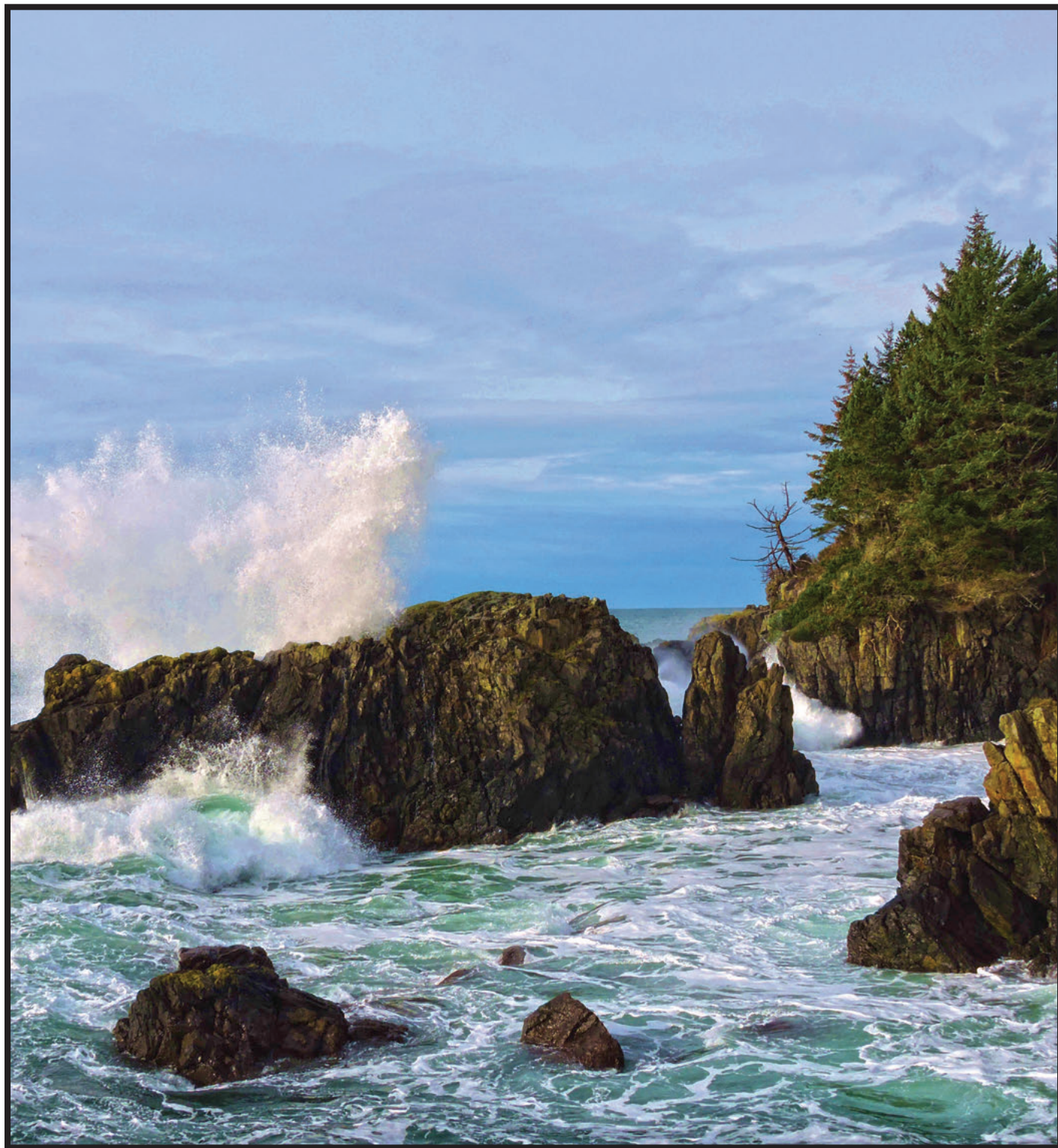




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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Send to: Gail Harcombe
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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

Guidelines for Submissions

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

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

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Cover Image: VNHS photo contest winner—
At Sherringham lighthouse. Photo: Pauline Davis

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In my note in the last issue, I promised a taste of what we saw when we took advantage of Canada's 150th birthday and the free entry to national parks by exploring national and provincial parks in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Check out pages 10–13 and get an idea of what an amazingly diverse and beautiful country we live in. Of course, closer to home, we also have awesome landscapes and cool animals and plants to see—the cover image (taken from near Sherringham lighthouse in Sooke) is a lovely example. So near or further afield, the natural environment has so much to offer us.

I encourage you to send me pictures and stories of your adventures...and any other topics that you feel will be of interest to our members. I love having the “problem” of too much content for any given issue!

Our evening presentations (Birders, Natural History, Marine and Botany nights) are up and running again—treat yourself by attending as many of the fascinating presentations as possible. Check the calendar for dates and details on each of the topics. And then we have our field trips—lots to choose from! Please let us know if you have thoughts on trips—we are always looking for new ideas.

For all you birders out there—check the dates for the 2017 Christmas Bird Count. Every year brings new species and several times, record numbers of species—a fun way to spend the day, and contribute to “citizen science” at the same time!

And lastly, don't forget to send in your nomination(s) for the VNHS Awards—see page five—due February 1, 2018.

Oh, yes—and since I will not be writing another note until the new year, I will take this opportunity to wish that you and your family and friends have a safe and happy holiday season.

Gail Harcombe

A Message from Your Board

Eighty-one members RSVP'd to attend the annual BBQ Social after Hawkwatch 2017—a record response rate! Thanks to everyone who did attend despite the weather being a bit uncooperative. We went through almost all the food—just some cake to spare. The success of this event depended on a few key volunteers. Without the incredible Bill Dancer, there would be much less knowledge gained by the general public to Hawkwatch: thank you for staffing the VNHS display for the event, Bill—your enthusiasm is contagious!

Even though she wasn't able to attend the BBQ, Gail Harcombe did all the food shopping for the event: thank you Gail! Marilyn and Phil Lambert chauffeured the cake, hot dog essentials, and most of the supplies to the event, as well as spent time looking after barbecuing. Phil also behaved presidentially and welcomed everyone. Thank you Lamberts! Claudia and Darren Copley also ferried out some key ingredients: two bbqs, propane, and a willingness to cook dogs for the hungry hawk-watchers. Bob Mackie had his hands full handling buns—cutting them, that is, and Cheryl Mackie was an excellent cake distributor. Thank you to the Copleys and the Mackies for these key roles.

This year we were again joined by the Nature Kids. Stephanie Weinstein said a few words and introduced her new co-leader Heather Lane, and Daniel Donneke carried a scope up the Beechy Head hill so the younger set could enjoy a view. By that time the weather had made the location a better spot for viewing whales than birds, but no one minded that.

Another annual activity to remember to participate in is the opportunity to nominate someone for a distinguished service award. The details and previous years' recipients are in this issue of the newsletter (page five), and the deadline is the end of February.

Recent decisions by the board include funding the first phase of a project that will hopefully one day see a key riparian link restored between Haliburton Community Organic Farm, Saanich's Royal Oak Burial Park, and CRD's Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. The goal is to restore a movement corridor for wildlife between these greenspaces. To this end, the VNHS board contributed \$5000, with the recognition that there are some key government agencies



New interpretive sign at Cattle Point.

whose involvement will need to be significant to be successful. This includes the Ministry of Transportation to help wildlife safely navigate the multiple lanes of the Pat Bay Highway. An ambitious but worthwhile project.

Another initiative is one that has been suggested in the past and that we have now accomplished: we have business cards for members to hand out that have the basic information about the Society. So next time you are out on a nature walk and you are asked what you're doing you can offer a card for more information. Please help yourself to a handful of them next time you attend an evening presentation if you are interested. We ordered a thousand so have plenty to spare.

A few years ago, the VNHS provided \$2000 towards the cost of an interpretive sign being planned for Cattle Point, including \$1000 from a grant submitted by then board member Melissa Frey to Victoria Parks and Recreation. The project is now complete, with the VNHS logo prominently displayed. We hope the beautiful artwork and information will generate appreciation of, and care for, our incredible marine environment. Thanks to everyone involved in this successful project—it looks wonderful.

Finally, there has been a slight change in the makeup of the board. Paige Erickson-McGee's position has been filled by Stephen Ruttan, who indicated his interest in joining after the last AGM. Welcome Stephen!

VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways: writing articles for the Naturalist; leading field trips; or serving on the board or committees. Some go out of their way to ensure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities by visiting shut-ins or driving others to Society functions. The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways, for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2018. All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with their address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie -Grieve
1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
1994 Kaye Suttill
1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
1996 Gordon Devey
1997 Michael Carson
1998 No recipients
1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
2002 Norm Mogensen
2003 Bob Chappell
2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska

2005 Rick Schortinghuis
2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess
2007 No recipients
2008 Ann Nightingale
2009 No recipients
2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn
2011 Claudia and Darren Copley
2012 Bill Dancer
2013 No recipients
2014 John Henigman, Jeremy Tatum
2015 Hans Roemer
2016 No recipients
2017 No recipients

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Mr. David Anderson, Dr. Bill Austin, Mrs. Lyndis Davis,
Mr. Tony Embleton, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling,
Mr. Bruce Whittington



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2017 Christmas Bird Count— Will this be a Record-breaking Year?

By Ann Nightingale
Photos by author

Count	Date	Coordinators
Victoria	Saturday, December 16, 2017	Ann Nightingale -250-514-6450; victoriabc@naturevictoria.ca
South Salt Spring Island/ Sidney; North Salt Spring Island/ Galiano; Pender Island	Sunday, December 17, 2017	Daniel Donnecke 250 744-5615; sidneycbc@naturevictoria.ca (South Salt Spring/Sidney); Tim Marchant tim@villagecobbler.ca (North Salt Spring); Mike Hoebeel mhoebel@telus.net (Galiano Island); Gerald McKeating geraldmckeating@shaw.ca (Pender)
Sooke	Thursday, December 28, 2017	Matt Cameron-250-580-0573; sookecbc@naturevictoria.ca
Duncan	Monday, January 1, 2018	Derrick Marven 250-748-8504; marven@shaw.ca

On our 2016 Christmas Bird Count, 245 volunteers headed out to count the birds within the Victoria count circle. Our total of 73,050 individuals was about average for the last few years, and our species total, 141, was exactly the same as the last two years. The species total was the top in Canada again this year, but so, so average. We once again had a good number of species with record numbers: Brant (8/old record 5), Canada Goose (6972/6860), Mourning Dove (100/76), Northern Pygmy Owl (8/5), Downy Woodpecker (240/234), Hairy Woodpecker (38/37), Northern Flicker (661/645), American Dipper (15/11), Hermit Thrush (76/58), Spotted Towhee (1501/1247), Clay-coloured Sparrow (new species), White-throated Sparrow (21/13), and White-crowned Sparrow (432/384). We didn't refind 2015's Yellow-breasted Chat or Redwing, but Jeremy Gatten *did* relocate the Redwing in January 2017, so it was probably here the whole time.

It's been a while since we pulled out all the plugs and went for a record attempt. Yes, I know we currently hold the Canadian record for species seen on a single CBC, but that was way back in 2004. I think it's time we tried to break that, and 2017 seems like it might be a good year. There have been 12 new species added to our checklist in just the last four years. Rarities seem to be popping up all over the place—perhaps because we have so many people out looking for them. We have the largest participation in the field of any Canadian count, and are always near the top for all of North America. So this year, in addition to our regular counters, I'm looking for some specialization folks, people to track down the Sooty and Ruffed Grouse, chase the rarities that are seen leading up to the count, possibly doing a “big sit” at a single location for the day, etc.

I am also looking for a boat for the northeast part of the circle. Jim and Jeannie Cosgrove have provided a vessel for the last several years, but they have hit the road in their RV, so we are a little adrift. If you have a boat that could be used,



Lincoln Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolnii*).

we can match you up with some counters!

If you are even the tiniest bit curious about what would be involved to coordinate the feederwatch, please give me a call at 250-514-6450. Ideally, I'd like to see a feederwatch organizing team to share the responsibility and success. If you'd like to participate in a feederwatch on the count day, a feederwatch list (with photos) and report form are posted at vicnhs.bc.ca/cbc/feederwatch.html.

Everyone is welcome!

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is on **Saturday, December 16** this year.

You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. I'd also be interested in recruiting some groups—walking groups, school groups, scout groups, or any other group that would like to support the activity. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Most teams spend all of the daylight hours out in the field, but there is room



American Coot (*Fulica americana*).

for people who can only spend part of the day too. Come out for as long as you can! There are a few “keeners” who go out looking and listening for owls in the pre-dawn hours. There may be boats on the water again this year (weather permitting), so if that is your particular specialty, please let me know.

If you are curious, interested, would like to see lists and pictures of the region’s winter birds, or just need more


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information, please check out the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca/archive/cbc/) and the Christmas Bird Count site (birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count) If you have a preference to count in a specific area, you may contact the team leader for the area directly.

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

Coming full circle— Post-count gathering

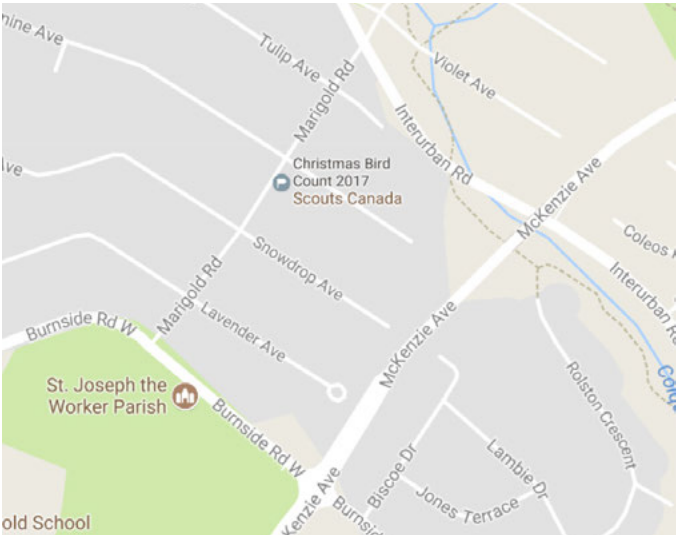
At the end of the day, as many people as can, will attend our post-count gathering to total up the events of the day. This year, we are returning to our centre—the centre of the circle, that is! Our venue will be the Scout Hall at 505 Marigold, between Interurban and Burnside Rds. Although our east Saanich people will have a few more minutes to drive than they have in the past, this location should make it easier for people from all other parts of town to attend. If we love it, we may be able to make it our permanent home.

We'll be meeting up at around 5:00 p.m. on count day to warm up, share stories and find out how the day went. You are welcome to join us, even if you don't come out on the count itself. If you can bring a plate of goodies, so much the better!

If you've counted with us recently, and we have an email address for you, you will get some instructions soon. Otherwise, if you'd like to be a bird counter this year, please contact the leader for the zone you'd like or register on the VNHS website. The updated leader list and meeting times and places will be posted on the website. Feel free to invite a friend!



Clay-coloured Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*).



	Area Name	Leader	Phone	Email
1	Butchart Gardens—N. Highlands	Warren Drinnan	250-652-9618	cbc1@naturevictoria.ca
2	Central Highlands	Warren Lee	250-478-7317	cbc2@naturevictoria.ca
3	Goldstream—Finlayson Arm	Robin Robinson	250-391-5995	cbc3@naturevictoria.ca
4	Thetis Lake—Hastings Flat	Jessie Fanucchi	250-818-1226	cbc4@naturevictoria.ca
5	Langford Lake	Barbara Lake	250-652-3358	cbc5@naturevictoria.ca
6	Albert Head—Triangle Mountain	Rob Gowan	250-592-8905	cbc6@naturevictoria.ca
7	Esquimalt Lagoon—Mill Hill	Rick Schortinghuis	250-885-2454	cbc7@naturevictoria.ca
8	Esquimalt Harbour	Don Kramer	250-995-9369	cbc8@naturevictoria.ca
9	Portage Inlet—The Gorge	Jeff Gaskin	250-381-7248	cbc9@naturevictoria.ca
10	Victoria Harbour	John and Donna de Haan	778-265-9817	cbc10@naturevictoria.ca
11	Beacon Hill Park	Mary Robichaud	250-507-8760	cbc11@naturevictoria.ca
12	Oak Bay	Geoffrey Newell	250-598-0158	cbc12@naturevictoria.ca
13	University—Cadboro Bay	Val George	250-208-0825	cbc13@naturevictoria.ca
14	Ten Mile Point—Arbutus Rd	Agnes Lynn	250-721-0634	cbc14@naturevictoria.ca
15	Gordon Head—Mt. Douglas	Margie Shepherd	250-477-5280	cbc15@naturevictoria.ca
16	Swan Lake—Cedar Hill	Bill Dancer	250-721-5273	cbc16@naturevictoria.ca
17	Blenkinsop Lake—Panama Flats	Carl Hughes	778-679-9224	cbc17@naturevictoria.ca
18	Elk Lake—Cordova Bay	Mike McGrenere	250-658-8624	cbc18@naturevictoria.ca
19	Prospect Lake—Quick's Bottom	Dave Fraser	250-479-0016	cbc19@naturevictoria.ca
20	Martindale—Bear Hill	Ian Cruickshank	250-382-1652	cbc20@naturevictoria.ca
21	Zero Rock (ocean)	TBA		cbc21@naturevictoria.ca
22	Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	250-477-5922	cbc22@naturevictoria.ca
23	Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ross Dawson	250-652-6450	cbc23@naturevictoria.ca

Avian Leucism

By Val George

Photos by author



A leucistic Black Turnstone (*Arenaria melanocephala*) at Clover Point in Victoria.

Local sightings of leucistic birds seem to have increased recently. Examples are the several white hummingbirds reported from Vancouver Island and the leucistic Semipalmated Plover that for several days in August confused the identification of the Piping Plover at Boundary Bay in the Fraser Valley (a first B.C. record for the latter species). Whether this increase is because leucism is becoming more common or the increased interest in birding is resulting in more people noticing and reporting these birds, leucistic birds are always very interesting to discover.

Leucism is a genetic mutation that results in improper deposition of pigments in various parts of the body of the animal. In the case of birds, the most obvious effects are white patches in the plumage and/or overall diluted colouration. The main pigment involved in leucism is melanin—a group of chemicals that in humans causes tanning of the skin—though other colours can also be affected. The effect can result in anything from a few white feathers to overall white colouration. Since it is the darker colours that melanin is responsible for, black and brown feathers are most affected.

Leucism should not be confused with albinism. Albinism is also a genetic defect, but it's one where there is a complete lack of melanin. Albino birds are usually pure white, though in some cases some faint colouration may be present due to the presence of a small amount of other pigments; the absence of melanin also affects the eyes (which consequently are pink), the bill and the legs. Leucistic birds usually have regularly coloured eyes, and other body parts than the feathers are also not usually affected.

In most cases, the species of a leucistic bird is not difficult to determine, at least for experienced birders. Size and shape of the bird narrow the possibilities, and the parts of the plumage that are normal usually suffice to immediately identify the species. That's not always the case, however.

Some years ago when I lived in Terrace in the Skeena Valley, a neighbour of mine called one morning to say he had a McKay's Bunting coming to his feeder. This gentleman wasn't really a birder but he did take a real interest in the kinds of birds at his feeder, so I dropped everything and hurried over to his house because, apart from the fact I'd never seen a McKay's Bunting, at that time there had been only one record for the province. Within a few minutes of my arrival at the feeder, the bird flew in and it did indeed look like a male McKay's Bunting, with its almost complete white plumage with dark wing tips. However, on closer examination through binoculars, I had to reluctantly conclude that it was a leucistic Dark-eyed Junco, probably the slate-coloured form, because there was some washed-out colouration on the head and chest consistent with the latter species and the tail was too long for the bunting—not what I was hoping to see, but a very interesting bird nevertheless. This is an example of a case where there were very few clues to immediately identify the bird, so a careful examination was needed to be sure of the correct identification.

One question people often ask if they're not very familiar with the phenomenon of leucism is whether it affects a bird's behaviour. In fact, it sometimes can, though some leucistic birds seem to do quite well, as evidenced by the fact that they're seen in a locality for several years. However, a leucistic bird might experience significant problems.

One serious problem may be predation. A bird with white patches, especially if the white is extensive, is more conspicuous to predators. Also, white colouration causes more heat reflection that may affect the bird's ability to maintain body heat in cold climates. Another problem may be with breeding since plumage colouration is important in courtship display; a bird that looks different may have difficulty attracting a mate. And there may be other, less significant, issues due to the abnormal genetic makeup of the bird.

Birding regularly turns up unusual sightings, abnormal behaviour, weird vocalizations for the species, atypical plumage features, etc. These sightings produce some of the experiences in the field that generate continued interest in birding for many of us. For me, coming across a leucistic bird is always a highlight of a birding walk, as I suspect it is for most birders.

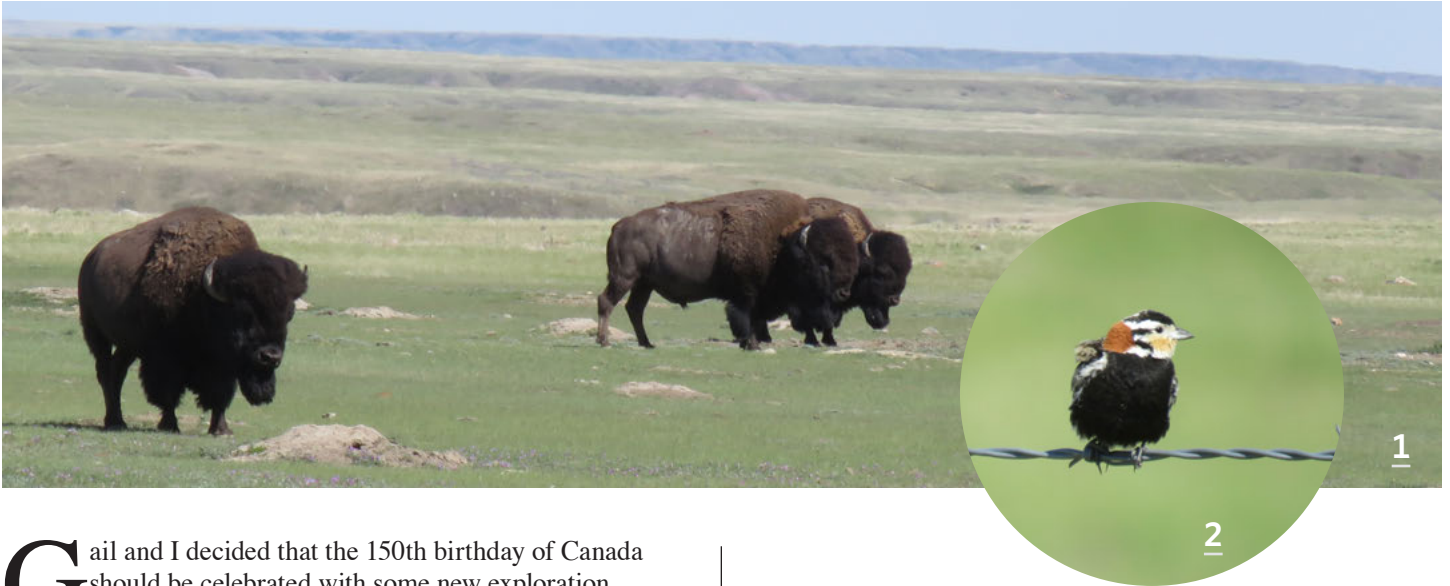


A leucistic Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) in Saanich.

A Visit to Some of Western Canada's National Parks

By Andrew Harcombe

Photos by Gail Harcombe



Gail and I decided that the 150th birthday of Canada should be celebrated with some new exploration, so in May and June, we visited two new and two old national parks (for us)—one in each of the four western provinces. We started in Grasslands National Park (West Block) in southern Saskatchewan, which is an open prairie grassland with moist gullies and wetlands. New on this visit was a campground in the middle of the park and a free-ranging Bison herd that is helping return the ecosystems to an herbivore-grazing regime. Our highlights included Black-tailed Prairie Dog towns with Burrowing Owl and Coyote interlopers, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Bobolink, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Solitary Sandpiper.

We then visited Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba, a first for us. In contrast to the last park on our route, Riding Mountain is dominated by deciduous and coniferous boreal forests with extensive beaver ponds and small lakes. Moose, Black Bear and warblers and vireos were widespread, including a Chestnut-sided Warbler and American Redstart fallout in a woodland inundated with tent caterpillars.

Heading westward, we stayed farther north than our eastern route, and had our first visit to Elk Island National Park in Alberta. Deciduous boreal forest dominates this smaller park, with grassland openings for Bison and Rocky Mountain Elk. A great bird for us were two young Great Gray Owl, begging for food in loud calls first heard from our passing car.

Our final park was Yoho National Park in British Columbia, one that we have driven through many times but rarely spent anytime exploring. Being in the mountains meant many of the flora was just coming into bloom. Special things seen there included Three-toed Woodpecker, several Mountain Goats in view from our campsite, and singing Hermit Thrush.

National Park visitors are treated to free park passes in this celebratory year; taking advantage of this and seeing some new country seemed like the Canadian thing to do.

Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan

1. Bison have been reintroduced into the park.
2. Chestnut-collared Longspur.
3. Black-tailed Prairie Dogs.
4. Grasslands National Park.
5. Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba

6. Black Bear encountered on an evening drive through the park.
7. Typical boreal landscape in Riding Mountain National Park.
8. Eastern Towhee.

Elk Island National Park, Alberta

9. Riding Mountain National Park is a mixture of open meadows with Bison and Rocky Mountain Elk, and closed forest.
10. Nesting Red-necked Grebe on a beaver-created wetland.
11. Juvenile Great Gray Owl.
12. Prairie barn.

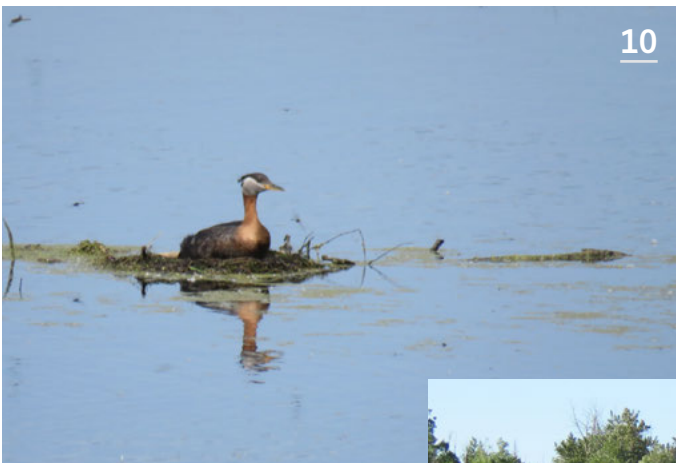
Yoho National Park, BC

13. Diverse vegetation seen on a walk to Wapta Falls.
14. Yellow columbine.
15. Emerald Lake, Yoho National Park.





9



10



11



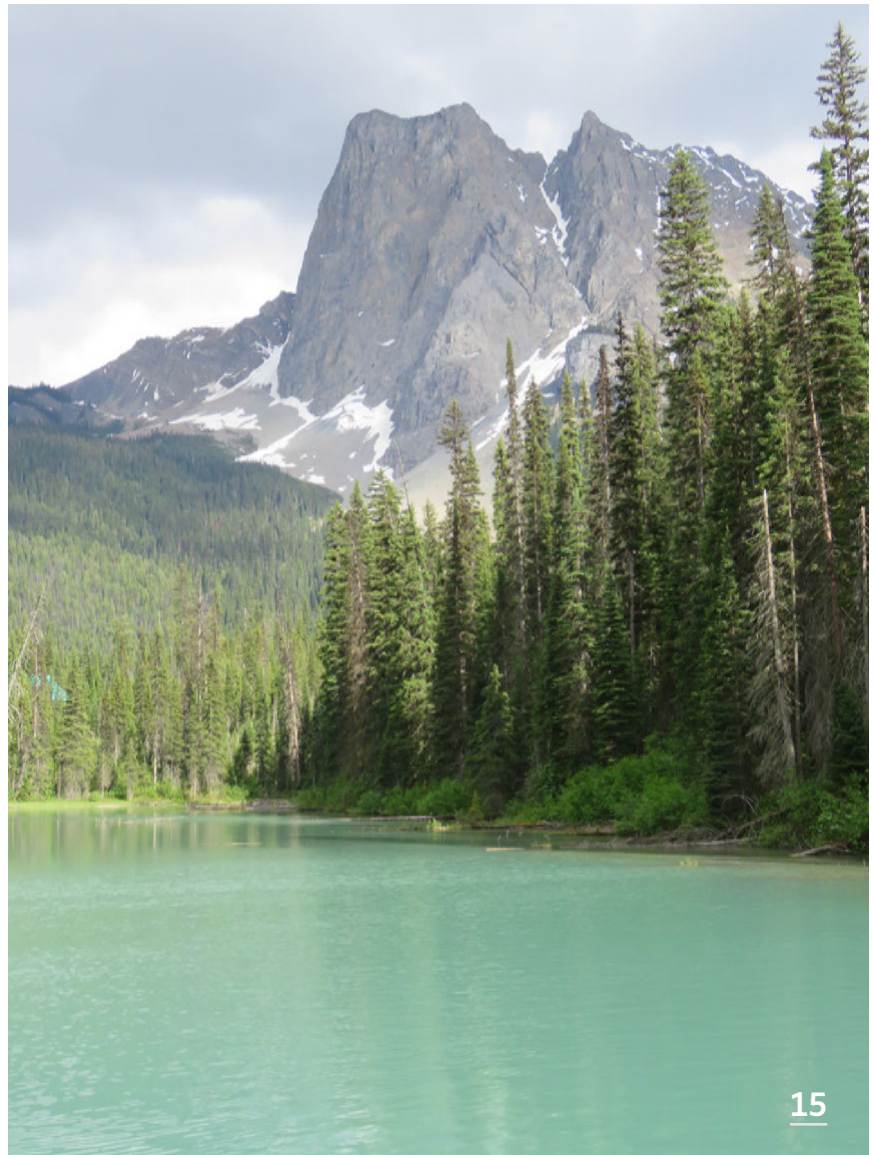
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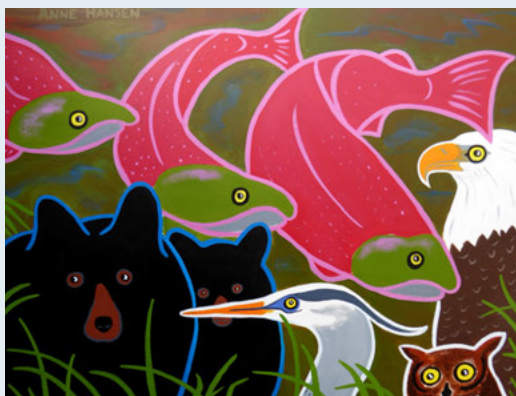
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15

ANNE HANSEN:

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November 4 & 5, 2017

12:00 p.m. – 4:30 pm.

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Visit Oystercatcher Central by appointment:

anitabike@gmail.com (250) 381-7313

www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com

New Victoria Area Bird Checklist Now Available

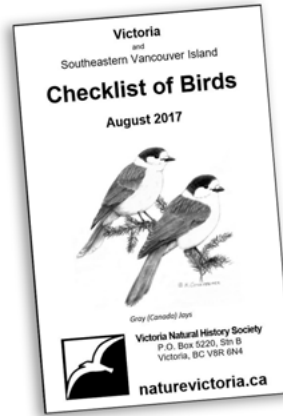
By Ann Nightingale

The VNHS Bird Records Committee is working hard to keep up with all the new species and new records of known species that local birders are finding. Since a major overhaul in 2013, the checklist has now been revised with 12 new species, and still has several under review.

The new species are:

- Gray-cheeked Thrush (Rocky Point—restricted access)
- Field Sparrow (Esquimalt Lagoon)
- Boreal Owl (Race Rocks—restricted access)
- Eastern Phoebe (near Esquimalt Lagoon)
- Brown Booby (3 offshore records)
- Acorn Woodpecker (Cedar Hill Golf Course and Burnside Rd W area)
- Laughing Gull (North Saanich)
- Little Stint (North Saanich)
- Blackburnian Warbler (Beacon Hill Park)
- Siberian Accentor (cat-killed specimen found in a freezer collection-found many years ago)
- Blue Grosbeak (Rocky Point—restricted access)
- Cassin's Finch (Shawnigan Lake)

If you've reported a bird that did not appear on this list, it doesn't mean that it won't ultimately be added. The review works as follows: the committee reviews reports in an online forum. If there is sufficient agreement on the acceptability of the report, the species or new date(s) will be added to the checklist. If there are questions of identification or of provenance, or if there is disagreement between the committee members, the report will be reviewed at a



face-to-face meeting of the committee. These meetings only occur about once every year or two. Old records, like the curious situation surrounding the Siberian Accentor, pop up all the time. In this case, Wayne Campbell discovered a long-forgotten bag of dead birds a neighbour had given him in the bottom of his freezer. In it was an unquestionable Siberian Accentor specimen, and has

been accepted by the committee.

The current committee consists of Bryan Gates, Barbara Begg, Dave Fraser, Bruce Whittington, Rick Schortinghuis, Ann Nightingale, and Jeremy Gatten. Gratitude is extended to Derrick Marvin and Jeremy Tatum, who were on the committee for many of the reviews covered in this checklist, but have managed somehow to escape. They might have been ship-assisted! (Inside joke!)

Unlike records committees of the past, the current committee actively seeks out reports to other repositories, such as eBird. However, if you want to ensure that your sighting gets considered for updates to the checklist, please send the details to rba@naturevictoria.ca.

Special thanks to Howard Coneybeare for the cover artwork!

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

WildWings Nature & Arts Festival 2017: *Nature and Children Nurturing the Future*

Each fall, the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, along with many community partners, hosts the WildWings Nature & Arts Festival, a series of nature-themed events held around the Cowichan Valley to celebrate Cowichan nature and the return of the trumpeter swans to their overwintering grounds in the Cowichan Valley. This year's festival features sixteen events from October 5th to November 4th. Activities run the gamut from birding and nature interpretation to local cultural experiences, as well as a nature themed art show on display until **November 4**. For full festival event and ticket details visit www.wildwingsfestival.com or contact Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society Program Manager, Elizabeth Bailey, at programs@somenosmarsh.com or 250-884-0749.

13th Annual Garry Oak Recovery Team Colloquium **Friday, November 17th, 2017**

New Ways of Understanding Garry Oak Ecosystems

GOERT has again partnered with the Restoration of Natural Systems Program at the University of Victoria for its Research Colloquium. The theme is "New Ways of Understanding Garry Oak Ecosystems." We will look at the Garry Oak Ecosystem as a layered landscape that has been shaped by its historical context and how contemporary social priorities are shaping its future. Also, how citizen science is being used to help understand and restore Garry Oak ecosystems. Presentations will include some of the latest research and projects including the importance of new technology, project updates (recovery planning, bluebirds and Somenos), the use of native vegetation in restoration projects and a look at other endangered ecosystems (sand dunes) for common challenges and solutions.

Register by November 10, please e-mail your name & address to finance@goert.ca \$30 individual, \$15 student,

\$50 non-governmental non-profit group (3 individuals max).
Cost includes lunch and refreshments.

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). Donations are appreciated. For information, see <http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/adult-programs.php> Download the sanctuary bird checklist: <http://tinyurl.com/birdchecklist>

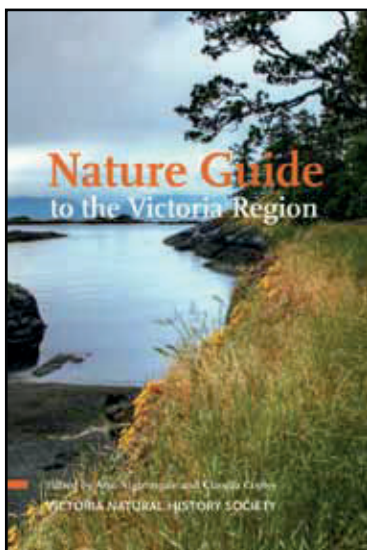
Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

Sundays Nov 12 and Dec 10 at 9 a.m.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory hosts guided bird walks at Outerbridge Park in Saanich on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The easy walks, suitable for people with mobility concerns, begin at the parking area off Royal Oak Drive. For dates and details, see <http://rpbo.org> Download the bird list http://www.rpbo.org/outerbridge_park.pdf

A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island **(CD and booklet set) available at 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



Nature Guide to the Victoria Region

Edited by Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley

With chapters by David Stirling, Alan MacLeod, James Miskelly, Robert Cannings, Bryce Kendrick, Philip Lambert, David Nagorsen, Anna Hall, Gavin Hanke and Leon Pavlick.

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

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

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 18 new members since the last issue and the following have agreed to have their names published in this Welcome section.

Brenda Sopow

Victoria
Birds, Geology, Trees, Insects

Nicole August

Victoria
*Birding, Botany, Zoology, Hiking,
Biking, Science, Just About Anything*

Simone & Blaine Marler

Pender Island
Birding, General Nature

Teresa Serenith

Victoria
*Preserving Nature, Birdwatching,
Bat Habitat, Education, etc.*

Katherine St James

Victoria
Birds, Amphibians, Bats

Melissa Anderson

Victoria
Marine, Botany

Helen Rodney

Victoria
*Mainly Birding, But Basically
Almost Everything!*

Michael Rogers

Victoria
Birds, Botany, And Ecology

Elizabeth Giannantonio

Victoria
*Conservation Biology, Whale Watching,
Ecology, Marine Biology, Oceanography,
Scuba Diving, Marine Mammal Biology,
Hiking, Kayaking*

Nancy Aubut

Victoria
*Hiking, Biking, Cooking, Cats and Dogs,
Gardening*

Patricia and Ean Maxwell

NorthSaanch
Birds Mostly But All Wildlife Generally

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 Claudia Copley. 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.

NOVEMBER

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Saturday, November 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Mushrooms at Royal Roads

This area has a diverse selection of mushrooms so it is always a great place to wander at this time of year. A member of both South Vancouver Island Mycological Society (www.svims.ca) and VNHS, **Kem Luther** will lead us around the area assisting us in identifying what we see. Bring your favourite field guide and we will assist you at learning more about these mysterious fungi of the forest. Please note this is an observation trip, not intended for collecting. However, a few selected specimens will be chosen by the leader for closer examination. Meet at Royal Roads University (2005 Sooke Rd) by the Tennis Courts near the university entrance at 1:00 p.m. Note parking fees are in effect. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, November 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Pelagic Birding on the MV Coho

Mike McGrenere will lead this trip on the MV Coho on its usual sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. He has been doing this trip for about ten years now and he says this is the best opportunity to see bird species that are usually found further out to sea, including shearwaters, fulmars and phalaropes. The crossing takes 90 minutes. We will be birding from the bow of the boat, so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. sailing. We will return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket. Street parking is free on Sundays. You must check in with Mike inside the terminal before buying your ticket. Return ferry fare is \$37 US (about \$50 Ca).

You will require a Passport or enhanced driver's license to go through US Customs. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, November 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Fungi Observations in John Dean Park

Mycologist **Bryce Kendrick** (www.mycolog.com) will lead us on an informative nature walk through the Park. Mushrooms are only one of the types of organisms that he will show us. We will learn how molds and slime molds differ from the mushrooms. You might also ask him why fungi are more like animals than plants. As this is a park, there will be no collecting. However a few selected specimens may be chosen by the leader for closer examination. We will meet at 1:00 p.m. at the far end of Carmanah Terrace. Follow East Saanich Rd to Dean Park Rd and right on Carmanah Terrace to the end. Although we will not cover a large distance, the ground will be uneven and occasionally steep. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday November 14

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Wild Anticipation

The 'wild' we know is not the wild our ancestors knew. Artist **Joanne Thomson** has a deep appreciation for the wisdom and efforts of those anticipating the need to preserve wild places. This presentation offers homage to that wisdom through stories, photographs, and paintings from some of those places to inspire the active appreciator and conservationist in you. Come and learn more about Ivvavik National Park, Grasslands National Park, Francis King CRD Park, Wildwood Ecoforestry Institute, Goldstream Provincial Park, and St. John's Point Mayne Island Conservation Society. Joanne will bring some of the paintings to be featured in her solo exhibition at the Martin Bachelor Gallery, 712 Cormorant St., January 5–February 1, 2018.

www.wildanticipation.ca www.joannethomson.com

Join us in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m.

Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Saturday, November 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Snow Geese at Reifel Bird Sanctuary

Come and see the annual Snow Goose spectacle at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. Every November, thousands of Snow Geese stop-over in this part of the Fraser River delta. There is normally time to visit Boundary Bay or another site as well. Past trips have produced up to 80 species of birds for the day. Bring a lunch and drinks as we will not be stopping for refreshments. Dress warmly as it can be windy near the water. We go rain or shine. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We plan to return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes. First 8 people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement as number of cars are limited. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$70 for the day from Victoria plus \$5.00 entry fee to Reifel. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to confirm attendance.

Sunday, November 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding Maber Flats

A dedicated group of birders have been birding (and eBirding) Maber Flats every Friday morning for over three years. Join **Andrew Harcombe** birding their usual route—in addition to Canada Geese, you might see a Cackling Goose, maybe even a kestrel on the wires or flying by. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the gravel area across from the Central Saanich municipal yard, on Keating Cross-Road.

Tuesday, November 21st

BOTANY NIGHT

Lichen diversity on Metchosin's military lands

Military-owned lands, being off-limits for public and economic use, can preserve biodiversity in landscapes where original nature has become scarce and compromised. Lichens have on average finicky habitat requirements and little tolerance for human land use, but they occupy their original or nearly original habitats in

some of the minimally-used areas of Department of National Defense lands on southern Vancouver Island. **Curtis Bjork** has recently inventoried lichen species on the DND properties Albert Head, Mary Hill and Rocky Point, finding many species new to British Columbia or North America, and some new to science. The roughly one square kilometer area of Albert Head may have the highest per unit area lichen species richness in the world, and portions of Mary Hill and Rocky Point also are extraordinarily rich in lichen species. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, November 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Bring Back the Bluebirds Update

In 2012, the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT) undertook a five-year project to reintroduce the Western Bluebird to the Cowichan Valley. At the end of the "official" five-year project, the work was taken on by the Cowichan Valley Naturalists, who are now looking to expand the efforts to other areas on southern Vancouver Island. Join **Genevieve Singleton** and **Ryan Hetschko** for an update on how the project went, and their plans for the future—and how you can help! We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Come early to socialize! Presentation begins after VNHS announcements and coffee. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Sunday, November 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding Panama Flats

At this time of year, Panama Flats should have a good selection of waterfowl, raptors and birds of open fields and grasslands. Meet the tripler, **Gordon Hart**, at Hyacinth Park at 9 a.m. in the large parking lot on Marigold Road near Interurban Road. We will start from the Colquitz Creek trail walking north, scanning the flats, and explore the duck pond and Panama Hill area.

Monday, November 27

MARINE NIGHT

How did a DFO scientist end up on Robinson Crusoe Island?

Acoustic surveys performed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada use echo-sounders to detect and enumerate fish using sound, in tandem with capture nets to identify the species and collect information on the size of fish. The DFO science program is working on the development of alternative and non-invasive methods to gather this information, for example by deploying underwater cameras where the use of trawls is not possible. **Dr. Stéphane Gauthier**, Ocean Sciences Division was contacted by colleagues in Chile to test such an alternative approach on a remote island off the central coast of Chile. Robinson Crusoe Island is home to a small secluded fishing community and hosts a rich aquatic fauna unique to the Juan Fernandez ridge ecosystem. His team designed an acoustic survey around this island and used echo-sounders deployed off a small vessel as well as a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) equipped with cameras systems. The project was highly successful, revealing a rich and diversified reef ecosystem. Join us in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Langford Lake Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at Langford Lanes parking lot on Langford Parkway at 8:30 a.m. for a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. This trip will cover the area around Langford Lake. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and note-pad. This is a regular Saturday Birding Group outing but it is also a great opportunity for novice or near-novice Christmas Bird Counters to get in some practice. **Ann Nightingale** will be your leader. Contact Ann at (250) 652-6450 or motmot at shaw.ca if you need more information.

Saturday, December 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Esquimalt Lagoon Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

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

Tuesday, December 12

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Prairie Sunset: A Story of Change

The book *Prairie Sunset: A Story of Change* is the culmination of a project that began in 2003 when Victoria-based photographer/author Dion Manastyrski travelled back to the prairies to photograph and capture "the story of change" on the prairies. He grew up on a small farm in Saskatchewan on an original homestead built by his grandfather and his father, and even as a child, he was fascinated by abandoned farm buildings, wondering where those people went, and why they left. **Dion Manastyrski** presents photographs and stories of his experiences throughout this project that documents the past 150 or so years of agriculture in the rural prairies, focusing especially on recent changes including the disappearance of the family farm, the continuing shift to larger-scale farming, rural depopulation of the past 40 years or so, and the continued effects that the recent industrialization of farming is having upon the natural ecosystems and wildlife of the prairies. Join us in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Saturday, December 16

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT — VICTORIA

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is on Saturday, December 16, this year. The BCVI 15 mile diameter circle is centred on the Marigold/Interurban area. Everyone is welcome! You don't have to be an expert birder to participate. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. If you are curious, interested,

would like to see lists and pictures of the region's winter birds, or just need more information, please check out the VNHS website (www.vienhs.bc.ca/archive/cbc) and the Christmas Bird Count site (www.birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count). See page 11 for details.

Sunday, December 17

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—SOUTH SALT SPRING ISLAND/ SIDNEY; NORTH SALT SPRING ISLAND/ GALIANO; PENDER ISLAND

See December 16, and page 11 for details.

Tuesday, December 19th

BOTANY NIGHT

Members Night: Botany Night Christmas Party

Join us for informal gathering to share pictures, stories, and snacks. Bring along photos you'd like to show off or photos you'd like identified. Treats are appreciated but not required. If you have something to present, please contact james.miskelly@gmail.com (250-544-0455). Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Thursday, December 28

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—SOOKE

See December 16, and page 11 for details.

Monday, January 1, 2018

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT—DUNCAN

See December 16, and page 11 for details.

*We keep it natural.
For you, for them.
Forever.*

**Invest in nature for future generations
Call 250-995-2428 today
to set up your monthly donations**



Habitat Acquisition Trust
hatmail@hat.bc.ca | 250 995 2428 | hat.bc.ca

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*In the end you're either endowed...
or extinct.*

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**SWAN LAKE
CHRISTMAS HILL
NATURE SANCTUARY**

To discuss the possibility of leaving a planned gift to Swan Lake,
please contact kburton@swanlake.bc.ca or phone: 250.479.0211 today.



VNHS photo contest winner—Savannah Sparrow. *Photo: David Marques*