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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





The Victoria NATURALIST

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Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: publications@vicnhs.bc.ca
[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

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

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

7.5" (2 columns) wide 2250 x 1600 pixels

3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

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Cover Image: Western Tiger Swallowtail, VNHS Photo contest 2nd place winner, Invertebrate category.
Photo: S.C. Harper.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Hopefully by the time you are reading this issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*, we will have left the grey and damp of winter behind and can start enjoying the wonders that spring brings to our part of the world. I managed to escape for part of January and February (to Guyana and Trinidad!!—if you have not been yet, add these to your wish list), but it still seems to have been a long winter. Whether you were able to “escape” or not in the past few months, now is the time to take advantage of the presentations and field trips brought to you by VNHS. Topics are varied and always interesting and of course, any time spent outdoors is better than time spent inside, don’t you think? Don’t miss discovering intertidal creatures, spring blossoms, and more!

I don’t know how many of you might receive the Nature Conservancy of Canada e-newsletter, but we do, and the January issue has fascinating stories about everything from birds of prey in Australia intentionally setting fires to grassland in order to flush out prey; one about iguanas so cold they could not move and so fell out of trees (in Florida!), a hopeful study that shows boat noise-limiting regulations may be helping endangered Orcas, to one rather hilariously titled “Monkeys celebrating Movember year-round”...about a new species of moustached monkey found in Ethiopia and Sudan...find these stories and more at www.natureconservancy.ca/en/blog/january-roundup-conservation-2018.html

Some possible good news (from a January article in the Times Colonist)—there is hope that sea stars (starfish to many of us) are making a comeback on the west coast, four years after a “mysterious syndrome” killed millions of them. The cause of the Sea Star Wasting Syndrome may have been a virus, although scientists have not confirmed this. Sea stars are being found again from California to B.C., but are not out of danger yet. Fingers crossed these fascinating creatures will rebound to healthy numbers again soon.

And for all you photographers out there...get your creative juices going by checking out the amazing images in Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest results at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/2017-photo-contest-winners/> The colours and composition of so many are simply breath-taking. You never know—you might have THE winning photo for this contest in 2018!

Gail Harcombe

A Message from Your Board

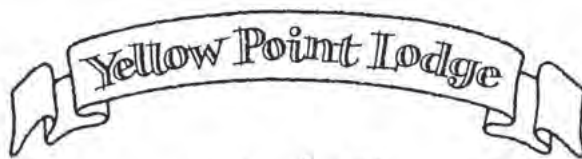
Thanks to a handful of dedicated volunteers, your Society is able to offer a series of monthly meetings that cover a range of topics and are open to anyone interested in attending. We hope you are able to attend at least a few of these each year, and that the topics vary enough that something comes up that is of interest to you. Please feel free to put forward speaker/topic ideas or come forward if you have something you would like to present.

On that note, the March Natural History Presentation coincides with our Annual General Meeting, so we really hope to see you there. As a way to entice you out of your comfy home, we have a guest speaker from the lower mainland presenting on one of British Columbia's keystone species: Sockeye Salmon. Come early (7:00 p.m.) for some socializing and snacks. The business meeting itself is kept to half an hour, so you should be home by 9:30 p.m. See the calendar page 23 for more details.

A recent board decision that members may be interested in: we now accept membership payments for one, two, or five years. This saves some hassle for people whose commitment to the organization is ongoing, as well as simplifying things

for the Membership Director. The new online membership information and forms reflect this change. Another important new feature on the downloadable, fillable pdf membership form: we have moved the signature requirement to the bottom of the first page so it is more obvious. By signing this form (electronically or physically) you can eliminate the bother on field trips about whether or not you have signed the waiver for the year. If your membership is current, you can get right to the business of enjoying the outing without fussing about paperwork. We hope that this streamlines the fieldtrips and makes them more enjoyable.

The board would like to thank the VNHS Bird Records Committee for their volunteer time in putting the latest VNHS Bird Checklist for the region together: Barbara Begg, Dave Fraser, Bryan Gates, Derek Marven, Jeremy Gatten, Ann Nightingale, Rick Schortinghuis, Jeremy Tatum, and Bruce Whittington. Hard copies are available for \$2 at evening presentations, as well as at Wild Birds Unlimited, the Swan Lake Nature House, and the Goldstream Visitor Centre. Based on a suggestion from a member, the new, updated checklist is also available online at www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1447



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**VICTORIA NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY**

**Notice of
Annual General Meeting
March 13, 2018 7:30 p.m.**

**Rm 159, Fraser Building,
University of Victoria**

Evening presentation to follow AGM:

***Sockeye Salmon of the Skeena:
a Century of Change***

**Michael Price shares insights from his
research on the historical ecology of
Skeena Sockeye and the conservation
challenges of this iconic species.**

Come early (7:00 p.m.) to socialize

Local Christmas Bird Counts Turn Up Several New Species

The counts for Sooke (BCSO) and Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS) have been getting well established, so it seemed like this would be a good year to introduce a new format. The zone-by-zone results for Victoria will be emailed out to anyone who participated whose email address I have, and will be posted on the Christmas Bird Count website (www.christmasbirdcount.ca). The count totals for Victoria, Duncan, Sidney/South Salt Spring and Sooke will be presented in an article, along with summaries for each circle. We may be able to add other Gulf Island results here as well in the future.

Victoria—December 16, 2017—Ann Nightingale

The 2017 Victoria Christmas Bird Count took place on December 16th, with relatively cooperative weather. Three boats got on the water and we once again set a participation record with 265 counters out in the field. Our feederwatch counters dropped below 50 again, so we've got a new strategy in the works for next year to try to entice more reports.

Our total of 84,517 was the highest number of individuals reported since 2016. The species total of 144 was the top in Canada again this year, much to the chagrin of our friendly rivals in Ladner. Two new species, Great Egret and Chipping Sparrow, both found in the Martindale area, were added to our cumulative list.

Given the high number of individuals, it's not surprising that a number of species hit record high totals. It was definitely a surprise that fifteen species did so! They were Canada Goose (7239/old record 6972), Wood Duck (234/219), Gadwall (307/170), Anna's Hummingbird (1139/1063), Surfbird (159/78), Great Egret (1/0), Barred Owl (16/13), Northern Flicker (689/661), Steller's Jay (702/659), Common Raven (463/420), Common Redpoll (92/1), White-winged Crossbill (2/1), Chipping Sparrow (1/0), Savannah Sparrow (118/112), and White-crowned Sparrow (478/432). Looking at these results, you might get the idea that all is well with winter birds in the region. However, 48 of the 144 species were below 25% of their previous highs. Big misses included Eurasian Skylark (for the second consecutive year), Sanderling, Tundra Swan, and Townsend's Warbler. One thing is certain, the "birdscape" is changing!

Rarities included Common Redpolls (quite common this year), Chipping Sparrow, Great Egret, and White-winged Crossbill. On the water, Cassin's Auklet was a highlight for all three teams. The two rarest birds for our area avoided us, though. It turns out that a Tennessee Warbler (4th documented record for Victoria) and a Lesser Goldfinch (first record for the Victoria Checklist area, with two prior records in Shirley, outside the boundaries) had been coming to feeders in the upper Quadra neighbourhood of Rogers Farm since early December. Although only the warbler made it into count week (due to photos taken during that time), many birders got to see



these two species thanks to the hospitality of Susan Harper and her neighbours.

Many thanks to everyone who participated! I hope you all had a great time and will be back for next year's count on Saturday, December 15. Once again, the zone leaders made my job easier by having all their folks on the right track. I am most grateful for your help! Thanks also to Thomas Ovanin, Evelyn and Don Spencer, and Purnima Govindarajalu for putting everything together for our post count.

Sidney/South Salt Spring—December 17, 2017—Daniel Donneck

The Sidney / South Salt Spring Island count was held on 17 December 2017, so the day after the Victoria count. I am especially grateful to those counters who got up early, despite having done so the day before, and made their way to their prearranged count zones or to the Panorama Rec Centre for their assignments by 8 am on a less than average day. There was drizzle in the morning and there was a stiff southeasterly breeze threatening at least one of our three boat parties, who nearly canceled going out of Sidney, but overall it all turned out o.k. The drizzle stopped or slowed down in most zones that day and so did the wind. We had cloud cover the entire day. Some people got up even earlier to go owling with a nice reward being a Northern Pygmy Owl and a Barred Owl. Great Horned Owl was missed on count day but heard during count week.

Most of our count zone is actually water, so being able to get out with boats is essential for an accurate estimate of the birds in our count circle. Parks Canada sponsored a boat again for the fourth year in a row which managed to get out to part of Sidney and Cordova Channel, Sidney Island Spit, some of Haro Strait, Moresby and Shute Passage, as well as south Portland Island, where the only snipe was seen in the count circle. One boat managed to get around the little Islands to the north east of Swartz Bay Ferry terminal finding the Greater



White-fronted Geese among other goodies. A third boat ventured north from Brentwood Bay covering much of Saanich Inlet and Satellite Channel finding large numbers of eagles soaring near Separation Point.

On the water, we smashed our previous high count for Ancient Murrelets with a total of 731 (previous high of 106 in 2011).

On land we set an incredible number of records with two new birds for the count circle: Barn Swallow and Rusty Blackbird as well as many high counts:

- 87 Trumpeter Swans (up from 70 in 2016)
- 18 Greater White-fronted Geese (up from 7 in 2016)
- 191 Hooded Mergansers (up from 151 in 2016)
- 27 Red-throated Loon (up from 10 in 2016)
- 186 Bald Eagles (up from 99 in 2014)
- 1114 Mew Gull (up from 660 in 2011)
- 262 Anna's Hummingbird (up from 261 in 2014)
- 196 Northern Flicker (up from 194 in 2016)
- 803 Chestnut-backed Chickadee (up from 760 in 2011)
- 62 Brown Creeper (up from 50 in 2011)
- 6 Common Redpoll (up from 1)
- 1 Barn Swallow (first record for BCSS)
- 2 Rusty Blackbirds (first record for BCSS)

There are also declines. Even though the SSCBC is a relatively young count circle with 14 years of Data, it is apparent that some birds like Greater Scaup or Skylark are becoming harder to find and have not been recorded this year. Gone seem the days were rafts of hundreds of Western Grebes (thousands by some accounts) staged in Saanich Inlet. We found 17 this year. Record low counts:

- 7 Mute Swan (down from 12 in 2012)
- 27 Green-winged Teal (down from 40 in 2007)
- 12 White-winged Scoter (down from 21 in 2015)
- 0 Greater Scaup (seen in 12 out of 13 previous counts)
- 0 Skylarks (seen in 12 out of 13 previous counts)

0 Savannah Sparrow (seen in 12 out of 13 previous counts)
83 house finch (down from 165 in 2013)

A great thanks to all the zone leaders, boat drivers, field counters and feeder watchers. This count would not be possible without you.

Sooke—December 28, 2017—Matt Cameron

On December 28, about forty of the toughest birders around descended on the Sooke area for the Christmas Bird Count. The weather was miserable. Temperatures were cool, the rain was relentless, and it is possible that the sun never came up. For most the birding was slow. One birder hiked for several hours only to find four birds. Nevertheless, good efforts were put in by all zones and some good birds were found. Most notable being the Bullock's Oriole in Metchosin and Snowy Owl off East Sooke Park.

The Sooke Count's final species tally was 100 species, which is less than in previous years but good given the conditions. Much gratitude is deserved by the hard-as-nails birders who sacrificed the quintessential eat-soup-and-hang-out-by-the-fire day to stand in the rain and count birds.

Duncan—Jan 1, 2018—Derrick Marven

This year we had great weather with no rain or snow, the temperature early in the day was a little nippy but by mid-day had warmed up nicely.

We had 118 species seen with some rare sightings. This is our highest species total since 2007. The Northern Mockingbird obliged by staying around for more than a year, one wonders if will last out to next years count. A Bohemian Waxwing was found in a flock of it's smaller cousins the Cedar Waxwing along Maple Bay Road in a Holly farm, this is the second year running for us of this rare species for Vancouver Island. A flock of 21 Common Redpolls delighted the group counting in Cowichan Bay. It appears that this species has made a major influx this winter onto Vancouver Island with sightings at many locations.

Our overall count found 22,032 birds, this was slightly up from last year, though sadly still well below our average.

We had around 35 people out counting and another 10 watching their feeders. It appears that the flu bug knocked our participants down this year as it ravaged the lower island.

The whole of Somenos Marsh was still frozen, dragging the duck number down; surprisingly Quamichan Lake stayed open but lacked large numbers of ducks with not many Ruddy Ducks this year, this following on from getting skunked last year by this lovely little diving duck. Our count had established itself as the highest count in Canada for Ruddies but now we are an also ran.

Below are just some of the highlights by groups of birds.

Waterfowl Most dabbling duck numbers were down with not many Green-winged Teal or Northern Pintail, we did manage to find two Eurasian Wigeon among the ever-diminishing American Wigeon. Bufflehead numbers crashed with less than half our normal count. Lesser Scaup numbers were way down with the Sewage lagoons have the lions share.

We did well for loons although their numbers remain low from many years ago.

Hawks & Eagles This year saw a record number of Coopers Hawks with 20 recorded. Eagles were average and we only had two Northern Harriers, which is low. They seemed to have vacated our area big time this year; we need more vermin. Only one American Kestrel was surprising as the swan and goose people seem to find them every week. Other falcons did well with five each of Merlin and Peregrines.

Shorebirds This was a big disappointment with just four Killdeer and nine Black Turnstones. On the bright side we had 16 Wilson's Snipe with one lucky group finding a nice flock.

Gulls Gone are the days of major numbers found on our count. Mew Gull number went up nicely and a single California Gull and a 1st winter Glaucous Gull were found. 82 Bonaparte's Gulls were found between us and Saltspring and 3 Ring-billed Gulls made up the numbers.

Owls Not bad for owls with eight found, a Barn Owl was nice and so was a Short-eared Owl.

Hummingbirds and Woodpeckers Anna's Hummingbirds went up from last year and the woodpeckers were around the same, although still low from past years.

Shrikes and Corvids Northern Shrike set a record with 9 found and Common Ravens were right on average. Northwestern Crows on the other hand dropped drastically, not sure what cause this but the large late afternoon flocks of yesteryear are no more.

Chickadees, Wrens and Kinglets This is where our numbers tumbled with low counts across the board for all species. Brown Creepers were absent from many lists.

Thrushes and Starlings Robins, Varied Thrush and Starlings were all in low numbers. Varied Thrush go up and down each count; this is two years running of low numbers. One Hermit Thrush was had.

Sparrows Here the numbers went up a bit with reasonably good counts of most species and a Swamp Sparrow and two Lincoln's were nice additions. It is strange the way the Lincoln's Sparrow which were so abundant just before Christmas appeared to have left.

Blackbirds Red-winged Blackbirds continue to drop in our area although the Brewer's are stable and came through with a good average count. We did have a Western Meadowlark for the count week and I know for certain they were out there on count day, must try to encourage the counters to paddle out in those wet fields.

Finches Most finches were right on average, although Pine Siskins took a major hit. This little finch is so irruptive some years and absent in others. The Common Redpolls were a great find and added nicely to our species count.

Lastly **House Sparrows** Their numbers continue low from three to four years ago when we had record numbers, maybe the record Coopers Hawks have played a part in this.

Overall a great count with happy faces all around at the roundup where we were spoiled rotten by the ladies with lots of food and hot drinks. Big thanks to all for their help, and we will hopefully see you all again next year.

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Full results for all circles, including weather, effort, and participation are available at

<http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation>

cw=Count Week

	Victoria (BCVI)	Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS)	Sooke (BCSO)	Duncan (BCDU)
Brant		23	7	
Snow Goose	4	1		1
Greater White-fronted Goose	105	18		3
Cackling Goose	709	3	25	16
Canada Goose	7239	2170	530	2290
Mute Swan	1	7	3	4
Trumpeter Swan	141	87	2	861
Tundra Swan				4
Wood Duck	234			51
Northern Shoveler	89			116
Gadwall	307			24
Eurasian Wigeon	14	7	1	3
American Wigeon	3841	1974	282	1783
Mallard	5582	881	291	1469
Northern Pintail	661	1		825
Green-winged Teal	771	27	3	325
Canvasback	20			
Ring-necked Duck	253	9	96	269
Greater Scaup	13		33	143
Lesser Scaup	173	4		457
Harlequin Duck	202	90	36	
Surf Scoter	630	441	319	112
White-winged Scoter	139	12	99	1
Long-tailed Duck	325	37	6	
Bufflehead	1984	1539	564	577
Common Goldeneye	287	367	85	272
Barrow's Goldeneye	37	130	35	177
Hooded Merganser	487	191	102	107
Common Merganser	632	282	132	948
Red-breasted Merganser	599	1148	180	106
Ruddy Duck	10			27
California Quail	131	39	70	167
Ring-necked Pheasant	1			
Pied-billed Grebe	39	8	6	25
Horned Grebe	518	219	108	82
Red-necked Grebe	193	12	59	55
Eared Grebe	1			
Western Grebe	12	17	117	21
Rock Pigeon	979	159	89	197
Eurasian Collared-dove	186	91	2	73
Mourning Dove	67	1		
Anna's Hummingbird	1139	262	122	151
Virginia Rail	6			1
American Coot	1148		1	105
Black Oystercatcher	112	43	98	
Black-bellied Plover	145	43		
Killdeer	76	31	4	4
Black Turnstone	327	48	107	9

	Victoria (BCVI)	Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS)	Sooke (BCSO)	Duncan (BCDU)
Surfbird	159	7	4	
Sanderling	0	17		
Dunlin	137	186		
Wilson's Snipe	24	1	1	16
Spotted Sandpiper	4	2		
Greater Yellowlegs	7			
Common Murre	1332	84	5	
Pigeon Guillemot	156	112	14	
Marbled Murrelet	76	46	6	27
Ancient Murrelet	1126	731		
Cassin's Auklet	3			
Rhinoceros Auklet	4	3	1	
Bonaparte's Gull				82
Mew Gull	2809	1114	239	779
Ring-billed Gull	2			3
Western Gull	5	1	2	
California Gull	13	1		1
Herring Gull	2	2		3
Iceland Gull	136	22	21	96
Glaucous-winged Gull	4564	1525	535	1259
Glaucous Gull				1
Red-throated Loon	21	27	10	8
Pacific Loon	173	67	42	37
Common Loon	50	29	33	19
Brandt's Cormorant	718	287	25	8
Double-crested Cormorant	583	201	180	119
Pelagic Cormorant	246	466	92	13
Great Blue Heron	106	16	24	38
Great Egret	1			
Turkey Vulture	9			
Bald Eagle Adult	164	78	28	158
Bald Eagle Immature	53	31	17	92
Bald Eagle Unaged	18	77	11	
Northern Harrier	6	2		2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	14	6	1	2
Cooper's Hawk	42	9	8	20
Red-tailed Hawk	50	15	8	22
Golden Eagle	3			cw
Barn Owl	1			1
Snowy Owl			1	
Western Screech-Owl	1			
Great Horned Owl	21	cw		5
Northern Pygmy Owl	3	1		
Barred Owl	16	1	1	1
Short-eared Owl	0			1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1			
Belted Kingfisher	40	29	11	19
Red-breasted Sapsucker	25	10	4	8

Full results for all circles, including weather, effort, and participation are available at

<http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation>

cw=Count Week

	Victoria (BCVI)	Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS)	Sooke (BCSO)	Duncan (BCDU)
Downy Woodpecker	195	30	14	30
Hairy Woodpecker	26	10	3	6
Northern Flicker	689	196	130	103
Pileated Woodpecker	38	9	1	4
American Kestrel	6	5		1
Merlin	16	5	5	8
Peregrine Falcon	9	6	1	6
Northern Shrike	7	1		9
Hutton's Vireo	4	6		1
Steller's Jay	702	189	123	168
Northwestern Crow	6447	421	107	202
Common Raven	463	168	76	229
Horned Lark		1		
Barn Swallow		1		
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	2439	803	295	418
Bushtit	1386	273	30	160
Red-breasted Nuthatch	438	64	14	52
Brown Creeper	158	62	45	14
Pacific Wren	263	99	90	38
Marsh Wren	49	2	2	6
Bewick's Wren	291	62	8	48
American Dipper	5		3	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	918	454	325	115
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	259	91	35	65
Mountain Bluebird	1			
Townsend's Solitaire	1			
Northern Mockingbird				1
Hermit Thrush	10		14	1
American Robin	3634	921	875	338
Varied Thrush	317	62	150	60
European Starling	5110	1734	675	1186
Bohemian Waxwing				1
Cedar Waxwing	323	37		93
American Pipit	1			
House Sparrow	1926	219	77	492
Evening Grosbeak	12			9
House Finch	667	83	28	102
Purple Finch	51	66	6	21
Common Redpoll	92	6		21
Red Crossbill	16	1		37
White-winged Crossbill	2			
Pine Siskin	664	149	937	73
American Goldfinch	57	2	2	
Spotted Towhee	1085	436	147	309
Chipping Sparrow	1			
Savannah Sparrow	118			
Fox Sparrow	819	273	127	201
Song Sparrow	849	243	95	195

	Victoria (BCVI)	Sidney/South Salt Spring (BCSS)	Sooke (BCSO)	Duncan (BCDU)
Lincoln's Sparrow	96	2	1	2
Swamp Sparrow	2			1
White-throated Sparrow	4	1	1	
White-crowned Sparrow	478	101	18	87
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1764	440	272	400
Dark-eyed Junco	4847	1574	841	1296
Western Meadowlark	44	27	1	cw
Bullock's Oriole			1	
Red-winged Blackbird	512	75	283	249
Brown-headed Cowbird	15			3
Rusty Blackbird		2		
Brewer's Blackbird	451	375	441	281
Tennessee Warbler	cw			
Orange-crowned Warbler	2			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	6			6
Wilson's Warbler	1			
Common x Barrow's Goldeneye.	1			
Western x GWGU	11		19	
Herring x GWGU	1		7	
Slate coloured Junco	1			
Common/Red-Breasted Merganser	9			
Unidentified shorebird	4	100		
Unidentified alcid	1			
Unidentified murrelet	10	5		
Unidentified grebe	2			
Unidentified sparrow	14			82
Unidentified duck			50	
Unidentified goldeneye	1	93		
Unidentified cormorant	173	69	9	
Unidentified loon	19			
Unidentified finch	1			
Unidentified scap	1			
Unidentified gull	1989	319	270	101
Total individuals	84517	26001	11592	22032
Total species	144	114	100	118



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Kechika Wild

The sun was sinking below the ragged mountain peaks,
bathing the valley below in a warm golden glow.

A light wind was drifting up the steep valley slopes,
caressing the shivering saffron grasses and the silvery willows
who were shimmering against a crimson sky.

Below, the river was lazily meandering, sparkling in the dying
light,
past dark spruces and emerald oxbows.

A moose was feeding mid-calf in a crescent-shaped slough,
water and green grassy ribbons dripping from its mouth.

Time had stopped as I stood entranced above the valley floor.

Mysterious chemical pathways were engraving in my mind,
for decades to come, this time, this place where I had come to
be
and where a part of me still is, all senses tingling, in awe,
overwhelmed by the beauty and wildness of this untamed
world.

Louise Goulet, September 2009

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Volunteers give a hoot!

By HAT Volunteer, Eric Grace, in collaboration with HAT Staff



Habitat Acquisition Trust volunteers and staff get ready to head out to survey for Western Screech Owls.
Photo: HAT.

When February arrives, dozens of volunteers will drive to wooded areas in and around Victoria at dusk and stay out late, listening. They are part of a project launched in 2015 by the Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) to monitor numbers of the endangered coastal subspecies of Western Screech Owls. February to April is the birds' breeding season, and the volunteers will be listening for their distinctive courtship calls in areas where they have been known to nest in the past, or have been recently reported.

Listening for owls at night is labour-intensive, but it is a labour of love for HAT volunteers and staff. In 2016, over 40 volunteers spent a total of 54 hours and travelled 60 km of survey route to discover just 4 territories where the owls were active. Last year, they got some help from technology. Automated recording units (ARUs) were placed at likely spots, with microphones programmed to turn on at sunset and off at midnight. The sound files they collected were analyzed by computer and helped identify two additional territories for the rare owls. The ARUs allow HAT to do surveys without disturbing the endangered owls.

While it can be exciting to see and hear Western Screech Owls, it's best to leave these encounters to chance. HAT urges the community not to disturb the owls by doing playbacks and to avoid visiting known nest sites, as these actions can cause unnecessary stress and lead the owls to expend their precious energy on defending their territory against non-existent competitors.

Once quite commonly heard in the Greater Victoria region, Western Screech Owls numbers have fallen by over 90% in

the last 10 years. There are several reasons. Habitat changes have led to an increased population of Barred Owls, which have displaced their smaller cousins. Free-roaming outdoor cats not only kill owls but their prey food of small rodents and birds. Rodenticides may also have an impact and have been found in the bodies of most owls.

In addition to its census activities, the HAT project works with landowners to encourage conservation of suitable habitats where owls can breed and find food. HAT volunteers have also begun building and installing nest boxes for owls that can be monitored in future years to gauge the success of the program. Already, two of these boxes have become home to breeding Western Screech Owl pairs, which is encouraging. In January 2018, HAT is hosting an owl monitoring training session with local Scouts, who will learn to assess nest box use at their very own Camp Barnard. **Anyone wanting to become a citizen scientist—by listening for hoots, building nest boxes, or helping in other ways—is encouraged to visit hat.bc.ca for more information.**

The Habitat Acquisition Trust Western Screech Owl Project is funded by the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program and by donations from people like you. Readers are encouraged to make a donation in support of Western Screech Owl conservation at hat.bc.ca/donate or by calling 250-995-2428.

The Snake Tree

By Alexis Grange, Deep Roots Farm, Yellow Point, Vancouver Island

Photos by author



The full moon is due at midnight. That afternoon, GoldenRose, my friend Noël and I are bent over an onion bed, harvesting and chatting with each other. All of a sudden Goldie breaks the conversation. “Look at the snakes! There are two, oh three gardener snakes!” she says, all excited. We turn around and rush to the fence where we see two snakes disappearing into the bush.

“Have you guys ever seen so many snakes on the farm?” Goldie asks with a mischievous smile. About to reply, we raise our heads and see another long, black, yellow and red body slithering around a branch of the plum tree in front of us.

“Look, there is one in the tree!” shouts Goldie. “And two! Three! And another on the blackberry bush! And one on the ground coming out the onion bed!” we call out, as we spot more and more. We count as many as ten snakes at the same time.

“Wow, this one has a frog in its mouth!” Noël cries out, impressed by the scene. We look down to see the body and legs of a Pacific tree frog in the process of being swallowed by the tiny head of the snake. I reach for my camera and click a few pictures. They seem clear, and I’m excited to have recorded this unusual phenomenon.

“This is the first time I’ve seen so many snakes at one time in my life!” says Goldie, although she has worked on her farm for two years. I squat down to take more pictures, looking carefully around to make sure that I’m not stepping on a snake, or that one doesn’t fall on my head and try to eat me. I haven’t seen many snakes in my life in France, and they still feel dangerous. A minute has passed, and we are feeling incredulous, our minds trying to analyse the weird happening. “What’s going on?” we ask each other. “They are not even afraid of us, they are crawling right beside us”, Noël observed.

I have experienced the power of the moon over nature, people

and animals many times. “It’s probably the effect of the full moon,” I say, in a jolly but serious tone, “The snakes are reacting to it with a small festival!” “I think they are hunting!” says Noël, sounding quite sure of himself. Goldie has no idea. “I hope this is not a bad thing for my garden”, she says with concern. “It looks like a snake invasion. There are dozens of them!” I continue, “I wonder when they are going to stop showing up?”

Not sure about any of our theories, and feeling overwhelmed by the mystery, we stay there observing, like a good audience. Disobeying the law of gravity, they effortlessly float on the leaves of the bush like a bird flies in the sky. Most are going round and up and down, like dancers in a small ballet. Soon we understand that the same snakes are appearing at different spots. They disappear inside the bush and reappear sliding up and around the vertical branches of the plum tree. After five minutes Goldie and Noël go back to work while I stay watching, mesmerized by the scene. I’m feeling that something unique, much bigger than us, is unfolding before our eyes and I don’t want to lose a crumb of it. I’m an observer, but at the same time I feel like touching one. I reach for the tail of a snake passing unworried on the ground, but at the moment of catching it my arm softened and failed to grasp it. The thrill of trying to catch one makes my heart pulse faster, fear and excitement starting to slither inside me like a spicy venom.

“They can’t bite you”, Goldie had assured me earlier, but my mind is stronger than my will and I’m afraid of grasping it.

I go back to the vegetable beds to finish my shift, volunteering one more hour in the garden. My mind gets obsessed with the snake gathering, and the idea of catching one. After I finish working I stop at the plum tree on my way to the house. They are still here; I’m standing shaking in front of the spectacle. I watch for five minutes and then do a quick search on my Smartphone with the words “gardener snake gathering”.

The research shows me that it is usual for Common *Garter* snakes to gather in some places where they will hide for the winter; they usually sleep together in cracks in the bedrock. I find a video of the “Narcisse snake pit gathering” in Manitoba,



the biggest in the world, with tens of thousands of them. The video shows children playing with the snakes. I feel like an idiot. If children can do it so can I! I grab one. It moves violently and immediately clasps hard to the branch of the tree. I pull on its tail, but it's impossible to detach it from the tree. It curves its body and moves its head toward my hand in a terrorizing motion. I pull back my clumsy hand in a rush. My breath is uneven.

I spot another slithering on the bush. It seems curious about me, half of its body hanging into the void in my direction. It looks into my eyes, its red tongue rocking in and out. It's a weird feeling to face a snake looking at me exactly at the level of my eyes. I don't dare to try a catch. Soon another weaves around the first one, like a loving partner getting into bed. Now these two snakes move their heads towards me. Damn it, I'm intimidated! But I'm determined, and I choose another snake to catch.

This one is a good specimen, around sixty centimetres long. I stare at its multicoloured body, visualize myself seizing it, and let my hand grab it for real. It struggles for two seconds before I let it go in the grass, frightened by its crazy movements. Its body slithers across the weeds at high speed. As I grab it again, a straight jet of yellowish liquid flies into the air. My right hand is wet, and a lingering odour reaches my nostrils. This is definitely the famous liquid that these snakes secrete to get rid of their assailants. Goldie had told me about it earlier, but I had forgotten. It stinks like a rotten egg with Indian spices. I keep holding the snake, its head down in the grass, and its tail clasps my finger with an uncomfortable sensation. After fifteen long seconds, it finally starts to calm down. I grasp the snake with my two hands to support its body. Garter snake caught! It is now resting

comfortably on my left hand, while my right hand tenderly holds its tail to prevent it from fleeing. I get accustomed to its soft, moist body, and it almost feels like holding a pet.

Proud of myself, I take it on a small tour of the farm, showing it to my friends. The snake poses for a picture with me, and I smile, realizing that on this full moon day I have challenged one of my deepest fears. I have demystified my belief that all snakes are dangerous.

The video on YouTube says that a good snake population is a sign of a healthy environment. In this case the garter snakes don't bite, so there is no worry. I would like to have held it for a while longer, but after a few minutes it starts shaking its body like a cat that wants to be free. In the next five minutes I'll catch two more snakes and free them.

When I go back to the house my body is still vibrating with strong emotions. I sit on a sofa on the deck overlooking the garden, my urge to catch a snake satisfied, my head filled with incredible remembering and new knowledge.

That midnight, I was once again relaxing on the deck. An odd call pierces the night: "Hu hu hu hu, hu hu hu huuuu." Noël and I look at each other with big eyes. "It's probably an owl", we say. We hear it flying in the nearby forest. Then we hear the sound of dead leaves moving and branches cracking. Something else, something heavy. But this one will need to remain a mystery.

Alexis Grange is a seasonal worker from Chambéry, France. With his friend Noël Vidoni he took the summer off to learn about farming and permacultur, and see Canada's beauty.
grange.alexis@gmail.com



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Medicines from the Ocean

By Philip Lambert, Emeritus Curator of Marine Invertebrates, Royal B.C. Museum

Photos by author



The Green Sea Urchin contains a glycoprotein that inhibits or halts development of some tumors.

I stepped off the stern of the boat into the frigid water. A sharp pain stabbed my forehead as the icy water assaulted my skull—the kind of headache you get when you gulp too much ice cream. After a brief swim to the bow of the boat, my buddy and I descended the anchor line into the depths of Barkley Sound. I kicked against a slight current. Faint white blotches gradually materialized into giant Plumose Anemones as we reached the reef 50 feet down. I sometimes wonder why I endure the discomforts of these cold northern waters. But each time, the colour and diversity of life here rekindles my enthusiasm and the discomforts fade into the background. Few other localities in the world can surpass the yellow, pink, red and lavender patches encrusting every square inch of rock in the surging current.

With my face now only inches away from the bottom, I can see the texture and forms of sponges, sea squirts, and moss animals enveloping the rock. Very few of these organisms are overgrown by other species. The sponge cannot physically remove organisms that settle on it and yet

its surface is clean. The same goes for the translucent blobs we call compound sea squirts. What's going on here? In an ocean full of larval animals and plants looking for a place to attach, what prevents them from settling on top of these organisms?

It turns out that many of these animals produce repellents—a kind of chemical defense. Man has already discovered this phenomenon in land organisms. Most of you will be familiar with the mould called penicillin that kills bacteria. Aspirin (ASA) comes from the willow tree. Almost a quarter of all medical prescriptions originate from plants or micro-organisms. Plants cannot escape their enemies, so they produce toxic chemicals that repel grazers. Many British Columbians will be familiar with the discovery of taxol from the Yew tree of our own rain forests, for treating cancer. One of the arguments for preserving tropical rain forests is the potential for discovering more of these natural chemicals that can benefit mankind. The same argument can be used for preserving the health of marine ecosystems—they could be a source of medicines.



Anticoagulants and anti-inflammatories are extracted from sea cucumbers.

Unlike on land, many attached organisms in the sea are animals rather than plants. Common marine animals such as sponges, worms, sea squirts, hydroids, corals, crabs and shrimp, molluscs, and sea anemones contain chemicals that repel predators. Back in 1983, in a *Wealth of Wild Species*, Norman Myers presented an impressive list of chemicals already isolated from these animals. An extract from octopus relieves hypertension. A Caribbean sponge produces a chemical that protects against certain viral diseases. An enzyme, chitosanase, from shells of shrimps, crabs and lobsters prevents some fungal infections. Didemnin, derived from sea squirts, appears to attack two classes of viruses. It is also reported to double the life expectancy of animals suffering from leukemia. One type of flu virus is resisted by extracts from three species of sea stars. A Caribbean sponge produces a compound (Cytarabine) which is effective against herpes and encephalitis, and treats leukemia. Of one hundred and twenty species of sponges screened for bioactive chemicals—almost half contain antibiotic



The Leopard Nudibranch contains isoguanosine that reduces hypotension and relaxes smooth muscles in mammals.



The Monterey Dorid contains compounds with anti-bacterial activity..

substances. An extract from clams, oysters and abalone called Paolin 1, arrests many harmful bacteria including streptococci. A related agent Paolin II inhibits herpes viruses and reduces some tumours. In a more recent review by Datta et al. (2015), even more useful chemicals have been discovered, too many to list here. To date, approximately 16,000 natural marine products have been isolated from marine organisms. These bioactive chemicals, or secondary metabolites, probably arose by random mutations. Then, because the repellent properties allowed those individuals to survive longer, more offspring could be produced, and a new genetic strain evolved. Their properties block enzymatic reactions, interrupt the cell cycle, affect phagocytosis, and have anti-tumor properties among other functions.

Ideally, once the compounds have been identified, they are synthesized artificially rather than endangering the species by over-harvesting. Humans can thus benefit from the millions of “clinical trials” that have taken place in Nature. This potential storehouse is one of many reasons to preserve biological diversity in the sea. We poison our environment at our own peril. The spread of DDT and PCB throughout the globe, thousands of miles from the original sources, should be proof enough that what we do locally can have global consequences.

Human activities are causing the loss of species at a greater rate now than during any previous mass extinction, even more than during the extinction of the dinosaurs. Humans are the dominant animal on the planet. Unlike previous dominant species, we have the potential intelligence and the foresight to improve our chances of survival. But we must change how we impact our environment, before it is too late. What guidelines should govern our behaviour? Aldo Leopold summed it up this way. “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” Or to put it another way —“if we live as if it matters and it doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter. If we live as if it doesn’t matter and it matters, then it matters”..



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To Rescue a Hummingbird

By David Glenn

We live in a well-wooded area off the West Coast Road on Vancouver Island. A bird feeder and a hummingbird feeder are part of the décor. Two or three Anna's Hummingbirds have wintered here, appearing most days and entertaining us with their games and antics. From my sofa, they are only a couple of feet above me on the other side of the glass.

It was Friday, April 7, 2017. I glanced up. One bird was madly beating his wings and clawing with his feet like he was trapped. I quickly stepped out on the deck, lowered the feeder. It hangs from a string over a hook. I gently put my hands around him so as to support him. He/she? was surely trapped but I couldn't see how.

I saw that his beak was free and open but there was a long pink "thread" stretched from his mouth into the feeding port. His tongue was stuck in the hole. A little gentle wiggling from both of us and he was freed.

I discussed the event with my neighbour. We decided to inspect the unit for a crack or a sharp edge so we took it down and opened it. There were a dozen or so large black ants inside. Mike said they were the biting kind. An ant had latched onto his tongue. We had our answer. I still have three birds so I assume that he survived his ordeal.

I had seen the occasional ant climbing the string but as the feeder is a sealed unit, I gave it no heed. Lesson learned. I shall now work on the ants.

ODDS AND ENDS

New species found...

It seems there are still many things to be learned about this planet we live on...the more we investigate, the more we find... and not just historical evidence, as shown by a recent paper in Mesoamerican Herpetology describing the discovery of what is thought to be a new species of *Celestus* (Squamata: Anguidae) from western Panama. The paper by Lotzkat et al. 2016 (Mesoamerican Herpetology. Volume 3, No. 4), explains the research and discovery of the new taxon collected in the Reserva Forestal La Fortuna, about halfway between the localities of the Panamanian endemic *C. adercus* and the Costa Rican endemic *C. orobius*. The new form is most similar to these two species, but differs from them and all other Mesoamerican in scalation and coloration. Perhaps you will be lucky enough to see one if you visit that part of the world.



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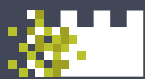
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IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Geoff



A long-time member of VNHS, Geoff Barnard passed away in January. For many years, he could be seen out and about, binoculars and scope in hand, in many of the familiar birding spots around Victoria. He spent a lot of time at Swan Lake, having first connected with Swan Lake as a novice birder. He attended the weekly bird walks around the lake, and when the guide leading the walk was no longer available, Geoff stepped in temporarily. He volunteered for over 10 years, often leading both the Wednesday and Saturday walks.

Geoff understood more about the birds of the Sanctuary than anyone else. Joan Cowley, former volunteer coordinator remembers how Geoff knew just where a certain male hummingbird would perch and always impressed those new to his walk when he would say “Now just around the corner you will see a hummingbird”! He put together the first birding guide for the lake based on the meticulous records he kept of each walk. Jack Sutherland, current bird walk leader, remembers the superb survey made by Geoff which identified the location of spring nests (with maps), the species that made them, and the number of eggs they contained.

He will be remembered for his kind and thoughtful manner, his sense of humor (evident in his puns and limericks), and his love of birds and commitment to nature preservation. He was a rare bird and will be deeply missed.

LETTERS

[Editor's note: in some cases, excerpts from letters received are printed rather than complete letters.]

RE: VNHS Alice M Hay Graduate Scholarship

Thank you so much for the award!! It gave me such relief when I received the notice of the award. This award is so important to me because I am also a mother of 3 kids so although I am thoroughly enjoying my current schooling the financial burden has become stressful. This award allows me to breath deeper.

I received my BSc in Biochemistry and Microbiology from UVIC in 1994. I chose UVIC because it is a beautiful place to be and is also my hometown. I also attended Camosun College as my father was an organic chemistry teacher there. After my degree I worked for DFO at the Pacific Biological Station in the Molecular genetics lab developing genetic stock id programs, diagnostic tests and gene expression assays in salmon. Before beginning my Masters at UVIC I worked at the Centre for Shellfish Research at the Vancouver Island University developing genetic species, and gene expression assays for shellfish.

...
After competing my Master's in Biology I hope to continue working on developing genetic ways of assaying anthropogenic influences on marine ecosystems like climate change, pollution, and rehabilitation programs.

Again I am so thankful for this award, it has helped mitigate my financial stresses and helps me to focus more on my studies.

Sincerely and best regards,

M. Raap

The staff of Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary would like to say a huge "THANK YOU!" for your on-going support of our special Nature programs here at the lake. Your generosity means a lot to all the children and parents who participate and enjoy them.

Thank you so much!!
Sincerely

Denise
Donor Relations Volunteer

My name is Johanna Stewart. I am a student at the University of Victoria, entering my fifth year of a double major program in Biology and Environmental Studies. I am grateful to be a recipient of the VNHS Freeman F.

King Scholarship and the VNHS Dennis and Lyndis Davis Scholarship this year.

Throughout my years of study at UVic, my most treasured experiences have been had through hands-on, experimental education, such as in my course labs, field trips, on co-op work terms, and most recently during a term of summer field courses.

This past summer, I spent six weeks at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre as part of a Marine Invertebrate Zoology course.

...
I also had the opportunity to conduct my own independent study, investigating the foraging behavior of the marine snail, *Nucella lamellose*, in the presence of chemical cues from predatory sea stars.

Following this field course, I spent another 6 weeks travelling through the Salish Sea bioregion as part of the Redfish School of Change

...
This summer's field courses have undoubtedly enriched my education and, hopefully, will help me on my way to building a career in Environmental Science. However, as you can imagine, these types of field courses are fairly expensive to attend, especially given that I was in school all summer rather than working a summer job. The Victoria Natural History Society's scholarships have made all the difference in allowing me to access these opportunities. Your generous gift has permitted me to pursue my passions without having to worry for my financial security.

I am especially grateful to have received this support from a society that plays such a vital role protecting and celebrating natural spaces through your conservation and education programs in Victoria. I have so much respect and gratitude for the work performed by the Victoria Natural History Society, and I cannot thank you enough for the various ways in which you have supported and inspired my personal growth as a student, as a change-maker, and above all, as a lover of nature.

With infinite gratitude,
Johanna

Re: Royal Roads—
Victoria Natural History Society Bursary

I am very pleased and grateful to have received the Victoria Natural History Society Bursary.

LETTERS continued

To have received this support from doing something I am passionate about, being active in an environmental organization means so much to me. I am very excited to continue my studies in the BSc. Environmental Program at Royal Roads University, and feel that receiving this Bursary has encouraged me to continue being active in environmental organizations when I graduate. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Isabel Gasior

Re: VNHS Bev Glover Memorial Scholarship

I am writing to you to express my sincerest appreciation for granting me this award. I felt relieved and honoured to get the news that I had been chosen. This award relieves such a large stress and burden off my shoulders allowing me to focus on my studies.

Completing my undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria has been an amazing experience for me. I came here from Alberta to learn about the ocean, and have learned so much more; about science and math, about how humans act and interact, about the earth, and about me! I have enjoyed being here so much and expanding my knowledge that I am sad to be calling this my last year.

...

After I complete my undergraduate degree this year, I will hopefully move on to graduate school and complete a Masters of Oceanography. My passions are conservations, invasive species, and climate change; I would love to complete a project looking at one or more of those topics in relation to Canadian oceans. I would also love to be a part of mitigating damage to our oceans by helping implement and study Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The ocean is extremely important for a number of reasons including food resources, climate patterns, and sinking excessive carbon dioxide; it is very important for us to protect it and I would love the opportunity to be a part of that.

Again, Thank you so very much for your generous gift.

Best regards.

Ms. Brandy Biggar

Fourth year student, combined Honours BSc Biology and Earth and Ocean Sciences

Hometown: Edson, AB

ANNE HANSEN:

Celebrating 10 years of Oystercatcher art



OAK BAY STUDIO TOUR

April 21 & 22, 2018

12:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

2260 Dalhousie Street, Victoria, BC

Visit **Oystercatcher Central** by appointment:

anitabike@gmail.com (250) 381-7313

www.oystercatchergirl.blogspot.com

BULLETIN BOARD

Birding Banding in Azerbaijan and RPBO AGM

Wednesday, March 21 7:00 p.m.

First Unitarian Church of Victoria 5575 West Saanich Road

Join us for Jannaca Chick's fascinating slideshow presentation on the experience of volunteering at a bird banding station in Azerbaijan, a little-known country located by the Caspian Sea, north of Iran and south of Russia. The Besh Barmag bottleneck, a thin strip of steppe between the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, has been recently identified as a major migration flyway for the Western Palearctic region. There will be snacks and socializing at the start of the evening (doors open at 6:30 p.m.), then a brief AGM prior to the presentation. Free admission. For information, contact rpbo@rpbo.org

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2018

Don't miss it! On until April 2, 2018, this amazing exhibit is once again at the Royal B.C. Museum with a brand new selection of 100 of the most stunning images from around the world. The dramatic, back-lit, large-scale photos include those by some of the world's most respected nature photographers and wildlife experts, but also showcase young photographers' budding talents, and special categories tell stories of the natural world's beauty and struggles. For tickets and information: <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/visit/exhibitions/wpy2017>

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 March 11 and April 8 at 9:00 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 at http://www.rpbo.org/outerbridge_park.pdf

Get yours now! Limited number available...

A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island

(CD and booklet set) by Rocky Point Bird Observatory

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

2018 BC Nature AGM & Conference May 10–13, 2018, hosted by Nature Vancouver

To be held at the UBC Campus in the Forestry Faculty building. A major theme is celebrating John Davidson as B.C.'s first Botanist and UBC Professor. Other interesting presenters will cover birding, marine biology and forestry topics and tours. Nature Vancouver celebrates its 100th Anniversary in 2018. For more information, contact manager@bcnature.ca or 604-985-3057.

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



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.

Jan O'Brien
VICTORIA
Birding, hiking

Samantha Wall
SIDNEY
Birds

Sue Schaefer
VICTORIA
My goal this year is to learn more about birds but all of natural history intrigues me. I volunteer at Francis King and am involved in restoration projects.

James Cuthbert
VICTORIA
Ornithology

Marji and Bob Johns
Brentwood Bay
Paleontology—earth science, general natural history

Jennifer Williams
VICTORIA
All natural history, but especially marine biology

Laura Briggs
VICTORIA
Aquatic ecology, native flora and fauna

Edith Quayle
VICTORIA
Hiking, walking, kayaking

Lynn Beak
VICTORIA
Birds, hiking, natural environment

Janet Chriest
VICTORIA

Geraldine Ellingson
VICTORIA
Birding, golf

Jane Hutchins
VICTORIA
Botany, marine

Burl Jantzen
VICTORIA
All natural history

Michael Marcucci
VICTORIA
Trees, forests, botany and generally nature.

Brian Munn
VICTORIA

Ashlea Veldhoen
VICTORIA
Birding, Natural Resource Management, Conservation



FRIDAY APRIL 27 - SUNDAY APRIL 29
FRI: 7 PM - 9 PM | SAT - SUN: 7 AM - 6 PM

This three-day course, led by renowned bird experts, **Drs. David Bird and Rodger Titman**, is perfect for bird enthusiasts from novice to expert!

Be prepared to discover how birds do what they do; learn

about their fascinating behaviours; delve into their biology to investigate how their bodies work; and last but not least, how to identify the vast array of these feathered marvels.

COST	\$275/person Non Members	\$250/person Members
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For more information or to register, please call 250-479-0211 or visit the Nature House at 3873 Swan Lake Rd, Victoria BC.

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.

MARCH

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Tuesday, March 13

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sockeye Salmon of the Skeena: a Century of Change

The Skeena River is a relatively intact, large, salmon system of immense beauty under persistent threat from large-scale industrial development. Sockeye Salmon populations inhabit every corner of the watershed and have driven the local indigenous culture, diversity, and economy for centuries. Simon Fraser University PhD candidate **Michael Price** shares insights from his research on the historical ecology of Skeena Sockeye and the conservation challenges of this iconic species. Come a bit earlier than usual (7:00 p.m.) for snacks

and socializing. AGM will start at 7:30 p.m., and the presentation at about 8 p.m. We meet in Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Saturday, March 10

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Birding Island View Beach & Saanichton Spit

We will be walk along beside Island View Beach and continue out to Saanichton Spit if the weather is reasonable. There are still a lot of birds on the water as well as good possibilities on land. Brant may be resting at the water's edge at this time of year and we always can hope for a Black Scoter as it's one of the few locations where they are found in the Victoria area. We'll walk back along the trail away from the water to check for a Shrike or maybe a Northern Harrier. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the north end of the parking lot. To reach Island

View Beach, go north on the Pat Bay highway, turn right at the lights at Island View Rd (Michell's Market) and follow that to Homathko Rd. Follow Homathko Road to the end. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, March 11

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Urban Forest—Royal Roads

We usually take our botany field trips to areas where the natural vegetation is the primary focus but this will be one in a series of walks to areas where the vegetation consists of both native and introduced trees and shrubs. We need to be reminded that these bits of Urban Forest are very important to our wild creatures. We will do some identification of the trees that form this critical canopy. The area is also noted as a Heritage Tree Area so we'll point out some of the trees that prompted the designation of this place. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the Cedar Building. To reach that location, turn into Royal Roads University at the traffic light, take the first right that winds down to the stop sign at bottom, then right to the Cedar building. Parking is right and left of the stop sign. There is a fee for parking. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, March 17

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Stroll through Uplands Park and Cattle Point

Commencing at 1 p.m., join **Rick Searle** for a stroll through Uplands Park and Cattle Point. The lilies may be starting to show by then and spring migrants may have begun to arrive. Some of the trails may be flooded, so gumboots are advised. Participants can meet Rick in the Cattle Point parking lot for an hour to 1 ½ hour stroll through the park. For additional information, call 778-533-0266.

Sunday, March 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding in Parksville

Come to see the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn. Massive numbers of sea ducks and gulls follow the herring in close so we can observe the birds feeding on the herring roe. We can also enjoy the beginning of the congregation of the Brant Geese in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area and vicinity. Bring a lunch and dress warmly as it is often chilly by the water. We will carpool and start from Victoria at 7:00 a.m. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes after March 5. First nine people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$20.00 per person. Participants will be limited to minimize number of cars. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.

Tuesday, March 20

BOTANY NIGHT

Ecosystem-level outcomes of invasive species management in Garry oak meadows

Garry oak meadows are undergoing constant pressure by invasive species such as Scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry. Often, it is local community members that spend time each day, pulling these species out to manage the meadow. Beyond reducing invader numbers, there may be ecosystem benefits for the meadow of this active management process. **Nancy Shackelford** describes work that has been done measuring a few of those potential benefits, and testing whether management, or other factors, contributed most to

the likely continuation of our local Garry oak meadows on Saanich Peninsula. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, March 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Birding around Viaduct Flats

Viaduct Flats has an excellent viewing platform to highlight all the water birds that we enjoy over the winter months. We will start there and proceed along near the water for more views of the ducks before meandering into the nearby woods and fields. There are always a good variety of passerines to enjoy. In some years, a Great Horned Owl has nested in the area and the babies may be out and about. Just be warned that the paths may be mucky. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the viewing platform. The parking lot is near the intersection of Interurban and Viaduct. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, March 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

Birding Panama Flats

In early spring, Panama Flats should still have a good selection of waterfowl, raptors and birds of open fields and grasslands. Meet the trip leader, **Gordon Hart**, at Hyacinth Park at 9:00 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. For more information, Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or email him at hartgordon19@gmail.com

Sunday, March 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Exploring Mary Lake Native Trees and Shrubs before Spring Flowers Burst Forth

One of the most exciting new properties to come under protection from development is Mary Lake in the Highlands. The lake sits in the midst of a 67 acre (27 hectare) parcel of carefully conserved and endangered Dry Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem. The property provides habitat for several mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians as well as a diverse array of plant species. Lying between Gowlland Tod Provincial Park and Thetis Lake Regional Park, the Mary Lake property provides an important wildlife corridor between these two large areas of parkland and could provide future hiking trail connectors for humans as well. **Bob McMinn**, who has been involved with the preservation of the natural areas of the Highlands for many years, will be our guide. Check out the Greater Victoria Green Belt Society website www.marylakeconnections.ca to find out how you can be a part of this valuable investment. We have partly chosen this time of year for our outing to challenge ourselves to identify the native shrubs and trees on the property before the leaves give away the plant identities. This is also a unique opportunity for those who like to enjoy the natural surroundings but have difficulty with challenging terrain. There are many gentle trails already in existence but good walking shoes will make your visit more comfortable. We will meet at the gate at 1772 Millstream Rd at 10:30 a.m. Parking is alongside Millstream Rd. We'll walk around till noon when we have been invited back to the lakeside Highlands Nature House. Here we can get warm, eat our lunch and enjoy a talk complete with pictures about the property. Then we'll go out for about another hour's walk. A small donation towards the property would be appreciated, and don't forget to bring your lunch. To get there, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to the Millstream Rd exit.

Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. The property is just past the Finlayson Arm Rd turnoff. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Monday, March 26

MARINE NIGHT

Stories from the Intertidal

David Denning will present a selection of colourful natural history vignettes about the fascinating and often surprisingly complex animals and inter-relationships along our seashores. The talk is a preview of his book-in-progress, *The Secret Seashore: An Uncommon Natural History of Common Seashore Life*. David is resident of Salt Spring Island and a science educator who has specialized in teaching about marine topics for over 35 years. We meet at 7:30 pm in Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Wednesday, March 28

BIRDERS NIGHT

Ethno-ornithology is Way Cool Because...

UBC Beaty Biodiversity Museum's Assistant Curator of Tetrapods, **Ildiko Szabo**, will help us explore the intersect between bird feather identification and anthropology artifacts. This field of inquiry, ethno-ornithology, combines avian identification, avian forensics, cosmology, cultural practices, land conservation, and the 'Rights of Nature' Ecuadorian constitutional amendment. Discover how sleuthing bird identifications can confirm, or can lead to discovering the cultural origin of stunningly beautiful feathered artifacts. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Presentation will follow announcements and a brief break. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Friday, March 30

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Signs of Spring at Last

Come join us on Good Friday. It should be feeling a lot like spring by now with buds bursting open and most leaves starting to appear. A good number of the bulbs will be in full bloom, such as the appropriately named Easter lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*). We will wander around the waterfront areas from Mount Douglas to Oak Bay to check for early flowers. The big-leaf maples (*Acer macrophyllum*) should be leafing out and showing their interesting flowers. The Orange-crowned Warblers like to check for bugs about then and perfectly blend in with the new foliage and flowers. We'll stop by a spot to see the salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) and hopefully we can find a newly arrived Rufous Hummingbird checking out these flowers. These birds arrival time is synchronized with the flowering of the salmonberry and the flowering red currant (*Ribes sanguineum*). The delicate satin flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) will be out in an area right near the water. We'll even try to see if some cactus still grows in the cracks of a huge rock in one of the little known parks. We'll stop at a spot where we can see the rare *Sanicula arctopoides* that has the magical common name of footsteps of spring. It should be showing its almost yellow leaves that turn back to green in a few weeks. You never know what we'll find in a sheltered spot to give us a taste of what is to come. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the base of Sinclair Rd in Cadboro-Gyro Park near the washroom building and we'll go from there. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

APRIL

Sunday, April 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join us on the first of the season's Butterfly outings! This outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will meet at the parking lot by the reservoir on Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road) and decide where to go from there. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the main parking lot just north of the summit. The meeting time may change. Check website closer to the date for updates. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or email him at butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Sunday, April 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Satin Flowers and Birds at Juan de Fuca

Let's start Easter Sunday with a walk around an area where you can look at the early satin flowers (*Olsynium douglasii*) and other emerging spring flowers, as well as enjoy the birds that are telling us that spring is here at last. The shooting stars (*Primula hendersonii*), blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), spring gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*), monkey flower (*Mimulus alsinoides*) and appropriately-named Easter lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*) should be in bloom by now. It is also a great place to check out the birds like the Yellow-rumped Warblers at the tops of the nearby trees. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre (Westshore Parks and Recreation), 1767 Old Island Highway. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to town. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, April 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Tracking Animals

Let's enjoy something different for Easter Monday. It's been a while since we enjoyed sharing one of Gary's adventures in the woods with him. He has a great understanding of the critters that also inhabit these spaces. On this outing, he plans to share some of his knowledge with us so we can understand more of what is around us when we are out enjoying nature. We'll be looking for animal signs such as food caches, rubbing trees, scratch piles, scat, trails, tracks and the like. We'll be talking about their ways of communication, habits, travel routes and their relationship with one another. To optimize our chance of seeing these signs, we plan to cover about 5-7 km over about 6 hours. This will include plenty of time for stops of interests and lunch. It will be a slower-paced hike with possible small creek crossings. No big hills to climb as we'll be using existing trails in forested valleys and gullies where creeks and wetlands are found. These are typically the corridors that animals choose to use. He'll be talking about how animals recognize one another's signs. That's where his dog Shadow comes in. She is an integral part of our hike. But please no other pets. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all-day outing. We will car-pool and start from Victoria at 8:00 a.m. You must be a member of VNHS to attend and must register after March 5 for this event, as the number of participants is limited. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information more to register.

Saturday April 7

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding at Rithet's Bog

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

Sunday, April 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Leisurely Walk up Lone Tree Hill

This little knoll is a treasure trove of spring wildflowers and interesting birds. The trail is a gradual climb but we take it at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. It's also a good opportunity on the way up to practice listening for the different birds. As well as residents, a few of the migrating birds are back on the hill by now. We should be able to enjoy the returning Orange-crowned Warbler singing his heart out. It's a bit early for the full diversity of plant species but it's fun to see which flowers are the early ones in the long progression of blooms that we enjoy in Victoria. We also get to take in the fantastic views from this high viewpoint when we reach the top. Starts at 9:00 a.m. To get to the park, follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Rd exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Rd. Continue to the junction with Millstream Lake Rd. Keep left to continue on Millstream Rd to the park entrance on the right. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, April 10

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Klee Wyck Journal—Adventure Book Presentation

Canadian author, **Lou McKee**, has written and illustrated a beautiful new book about the building of a cozy cabin in the wilderness, reached only by kayak, with 140 illustrations of flora and fauna. Join Lou and husband, **David**, for their presentation, readings and audience discussion about the KLEE WYCK JOURNAL. The presentation is full of the illustrations, stories, photos and videos of the people and adventures involved in the building of a coastal wilderness shelter hidden among old rain forest firs and cedars and dense salal bush. If anyone is interested in purchasing a book, they will be available for sale by cash or cheque (\$29.95). We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Saturday, April 14

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3/4)

Magnificent Wildflowers and Birds at Mill Hill with Options

Enjoy a visit to Mill Hill for an excellent spring show of wildflowers and also listen for the birds as you climb through the varying habitats. Soak up the colours of spring as the progression of wildflowers begins for another year. To avoid the rougher sections near the top, we will also offer a shorter, easier version at the same time. Both routes will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at the Mill Hill Regional Park information kiosk at 9:00 a.m. To get to the park, take the Colwood exit off the Trans-Canada Highway and follow the Old Island Highway for a short distance. Turn right at the traffic light at Six Mile Road just before the bridge, then left on

to Atkins Road. Turn left at the four-way intersection to continue on Atkins Avenue that leads to the park entrance on the right. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, April 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Early Spring Flowers and Birds at Gore and Oak Haven Parks

What better way to spend a morning than in these two delightful Saanich Peninsula parks with their exquisite spring wildflowers and plenty of birds. To allow more people to partake in the level section in Gore Park, we will do this park first. Oak Haven Park has a climb to the summit but it is not terribly strenuous or long. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the entrance to Gore Park. To reach Gore Park, proceed along Benvenuto Dr towards Butchart Gardens. Turn right on Amwell Dr. Follow Amwell Dr to reach Greig Rd. Turn right to the park entrance on the right. We usually walk to Oak Haven from Gore Park and return. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Tuesday, April 17

BOTANY NIGHT

Do Bald Eagles influence coastal plant ecology?

Nutrient flow from ocean to land forms a critical connection between these two ecosystems. Nutrient flow occurs through pathways such as marine fog, salmon, or seawrack, but **Becky Miller** proposes that Bald Eagles are also an important pathway of marine nutrient transfer. In this talk, Becky will discuss how the long-term presence of Bald Eagles influences soil chemistry and whether or not that altered soil chemistry changes the plant community. This research took place on coastal islands in the outer reaches of the Great Bear Rainforest, and the presentation highlights general plant ecology on these islands, discuss working conditions, and show pictures of this spectacular coastal region. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Saturday, April 21 to Sunday, April 29

VICTORIA BUTTERFLY COUNT WEEK

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guides. Contact **Gordon Hart** (count coordinator) at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca if you would like to help out.

Saturday, April 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Pink Fawn Lilies and other wildflower delights along the Cowichan River

We will spend the day exploring various sites along the Cowichan River with the Honeymoon Bay Ecological Reserve as our target destination. The Reserve was established to preserve a showy stand of the rare Pink Fawn Lily (*Erythronium revolutum*) and our visit is planned to catch the bloom at its peak. **Genevieve Singleton**, volunteer warden for the reserve, is a wonderful naturalist and will share her knowledge of the plants, the watershed issues and the history of the reserve with us. Bring a lunch and drinks for this all day outing. Registration is required for this trip as the number of visitors is limited. For more information and to register, please call Marilyn Lambert 250-477-5922.

Saturday, April 21

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Enjoy all that Jocelyn Hill has to offer

Join **Rick** to enjoy the wildflowers and the birds as well. Our goal

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

Sunday, April 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Macaulay Point intertidal walk

We will meet at the Fleming Beach boat launch parking lot at the foot of Lampson St. in Esquimalt at 2:30 p.m. and walk out to the rocky intertidal zone on the point. The footing can be slippery and wet so please wear appropriate shoes or rubber boots. The 2 ft tide should expose many of the common critters and hopefully, some rarer species. For more information contact **Phil Lambert** 250-477-5922.

Sunday, April 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

27th Annual Camas Day

For the past 27 years, the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society and the Victoria Natural History Society have co-sponsored this event in Beacon Hill Park. Each year, there is a wide choice of hourly walks starting with Birding at 7:00 a.m. till early afternoon. Themes such as Birds, Wildflowers, Archaeology, First Nations culture and other aspects of the Garry Oak Habitat will be covered. Final subjects and leaders are not yet confirmed but you can check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca/ now for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, email info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca or call 250-592-6659.

Wednesday April 25

BIRDERS NIGHT

Watching Birds Naked

Are birds really “bird-brains”? Do they taste “good”? Can eagles really see farther than humans? Why are most owls as blind as we are on a dark night? How does a kestrel use ultraviolet light to catch mice? Which birds smell the best? These are just some of the questions that **Dr. David Bird** will answer in his humorous but educational slide show on the sensory ecology of birds. Remove those beautiful coats of feathers and you'll discover that birds have some of the most incredible physical and physiological adaptations to keep them in tune with their environment and with each other. Once you've heard Dr. Bird's talk, you'll never look at birds in the same way again. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Presentation will follow announcements and a brief break. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

Wednesday, April 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Checking out some Wild Edibles

Join naturalist **Sean Rangel** who will show us that there are a lot of edible plants in the outdoors right under our noses that we overlook

every day. Anyone wanting to explore wild foods for forging, education or just fun should have a safe foundation on which to explore. We will learn how to properly identify common edible plants and families as well as common toxic plants and families. Meet at Royal Roads University in Lot P3 at 10:00 a.m. To confirm interest in this mid-week outing, please register by April 18. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information or to register.

Saturday, April 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

Birding Along Lochside Trail at Blenkinsop Lake

Join our leader **Kevin Slagboom** on a walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. This is one of Kevin's favourite areas and he will show us why he enjoys it. We will check to see if migrants such as swallows, warblers or maybe an early Black-headed Grosbeak have joined the residents such as Cooper's Hawks and Downy Woodpeckers. If we try to spot these birds before the leaves fill in completely, they might be easier to see but each year is different. If it's a nice day, we will continue along Lohbrunner Road to the lower reaches of Mount Douglas and walk back south through the park to reach Mt Douglas Cross Road that will take us back to where we started. Meet at 7:30 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

Sunday, April 29

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Special Plants at Cattle Point and Uplands Park

This park has more rare and endangered plants than any other municipal park in the area. Despite the dogs and other traffic, a number of these still survive in this urban setting. **Wylie Thomas** has been working for several years at trying to protect this unique landscape. He'll help us to find some of these special plants as well as help us enjoy the more common wildflowers that should be in full bloom. We will be walking on some rough bits but this is basically a level trail so is an opportunity for those who can't handle the usual Southern Vancouver Island rocky terrain where the wildflowers typically grow. Cattle Point/Uplands Park is on Beach Drive between Oak Bay and Cadboro Bay. Meet at the nature sign by the Cattle Point waterfront parking area at 10:00 a.m. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday, April 30

MARINE NIGHT

Gorge herring, Victorian native oysters, and Seaquaria—towards appreciation of urban marine Naturehoods Marine ecosystems in an urban environment can be very rich, and even core habitats for some animals. World Fisheries Trust (WFT) has been working with native oysters and Gorge herring that are particularly unique to the urban marine ecosystem of the Capital Regional District, as well as installing local marine ecosystems in 37 schools. These native oysters have among the highest levels of larval recruitment on the North American coast and the genetically unique Gorge herring continue to bounce back. **Joachim Carolsfeld**, Executive Director of World Fisheries Trust, will explore how their work on these elements has been evolving, and where they are going. We meet at 7:30 pm in Room 159, Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.



27th Annual Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat

Camas Day

Sunday, April 22, 2018



Save the date so you don't miss this full day of natural history walks! For the past 27 years, the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society and the Victoria Natural History Society have co-sponsored this event in Beacon Hill Park. Each year, there is a wide choice of hourly walks starting with Birding at 7:00 a.m. till early afternoon. Themes such as Birds, Wildflowers, Archaeology, First Nations culture and other aspects of the Garry Oak Habitat will be covered. Check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website **friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca** for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, email **info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca** or call **250-592-6659**

