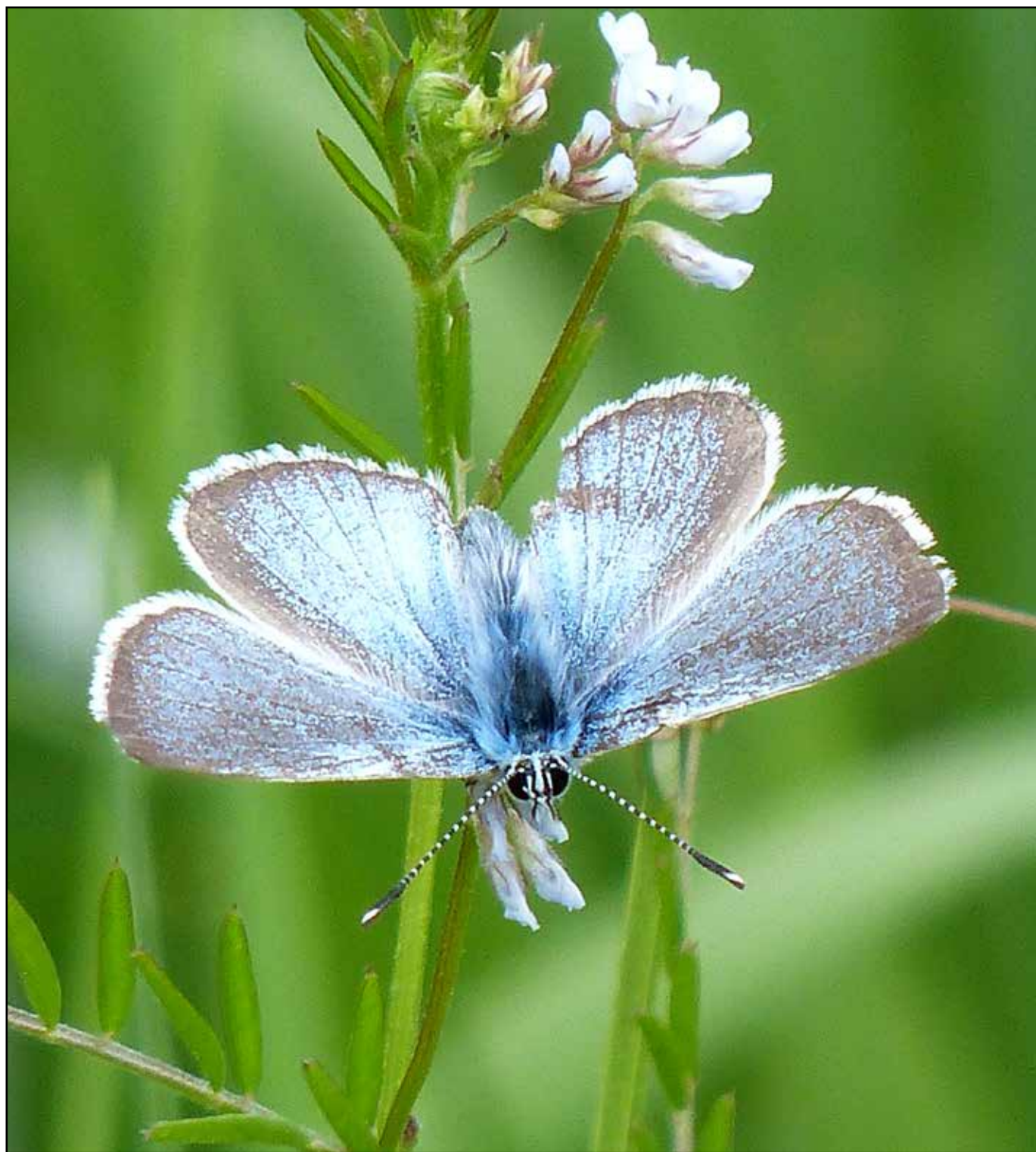




# The Victoria NATURALIST

MARCH  
APRIL  
2015  
VOL 71.5

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the  
**VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4  
Contents © 2015 as credited.  
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada

**Editor:** Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508  
**Production:** Patrice Snopkowski, CGD  
**Distribution:** Ken Sohm, Laura Gretzinger  
**Printing:** Fotoprint 250-382-8218

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

## VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Honorary Life Members:** Mr. David Anderson, Dr. Bill Austin, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mr. Tony Embleton, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling, Mr. Bruce Whittington

### Officers 2014-2015

**PRESIDENT:** James Miskelly 250-544-0455, james.miskelly@gmail.com  
**VICE-PRESIDENT:** VACANT  
**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*)

### Directors at Large:

Melissa Frey 250-383-2836, melissa.a.frey@gmail.com  
Phil Lambert 250-477-5922, plambert@pacificcoast.net  
Gary Kaiser 250-213-9457, gansus@shaw.ca

### 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  
Birder's Night: James Clowater 778-426-0166, clowater@shaw.ca  
Field Trip Coordinator: TBA—contact a board member if you have ideas.

### Membership

Payable online—see website [www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca) for details  
Individual \$30\*; Family \$35\*  
\*less discount: Senior \$5 or Student \$10

Any donation in excess of the above fees is income tax-deductible. A copy of our membership form is available on our website [www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca) or can be requested by email: [members@vicnhs.bc.ca](mailto:members@vicnhs.bc.ca). For additional membership information and renewal, please contact Darren Copley, 250-479-6622, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural History Society, Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC, V8R 6N4

**VNHS Website:** [www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)  
**Twitter** @VictoriaNHS

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

## SUBMISSIONS

**Deadline for next issue: April 1, 2015**

Send to: Gail Harcombe

7368 Veyaness Road, Saanichton BC V8M 1M3  
Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: [publications@naturevictoria.ca](mailto:publications@naturevictoria.ca)  
[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.

7.5" (2 columns) wide 2250 x 1600 pixels

3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

If you supply hardcopies, once scanned and input, hardcopy materials will be returned to the sender if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

## ADVERTISING GUIDELINES

We do our best to ensure your ad is produced accurately. Although hardcopy is accepted, we prefer print-ready high resolution digital files (PDF) as this decreases the risk of errors in reproduction of the material. Should we make an error, please contact us and a correction can be printed in the next issue. A charge is levied for typesetting. Minor alterations to existing ads cost \$10.00. Add \$15 per photo. Advertising fees are due and payable when copy is submitted. Please submit a cheque payable to The Victoria Natural History Society.

Ad Size	Price	Dimensions (in inches)
Back page	\$120	7.5" width x 8" height
Full page, inside	\$100	7.5 width x 9.5" height
1/2 page, horizontal	\$80	7.5" width x 4.75" height
1/2 page, vertical	\$80	3.5" width x 9.5" height
1/3 page horizontal	\$50	7.5" width x 3.25" height
1/3 page, vertical	\$50	3.5" width x 6.5" height
1/4 page, horizontal	\$40	7.5" width x 2.25" height
1/4 page, vertical	\$40	3.5" width x 4.75" height
1/8 page, horizontal	\$25	3.5" width x 2.25" height

Rates as of February, 1994. May be subject to change.

### Submit advertising to:

[publications@naturevictoria.ca](mailto:publications@naturevictoria.ca)  
or phone: Gail Harcombe 250-652-3508  
*Thank you for your patronage.*

**Ask about receiving the magazine  
in a digital format to see the colour version.**

**Contact:** [dccopley@telus.net](mailto:dccopley@telus.net)

# Contents

Message from the Board .....	4
VNHS Proposed Bylaw Changes.....	5
Even More Beautiful After 40 Years! <i>By Claudia Copley</i> .....	6
Warm, Sunny Days: 2014 Butterfly Count Results <i>By Aziza Cooper</i> .....	7
Christmas Bird Count 2014 Proves We're NOT Just Fair Weather Birders! <i>By Ann Nightingale</i> .....	9
Urban Forests <i>By Adam Taylor</i> .....	13
T. Chris Brayshaw [obituary] <i>By Dr.R.J. Hebda, Axel Brock-Miller, Mary Lou Florian, &amp; Helen Oldershaw</i> .....	14
Rocky Point Bird Observatory— Migration Monitoring and More! <i>By Serena Johnstone</i> .....	16
24th Annual Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat—Camas Day <i>By Agnes Lynn</i> .....	17
Welcome to New Members .....	17
Bring Back the Bluebirds: A Long-overdue Project Update <i>By Jemma Green</i> .....	18
Letters .....	20
Leaving a Legacy for Nature <i>By Steve Houser</i> .....	21
A Different Kind of Turkey for Thanksgiving <i>By Christina Carrières</i> .....	22
2015 BC Nature Conference & AGM.....	23
Bulletin Board.....	23
Calendar .....	24

Front cover photo: Silvery Blue, Galloping  
Goose Trail at Helmcken Road.  
*Photo: Aziza Cooper*

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This issue is chock full of interesting articles and amazing photographs for your reading pleasure. From the exciting news about Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary's 40th anniversary and the related activities to the "dry, business" items of the proposed bylaw changes (important to members)... from butterfly and bird count results to good news stories about bluebirds and Turkey Vultures...this issue has it all! (We actually had more submissions than we were able to fit in the newsletter...a "problem" I love to have! Thank you to all contributors.)

Spring in Victoria and the southern Gulf Islands is a special time, and March and April can be among the best months of the year—nature is "waking up" after the colder, darker months, and we start to see the first signs of spring. The BC Nature AGM on Salt Spring, the Active Pass Nature and Art Festival on Mayne Island, and the great field trips on offer all provide an excuse—as if we needed one—to (re)discover the beauty of nature and refresh our spirits. Get out there and see if you will be the one to find that first butterfly or the earliest flowers in the Garry oak meadows.

Don't forget the VHNS AGM coming up in March, and that includes the election for the Board of Directors. We do have room on the board for more directors, so please give this some thought and contact any of the current board members (see p.2 for contact info) if you might be interested.

ERRATA for Jan/Feb 2015 issue: in the Whale Watching article (p.15-16), Herrmann's Gull should have been Heermann's Gull, and breaching should have been breaching.

*Gail Harcombe*



# Message from the Board

**T**he biggest piece of news is that we are going to support the effort to replace the dilapidated boardwalk at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary in a big way: \$75,000! Almost every member of this Society has probably spent time exploring this oasis in the heart of the city, and the boardwalk is a vital piece of the experience. Most of you will also know this replacement is a long time coming—the current structure is rotting away and in several places feels downright unsafe. The new boardwalk will be similar in materials to the Founder's Wharf, so we hope not to have to talk of replacement in anyone else's lifetime!!

## ANNE HANSEN

### *A different species of wildlife artist*



[www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com](http://www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com)

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

[anitabike@gmail.com](mailto:anitabike@gmail.com) (250) 381-7313

**See Anne on the Oak Bay Studio Tour,  
April 18 & 19, 2015**

The money raised to date by Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, through this and other donations, will cover the cost to repair the area of greatest need, but more contributions are needed to complete the entire span. We hope individuals and other funding agencies will consider contributing to this incredible natural history experience: turtles, birds, dragonflies, solace... It is a great year to become a member and otherwise support the Sanctuary—this year marks their 40th birthday! For more information please see the article on page six of this magazine.

Another funding contribution from VNHS is for the completion of the Avatar Grove boardwalk. Getting there isn't as easy as a visit to Swan Lake, but having a boardwalk and trail to help you navigate your way to see the coastal giants protects both you and the trees' delicate roots. Volunteers are doing the work, but building supplies are needed, so VNHS has contributed another \$1000 to help complete this effort. Volunteers and more funding are always welcome: <https://www.ancientforestalliance.org/>.

The Bring Back the Bluebirds campaign is still a going concern, and one that we know our membership is very keen about. We all want to welcome back this exquisite songbird to our region. For this reason, the VNHS has committed to matching individual member donations up to \$5000. If you have any other fundraising ideas, the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team would probably really appreciate hearing them. See page 18 for more information.

The new year began for the Society with a revitalized website, all thanks to the volunteer efforts of VNHSer Adam Taylor. It may still have a few growing pains—please keep in touch if you are having trouble with it. We welcome photos from the membership to help add interest. We are grateful and would like to extend our appreciation to Adam for the new site, but also, very importantly, to Ann Nightingale for maintaining a web presence for the Society for more than a decade.

Along with the new website is a new online membership form and waiver. When you renew your membership, your signed waiver will be kept on file for the year, saving everyone the hassle of collecting signatures for each field trip. We hope this streamlining handles the insurance requirements without inconveniencing anyone too much.

Finally, please remember to come to the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday March 10th to vote on the proposed bylaw changes (page five). We need quorum and the presentation topic is fresh. Here's a hint: sweet songsters in the grass (p. 24).

# VNHS Proposed Bylaw Changes

The words/passages in the current bylaws to be revised are in **bold**. Corresponding proposed changes are in ***bold and italic***.

## CURRENT:

### 1.01 Classes of Membership

There shall be **six classes** of membership:

- (a) Individual - for any person 16 years of age or older;**
- (b) Family - for husband and wife and/or parent(s) and dependent children and each person shall be classed as an individual or junior member;**
- (c) Golden Age - For any person aged sixty-five or over;**
- (d) Junior - for any person under the age of 16 years who has paid the membership dues, and the dependent children within a family membership;**
- (e) Sustaining - for any person eligible for membership who pays a minimum of three times the annual dues based on the individual membership;**
- (f) Honorary Life - any person who has rendered outstanding service to the Society by increasing knowledge of and interest in natural history may be made an honorary life member.

### 1.03 Rights and Obligations of Members

**(a) A member may obtain from the Society a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws at a charge of no more than \$1.00.**

...

(c) Every member **16 years of age or older** shall have one vote at any regular or special meeting of the Society and shall be eligible to hold office in the Society.

...

### 1.04 Cessation of Membership and Expulsion

**(a) Resignation: A member wishing to resign shall give notice in writing to the secretary.**

### 3.06 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall ...

(e) submit **an audited financial statement** for the previous year and a proposed budget for the ensuing year at the Annual Meeting

...

### 5.04 Auditor

An auditor **shall** be appointed by the Society at the Annual Meeting held in each year...

## PROPOSED:

### 1.01 Classes of Membership

There shall be ***three*** classes of membership:

- (a) Individual - for any person 18 years of age or older;***
- (b) Family - for spouses and any dependent children under 18 years of age or related individuals living in the same household;***
- (c) Honorary Life - any person who has rendered outstanding service to the Society by increasing knowledge of and interest in natural history may be made an honorary life member.

## NEW for 1.01

***NOTE: Discounts to membership classes (a) and (b) will apply for students (any person under 18 years of age or enrolled as a student in a post-secondary institution) and seniors (any person aged sixty-five or over).***

### 1.03 Rights and Obligations of Members

***(a) A member may obtain from the Society a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws.***

...

***(c) Every member shall have one vote at any regular or special meeting of the Society and shall be eligible to hold office in the Society.***

...

### 1.04 Cessation of Membership and Expulsion

***(a) Resignation: A member wishing to resign shall give notice to the secretary, or cease payment of annual dues.***

### 3.06 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall ...

(e) submit ***a board-approved financial statement*** for the previous year and a proposed budget for the ensuing year at the Annual Meeting

...

### 5.04 Auditor

An auditor ***may*** be appointed by the Society at the Annual Meeting held in each year...

# Even More Beautiful After 40 Years!



By Claudia Copley,  
VNHS representative on the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Board

The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is one of those special places that VNHS members visit regularly—for some it may be as often as every day! It is a wonderful refuge filled with natural experiences for people whose senses are tuned into their environment. Just a few steps into this “natural heart of the city” and you know you have found a quiet retreat in which to experience nature. It has a pull we can’t resist.

2015 marks a major milestone for the Sanctuary: in 1975, the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society was formed—protecting an area that had formerly been used and abused through industry and agriculture. Long-time VNHSers will know that the Victoria Natural History Society and the Sanctuary activities and interests have been intertwined since its inception. We have always had an appointed representative on the Swan Lake Board, and each year we have donated \$4000 to the Sanctuary for its activities. Our membership cares deeply about the critical habitat that the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary protects.

Forty years as a nature reserve has meant that many of the natural areas within the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary boundaries have had a chance to recover, but the infrastructure that allows visitors to appreciate the Sanctuary - the boardwalk, nature house, and bridges - are all in need of our help. Because we are intensely appreciative of the sanctuary the Sanctuary provides, both for ourselves and for native species in an increasingly urbanized community, the Victoria Natural History Society board decided to contribute \$75,000 towards upgrading those portions of the floating boardwalk most in need of repair.

To date, \$150,000 has been raised towards the boardwalk work, but more money is needed to complete the project, so a major effort will be made this year to raise funds for its completion. Everyone who uses the Swan Lake floating boardwalk knows that this upgrade is essential and we hope that others will consider supporting this important project. The lifetime materials that will be used means this is an investment for future generations of nature-lovers, and that is worth the investment!

In addition to initiating the boardwalk replacement, the Sanctuary will mark its 40th anniversary through a series of celebratory events and activities. And of course, the VNHS membership is invited to join in! So mark your calendars, watch for invitations for the following festivities, and participate in the effort to keep the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary going strong for another 40 years! Their mission is a perfect fit with that of the VNHS: “To provide a diverse and enriching experience with a



The Board of the VNHS decided to contribute \$75,000 toward the replacement of the Swan Lake boardwalk and we hope members of the Society will also support this initiative.

focus on natural history, education and ecological restoration to inspire personal action in stewardship activities.”

**April 2, 2015—Annual General Meeting:** This is a Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary member’s only event: socialising at the start with snacks and drinks and lively conversation and a welcoming atmosphere. The meeting will include a presentation of the year’s accomplishments and our vision/goals for the upcoming year.

**April 25/26 2015—Native Plant Sale:** This popular annual event is the perfect place to source plants for your wildlife-friendly landscaping. Sales support the Sanctuary’s activities.

**May 23, 2015—40th Birthday Party!** Tents, music, light refreshments, speakers to highlight 40 years’ accomplishments and next 40 years. Everyone welcome but RSVPs will be required to ensure we order a big enough cake!

**June 18, 2015—Social Gathering:** This ticketed event will be held in the evening in and around the Nature House—details pending.

Additional activities include a photo contest, a raffle, and other fundraising efforts. Details to come!



# Warm, Sunny Days: 2014 Butterfly Count Results

By Aziza Cooper



(left)  
Western Tiger  
Swallowtail,  
Government  
House.

(lower)  
Silvery Blue,  
Galloping  
Goose Trail  
at Helmcken  
Road.

*Photos:*  
Aziza Cooper

Our local butterflies are a wonderful and rewarding aspect of nature, and what could be more pleasant than looking for them on a warm, sunny day?

Butterfly counts last year continued the counts started in the early 1990s, and 2014 was my first year as count coordinator. Twenty observers submitted a total of 139 reports. Thank you, observers!

Butterfly numbers were generally up, with three times the number of individuals counted than were seen in 2013—3219 versus 1068 in 2013. Thirteen species showed the highest total in six years (since 2009), including Woodland Skipper, Brown Elfin, Painted Lady, Western Tiger Swallowtail and Pale Swallowtail. This is quite an encouraging trend!

Three species not reported last year were Field Crescent, Milbert's Tortoiseshell and Purplish Copper. Hopefully we can locate these in the future.

A new location for Silvery Blues at Helmcken Road and Highway 1 was found in 2013, and numbers were continuing to increase in 2014.

New species were notable: two Clouded Sulphurs at Panama Flats, three Orange Sulphurs at Martindale, and a rare Monarch at Panama Flats.

Watching butterflies is best done on a warm, sunny day with calm to mild winds. Butterflies are most active in bright



sun and when the temperature is above 12 C, between about 10 am to 4 pm. Our counts are held from April through September, and the count period is nine days of each month - from the third Saturday to the fourth Sunday.

Counting is straightforward—just count the number of each species you can confidently identify in any convenient location such as a park, field, street or your back yard. Good tools are close-focus binoculars, a field guide and a camera.



(top) Orange Sulphur, Martindale Valley; (lower) Clouded Sulphur, Panama Flats. Photos: Aziza Cooper



*Has been serving guests since 1939.*

*We have recently signed a conservation covenant on nearly 70 acres of our property.*

***www.yellowpointlodge.com***  
***(250) 245-7422***

Photos of rare or unusual species are appreciated. Anyone can submit as many counts as they wish, as long as they fill out a count form for each location. Our count area is the same area as the Victoria Christmas Bird Count circle, with the northern border at about Island View Road, and the western border at Goldstream.


There are many good butterfly books. I use Brock and Kauffman's *Field Guide to Butterflies of North America*. 'The Nature Guide to the Victoria Region' has a complete list of the local butterflies. The internet site efauna.bc.ca has photos of all local species.

Online, the Invertebrate Alert (linked from the VNHS home page) posts notable sightings of butterflies and other bugs, and BCButterflies is a Yahoo group for posting butterfly sightings province-wide. The VNHSInvertAlert is a Flickr group for posting photos.

Please join me on a Butterfly Walk once a month. These take place on the first Sunday from April to September, meeting at 1 pm on Mt. Tolmie summit. The walk is an introduction to butterflies and though I'm no expert, other people with much more experience are often with us. The walk is dependent on sunshine, and will not be held on cloudy or cool days.

Please contact me at [tanageraz@yahoo.com](mailto:tanageraz@yahoo.com) if you have questions about counting butterflies or suggestions for areas needing to be covered.

Good butterflying this year!




**GOES WITH ANYWHERE**

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



**Bird Feeders - Custom Seed Blends - Optics - Gifts**



**Wild Birds Unlimited®**  
**Nature Shop**

**3631 Shelbourne St., Victoria - 250-595-3595**

*Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten...  
Visit our store for your very best value!*



# Christmas Bird Count 2014 Proves We're NOT Just Fair Weather Birders!

By Ann Nightingale

**W**inds blew, rain poured, and yet 222 determined counters hit the streets on Saturday, December 20th, who with a record-blasting 110 feeder watchers, tallied 76,359 individuals of 141 species. For those who are keeping track, that's only 10 fewer bush-beaters than our best ever showing on a fine day in 2013. Our feeder watch reports were approximately double what we have been getting, so I'm very happy with that. Let's hope the numbers continue to grow as more and more people start paying attention to birds.

Needless to say, the boats did not get launched this year, but we did get one marine report (and one unique species) from Meredith Dickman, stationed as Trial Island's lightkeeper. She did a lot of her counting from inside as the winds reached over 90 kph on the island!

Unfortunately for us, the weather was much better on Sunday, allowing the Ladner crew to sneak past us with 143 species for their count. Just wait until next year, Ladner! I should note, however, that there are a couple of other counts poised to give us a run. New circle coordinators Daniel Donnecke (Sidney/South Salt Spring) and Cathy O'Connor (Sooke) both led their teams to record counts in 2014 and I think they may be conspiring to take the crown.

Despite the conditions, we had a new species for the Victoria circle. An out-of-season Barn Swallow that had been reported days earlier at Clover Point made an inland retreat, but was still spotted—at Quick's Bottom. A few species broke their previous records this year: Greater White-fronted Goose (111), Canada Goose (6860), Turkey Vulture (34), Black-bellied Plover (298), and Eurasian Collared-dove (more than tripling the previous record with 214). Anna's Hummingbirds were surprisingly strong given the windy conditions with 761 counted.

One surprise was the balance between some of the zones, with Esquimalt Lagoon/Mill Hill (84) edging past Martindale Flats/Bear Hill (82) and Oak Bay (82) for the highest number of species. Sadly, although the Lagoon and Oak Bay zones did have record counts, the closeness is due to a considerable decline at Martindale. It's been a while since we've seen counts from the Martindale zone breaking three digits.

Rare and uncommon birds this year included Band-tailed Pigeons, Brant, Pine Grosbeaks and our second ever Red Knot. The most controversial bird of the count is an American Black Duck from Beacon Hill Park. The species is not in question but some birders are uncomfortable with this bird's provenance. However, it migrates away from the park each year, returning in the winter. The records committee will need to decide on it for the checklist, but I'm comfortable including it in the CBC. Big misses for us included Sky

Lark (which may be gone forever soon), Orange-crowned Warbler, Northern Shrike, American Bittern and Golden Eagle. All but the Sky Lark were reported in the Victoria circle during count week. Some birders estimate the Sky Lark numbers may now be well below 50, with most agreeing that they are below 100. This is not likely a sustainable population and that could die out within the next few years.

Results for all of the counts, including those from the southern part of Vancouver Island can be found on the Audubon Society's site. <[birds.audubon.org](http://birds.audubon.org)>. You can review statistics going all the way back to the very first official Christmas Bird Count, graphs, maps and find all sorts of other cool information. If you want to search by count circle, the codes for the local counts are BCVI (Victoria), BCSO (Sooke), BCSS (Sidney/South Salt Spring), BCGS (Galiano/North Salt Spring), BCPI (Pender Island) and BCDCU (Duncan).

For those who like to plan ahead, The Victoria 2015 count will be on Saturday, December 19.



Support the return of  
the Western Bluebird,  
a beacon of hope for the  
conservation of rare and  
endangered Garry Oak  
ecosystems in BC

Please make your gift today.

Online: [www.goert.ca/donate](http://www.goert.ca/donate)

By phone: 250-383-3427

By cheque made payable to: GOERT Society  
1500E Admirals Rd, Victoria, BC V9A 2R1

Contact us: [info@goert.ca](mailto:info@goert.ca) | 250-383-3427 | [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca)

# 2014 Victoria Christmas Bird Count including Feeder Watch

Species	Count Areas																				Feeder	Victoria Count (Field & Feeder)	New Records in Bold
	Butchart Gardens / Northern Highlands	Central Highlands	Goldstream	Thetis Lake / Hastings Flats	Langford Lake	Albert Head / Triangle Mtn	Esquimalt Lagoon / Mill Hill	Esquimalt Harbour	Portage Inlet / The Gorge	Victoria Harbour	Beacon Hill	Oak Bay	UVIC/ Cadboro Bay	10 Mile Point	Gordon Head / Mount Douglas	Swan Lake / Cedar Hill	Blenkinsop / Panama Flats	Elk Lake / Cordova Bay	Prospect Lake / Quicks Bottom	Martindale / Bear Hill			
Gt. White-fronted Goose	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	23		
Snow Goose					15	1			44			5					46			2			
Brant												4											
Cackling Goose	48						1										30			69			
Canada Goose	1414	2		344		60	240	102	377	31	1	64	75		124	133	905	53	270	2665			
Mute Swan						8	13		3														
Trumpeter Swan	92	1		20			1						1				2		30	61			
Tundra Swan							2																
Wood Duck																							
Gadwall	3					6	2	1	4		3				40	10	19	36	15				
Eurasian Wigeon	5									1							3	67	14	8			
American Wigeon	1913		30	30		2	108	7	157	157	180	23	506		122	257	156	97	11	641			
American Black Duck											1												
Mallard	1321	13	44	190	14	90	154	40	278	95	472	117	249	2	218	598	295	119	99	1707			
Northern Shoveler	20			17												24	11	4	2	3			
Northern Pintail	96			4			36		12							1	399	2	542				
Green-winged Teal	264			44					6				1			17	319	7	5	392			
Canvasback																1							
Ring-necked Duck	19	12		37	15	7	36		2	4	5					13	21	17	132	39			
Greater Scaup				1			5					6											
Lesser Scaup				1		7	12	7	72					3		3			2	2			
Harlequin Duck						2				20	10	41									34		
Surf Scoter						10	22	2		26	28	56	6	50	48					16			
White-winged Scoter							1					5		11	3								
Long-tailed Duck							1								2								
Bufflehead	33	13	22	12	14	68	317	72	118	286	132	206	78	27	169	27	10	95	24	242	93		
Common Goldeneye			24			1	37	39	3	9	4	21	1		20					3			
Barrow's Goldeneye			24																				
Hooded Merganser	20	19		6	2	6	11	39	15	17	1	16	28	6	82	9	13	64	32	18	4		
Common Merganser	5	4	18	19	7	4	1	55	11	30	10	18	6	32	19		5	460	29	3	11		
Red-breasted Merganser						6	15	21		39	6	44	1		16			79		1			
Ruddy Duck																			2				
California Quail	1	29		40	4	1	7	2							12				38	50			
Fed-throated Loon						1	2			4		3			2					1			
Pacific Loon						1	1			2		5	1		10					4			
Common Loon							1	2		4	2	1			8		1						
Pied-billed Grebe					7		4		2							3		33	13				
Horned Grebe			1			26	15	18			4	3		2	12			6					
Red-necked Grebe								3				3			2								
Eared Grebe																1							
Western Grebe							20																
Brandt's Cormorant							2				15	7		1	1			1		15			
Double-crested	5	1	5	2	42	6	6	11	42	89	7	22	2	6	7	9	4	236	23	16	65		
Pelagic Cormorant																							
Great Blue Heron	6	1	2			4	8	9		11	16	20	1	6	14			5		6	33		
Turkey Vulture		3		5		9	12	2					1			1	3		4	6			
Bald Eagle (adult)	11	1	7	7	11	3	7	7	3	5	2	6	8	4	5	3	6	11	13	20			
Bald Eagle (imm)			13	2		4	6	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1		2		9	4			
Unaged Bald Eagle			12																				
Northern Harrier	1																			4			
Sharp-shinned Hawk			3			1	2		1	2			2		2		1		4	2			
Cooper's Hawk	2				1	1	1	1	3	2		1	2	3	1	5	5	1	2	1	6		
Red-tailed Hawk	7	1		11	2	1	1	3		1		1		2	1	1	8	3	8	5			
American Kestrel	1																				1		
Merlin	1		1	2		1	2				1		1			1	4		2	2			
Peregrine Falcon	1		1	1		1			1	2							3		2	3			

# 2014 Victoria Christmas Bird Count including Feeder Watch

Species	Count Areas																			Feeder	Victoria Count (Field & Feeder)	New Records in Prev High			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19				20	23	
Ring-necked Pheasant				1																				1	93
Virginia Rail																								5	14
American Coot	10				3												13	1	1102					1,129	1712
Black-bellied Plover																								298	282
Killdeer			1									14												85	370
Black Oystercatcher						2						48												57	111
Greater Yellowlegs												2												2	14
Spotted Sandpiper						1																		2	70
Black Turnstone							15					85	22	27		2								81	370
Surf-bird																								9	78
Red Knot																1								1	1
Sanderling																								5	67
Fock Sandpiper																								57	
Dunlin																								527	1073
Wilson's Snipe						2			4															9	110
Bonapartes' Gull										2														2	5004
Mew Gull						132	55		1	142	30	87	9	8	9	75	130	121	1	1134	5			1,939	16375
California Gull										15	1	4					2							23	130
Herring Gull											1	1												4	288
Thayer's Gull									1			1					12	17						37	3110
Western Gull											1	1												2	18
Glaucous-winged Gull	639	56	726	39	50	85	167	126	266	334	251	120	110	85	74	147	476	775	84	852	24	24	5,510	16,794	4
Glaucous Gull																								1	4
Common Murre						11	1	1				4		1	4									29	9938
Pigeon Guillemot							1				1	6	5	1	1									16	323
Marbled Murrelet						1	1				6		8		3									19	290
Ancient Murrelet						2					20	13	16		3									59	6401
Rhinoceros Auklet											1													1	113
Rock Pigeon					4	35	131	60	31	78	72	83				20		1	6	17			538	1198	
Band-tailed Pigeon				8															1					9	417
Eurasian Collared-dove		17		4	2		2	15							2		50			122			214	63	
Mourning Dove																								15	70
Western Screech-owl		2																						2	23
Great Horned Owl		2	1	1			1																	7	49
Barred Owl												1					1	3						6	12
Northern Saw-whet Owl								1																2	4
Anna's Hummingbird	35	15		6	16	9	29	16	44	36	29	29	14	37	29	43	101	22	46	48			157	761	1063
Belted Kingfisher	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	5	1	3		1			2		1	4	2	1				31	71
Red-breasted Sapsucker			1	1		2	1			2					1									2	11
Downy Woodpecker	6	4	1	3	1	8	3	2	2	2	4		2	5	7	20	10	1	14	10			46	151	212
Hairy Woodpecker			2	1		2	1	1								37		7	23				7	23	37
Northern Flicker	19	10	3	15	3	19	24	22	23	12	8	5	3	17	33	13	36	14	71	25			51	426	645
Pileated Woodpecker	3	2		1			1	1						2				5	3				9	27	56
Hutton's Vireo																								1	8
Steller's Jay	20	19	3	47	14	10	24	12	14	2	2	10	9	22	36	2	49	23	82	16			77	493	659
Northwestern Crow	4	11	30	94	258		219	712	401	117	63	87	57	25	1122	197	438	447	19	118	123	4,542	10002		
Common Raven	72	30	2	23	9	9	15	13	3		6	3	2	6	7	2	12	12	28	32			5	291	420
Barn Swallow																								1	
Chest-backed Chickadee	108	104	3	54	21	43	135	46	104	49	101	53	47	179	133	78	195	115	340	194			349	2,451	2812
Bushtit	46	8		22	20		2	5	75	6	43	70		100	41	103	198	10	47	29			588	1,413	2522
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	29		14	6	11	14	28	20	5	9	4	10	24	60	5	13	13	58	11			102	444	768
Brown Creeper		4		7	1	7	7	8	3	2	3	3	3	2	11	7	3	3	11	15			9	109	171
Bewick's Wren	4	12		8	3	2	7	2	7	11	6	7	3	12	23	21	30	6	28	16			42	250	365
Pacific Wren	11	30	12	15	3	10	26	6	12	4	6	16		15	50	12	22	14	40	33			8	345	587
Marsh Wren	1				1			1				1				4	6	2	14					35	57
American Dipper			2																					2	11



# 2014 Victoria Christmas Bird Count including Feeder Watch

Species	Count Areas																							Total #	Victoria Count (Field & Feeder)	New Records in Bold
	Butchart Gardens / Northern Highlands	Central Highlands	Goldstream	Thetis Lake / Hastings Flats	Langford Lake	Albert Head / Triangle Mtn	Esquimalt Lagoon / Mill Hill	Esquimalt Harbour	Portage Inlet / The Gorge	Victoria Harbour	Beacon Hill	Oak Bay	UVIC/ Cadboro Bay	10 Mile Point	Gordon Head / Mount Douglas	Swan Lake / Cedar Hill	Blenkinsop / Panama Flats	Elk Lake / Cordova Bay	Prospect Lake / Quicks Bottom	Martindale / Bear Hill	Albert Head / Esq Harbour (offshore)	Feeders				
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	23		9	1,842	4000	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	96	149	18	295	11	102	112	56	71	12	19	28	16	30	154	45	80	44	352	143		10	213	402		
Hermit Thrush	6	9	2	11	4	4	17	6	7	9	3	10	5	15	18	12	14	8	26	17				58		
American Robin			3	1		1	4	1	2			1			2				1			4	20	58		
	394	231	20	90	13	71	121	146	150	94	33	220	13	127	285	277	783	610	780	1399		67	5,924	14327		
Varied Thrush	5	73	8	2	3	23	12	3	2	1	2		3	12	23	2	2	4	26	7		9	220	1200		
European Starling	750	3		162	58	14	73	6	313	248	2	16	39	20	186	68	292	180	282	1157		117	3,986	18183		
American Pipit																				4		4	272	4		
Cedar Waxwing												5			4		1			3			13	600		
Yellow-rumped Warbler											1	1											2	25		
Townsend's Warbler																				1			1	4		
Spotted Towhee	32	22	6	25	11	32	34	20	32	10	13	32	16	35	51	45	68	30	95	67	1	166	843	1247		
Savannah Sparrow																				11			11	112		
Fox Sparrow	27	11		8	8	33	30	8	38	6	7	15	16	24	56	33	43	29	52	64		93	601	951		
Song Sparrow	32	3	2	7	9	15	31	13	27	18	11	6	13	5	50	25	30	27	45	79	12	52	512	937		
Lincoln's Sparrow	1											1					7		7	17			33	137		
Swamp Sparrow																	1							10		
White-throated Sparrow							1								1	1	2		2			3	10	13		
White-crowned	1						31	6	18	8	5	2				3	20	1	10	115	1	25	246	384		
Golden-crowned Sparrow	58	16	14	33	27	60	22	67	118	33	36	38	56	52	62	120	102	43	108	287	17	172	1,541	1937		
Dark-eyed Junco	247	154	27	85	39	107	151	104	249	102	89	41	44	198	257	105	436	158	386	768		748	4,495	8823		
Red-winged Blackbird	103				21								1			22	77	48	85	19	8	2	386	2160		
Western Meadowlark															3						7		11	128		
Brewer's Blackbird	1						47						20		6	4	67			128			273	1377		
Brown-headed Cowbird																1							2	31		
Pine Grosbeak		2																						2	44	
Purple Finch	1	9	4			5	1		4			14	1	3	6	1	7	2	15			29	102	505		
House Finch	12			16		4	14		20	8	6	37	3	16	22	30	42	10	29	92		153	514	1973		
Red Crossbill		39	25	46	5	10	7	41						23	8	6		94	218	4		5	531	1830		
Pine Siskin	190	431		2		4	94	26	2	56	19	3	102	33	448		83	123	222	284		67	2,189	9386		
American Goldfinch									14	6	3	2	1			1						34	66	240		
Evening Grosbeak												1											1	187		
House Sparrow	52	1	2	24	34	5	66	25	258	114	58	3	13	21	84	124	249	78	74	95		307	1,687	2975		
Glauc-wingedWestern Gull												10					9							19		
Eurasian Teal																								1		
Eurasian x Green-winged Teal																	1							1		
American x Eurasian Wigeon																								3		
Hairy/Downy Woodpecker																	1									
Unidentified Gull				6					1	50	343							62	220					682	1	
Unidentified Auklet												5												61		
Unidentified Cormorant																								39		
Count Totals	8,285	1,611	1,126	1,972	793	1,226	2,876	2,069	3,498	2,561	2,236	2,690	1,658	1,311	4,340	2,819	6,485	5,648	4,737	14,068	590	3,759	76,359	125,518		
Species Totals	58	46	39	55	43	65	84	57	56	63	58	82	52	46	71	61	67	60	73	82	23	41	141	154		

# Urban Forests

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Habitat Acquisition Trust



View of Victoria. Photo: Todd Carnahan

As the doctor says, “I’ve got good news and bad news”. Let’s get the bad news out of the way first: Victoria is losing trees. In fact, every year, the core CRD region is losing a treed area equivalent to two Beacon Hill Parks. While all municipalities in the CRD are losing trees, Saanich, Langford, and the City of Victoria top the list for tree loss, while the Highlands and Metchosin are at the bottom. Each of these municipalities has a different story to tell. In Langford, large developments seem to be causing the tree loss, while in Saanich, it is mostly small-scale development. In Victoria, the issue is different again - an aging urban forest is dying, with few young trees growing up to replace the casualties of age.

All these trees are part of what many arborists call the “urban forest”. The Urban Forest includes any tree (or woody shrub) that grows in a human settlement. These trees play important roles in our community. They provide habitat for many species of plants and animals, including mosses, spiders, birds, butterflies, and more. Trees also provide many “ecosystem services”—functions like water retention, air pollution reduction, and erosion control—for which we would have to engineer solutions at great cost in the absence of these trees. From a human perspective, trees also improve our sense of well-being, the mental and physical health of our communities, and even our property values.

In short, a declining urban forest is not good for our community.

The good news is that awareness is growing, and some

(though certainly not all) municipalities are taking action. Saanich and the City of Victoria recently adopted Urban Forest plans that call for changes to tree bylaws, planting and improve planning for trees. However, the reality is that most land in our region is privately owned—and most tree loss is occurring on private land.

Which is why HAT is launching an Urban Forest Good Neighbours project. HAT will be working with land owners in Saanich, Victoria, View Royal, and Esquimalt to help them manage and care for trees on their land, and to encourage them to grow new trees that will become the next generation of our urban forest.

Jill Robinson, who has just joined HAT as our Stewardship Coordinator, says “I’m looking forward to helping people find solutions to their tree problems, and really excited about improving tree health in our community and helping people pick the right tree for the right spot.” Jill recently received her MSc in Seabird Biology, has studied and monitored sea- and shorebirds in the Aleutian Islands, Newfoundland, and Manitoba, studied sea turtles in Florida, and collected data on forest biodiversity in tropical rainforests of Ecuador and Costa Rica. Jill has also been heavily involved in stewardship and public outreach programs.

If you have tree problems or have a space for a young tree, call Jill at 250 995-2428, or email [jill@hat.bc.ca](mailto:jill@hat.bc.ca) to arrange a land care visit.

# T. Chris Brayshaw, BA, MA, PhD, Botanist

Born July 2, 1919. Died December 22, 2014, age 95, in his sleep.

Obituary written by Dr. Richard J. Hebda, Curator of Botany, Royal BC Museum, Axel Brock-Miller, Mary Lou Florian, and Helen Oldershaw [abridged by editor]



Chris Brayshaw at his microscope circa 1970.  
Photo: Royal BC Museum

We are honoured to share the story of a remarkable British Columbian and celebrate his life. Chris was born in Yorkshire, England, and came to Canada with his parents at the age of one. They homesteaded on a farm in Vernon, B.C., where he grew up in a unique house that still stands today. His father was a renowned fly fisher and fish artist and his love of nature rubbed off on young Chris. His mother had studied botany in Germany, and she was a respected botanical artist.

Chris was sent to boarding school in England for his high school years. He enrolled at UBC to train as a geologist just before the war. To his disappointment, he was instead put into biology.

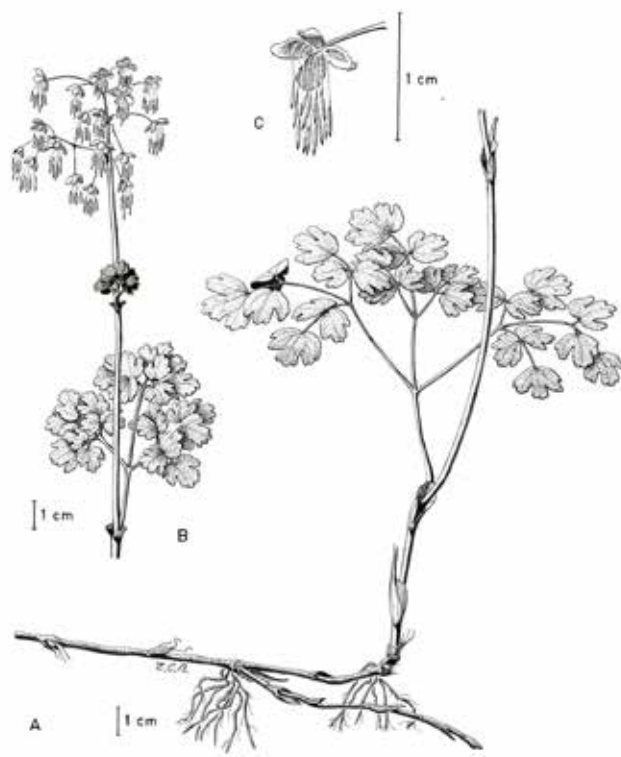
At the outbreak of WWII in 1939, Chris enlisted in the Canadian Air Force and was later seconded to the RAF in England, where he served as navigator for coastal defence and U-boat hunting along the Irish coast. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After the war, Chris completed his BA in biology at UBC, and then went to the University of Saskatchewan, where he earned an MA on 'Prairie Grassland Research' in 1950. In 1954, Chris earned his doctorate [at UBC], defending his dissertation on 'Ponderosa Pine Ecology'. He was one of several distinguished botanists who were learning together at UBC at the time, and with his colleagues he began a transformation of our understanding of British Columbia's plants and ecosystems.

Chris ended up working in Ottawa and nearby Chalk River.

His health deteriorated for a while so he adopted the credo that nature is humankind's best medicine. Chalk River is set near extensive forests, hills, and numerous lakes, rich in native wildlife typical of the south edge of the Canadian Shield. Always returning to nature, Chris made numerous field trips, taking extensive notes, and making many excursions into the wilderness of Algonquin Park and his health rapidly improved. Mindful of his love for the outdoors and his health, Chris declined a promotion in Ottawa. In his own words, Chris "had a canoe, a VW beetle, and some money", and decided to return to B.C.

He joined the B.C. Provincial Museum as a botanist in 1963, his "perfect job". For the next forty years he served our province advancing and promoting knowledge of plants. He wrote several seminal books that he exquisitely illustrated as a true nature artist and son of his mother. He helped plan and develop the new [museum] facilities and exhibits, now so famous around the world. His VW Beetle, with canoe on top, traveled our province adding thousands of specimens to the botanical collections. One of his major achievements was the planning and establishment of the first major Native Plant Garden in western Canada on the grounds surrounding the museum buildings. He collected hundreds of living plant specimens around B.C., some of which



*Thalictrum occidentale* (male); illustration by T. Christopher Brayshaw, courtesy of the Royal BC Museum.





Chris Brayshaw.  
Photo: H. Oldershaw

live in the garden today. He loved doing research on native species and tackled botanically-challenging plant groups including willows and aquatic plants. He promoted the field of botany, leading public tours and writing a widely used booklet on plant collecting for the amateur. He broadened his knowledge of plants through trips to exotic lands.

As Curator Emeritus, his botanical contributions continued for 18 years beyond his retirement with the publication of even more books, including the comprehensive and richly self-illustrated 'Trees and Shrubs of BC'. He was a passionate supporter and botanical advisor of Beacon Hill Park and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society, and a prime contributor to the living and natural values of the Beacon Hill Park Official Management Plan. The Park's nationally important flora survives in great part due to his persistent efforts.

Chris's true love was taking his canoe on top of his VW beetle to some lake and spending time collecting plants, fly fishing, and cooking his fresh-caught fish over an open fire.

In August 2011, Chris moved into Douglas Care Community on Niagara St., in the block next to his beloved Beacon Hill Park. Mary Lou Florian and Helen Oldershaw, long-time friends and Chris' Health-Care Representatives, would like to thank the staff for their considerate care of, and friendship toward, Chris during his stay at Douglas Care.

Chris had the unique gift of being scientifically aware of the intricacies of nature, yet able to engage ordinary folks with the wonders and surprises of our natural world. He inspired and educated generations of botanists and naturalists. Yet, this gifted man remained humble and unassuming. His legacy will endure long into the future. The people who met and knew Chris will miss him.

Some of his books for the general public:

*Key to the Native Trees of Canada*, 1960.

*Ecology of Festuca Grassland in Central Saskatchewan*, 1981. (Festuca=fescue).

*Buttercups, Water-lilies, and their Relations*, 1989.

*Trees and Shrubs of British Columbia*, 1996.

*Plant Collecting For Amateurs*, 1996.

*Pondweeds, Bur-reeds, and their Relations, of British Columbia*, 2001.

*Catkin-bearing Plants of British Columbia*, 2006.

[Editor's note: There will be a Celebration of the Life of T. Christopher Brayshaw on Thursday March 12th from 3:00 pm–4:30 pm at the Royal BC Museum.]

## 2015 ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

SATURDAY & SUNDAY  
APRIL 25TH & 26TH, 2015  
9:00AM - 3:00PM

- 🌿 Over 4,000 plants and hundreds of species
- 🌿 Parking is limited so please carpool if possible
- 🌿 Pre - orders over \$300 available - call 250.479.0211
- 🌿 See our website for plant list and additional parking locations



Connect with us

3873 SWAN LAKE ROAD  
VICTORIA, BC T: 250.479.0211  
WWW.SWANLAKE.BC.CA



# Rocky Point Bird Observatory—Migration Monitoring and More!

By Serena Johnston



The fall migration report for 2014 is complete and available for the public on the Rocky Point Bird Observatory web-site. The report provides a summary of species banded during the 2014 fall migration. A comparison to previous years shows that 2014 had the lowest number of birds banded per net hour since 2002 but the highest number of species banded in the last 14 years. The report also provides information on the variable habitat of our Rocky Point site and the effect this may have on bird populations in the area. Removal of Scotch broom in the area has decreased the heterogeneity of habitat in some parts of the monitoring area, potentially resulting in the observed decrease of captured birds. Growth of native species in these areas is slow and may take several years before an increase in bird captures is seen. Analysis of our data has also shown that peak migration was roughly one week later in 2014. Typically peak migration of



passerines at Rocky Point occurs September 21st and 22nd; in 2014, the most productive day occurred October 3rd, with 105 individuals banded. A detailed report on the 2014 fall passerine migration, banding, and observations can be viewed at [www.rpbo.org/reports](http://www.rpbo.org/reports).

Throughout the spring, RPBO will be holding sessions on wing and study skin preparation. A variety of raptor and owl wings has been provided by the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Service and these are being prepared as a way of studying molt patterns. Prepared wings are also used as visual aids in RPBO's educational programs. Anyone interested in learning about study skin preparation can contact RPBO for more information on when sessions will be held.

The Rocky Point banding workshop is fast approaching and will be held this year April 3-5. This training workshop is not mandatory for our volunteers, but is a great learning experience for those wishing to get some hands on experience with banding. The workshop teaches participants basic anatomy and handling techniques as well as age classifications, molt patterns and aging and sexing techniques. The workshop includes work with RPBO's specimen collection, presentations and demos on raptor, owl and hummingbird banding, as well as a field session where volunteers get hands on experience with extraction, banding and measurements of live birds. The banding workshop takes place at Royal Roads University. The cost is \$350 with a \$50 reduction for students and includes all classroom materials, continental breakfast and a membership to RPBO. Enrollment is limited to 18 people and space fills up quickly, so be sure to book your spot if you're interested in attending this year's session!

## Species profile: Golden-crowned Sparrow

The Golden-crowned Sparrow is a common winter resident in Victoria. This large-bodied sparrow spends its summer in central and northern British Columbia and Alaska, and can be found as far east as the Rocky Mountains. The aptly-named Golden-crowned Sparrow can be recognized by its yellow forecrown bordered by black stripes (much less obvious in winter when not in breeding plumage). Their song is a distinctive, slurred clear whistle "oh dear me". Often in mixed flocks with White-crowned Sparrows, this winter visitor is more secretive and spends its time in dense thickets. Watch for this visitor in your feeder and garden this winter!

(inset, above) Golden-crowned Sparrow. Photo: S. Johnstone

**OLYMPIC PENINSULA**  
April 10-12, 2015

# BirdFest

*Come bird with us!*

- Neah Bay Birding Excursion
- San Juan Island Cruise
- Guided Birding Trips
- Photography Workshop
- Bird Drawing Class
- Auction & Raffle
- Gala Banquet with speaker  
Lynsy Smithson-Stanley

For more information:  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org)  
[info@olympicbirdfest.org](mailto:info@olympicbirdfest.org)  
 or 360-681-4076

For lodging and visitor information, call 800-942-4042 or click [www.olympicpeninsula.org](http://www.olympicpeninsula.org)

[www.visitsequim.com](http://www.visitsequim.com) 800-737-5462



# 24th Annual Garry Oak Habitat Celebration— Camas Day, Saturday May 2, 2015

By Agnes Lynn



(above) Camas (*Camassia Leichtlinii*); (right) Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*). Photos: Agnes Lynn

Save the date so you don't miss this full day of natural history walks! For the past 24 years, the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society and the Victoria Natural History Society have co-sponsored this event in Beacon Hill Park. Each year, there is a wide choice of hourly walks from 7 a.m. until early afternoon. Themes such as Birds, Wildflowers, Archaeology, First Nations culture and other aspects of the Garry Oak Habitat will be covered. Final subjects and leaders are still not confirmed but you can check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website (<http://friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca>) now for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, call 250-592-6659 or email [info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca](mailto:info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca).



---

## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 28 new members since the last issue. The following agreed to have their names published in our Welcome column.

**John MacFarlane**  
Delta  
*microscopic fauna & flora*

**Doone Watson**  
Calgary  
*birds, trees*

**Julian Dunster**  
Victoria  
*birding*

**Jacklyn Barrs,**  
Victoria  
*passionate about marine wildlife and the marine environment. Interested in conserving the natural environment for future generations through education*

**Elizabeth Martin**  
Victoria  
*biking, walking, birds, animals, scenery, vistas, anything natural.*

**Anne Roburn**  
Victoria  
*birds*

**Cheryl Hoyle**  
Victoria  
*flora & fauna, hiking, camping, adventure, helping wild & domestic animals, paddling & photography*

**Vivian & Bev Lochridge**  
Victoria

**Cathy Carlson**  
Shirley  
*conservation, wetlands*

**Ginny & Dick Chadwick**  
Victoria  
*birding, gardening*

**Aimee Pelletier**  
Victoria  
*botany, birds*



# Bring Back the Bluebirds: A long-overdue project update

By Jemma Green, Bring Back the Bluebirds Project Coordinator,  
Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team Society

By now, many of the readers of *The Victoria Naturalist* will be familiar with the Bring Back the Bluebirds project. It is the work of over a decade by many organizations, conservancies, naturalist groups, and volunteers to re-establish a sustainable breeding population of the extirpated Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) in the Salish Sea region through a combination of reintroductions of breeding pairs and habitat enhancement.

Bring Back the Bluebirds has been the recipient of two very generous grants from the Victoria Natural History Society in recent years. While we have contributed two articles to this newsletter about our project, in autumn 2012 and 2014, neither has provided the comprehensive project overview and update that our keenest proponents are due. With this article, I hope to satisfy curiosity about the Project's development over the years and arouse interest in its future.

## Year 1

After seven years of successfully integrating and overhauling pre-existing nestbox networks and working with private landowners to mount hundreds of additional nestboxes in areas of prime bluebird habitat throughout southeastern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands, Bring Back the Bluebirds, headed by the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT), set about devising a reintroduction program. Fortunately, the groundwork had been laid by Ecostudies Institute, a Washington-based organization that in 2011 had just wrapped up a successful five-year Western Bluebird reintroduction program on nearby San Juan Island, WA. Bring Back the Bluebirds developed a similar five-year translocation program for Vancouver Island, the goal of which was to release as many as 10 breeding pairs each year for five years, for a total of 80-100 adult bluebirds by 2016.

2012 was to be the pilot year. In March of 2012, the Victoria Natural History Society was the first to step forward with a generous grant (a combination of legacy funds from the estate of Harold Pollock, a lifelong naturalist who had started a bluebird nestbox program decades earlier, and matching donations from other members) that enabled the launch of the reintroduction phase. The Cowichan Valley was selected as the release area for its central location within the bluebirds' former range, and for the remnants of high-quality bluebird habitat that can still be found there. The Nature Conservancy of Canada's Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve, one of the best examples of Garry Oak woodland and meadow remaining in the world, was to be the first release site.



A breeding pair at their food dish, Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve, 2013. Photo: J. Daly/GOERT

In May and June, eight adult and nine juvenile Western Bluebirds were translocated from Joint Base Lewis-McChord military base in southern Washington (the nearest large population) to the Cowichan Valley - two adult pairs that had not yet nested that spring, and two families—breeding pairs with their first broods of four and five nestlings. The translocated bluebirds were reintroduced using a “soft release” approach, in which each pair, or family, was held in a temporary aviary at a release site to acclimatize and familiarize themselves with the sights and sounds of their new habitat before being released.

Throughout the holding period, the bluebirds were cared for and closely monitored by the project technician: pairs were held until they started to exhibit breeding behaviour, while bluebird families were held in an aviary until just after the nestlings fledged. In this way, each release was timed to increase the likelihood of a successful reintroduction. The bluebird pairs would be ready to mate and build their first nest, while families would stay together near the release site until the young were old enough to fend for themselves, often establishing a second nest during this period.

Following the 2012 releases, both pairs and one of the families were occasionally sighted; however, no evidence was found of the three pairs having bred successfully in any of the bluebird nestboxes in the area (one family, released in Maple Bay, started nest-building but abandoned the nest before any eggs were laid). Fortunately, the pair that had been released with their young at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve decided to stay and establish a breeding territory,

building a nest in a nestbox and laying a clutch of five eggs within a few weeks. Four of the eggs hatched and a few weeks later, on July 29th, 2012, the first bluebirds to hatch on Vancouver Island in 17 years fledged!

For another two weeks, supplemental food was provided to the family on the Preserve, until the youngest juveniles had learned to forage for themselves. The field season came to a close, and the efforts of project partners had been rewarded with a successful translocation. Encouraged by the knowledge that breeding pairs often reuse established territories, and that Western Bluebirds have been known to return to the place they were raised for their first breeding season, planning began for a second year of translocations.

## Year 2

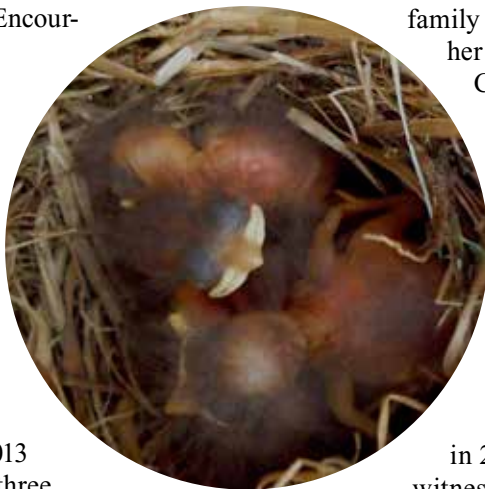
Building on the promise of our pilot year, in 2013 we were awarded enough funding to fully implement our translocation program. The first major success of 2013 was the return of four of 2012's juveniles (three translocated and one island-hatched, all offspring of the pair that had nested at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve). To our amazement, a fifth bluebird appeared on its own in the Cowichan Valley that spring—a female that had dispersed from the reintroduced population on San Juan Island! In addition to these returning bluebirds, we released a further 18 adults and 10 fledglings onto host properties with good habitat around Duncan and Maple Bay.

We consider a translocation event successful if at least one individual of the pair establishes a territory and initiates breeding activity, such as nest-building. Of the six



(above) A nestling receives its unique coloured leg bands in 2013. Photo: J. Daly/GOERT

(inset, centre) Newly hatched nestlings in 2014. Photo: J Green/GOERT



pairs released in 2013, one established a breeding territory together while a second pair “divorced” when the male decided to pair with the San Juan Island female. There was a higher success rate with the released families: all the nestlings translocated with their parents fledged and, following release from the aviary, all three pairs of adult birds established a breeding territory, built a nest, and fledged a 2nd clutch...almost. One of the females, released with her

family later in the season, also opted to “divorce” her mate. She paired with one of the returned Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve males, and the two raised a brood in a nestbox located just metres from where his parents had nested the year before. Over the course of the 2013 breeding season, we monitored seven nests in six breeding territories, which fledged a total of 22 juveniles.

## Year 3

Positive population trends continued in 2014. For the first time, last spring we witnessed the return of two generations of bluebirds: three of 2013's adults and five of 2013's juveniles returned on their own to the Cowichan Valley. One pair of adults, which included the male that had been translocated as a nestling with his family in 2012, had survived the winter together and had migrated back to the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve to the breeding territory in which they had nested successfully in 2013.

The third adult was a female who returned to her 2013 breeding territory, along with two male offspring, though without her former mate. Fortunately, her territory was adjacent to the Preserve, and she quickly paired with one of the three young males that had returned with their parents. While it was promising to see so many bluebirds return, it was unfortunate that half of them were unpaired males; none of the females raised in 2013 had returned.

The skewed sex ratio in the returning birds really drove home the importance of translocations to the reintroduction effort. Fortunately, several large grants enabled Bring Back the Bluebirds to keep pace with the translocation schedule; between March and June, six pairs and three families (with 4, 5 and 6 nestlings each) were translocated. To our amazement, we experienced a record translocation success rate of 72% (the range of translocation success for both the San Juan Island and Vancouver Island projects had been 13-63%)! Four of the six released pairs established a breeding territory and began nest-building, while all of the translocations of families were successful (you can read about the exciting results of one family's release in the November/December 2014 issue). Between returned and translocated birds, we were kept busy monitoring 13 nests across nine breeding territories. Eight of these nests were successful, fledging a total of 33 young. At last count, the known Western Bluebird population on Vancouver Island was at 18 adults (including 5 breeding pairs) and 50



Dependent young with father at dish, 2014. Photo: R Shelling/GOERT

juveniles. How many, if any, of these birds will return next year? All we can do is wait and see.

## Reflections on the Project to Date

It is clear to project partners and the general public alike that we are making progress in our efforts to re-establish a breeding population of Western Bluebirds on Vancouver Island. For the first time in almost two decades, the species is returning to our area to breed. Not only are nesting attempts successful, but some of the bluebirds that survive their winter migration are opting to return to their breeding territories or the places they were fledged on Vancouver Island. The number of adults and juveniles returning has increased each year, as has the number of successful translocations, breeding territories, nest attempts, successful nests, and juveniles fledged. As a consequence, the overall population continues to grow.

Our experiences over the last three seasons have enabled us to refine translocation methodologies, which will hopefully inform future conservation efforts and other attempts to reintroduce migratory passerines. However, we have also learned that there are many variables, from predators and competitors to variable weather, which can—and do—affect a small population, making it vulnerable to extirpation without continued recruitment (in this case, through translocations).

In spite of the inherent challenges, Bring Back the Bluebirds continues to be a good news conservation story. A founder population is being established in the Cowichan Valley; hundreds of nestboxes have been mounted and dozens more go up each year, many of which support the breeding of other native cavity nesting birds; communities and individuals throughout Vancouver Island are tuning in to the environment around them and gaining an increased awareness of their interconnectedness with nature. In short, the return of this one, gentle songbird has provided a glimmer of hope for the conservation of their rare and endangered Garry Oak habitats. The Victoria Natural History Society has been a part of making all of this possible. Thank you.

*Bring Back the Bluebirds is currently fundraising for a fourth season of translocations, and is also seeking a donation of a spotting scope and tripod to replace equipment that was stolen last year.*

*Bring Back the Bluebirds is led by the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, in partnership with Ecostudies Institute, the Province of BC, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society. Funders for 2012-2014 included: the Baillie Fund of Bird Studies Canada, Canada Summer Jobs, Canadian Wildlife Federation, EcoAction, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, North American Bluebird Society, Parks Canada, Public Conservation Assistance Fund, Science Horizons, Southern Interior Bluebird Trails Society, TD Friends of the Environment, Vancouver Foundation, Victoria Natural History Society, and private donors.*

## Letters

I am writing to express my gratitude to the Victoria Natural History Society for making the Victoria Natural History Society Bursary possible. I am incredibly happy and appreciative to be selected for this honour.

I am currently completing my Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science at Royal Roads University. My future goals include working in habitat conservation and/or land remediation.

As I have spent this summer as a biology intern for Kalu Yala Entrepreneurial Internships in Panama, I was unable to work more than two months before starting at Royal Roads University. This bursary has lightened my financial burden, allowing me to focus more on school.

Again, I offer my deepest gratitude for your support.

Sincerely,

Danielle Spence

The article re VNHS and Harold Hosford took me back to when he was teaching birding in the 70s. A great person and fun teacher. We used to meet in the woods at Swan Lake. I relive my birding days through *The Naturalist*.

Thanks,

A. Belither

We are making a donation in honour of Bill Dancer's work in the community at Campus View Elementary School's Earthfest Celebration and coming to Mt. Tolmie during the teacher's strike to take a group of children on a nature walk. Wonderful work by everyone at VNHS!!

Thank you,

Narda Nelson and family



# Leaving a Legacy for Nature

By Steve Housser, Leadership Giving



**W**hen making a Will, family is often top of the list of beneficiaries. But then we need to consider what other worthy causes we would like to support. I am writing to urge you to consider the cause of conservation when you are planning how to allocate your estate.

Natural habitat is disappearing at an alarming rate. As development pressures increase, we must increase efforts to protect our environment. For nearly five decades, The Nature Trust of British Columbia has been working successfully to preserve and protect important ecosystems across “Beautiful B.C.”. We are blessed by a rich and diverse collection of special properties. But as more wildlife habitat is threatened, we need to protect more land in its natural state.

By making a bequest in your Will to The Nature Trust of BC, you can help preserve critical habitat for birds, plants, fish and wildlife so that future generations can enjoy the peace and beauty of nature undisturbed, as well as the many benefits nature provides, such as fresh water and clean air. There’s also a direct and significant tax benefit for your estate. As a registered charity, The Nature Trust of BC will issue a tax receipt for the full value of any bequest you make.

We recognize people who leave a bequest to The Nature Trust of BC as “Visionaries”. It signifies that you have a vision for the future that includes protecting and preserving natural habitat. What greater gift could there be for the plants, birds and animals that will thrive in lands you help to save? And think of the possibilities you will create for generations to come to enjoy spectacular wilderness free from the threats of development. Please become a Visionary and support the conservation efforts of The Nature Trust of BC.

The Nature Trust of BC is based in BC and all our funding stays in B.C. Our volunteer board of top business leaders and world class scientists reflects our commitment to sound science and prudent business practices. The Nature Trust of BC has no debt and no mortgages.

A bequest to The Nature Trust of BC is a gift to nature for the future and forever.

To find out more about how you can become a Visionary, please call our toll free number at: 1-866-288-7878 (or 604-924-9771 in the Vancouver area).

Bequests are a personal matter. We encourage you to visit a lawyer or notary before finalizing your will.



## Active Pass Nature & Arts Festival 2015

April 17–19, 2015  
Mayne Island, BC

### Explore the nature and arts of the Southern Gulf Islands

- Birding Walking & Historic Tours
- Local Arts Marketplace
- Art Studio Tours
- Nature Photography
- Live Music
- Nature Film Festival
- Art Demonstrations
- Live Theatre & Local Art Displays
- Family-Oriented Activities
- Festival Banquet
- Dr. Robert Butler, Keynote Speaker
- Opening Reception

“To promote and celebrate the natural beauty and wildlife of the Active Pass Region of the Salish Sea, the unique communities within it and the art it inspires.”

### Come Help Us Celebrate! Register Early!

[www.festivalactivepass.com](http://www.festivalactivepass.com)

Email: [info@festivalactivepass.com](mailto:info@festivalactivepass.com)

Twitter: [@festactivepass](https://twitter.com/festactivepass)

Facebook: [facebook.com/festivalactivepass](https://facebook.com/festivalactivepass)

# A Different Kind of Turkey for Thanksgiving

[from January 2015 press release]

By Christina Carrières, RVT, Senior Wildlife Rehabilitator, BC SPCA Wild ARC



In early October 2014, BC SPCA Wild ARC received a call from a Saanich resident reporting that an injured immature Turkey Vulture was grounded, unable to fly, and stumbling as it attempted to move. Wild ARC staff contacted Jeff Krieger, Alternative Wildlife Solutions, to assist in the rescue. The vulture was brought to Wild ARC's facility in Metchosin for medical care. On examination, the wildlife rehabilitators determined that the bird had a fractured right leg. TUVU 14-2226 is the Turkey Vulture's identification code and number assigned on admission. It also refers to the fact that he was the 2226th wild patient admitted at Wild ARC in 2014!

Although Turkey Vultures do not use their legs and talons to hunt and capture live prey, they need them to hold down carcasses while ripping off pieces with their sharp hooked bill. They also have to be able to land on tree branches and support their heavy weight [over 1.5kg (3.5lbs)]. The Juan De Fuca Veterinary clinic donated the use of their digital x-ray machine to take radiographs of the leg. TUVU had a mid-shaft fracture of his tibiotarsus, the larger of the two bones between the knee and the hock. Dr. Ken Langelier, Island Veterinary Hospital, Nanaimo, generously performed the surgery to stabilize the bone free of charge.

Unfortunately, in stabilizing the wild bird's leg prior to surgery, the fibula, the smaller bone adjacent to the tibiotarsus, also broke. A surgical pin was inserted in the larger bone, providing the necessary support for both bones to heal. Ironically, the surgery took place on Thanksgiving eve. TUVU remained under Dr. Langelier's watch over Thanksgiving dinnertime until one of Wild ARC's transport volunteers could bring him back to the facility.

When kept in a captive setting, wild animals are under considerable stress, and combined with an injury, in some cases, they will refuse to self-feed. TUVU was one of those patients. Wild ARC rehabilitators hand-fed him for several weeks before he started eating on his own. It was a reassuring moment when he ate his first meal because it meant that the frequency of interaction with the bird could be decreased, allowing him to recover

while minimizing his stress. In order to gradually increase his activity level and allow the leg to heal, TUVU was moved from a small enclosure to larger ones as his leg became stronger. During progress examinations, further radiographs were taken, and he received cold laser therapy to speed up recovery, also donated by the Juan De Fuca Veterinary Clinic. It took several weeks after surgery for TUVU to become comfortable standing and walking on his leg.

One month after the surgery, TUVU was brought back to Island Veterinary Hospital for Dr. Langelier to remove the pin. The surgery and fracture repair was a success! For the next few months, TUVU continued healing, taking advantage of Wild ARC's largest flight pen to regain full use of his leg while being able to fly and rebuild his muscles and stamina. TUVU still has a limp, but demonstrated that he can perform all the necessary tasks he requires in the wild.

Lower Vancouver Island is a unique place in Canada. Not only it is absolutely gorgeous, but its winter climate is mild enough for certain species of migratory birds to over-winter in the area. Rather than flying to Central America, a number of Turkey Vultures are found year-round in Metchosin. On January 30th, after 5 months in care, TUVU was released to soar high into the sky with other Turkey Vultures, smelling the air in search of their next meal.

For Thanksgiving 2014, BC SPCA Wild ARC was able to give TUVU a second chance by providing him with the surgery he needed. Wild ARC thanks the community for their support, helping us care for the 2500 wild patients admitted annually. We rely on public donations, and there are many other ways you can help. For more information, visit our website at [www.wildarc.com](http://www.wildarc.com) (and take a peek at some of the wild patients currently in care on our live Critter Cam at [www.spc.bc.ca/crittercam](http://www.spc.bc.ca/crittercam)).



All photos by the author.

# 2015 BC Nature Conference & AGM on Salt Spring Island

“Living by the Salish Sea: Protecting Our Ecoregion”



Early registrations for the May 2015 BC Nature Annual Conference and AGM indicate the event will be very popular—over 60 people had registered for the conference before the end of January!



The theme for the Conference is “Living by the Salish Sea: Protecting Our Ecoregion” and Nieke and her team of volunteers have put together a program highlighting the spectacular natural history of the region, from ocean realm to mountaintops.

Participants will have plenty of opportunities to explore the region’s treasured natural areas. Pre-conference trips include visits to other Southern Gulf Islands, geology tours, nature photography workshops, and a visit to the island’s newest nature reserve. About 20 field excursions are planned for Friday afternoon and Saturday afternoon to include Salish Sea natural history by boat, organic farm tours, birding, hiking, intertidal explorations and more.

“Several of the trips are filling up fast,” said conference registrar, Barry Spence, “so people are advised to register early if they want to attend the more popular sessions.” Some field trips are offered both Friday and Saturday, but each trip is limited to 12 people.

Friday morning presentations will highlight Salish Sea biology from insects to birds, from marine life to native plants and deer.



The Conference will be kicked off with a Thursday evening social and a nature-focused Only Planet Cabaret (don’t miss it!). Keynote speaker on Friday is internationally known conservationist Ian McAllister, presenting spectacular photographs and video from the Great Bear Rainforest. Saturday’s

AGM and social will include Christopher di Corrado on the BC Breeding Bird Atlas and Ramona de Graaf on Salish Sea forage fish.

Salt Spring Island has much to offer in addition to the Conference: abundant nature and hiking, local food and arts, and the Saturday Market. More information and registration forms for the Conference can be obtained from [www.saltspringtnc.ca/BCNature.php](http://www.saltspringtnc.ca/BCNature.php)

---

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Outerbridge Park bird walk—March 8 and April 22, 2015

Rocky Point Bird Observatory hosts bird walks at Outerbridge Park in Saanich on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The walks begin at 9 am at the parking area off Royal Oak Drive. This is an easy walk and suitable for people with mobility concerns.

### Trial Island Invasive Species Removal—Volunteers Needed

A portion of Trial Island, just off the coast of Victoria near Oak Bay, is an Ecological Reserve containing some endangered species. If you would like to help clear out invasive species, contact Matt Fairbarns, Eco-warden for the Ecological Reserve, at [aruncus\\_consulting@yahoo.ca](mailto:aruncus_consulting@yahoo.ca) for dates and details.

Participants must be fit as you commit to at least 5 hours on the island each time you go, and it requires some agility to get from boat to beach and return.

### Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2014

**December 12, 2014–April 6, 2015**

Don’t miss this incredible exhibition featuring 100 large-scale, back-lit photographs, by some of the world’s most respected nature photographers and wildlife experts—just a few weeks left! Wildlife Photographer of the Year showcases award-winning images of our natural world while pushing the boundaries of technical skill.

### Festival Active Pass, April 17-19, 2015

Explore the nature and arts of the Southern Gulf Islands at this festival on Mayne Island. Enjoy wildlife/birding tours and excursions, presentations, music and theatre and more. Reserve and register soon! See page 21 for more information.

### Camas Day, Saturday, May 2

Advance notice of the 24th Annual Camas Day! Check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website <http://friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca> for information, email [info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca](mailto:info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca), or call 250-592-6659.

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). Photo: David Denning



# 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. PLEASE NOTE: EVENT DETAILS ARE ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION BUT CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS.

*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@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.

## MARCH

### Saturday, March 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Birding Patricia Bay & Coles Bay Park*

We will go first to Patricia Bay. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the small parking lot on West Saanich Rd (between Willingdon Rd and Mills Rd) on the ocean side near the west end of the airport runway. There should be White-winged Scoters as well as Surf Scoters, Loons, Common Goldeneye, Grebes and Scaup to see. We'll also wander around some wooded areas nearby. Then, to get to nearby Coles Bay Park, go south on West Saanich Rd to turn right on Ardmore Dr, then left on Inverness. Park sign is on the right. We'll take a short walk down to the water with a quick loop through the productive woods. More ducks including Barrow's Goldeneye on the water if we are lucky. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) for more information.

### Sunday, March 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Urban Forest—Ross Bay Cemetery*

We usually take our botany field trips to areas where the natural

vegetation is the primary focus but this will be the start of a series of walks to areas where the vegetation is primarily exotic trees and shrubs. We will do some identification of the trees that form the canopy so important to our wild creatures but our main focus is to be on the lookout for why these small bits of Urban Forest are important to the birds and other creatures in nature. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the entrance to Ross Bay Cemetery on Fairfield Rd at the base of Stannard Ave. Contact Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Tuesday, March 10

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT AND AGM

#### *Meet the Grigs*

Grasshoppers and crickets are some of the most familiar insects. Everyone knows what a grasshopper looks like, but have you ever seen a Jerusalem cricket or a hump-winged grig? Have you ever heard the soft, shuffling song of a toothpick or the insistent buzz of a gladiator? The grasshoppers and crickets of BC are a varied and fascinating group. **James Miskelly**, Research Associate at the Royal BC Museum, will discuss their diversity, ecology, and identification. There will be lots of pictures and song samples! NOTE: the VNHS Annual General Meeting will be held prior to the presentation.

## Sunday, March 15

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Birding in Parksville**

Come to see the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn. Massive numbers of sea ducks and gulls follow the herring in close to where we can observe the birds feeding on the herring roe. We can also enjoy the beginning of the congregation of the Brant Geese in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area and vicinity. Bring a lunch. We will carpool and start from Victoria at 7:00 a.m. Carpool expenses will be about \$20.00 per person. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.

## Tuesday, March 17th

### BOTANY NIGHT

#### **Biodiversity of the Central Coast of BC**

BC's Central Coast is a wild collection of islands, shorelines, mountains, and forests, a combination that leads to high species diversity and complex patterns of species distributions. This talk by **Brian Starzomski** will explore some of the species that can be found there, and some of the landscape patterns that make this beautiful part of BC so special. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

## Saturday March 21

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Birding in Centennial Park**

We will go to Centennial Park in Central Saanich. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Hovey Rd entrance off Wallace Drive. Meet at the main parking lot by the lawn bowling club. Lots of good woody birds. Maybe a Red-breasted Sapsucker and there is sometimes an American Kestrel in that general vicinity. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Sunday March 22

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Gorge Waterway Restoration is Underway**

We will learn about habitat restoration projects along the Gorge Waterway, starting at the Gorge Waterway Nature House in Esquimalt Gorge Park. Kitty Lloyd, the Gorge Waterway Initiative Coordinator, will be our guide. We will get up close with the marine life of the Gorge in the Seaquarium touch tank, see the interactive 3D Gorge watershed model and walk around the restored Gorge Creek that flows through the park. Then we will head to Banfield Park where we'll see a bioengineering project, a restored shoreline along the Railyards waterfront and we will cross the Selkirk Trestle to Cecelia Ravine where another restoration project is underway. Bring your binoculars for birding along the way. We will start from the parking lot in Esquimalt Gorge Park. The entrance to the park is near the Esquimalt side of the Gorge Bridge on Tillicum Rd. Drive into the park to reach the main parking lot where we will meet at 10:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## Wednesday, March 25

### BIRDERS' NIGHT

#### **Marbled Murrelet Conservation Research in Canada**

**Douglas Bertram**, Marine Bird Conservation Biologist for Canadian Wildlife Service, Pacific Region, and Chair of Canadian Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team, will discuss his research on population ecology of Marbled Murrelets (seabirds that nest solitarily at very low densities in coastal oldgrowth forests, up to

50 km from the ocean). We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

## Sunday, March 29

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

#### **Mossy Maple Grove with Ancient Forest Alliance**

At last we have a date. Worth waiting for! We will join the folks from Ancient Forest Alliance on a visit to this rare grove of centuries-old native Bigleaf 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 about the area. This will be a full day trip so bring a lunch. We will carpool from the Victoria area. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more details and to register.

## Monday, March 30

### MARINE NIGHT

#### **Sea Star Wasting Syndrome**

Marine naturalist, avid diver, and popular author **Andy Lamb** will talk about the recent Sea Star Wasting Syndrome that has impacted various asteroid species throughout the Northeast Pacific. Come join us to learn more about this devastating disease, and how you can help monitor the situation. Meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

## APRIL

## Friday, April 3

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### **Magnificent Wildflowers and Birds at Mill Hill**

Enjoy a Good Friday visit to Mill Hill for an early spring show of wildflowers and listen for the many birds as you climb through the varying habitats. Since 2000, CRD Parks staff and volunteers have been battling invasive Scotch broom in the park's Garry oak ecosystem. Soak up the glorious colours of spring and admire the results of this restoration. We are hoping to see, perhaps, a Townsend's Solitaire at the top as you look down over the tree tops as well as listen all the way up and down for the birds. Please note the route is steep and rough on the way down but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at the Mill Hill Regional Park information kiosk at 9:00 a.m. To get to the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge, then left on Atkins Road. Turn left at the four-way intersection to continue on Atkins Avenue that leads to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## Saturday, April 4

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### **Satin Flowers and Birds at Juan de Fuca**

For those of you who are not up to the strenuous walk up Mount Wells, this outing is another chance to see masses of the early Satin Flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) as well as other emerging spring flowers without the big effort. The Shooting Stars (*Dodecatheon*

*hendersonii*), Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), Spring Gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*) and Fawn Lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*) should be in bloom or at least starting now. It is also an excellent place to check out the birds so this trip will have some of each. Meet at Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre (Westshore Parks & Recreation), 1767 Old Island Highway, at 9:00 a.m. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to town. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Sunday April 5**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Monthly Butterfly Outing***

Join Aziza Cooper on the first of the season's Butterfly outings on Easter Sunday! 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 p.m. 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.

### **Monday April 6**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Leisurely Walk up Lone Tree Hill***

Great way to spend Easter Monday! This little knoll is a treasure trove of spring wildflowers. It is a bit early for the full diversity of species on this hill but it's fun to see which flowers are the early ones in the long progression of blooms that we enjoy in Victoria. We can certainly take in the fantastic views from this high viewpoint as well as listen for birds such as the Orange-crowned Warbler singing his heart out. In a previous year, we were treated to great views of a Townsend's Solitaire at the top so don't overlook that bird just because it looks like an American Robin from the back. Please note the trail is steep near the top but not as challenging as some of the other areas. The walk is at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Starts at 10:00 a.m. To get to the park, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday April 11**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Birding at Rithet's Bog***

Join us as we enjoy a birding walk along the level loop trail around the bog. Rails and Anna's Hummingbirds, wetland-loving warblers, swallows, migrating Teal and other ducks are all possibilities. There should be a number of early migrants around now as well as the considerable resident population of birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m. along Dalewood Lane (just off Chatterton Way) at the northwest corner of the Bog. Leader is Marie O'Shaughnessy. Call Marie at (250) 598-9680 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Sunday, April 12**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

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

What better way to spend a morning than in these two delightful Saanich Peninsula parks with their exquisite spring wildflowers and plenty of birds. To allow more people to partake in the level section in Gore Park, we will do this park first. Oak Haven Park has a climb to the summit but it is not terribly strenuous or long. Meet at

9:00 a.m. at the entrance to Gore Park. To reach Gore Park, proceed along Benvenuto Dr towards Butchart Gardens. Turn right on Amwell Dr. Follow Amwell Dr to reach Greig Rd. Turn right to the park entrance on the right. We usually walk to Oak Haven from Gore Park and return. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Tuesday, April 14**

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

#### ***Chasing Ghana's Ghosts: the Status of Lions and Other Wildlife in West Africa***

The lion is a powerful symbol of African wilderness and the majesty of large carnivores. Despite such charisma, lions are collapsing in range and numbers across much of Africa. In this talk, **Cole Burton** will discuss work in which he's been involved during the past decade to investigate the status of lions and other wildlife in West Africa. Cole will present results of wildlife surveys undertaken in Ghana's Mole National Park, and discuss collaborative assessments of the success of lion conservation efforts across other parts of Africa. We will meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building.

### **Sunday, April 19**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

#### ***Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to Offer***

Join us to enjoy the wildflowers and the birds as well. Our goal is to see the Gold Stars (*Crocidium multicaule*) in bloom but we will not be disappointed if we miss them as there is an amazing array of other delights and great panoramic views from the ridge. We might see a Golden Eagle on the ridge or a Townsend's Solitaire or hear or see a Sooty Grouse. Please note the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Bring a lunch. Meet there at 9:00 a.m. To reach the start, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd. Go past Lone Tree Hill Park on your right and watch for Emma Dixon Rd on the left. The trail head is on Millstream Rd just past that intersection. Park on the right-hand-side of the road. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Tuesday, April 21st**

BOTANY NIGHT

#### ***Fantastic Flora from Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania***

Experience five distinct vegetation zones as you climb up and down Mount Kilimanjaro with biologists **Jenny Feick** and **Ian Hatter**. Africa's highest mountain is home to 2500 plant species, including 1800 species of flowering plants, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. The bizarre forests of Giant Grounsels and Giant Lobelias feel other-worldly. This huge free standing strata volcano affects the local climate and vegetation as far away as the Serengeti ecosystem to the east. Global climate change affects its famous glaciers, source of life-giving water upon which flora, fauna and people depend. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.



## Wednesday, April 22

### BIRDERS' NIGHT

#### ***All Buffleheads Day and the Great Bufflehead Crash—Why?***

Why was the Great Bufflehead Crash of November 4, 1940, followed in rapid succession by the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (Galloping Gertie) and the disastrous Armistice Day Blizzard? As a prairie farm boy, **James (Kerry) Finley** learned of the mysterious mass crash in eastern Saskatchewan through local lore, and it has gripped his interest ever since. In 1999, after an arctic career studying Bowhead Whales, he turned his attention to Buffleheads, from his home overlooking Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Sidney. His research includes a study area in the interior B.C. grasslands, and now spans fifteen life cycles of the Bufflehead between its fresh and saltwater habitats. Mr. Finley has developed a predictive model of weather and Bufflehead migrations built on the constant of All Buffleheads Day (ABD), the 298th day of the earth's cycle (October 15th except in Leap years). He will explain why ABD is a national phenological phenomenon, and why it presages global weather patterns and disasters. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in room 159 of the Fraser building. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

## Saturday, April 25

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

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

Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. We will check to see if migrants such as Swallows, Warblers or maybe an early Black-headed Grosbeaks have joined the residents such as Cooper's Hawks and Downy Woodpeckers. If we try to spot these birds before the leaves fill in completely, they might be easier to see, but each year is different. Meet at 8:00 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Contact Rick at 250-885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Saturday, April 25

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Royal BC Museum Native Plant Garden Tour***

Many Victoria residents do not even know of the existence of the B.C. Native Plant Garden on the museum grounds. This was planned and established starting in 1968 by T. Christopher Brayshaw (who just passed away in December at age 95). Many botanists associated with the museum continued the collection of plants and tried to make sure the garden was properly maintained but it fell to a number of volunteers to keep it up in these austere times. One of these volunteers, Michael Fox, will be our guide and will show us how the garden is laid out in the different vegetation zones of B.C. Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the totem pole at the east side of the garden. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## Sunday, April 26

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Fort Rodd Hill Birding***

Ecosystem Scientist Aimee Pelletier at Fort Rodd Hill has invited us in as volunteers to participate in a bird survey of the property. The Tuesday Birders have already done one pass and will do another once the migrants have returned. The Saturday Birders hope to get there sometime soon as well. We have arranged to do another survey on this day because we also want to see the Garry Oak Meadow Restoration Project in full bloom on the same day. See details below on that. Join us at the Gate at 9:00 a.m. when they

open, and we will wander down to the ocean and through the woods for a couple of hours. The entrance fee will be waived as we are volunteers. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## Sunday, April 26

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Fort Rodd Hill Tour of Garry Oak Meadow Restoration Project***

As indicated above, Ecosystem Scientist Aimee Pelletier at Fort Rodd Hill has invited us in as volunteers to participate in a bird survey of the property. This date was chosen so we could enjoy seeing their Garry Oak Meadow Restoration Project on the same day. The meadow should be in peak bloom with camas and other wild flowers making quite a show. The staff has taken a previously vacant field containing nothing much more than compacted invasive grass species and transformed it into what we believe it may have looked like in the past before the military precision of mowing took over the site. The entire meadow is currently fenced to keep the deer and other critters from eating everything. We'll also tour the adjoining nursery where they have grown a good number of the plants from seed. If you only wish to do the Meadow part of the tour, meet at the gate at 12:00 p.m. and we'll join you up with the rest of the people. Please let Agnes know if you will only be doing the Meadow part so she can come to the gate to meet you. We should have time to tour the meadow and the nursery and eat a quick lunch before heading off to the Devonian Park tour. See below for details on that. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information or if you only plan to attend the Meadow part of the tour.

## Sunday, April 26

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Searching for Mist Maidens in Devonian Park***

Metchosin's Devonian Park is a great place to enjoy both birds and wildflowers as we meander along towards the seashore. We will be joined by CRD Volunteer Steward Moralea Milne. She has been a big part of the enormous effort in eradicating several invasive plant species from this park so we can savour the spring wildflowers that should be at their peak right now. When we get near the seashore, Moralea will show us the hard-to-find delicate little wildflower called Mist Maidens (*Romanzoffia tracyi*). As we poke along the beach, we'll stop to enjoy the fabulous views of the Olympics if it's a clear day and see if we can spot any of the river otters, harbour seals or orcas that are common in this area. Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot at the entrance to the park. Devonian Park is on William Head Rd.

## Monday, April 27

### MARINE NIGHT

#### ***Risky Business: Identifying Priorities for Ecosystem-Based Oceans Management***

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



Chocolate Lily (*Fritillaria affinis*). Photo: Agnes Lynn