work is during school hours, so retired members and/or shift workers get a call. We do programs in both official languages; as French Immersion classes grow in number, a substantial percentage is done in French. We also used the distribution of our book, *Nature Guide to the Victoria Region*, to all schools in the three school districts to advertise our free program, in turn resulting in many thank you's and additional school outings.

The program is obviously of benefit to the children, but also rewarding to those that volunteer. To see a light turn on in a child watching something as simple as ants tending their nest, or finding out for the first time that birds come in colours other than black, white and brown, is wonderful. It is also remarkable and heartening to discover some excellent naturalists of a very tender age."

*Thanks Bill for a remarkable effort! Other members who have been particularly busy include of course Agnes, who often leads Saturday birding trips, organizes and leads the Olympic Peninsula botany trips, and is the prime mover behind our calendar of events. Thanks also to Rick Schortinghuis (who is taking some time off from VNHS while banding for Rocky Point Bird Observatory), Aziza Cooper, and Melissa Frey amongst others. Hope to see many of you at our program of evening presentations, starting in early September at the University.*



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# B.C.'s Albatrosses

By Val George

*Photos by author*

It was about 7.00 a.m. on a May morning when about 80 birders boarded the 130ft tour boat MV Frances Barkley docked in Ucluelet, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. We were setting out for a day of pelagic birding. Seven or eight of us were eating breakfast in the vessel's small cafe prior to heading out into the open ocean. Conversation soon turned to our expectations for the day. Someone said, "Maybe this trip I'll get my Laysan Albatross." We all agreed that that was our top target bird. Though all of us had made several – in some cases many – pelagic trips in B.C. waters, none of us had yet been fortunate enough to add this albatross to our B.C. lists.

Soon we were heading out to our destination, the La Perouse Bank, about 30 km offshore. On the way out we didn't see a lot of birds: a few Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters and birds commonly seen from shore, such as

loons and alcids. In particular, we didn't get any albatrosses, which was normal because these birds are rarely seen close to shore.

We had barely arrived at our destination and started serious pelagic birding when someone at the back of the boat called, "albatross." Except for a few excited people, for whom this was probably their first pelagic trip, we all casually scanned the ocean for what we assumed was a Black-footed Albatross, the expected species. Then the shout went up, "Laysan." Instant excitement! Everyone rushed to get to the back of the vessel to frantically scan the ocean for a sighting of the bird before it disappeared. Actually, there was no need for the panic because the large dark-grey and white bird casually flew up to the boat and stayed with us for some time, affording everyone on board excellent views and photo opportunities. Though several of us had seen the species in other parts of the Pacific Ocean, for almost everyone it was a tick for their B.C. list.

Laysan Albatrosses are regular visitors to B.C. waters but, as this story implies, they only very rarely come close enough to shore to be seen even on pelagic birding trips. Normally, they are far out in the Pacific Ocean, searching for the cephalopods that form the bulk of their diet. They go to shore only to breed which, in the case of the present species, is on the islands of the NW Hawaiian chain; almost all the world's Laysan Albatrosses breed there, including on Laysan Island from which they get their name.



Above, left: Black-footed Albatross (*Phoebastria nigripes*). Right: Laysan Albatross (*Phoebastria immutabilis*).

The populations of the world's albatrosses (14 –21 species, depending on which authority you want to recognize) have seriously declined over the past several decades due to hazards such as drift-net fishing that entangles them, longline fishing that hooks them when they take the sinking baits, and ingestion of plastics from the ocean surface.

And prior to that in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries albatrosses were taken in the millions for their feathers. However, Laysan Albatrosses have recovered somewhat recently; the current population is about a million and a half birds and considered to be stable. One interesting statistic about albatrosses is that, provided they manage to avoid all the many hazards facing them, they're some of the longest-lived birds in the world, sometimes making it to 50 – 60 yrs. One Laysan Albatross has been documented as at least 63 yrs old.

Two other albatross species have been recorded in B.C. waters. Black-footed Albatrosses are the common ones seen on pelagic birding trips. With an average wing span of about 210 cm these dark-plumaged birds are a little larger than Laysan Albatrosses and are among the largest flying birds in the world (though the world's largest flying birds, by wing span, the Wandering and Royal Albatrosses of the southern oceans have wing spans a metre greater). Unlike the other two species that occur in our waters, Black-footed Albatrosses are almost guaranteed on pelagic trips.

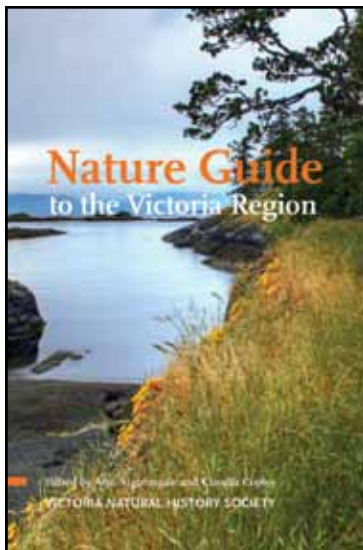
Like the Laysan Albatross, Black-footed Albatrosses also breed mainly on the NW chain of the Hawaiian Islands, though there are small breeding colonies on islands off Japan and Mexico. They also range over the North Pacific from Alaska to California when not breeding. Their diet includes fish and fish eggs as well as squid.

Albatrosses don't breed for the first several years of their lives. In the case of Black-footed and Laysan, the first

breeding age is at 6 or 7 years old. When they do breed the investment in their offspring is very demanding: incubation of the single egg takes about 2 months followed by another 5 to 6 months to fledge the young bird.

The third species on the B.C. list is the Short-tailed Albatross. There are only a few records of this species in recent times. This is because Short-tailed Albatrosses are very rare anywhere. It was once a common bird in the North Pacific but hunting for its feathers in the early 20th Century killed millions of birds; by the middle of the century it was almost extinct with the total population down to just a few dozen birds. Protective measures since then have led to some recovery, resulting in a present population of about 2000. All three of B.C.'s albatross species are closely related since they are in the same genus (*Phoebastria*). They're not so closely related to most of the other albatrosses of the world, which taxonomists have placed in several different genera. All the other albatross species are birds of the oceans of the southern hemisphere. Pelagic birding off the B.C. coast is likely to record only the Black-footed species, but when these birds are seen they always rate as one of the more notable sightings of a pelagic trip. Their large size and effortless flight low over the waves never cease to impress us. Additionally, there is a mysterious aura surrounding a bird that spends almost all its life on the open ocean in places that are alien and unfamiliar to most of us. These characteristics make albatrosses some of the more sought-after additions to any birder's B.C. list.

*Editor's postscript: Val George highly recommends this trip on the MV Frances Barkley, a very stable and comfortable boat, to La Perouse Bank. For information on such trips, check the WildResearch website at <http://wildresearch.ca/>*



## Nature Guide to the Victoria Region

Edited by Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley

The Victoria region is one of the most biologically-rich areas of the country, with many plants and animals found nowhere else in Canada. Ten local experts have contributed their knowledge about all things natural in this region, from mushrooms and dragonflies to owls and whales. In ten chapters, David Stirling, Alan MacLeod, James Miskelly, Robert Cannings, Bryce Kendrick, Philip Lambert, David Nagorsen, Anna Hall, Gavin Hanke, and Leon Pavlick describe the species most likely to be seen here and direct you to the best places to see them. The Guide is in a portable, easy-to-read format, and includes beautiful full-colour photographs, checklists, and a map of all the great places to visit.

*Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned naturalist, a visitor or a resident, this book will give you the knowledge you need to get the most out of your explorations of southeastern Vancouver Island.*

**\$15 at Society evening presentations. Look for them in local bookstores!**

# Frog Fossicking River Otters

By Bill Merilees and Gordon Hartman

Though primarily a predator of fish, the River Otter's diet includes a wide diversity of other prey items. At times this may include a relatively high percentage of amphibians. Even knowing this, the following observation is of interest.

On March 7th 2014, the authors were making one of their regular rounds of the Buttertubs Marsh Conservation Area in Nanaimo. We stopped at the Osprey Viewing Platform to scan the panorama for wildlife. It was a chilly somewhat blustery afternoon, not much activity until a flicking of a tail in the cattails caught our attention. Quickly thereafter two juvenile river otters began to gambol, push and swim their way through the vegetation towards us, totally unaware of our presence.

A unique feature of this location at Buttertubs is the fact that the cat-tail mats are actually rafts of floating vegetation that drift with the wind. They are not solid mats either but include gaps where the otters could easily exit and re-enter

the water column beneath. The otters we were watching were on a mission. This became very evident when one popped up in full view chomping on the head end of a reasonably large bullfrog (sketch). Quite mesmerized, we just enjoyed the serendipity of this moment. Over the next 10-15 minutes our observation continued until these animals passed under the platform we were standing on, before disappearing out of sight around a stand of pond side vegetation. In total we observed the otters consume at least three bullfrogs.

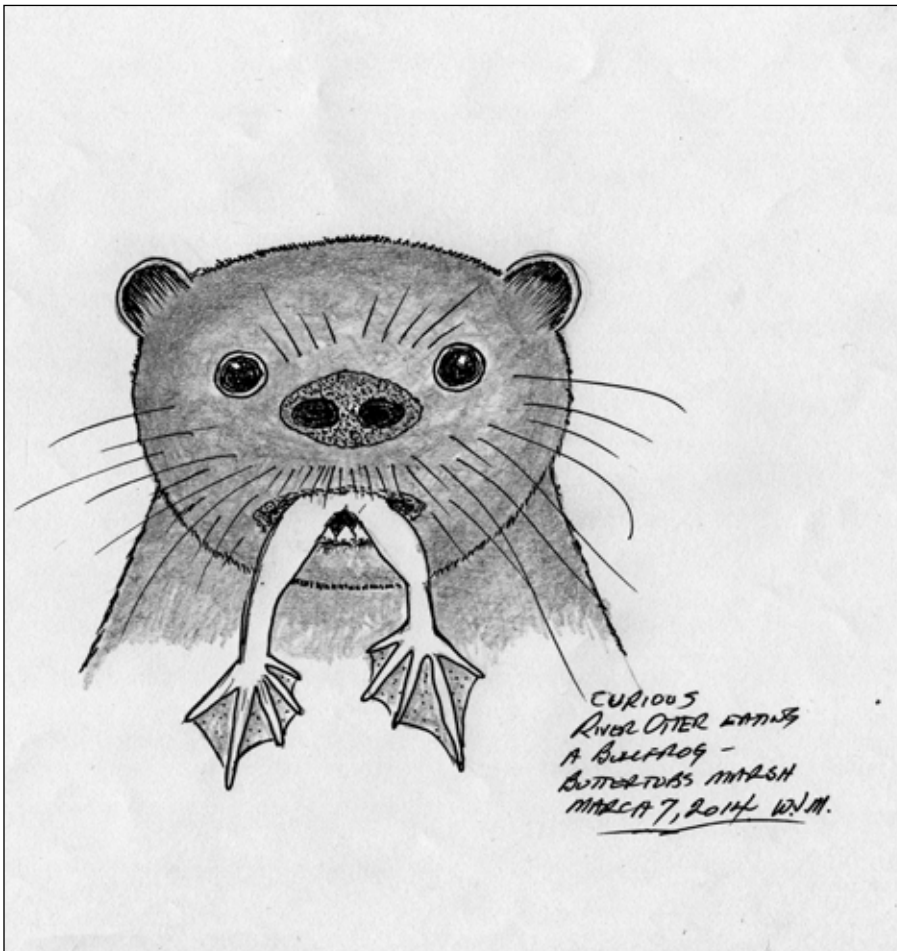
In the past few years Buttertubs has seen its bullfrog population reach almost plague proportions. Even Common and Hooded Mergansers (Mightysnipe 2005, Merilees & Thomson 2014) have been observed feasting on sub adult bullfrogs and Pied-billed Grebes on the tadpoles. For these otters and the mergansers this predation has taken place during the winter months when the frogs were in hibernation and therefore comatose.

Unlike turtles, which hibernate buried in a pond's bottom sediments, bullfrogs require oxygen-rich water, spending a good portion of their hibernation lying on the bottom or only partially buried (Emmer 1997). During the winter their dormant state makes them more vulnerable to predation than during the warmer months of the year. At Buttertubs, otters and mergansers have recently discovered this newly available food source. As the bullfrogs emerge from hibernation later in the year, Great Blue Herons likewise become beneficiaries.

Close observation of otters, and other mammals of similar size such as beaver and raccoons is almost always a chance event. When you are favoured by these encounters savour the moment. We certainly did!

## References

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# Saanich Pulling Together – Volunteer Program at Marigold Park

By Laura Gretzinger

I love nature and like most Victorians, I'd rather spend an afternoon walking through the woods than sitting in my kitchen looking at dirty dishes. When I first moved to Victoria in the early 1990's I had no idea where to live. I rented a home in the most central location but there were no parks close by! When my husband and I bought our first home we chose wisely, near schools and a park. Cuthbert Holmes Park was my second backyard. Our second home was even closer to schools and right next to Marigold Park, a small gem in Western Saanich.

With my love of natural areas, post secondary schooling, and knowledgeable friends, I learned all about the native and non-native plants of Victoria. And one day at a pub someone was talking excitedly about Pulling Together. So with a little research I found out more about the program.


The general idea is to engage local residents in invasive plant removal and actively restore the ecology of natural areas. This was a project that excited me. So by becoming the lead steward for Marigold Park I was now responsible for restoring healthy ecosystems and also educating people about the value of natural areas.

With the help of the volunteer coordinator, I drew up a restoration plan for Marigold Park and have had numerous 'work parties' since. In a couple of months we uncovered a rocky outcrop with a few Garry oaks, camas and who knows what else will appear in spring. It was exciting to see new volunteers come out to each event and it certainly didn't take long to have a core of dedicated residents committed to restoring our local park. Our future goals are to continue to tackle the blackberry and pull out the ivy. We've already gotten to all the broom, which is a feat in itself.


It is also a bonus to have a Bald Eagle nest in Marigold Park and convenient since I monitor CRD eagle nests for the Wildlife Tree Stewardship Program (WiTS).

The Saanich Pulling Together Program has provided strong support for new stewards like me. Active stewardship activities occur at 34 sites throughout the Victoria area and continue to grow. Now that's taking care of our own backyards!


For information on this Saanich program, check this website: [www.saanich.ca/living/natural/opportunities.html](http://www.saanich.ca/living/natural/opportunities.html)

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# “Know Nature and Keep It Worth Knowing”: the Work of the Conservation Committee

*Editor's note: On joining the board of directors a couple of years ago I soon realized how little I knew about the history of our society. Page 2 of our newsletter lists our Honorary Life Members. For what achievements exactly were these members selected?*

*Each year in the fall/winter newsletters we list the members who have received the Distinguished Service Award and we call for nominations. Here again, while I could intuit why certain members were selected, others remained a blank. It was in this frame of mind that I focused on one of our Honorary Life Members, Tony Embleton and the group which he long personified, the Conservation Committee, and decided to find out what I could. Since then I have had several hours chatting with Tony and gone through some of his voluminous records. The following will give some indication of the enormous amount of work that Tony and his team did over a period of some 20 years.*

*Ken Sohm*

Tony emphasizes that the over-riding ethos of the work done was in the spirit of BC Nature's motto above (the title of this article).

On joining our society in 1989, Tony soon became a member of the Parks and Conservation committee, being chair of this group for much of the 1990s. The committee worked closely with the Victoria Natural History Society and got support from the Board and the membership. Concurrent with this, Tony became the VNHS representative to the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists (FBCN), now called BC Nature. He was appointed BC Nature's representative to the provincial government's *Commission on Resources and Environment* (CORE). Initiated under Premier Michael Harcourt's NDP government, the aim was to identify regional and local resource-use goals for four provincial regions. Vancouver Island was one of the four regions selected. This project lasted from 1992–1996. No consensus was reached at that time.

As a result Tony met and communicated with many nature organizations around Vancouver Island, encouraging them to identify environmentally sensitive areas (ESA's) in their region. Some of the obvious examples of the 40 or so identified in our region were Elk/Beaver Lake Park, Esquimalt Lagoon, and Blenkinsop Lake; others were not quite so obvious, for example the Ardmore Shoreline, Bazan Bay, McMinn and Doumac Parks.

Once these areas were identified, the various governing bodies were informed with a request for cooperation. For example, the municipality of Sidney had a list of seven areas; the Highlands' list cited Mount Work and Pike Lake amongst others. Tony became BC Nature's Regional Coordinator for Vancouver Island Naturalist Clubs.

The number of people involved with the ESA project was considerable. In 1996 the Conservation Committee had 16 members. In addition some 30 'observers' are listed, many of them committee members. The 'observers' were volunteers who would keep a sharp eye on an area convenient to them; in effect, wardens. In addition the amount of correspondence was daunting; besides constant communication with the various levels of government everyone involved with the conservation group was kept informed. And Tony did not have a personal secretary!

The CRD introduced its *Green Spaces Strategy* in 1997 and Tony's group turned its attention to this initiative. The Green Spaces project ultimately involved some hundreds of volunteers who received training in how to evaluate and inventory valuable ecological sites. The volunteers were recruited by advertising in the Times Colonist and through the help of Calvin Sandborn and the Environmental Law Group at the University of Victoria. Funds were raised from various sources for the technical equipment needed for the surveying.

Between 1997 and 2006, 600 sites had been surveyed with management recommendations made for them all. To quote from the citation for Tony's 2006 nomination, written by Tom Burgess and Norman Mogenson: "Tony's efforts have resulted in a heightened level of awareness by local citizens, a critical requirement for securing ecologically valuable lands. The early work...has resulted in new and enlarged parks in the CRD and designation of 30 conservation covenants on private lands."

The Conservation Committee is no longer an active group, but its principles are still alive and well. Think of the many conservation related articles from HAT published in our newsletter. We have members who constantly remove Broom and other invasives. Organizations like WiTS are active in monitoring trees important to wildlife. Laura Gretzinger's accompanying article illustrates conservation in action.

Many more topics could be mentioned with regard to the work of the Conservation Committee, not least the saga of the Blenkinsop Trestle.

For information on ESAs and the Green Spaces project, click directly on [www.vicnhs.bc.ca/ESADecember2013.pdf](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/ESADecember2013.pdf) or click the Conservation tab on our VNHS website.



## July Botany Field Trips

By Agnes Lynn

Despite the disappointing weather that cancelled both the planned Butterfly and Dragonfly trips, we still had some very good out-of-town trips. We went as a group in the van to Mount Washington, more correctly to Strathcona Park. Our favourite loop includes Paradise Meadows, Battleship Lake and Lake Helen MacKenzie. The weather was marginal with rainy bits but warm so it wasn't an issue and gave great misty views of the lakes. Progress is always slow in the beginning as we try to identify everything we see. Bonus of the field trip is a species list that has almost everything on it for you to take home. The flowers were amazing as usual. Due to the long flowering period up there, we can usually enjoy a wide selection of flowers no matter when we go in July. We always run out of time to examine carefully the huge limestone rock formation at the end of the loop. This yields many uncommon plants and we could spend hours there. Highlight of the trip were the excellent views of a female American Three-toed Woodpecker. This elusive bird is very hard to catch up with so we were thrilled with its cooperation.

At our lunch stop, False hellebore (*Veratrum viride*) in flower. Photo: Agnes Lynn



In the forest near the end, Menzies' pipsissewa (*Chimaphila menziesii*). Photo: Agnes Lynn





Misty view of Battleship Lake. *Photo: Dave Lynn*

The first Olympic trip of the season was a combination of the walk along Klahane Ridge followed by the meander down the Switchback Trail. We arranged for our trusty All Points Charters and Tours van and driver to pick us up at the Coho ferry in Port Angeles and deposit us at the visitor centre at the top of Hurricane Ridge. Fortunately the weather that day was perfect. It was clear and warm but not too hot. Even along the ridge, we were able to rest in the shady spots. The plants on the ridge always look a little tired overall because of the stark conditions that they grow in but once you start looking, you can find some amazing gems. Timing was perfect as we were at the peak of the season. Again a list of plants has been gathered over many years which helps with the identification. Thanks to Hans Roemer



In the forest, One-sided Wintergreen (*Orthilia secunda*)  
*Photo: Dave Lynn*



Delicate plant that lives at the water's edge Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flamula*). Photo: Dave Lynn



Rainy Copper bush (*Elliottii pyroliflora*). Photo: Dave Lynn

for the base lists (both areas) which we have added to over the years. Fortunately the only creatures we saw were marmots as that's the trail which has the crazy goats which you must avoid. The second half of the trip went down a much more lush valley with completely different plants. Scenery was spectacular as we could see from the steep valleys up to

the rugged peaks. After negotiating the many switchbacks, we found ourselves walking along a tumbling creek with yet another different set of moisture-loving plants along it. For those who got down early, there was still a lot to see along the moist edges of the road. The van driver picked us up down there in plenty of time to catch the ferry home.

### **Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve, April 25, 1921-June 3, 2014**

Margaret passed away peacefully June 3, 2014. She and her husband, Rob (deceased), will be remembered for their wonderful, wild English country garden when they lived on Penrhyn Street in Cadboro Bay. This garden hosted two out of three of the confirmed sightings of Costa's Hummingbird found in the Victoria area. The first was in April 1972 and the second was in May 1997. Birders were enthusiastically welcomed to see these and other rarities over the years.

Margaret and Rob were former members of the Victoria Natural History Society. In recent years Margaret had resided at Glengarry Hospital on Fairfield Road, Victoria.

## **Welcome to New VNHS Members**

Our Society grew by 11 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our *Welcome* column.

#### **Shannon Marshall**

Victoria

*Backyard Bird Watcher*

#### **Sandra Berry**

Victoria

*hiking, kayaking, climbing*

#### **Maureen Clarke**

Victoria

*hiking, photography, conservation*



# Bewick's Wren Nest in My Granddaughter's Runner

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Imagine the surprise when Caitlyn O'Shaughnessy noticed a little bird flying in to the shoe rack on the deck and disappearing into her runner earlier this spring. I was called to ID the little bird from a photo which my family sent me. Sure enough, it was a Bewick's Wren.

Their rather large garden that borders part of the Colquitz watershed is a bird haven with visits from Great Blue Herons, Anna's Hummingbirds, assorted warblers, ravens, crows and California Quail. This Spring a pair of American Robins decided to nest within the grape vines, and the biggest thrill was the sight of a family of Barred Owls, 3 owlets to delight the family. They are still being seen and heard on occasion, however, the hissing cries of the young owlets at night have not always been appreciated by my two granddaughters. Ear plugs have had to be purchased to allow for a good night's rest.

## Secretive Housing of Mr. Wren

By Tatiana Schneider

This spring on numerous occasions we admired, through the kitchen window while washing dishes, our wren hopping along the fence. We often commented: "He has really become tame or he really likes us."

Then when the dry days of May arrived, I started using the water hose on a reel attached to the side of the house under our kitchen window. Soon after, there was a small leak at the reel end. Finally Paul had enough of my complaints and decided to check the reel before the leak got any worse. It was also a good excuse to take the reel apart to see how it works. To our amusement we found an elaborate nest, no longer in use, between the back of the reel and the house siding. We think it was a wren's nest. That would explain the frequent presence of the wren on our fence. So much for the idea "he really likes us"!

Later in summer one of our solar night lights stopped operating for no apparent reason. When Paul opened it, there were many small white webs inside – spiders had certainly



Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy



Bewick's Wren. Photo: Ann Nightingale



Photos: Tatiana Schneider

found a haven. A perfect lodging beneath a light that went on automatically every night, attracting all their needed food. Birds and insects certainly are good at finding suitable protected spaces.

# Mt. Tolmie's Butterflies

Photos by Ken Sohm



Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) showing both the underwing which is intricately beautiful and the top of the wings outspread.



Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) (in some books Red Admirable).

**The Invertebrate Alert** Worth checking out! on July 26 near the end of the Butterfly Count week, I noticed a suggestion on the 'Alert' link on our website that a good time of day to go up to the reservoir at the top of Mt Tolmie to look for unusual butterflies was about 6 p.m. So Heidi and I went up the following evening, the 27th, around 6.30 p.m. No sooner were we there but we noticed two butterflies flying furiously together, apparently jousting, and then settling. One I quickly identified as the Painted Lady and assumed that there were two of them. But we were patient enough to wait for clear views of them both and found the second one was the Red Admiral. In conversation with Jeff Gaskin on a recent butterfly walk, he said he had had the same experience at 6 p.m. *Continued on page 15.*

Ken Sohm

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## Snippets from the Audubon Magazine (abridged)

For the full story, go to <http://www.audubonmagazine.org/>

### Innovative Technology Gives Birdwatching a Boost

by Chelsea Harvey

Researchers from Columbia University and the University of Maryland released a free iPhone app last month called "Bird-snap" aimed at helping amateur birdwatchers identify species. Professor Peter Belhumeur of Columbia, who supervised the project, says his inspiration stemmed partly from his admiration for birdwatchers' ability to accurately identify species on sight. "For the rest of us, it's a much harder process," he explains. "So we made this app to bridge that, to help people without training to get a leg up on identification." On its surface, the program seems simple enough: You snap a photo of the tricky bird in question and upload it to the program, which processes your photo and reports back with a list of possible matches. The program uses characteristic bird

markings – for example, the distinctive white "eyebrows" on a Carolina wren – to come up with the best possible match.

### Nine brand new birds that are already threatened

by Clara Chaisson

If you've never heard of the Somali Ostrich, the Javan Blue-banded Kingfisher, or the Blue-bearded Helmetcrest, don't beat yourself up for being a bad birder. Until recently, they didn't exist. A massive reassessment of all non-passerine – or non-perching – birds yielded a walloping 361 new species that had previously been lumped in under other names. A planned reassessment of passerines – which represent more than half of all bird species – is likely to up the totals even more. But the birds' warm welcome to the guidebooks is dampened by a sobering statistic. Bird Life International, the world's largest nature conservation partnership – comprised of 120 organizations including Audubon – assessed the new species on behalf of the 2014 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and found that more than 25 percent of them qualify as threatened. *Continued on page 15.*





From left to right: Woodland Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanoides*), Lorquin's Admiral (*Limenitis lorquini*) and Pine White (*Neophasia menapia*).

**At 10 a.m. on August 3**, Mike and I met our leader, Aziza Cooper, and five other participants at the top of Mount Tolmie for a morning of butterflying. We began our search on Mount Tolmie where we found only a few Woodland Skippers. Together, the group decided to go to Playfair Park where we enjoyed the colourful perennial flower border and another 37 Woodland Skippers. Aziza knew about a large patch of thistles located at Outerbridge Park that she thought might be productive for butterflies. The thistles and butterflies didn't disappoint us and we enjoyed another 40–50 additional Woodland Skippers in that one thistle patch. Many of them were busy sipping nectar and they allowed us to approach quite close for excellent views. It was impressive to see so many of these small butterflies together on these plants. Several participants spotted a Swallowtail species zip by and everyone saw a couple of Cabbage Whites and four Lorquin's Admirals. We ended the field trip with a white butterfly floating high through the Douglas fir trees on Royal Oak Drive; it was likely a Pine White. Though we didn't find a large number of species, it was a most enjoyable outing at a leisurely pace. We look forward to learning more about butterflies on future outings.

Barbara McGrenere

## Snippets (continued from page 14)

*And a few books for our Indian Summer backyard bibliophiles from the same source. Might be something here for those of you planning to investigate Kem Luther's book club (see the Bulletin Board)*

### ***The Homing Instinct***

by Bernd Heinrich Houghton Mifflin, 368 pages, \$27

In naturalist Bernd Heinrich's latest book, he explores the mysteries of migration and the homing instinct – from his own home in Maine, which houses many a non-human inhabitant, to the annual return of a pair of Sandhill Cranes in Alaska, to the enormous communal nests that sociable weaverbirds build to survive boiling summer days and freezing nights in the Kalahari. In this richly crafted book, Heinrich serves as a sometimes funny, always capable guide into the diverse ways that animals the world over find and make their homes.

### ***The Thing with Feathers***

by Noah Strycker Riverhead (Penguin), 302 pages. \$27.95

Magpies mourn their dead. Parrots can keep a beat, even dance. Oh, and albatrosses fall in love. Noah Strycker collates these and other insights of bird behavior into *The Thing With Feathers*. In this chatty, easy-to-read volume, Strycker marshals original reporting and scientific studies to argue the simple yet radical notion that birds have something to teach us about our own humanity. Spend some time with this book and even a veteran birder is bound to learn a thing or two.

### ***The Forest Unseen***

by David George Haskell Penguin Books, 288 pages, \$16

David Haskell endeavors to witness the workings of the entire forest by revisiting a single tiny patch again and again throughout the year. Contemplative and poetic, the book slides effortlessly between the micro and macro scales in a way that makes ecological complexity both accessible and awe-inspiring. Whether you read it cover to cover or pick it up for the occasional, randomly selected chapter, Haskell's writing is sure to deepen your appreciation for the natural world and invite some meditative thinking of your own.





Big-headed Sedge, also called Large-headed Sedge (*Carex macrocephala*), and Yellow Sand-verbena (*Abronia latifolia*).  
*Photos by author*

# Dune Restoration on James Island

By Aziza Cooper

In late June, I volunteered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) helping with dune restoration on James Island. This was a rare opportunity to visit this island which is privately owned and usually off-limits.

NCC has a covenant with the owner of James Island, who has agreed to preserve the dunes as protected areas and to support their restoration. The north spit dunes are one of five dune areas which are a rare ecosystem with many red- and blue-listed plants. The channel between James Island and Vancouver Island is also an Important Bird Area (IBA).

James Island history begins with thousands of years of native use, which changed in the early 1900s, when the island was used as a private hunting ground for Victoria sportsmen including then British Columbia Premier Richard McBride, who served between 1903 and 1915. McBride introduced exotic animals such as pheasants and

the Fallow Deer which still roam the island. In 1913, the CIL Company's dynamite manufacturing operation relocated there from downtown Victoria. World War I created a huge demand for dynamite, and the island's population rose to 800. After World War II the demand fell off, and CIL sold the island. It changed hands several times until the present owner, Craig McCaw, one of the richest men in the world, bought it. He had a vision of establishing a totally green village for ecologically-minded wealthy friends. Although his efforts improved the island's degraded habitat, the eco-village didn't happen, and the island is now up for sale. Asking price is \$75 million.

Our team of twelve assembled at James Island Dock Road. Several NCC staff members were with us including Tim Ennis, director of West Coast operations for the NCC, and Katy Fulton, NCC's enthusiastic Victoria volunteer





coordinator. A Times-Colonist reporter also came along to get first-hand information. At 9 a.m., we took the island's water taxi out to the dock at Melanie Spit at the south end of the island.

A small school bus took us several miles north, passing a golf course and getting glimpses of a herd of deer. As on Sidney Island to the east, the Fallow deer have removed most of the natural undergrowth and are preventing seedling trees from growing.

At the north end we stopped by a field with dozens of dragonflies. On foot along a concrete roadway, we passed a red marker showing the limit of entry to anyone not involved in restoration. In the dune area we were given an orientation by Tim Ennis, with a comprehensive overview of James Island history, NCC involvement and the progress of restoration over the last three years. Katy Fulton gave us a safety orientation.

An aerial photo from before restoration showed a huge area of yellow gorse covering the tip of the spit. Now there is only a remnant of the gorse, and big piles of cleared gorse drying which will eventually be burned.

Tim and Katy described several rare plants of the dunes including Contorted Pod Evening Primrose and Big-headed Sedge. The endangered Yellow Sand Verbena is the home of

the rare Edward's Beach Moth, an inconspicuous nocturnal moth which hides out in curled leaves by day. Tim asked us to walk in single file to reduce damage, and I watched where I stepped all day.

There was a choice of tasks for the day: cutting gorse, digging out the invasive European Beach Grass, pulling up Crow Garlic, or laying down black landscaping cloth to suppress the germination of seeds. Gorse seeds can last 40 years and broom seeds up to 100 years, and many of both remain in the dunes.

I worked at putting down the landscaping cloth. We gathered rocks and pieces of driftwood to hold down the cloth. Our safety orientation mentioned black widow spiders living under rocks and driftwood, but I was never lucky (unlucky?) enough to see one.

During the day I observed 32 bird species, including five Western Sandpipers, my first southbound shorebirds of the year. Three Heermann's Gulls and two species of cormorants were at the tip of the north spit, Rhinoceros Auklets and Pigeon Guillemots were offshore and Purple Martins overhead.

Tim said that before restoration started Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper were not nesting there. Now the Killdeer give lively distraction displays showing that their nests or young



are nearby. Spotted Sandpiper and a Willow Flycatcher called from the marsh, and a male Red-winged Blackbird called and perched close to our group to keep an eye on us. Tim mentioned a nesting Common Nighthawk found in the south end dunes in a previous year.

About 60 Canada Geese were along the shore, and their droppings were all over the spit. They are another example of a misguided species introduction – a goose that doesn't migrate and has no local predators.

We broke for lunch and sat on a log or on the sandy beach, a chance to chat with everyone. Eco-volunteers are a great

bunch of people of all ages who share a common love of nature and enjoyment of work in the outdoors. Everyone there was positive and energetic, happy to help out.

After lunch I pulled Crow Garlic, a species that escaped from kitchen gardens of the previous settlement, while other workers returned to their gorse and beach grass work. At 2:30 p.m. we boarded the bus for the return journey.

It was a great day to spend in the sun helping out the island's dunes, and wonderful to visit this island which is usually so near to Vancouver Island, and yet so far.

## Leave a Lasting Legacy to Nature

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





# 20 Years Young, and Busier Than Ever!

By Acacia Spencer-Hills



**R**ocky Point Bird Observatory has been as busy as a chickadee over the last few months. Our annual *Introduction to Bird Monitoring and Banding Workshop* was March 28th-30th, and this year saw 18 participants from locations as far away as North Carolina! Instructor Nick Bartok (Calgary bander), mixed classroom teaching with hands-on and “in the field” experience in bird handling, anatomy, monitoring and banding techniques, mist net setup, and bird extraction. The workshop was well-received, and many participants have volunteered in our monitoring programs this year.

In May, RPBO co-hosted the BC Nature AGM with VNHS. Many RPBO members participated in this wonderful event, volunteering at or coordinating field trips, attending or even giving presentations. A great time was had by all, and RPBO is grateful to have had the opportunity to co-host.

Also in May, International Migratory Bird Day at Beaver Lake saw RPBO paired with VNHS, as well as CRD Parks, Pacific Northwest Raptors, Saanich Nature Pre-School, Rithet’s Bog Conservation Society, the BC Hummingbird Project, and Malcolm & Christina Rodin displaying their birdhouses. RPBO set up mist nets, and we managed to catch a few birds to show the public, including a Rufous Hummingbird and a Northern Flicker. It was a great day to be outside, sharing appreciation and knowledge about birds and hopefully inspiring people to get involved in bird- and nature-related projects.

May was also Baillie Birdathon month, with many of our members participating in this long-standing (the oldest in North America!) fundraising event that supports Bird Studies Canada and RPBO. The challenge is to find and identify as many bird species as possible in a 24-hour period, sponsored at a flat rate or on a per-species basis. Ian Cruickshank, a RPBO team member whom many of you know (if perhaps only by reputation), managed to see 110 species in 6 hours while on vacation in Saskatchewan! Our youngest team member, Emma Reader-Lee, saw 76 species between 4:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. Team member Ann Nightingale went perhaps the most “full out”, starting her Birdathon



Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*).  
Photo: Marie O’Shaughnessy

at 6 a.m. May 17th and birding straight through to 6 a.m. May 18th – phew! She found a respectable 101 species.

Our Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) Program wrapped up August 3rd, marking our 11th year of participation in the program managed by the Institute for Bird Populations. Designed to assess and monitor population dynamics and demographics of North American landbirds, RPBO runs two mist-netting sites – Madrona Farm and Witty’s Lagoon. The sites provide a great opportunity to not only see some breeding or young birds, but also to train new volunteers in banding, extracting, and site setup. Thanks go out to all volunteers new and old!

Our Migration Monitoring Program is in full swing, with sites at Pedder Bay RV Resort & Marina and Rocky Point running mist nets simultaneously for 6 hours a day starting 15 minutes before sunrise, from July 15th to October 18th. As of August 4th, the Rocky Point site had banded 393 birds,

with 54 recaptures, and our Pedder Bay site had banded 502 birds, with 133 recaptures. For a real treat, please check out our Facebook page or blog at [rpbo2014.blogspot.ca](http://rpbo2014.blogspot.ca) to see daily updates for both sites – with pictures of birds banded! Remember that our Pedder Bay site is open for the public to view our banding operations; for more information, email to [rpbo@rpbo.org](mailto:rpbo@rpbo.org) – we’d love to see you out there!

Lastly, our Saw-Whet Owl Monitoring Project is at Rocky Point from September 15th to October 31st and it’s looking as if we will be opening our Pedder Bay site for a full owl season for the first time ever. Mist netting runs for 6 hours starting just before sunset. To fund this project, RPBO hosts two annual “Owl BBQ”s – no, we do not BBQ actual owls! Tickets include food and an opportunity to see live owl banding in action. Two BBQs are planned – September 27th and October 4th. For more details, check out [rpbo.org](http://rpbo.org) if you wish to attend.

2014 has flown by (pardon the pun) so far, and there’s no sign of slowing down. As always, we are looking for more people to bring their talents to RPBO, so if any of the above interests you, please check out the volunteer links on our website and come join the fun!

# Letters

President BC Nature

Thank you BC Nature for the Ian McTaggart-Cowan Award!, May 3, 2014. You certainly caught us by surprise. Awards presented by one's peers are of the greatest significance; and even more profound when the award is in the name and honour of a well-known achiever such as Ian McTaggart-Cowan.

The conference itself gave us great pleasure, and then to be honoured by and in the midst of naturalists for our efforts – such a pleasurable and confirming reward.

Our grand kids also admire the very nice wooden bowl too, and the slight stain caused by the pine beetle. It represents a complicated story in itself.

Thank you to BC Nature for the honour; thank you Victoria Natural History for the nomination. We appreciate the recognition on behalf of ever so many that shared with us through thick and thin to implement and proceed with projects, the most recent being the Hummingbird Monitoring Network now integrated seriously and successfully within the Rocky Point observatory operation.

Pleased and proud

Sincerely

Joy and Cam Finlay



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## BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

### Victoria Natural History Book Club

Announcing the launch of VNHS's first-ever book club. Each year, dozens of creative nonfiction books are published that speak to the environmental situation on Vancouver Island. The last year, for example, saw the publication of *Where Do Camels Belong* by Ken Thompson, *The Soil Will Save Us* by Kristin Ohlson, *The Origin of Feces* by David Waltner-Toews, *Wild Ones* by John Mooallem, and *The Once and Future World* by J. B. Mackinnon – all worth reading and discussing.

We will convene one evening a month to talk about a new natural history book. For our first meeting, on Monday, September 8, 7:00 pm, we will gather at Kem Luther's house, 4542 Rocky Point Road, to discuss Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, a small classic that many club members have wanted to read or reread. At this first event we will discuss meeting venues and books to read in the coming year.

Maximum of 15 persons. To reserve your place in the book club, contact Kem Luther [kem.luther@gmail.com](mailto:kem.luther@gmail.com), 250-595-2474.

### Wild Mushrooms: An Introductory Course for Adults

This series of 6 classes is sponsored by Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary and the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (SVIMS). Register for as many as your interest and schedule allow. Details at <http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php>

### Non-Native Cattail Clearing at Rithet's Bog – Volunteers Needed!

**Saturday, September 13, 10 a.m to 3 p.m.**

(Part day participation is welcomed. Drop in when you can. Leave when you have to.)



Saanich Parks, Ducks Unlimited, Saanich Pulling Together Volunteers, and the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society are hosting a volunteer event to remove invasive non-native Narrow Leaf and Hybrid Cattails from the wetland adjacent to Chatterton Way at the west end of the bog, to improve viewing of and habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds by reclaiming areas of open water and mudflat that have been overgrown by non-native cattails. We will not be removing significant amounts of our native cattail species. **Please no dogs or small children.** Contact Russ for more information [rpym@shaw.ca](mailto:rpym@shaw.ca) or 250-658-5167.

### Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up

There will be two Shoreline Clean-ups at Esquimalt Lagoon on Wednesday, September 24 and Thursday, September 25, both at 9:30 a.m. For more details and to sign up, go to [www.crd.bc.ca/elsi](http://www.crd.bc.ca/elsi)

### Swan Lake Guided Bird Walks

Every Wednesday and Saturday at 9:00 a.m. Bring your binoculars and walking shoes 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 Rd, off Ralph St.

### Christmas Bird Count Reports available

Interested in copies of The Victoria Naturalist containing reports of the Annual Christmas Bird Counts from 1947 to 2013, except for 2006? If so, please phone Gwennie Hooper at 250-477-1152.

### Available and free!

24 years of the Journal of Wildlife Management (1977-2000) and associated Wildlife Monographs and 10 years of Conservation Biology (1991-2000). These are journals for professionals in the fields of wildlife management and ecology. There is a wealth of information in them, but it is presented for academics and managers rather than for a lay audience. Contact Tory Stevens for more information 250-387-3960 [Tory.stevens@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Tory.stevens@gov.bc.ca)

### Going to Birders' Night?

We are still hoping to find someone to organize the refreshments on Birder's Nights, the fourth Wednesday of the month. This involves coming to the lecture hall not later than 6.30 with the equipment, beverage supplies, and cookies. All equipment is provided and naturally there is reimbursement for the food purchases. For further details contact Ken at [ksohm@live.com](mailto:ksohm@live.com) or phone 250-658-6115.

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## 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.

*Remember that if you want to do a talk or know someone who might, please contact one of the presentation night coordinators. If you have an idea for a field trip or wish to volunteer as a leader, please contact any board member. Contact information on p.2. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share!*

**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, usually at 8:00 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. 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. For more details, contact Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or 250-721-0634.

**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](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or phone 250-721-0634 for more information.**

## SEPTEMBER

### Saturday, September 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Waterfront Birding*

This is a good time to check out the waterfront for birds.

**Marie O'Shaughnessy** will be your leader. Meet at Cattle Point (Beach Dr between Rutland Rd and Dorset Rd) at 7:30 a.m. We will wander around Cattle Point and make a few stops between there and Clover Point, ending up at the Ogden Point Breakwater. There will be birds on the water as well as shorebirds to watch for. Contact **Marie** at 250-598-9680 or email **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### Sunday, September 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Monthly Butterfly Outing*

Join **Aziza Cooper** on the last of the season's Butterfly outings. 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 1:00 pm at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact **Aziza** at 250-516-7703 or email her at skylarkbc123 at gmail.com for more information.

### Tuesday, September 9

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT PRESENTATION

#### *Microbes within us: How symbiotic bacteria shape the lives of animals*

Symbiosis, or intimate associations between different species, is one of the most important forces in biology. In this talk, **Steve Perlman** will discuss recent advances in discovering and understanding the hidden world of symbiotic microorganisms that live exclusively inside animals. Focusing on microbial symbionts of insects and humans, Steve will describe some of the diverse roles symbionts play in the natural history of their hosts, such as helping them digest food, protecting them against natural enemies, and manipulating their reproduction and behaviour. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

### Sunday, September 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Esquimalt Lagoon*

The Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative ([www.crd.bc.ca/elsi](http://www.crd.bc.ca/elsi)) is a group of organizations who collaborates to protect, enhance and restore Esquimalt Lagoon and the surrounding area. Come take a walk with marine biologist/educator **Kitty Lloyd** who is the current ELSI coordinator. She will remind us how important it is to preserve the valuable components of the Esquimalt Lagoon ecosystem while we walk along the spit. We will look at the projects undertaken to help preserve the fragile dune habitat important to our migrating waterfowl. We will do a bit of birdwatching to finish off as Kitty explains how the area is used by these birds. Meet at 10:00 a.m. near the washrooms at the corner of Lagoon Rd and Ocean Blvd. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

### Tuesday, September 16

BOTANY NIGHT PRESENTATION

#### *Garry Oak Wetlands on Vancouver Island*

We often associate Garry oak ecosystems with dry, rocky places, but this is only half the story. Wetlands are an overlooked

component of these important ecosystems. **James Miskelly** will present an overview of wetland habitat in Garry oak ecosystems, the common species, the rare ones, and what can be done to protect or restore them. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

### Saturday, September 20 to Sunday September 28

EVENT

#### *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).

### Wednesday, September 24

BIRDERS' NIGHT PRESENTATION

#### *Hummers in the Mist*

Join **Eric Pittmann** for stunning Hummingbird video adventures in Alaska with a BBC wildlife crew. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

### Sunday, September 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

#### *Juan de Fuca Pelagic Birding*

We have once again hired the boat Fantasea II to go from Victoria Harbour out into the Juan De Fuca Strait and towards Race Rocks to find some of the pelagic species that feed there. We repeat this popular tour each year as it always turns up something to keep us interested in going again. We will follow the tide debris line that occurs between Victoria and Race Rocks as the currents cause an upwelling of nutrients from the bottom, resulting in the best feeding spots for the birds. Possible birds include shearwaters, murrelets, auklets, jaegers, Northern Fulmar, many species of gulls, phalaropes and other pelagics. We generally are able to go through Race Rocks to see close-up the variety of sea lions and seals who laze on the rocks there. We are sometimes treated to whales if they are in the area. There is room for 20 people. The cost is \$65.00 (including GST) per person for VNHS members, \$85.00 for non-members. The trip is 5 hours (9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.). **Please book as soon as possible, by Sep 14 at the latest.** First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through PayPal on the VNHS website ([vicnhs.bc.ca](http://vicnhs.bc.ca)) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Spaces remaining on Pay Pal do NOT indicate that spaces are still available on the boat. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information. See more details about the trip at <http://vicnhs.bc.ca/fantasea.html>.

### Monday, September 29

MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION

#### *The Galapagos Marine Environment*

**Michael Jackson** is the author of 'Galapagos – A Natural History Guide' which has been a key resource for naturalists visiting the islands for almost 30 years. He has been visiting the islands now for 34 years and is a member of the Charles Darwin Foundation and a director of Galapagos Conservancy Canada. Michael has snorkeled and dived the islands extensively. Life on land in the Galapagos is intricately dependent on the marine environment and the marine environment itself is spectacular. Michael will share his images and knowledge of the Galapagos marine environment and also its connection to supporting life on land. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

## **OCTOBER**

### **Sunday, October 5**

#### **FIELD TRIP**

##### ***Spectacular Spiders***

Join **Darren and Claudia Copley** for a spider stalk Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. We'll walk to the retriever ponds area and check the field, forest, bushes and water's edge for spiders. Come learn about these 8-legged wonders! Bring a spider along to have it identified and discussed. Meet at the picnic shelter at 1 p.m. This trip is being held in conjunction with CRD Parks and is suitable for all ages.

### **Saturday October 11**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)**

##### ***Viaduct Flats Birding***

Come join the **VNHS Saturday Birding Group** at Viaduct Flats. Open to all level of birders. Great place to learn. Meet at the viewing tower at 8:00 a.m. This is near the intersection of Interurban and Viaduct. The water birds are returning and there are lots of birds in the woods. We also usually wander into the surrounding area such as Camosun College/Layritz Park or Quick's Bottom depending on what interesting birds have been reported. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

### **Tuesday, October 14**

#### **NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT PRESENTATION**

##### ***Discover the Yukon***

The Yukon is more than just 400,000 square kilometres of largely unroaded wilderness, a diverse set of ecosystems populated by bears, sheep, bison, moose and caribou. Because the central Yukon was never glaciated during the Pleistocene Ice Ages, it is also home to many species found nowhere else in the world, or species that have more affiliation with Mongolia and Siberia than to the rest of North America. This presentation by **Syd Cannings** will provide an introduction to the geography and ecology of the Yukon, with special emphasis on its unique habitats and species. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

### **Sunday, October 19**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)**

##### ***Whale Watching and Eco Tour***

In VNHS we have amazing members such as **Jim Cosgrove** (see details at web site below.) He spends his semi-retirement summers on the Spring Tide whale boats. We have been thinking of trying a whale watching trip for VNHS members so we decided to go out with Jim to share one of his adventures. We will travel on one of Spring Tide's larger vessels rather than a typical whale watching zodiac so should be comfortable in all weather. We will concentrate on trying to find whales although we will look at birds, mammals or anything of interest on the water. Unless we get whale sightings in a different direction, we hope to travel eastward towards the Gulf Islands. You will find that the Spring Tide vessels travel quickly so we will only need to be out for about 3 hours, which is the usual for a whale watching tour. October was chosen to get a good chance of seeing a variety of the resident as well as the transient whales but there are no guarantees of what we might see. We do require a minimum number of participants for this tour to take place but we hope to get enough people to reserve the larger of the two vessels to have more room and better communications. **Please book as soon as possible, by Sep 14 at the latest.** First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay through PayPal on the VNHS website

([www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Contact **Agnes** at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information. See more details about Jim and the trip at <http://vicnhs.bc.ca/springtide.html>.

### **Tuesday, October 21**

#### **BOTANY NIGHT PRESENTATION**

##### ***Plants of Costa Rica***

**Andy MacKinnon** will share a sample of his travels in Costa Rica and the plants he has encountered there. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

### **Wednesday, October 22**

#### **BIRDERS' NIGHT PRESENTATION**

##### ***Bird collisions with glass – a real headache***

Collisions with windows are considered to be one of the largest sources of human-caused mortality for birds in North America. An estimated 25 million birds are killed annually in collisions with buildings in Canada and 365-988 million in the U.S. Most collision-related deaths occur during the daytime at homes and other residential buildings because they are by far the most numerous and widespread of building types. Nevertheless, since many high-rise office buildings are clad in large expanses of reflective glass, they can cause a disproportionately high number of collisions annually, particularly if they are adjacent to areas that attract high densities of birds. **Krista de Groot** will explore why birds collide with glass, the scope and severity of the issue, and what you can do about it in and around your home and business. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

### **Monday, October 27**

#### **MARINE NIGHT PRESENTATION**

##### ***Fraser River White Sturgeons – Freshwater Incursions and Marine Excursions***

The population of White Sturgeon living in the lower Fraser River is currently listed as a threatened stock. Fortunately, through detailed tagging studies and an active volunteer citizen science program, researchers have an improved understanding of the population demographics and movement patterns of these magnificent fish – and these findings are translating into better management and stewardship. Join **Dr. David Robichaud**, a behavioural ecologist who has been working with LGL Limited and the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society, as he highlights some of their most up-to-date study results. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

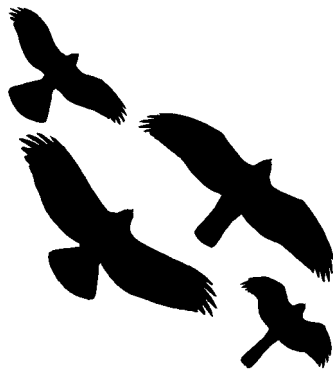
#### **ADVANCE NOTICE: NOVEMBER**

##### **Sunday November 2**

#### **NON-VNHS EVENT**

##### ***SVIMS Annual Mushroom Show at Swan Lake***

The South Vancouver Island Mycology Society's annual Mushroom Show takes place at Swan Lake Nature House at 3873 Swan Lake Rd, off Ralph St. Open 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Admission by donation. An extensive range of species will be on display complete with identification. Members of the public are encouraged to bring any species they find to the Show for identification. Mycologists will be at the show throughout the day to identify species as well as provide tips on how to identify mushroom varieties. People who wish to have a species identified should bring the entire mushroom, including the root or growing surface if necessary. If possible, note the environment the mushroom is growing in as well as what the area is like that it is growing in. Also cooked samples to taste.



*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.**