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The Victoria NATURALIST

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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, book reviews, etc., up to 2000 words. Please note: If you are concerned about protecting your privacy when submitting an item, please notify the editors at the time of your submission and indicate whether or not you wish to use a pseudonym or have your name withheld.

We prefer electronic submissions—these can be submitted in either PC or Mac compatible word processing format—but hardcopies are also accepted. Please include photographs or illustrations if possible, along with a suggested caption and photo credit. If digital, images need to be high resolution—a minimum of 300 dpi for all sizes is requested.

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Cover Image: Bald Eagle. VNHS Photo Contest winner (Birds). Photo: Tim West

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Spring seems to have (finally) sprung in Victoria. By the time you read this, the lilies might be over but the camas, off to a later start than usual, should be either at the height of their beauty or close to it. I was lucky enough to be travelling in Thailand and Bhutan in March, so missed the (almost) never-ending rain, and was glad to come home to signs of spring cropping up everywhere. Hopefully some of you were able to join Nature Conservancy Canada at the “In Bloom” event at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve on April 29...that place is a mass of flowers, and there are all sorts of birds to delight you.

A total aside—the other day I read an item of interest—nothing close to the Victoria area, but still an interesting bit of natural history (history being the key word). A fossil discovered in Montana has been identified as a “sea creature” which appears to be a new species of an elasmosaur (marine reptile). These carnivorous maritime dinosaurs, known for their almost comically long necks, lived in the large inland sea that once stretched the distance from Montana to Minnesota, some 70 million years ago. Fascinating discovery augmenting our knowledge of life on earth all those years ago.

As always, this issue of the newsletter is full of interesting articles and beautiful photos—I hope you enjoy it. Check out the winners of the VNHS Nature Photo Contest (see page seven)...Wow! The first place winners of each category (and I hope, the rest of the winners) will be featured on the covers and within the newsletter in the issues to come. What a wonderful variety of images—our members are a very talented lot!!

In May and June, I will be travelling (part way) across Canada, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of our country, when the next newsletter is due to be compiled. I would like to thank Claudia Copley, past editor, in advance as she has agreed to fill the gap and manage the production of the July/August issue. As per usual, please send your submissions to publications@naturevictoria.ca or phone: 250-652-3508 and your messages/files will be forwarded. Remember articles can be as short as captions to go with photos, or as long as 2000 words, and be sure to include high resolution (300dpi—usually 2+MB files for any images).

Have a wonderful spring!

Gail Harcombe

A Message from Your Board

Annual general meetings are a great time for any Society to experience a “re-set”- a fresh start with new people bringing energy and an interest in working with others towards common goals. This past April’s AGM saw Rick Searle join the board, and the exit of Ben van Drimmelen after completing a two-year stint on the board. We welcome this great new addition and remind everyone that your Society depends on committed volunteers to see things through.

One of the projects highlighted at this year’s AGM, as it has been every year since its inception more than a decade ago, is the Connecting Children with Nature program that is co-coordinated by Bill Dancer and John Henigman. The success of the program is evident by the ever-increasing participation, and this past year the milestone of 1000 schoolchildren was reached and surpassed! Congratulations to all involved. Bill and John were featured as nature mentors on the back page of the spring issue of BC Nature’s magazine and that article inspired a donation to BC Nature’s Education Committee from a member of another provincial nature club—Nice! What a great demonstration of the effectiveness of long-term, committed volunteers with the best interests of the organization in mind.

Another success of this year’s AGM was passing the necessary changes in order for the VNHS to be compliant with the new BC Societies Act regulations. Although not very exciting, this was an important goal and we are grateful to



everyone who came out for the vote. Much appreciated! The tea-and-treats socializing was a nice addition to our annual meeting, so it is likely we will try to do this again if we have members willing to help with it. Thank you’s for this year go out to Gail Harcombe, Vicki Metcalf, and our regular Birder’s Night Coffee Guys: Ken Walker and Carleton Monk. The presentation after the business meeting by VNHSer and biologist Rich Weir on meso-carnivores was also excellent, and helped draw people to the meeting. What a great turn-out we had—Thank you!

In appreciation of you, our members, we are once again going to hold the BBQ Picnic and Social in conjunction with the annual CRD/VNHS HawkWatch event out at East Sooke Park. This year we expect it will be on Saturday Sept 30: after the HawkWatch event ends we roll out the bbqs and get the veggie and regular dogs sizzling. It isn’t fancy but it is fun, and an informal atmosphere for socializing with other members. No speeches or elegant attire, just naughty food (there’s always chips and cake too), and, hopefully, sunshine! Please watch for the notice in the magazine and RSVP so we know how much food to buy, and don’t forget a portable chair or picnic blanket.

In February your Society once again had a table at the annual Seedy Saturday gardening event: what a blast it is! The offerings at our table are educational and free, and the interest from the gardening public is heartwarming. Another event we participated in was Watershed Wonders at the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea. The visitor tally for the day was 406, with Bill Dancer handling it solo! He said he had a great day. We have also had a table set up at the monthly Swan Lake special events that the VNHS sponsors, and hope to have a presence at other special events in the region throughout the year. If you have an interest in helping staff a table at a special event, or know of an event you think we should be at, please let our volunteer Volunteer Coordinators (Vicki Metcalfe and Paige Erickson-McGee) know about it.

(left)
Bill Dancer
at Watershed
Wonders.
Photos: Tina Kelly



20th Valentine Birdathon: Toast Crumbs Not a Problem

By Alan MacLeod
Photos by author

If you think breakfast-in-bed sounds like a good platform for ushering in Valentine's Day, what about those pesky toast crumbs in the sheets and that messy egg yolk drooled on one's pajama top? Well, there is an alternative to Valentine breakfast in bed. The numbers may have been down but the congeniality was top of the line in the annual VNHS Valentine Couples Birdathon, February 12. Neither stray toast crumbs nor errant egg yolk posed a problem for any of the couples who got up well before 6 a.m. to join in the friendly competition aimed at determining who would get to see their names inscribed as 2017 winners of the Anderson Trophy.

For the record, it was Daniel and Susan Donnecké who claimed bragging rights in the 20th Valentine Birdathon. Following their carefully choreographed plan of attack, the Donneckés chocked up 80 species in the 6 a.m.-to-noon count period, availing themselves a comfortable winning margin over the rest of the field. The Donneckés, strong finishers in previous valentine events, warmed to their first opportunity to stand atop the podium. Martindale Flats was generous to Susan and Daniel this day. There they counted Trumpeter Swan, Eurasian Collared-dove and Mourning Dove, Lincoln's Sparrow and Peregrine Falcon. Three Eared Grebes were their reward for checking the waters of Cadboro Bay and Cattle Point provided surfbird, back turnstone and dunlin.

Agnes and David Lynn, two-time previous Anderson Trophy winners, made do this time with finishing as runners-up, with 68 species. The Lynns appreciated the Canvasbacks and Ruddy Ducks they found at Viaduct Flats, the gangs of Northern Pintails and Northern Shovelers at Panama Flats, Western Gull at Cattle Point and California Gull at Bowker Creek.

Mike and Barb McGrenere delivered a four-star result—61 species—inasmuch as they did their count without burning a drop of fossil fuel: they walked the whole way from their Cadboro Bay nestbox to Swan Lake, where participants gathered afterward at the nature centre to swap war stories. Mishap had recently befallen their regular spotting scope so Barb and Mike had to dig their ancient Bushnell Spacemaster out of storage and use it to pick out the far-flung waterbirds of Cadboro Bay. The old Spacemaster delivered Eared Grebe and all the 'puddle ducks' a grateful couple could want.

It may have been as long as eighteen years since the event organizers had seen Gordon and Anne-Marie Hart in the valentine event; they were very happy to have that dry spell come to an end this time. The Harts allowed themselves a late



Clockwise from upper left, Alan MacLeod and Jan Brown, Susan and Daniel Donnecké, Barb and Mike McGrenere, Agnes and David Lynn, Anne-Marie and Gordon Hart.

start—by 8:30, most of the other valentine birders already had a couple of hours under their belts—but they weren't punished for doing so. Ann-Marie and Gordon liked the trio of Black Brant and fleet of Western Grebes they found at Esquimalt Lagoon as well as the Red-breasted Sapsucker that showed itself in the woods at nearby Royal Roads University. The Harts finished with 58 species, good enough, we hope, to motivate a return engagement next year.

The event organizers, Alan MacLeod and Janice Brown, typically content themselves with walking out their door just past 6 a.m. to see what they might find in their own urban neighbourhood. They birded 13 km by shank's-mare in James Bay-Fairfield. They were pleased to find a Great Horned Owl in Beacon Hill Park, two American Pipits at Clover Point and a small gang of American Goldfinches on May Street in Fairfield. Their day's total, 55 species, would have disgraced the high fliers in this event but Brown-MacLeod weren't a bit embarrassed: on a species-per-kilometre basis they were right up there among the leaders.

Alas, it was not a banner day for rarities—no one managed to bag either the brace of Pink-footed Geese nor the Redwing that had drawn birders' attention in recent days—but the aggregate species count on February 12, an even hundred, was pretty decent given the comparatively small number of couples participating.

It always intrigues some of us to contemplate the species missed during the valentine count. Only four raptor species showed themselves; four that didn't: Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin. Missing-in-action

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Daniel and Susan Donneck, winners of the 2017 VNHS Valentine Couples Birdathon.

shorebirds included Black-bellied Plover and Sanderling. It was a slow day for alcids too: no Common Murre, Ancient Murrelet or Rhinoceros Auklet.

The good news is that none of the participants seemed to feel that there was a shortage of fun. Apart from the all the merriment, the count serves a worthy purpose: the ten-buck admission fee goes entirely to supporting VNHS conservation efforts.

Only the Donneckes get to see their names on the Anderson Trophy, but other rewards were collected February 12. Loyal, long-time birdathon sponsor, Don Wuest of Wild Birds Unlimited, Shelbourne Street, provided three excellent B.C.-made wren nextboxes for the top three finishers. Don has been principal sponsor of the birdathon for many years, his support much appreciated by everyone who joins in a valentine birdathon. Thank you, Don, for your continuing support of an event that those who know best—long-time participants—insist beats the heck out of a crummy breakfast in bed.

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Victoria Natural History Society

Nature Photo Contest 2017

Thanks to the 17 members who contributed over 100 photos in our two-week photo contest to showcase the amazing nature in the South Vancouver Island region! The categories were Bird, Botany/Fungi, Marine, Invertebrate, Mammal/Herpetile, and Habitat/Ecosystem. The criteria was for the nature photos to be taken in the South Vancouver Island and surrounding area (including the Gulf Islands).

Independent judging was provided by an avid local photographer Mars Romer (www.marsromerphotography.com) who has judged photo contests through the Victoria Camera Club. A scoring scheme was used as a reference to rank the top three images in each nature group, in terms of: i) light and exposure; ii) sharpness; iii) composition and design; and iv) mood, impact, and subject matter.

The results, organised by category and placement, are:

Birds

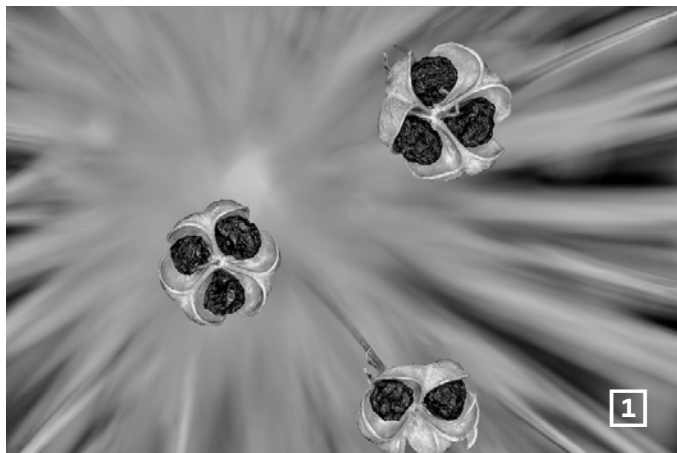
1st	Bald Eagle	Tim West
2nd	Lapland Longspur	Gordon Hart
3rd—three-way tie!		
	Dark-eyed Junco	Gordon Hart
	Savannah Sparrow	David Marques
	Western Sandpiper	David Marques



VNHS Nature Photo Contest 2017

Botany/Fungi

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1st | Small alium seeds | Neil Boyle |
| 2nd | A different look at camas | Nathan Fisk |
| 3rd | Fawn lily | Neil Boyle |



Marine

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------------|
| 1st | Harbour Seal | S.C. Harper |
| 2nd | Frosted Nudibranch | James Holkko |
| 3rd | Brooding Anemone | James Holkko |



VNHS Nature Photo Contest 2017

Invertebrate

1st	European Paper Wasp	James Holkko
2nd	Western Tiger Swallowtail	S.C. Harper
3rd	Female Blue Dasher	James Holkko



Mammal/Herptile

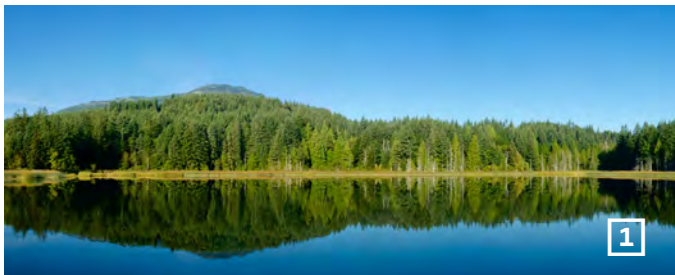
1st	Pacific Tree Frog	James Holkko
2nd	Big Brown Bat	Bruce Whittington
3rd	Columbia Blacktail	Val George



VNHS Nature Photo Contest 2017

Habitat/Ecosystem

1st	Chemainus Lake Panorama	Bruce Whittington
2nd	At Sherringham Lighthouse	Pauline Davis
3rd	Satin flower meadow	Neil Boyle



The Hollyberry Cotoneaster, a 'bright' addition to the Vancouver Island Flora

By Bill Merilees
Photo by author

In September of 2014, the road access to Hyphocus Island in Ucluelet had numerous shrubs sporting cluster of large scarlet berries. Thanks to Terry Taylor, these were confirmed to be the Hollyberry Cotoneaster, *Cotoneaster bullatus*. Our Illustrated Flora of British Columbia (Vol. 4) illustrates this species, mentioning it as "being rare on the lower mainland". This observation at Ucluelet may have be the first record for this species on Vancouver Island.

Cotoneaster bullatus is native to Western China and is widely used in ornamental landscaping. The flowers are reportedly attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds, the large red fruits being attractive to birds. This would make it a good addition to those interested in wildlife gardening. Its deciduous leaves also produce good fall colour.

Along the back road from Ucluelet to Hyphocus Island and the Town's sewage lagoon, a considerable number Holly berry Cotoneaster shrubs were present. This suggests they have likely been present in this area for some time, probably imported as nursery stock, with its seeds being further dispersed by birds? The splashes of colour produced by the berries, was most pleasing to the eye!

References:

Anonymous. Hollyberry Cotoneaster, Washington State University, Clark County Extension, PNW Plants. Online resource.
Douglas, G.W., D. Meidinger and J. Pojar, editors. 1999. Pp. 268-269 in *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*, Vol. 4. Province of B.C.



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Avian Mega-rarities on Vancouver Island

By Val George
Photos by author

Superlatives (awesome, amazing, incredible, etc.) are much over-used words in today's written and especially spoken communication. It's appropriate, however, to use one to describe the number of mega-rarity birds that have occurred on Vancouver Island during the last few months.

Provincial mega-rarities are birds that have not been recorded previously in B.C., or have been seen only once or twice before. One such bird usually shows up only every few years. Yet in the past four months we've had five on Vancouver Island.

The bonanza for Island birders—especially avid listers—started in November with the appearance at Esquimalt Lagoon of a Field Sparrow. This species is a common bird in the eastern States; here many of the birds are resident and those that migrate don't go very far in avian migratory terms, so it's not surprising that the species has been recorded only once before in B.C. Mega-rarities are usually birds that have wandered off course during migration or have been forced off course by very inclement weather, so a bird that doesn't



Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*).

migrate very far doesn't have much chance of going astray and appearing far from its normal range.


Our bird, unfortunately, stayed where it was found for only one day, so few birders were lucky enough to see it. I managed to get out to the Lagoon to discover it feeding in the open on the ground close to the water's edge. It was a very cooperative little guy for myself and the dozen or so other birders who were there insofar as it gave us great opportunities for photographs.

A month later, at the end of December, the second of our mega-rarities appeared—or rather was properly identified—a Purple Sandpiper. This bird was frequenting the rocky, seaweed-covered foreshore in Oak Bay. The reference to identification is because the bird had probably been present since at least September but had been incorrectly identified as a Rock Sandpiper. The misidentification was understandable because the two species are extremely similar, and it required good photos of the bird to confirm its identity.


Purple Sandpipers breed in North America in the northeast Arctic and winter on the Atlantic coast, so if this is where it came from—they do also breed in Europe and Asia—then it was a long way from where it should have been. The bird was last recorded February 17. At the time of writing, early March, it may still be present because when it was being seen, it appeared in places easily accessible to birders only intermittently. The record is a first for B.C.

About the same time that the sandpiper showed up, a Red-flanked Bluetail was found on the Comox Christmas Bird Count, held on December 22. This was the second record for B.C., and indeed Canada, the other being a bird recorded in New Westminster in 2013. Many birders saw the Comox bird because it remained in the same general area for about three weeks.


The Red-flanked Bluetail is an Old World chat (Family:

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Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*).

Muscicapidae), so it's related to the European Robin, a bird it resembles in size and shape though not in colour. It's an Asian species that breeds across the northern regions of that continent, as well as northern Europe; its wintering area is Southeast Asia.

As if we hadn't already had more than our fair share of mega-rarities, in mid-January this year two Pink-footed Geese arrived with a flock of Canada Geese. These birds were originally at Martindale Flats on the Saanich Peninsula but moved around the general area for about a month before the last sighting.

The Pink-footed Goose is closely related to the Greater White-fronted Goose (Genus: *Anser*) and is very similar

to the juveniles of the latter species. The species breeds in eastern Greenland and northwestern Europe so, like the bluetail, our birds were thousands of kilometers from home. In fact, bird record committees usually have major discussions about the provenance of wildfowl that are that far from their normal range because many species are kept in wildfowl collections. The pair we had here showed no signs of having been held in captivity. If accepted as wild birds, they will be the first record for the province.

The last bird in our remarkable list of mega-rarities is the Redwing—presumably the same bird that first appeared in December 2013—that re-appeared in February of this year. At the time of writing, the bird is still at the location in Saanich where it was first seen. Subsequent to the 2013 sighting, the Redwing was again discovered on the 2015 Christmas Bird Count, after which it was continuously recorded by many observers until April 2016.

When originally discovered, the Redwing was a first B.C. record. It's a Eurasian thrush related to our American Robin (Genus: *Turdus*). Those of us from the UK are very familiar with it as a winter visitor, sometimes in large numbers; it breeds across northern Europe and Asia and migrates south and west as far as northern Africa.

So that's it—or is it? Maybe we'll get yet another mega-rarity before winter is finished. But we shouldn't push our luck. We birders on Vancouver Island are probably already the envy of every other birder on the North American continent.

A Squirrel's Odd Behaviour

By Barbara Begg



At the townhouse complex in North Saanich where I live we have a pond with a foot bridge which connects to an island in the pond. On 23 January, 2017, while walking our trail, I stopped about nine metres from the shore end of the bridge when I saw an Eastern Grey Squirrel dash across the island. The squirrel briefly disappeared from view behind some bushes. The next moment I saw something swimming toward the edge of the pond. My first thoughts were of a squirrel on the island and a muskrat in the water.

When it climbed out onto the short grass I could see it was the Grey Squirrel. It ran across our road without shaking the water off its pelage and entered the backyard of a unit where there is a wide assortment of bird feeders.

There are a few branches overhanging the pond that a nimble squirrel could use to transit over to the island, or it could have used the bridge. I don't think it fell into the water from the trees as it appeared dry when I saw it run across the island.

Grey Squirrels are very habituated to people here and don't frighten easily so it shouldn't have been reluctant to use the bridge while I was nearby. Indeed, I don't think it saw me.

Apparently it is very unusual for squirrels to willingly enter water. The pond has frozen and thawed a few times recently—perhaps the squirrel used the bridge or the branches to cross to the island and decided to run over the ice to get off as it may have done on other days. Surprise! Instead it had a very cold swim of eight metres as this action took place during a short ice-free period.

Pollinaturescaping— six plants for creating a garden that boasts bees and blooms year-round

By Alanah Nasadyk, Habitat Acquisition Trust Community
& Development Coordinator
Photos: Habitat Acquisition Trust



Skipper Butterfly and bees enjoy naturally growing Canada goldenrod (*Solidago lepida*) at Sooke Potholes.

Concern for the world's pollinators is stirring, with the vital role bees play in the reproduction of nearly 90% of all plants, our health and success is directly tied to theirs. The good news is anyone can help by providing habitat for pollinators like our butterflies, birds, beetles and bees. If you have a parcel of land or a balcony for planters, that is a bonus. But if you don't, and you're keen, there are community gardens that give you an option to garden anyway.

Pollinaturescaping is simply turning the space you have into a naturally attractive place for pollinators by emulating wild habitat. As pollinators go from plant to plant fertilizing them with pollen that clings to their bodies, what they are really trying to do is forage for food. Pollination is the happy accident that results from their search. By providing bees and other pollinators with lots of easily accessible food, we are giving them a boost to survival, while offering the plants they visit in search of food what they need to continue thriving. Some bees are only capable of flying 100–200 meters in search of food, which means having what they need within reach can be life or death for a bee.

Just considering bees alone, in B.C. there are 451 different species with unique preferences for plants. Some bees have long or short tongues and other variations in physical

features that make certain flowers great, while others may be challenging to access, wasting the bee's precious energy reserves. Also, different species of bees are actively pollinating at different times of the year. If a bee becomes active in its search for sustenance, but there are not enough flowers blooming in their area, they may not survive.

To address the many unique bee's necessities then, there are several important things to consider. If you want your habitat to be the most helpful, select a variety of plants with different shapes and heights to accommodate all kinds of pollinator species. Take an inventory of the plants you have or hope to plant, look up their blooming times, and ask yourself, "are there months of the year where my space has no blooms?" This is

an opportunity to purchase some new plants or seeds for the bees.

Having a garden that blooms throughout the year, means that not only will you have an exciting garden no matter the month, you can also have pollinator visitors attracted to your garden and enjoying that habitat all year round. This way you are supporting the diversity of bee species needed for a nearby gardens, farms, and natural areas to grow strong. Diversity really is key in creating a pollinaturescape. Even incorporating a variety of colours is helpful as different pollinators are drawn to different hues.

What else is key when pollinaturescaping is taking cues from nature. This means using plant species that would have originally grown in your area, rather than introducing exotic species. A good exercise is to take a look around your parks and natural spaces to get inspiration on what native flowers to plant. If you're not familiar with their names, take some photos of the plants you find and bring them to your local native plant nursery for guidance or join a native plant identification group online.

It can be tough to resist the charm of cultivated varieties of plants, but there are a number of good and logical reasons to do so. The hundreds of native pollinator species found



Anise Swallowtail on consumption plant (*Lomatium nudicaule*).

naturally in our region co-evolved alongside our native plants for millennia. By planting native species you are preserving these pre-existing mutually beneficial relationships. When bringing in exotic species there is always a chance that they can get out of hand and end up growing beyond your tended plot. This can have the nasty consequences of competing with naturally occurring plants for already scarce space, contributing

to habitat loss, and if a garden-escapee has the right weedy characteristics, it can take over! This can cost your community and conservation groups loads of time and money to remove. When exotic weeds create a monoculture of single species, unlike a diverse ecosystem, they may offer pollen at only one time of the year, which is insufficient for most pollinators. Lastly, many exotic cultivars have been bred for

showy petals but do not offer much in the way of the pollen pollinators sorely need to get by.

Taking all of these things into consideration, let us explore an example pollinaturescape suited to the South Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Starting out with six or more plants that have blooms spanning from February to October is a good basis. From there you can work in more variety as you tend and improve your naturespace. For example you could plant Hooker's willow (*Salix hookeriana*) for a tree that blooms before other plants in February. Working down in size you might choose a salmonberry shrub (*Rubus spectabilis*) that blooms from March to June with beautiful pink blossoms and tasty fruit. Next, for a great groundcover, go for yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). This pale-flowered plant blooming from April to October is also a host species for Painted Lady butterfly larvae (*Vanessa cardui*). Another white-flowered host plant for Painted Lady butterflies you could add is pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*) blooming from July to September. To add some variety in colour, consider planting consumption plant (*Lomatium nudicaule*). With its yellow, aromatic puffballs blooming from April to June, it is also a host to Anise Swallowtail Butterflies (*Papilio zelicaon*). Finally, you might want to add another burst of bright yellow flowers and pollen from July to September with Canada goldenrod (*Solidago lepida*), a popular buzzing ground for tiny skipper butterflies and bees.

This year, many organizations, including Habitat Acquisition Trust, Victoria Natural History Society, and Pollinator Partnership are teaming up to make a difference for pollinators in our region with special pollinator-focused initiatives.

For more detailed information on habitat stewardship and local pollinators, contact us at hatmail@hat.bc.ca or by calling 250-995-2428 to receive Habitat Acquisition Trust's new *Pollinator Stewardship Series Guide* by mail. Set for publication Summer 2017.

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Bring Back the Bluebirds Project, Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society April 2017 Update

By Genevieve Singleton, Nature Interpreter and Naturalist

The Bring Back the Bluebirds Project, under the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team's (GOERT) leadership for the past five years, is now entering its sixth year with the Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society (CVNS) stepping into GOERT's big shoes! The Victoria Natural History Society has been a constant and generous supporter through these six years—your annual donation of \$5000 contributes greatly to the success of the Project.

Imagine being in a Cowichan Garry oak meadow on a lovely summer day. A blue streak flashes across the horizon and you hear the low chirps of a Western Bluebird calling to its mate. After 20 years of bluebird silence, this experience is now possible—these iconic extirpated (locally extinct) birds are coming back! These beautiful birds disappeared from the valley due to destruction of nesting sites and habitat, predators, and the use of pesticides. They have not been breeding on Vancouver Island since 1995. For the past five years, GOERT and CVNS have worked with many partners, including the Victoria Natural History Society, to bring these flying jewels back to Quw'utsun (Hul'q'umi'num, our first language, word for Cowichan). In 2012, through the hard work of Kathryn Martell, Trudy Chatwin and many other GOERT staff and board members, the pilot project Bring Back the Bluebird Project (BBTBP) was started by GOERT to re-establish a Western Bluebird population in the Cowichan Valley. For the first five years, the project consisted of translocating birds from a healthy population at Joint Base Lewis-McChord Air Force Base, in Washington State,

to the Cowichan Valley. We also worked hard at providing nesting sites in favourable habitats by installing a network of nearly 250 nest boxes, which the CVNS now monitors and maintains. The five-year pilot project under GOERT's direction is now finished, and as planned, CVNS is now the lead to continue to build the Western Bluebird population to an effective, sustainable population in coming years. In the fall of 2016, we counted almost 100 Western Bluebirds! This included 29 adults (with eight breeding pairs) and 67 juveniles.

From the beginning, GOERT, CVNS and partners have been supported by a team of experts including, but not limited to, an ornithologist, a species at risk biologist, biologists and naturalists from local and national organizations, and the provincial government. From 2012 to the present, GOERT staff and members of the CVNS have done the translocation work with guidance from Gary Slater of the Ecostudies Institute, Washington State, who provided his expertise and conducted the translocations. Our project is based on the work Gary did with the San Juan Western Bluebird Reintroduction Project.

In the early years of the project, well-known Victoria Naturalist member, Tom Gillespie, came up to assist a number of times. Syd Watts, naturalist extraordinaire and CVNS life member was one of the last people to see Western Bluebirds in the valley. Both Tom and Syd were extremely supportive of the project and are much missed. Syd put a great effort into building and putting up many bluebird boxes in Mt. Tzualem Ecological Reserve with the hope that they would return. Bluebirds were sighted there a few years ago in winter, and



2012 project team (left to right): Irv Banman, Dave Polster, Kathryn Martell, Andrew MacDougall, Genevieve Singleton, Trudy Chatwin, Gary Slater, Tom Gillespie, Syd Watts.



Western Bluebirds. Photo: Ryan Hetschko.

we hope someday soon that they will return to nest there.

Over 50 volunteers will work on the project in 2017, and we expect them to put in over 1500 hours monitoring bluebirds. For the first time, the CVNS has developed a network of volunteers that will monitor and maintain the 18 bluebird nest box trails. A bluebird nest box trail includes a series of nesting boxes in a specified area. Some of these trails are on public property, and many are on private property. We are most appreciative of the landowners who allow nest boxes on their property, and who sometimes assist us by monitoring the birds on their own land. Training manuals for bluebird trail volunteering have been developed for this new initiative.

Our volunteers are responsible for collecting and recording day-to-day information and maintaining the nest box sites. CVNS Bring Back the Bluebird Project staff are responsible for compiling the information and managing the data, as well as banding the new bluebird juveniles. Every bluebird in the Cowichan population is banded, which helps volunteers gather detailed and accurate information in monitoring for return success in future years. Already in March this year, the BBTBP manager led a half day workshop for the trail monitors. Monitors are getting ready to clean out their boxes and get organized for their checks. There have been several groups of bluebirds spotted over the winter, even after the cold snow. We now wait for the return of the ones that migrated. Since flowering season is so late, perhaps the bluebirds will arrive late too, only time will tell!

Throughout the summer, staff and volunteers collect data on brood sizes, hatch success, fledge success and band the juveniles when conditions are right. Potentially some will have second clutches, which will keep us busy throughout the summer. In addition, CVNS volunteers and staff visit schools, community groups, host outreach events and do fundraisers to create public awareness and understanding of this project and the lives of these beautiful birds. The CVNS staff are responsible for overseeing the activities and ensuring the goals, tasks and timelines are met. I have been honoured to be the liaison person between GOERT and CVNS for the past five years and now volunteer as the Project Coordinator. I am thrilled to have Ryan Hetschko, Uvic Geography student, return to be the Project Manager—his third year with the project.

We have an upcoming fundraiser, including an auction and live music by King Tide, at our annual Beer and Burger event, Sunday, April 30, 5 to 8 p.m. at the Cow Bay Pub, Cowichan Bay (contact Genevieve for \$25 tickets). We have been as busy as little bluebirds in writing grants and so far, have received funds from the BC Nature Foundation (thank you Claudia Copley for bringing that to my attention!), Victoria Natural History Society, Cowichan Valley Regional District, North Cowichan, the Baillie Fund, TD Friends of the Environment, and a number of very kind individual donors. We have other requests in the pipe and hope to have further success in our fundraising efforts.

We will not be doing any translocations this season, based on Gary Slater's advice. It is a year of transition, taking over from the excellent work of GOERT, our previous lead. We are on a steep learning curve so will concentrate on providing our tremendous team of monitoring volunteers with support and setting up a long-term plan with secure funding. Under Gary Slater's direction we will be increasing our contact with the San Juan Western Bluebird Reintroduction Project so we can work together cross border to improve the Western Bluebird population in the Salish Sea area.

We look forward to another exciting season as we take up the reins, and will share with you an update in the future. Thanks again, Victoria Natural History members, we could not do this project without you!



Photo: Reanna Shelling.

Genevieve (Jenny) Singleton first became a VNHS member fifty-four years ago, when her parents signed her up as a member for her tenth birthday. She became one of Skipper's Junior Naturalists. Skipper, also known as Freeman King, (1891-1975) was a life member of VNHS and ran the Junior Naturalists for many years. Genevieve grew up working in her teens at Francis Park (now Francis King Park), receiving an honorarium of \$100 for the summer's work from VNHS! She

went onto work at Goldstream Park with Skipper and then throughout the province as a Park Naturalist. She continues to share her deep passion for sharing nature with children and adults working and volunteering in the Cowichan Valley. She recently received BC Parks Volunteer of the Year. She is forever grateful to Skipper and the Victoria Naturalists for changing her life!

Twinflower4@gmail.com for tickets to Bring Back the Bluebirds Burger & Beer Fundraiser

Thanks to Ryan Hetschko for assistance with this article.

Letters

Re: Samuel Simco Bursary

Thank you so much for your award, it has helped me greatly cover my tuition for the current semester and will help me greatly in the future when I have less financial debt to pay. I appreciate you choosing me for this award and will do my best to put it to good use.

My educational journey actually starts at the University of Hawaii at Manoa that is where I completed my first year. I decided I wanted to study abroad at UVic for my second year because it is in a different country and closer to home. I will be returning to the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the fall to finish my last 2 years of my undergraduate degree.

The University of Victoria has opened up my eyes to the world of science and numerous amounts of careers I could obtain post University. I am very thankful for my opportunity to be studying at UVic and your generosity for helping me be able to study at UVic.

I knew I wanted to be a marine biologist when I was 7 years old. In second grade I had read a series of books on dolphins and fell in love with the ocean and all it has to offer. Ever since then I've grasped at anything that has to do with marine science. My goals have always been to make a difference in this world, no matter how big or how small, I plan on making many differences that will help the oceans, the organisms in them, and humans. I have had big dreams in the marine world since the age of 7 and I can feel the opportunities for making changes in the world coming closer and closer with every ounce of knowledge I learn.

Thank you again, for the opportunity you have helped give me. I know I will have an even greater appreciation of your generosity when I have conquered my goals and have people like yourself and many others to thank because I know I wouldn't have been able to achieve what I will without your support.

Sincerely,

Miss Ashleigh Epps

2nd year student, Marine Biology

Hometown: Victoria

Re: VNHS Dennis and Lyndis Davis Scholarship

I am grateful to receive this award towards my education. It is a gift to have the high standards that I set for my work recognised and rewarded, and I hope to continue producing quality work throughout my career in biology and restoration ecology.

My educational journey has been long and winding, and in between stints in school in both British Columbia and California, I have worked at three native plant nurseries, biked across much of Canada and the west coast of North America, and initiated several successful community projects. I came to Victoria to deepen my understanding of ecosystem dynamics and human relationship to landscape in an urban context, and I am happy to say I made the right choice.

Currently, I am working with the Galiano Conservancy Association to monitor their new food forest project and to

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Letters

design their new native plant nursery and native plant forage forest projects. I am also spearheading an initiative at UVic called Edible Campus, aimed at introducing edible landscapes for hands-on learning to the UVic campus.

In the future, I hope to help communities integrate themselves with the forces of the natural world, and to do my part to heal the age-old divides between agriculture and conservation, urban and rural, native and non-native.

Thank you once again for your contribution to my education. You will not be disappointed!

Sincerely,

Mr. Adam Huggins

4th year student, Biology and Environmental Studies

Hometown: Vancouver

Thank you for your generous donation of the **VNHS Freeman F. King Scholarship**. I was very excited to receive this award because it was recognition of my dedication to school, and the financial strain it will alleviate will allow me to dedicate more time to my education and helping in the community. I am also honoured to be recognized by the Victoria Natural History Society, because I am very interested in natural history, being a biology student and spending a lot of my leisure time outdoors in nature.

As a recipient of your award, I thought I would let you get to know me more as a person. I have always worked hard to maintain a high academic standing in Biology and Microbiology, because I am very interested in learning about nature and the human body. In addition to my classes I have also spent a year volunteering at the Christie Lab in

the department of medical science at UVic and helped a professor design course content for a third year Molecular Microbiology course. Outside of school I have dedicated my time to volunteering in multiple health care settings, including the Royal Jubilee Hospital and at a child health clinic, where I now work. For relaxation I spend time in nature, where I hike and bird watch with my partner.

Despite working hard and doing my best to help others, I have been faced with many challenges throughout the course of my education. My mother passed away after suffering with trigeminal myalgia. I supported a sister who had a teenage pregnancy and had to finance myself through school. These experiences have motivated me more to work hard and help people, and also made me confident in my future career path.

After I graduate I want to pursue a degree in medicine and a master's degree in public health. A career as a doctor and a public health degree will allow me to have a comprehensive understanding of health care, including treatment, how health care systems are organized and how research is conducted. Being able to work in healthcare will allow me to help people who have suffered, like my mother, and also allow me to learn as much as I can about what I am passionate about how biological knowledge can be applied to help people.

One of the main reasons I am able to get involved in the community and work hard at school is due to people like you recognizing hard work and providing support. Thank you again for that support. It is helping me in my journey to help others.

Sincerely,

Nathan Smith

Leave a Lasting Gift

Donate to The Nature Trust of BC in your will to help conserve the natural diversity of wildlife, plants and their critical habitats for future generations.

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

www.naturetrust.bc.ca



BULLETIN BOARD

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Guided Bird Walks

Every Wednesday and Sunday 9:00 a.m.

Bring binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal and informative walk around the lake area (usually led by VNHS members). Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Store in Shelbourne Plaza posts the bird reports from the Sunday walks. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Rd, off Ralph St. Donations are appreciated. For more information, see

<http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php>

Download a copy of the sanctuary bird checklist:

<http://tinyurl.com/birdchecklist>

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

Sundays, May 14 and June 11 at 9 a.m.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) hosts bird walks at Outerbridge Park in Saanich on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The walks begin at 9:00 a.m. at the parking area off Royal Oak Drive. This is an easy walk and suitable for people with mobility concerns. For dates and details, see

<http://rpbo.org> and download the bird list

http://rpbo.org/outer-bridge_park.pdf

Gull Identification Guide (free download)

Do you have trouble identifying gulls? Species are similar and plumage changes dramatically over the first few years of life, giving a diversity of plumages that can be confusing. John Muir Laws has developed an identification guide with all the plumages of common west coast gulls shown side by side, with detailed notes re subtle differences. Download free guide <http://johnmurlaws.com/natural-history/gull-identification-guide-free-download>

Signs of Spring



A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island (CD and booklet set) available from Rocky Point Bird Observatory!

Want to improve your birding by ear? This guide provides an introduction to call notes of common birds found on southern Vancouver Island. When learning to bird by ear, many people concentrate on learning the songs because songs tend to be complex and often beautiful. However, songs are generally only by breeding males in the spring and summer, and there is a whole world of simpler sounds given year-round by songbirds of all ages and sexes. Being familiar with these could enhance your birding year-round! For information or purchase (discount for RPBO members), contact rpbo@rpbo.org

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 23 new members since the last issue and the following have agreed to have their names published in this Welcome section.

Robert Harwood and Patricia Woodland

Victoria
*bird photography, writing,
Garry oak ecosystem, regional
environment, night sky*

Katrina Connors

Victoria
*My son (6 years old) is an avid
birder. We are interested in the
weekend bird walks and family-
friendly activities.*

Bob Hansen

Victoria
General wildlife

John Cook

Victoria
bird watching

Kelly Nordin

Victoria
Conservation Projects

Ab Fotheringham

Victoria
*Hiking, camping, kayaking,
birding, skiing, aviation*

Rick and Doreen Hardy

Victoria
*birding, photography; Nature,
native plants and trees*

Edward Frost

Canmore
Walking, birding, flowers

Tammy Lindahl

Victoria
*Early naturalists on Vancouver
Island*

Stephen Ruttan

Victoria
botany, natural history

Donna Lee and Michael Webb

Victoria
Marine, birding,

Mary and Gerry Whitley

Whitehorse
Mostly birds

(left) Anna's Hummingbird at Swan Lake, March 15th.
Photo: Pauline Davis

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/?page_id=1518 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 the Field Trip Coordinator Ben van Drimmelen. Many of you do interesting things either for fun or for work, and it would be great to share! See page two for email addresses and phone numbers.

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. If space allows, guests may participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society.

Despite our best efforts to schedule events in advance, changes are inevitable. Please check the website close to the date for any changes. We sometimes also schedule additional events due to unexpected opportunities. Please be sure that VNHS has your up-to-date email address to receive these changes or notice of additional events. If you do not use the internet, team up with someone who does to keep up with changes.

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 the Calendar page of the VNHS website (http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518) on the Thursday/Friday before to find out the week's location. Novice and experienced VNHS members all welcome. Non-members can participate for up to three trips, after which they are expected to join the Society. For more details, contact Rick Schortinghuis at 250-885-2454 or Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634.

MAY

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Friday, May 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Panama Flats

Bonus Friday event! Join us at one of the best spots in the region for shorebirds. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the small parking lot near the playground. To reach this meeting place, turn off Interurban Rd at Hyacinth and follow the road to the end. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, May 6

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon

Join Ann Nightingale for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon.

We should see a good variety of migrating shorebirds and passerines. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of Esquimalt Lagoon by the washrooms. This is about a five-hour walk. Bring a drink and a snack. Contact Ann at (250) 652-6450 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday May 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join us on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each trip is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This event 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 Rd) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or email him at butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Friday, May 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Witty's Lagoon

Bonus Friday event! The trail at Witty's Lagoon drops quickly via a scenic waterfall to the beach. Enjoy spring migrants in the woods and shorebirds along the estuary and in the saltmarsh behind the beach. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the main parking lot on Metchosin Road (across from golf course). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, May 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Early Birding Walk on International Migratory Bird Day

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be joining in with the International Migratory Bird Day events planned for this day at Fort Rodd Hill. We will check out the trails and the ocean front to see what migrants have joined the resident birds in this productive area. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the main parking lot at Fort Rodd Hill to sign in. Afterwards you may wish to join in the other drop-in events planned for the day from 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. See info on back cover or on the Parks Canada 2017 BioBlitz, VNHS, and RPBO websites. To reach Fort Rodd Hill, take the turn on to Ocean Blvd as if you were going to Esquimalt Lagoon and watch for the Fort Rodd Hill sign on your left. No entry fee to any National Park in 2017. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information on this early bird tour.

Sunday, May 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Scramble up the back of Mount Douglas

Join us in birding and botanizing Mount Douglas. If the weather is sunny, it is also a great spot for butterflies. We should get a good number of warblers, and Western Tanager, House Wren and Chipping Sparrow are likely. We can always hope for a Lazuli Bunting singing above us in the trees as we slowly climb to the top. The late wildflowers such as woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) may still be good as well. Please note the trail is steep but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot off Blenkinsop Rd just north of Lohbrunner Road. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Friday, May 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Viaduct Flats

Bonus Friday event! Join us in birding Viaduct Flats and the surrounding area, including up Broadcast Hill. Water birds are still coming through and migrant passerines are flitting about in the trees. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the viewing stand near the parking lot at the foot of Viaduct Ave. which is off Interurban Rd. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, May 20

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Mount Newton

Join us on this leisurely loop on the south side of Mount Newton looking for spring migrants in this area of mixed forest and large rural lots. This is a great area to see Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-throated Grey Warblers and Mourning Doves. Take East Saanich Road to Haldon Road. Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton

Heights at 7:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, May 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mountain Road

Join us in this very productive birding area. This trail, mostly under power lines, is a great place to see warblers, vireos and flycatchers. This is the most reliable spot for MacGillivray's Warbler. Take the Trans-Canada Highway to the Millstream Road exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Road. Turn right at Stewart Mountain Road and meet at the mailboxes at 7:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, May 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

Join Rick Schortinghuis on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds and scenery along the way. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km along Sooke River Road (off Sooke Road). Bring a lunch. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Friday, May 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Blenkinsop Lake

Bonus Friday event! Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. Enjoy spring migrants such as Black-headed Grosbeaks and Yellow Warblers. Meet at 7:30 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Join Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, May 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Observatory Hill (Little Saanich Mountain) Birding Walk

Join us on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain. Flycatchers, Western Tanagers, House Wrens and a variety of woodpeckers are some of the birds we might find. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the bottom of the road leading up the mountain (5071 West Saanich Road). Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, May 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Low Tide at Harling Point

Low tide at Harling Point uncovers a wide variety of species—if you have help and the patience to look for them! We'll carefully meander over rocks and alongside tide pools looking for invertebrates, fish and algae and discuss their adaptations for survival in this habitat. On previous trips we've spotted Blood Stars, Leather Stars, Gumboot Chitons, Sea Lemons, Red Sponge Nudibranchs, Umbrella Crabs and more. Sea Lions and Oystercatchers too. Please wear appropriate foot wear for scaling WET rocks and slippery seaweed. A walking stick for balance may be helpful. Meet at the end of Crescent Road adjacent to the Chinese Cemetery at 10:00 a.m. Call Tina at 250-881-4191 to answer questions or for more information.

JUNE

Saturday, June 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

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

Join us for a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the Hydro substation. This is a great place to hear or see most of our warblers, vireos and flycatchers. This is the most reliable spot for Black-throated Grey Warbler. This is a four to five hour walk. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Francis King Park Nature House on Munns Road. Bring a drink and a snack. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, June 4

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join us on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each trip is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This event 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 Rd) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or email him at butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Saturday, June 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Birding Jordan River Area

Join us for a trip to Jordan River. In the past, it has been a hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall and it is a great place to hear breeding Fox Sparrows singing in the spring. As well as beat the bushes for all the fresh migrants, we will scan the ocean and the shoreline. We never know what might be out there. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Bring a lunch. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, June 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Duncan Area Butterflies & Birds

We will venture farther afield to the Duncan area this week to do some birding and perhaps enjoy some of the area's butterflies. The morning will mostly be spent birding, starting with an enjoyable walk along the productive Dock Rd and then we will try to find a nearby Red-eyed Vireo plus other warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Bring a lunch and we will spend time in the afternoon searching for the amazing array of butterflies that are around the Duncan area. It needs to be sunny to make this part worthwhile. Otherwise we'll continue birding in other spots nearby. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool or at 7:45 a.m. at Cowichan Bay Dock Road (north of the intersection of Cowichan Bay Road and Tzouhalem Road). Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, June 17

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Goldstream Heights—Higher Elevation Birding

We will go up the Malahat to the area high above Shawnigan Lake to see what birds are enjoying the wide open spaces in an area that has been clear-cut a number of years back. Each year as small trees

and shrubs come back, so do the birds. It's one of the few spots that you may hear or see both species of grouse that we have locally. Also lots of the migrant flycatchers, vireos and warblers lurk in the bushes. Sparrows should be singing everywhere. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Sunday, June 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Investigating Chemainus Balds

By this time of year, most of the local wildflowers are almost finished but if we go up-island a bit and gain some elevation, we should still find something to interest us. This outing is intended to check out an area where there are Garry oaks on a rocky area that is surrounded by forest. There are the wildflowers typical of the Garry oak habitat plus some interesting native grasses that we can work on identifying. The terrain is rather uneven so a hiking stick might be handy. Bring a lunch. The area is reached via a logging road southwest of Chemainus. We will probably meet to carpool from town in the morning but firm plans are yet not in place. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to sign up to be notified of further details for this trip or if you need other information.

Sunday, June 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Cowichan River Footpath

This is an area well known to hikers and fisherman. This is a popular hiking trail but we will slow down to enjoy the birds and flowers along this scenic waterway. We will be investigating the area between Skutz Falls and Marie Canyon. A challenge to find along the route is the rare California tea plant (*Rupertia physodes*). There is also a small segment of Garry oak meadow where we hope to see some of the late spring wildflowers but another highlight of this section of trail is the abundance of plants found in the "Oddballs" section of the field guide by Pojar & McKinnon. This includes ground cones (*Boschniakia hookeri*) and candy sticks (*Allotropa virgata*). The route is reasonably level, but there are many trees roots crisscrossing the first half of the route that some people may find challenging. Wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all-day outing. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, June 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Investigating the Seaweeds along the Seashore

Normally we are studying the intertidal creatures when we have a seashore adventure. This time we are privileged to have retired marine biologist **Tom Widdowson** take us on a seaweed trip. Most of us know a few common seaweeds but the diversity on our local beaches is phenomenal. We'll ask Tom to give us his thoughts about why the seaweeds are no longer as bountiful as when he was doing his studies of these local areas years back. We will probably meet to carpool from town in the morning and go to the Sooke area but firm plans are not in place as yet. Tides will determine where and when we need to be there. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to sign up to be notified of further details for this trip or if you need other information.

Parks Canada Bioblitz 2017 • International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday May 13th • Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites

Schedule of Events:

- 7 am** **Victoria Natural History Society's Bird Walk**
Meet at the entrance kiosk
- 10 am – 2 pm** **International Migratory Bird Day 2017 Festival: Helping Birds Along the Way**
Guided Birdwalks • Bird-friendly Displays • Banding
Demonstrations • Birds of Prey
Hosted by Rocky Point Bird Observatory
- 11 am – 12 pm** **Unveiling of our Coast Salish archway by master carver Tom LaFortune**
Meet at the entrance to the Garry Oak Learning Meadow
Hosted by Parks Canada
- 1 pm – 4 pm** **Family BioBlitz Festival**
Pollinator Discovery Stations and Displays • Guided Bug Hunts •
Cool Nature Crafts
Hosted by Parks Canada



Visit rpbo.org for more details



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