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The Victoria NATURALIST

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*less discount: Senior \$5 or Student \$10

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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

Guidelines for Submissions

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: A view from the stern of the Fantasea II, the vessel used for VNHS Juan de Fuca Mini-Pelagic Birding trips. Photo: Neil Boyle

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

With the tourists mostly gone, I restarted my occasional visits to Government Street, meaning to Murchies and Munro's Books. The other day I wandered into the latter and found on the remainder tables the book of photos of the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2013* at a very good price. It reminded me that the show is coming up again soon, starting on December 12, running until April at the Royal British Columbia Museum.

Mentioning books, a remarkable bird book I found last year is *Birds and People*, by Mark Cocker. The author is a regular writer for the Guardian Weekly, penning, along with Paul Evans, the long-lasting 'Nature Watch' column. First published in 2013, the book is a fascinating narrative of the relationship of people and birds over many centuries, somewhat along the lines of Canadian writer Graeme Gibson's *The Bedside Book of Birds*. For example, the index in *Birds and People* carries about twenty entries for Aristotle, who made many surprisingly accurate observations of birds; some fanciful ones too, which are amusing. Cocker's book is hardly a bedside book however; it is heavy. You may need the librarian to carry it out to your car. Anyone like to do a book review of this one or of other recent nature books?

I hope you enjoy the remarkable stories spanning the hemispheres in this issue, with great photographs; and thanks to our Events organizer and compiler: something to suit all tastes. For the birders, last year's trip to Boundary Bay was very productive and one of our members did a trip report citing the exciting rarities and several 'lifers'. Many thanks to all contributors.

Ken Sohm

President's Message

The Rare Bird Alert – Discontinuing this longstanding birder-friendly feature caused a lot of discussion. Many expressed regret at losing this handy mechanism. However, overall the consensus was that the phone alert is outdated. Most keen birders now obtain reports literally instantaneously via smart phones or pads. In fact, very few of the reports came in directly to the RBA, resulting in a lot of volunteer hours, since most of the sightings had to be gathered from various internet sources such as E-bird and BCVI BIRDS; E-bird is easily accessible on the internet and people can view sightings by using the “Explore Data” button. Our counterparts in the lower Mainland, Nature Vancouver, discontinued their phone alert earlier this year. In making the decision to discontinue the RBA, the board assessed the various statements made in the feedback and we have especially listened to volunteers and members who in recent years have been most closely involved with the RBA and fully understand the system. As an alternative, we suggest you access the bird alert on our website. To do so, follow these steps:

Go to www.vicnhs.bc.ca Click Rare Bird; scroll down to “Recent Rare birds in the CRD...” and you will find birds recently reported. If you want to take this further, click “Subscribe to this alert”, choose either “once a day” or “every hour”, click “Create an account” and fill in the

required spaces. There is also a video available on our website illustrating how to use E-Bird.

Volunteer Opportunity – There will be a need over the next year or so to produce descriptions of natural areas in our region (see article page 13), to extend a project sponsored by BC Nature, started in the Comox/Courtenay area. A huge effort involving 80+ volunteers successfully kick-started the project for Comox naturalists. We hope that some of you will consider covering an area. The Courtenay volunteers often worked in small groups of two or three. Enthusiasm, ability to write and research, and some familiarity with the area you take on are prime. There will be support from our organizing committee and a final edit; some areas already have lists of flora and fauna inventoried so enquire before you start. If you are interested and wish to see the list of areas identified, please email John Henigman, jfhenigman@gmail.com

Board of Directors – We are pleased to announce that Gary Kaiser has agreed to join our Board this fall. Gary brings a lot of knowledge and experience lecturing to the board. Gary is a biologist, specializing in Palaeontology and Ornithology, and has been associated with the RBCM for many years doing research on fossils. Gary has written and co-authored several books and many other publications.

Book Sale – Our society recently acquired a large number of nature books. We have decided to have book ‘sales’ (by donation) throughout November at evening presentations. The books will be somewhat sorted by topic, e.g., botanical titles at Botany Night. To eliminate delays in starting the meeting proper, if you are interested in books come early, preferably by 7:10. Proceeds will go to one or more of the many nature organizations in our region, yet to be determined.

The late Daniel Bryant – The late Daniel Bryant – Many of our birders will know Daniel Bryant, who passed away in late September. Until recently, he was a frequent participant, complete with telescope, with both the Tuesday and the Saturday birding groups. From the late 1990’s on, he was a familiar face at birders nights. Daniel was active in Xmas Bird Counts, and in recent years, led the Sooke Count. He was also, for a period, the voice of the RBA. We will miss his quiet presence. We offer our sympathy to the family. For those of you who didn’t see the obit in the Victoria Times Colonist, you can read an account of his interesting background and career at <http://www.earthsoption.com/obituaries.cfm?profileID=13377&name=Daniel%20BRYANT>

Twitter – I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the volunteer(s) who work hard to manage our Twitter account – my earlier comments at the October Natural History Night reflected my ignorance. It is great to find out that our society has embraced different ways of communication, including Twitter. Members and others can follow us @VictoriaNHS. In the next Naturalist there will be a primer on the use of Twitter – people can decide for themselves if it is for them or not.

Ken Soh



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VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways: writing articles for the Naturalist; leading field trips; or serving on the board or committees. Some go out of their way to ensure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities by visiting shut-ins or driving others to Society functions. The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways, for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2015.


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

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients


1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter,
Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
1994 Kaye Suttill
1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
1996 Gordon Devey
1997 Michael Carson
1998 No recipients
1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
2002 Norm Mogensen
2003 Bob Chappell
2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska
2005 Rick Schortinghuis
2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
2007 No recipients
2008 Ann Nightingale
2009 No recipients
2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn
2011 Claudia and Darren Copley
2012 Bill Dancer
2013 John Henigman, Jeremy Tatum

VNHS Honorary Life Members


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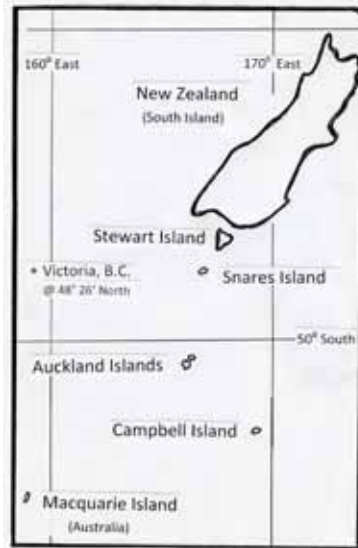
The Loneliest Tree in the World

By Bill Merilees

At the opposite corner of the Pacific Ocean from northwestern British Columbia, where the winds of the Roaring Forties propel the great albatross, there lies a series of islands. Should you island hop south from New Zealand, towards the Antarctic continent, these islands (see map) exhibit a progressive change in their vegetation. Stewart Island, at 47° south, is well treed, The Snares, named by Capt. George Vancouver at 4° South, is well treed but these are all of small stature. Next come the Auckland Islands at 5° South which has but a scattered, spindly forest confined to protected pockets. Even further South, Campbell Island at 52° has only shrubs, and Macquarie Island, at 54° South (Australian Territory), has no trees, or shrubs of any kind, only herbaceous grasses and a small number of flowering plants. Note: Victoria B.C. is 48° 26' North.

Considering the great temperate rainforest that back-drops Prince Rupert (at 54° North) and extends an even greater distance North well into Alaska, it may seem hard to believe that in the southern hemisphere, at this same latitude, trees have all but vanished. Here, due to the cooling influence of the Antarctic continent and where the blustery winds of the southern ocean hold sway, tiny, sub-Antarctic islands are but specks of land being lashed and pounded by the Roaring Forties and Screaming Fifties. Here is where the great albatross, storm petrels and penguins make their nests on land virtually inhospitable to trees.

In the New Zealand sector, disrupting this tree to treeless progression is a single exotic tree on Campbell Island. It is rightly recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the “loneliest tree in the world”. It was planted in 1901, to commemorate the New Zealand Government Expedition in which their Governor General of the time, Lord Ranfurly, was a member. As a result, this tree is known as the Ranfurly Tree. Here, at Garden Cove, 108 years later, (the time of my visit, January 7, 2009) and guarded by the local Hooker’s Sea Lion harem master, it continues to thrive. The next nearest tree, on the Auckland Islands, is 270 km (about 170 miles) distant. Between the years 1956 to 1995, when a manned Meteorological Station operated on Campbell Island, this tree provided the annual Christmas tree for the base’s Yule time celebration. This annual ‘cropping’ partially explains the tree’s current form, which is about 10 m wide but only 8 m high (see photos). This tree has a DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) of approximately 75 cm (2½ feet) a true ‘giant when compared to the spindly trees of the Auckland or Snares islands. The harsh, cool, rigorous climate probably plays a part in this form too. At the time of my visit there was no indication that this tree



Top, right: Very healthy foliage of the Ranfurly Sitka Spruce. Note, no sign of reproductive cones – male or female. Below: The Ranfurly Sitka Spruce Tree, being ‘guarded’ by a Hooker’s Sealion Bull, Garden Cove, Campbell Island. Photos: Bill Merilees

had produced or was in the process of producing any seed or cones and there were no seedlings present.

So, what species of tree is this, you ask? Would you believe it is a Sitka Spruce! A Sitka Spruce is on record as being the “loneliest tree in the world”. We know how it got to this location but why it was a Sitka Spruce and not a tree native to New Zealand, can only be guessed at. The Sitka Spruce is certainly a hardy tree, well suited, and frequently planted to withstand the rigorous climate of southernmost New Zealand. Those of us familiar with British Columbia’s north coast can certainly attest to its hardiness.

The Ranfurly Tree however is **not** the most southerly tree in the world. This distinction would go to whatever species of Beech resides at the southern tip of South America, which extends to about 56° south, in the vicinity of Cape Horn.

How Time Flies!

By Serena Johnston



Photos by author

Rocky Point Bird Observatory's 20th banding season is well underway and off to a terrific start. Currently two thirds of the way through our monitoring period and we have collectively banded over 4000 passerines with the busiest part of the season yet to come. Banding occurs at Rocky Point and the Pedder Bay RV Resort & Marina daily for six hours starting at sunrise. As of September 28th our Rocky Point site has banded 1927 birds, 274 recaptures, and 61 species, and our Pedder Bay site has banded 2397 birds, 804 recaptures, and 57 species. In the past few weeks we have seen the return of some common migrants (and annual favourites), as well as some wonderful rarities. Common migrants this time of year include Fox Sparrows, Lincoln Sparrows, Golden-crowned Sparrows and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. We have also had a huge influx of Steller's Jay with over 100 observations in a day, and Turkey Vultures in kettles up to 600 individuals. We have been lucky to capture and observe some rare visitors this fall, including a Brewer's Sparrow and a Lewis's Woodpecker at our Pedder Bay site. These species occur typically in the interior of British Columbia and Alberta and are rarely seen on Vancouver Island.

Owl banding began September 15th and is off to a great start. As of September 28th our two banding sites captured and released 297 Northern Saw-whet Owls. Mist nets operations are run daily from sunset onward for 6 hours. It's proving to be a very promising year for Saw-whet Owl migration. The majority of owls captured are juveniles suggesting it has been a very successful breeding year for our little owls. Northern Saw-whet owls can be aged by using a UV light to determine different age classes of feathers. This is possible due to a chemical called porphyrin that fluoresces orange under UV light. Owl monitoring ends October 31.

Our annual owl barbeques have been a great success with the first being held on September 27th and second on



Saw-Whet Owl.

October 4th. The event features barbecued salmon and veggie burgers, other goodies and a live owl banding demonstration. The events had a great turnout and were positively received by those who attended. Our Pedder Bay banding site is open to visitors daily for both passerine and owl banding. For more information email rpbo@rpbo.org. Daily updates (and some terrific photos) are posted on our Facebook page or blog at rpbo2014.blogspot.ca.



Feature Bird: Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Ruby-crowned Kinglet is a winter resident of Victoria. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet is a small song bird (about 5 to 6 grams) and has a thin straight bill and thin tail. Their over-all colouration is olive-brown with white wing-bars and a broken white eye ring. Males can be distinguished from females by their characteristic red crown. Their range extends from Northern Alaska to Southern Mexico, and east as far as Newfoundland. These birds can be found singly or in groups flitting nervously in the low to mid branches of shrubs and deciduous trees.

Why Did the Frog Cross the Road?

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Habitat Acquisition Trust



While the frog clearly crossed the road to get to the other side, there is some question whether or not it made it safely. Unfortunately, roads can be a major hazard for amphibians.

The word “amphibian” comes from the Greek roots “amphi” (meaning both) and “bios” (meaning life) and refers to the typical life cycle of this vertebrate group. Most amphibians begin their lives as larvae that are entirely aquatic and dependent on a water body, but as they mature they metamorphose into an adult that can live both in water and on land. Our local amphibian species, including frogs, toads, newts, and salamanders, follow this pattern by and large. (As an aside, a couple of our local salamander species, such as the Western Red-backed Salamander, have novel adaptations that allow them to skip their aquatic life stage; their eggs are laid on land and hatch directly into miniature versions of the adult).

Now it may seem as if I’ve wandered a bit off-road here, but there is an intersection between the life cycle of amphibians and the meandering of roads that has significant implications for these soft-skinned creatures. While amphibians begin their lives in water, they eventually wander away from it, and, in this modern world, when they do they often encounter roads. And cross them. Or try to at any rate.

Western Toads, who emerge from their tadpole stage as small toadlets and begin their migration to woodland habitats in huge numbers, are especially vulnerable to becoming roadkill. However, I have seen many other crushed amphibians on the roadside as well, especially Rough-skin Newts and Pacific Tree Frogs. Red-legged Frogs are also vulnerable as they travel across the landscape between their breeding sites and forested foraging areas.

Projects in other parts of BC, such as the Ryder Lake Amphibian Protection Project and the SPLAT Amphibian Tunnel near Tofino, are working to mitigate amphibian mortality at road crossings, and HAT is hoping to identify hot spots of amphibian roadkill in the Greater Victoria area and similarly help these creatures to safely cross roads. The first step for us is to find out where large numbers of amphibians are crossing the road.

If you know of problem areas on a road, probably near a wetland, where you see many amphibians squashed, please let us know by emailing HAT at hatmail@hat.bc.ca or calling 250-995-2428.



Photos by author

The 2014 Christmas Bird Counts – The Year of the Feederwatch Explosion (we hope!)

By Ann Nightingale

Wow, October already, and time to start focussing on the upcoming Christmas Bird Count season. And with 2014 being the 70th anniversary of VNHS, it's time to do something spectacular again! In 2004, we hit a new Canadian CBC record of 154 species, which is still the record today. Do you think we can top that? That would be fantastic, but requires luck—and more than a few rare species—to show up on our count day.

I propose we do something over which we have a little bit more control. Once again an important participation record fell in 2013. We had 232 field participants last year, an all-time record for us. Our feederwatchers are lagging behind, though. Let's make 2014 the year that we finally get our feederwatch program off the ground! We normally get fewer than 50 feederwatch reports. In honour of the 70th anniversary, I think 70 is too low a goal but 700 might be a bit lofty. How about trying to get as many feederwatchers as we have people in the field? Increasing our feederwatch participation doesn't mean that we aren't going to push for a new field participation record, too. Rather, I'd like to expand our participation to those who can't or don't want to brave the elements and would rather bird from the comfort of their homes. A feederwatch list (with photos) and report form are posted at vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/feederwatch.html, and I will put

together flyers for people to distribute to their friends and neighbours.

A total 79,877 individuals of 146 bird species were observed on the Victoria count circle (BCVI) in 2013, breaking a three year trend of 140 species. A surprising number of species broke their previous records: Wood Duck (219), Double-crested Cormorant (1181), Black Oystercatcher (111), Surfbird (78), Eurasian Collared-dove (63), Mourning Dove (70), Great Horned Owl (49), Northern Flicker (645), Chestnut-backed Chickadee (2812), Pacific Wren (587), Marsh Wren (57), Hermit Thrush (58), Fox Sparrow (951), Swamp Sparrow (10), White-crowned Sparrow (384), and Golden-crowned Sparrow (1937).

Rare birds were also evident and we added Red Knot, Rock Wren, Palm Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, American Bittern and Sora. But the most interesting rare bird was the one that got away. Several weeks after the count, a photo surfaced of a Redwing, an Asian vagrant that was the first record for Victoria, seen just three days after our count in the Panama Flats area. A good reminder to dream big!

Everyone is welcome!

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is on **Saturday, December 20** this year, the latest day that our count occurs. The BCVI fifteen mile diameter circle is centred on the Marigold/Interurban area.

You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. I'd also be interested in recruiting some groups—walking groups, school groups, scout groups, or any other group that would like to support the activity. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Most teams spend all of the daylight hours out in the field, but there is room for people who can only spend part of the day too. Come out for as long as you can! There are a few “keeners” who go out looking and listening for owls in the pre-dawn hours. There may be boats on the water again this year, so if that is your particular specialty, please let me know.

Count	Date	Coordinators
South Salt Spring Island/Sidney; North Salt Spring Island/Galiano; Pender Island	Sun, Dec 14, 2014	Daniel Donneck 250 744-5615; sidneycbc@naturevictoria.ca (South Salt Spring/Sidney); Tim Marchant tim@villagecobbler.ca (North Salt Spring); Mike Hoebel mhoebel@telus.net (Galiano Island); Gerald McKeating geraldmckeating@shaw.ca (Pender)
Victoria	Sat, Dec 20, 2014	Ann Nightingale 250-652-6450; victoriacbc@naturevictoria.ca
Sooke	Sun, Dec 28, 2014	Cathy O'Connor 250-580-5673; sookecbc@naturevictoria.ca
Duncan	Thurs, Jan 1, 2015	Derrick Marven 250-748-8504; marven@shaw.ca

If you are curious, interested, would like to see lists and pictures of the region's winter birds, or just need more information, please check out the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/) and the Christmas Bird Count site (birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count) If you have a preference to count in a specific area, you may contact the team leader for the area directly.

Feederwatchers don't have to register—just report your birds on the appropriate count day!

Leaders:

There are a few changes in leadership this year. As many of you may know, longtime zone leader and recent Sooke circle coordinator Daniel Bryant passed away in late September. He was a wonderful person and fantastic leader for our counts. He arranged for Cathy O'Connor to take

over the coordination of the Sooke count before he went to hospital—a true reflection of his dedication to any task that he took on. We will definitely miss him.

Daniel Donneck volunteered after last year's counts to fill the leadership spot for the Sidney/South Salt Spring count. He will work with the coordinators on the Gulf Islands to pull together what must be the most watery Christmas Bird Count in Canada.

We will also need a couple of new zone leaders for the Victoria count. Check our website for up to date reassignments and vacancies. Please let me know if you are interested in becoming a zone leader!

If you'd like to be a bird counter this year, please contact the leader for the zone you'd like or register on the VNHS website. The updated leader list and meeting times and places will be posted on the website. Feel free to invite a friend!

	Area Name	Leader	Phone	Email
1	Butchart Gardens - N. Highlands	Warren Drinnan	250-652-9618	cbc1@naturevictoria.ca
2	Central Highlands	Warren Lee	250-478-7317	cbc2@naturevictoria.ca
3	Goldstream - Finlayson Arm	Robin Robinson	250-391-5995	cbc3@naturevictoria.ca
4	Thetis Lake - Hastings Flat	Chris Chutter	250-967-1862	cbc4@naturevictoria.ca
5	Langford Lake	Barbara Lake	250-652-6450	cbc5@naturevictoria.ca
6	Albert Head - Triangle Mountain	Rob Gowan	250-592-8905	cbc6@naturevictoria.ca
7	Esquimalt Lagoon - Mill Hill	Rick Schortinghuis	250-885-2454	cbc7@naturevictoria.ca
8	Esquimalt Harbour	Don Kramer	250-995-9369	cbc8@naturevictoria.ca
9	Portage Inlet - The Gorge	TBA		cbc9@naturevictoria.ca
10	Victoria Harbour	Jeremy Gatten	778-426-4285	cbc10@naturevictoria.ca
11	Beacon Hill Park	Mary Robichaud	250-507-8760	cbc11@naturevictoria.ca
12	Oak Bay	Mike Edgell	250-656-5998	cbc12@naturevictoria.ca
13	University - Cadboro Bay	Val George	250-208-0825	cbc13@naturevictoria.ca
14	Ten Mile Point - Arbutus Rd	Agnes Lynn	250-721-0634	cbc14@naturevictoria.ca
15	Gordon Head - Mt. Douglas	Margie Shepherd	250-477-5280	cbc15@naturevictoria.ca
16	Swan Lake - Cedar Hill	Bill Dancer	250-721-5273	cbc16@naturevictoria.ca
17	Blenkinsop Lake - Panama Flats	Steve Roias	250-588-0433	cbc17@naturevictoria.ca
18	Elk Lake - Cordova Bay	Donna Ross	250-655-1327	cbc18@naturevictoria.ca
19	Prospect Lake - Quick's Bottom	Dave Fraser	250-479-0016	cbc19@naturevictoria.ca
20	Martindale - Bear Hill	Ian Cruickshank	250-382-1652	cbc20@naturevictoria.ca
21	Zero Rock (ocean)	Donald Stewart	250-881-8532	cbc21@naturevictoria.ca
22	Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	250-477-5922	cbc22@naturevictoria.ca
23	Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ross Dawson	250-652-6450	cbc23@naturevictoria.ca

Pacific White-Sided Dolphin –

Lagenorhynchus obliquidens

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Photos by author

There are changes happening in the oceans, even if they are hard to see. The Oceanographers and researchers are compiling evidence that indicate that the seas are more acidic, warmer than 10 years ago and contain less oxygen within the water columns. These combined changes are having a detrimental affect on much of the marine life as well as creating dead zones in our oceans. Toxic chemical run off from the land can cause Toxic Algae Blooms that are harmful, not only to marine life but humans too. Coral reefs are dying and huge areas of plastic waste are causing havoc for animal and marine traffic traveling the oceans. Climate change is happening and is a REAL phenomenon.

The Salish sea, a name given to the coastal waters of southern BC in honour of the coastal Salish people in 2013 is

reported as sharing these changes. Victoria, a busy harbour city is bathed twice daily by the ebb and flow of the Salish Sea. As composition of oceans and seas alter, marine life down to the tiniest of microbes that make up much of the biomass of the oceans, alter too. A cause and effect response occurs with negative and positive changes.

One of the positives seen in this area are the recent sightings of the very acrobatic and gregarious Pacific White-sided Dolphin or Lag as they are often referred to. Four years ago one hardly saw these Lags. Generally, they ply the inland waters of northern Vancouver Island in large groups. However, small groups of 2-6 have been sighted in the Strait of Juan de Fuca over the past two years. 2013 saw approximately 1000 Lags in the Strait of Georgia. This year Sooke, Victoria and San Juan Island have had sightings of



large numbers (80-100). The dolphins have been seen harassing Southern Resident Orca, the Salmon eaters, but rarely in the company of Transient Bigg's Orca, since dolphins are a 'menu item' for those particular whales.

These Dolphins have created some excitement among the Eco-tourist Industry. Their exuberant and playful behaviour of bow-riding would indicate they are comfortable around boats. While out on a boat, I observed a single Lag Sept 18, leaping above the surface and bow-riding. This same animal preferred the company of one particular L Pod orca, a male, L 87. By September 23rd, we had several more sightings of large numbers and have continued to do so almost daily. With their black backs, grey striped flanks and white bellies they are a flashy cetacean and a real delight to see traveling as one big aggregation while herding their prey. It is a real privilege to see such diversity in our nutrient rich waters. It would appear there is an urgent need to be guardians of our beautiful BC coastal waters. After all, the Ocean is what gives us LIFE!



Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 29 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our Welcome column.

Eric Tull
Sidney
Birds, other nature

Daniel Weston
Victoria
Birds and moths

Tony Watts
North Saanich
Bird watching, wildlife in general

Alfred and Roberta Birch
Victoria
Native plants, birds, hiking

Ro Fife
Victoria
Birding and conservation

Russell Woods
Victoria
General flora, fauna and other mutations

Kim Beardmore
Victoria (Colwood)
Birding (primary), wildlife, marine life

Carleton Monk
Victoria
Birding

Raymond Woods
Sidney (& Alberta)
Birding

Joan Hendrick and John Potter
Victoria

Roxanna Harper
Victoria
Sharing a love of nature with the next generation

Leave a Lasting Legacy to Nature

Your bequest to The Nature Trust of British Columbia will help conserve the natural diversity of wildlife, plants and their critical habitats for future generations.

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

www.naturetrust.bc.ca



BC Nature Natural Viewing Areas Project

By John Henigman

The Victoria Natural History Society is embarking on a BC Nature project to put online summary information on key Natural Area Viewing Sites for the Vancouver Island region. This project was started by the Comox Valley Nature Club a couple of years ago, and is now an example of what we in Victoria could achieve. The Comox Valley natural areas can be viewed through their Club website at <http://comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/nature-viewing-guide/>. The level of detail provided is quite high for the Comox Valley sites, and we in Victoria are not bound by any imposed standard. Similar work for the Lower Mainland and Thompson/Nicola areas nature viewing sites is under way.

BC Nature has been managing the Viewing Guide project on behalf of natural history clubs in the province. They have contracted project manager Krista Kaptein to edit natural area draft summaries provided by Clubs, format them, add photos and put them up on the web in an organized fashion. The funding to conduct this work has come from BC Gaming grants, and currently BC Nature is awaiting additional funding to work on sites for southern Vancouver Island. BC Nature is requesting the VNHS create draft summaries of our natural areas that are fit to be considered public viewing areas. Krista has given us a basic template to follow to assemble the information.

Currently Greater Victoria area natural areas, including Sooke, are listed and some information presented for each one. Many of the listed sites are not necessarily good public viewing areas and have been eliminated from our list. The *original* list of sites can be seen through the VNHS website at <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/ESADecember2013.pdf>.

Recently the VNHS conducted a meeting on this project with a number of our members (Tony Embleton, Val George, John Henigman, Gary Kaiser, Bill Dancer, Ken Sohm), to discuss the value and conditions of putting information of our natural areas up on the web. The consensus from the meeting is that this project will help show off the tremendous beauty and ecological diversity of our region and will contribute to assuring its preservation.

Work on Greater Victoria natural area draft summaries is just beginning. We really need more of our naturalists to contribute. It's not difficult to do these summaries. So far John Henigman has created draft summaries for Mount Tolmie Municipal Park, and Rithet's Bog Conservation Area. Kem Luther has completed a draft summary for Matheson Lake Regional Park.

Contact John Henigman at jfhenigman@gmail.com, for more information on this project.

Member Profiles

Jim Cosgrove

A scuba diver for more than 53 years and a certified diving instructor since 1971, Jim has long been interested in the plants and animals of the ocean. An accomplished underwater photographer and videographer, Jim and his wife Jean owned and operated J & J DIVERS, (1971-2003) a company devoted to assisting underwater image makers. They have been involved in numerous projects producing documentary television programs as well as scientific and popular articles about the Giant Pacific Octopus and other British Columbia marine life.

For 30 years Jim served as the Diving Safety Officer at the University of Victoria and is a founding member of the Canadian Association for Underwater Science. After obtaining a Bachelor and Master of Science degree (Marine Biology) Jim worked for 10 years in the Biology Department of a community college before moving, in 1987, to a new position at the Royal British Columbia Museum. Jim retired as the Manager of the Natural History Section at the Royal British Columbia Museum in May, 2007. Since retirement Jim has co-authored a book on the Giant Pacific Octopus, and now spends his summers as the Biologist/Trainer of a whale watching company and his winters traveling to warm water destinations.

Jim resides in Victoria with his wife of 42 years.



Obstruction Point Flowers

By Ken Sohm

I was fortunate to snag the last spot for this Olympics trip. The weather was perfect and the colours dramatic— large patches of white, blue, orange; the campanula for example were at their peak.

A species which caused some excitement was a patch of Glacier Lilies (*Erythronium grandiflora*); this is an early blooming species. But when one realizes that there are still serious patches of snow in some spots, for the bulbs and latent plants in that area, August *can* be 'early'.

In addition to the flower spectacle there were scores of butterflies to delight us. The fritillaries were prevalent along with many checkerspots. Blues were also common and a couple of us were lucky enough to see an Olympic Parnassian.

This is an easy trip: we were met at the ferry by a comfortable bus and entertaining driver. Multiple stops along the road enabled us to get out, study or just admire the magnificent vistas – at one point Dungeness Spit was visible and, to the south-east Mt Baker was on show. This is an excellent trip for all levels of flower enthusiasts. I believe Agnes recorded some 80 species. Our thanks to Agnes for organizing such trips to the Olympics and also the one to Paradise Meadows, another outstanding flower spectacle this year.



Top: Olympic Parnassian. *Photo:* Val George. Right, below: Magenta Paintbrush. *Photo:* Agnes Lynn



Top row, left to right: Boisduval's Blue butterfly. *Photo: Val George*
 Castilleja. *Photo: Agnes Lynn*
 Alpine lily. *Photo: Val George*

Middle, left to right:
 Arctic Fritillary, Piper's Bellflower.
Photos: Val George

Below: Typical stop. *Photo: Agnes Lynn*





Pectoral Sandpiper. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

A Glorious Day by the Ocean

Field Trip report for Saturday
September 6, 2014

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

The early morning light of a new day flooded my apartment, and I was off to scout out my nearest bird venue, in preparation to lead a waterfront field trip. This one was conveniently across the street. Oak Bay Marina and Queen's Park were part of the planned stops, and I was ensuring the usual suspects were there. The tide was low and I wasn't disappointed. It was 7 a.m. and another gorgeous day here in Victoria was already under way. This year, summer sunshine has been truly exceptional. Past years have not been this kind.

Cattle Point was our start and by 7.30 a.m., 20 enthusiastic participants had arrived with scope and binocular in hand. Although this was a field trip with a focus on shorebird sightings, it is usual that all bird sightings are taken into consideration. I had noticed two participants with pen and paper in hand who were already listing species, seen and heard. The sun was brilliant and at a position that was quite blinding, but no one was complaining. Our first shorebird, a large one at that, was seen among the exposed, dark rock. One Black Oystercatcher soon became three, greeting one another with their noisy calls. A Cooper's Hawk darted across our view

while Glaucous-winged Gulls, immature and adult, Harlequin Duck, North Western Crow, Common Raven, and a flock of American Pipits were added. A distant Pigeon Guillemot, already in winter plumage was scoped, but generally there was little to be seen of sea bird life. Too many flat calm days that were not bringing up the nutrients from the water column. We soon scoped large numbers of Savannah Sparrows among the weathered drift wood. There must have been a possible fall-out of this species overnight. Song Sparrow, House Sparrow and an Anna's Hummingbird were added at this location.

Our next venue was the Bowker Ave site at Willows Beach. Here we were enthralled to see 17 or more Black-bellied Plovers in various states of molt. Beautiful birds when in full breeding plumage. Their plaintive calls are rather haunting in my opinion. A Greater Yellowlegs and a Black Turnstone were also tallied at this location. Farther along, the Oak Bay Marina gave us sightings of Hooded Merganser, Mallard, Mew Gull, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, and 4 Greater Yellowlegs. We were unable to find the one dowitcher species that had been seen on Monday at this location. Purple Martin that had been heard over the past few weeks were not obvious either.

Leading field trips have their rewards. I had scouted out on several occasions that week, the location of the rare shorebird that had been announced. It was located at the Royal Victoria Golf Course. Early evening forays from the beach side determined that it was very approachable. However, I knew it wasn't going to be possible for us this morning to access the perimeter, so the Beach Drive roadside would have to suffice. This sighting was far too rare to pass by so we made this unscheduled stop. We gathered with

scopes and binocular at the east end of the course near Newport Ave. A couple of out of town birders joined us. From this location we could just see, off in the distance, several small shorebirds on the 5th fairway. The numerous golfers and trees partially obscured our view, however we were able to identify the one Buff-breasted Sandpiper that morning. Two had been reported two days before. Perhaps the other was already on its way to points in South America, the Pampas of Argentina. This species was observed for 6–7 days at this location. Four Pectoral Sandpipers and noisy Killdeer were always with them. A Whimbrel was also seen the evening before, but we failed to locate it. A few American Goldfinches were seen and heard on the golf course.

From this venue, we headed over to Clover point, and found one resting Sanderling, Common Murre, Rhinoceros Auklet, Marbled Murrelet, Rock Dove, California and Heermann's Gull, and a Turkey Vulture. In total we had tallied 45 species,

which included some of the small common passerines. Our final destination was the Ogden Point Breakwater. We were told by two traveling birders, that two Western Sandpipers had been seen earlier down on the granite blocks, but we were unable to relocate them. However, during our walk of the entire breakwater, we did find the one Black Turnstone resting in the shadows of the blocks below. As we vacated the breakwater, four Barn Swallows were added to our list to swell our total to 46 species. There was however, no sign of a Wandering Tattler that had been reported a month earlier.

By 11.30 a.m. we had satisfied our need to add more species, as it was getting hotter. I was very pleased with our final tally, and was reminded that this was one of our best shorebird excursions along the Victoria Waterfront. Despite not finding Surfbird, Western or Least Sandpiper or even a Lesser Yellowlegs, participants were pleased. After all, there is always another day!

State of the Birds Report: Conservation Works, but There's More Work to Do

Excerpt from Cornell University press release Sept 9, 2014

The Cornell Lab and partners released the 2014 State of the Birds Report in early September. The report commemorates Martha, the world's last Passenger Pigeon, whose tragic passing 100 years ago spurred the creation of the world's greatest conservation movement.

In the last century we've saved Wood Ducks and Bald Eagles, Kirtland's Warblers and Brown Pelicans, and more. The new report offers the most comprehensive review of long-term trend data for U.S. birds ever, identifying a Watch List of 228 high-concern species as well as 33 Common Birds in Steep Decline to begin conserving now.

“State of the Birds” Report Assesses the
Health of the Nation’s Birds
The Good News: Conservation Efforts
Work When Applied
The Bad News: Populations Are Down in
Many Key Habitats

One hundred years after the extinction of the passenger pigeon, the nation’s top bird science and conservation groups have come together to publish The State of the Birds 2014 – the most comprehensive review of long-term trend data for U.S. birds ever conducted. The authors call the results unsettling. The report finds bird populations declining across several key habitats, and it includes a “watch list” of bird species in need of immediate conservation help. The report also reveals, however, that in areas where a strong conservation investment has been made, bird populations are recovering.

The State of the Birds 2014 is authored by the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative – a 23-member partnership of government agencies and organizations dedicated to advancing bird conservation. The report is based on extensive reviews of population data from long-term monitoring. It looks to birds as indicators of ecosystem health by examining population trends of species dependent on one of seven habitats: grasslands, forests, wetlands, ocean, aridlands, islands and coasts. This year’s report is also a five-year check-in on the indicators presented in the inaugural 2009 State of the Birds report.

The report points, once again, to conservation as the most valuable solution to stopping these species from joining the Watch List. Addressing the conservation needs of these birds will result in healthier, more productive land and water for other wildlife, as well as for people.

The strongest finding in The State of the Birds 2014 is simple: conservation works. Ducks fly once again in great numbers up the Mississippi River and across the Chesapeake Bay. California Condors are rebounding from just 22 birds to more than 200 today. Bald Eagles, Brown Pelicans, Peregrine Falcons – all species once headed the way of the Passenger Pigeon – are now abundant. To prevent future extinctions like the Passenger Pigeon, the report’s authors point to science, technology and knowledge as the foundation of proactive partner-driven conservation. The full report can be found at <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>

From The Victoria Naturalist June 1975 Vol. 31, No. 10
Copies of the June issue were given to all those attending
the Canadian Nature* Federation Conference in Victoria.

**In 1971, the Canadian Audubon Society expanded its
mandate and became the Canadian Nature Federation,
and in 2004, the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF)
became Nature Canada.*

Excerpt from

A Brief History of the Victoria Natural History Society

By A. R. Davidson

Let me go back to the beginning. On March 26, 1890, a few gentlemen met in the Provincial Museum and there and then the Natural History Society of British Columbia was formed, 40 gentlemen signifying their wish to join. On April 12 of the same year they held their first field meeting at Cadboro Bay, attended by 14 members, among them Mr. J. Fannin, the Museum Curator, and Dr. C.F. Newcombe, whose name is perpetuated in the Newcombe Auditorium.

This original society continued until March 3, 1933, when it was dissolved. So far it had not been possible to locate any of its minutes or manuscripts but it is recorded that many prominent Victorians were members and officers. *All men, you understand. Ladies were very useful bringing up the children and other household duties, but not to engage in such a serious matter as natural history.*

We do know however that in the fall of 1903 they imported 100 Skylarks from Europe and released them. And that in 1913 another 49 were liberated.

It is easy to imagine those tall-hatted gentlemen (I have a photograph of the first field meeting mentioned above) driving up the hill to Finnerty's fields, where the University of Victoria is now situated, opening the cages and watching those Skylarks flying around their new territory.

It must have suited the birds, because they have been resident ever since. Last year at least seven pairs nested on the University property in spite of the change from the quiet pastures of 1903 to the present clusters of buildings, acres of blacktop crowded with cars, and thousands of students.

From 1933 there was a hiatus of 11 years, but in April, 1944, a meeting was held in the Museum and, to quote from the editorial of the first issue of the Victoria Naturalist, dated April 1944 – "By the number that attended this meeting, and by their enthusiasm, it is evident that a society of this type has long been needed in this district."

And so it was! A list of members printed in the March 1947 issue gave the membership as 111, and this had increased steadily over the years.

On October 14, 1947, the first Audubon lectures were presented, Roger Tory Peterson being one of the first speakers. Five lectures were given annually until 1960, attended so well that for the next nine years each lecture was given twice, and from 1969 to the present our Society has sponsored one

matinee and two evening lectures (fifteen lectures in all) each winter.

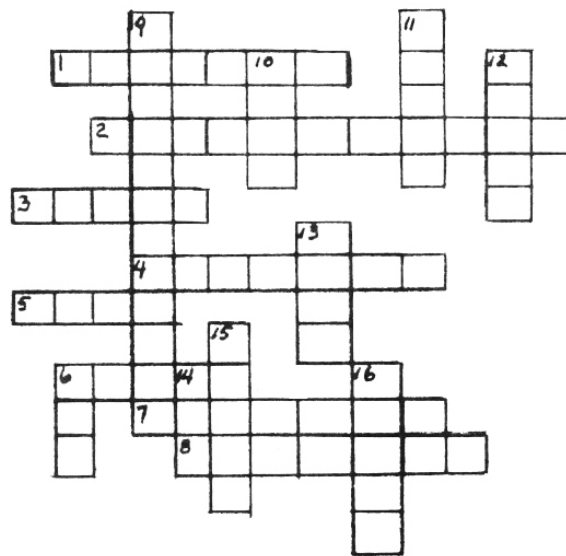
By 1958, natural history societies having considerably increased in numbers in British Columbia, Mrs. Gladys Soulsby (who was president of the V.N.H.S. at that time) proposed that a Federation of B.C. Societies be formed. To this end a meeting was held on February 16 of that year. Further meetings over the years resulted in the B.C. Nature Council being officially formed on May 11, 1963, with seven societies represented. The name was later changed to the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists, which, as of March this year, included more than 5,000 people in 34 clubs, plus about 500 direct members.

Note from p. 184 of June 1975 Naturalist: First report of Annas Hummingbirds in Roberts Bay Sidney, Dec 10 and 23.

From The Victoria Naturalist, October 1975 Vol. 32, No.2

This crossword puzzle by Dr. Clifford Carl was first published in 1953, in the Junior Section of the Naturalist. Harold Hosford, the newsletter coordinator in 1975, published it again in 1975 and said "There's no reason why it shouldn't be as much fun to do today as it must have been then." We agree that it is just as much fun in 2014, and invite you to try your hand at making up a natural history crossword...Send it to us and we'll do our best to print yours!

Look for answers in the next issue of The Victoria Naturalist



ACROSS:

1. A common duck
2. Our smallest bird
3. Long-legged, fish-eater
4. An owl
5. An egg-eater
6. Winter bird
7. Turkey
8. Swamp bird

DOWN:

9. Our commonest gull
10. A thin-bodied marsh bird
11. Hell diver
12. Looks like a penguin
13. A small gull-like bird
6. A cheeky bird
14. A male swan
15. Red breast
16. Flies* in a V

*spelling as in original

VNHS Members Help Map Oil Spills in the Salish Sea

By Dave Robichaud and Andy Rosenberger

What would be the consequence of an oil spill in the Salish Sea? Where would the oil go, and what ecologically sensitive places might be affected? These questions are of increased importance given Kinder Morgan's plans to twin their 'Trans Mountain' pipeline to the lower mainland. If the pipeline is further developed, then we may see more than 400 oil tankers passing by Victoria each year.

Since 2013, Raincoast Conservation Foundation and Georgia Strait Alliance have been trying to better understand the path an oil spill might take, and how far the oil could travel. To this end, thousands of small drift cards are being dropped along the oil tanker route from Burrard Inlet, through the Gulf and San Juan Islands, and out into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The drift cards are 4" x 6" pieces of bright yellow plywood (biodegradable of course), each with a unique number, and stamped with the reminder, "This could be oil". The results of the study depend on citizen participation: people who find washed-up drift cards should visit the project's webpage (salishseaspillmap.org), and indicate where and when their card was found.

This past October, several members of the Victoria



Photo: Donna Ross

Natural History Society were pleased to participate in a drift-card drop. Passengers on the 'Fantasea Pelagic Birding Trip' took a break from watching gulls, murres, and sea lions to help toss 200 drift cards into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The drop location was approximately 5 km south of the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve. It was a sunny, flat calm morning, and we watched the yellow cards drift away from the stern of the boat, floating lazily on the surface, waiting to be taken by future winds and currents towards unknown destinations.

So, when you are out enjoying a walk along our beautiful coastline, be on the lookout for drift cards, and please be sure to report them. Even if you haven't found a card, visit the webpage to see where cards have been found to date (some have been reported from as far as Haida Gwaii and the central Alaskan coast), find out more about potential threats to the region, and learn how to take action.

Broom Bashes

Saanichton Spit is enjoyed by many VNHS members. There are many interesting birds which call the Spit home at nesting time or just stop by on their way north or south from very faraway places. It is also one of the best examples of an intact dune system in the province. There are many rare and endangered plants that are especially adapted to grow in this fragile environment. Regrettably, there are a number of invasive species trying to make inroads on the Spit and they need to be removed. Most of the Spit is on the Tsawout First Nations land and they do have 'Broom Bashes' (this year Oct 22, Nov 12 and Nov 26, 9 a.m. – noon) to help clear out some of these invaders but VNHS member Bryce Kendrick has been working all year round to try to take out not just broom but other invasives such as the gorse that is now making an appearance there. He could use some help. Even if you could just spare a few hours helping him, it would be appreciated. Contact him at 250-655-5051 or bryce@mycolog.com if you'd like to join him at one of the scheduled events or just whenever you can spare a few hours. He has a very flexible schedule.



Saanichton Spit. Photo: Agnes Lynn



CARS male at feeder. *Photo: Don Carson*

The Nanaimo Boy: A Cowichan Valley Bluebird Story

By Jemma Green

Vancouver Island's ambitious Bring Back the Bluebirds project, aimed at reintroducing the extirpated Western Bluebird to the northwestern reaches of its historic habitat range, is now in its third year. The last known successful Western Bluebird nest on southern Vancouver Island occurred in the Cowichan Valley in 1991 (though regionally the last known nests were on Salt Spring and Galiano Islands in 1995). Thanks to three seasons of translocating breeding pairs and the installation of countless nestboxes throughout the Valley, the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team Society, with project partners Ecostudies Institute, Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Province of BC, has begun to build a small and growing population of Western Bluebirds.

In spite of the project's initial success – and a record number of nesting attempts this season – the 2014 breeding season saw a number of new challenges, perhaps the most interesting of which was an excess of unpaired males and the curious behaviour and exciting family dynamics that played out as a result.

As can occur within small populations, the sex ratio of returning bluebirds this year was heavily skewed: of the eight bluebirds that returned on their own in early spring, four were lone males in search of a mate (the other four arrived as two breeding pairs). By mid-May, the number of single males

increased when three paired females were killed on their nests by predators, leaving behind male survivors. The return of the four single males, and the survival of the other three, was bittersweet. As happy as we were to see so many bluebirds flying about the valley, we knew that seven roaming males could pose a threat to the breeding success of translocated pairs post-release. Although certain males appeared and reappeared, causing minor concerns or disruptions, one male in particular kept resurfacing at the wrong place and the wrong time. A marvel in April, a frustration in May and June, and a source of pride in July and August: this is the story of the "Nanaimo Boy."

The Nanaimo Boy's first appearance on Vancouver Island on April 2nd sparked a flurry of emails and posts between local birders and project partners when he was spotted at Nanaimo Airport, along with a Mountain Bluebird. Nanaimo is more than 40km (25mi) north of our core bluebird habitat and population in the Cowichan Valley.

Shortly after the initial sighting we were sent a photo taken by the birder who discovered the Nanaimo Boy, which revealed that he was in fact part of our reintroduction project: a juvenile from the second clutch of a breeding pair that had been translocated last year. His parents had returned to their former breeding territory in March; had he migrated back with them only to continue flying north, perhaps following the Mountain Bluebird? Would he return to their territory from Nanaimo? By the time we arrived at the airport the next day he was gone, leaving everyone to wonder if, and where, he would turn up next.

The answer came 10 days later. On April 13th, just as the finishing touches were being made to an aviary that we had built for a breeding pair that was soon to be translocated, the Nanaimo Boy reappeared. He had made it back to the Cowichan Valley, but he could not have picked a worse site. For the next few days we watched and waited, dismayed, as the Nanaimo Boy seemed determined to claim his territory and wait for a female. All we could do was plug the nearby vacant bluebird boxes, hoping to dissuade him. If the Nanaimo Boy stayed put, we would have to move the aviary to a new site; we could not risk the added stress he would bring to the confined pair. To our relief, after three days the Nanaimo Boy again disappeared.

A week passed and the Nanaimo Boy did not return to the aviary site. As the translocation day approached, we made the decision to keep the aviary where it was. However, no sooner had the breeding pair been released into the aviary than the Nanaimo Boy swooped down out of the trees. As he flew at the aviary again and again, harassing the pair, staff scrambled to set up a mist net. Within minutes the Nanaimo Boy was caught. The next morning he was placed in an aviary that had been vacated the evening before when another translocated pair was released. Left with no other option, the Nanaimo Boy would spend the next two weeks in this aviary – circling, vocalizing loudly, constantly agitated – until we released the pair that he had harassed, and could release him too.

Following his release on May 12th, the Nanaimo Boy was not resighted for over two weeks. But by the end of May, he had discovered the nesting territory of another

breeding pair. Although this pair had tolerated other single males within their territory – and even at their supplemental feeder – throughout the breeding season, the paired male must have recognized the Nanaimo Boy as a threat because he repeatedly chased him away. After a week spent on the margins of this territory, the Nanaimo Boy found a new purpose: a newly translocated breeding pair, already with a brood of six nestlings, in an aviary only a quarter of a mile away. The Nanaimo Boy first made contact with the pair in the aviary on June 4th, two days after they had arrived. Interestingly, he did not behave aggressively towards them, but rather called from nearby trees or perched atop the aviary. Although the female appeared unfazed by his presence, the male was noticeably agitated. The days wore on, and the Nanaimo Boy remained near the aviary, posing a concern to monitors by distracting the captive male from his task of feeding the nestlings.

By the morning of June 7th, the Nanaimo Boy was beginning to display courtship behaviour. Peeking inside the nestboxes positioned outside the aviary, calling as he flew from box to box, and perching near the female on the end of a branch which extended outside the aviary. On the evening of June 7th, it became clear that the Nanaimo Boy was a real threat to this pair when he flew to the end of an aviary perch to offer a large, bright green grub to the female through the wire mesh wall – and she opened her bill to accept it. Over the coming days, the male would continue to court the captive female and agitate the captive male.

On June 11th, the nestlings in the aviary fledged; it would soon be time for the family to be released. Not wanting to allow the Nanaimo Boy to scare off the parents during the release, which would spell certain death for the fledgelings who were still too young to feed themselves, we knew that we would have to trap the Nanaimo Boy again. On June 13th, the day of the release, mist nets were set up around the Nanaimo Boy's favoured nestbox, and bluebird calls were played to lure him in. After two hours, the Nanaimo Boy had hovered in front of the net, perched atop the net, and flown under the net, but still he continued to thwart our attempts to trap him; he wasn't going to be trapped the same way twice. We were left with no other option but to release the family and hope they stayed together in spite of the Nanaimo Boy.

Immediately following the release, much confusion ensued. With three adults and five juveniles to track, it took observers several minutes to realise what had happened. The Nanaimo Boy had chased away the other male. Within the next few days, it became apparent that the translocated male had been permanently displaced.

Thankfully, the female and all six fledgelings remained on site in spite of the Nanaimo Boy. Over the next few days, the female tolerated the presence of the single male as she industriously fed her young. Several chase events also took place, which were initially perceived to be attempts by the translocated male to return to his territory but were later assumed to be aggressive courting of the female by the Nanaimo Boy. Much to our amazement, by June 17th the Nanaimo Boy had inserted himself into the family and was helping to feed his adopted juveniles.



CARS pair and 3 juveniles at feeder. *Photo: Don Carson*

On June 21st, it looked as though the Nanaimo Boy's determination had finally paid off when he was spotted nest building with the female at a box on the property adjacent to the release site. Nine days later, the female laid their first egg, and four more eggs followed. Hot, dry weather held for the entirety of the incubation period, and the eggs hatched a day earlier than expected. The Nanaimo Boy seemed to feed his nestlings more energetically than any other parent, making constant trips to and from the nestbox with a bill loaded with mealworms whenever they were supplied. At thirteen days old, the five healthy-looking nestlings were banded.

Six days later, at 19 days old, the Nanaimo Boy's nestlings fledged. Suddenly, to those of us that had closely followed the trials and tribulations of this one individual over the last four and a half months (and cursed and wrung our hands with every wrench he threw in our plans), it seemed that this happy ending was befitting of such an exceptional bluebird. And although we make a point of not naming the birds involved in our reintroduction project, we could not help ourselves with the Nanaimo Boy; he was too great a reoccurring character not to.

Now that our field season has wrapped up for this year, all that remains is to wait and wonder what antics the Nanaimo Boy and his offspring will get up to next season.

The Bring Back the Bluebirds partner are grateful for NABS support for this project, through Zelany Fund grants.

Jemma Green was the 2014 Bring Back the Bluebirds Project Technician with the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team Society, and has since migrated back to the office where she coordinates planning for the 2015 breeding season. Jemma is a conservationist with years of outreach, fundraising, stewardship, and wildlife rehabilitation experience with a variety of environmental organizations, including restoration work in endangered Garry Oak ecosystems. This past summer of working closely with bluebirds for an entire breeding season was a perfect fit for her professional focus on animal behaviour, wildlife ecology, and conservation planning.

Volunteering for Nature – from the Perspective of an “Experienced” Volunteer

By Gail Harcombe

Blog published September 2014 for Nature Conservancy of Canada Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory

Each year, around the last week of August/first week of September, we (my husband Andrew and I) have travelled to Tatlayoko Lake for a week of volunteering at the banding station. Since this will be the 9th year of volunteering at TLBO, I was asked to write something for the blog from the perspective of an "experienced volunteer".

The moment when we top a rise in the road and the valley opens before us is something of which I will never tire...the majestic, craggy Niuts on one side and the rounded Potatoes on the other, with the snow-capped mountains to the south of

the lake glistening in the sun (most years) is an awe-inspiring vista. And this is just the beginning of the adventure. TLBO offers not only the experience of working at the banding station, but essentially a holiday in a beautiful and relatively unaltered part of the province.

I am a bit reluctant to admit that in 9 years, my bird ID skills have only improved slightly, but the good news is that my extraction skills (removing the birds from the mist nets) have improved dramatically. From the first very tentative extraction, likely a Song Sparrow or something similar that is fairly sturdy and can withstand the learning of a novice extractor, to today's extraction of the tiny Ruby-crowned Kinglet, I have learned something new every extraction. The opportunity to really look at birds up close and actually hold them is an amazing experience.



My weeks at TLBO have paid off in an unexpected way...I have also been able to volunteer for the past 3 years at migration monitoring stations in Victoria, on Vancouver Island – Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) and its associate station at Pedder Bay.

As one would suspect, each station has its own character. TLBO runs for two months – August and September – and the Victoria ones run July 15–Oct 15 (for passerines) and Sept 15–Oct 31 for Saw-whet Owls. All the stations have Banders in Charge (BICs), and assistant banders, and rely on volunteers for recording the data for each bird (scribing) and for assisting with extractions. The two Victoria stations also generally rely on volunteers for doing the daily census (walking the same route each day recording the species seen and heard, and their numbers), whereas at TLBO, the banders nearly always do census. The remote location of TLBO means that volunteers usually come for a week, whereas volunteers at the two Victoria stations can go for just one day at a time if desired. My home away from home while at TLBO has been the 6m diameter yurt...a great place to stay while volunteering...especially because you can see the incredible night sky and numerous wildlife species nearby.

Every week here has been different. We've had everything from hot, sunny days to mornings with frost, even fog, and a few days when banding was cancelled due to wind or rain. We've had some really busy weeks with lots of birds and some rather slow ones. Of course, I prefer the busy weeks, but even the slow ones are great because of where we are.

While some of the bird species recorded at TLBO are the same as those on the island, e.g., Warbling Vireos and Hairy Woodpeckers, many are different, likely due to location and the timing/duration of the banding season. Working at all three means I have had the awesome experience of extracting everything from Rufous and Anna's hummingbirds to Northern Flickers and Varied Thrushes, Bushtits to Belted

Kingfishers, a Steller's Jay and flycatchers like Pacific Slope, Willow, Hammond's, Dusky, and never to be forgotten...a trifle scary but thrilling extraction of a Pileated Woodpecker. The first Brown Creeper I extracted was at RPBO, and the first Sharp-shinned Hawk I ever extracted was at TLBO!

Actually, I take back what I said earlier about my bird ID skills...they have improved a fair bit (although I still have a long way to go). With more experience extracting has come more confidence in handling birds and in my ability to solve the extraction puzzle, so rather than my response of the first few years of "there's a bird in the net...get it out as fast as possible!" and then knowing only that it was small and yellow, now I find I look at the birds more closely, both while extracting and once freed, before placing them in the bird bags, and attempt to figure out the species. Once back at the station, scribing gives the chance to ask the bander how they identify each bird....what to look for to determine species. Every net round is different and the suspense of not knowing what you might find (one, two, five...or sigh, no birds) is very much part of the draw.

Why do I come to TLBO year after year? Well, besides the chance to see the area's beautiful landscape of mountains, valleys, and clear (and cold) lakes, and the chance to see wildlife like Black and Grizzly bears, I find solving the puzzle of how the bird got into the net and then reversing the process absolutely fascinating, and to me, it is that "Yes!" moment when the bird is safely free of the net that is so satisfying.

P.S. I'd like to acknowledge the bird ID and extraction techniques training and guidance, not to mention patience, of the following people: at TLBO – Steve Ogle, Chris Chutter, Avery Bartells, and Barry Lancaster; at RPBO – Ann Nightingale, Brian Pomfret, and Rick Schortinghuis.

ANNE HANSEN

A different species of wildlife artist



www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com

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

Visit Anne's studio by appointment at (250) 381-7313

or anitabike@gmail.com

Letters

Hi, my name is Robin Neaves.

I am new to Victoria and also a NEW member of VNHS. I am an Earth Ranger, and have been for two years now protecting the Polar Bear and raising \$363 and am now protecting the western bumblebee raising up to more than \$660. I did this by having an Earth Rangers birthday party, asking for no more than a donation to the Western Bumblebees. Plus, I spread the word by making a video and putting it on face book. I also made some cards and sold them door to door in our neighborhood.

The Western Bumblebees don't look like any ordinary bumblebee they have a white rump and are smaller than a bumblebee but are bigger than a honey bee. It's helpful to

have bumblebees in the world to pollinate our fruit and vegetables examples: raspberries, black berries, strawberries, tomatoes, avocado, watermelon just to name a few.

Money made for the Western Bumblebee will go toward research and habitat building/fixing.

I'm proud to be an official Earth Ranger, and to be a part of the VNHS.

You can become an official Earth Ranger and help protect an endangered species. Go to www.earthrangers.com and become an Earth Ranger today!

(Robin is a 4th grade student at Campus View and she has just had her 9th birthday).

BULLETIN BOARD/CLASSIFIEDS

Wanted: Kingfishers

Researchers from Vancouver Island University are studying the intestinal parasites of Belted Kingfisher and are interested in receiving any kingfishers that are found dead. For more information or to arrange pickup of a dead bird, please contact: Elsie Hampshire: (250) 668-8665 (elsie.hampshire@gmail.com) or Tim Goater: (250) 753-3245 (2325) (tim.goater@viu.ca)

New Royal BC Museum book the ultimate resource on marine mammals

Marine Mammals of British Columbia, a new book from the Royal BC Museum, by Nanaimo-based author Dr John K.B. Ford, takes an in-depth look at the rich variety and stunning species of mammals in British Columbia's coastal waters. This comprehensive book presents the latest information on 31 species of marine mammals that live in or visit Canada's west-coast waters. For more information, visit royalbcmuseum.bc.ca.

Annual Bird Reports 2013

The Annual Bird Report (ABR) for 2013 is now available. It gives a synopsis of the 253 bird species reliably recorded in the southern Vancouver Island birdwatching area in 2013. To obtain your copy, send \$4.50 to Jeremy Tatum, 205-1680 Poplar Avenue, Victoria, V8P 4K7, not forgetting to include your address. Alternatively, if you meet Jeremy in the field while birdwatching, or at one of Birders' Nights (see Calendar of Events), it is just \$3.00. Agnes Lynn also has a few copies for sale at that price.

In addition to accounts of the 253 species, the report also describes how to submit your sightings for inclusion in the 2014 ABR, as all birdwatchers are strongly encouraged to do. In brief, you are asked to **mail** your observations to Jeremy at the above address before the end of January 2015. You can also send them by email, but Jeremy **much** prefers you to send them

on paper by conventional mail. Please note that he does not get observations from elsewhere; in particular he does not scan the Internet looking for observations, and relies wholly on birders sending him their observations directly. And of course details such as field notes are **essential** for reports of rarities.

Help wanted for wetland surveys

The Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society is currently looking to restore a wetland on their property in Cobble Hill. More information can be found at <http://northwestwildlife.com/bird-and-wildlife-sanctuary/>. But before that work can be done, we would like to gather some baseline data about the site through biological surveys (bird, vegetation, amphibian, water quality, etc.). If you would be interested in helping us with these surveys, especially those of you with identification skills with birds, amphibians and wetland plants, please contact Carlo Acuña at cacuna26@yahoo.ca or Connel Bradwell, the educator based in Victoria, at islandeducator@northwestwildlife.com [N.B. Watch for info on a presentation on this topic in the new year].

Greater Victoria Green Team

Looking for a hands-on way to conserve and restore the environment? This new program helps connect volunteers to a range of environmental and restoration projects all over Victoria. We get together and remove invasive plants, plant native species, and clean up shorelines in Municipal, Regional and Provincial parks. We also harvest and prepare vegetables at non-profit educational farms. It's a great way to: make a tangible impact on the environment; meet like-minded people; learn about the environmental issues facing parks; learn to become a leader and work as a team; gain volunteer hours; get your hands dirty and have fun! Please join us at <http://www.meetup.com/greater-victoria-green-team>. If you need more information please email amanda@greenteamsCanada.ca. We are also on

Swan Lake Guided Bird Walks

Every Wednesday and Sunday 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. Parking is very limited so members are asked to carpool as much as possible and to park in the Nelthorpe cul de sac.

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 VNHS members all welcome. 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. Check on the Calendar page of the VNHS website (<http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/calendar.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 **Rick Schortinghuis** at 250-885-2454 or **Agnes Lynn** at thelynns at 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 at shaw.ca or phone 250-721-0634 for more information.

NOVEMBER

Sunday, November 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Mossy Maple Grove with Ancient Forest Alliance

This outing will NOT happen on this exact date. We are still in the process of determining when we will join the busy folks at Ancient Forest Alliance on a visit to this rare grove of centuries-old native Big Leaf Maples (*Acer macrophyllum*). This is a unique stand of trees near Lake Cowichan and includes hanging gardens of mosses, ferns and lichens that thrive on the calcium-rich bark of the trees. A salmon-bearing creek meanders through the area and we must be sensitive to the Elk which are easily scared as they wander through the area. The Ancient Forest Alliance hopes to obtain some protection for this enchanting rainforest of a different kind. See <https://www.ancientforestalliance.org/news-item.php?ID=820> for more details. To be informed of when this trip will take place and other details, contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

Sunday, November 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Mushrooms at Royal Roads

This area has a diverse selection of mushrooms so it is always a great place to wander at this time of year. South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (www.svims.ca) and VNHS member Kem Luther will gently lead us around but this outing is intended for us to discover our own specimens to try to identify. Bring your favourite field guide and we will assist you at learning more about these mysterious fungi of the forest. Please note this is an observation trip, not intended for collecting. However a few selected specimens will be chosen by the leader for closer examination. Meet at Royal Roads University (2005 Sooke Rd)

by the Tennis Courts near the university entrance at 10:00 a.m. Note parking fees are in effect. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, November 11

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT PRESENTATION

Juan de Fuca Forest: A Green Space Solution for Climate Change

The Juan de Fuca Forest lands, 130,000 hectares of temperate rainforest extending from Sooke to Port Renfrew, lie at Victoria's doorstep. Join **Nitya Harris** and **Saul Arbess** as they explain how this forest is important for bio-diversity, climate change, recreation, and local jobs. However, two major threats exist: urbanization and intensive unsustainable logging. Come hear how the Juan de Fuca forest can enable CRD citizens to address Climate Change. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

NOTE: Book Sale – by donation, throughout November at evening presentations. Books somewhat sorted by topic, e.g. botanical titles at Botany Night. To eliminate delays in starting the meeting proper, if you are interested in books, come early, preferably by 7:10.

Sunday, November 16

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho

Mike McGrenere will lead this trip on the MV Coho on its usual sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. He has been doing this trip for about ten years now and this is the best opportunity to see bird species that are usually found further out to sea, including shearwaters, fulmars and phalaropes. The crossing takes 1½ hours. We will be birding from the bow of the boat, so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. sailing. We will return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing. Allow plenty of time for parking. Street parking is free on Sundays. Ferry cost is about \$40.00 Cdn return. **You will require a Passport or enhanced driver's license to go through US Customs.** Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, November 18

BOTANY NIGHT

Camas meadow restoration at Fort Rodd Hill

Parks Canada has initiated a number of restoration activities at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site, including the wholesale conversion of an acre of lawn grasses to native meadow and oak woodland. Join **Aimee Pelletier**, Resource Management Officer, to learn more about this ambitious project. We will hear about the project's successes, the lessons learned, and the plants that are now thriving in the Garry Oak Learning Meadow. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

NOTE: Book Sale – by donation, throughout November at evening presentations. Books somewhat sorted by topic, e.g. botanical titles at Botany Night. To eliminate delays in starting the meeting proper, if you are interested in books, come early, preferably by 7:10.

Saturday, November 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Snow Geese at Reifel Bird Sanctuary

Come and see the annual Snow Goose spectacle at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. Every November thousands of Snow Geese stop

over in this part of the Fraser River delta. There is normally time to visit Boundary Bay or another site as well. Past trips have produced up to 80 species of birds for the day. Bring a lunch and drinks as we will not be stopping for refreshments. Dress warmly as it can be windy near the water. We go rain or shine. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We plan to return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes. 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 \$65 for the day from Victoria. Call Rick at 250-885-2454 for more information and contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to confirm attendance.

Saturday, November 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1-2)

In-seine: Sailfins, Shrimps, and Sea Slugs!

Join researchers from the Royal BC Museum, as they conduct an evening beach seine at Willows Beach (Oak Bay). As many as 20 species of fish, crabs, shrimp, and other invertebrates will be brought in using a large net, so everyone will get an up-close look at what lives beneath the waves. Participants will be involved at various stages of the sampling, so dress appropriately (gumboots, raingear) and wear a headlamp/bring a flashlight. Meet on the beach at 8:00 p.m. and expect to be there a couple of hours, no matter what the weather!

Sunday, November 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Fungi Observations in John Dean Park

Mycologist **Bryce Kendrick** (www.mycolog.com) will lead us on an informative nature walk through the Park. Mushrooms are only one of the types of organisms that he will show us. We will learn how molds and slime molds differ from the mushrooms. You might also ask him why fungi are more like animals than plants. As this is a park, there will be no collecting. However a few selected specimens may be chosen by the leader for closer examination. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. at the far end of Carmanah Terrace. Follow East Saanich Road to Dean Park Road and right on Carmanah Terrace to the end. Although we will not cover a large distance, the ground will be uneven and occasionally steep. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for more information.

Monday, November 24

MARINE NIGHT

The invasive intertidal cordgrass Spartina spp. – Are we on the path to coast wide eradication?

Spartina spp. have invaded intertidal habitat along the coast of California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. Where they thrive they convert intertidal mudflats, important nursing habitat for fish and crustaceans, into monophyletic stands of *Spartina*, changing the waterflow and topography of this habitat. As the Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist of BC, **Dr. Matthias Herborg** will talk about these plants and their impacts, and how a coordinated eradication effort along the West Coast is dramatically reducing these invaders. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

NOTE: Book Sale – by donation, throughout November at evening presentations. Books somewhat sorted by topic, e.g. botanical titles at Botany Night. To eliminate delays in starting the meeting proper, if you are interested in books, come early, preferably by 7:10.

Wednesday, November 26

BIRDERS NIGHT PRESENTATION

Bring Back the Bluebirds

The Red-listed Georgia Depression population of Western Bluebird has been considered extirpated in Canada since the mid-90s. In 2012, the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team joined the international recovery effort to restore healthy breeding populations in the region by heading the Bring Back the Bluebirds Project on Southern Vancouver Island. Working closely with private landowners to maintain suitable habitat and mount bluebird nestboxes, the project has been able to release a number of breeding pairs into core habitat areas each spring—with promising results. Three years into the 5-year project, Bring Back the Bluebirds Coordinator **Jemma Green** reports on progress and activities, and discusses how everyone can get involved in helping this charismatic songbird return to the region. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

NOTE: Book Sale – by donation, throughout November at evening presentations. Books somewhat sorted by topic, e.g. botanical titles at Botany Night. To eliminate delays in starting the meeting proper, if you are interested in books, come early, preferably by 7:10.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at the bridge at Esquimalt Lagoon at 8:00 a.m. for a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip will cover the ocean birds along the lagoon and will go into the fields back behind the lagoon to provide a variety of birds. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. Call Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454 or contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Tuesday, December 9

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT PRESENTATION

Winter Birds in your Backyard

While many birders fly away during the winter, Victoria is the destination of choice for a wide variety of birds. Join **Ann Nightingale** for a closer look at the birds you may not even notice in your own backyard. She'll share information on their habits as well as tips on identifying and counting the winter residents sharing your habitat. And just in time for the Victoria Christmas Bird Count and Feederwatch! Ann is also inviting you to send her photos of birds you've seen in your yard that you haven't yet identified, or any particularly interesting or amusing pictures of birds at your feeders or birdbaths. Please send them to motmot@shaw.ca, and they might end up in the show! Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Free and everyone is welcome. Bring a friend!

Saturday, December 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Juan de Fuca/Esquimalt Harbour Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at Juan de Fuca (Westshore) Recreation Centre Park and Ride (Ocean Blvd and Sooke Rd) at 8:30 a.m. for a chance to

tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip will cover the recreation centre property, parts of Esquimalt Harbour and the roadsides in between. Bring your walking shoes, fieldguide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. Contact Ann Nightingale at 250-652-6450 or motmot@shaw.ca if you need more information.

Sunday, December 14

SOUTH SALTSPRING ISLAND/SIDNEY,
NORTH SALTSPRING ISLAND/GALIANO
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
(See article page 9)

Tuesday, December 16

BOTANY NIGHT

Members' Night – Botany Night Christmas Party

Do you have a few botanical photos or stories you'd like to show off? Do you have images or specimens you'd like to have identified? Do you have a poem, song, or interpretive dance that you're dying to share? Join us at the Botany Night Christmas Party for informal mini-presentations and treats. If you have something to present, please contact kristen.miskelly@gmail.com (250-544-0455). Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, December 20

VICTORIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Everyone is welcome!

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is on Saturday, December 20 this year, the latest day that our count occurs. The BCVI fifteen mile diameter circle is centred on the Marigold/Interurban area. You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. Ann Nightingale would also be interested in recruiting some groups – walking groups, school groups, scout groups, or any other group that would like to support the activity. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Most teams spend all of the daylight hours out in the field, but there is room for people who can only spend part of the day too. Come out for as long as you can! There are a few "keeners" who go out looking and listening for owls in the pre-dawn hours. There may be boats on the water again this year, so if that is your particular specialty, please let Ann know. (For additional information, see article on page 9).

Sunday, December 28

SOOKE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

(See article page 9)

ADVANCE NOTICE:

Thursday, January 1, 2015

DUNCAN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

(See article page 9)



Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Langford Lake. It's amazing how one very small bird can make one's day! *Photo: Judy Burgess*