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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

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# Contents

A Message from Your Board.....	4
Valentine Birdathon: The Tough Got Going <i>By Alan MacLeod</i> .....	6
Vancouver Island Ladies <i>By Val George</i> .....	8
NatureKids News <i>By Stephanie Weinstein</i> .....	10
Where Have All the Good Owls Gone? <i>By Paige Erickson-McGee, Stewardship Coordinator, Habitat Acquisition Trust</i> .....	12
The State of the Marmot <i>By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Marmot Recovery Foundation</i> .....	14
Bulletin Board .....	15
Welcome to New Members .....	15
Calendar .....	16

Cover Image: Fawn lilies. VNHS Photo contest winner,  
Botany/Fungi category. Photo: Neil Boyle..

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Sometimes you get lucky...we were in Calgary for Easter and “enjoyed” temperatures of -9 to -15 C with wind chill...lovely. Lucky indeed we are to live in Victoria, where spring has sprung with abandon. May and June are among the best months for enjoying/exploring nature, and the wonderful variety of field trips offered in these months will give you a chance to do just that! (see Calendar, page 16). Invite a friend on these trips and encourage them to join VNHS!

Once in a while, I “discover” nuggets of interesting info in the newspaper or online. Recently, the Times Colonist had two items (both connected to music) that piqued my interest – and might do the same for you.

The first was about Bowhead Whales. Apparently these enormous creatures (almost 20m long!) sing more than other whale species, and not only that, their singing is “downright jazzier”. Over three years, a single underwater microphone captured 184 distinct bowhead whale songs as they swam in the Arctic. Since there are thought to be only about 200 males (only the males sing), this is a remarkable number of songs. The theory is that each male has a different song, and these likely change with seasons, and very possibly are improvised to attract females. Compared to Humpback Whales (described as the “classical music singers” with long elaborate songs), the Bowhead Whale songs show novelty and variety. Stafford says “These guys are great mimics. They can imitate ice... They make the nuttiest songs”.

The second was about how (some) birdsongs change over time. A study in Costa Rica on Canebrake Wrens (songbirds whose calls are full-fledged ballads, and who are in a small group of duetting birds) found that when two of these wrens communicate, their songs are an elaborate duet, warbling back and forth with such high co-ordination that they sound like a single voice. But a particular pair’s duet was really bad. They sang the wrong responses and screwed up the timing. They were young, still inexperienced at singing, and it showed. This observation proved huge: it demonstrated that birdsong works even more like language than we think — that in order to achieve their “Pavarotti-esque exchanges”, wrens need to learn a specific set of social rules which are similar to what humans might call manners. Fascinating!

For the full articles, see <http://www.timescolonist.com/cool-jazz-bowhead-whales-improvise-when-singing-study-says-1.23253226> and <http://www.timescolonist.com/life/islander/birdsong-gets-sweeter-over-time-study-finds-1.23259175>

Wishing you a Happy Spring!

*Gail Harcombe*

# A Message from Your Board

Eventually even the most committed volunteers in any organization need a rest, so when an opportunity was presented to take a break from being on the board after an unbelievable two decades, Darren Copley did just that! At the 2018 annual general meeting, after serving 10 consecutive two-year terms, he freed up a board position to accommodate the two people who put their names forward to take on some of the administration of the Society. Darren has agreed to continue with the task of membership—truly one of the most chronic tasks of such a large nature club. We are very grateful for his continued dedication to the Society. He has been an integral member of VNHS, serving in a multitude of capacities over the years: president for many years, field trip coordinator, host of natural history nights, representative to BC Nature, representative for BC Nature on the Public Conservation Assistance Fund, and all-around community liaison and one-person “VNHS Technical Support Team”. His long-running role as Membership Director is a difficult one to fill: Darren brought our receipting into the computer age when he took over. Thank you, Darren, for your dedication to the overall success of the VNHS—from both the board and membership!

Charlene Wood also stepped down at this year’s AGM: she is having a baby in the coming months so will be busy with the new arrival – congratulations, Charlene and Zaid! The board thanks Charlene and appreciates her offer to continue invoicing for advertisements in the magazine. Two new board members came on at the AGM: Penney Edwards and Jim Cuthbert. Welcome and thank you for “coming on board”.

Below is a summary presented at the AGM about what your Society did in the past year with your membership fees and on the strength of volunteer time commitments.

## DONATIONS

- Scholarships and Science Fair—The Society contributed approximately \$10,000 to the University of Victoria, Royal Roads University and Camosun College, through scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate and graduate students and through our support of the regional Science Fair competition.
- Swan Lake—Since the establishment of the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary in 1975, the Sanctuary has been gifted thousands of dollars annually from VNHS. In 2017, in addition to our “usual” \$5000, we also gave Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary a public-friendly microscope called the Micro-eye, valued at more than \$4000. It connects to a television so that everyone can see the item being magnified. Years ago, we donated a similar system to the Goldstream Nature House and it has been a big hit with all ages.
- Rocky Point Bird Observatory received \$5000 from the VNHS to be used for expenses related to migration monitoring projects.
- Haliburton Farm Society was offered matching funds totaling \$5000 from the Society for a major project with the ultimate goal of restoring connectivity between the Farm and Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park via a riparian corridor.
- Island Pollinator Initiative, a coalition of organizations to which VNHS belongs, received \$214 to cover the printing costs for rack cards and business cards, which include our logo.

## FUNDRAISING

- Bird Checklist and Book Sales: 240 checklists and 36 books were sold through the Society in 2017, as well as many more through various retailers, for a total income of \$1115.
- Annual Valentine’s Day Couples’ Birdathon: This event has been capably coordinated by Alan McLeod and Jan Brown since it was begun 20 years ago. All of the participant fees go into the conservation fund (see article page six).
- Donations: Member donations to the Society totaled \$3633 in this past year and have been allocated to conservation unless otherwise indicated.

## EVENTS/OUTREACH

- Each year we participate in a number of events, some of which we cohost, including Camas Day—2017 was our 27th year collaborating with the Friends of Beacon Hill Park—and the CRD and VNHS Hawk Watch, which is followed by our BBQ Social, meant for members to feel appreciated and meet other members. Fifty members attended last September for Gourmet hot dogs and cake. Join us again this year in September.
- Our table was set up at numerous other events as well: Seedy Saturday, Ocean’s Day at Gorge Park, International Migratory Bird Day and Fort Rodd Hill Bioblitz. These are great ways to let people know about Victoria’s nature club but also help distribute information about conservation initiatives.
- Without Ann Nightingale we are not sure the annual Christmas Bird Count would even happen, but we are sure it would not be the success it is. Our other annual counting effort, the Victoria Butterfly Count, was coordinated by Gordon Hart. To help build participant confidence and to enjoy beautiful locations in the sun, Gordon led butterfly walks in the region as well.
- Two VNHSers co-coordinate our extremely successful Connecting Children With Nature program: Bill Dancer and John Henigman. These free school programs are designed to get kids of all ages outside and into a nearby greenspace to learn about nature. In 2017, 1825 children of all ages participated in these programs on a variety of subjects.
- 130 field trips were led in 2017, including weekly Saturday (Rick Schortinghuis) and Tuesday birding (Bill Dancer).



Coordination is handled primarily by Agnes Lynn.

- VNHS presentations, totaling 30 monthly presentations each year, were on a multitude of topics from the microscopic to the massive, near and far. These evening presentations are free open to anyone who wishes to attend, so come on out and bring friends.
- Our current membership sits at 543 households (764 adults).
- Six issues of the newsletter come out annually. Currently colour pdfs are emailed to 235 members and the rest receive printed black-and-white copies.
- Your Society is represented or involved in many ways in the community: on committees like the Viaduct Flats Committee and Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, and cross-representation with various other organizations, e.g., Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, Habitat Acquisition Trust, BC Nature, and NatureKids. We also have representatives attending meetings of the Naturehood (Urban Sanctuaries Project) and the Island Pollinator Initiative.
- Other projects completed in 2017 include VNHS business cards for members to hand out when birding or otherwise, a nature photo contest coordinated by Charlene Wood where the winners get their photo on the covers of The Victoria Naturalist magazine, and an updated constitution and bylaws to conform to the changes to the Societies Act, thanks to Gail Harcombe and Ben van Drimmelen.



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# Valentine Birdathon: The Tough Got Going

By Alan MacLeod



The entire field of the 2018 Valentine Couples Birdathon. From left: Gail & Andrew Harcombe; Susan & Daniel Donnecke; Cathy Reader & Warren Lee; Anne-Marie and Gordon Hart; Siobhan Darlington & David Bell; Leah Ramsay & David Fraser; Barb & Mike McGrenere; Agnes & David Lynn; Jan Brown & Alan MacLeod.

*When the going gets tough, the tough get going.*

The old saying seemed especially apt on the morning of February 11, when birder couples were scouring local fields, woods and waters for birds in the annual VNHS Valentine Couples' Birdathon (VCB). David Bell had planned to arrive by air from Nova Scotia on Saturday evening—in plenty of time for the 6 a.m. event start on Sunday morning. Certainly not for the first time, the airline threw a spanner into best-laid plans. David arrived at the airport at precisely 8:48 Sunday morning, almost three hours beyond the event start time. He and his valentine, Siobhan Darlington, were not deterred.

Hutton's Vireo, White-throated Sparrow and Pileated Woodpecker were among the 44 species hauled in at their first major stop, Warrior Point at the northwest corner of Patricia Bay. Forty-four species in just fifteen minutes: a good start. The clear sailing continued. At Viaduct Flats the couple added Canvasback and Virginia Rail. Clover Point delivered Western Gull and Common Murre. Three hours into their very first Valentine birdathon, Siobhan and David added Peregrine Falcon and Ruddy Duck. And what was their final tally? How about 92 species in just three hours birding? Holy doodle!

It was a good thing the 2018 running produced a clear winner: had David's flight landed even later it would have been highly problematic to decide whose names would be inscribed on the Anderson Trophy. *Four* couples tied for second place, all with 68 species. The consensus among those attending the post-count gathering at Swan Lake was that the runner-up award

should go to the couple who had *bicycled* their way to glory: Susan and Daniel Donnecke.

The Donneckes rode 35 km to list their morning's tally. They too had smooth sailing—if we set aside the fact that on a cold morning Susan's hands came close to suffering frostbite. The Donneckes were one of several couples who managed to see the female Mountain Bluebird in the Hunt Road area of Central Saanich. Susan was underwhelmed: 'That's a bluebird?!' In the same area they had six Brown-headed Cowbirds and a gang of fifteen or more Cedar Waxwings.

Leah Ramsay and Davis Fraser began their day in a fashion that will make sense to many readers of *The Naturalist*: in their hot-tub. Which proved to be a worthy tactic: one of the first birds they had from their warm vantage point was a Great Horned Owl. Once towed off and on their way, Leah and Dave had an early Turkey Vulture at Viaduct Flats and not one but two harriers and a Northern Shrike at Martindale.

Anne-Marie and Gordon Hart also had 68 species—didn't everyone? They were understandably pleased with their grebe 'grand slam' at Esquimalt Lagoon: western, red-necked, horned, eared and pied-billed all in the same place. The Harts had a Virginia Rail of their own, at Panama Flats, and a trio of Red-tailed Hawks as well.

The final members of the Club of 68 were Cathy Reader and Warren Lee. Cathy and Warren liked the two Great Horned Owls they found at Viaduct and the shrike they spotted at Hunt Road. Though not countable for this particular event, they were also happy with the dolphins that decided to make an impressive



appearance at Warrior Point just when they were counting Barrow's Goldeneye.

Barb and Mike McGrenere carried out their count just as they have done these past several years—on foot. Starting out from their home at Cordova Bay, Barb and Mike counted their reliable, backyard Red-breasted Sapsucker before listing Eared Grebe on the bay. Eight kilometres later they had plenty of time to check out the offerings at Swan Lake. Eurasian Wigeon and Virginia Rail were among the cooperative birds they found there, bringing the total for their walk to an even 60 species.

Loyal VCB participants Agnes and David Lynn also found 60 species for their troubles. Agnes and David have a bird-rich backyard at Ten Mile Point: they collected five species of woodpecker pretty much outside their own kitchen window—and a Varied Thrush to boot. The Lynns were impressed with the two hundred or so Green-winged Teal they spotted at Roy Road and the Peregrine Falcon they found in the same neighbourhood.

Finishing dead last were the event organizers. Like the McGreneres, Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod simply walked out their James Bay door at six in the morning and started counting birds. Ross Bay Cemetery proved bountiful: there they found a Peregrine Falcon and a single red Crossbill. Just one. The hosts were also gratified by the Yellow-rumped Warbler they found at the birdy rain garden near Fishermen's Wharf. They walked 13 km and listed 55 species.

Gail and Andrew Harcombe showed their loyalty to the VCB. Just returned from an exotic foreign bird adventure, the Harcombes opted not to overtire themselves with another morning of birding but they showed up to contribute their

ten bucks and share in the post-count levity—levity always guaranteed but especially infectious this year.

Ann Nightingale helped the hosts immensely by volunteering to show up early at Swan Lake and look after the set-up arrangements. Thanks go to Ann and to another important player: Don Wuest of Wild Birds Unlimited, Shelbourne Avenue, our loyal sponsor for these many years. Don donated gift certificates of \$30, \$25 and \$20 as prizes. We are all grateful to Don for his ongoing support and encouragement.

The aggregate species count in the 2018 VCB was 111 species. Always of interest to some of us are the birds that were missed. Nobody found Mute Swan, Sanderling, Sky Lark, Hermit Thrush or Pine Siskin.



Siobhan Darlington and David Bell, winners of the 2018 Valentine Couples Birdathon.

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# Vancouver Island Ladies

By Val George

Photos by author



Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*).

Not the female version of our own species. This article is about the three species of butterflies that occur on Vancouver Island that are called “ladies”: the Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*); the West Coast Lady (*Vanessa anabella*); and the American Painted Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*).

What provoked me to write this article was the appearance at the end of the last butterfly season of an American Painted Lady. The butterfly was at McIntyre Reservoir on Martindale Flats. This is a very rare butterfly for Vancouver Island. In fact, for most of our VNHS butterfly group, it was their first record ever for the island; for many it was a “lifer” since they had not previously seen it anywhere.

All three lady species are very similar in appearance. They're medium-sized butterflies, orange-brown and black on the dorsal (upper) side and orange, brown and mottled grey-brown on the ventral (lower) side. The similarity in colour and pattern requires careful observation of details to identify them correctly in the field. The easiest to identify is the American Painted Lady due to its having two large round spots (shown in the accompanying photo) on the hindwing of its ventral side, whereas the other two species have four smaller spots in the same location on the outer edges of the hindwing.

The ladies are also similar in their migratory behaviour; all three species migrate into B.C. in spring and summer from the States. Since we are at the northern end of their migratory range, their numbers in the province vary considerably from year to year.

When they arrive here, Painted and Westcoast Ladies breed in B.C., raising a single brood. The emerging adults do not survive over the winter, as do some of our butterfly species, such as the Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) and Satyr Angewing (*Polygonia satyrus*), and they do not migrate back southwards but simply expire as the cool weather sets in. American Ladies, on the rare occasion they reach B.C., do not normally breed here.

Similarities end there. The two species that breed here use the leaves of different food plants for their larvae (caterpillars). Most butterfly caterpillars have very definite food preferences. Painted Ladies in B.C. use mainly thistles (*Cirsium* sp.); the Latin name *cardui*, in fact, means thistle.

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American Painted Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*).

The caterpillars of Westcoast Ladies feed on stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and garden hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*).

So how likely are you to come across these attractive butterflies? Painted Ladies are the most common in our area. This species is, in fact, "probably the most widely distributed butterfly in the world, occurring throughout most of the northern hemisphere and parts of the southern hemisphere," according to Guppy and Shepard (*Butterflies of British Columbia*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2001). In some years, such as last year, they can be widely distributed on the southern part of Vancouver Island and easy to find. Reliable places to find them in the Victoria area on warm days in spring and summer are the summits of Mt. Tolmie and Mt. Douglas when they are hilltopping. Hilltopping is a behaviour of many butterfly species whereby these insects fly to locations higher than the surrounding area in order to look for mates.

Westcoast Ladies are also regular in our area, though by no means as common as Painted Ladies. They also may be encountered anywhere, but, as with their relatives, Mt. Tolmie and Mt. Douglas afford good chances of finding one or more.

As already noted, the American Lady is very rare here on Vancouver Island. So consider yourself very fortunate if you find one.

We should mention in conclusion that there is another local butterfly in the *Vanessa* genus, the very attractive, red and black coloured Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), but it's not called a lady, so it didn't qualify for inclusion under the title of this article.



West Coast Lady (*Vanessa annabella*).



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# NatureKids News

By Stephanie Weinstein,  
co-coordinator, NatureKids Victoria

Photos by author



(above) Ollie the otter, hauled out with the harbour seals at Race Rocks.

(right) The NatureKids experience bull kelp with Eagle Wings.



**T**he January winds howled, turning Ross Bay into a frothy mess of white caps that carelessly tossed ancient tree trunk driftwood onto the rocky shore.

Cars lined Dallas Road and Clover Point with people looking for a glimpse of nature unbridled. Exciting times for storm watchers. Not so great for whale watchers.

Eagle Wing Tours' fleet of boats had been grounded for days. I was sure that our months of planning was going to have been in vain; more storms were predicted in the days to come. I checked the Environment Canada weather website obsessively, looking for Truth in the whimsical and ever-changing forecasts.

But we were in luck. I woke in the darkness in the wee hours on Saturday, February 3rd, to something strangely different. Silence. No moaning winds through the walls. No rain driving sideways against the windows. I couldn't believe it was actually going to happen.

Eagle Wing had generously offered the NatureKids Victoria Family Club a Coastal Wildlife Tour at a highly discounted rate. Fifteen families- including 25 children, aged 5-12, reserved spots on the 2.5 hour tour on Eagle Wing's Luxury Catamaran, 4Ever Wild, which comfortably seats 50

people. Eagle Wing's staff were eager to offer this awesome opportunity as they are developing education programs, turning their boat into a floating classroom.

All of the Eagle Wing crew—Sydney McCabe, Karac Lindsay, Peter Zelen and Captain Chris Bane, were professional, friendly, engaging, and knowledgeable about all aspects of the local environment-- bird life, algae and seaweeds, marine mammals, the landscape and seas surrounding. They clearly had put much thought and effort into how to make the tour child-focused. Sydney and Karac created a slide show of some common animals that we might see, a scavenger hunt and marine trivia game with prizes, a touch table with baleen and whale teeth, field guides and more. They had binoculars to borrow and extra clothes if needed. Families wandered around the boat, playing the games, enjoying the views, looking for wildlife, and listening to the stories of the crew. Naturalists, situated at the bow and stern, pointed out wildlife and landmarks as we passed by. When we reached Whirl Bay, Sydney, Karac and Peter used



a long pole to pull up some bull kelp. After learning about its growth rate superpowers, we made it into bull kelp bugles and jewelry.

Our main destination was Race Rocks Ecological Reserve, where we were greeted by three bald eagles perched on the rocks, holding court over the flocks of cormorants and gulls. We learned that this is one of the only places in the world where four species of pinnipeds gather: Pacific Harbour seals, Steller's Sealions, California Sealions and Northern Elephant Seals. Dozens of them lazed about, impressively coating the docks and rocks in a moving, trumpeting mass of fur and blubber. We learned that the Eco-guardian has discovered an innovative way to clear a path from the dock to the lighthouse, which is often completely blocked by pinnipeds: the blue wheel barrow. Apparently, the sea lions are not fond of it and they quickly move out of its way.

A highlight of our wildlife sightings was Ollie the Sea Otter. With about a million hairs per square inch, Sea Otters have the densest fur of any mammal, which keeps them warm in the cold Pacific waters. Sea Otter populations were decimated in the 1880s from California to Alaska due to hunting for the fur trade. By 1929, Sea Otters were gone from the B.C. coast. Between 1969 and 1972, 89 Sea Otters from Alaska were translocated to the west coast of Vancouver Island. The reintroduction --along with a hunting ban--was a success; today there are estimated to be approximately 3000 descendants of the original 89 distributed primarily from northern Vancouver Island to Barkley Sound. They are also expanding southward. It isn't clear if Ollie is the same otter that has occasionally been seen around Cadboro Bay, but he has been making a regular appearance at Race Rocks since 2012. Perhaps being the lone Sea Otter among the large population of pinnipeds, Ollie has been taking on some rather unotter-like antics, namely, spending much of his time hauled out on the rocks with the Harbour Seals rather than in the water.

The NatureKids had an unforgettable journey thanks to Eagle Wing Tours. We returned invigorated and inspired. And as soon as we got back to Fisherman's Wharf, the sky darkened and the rains returned.

Eagle Wing is passionate about educating individuals of all ages on everything the Salish Sea has to offer. In their efforts to design an education program, they wish to host more events like this one with NatureKids to get children outdoors and connected with nature! For Salish Sea adventures and inquiries, please reach out to the Senior Marine Biologist with Eagle Wing, Sydney McCabe, at [sydney@eaglewingtours.com](mailto:sydney@eaglewingtours.com).

To help meet the need for nature mentorship, BC Nature and Nature Vancouver formed the Young Naturalists' Club (YNC) in 2000 as a program of Nature Vancouver. In 2006, YNC became an independent registered charity and it was re-named NatureKids BC in 2015. NatureKids BC has since grown to almost thirty clubs across the province, providing opportunities for more than 20,000 children to get outdoors to explore, play, learn about and take action for nature. For more information visit <http://www.naturekidsbc.ca>.



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# Where have all the good owls gone? An update from HAT



By Paige Erickson-McGee, Stewardship Coordinator,  
Habitat Acquisition Trust



HAT owl monitoring—HAT biologist Tania Tripp (centre) installs an audio recording unit with two volunteers.  
*Photo: Paige Erickson-McGee.*

Feelings of curiosity, speculation, and excitement are rampant among owl enthusiasts after the Western Screech-Owl (WSOW) surveys wrap up with volunteers at HAT. Along with the eight transect routes completed and 26 nest boxes installed across the CRD, we have added over 40 deployment stations of Audio Recording Units (ARUs) installed at known or suspected WSOW territories. Automated Recording Units (ARUs) were an additional tool used this year which allowed for non-invasive and more continuous monitoring. The ARU recordings are analyzed in partnership with a generous volunteer at Jasco Applied Sciences, an international consulting firm that has been collecting, analyzing, and assessing acoustic data since 1981. Employee at Jasco Xavier Mouy has volunteered his time to develop a specialized recognition algorithm to identify and isolate owl vocalizations at the touch of a button. The future is here; so long are the days (or weeks) spent meticulously listening to hours of audio recordings to catch a faint glimpse of an owl.

With the data collected we have been able to confirm five of the six territories discovered last year are again active this year. This includes the site where a pair of WSOWs who shacked up in one of HAT's nest boxes.

"I'm so happy about their return and hope that they will

use the boxes again this year. Also confirmed a pair of Great Horned Owls very close to that site" said Tania Tripp, R.P.Bio. at Madrone Environmental, who is providing expertise and scientific guidance on this project with HAT.

Catriona and Tania were also able to confirm a second active territory in Cowichan, only 900 m from the nest box that was used last year. The two of them installed an ARU there in hopes of catching the breeding pair's courtship calls.

Agnes, along with her driver Dave Lynn, described her close encounter during her transect route:

"We had a great night last night on the survey. As we got out of the car, we could hear several Great Horned Owls (GHOW) so we listened for a while and we think there were at least four GHOWs, probably two pairs as we could detect the different calls—Ian McTaggart Cowan taught me the female call many years ago! I was surprised how close together the two pairs were. I noted them as southwest and west of us. We listened for quite a while and they were still hooting when we left. [The owls were] still there when we finished and came back past that same spot. That was exciting enough but when we got to the known WSOW spot, we finally heard a Screech-Owl and it came close up beside us from the west. We stopped and listened. As it was the first one that I had heard in the Victoria Checklist

area, that was exciting. It seemed to be getting closer so we stayed quiet for a few minutes and eventually I saw it fly across the road and down towards the ground, just behind Dave's head. I guess it was trying to find that owl calling! Then it was silent. But that wasn't the end of the evening's excitement.

We went to the next survey point and after about 5 minutes, we heard another WSOW and so we stopped to listen. It continued to call and was at a medium distance from us and I noted it first as northeast. We are pretty sure that it was too far from the other spot to be the same owl and too short of a time for it to get over there. The last surprise was a Great Horned Owl calling very close to us and not that far from the WSOW which was working its way to the south and getting nearer to the GHOW. We heard both of them calling one after the other for quite a while. Finally, we just left them calling as we still had 2 survey points to cover. Very surprising!"

As we continue to deploy ARUs into areas of historic Screech-Owl territories, we hold our hopes high that we will continue to get positive results. This still begs the question: how can we help to increase their population numbers? We know that Barred Owls are voracious generalists, and thrive in developed urban areas around humans, eating Eastern Grey Squirrels, Eastern Cottontail Rabbits, and rats, seemingly willing to take up residence everywhere from the downtown public library to the remaining forest patches, and everywhere in between. Conversely, Screech-Owls tend to avoid urban or developed areas and establish home ranges within intact forest patches of at least three hectares, but up to 58 hectares. Predation from

Barred Owls on Screech-Owls is a concern, as is competition for territory space, food availability, and general lack of cavities to establish nests. However, many questions remain unanswered as we continue to record and analyze audio data. Look out for the new annual report on survey efforts available early May on the HAT website, [www.hat.bc.ca/publications](http://www.hat.bc.ca/publications)

The owl project is in need of more reliable recording units in order to accurately listen for these owls and protect their nesting sites. The new Song Meter SM4 units cost upwards of \$1200.00 + shipping and software. We are asking you to join as an Owl Research Partner by sponsoring all or part of an Owl Recording Station for \$1500.00 each. If you feel strongly about owl research, join us in this endeavour by becoming an Owl Research Partner. Please call Habitat Acquisition Trust at 250-995-2428 or visit [www.hat.bc.ca/donate](http://www.hat.bc.ca/donate).



Owlbox—  
A still image taken  
from a video of a  
female owl nesting  
in a HAT nest box.  
Photo: Tania Tripp.

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# The State of the Marmot

By Adam Taylor, Executive Director, Marmot Recovery Foundation



Anakin at Mt Washington May 2017. Photo: Megan Wilkins.

*Dear Marmoteers, Nature-lovers, Conservationists, and our fellow Vancouver Islanders:*

Last year, as winter approached, we were eager to see our Vancouver Island Marmots enter the relative safety of their hibernaculum, plug the entrance, and settle down for their long sleep. Now, with spring upon us, we wait with baited breath for news of this year's first emergence holes, typically our first sign of marmot activity. We likely have to wait a little longer, as spring in the marmots' sub-alpine habitat arrives later than it does at sea-level. As we ready ourselves for the field season ahead, and it seems appropriate to review the current "State of the Vancouver Island Marmot".

Right now, we estimate there were between 150 and 200 Vancouver Island Marmots hibernating in the wild. These marmots are split between two populations: one in the Nanaimo Lakes region, the other in the Strathcona Provincial Park—Mt Washington region. There is a much smaller colony in the Clayoquot Plateau, and possibly some marmots in the Schoen Lake area, although these later ones have not been confirmed in several years.

The marmot population has come back from the absolute brink of the extinction. In 2003, less than 30 Vancouver Island Marmots remained in the wild. Through hard work, supportive partners, and the perseverance of the marmots themselves, the population is much higher today. Unfortunately, the marmots have not entirely escaped the shadow of extinction. In 2008, budget cuts forced us to scale down the captive breeding program. With fewer marmots to release, we chose to focus on re-establishing marmots in Strathcona Provincial Park, hoping that the larger southern

population would continue its recovery on its own. Alas, that has not been the case. While the Strathcona population has continued to improve, in absence of released marmots, the Nanaimo Lakes colonies have slowly declined. A larger population is needed to be sustainable without our direct assistance in the face extreme weather events and landscape changes that have enabled predators to more easily access marmot colonies.

Recovery is possible, with sufficient resources and time. Population modelling by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) has demonstrated that the marmot can survive on its own with a large enough population. A research collaboration with between the Calgary Zoo and Marmot Recovery Foundation is helping us improve how we support the wild population.

The Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Team, a group of government and stakeholder biologists, has tasked the Foundation with scaling up the captive breeding program again, as well as with making ever better, more strategic, and more effective use of the marmots we release, in order to best support the marmots in the wild.

This summer we will both continue our work of the past 20 years, and begin new projects. We will implement new release strategies, make strategic choices to create more marmots for future releases, and provide more habitat support through restoration, translocation, and supplemental feeding.

The Vancouver Island Marmot can be saved. This species is uniquely ours; it lives nowhere else, and its fate is in our hands. The journey to recovery has not been, and will not be, easy. That the species still exists today is a testament to the commitment and support of thousands of Canadians who have supported the recovery effort. But our work is not yet done.

We hope that you will join us, and the marmots, in the year and years ahead.



Photo: Trevor Dickson.



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## BULLETIN BOARD

### International Migratory Bird Day, May 12

IMBD will be on Saturday, May 12 from 9:00-2:00 at Beaver Lake (Elk/Beaver Regional Park). Once again Rocky Point Bird Observatory are teaming up with VNHS to bring you a great day of bird-related activities. Check the calendar in this issue for info on the early morning bird walk, and the VNHS website or email [rpbo@rpbo.org](mailto:rpbo@rpbo.org) for more information.

### World Oceans Day, June 3

Bring friends and family to World Oceans Day in Beacon Park, Sidney, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., June 3rd. Enjoy lots of free outdoor fun AND free admission to the Centre for the Salish Sea. For more information, see <https://www.salishseacentre.org/events/2017/6/4/world-oceans-day-free-outdoor-event-y8zh8>

### Micro Naturalists

A group of microscope enthusiasts are forming a loose 'network' to share information and techniques, and hope to inspire others to get involved – the natural world at the small end of the spectrum is incredibly interesting and beautiful (or startling!) on different sectors of the natural world. Check it out at <http://micronaturalist.ca/>

### Photography contests!

The **Metchosin Foundation/Metchosin Biodiversity Project** group has put together a new nature photography contest this year. MACCA (Metchosin Arts and Cultural Centre Association) and MF (the Metchosin Foundation)

are partnering to bring you Metchosin, Naturally! Seasons Through the Lens, a photographic contest and exhibition. The exhibition will be at the Arts Centre and the Old School Gallery, 4495 Happy Valley Road, from October 28 to November 10, 2018. The goal of this contest and exhibition is to represent the biodiversity of Metchosin through photographic skills. Over the last six years, several local photographers have accompanied Metchosin bioblitz teams while they found and identified over 2400 local species and working with these photographers has made the bioblitz organizers aware how important artistic depiction can be as a tool to expand local awareness of the Districts unique environmental setting. The contest and exhibition is open to all residents of Canada of any age level. Both amateur and professional photographers may participate. For more information, go to [http://metchosinbiodiversity.com/menu\\_photocontest.php](http://metchosinbiodiversity.com/menu_photocontest.php)

### Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is holding a First Signs of Spring: Early Bird Edition photo contest. Share your photos of spring by posting them on our Facebook gallery. Be sure to check out the gallery often as more pictures are added from across the country. Vote for your favourite too! This year's theme is birds in spring, so be sure to tag your photos using #NCCEarlyBirds. You could win one of six weekly outdoor gear prizes, including a \$1000 VISA gift card grand prize. It's as easy as 1, 2, 3... Get started today! For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/NCCEarlyBirds>

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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 22 new members since the last issue and the following have agreed to have their names published in this Welcome section.

### Elizabeth Drake

Victoria  
*Wildlife, research, conservation, hiking, meeting people*

### Victoria Lord

Sidney  
*Adventures and just everything else in life!*

### Matt Biller

Victoria  
*All things nature!*

### Linda Cheney

Victoria  
*All nature!*

### Bristol Foster

Saltspring Island  
*Everything (all usual suspects)*

### Rob Kremer

Victoria  
*Birding, marine, botany (just about everything...)*

### Barbara and Kurt Lane

Victoria  
*Birdwatching (beginner!)*

### Wendy Lopez

Brentwood Bay  
*Birds especially, all of nature*

### Valerie Ruhe

Victoria  
*Birding*

### Barb von Sacken

Victoria

### Karle Zelmer

Victoria  
*Wildlife Ecology*

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

## MAY

### Friday, May 4

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Birding Panama Flats*

Bonus Friday event! Join us at one of the best spots in the region for shorebirds. Look for plovers (Semi-palmated and Black-bellied), Dunlin, Least and Western sandpipers, and Wilson's Phalarope. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the small parking lot near the playground. Turn off Interurban Road at Hyacinth and follow the road to the end. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### Saturday, May 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Birds, Blooms & Butterflies on Mount Tolmie*

Early in the morning, we have a good chance of enjoying some special spring migrant birds on Mount Tolmie. Expect to enjoy hearing warblers and flycatchers as your reward for getting up so early. Western Tanagers are possible and occasionally a Western Kingbird might show up. After the birds quieten down, we can spend some time checking out the last of the wildflowers. Bring a snack to eat while we wait for it to warm up and then we may be able to see some of the butterflies who enjoy the hot dry habitat as well. Take the turnoff from Cedar Hill Cross Road and park at the main parking lot just north of the summit. Meet at 7:00 a.m.

Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, May 6**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Birding Royal Roads & Esquimalt Lagoon***

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. We should see a good variety of migrating shorebirds and passerines. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the south end of Esquimalt Lagoon by the washrooms. This is about a five-hour walk. Bring a drink and a snack if you wish. Esquimalt Lagoon is on Ocean Blvd, off the Old Island Highway. Contact Ann at (250) 514-6450 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### **Sunday May 6**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

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

Join us on our monthly butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the lot by the reservoir where we will have an initial look for butterflies and then decide where to go from there. The meeting time may change. Check website closer to the date for updates. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or check butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

### **Friday May 11**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Fort Rodd Hill Birds & Blossoms***

Bonus Friday event! We have been invited in to Fort Rodd Hill as volunteers to participate in a bird survey of the property. We have done this previously and this time we hope to add a few more migrants and maybe some residents to our list. Join us at the gate at 7:30 a.m. sharp to sign in and we will wander down to the ocean and through the woods for a couple of hours seeking out the birds. We have arranged this date because we also want to see the Garry Oak Learning Meadow Restoration. The meadow will be a bit past the peak bloom but the camas and other interesting later-blooming wildflowers will still be enjoyable. The staff has taken a previously vacant field containing nothing more than a few Garry oak trees surrounded by compacted invasive grass species and transformed the area into what we believe it looked like in the past, before the military precision of mowing took over the site. The restored meadow is currently fenced to keep the deer and other critters from eating everything. We'll also tour the adjoining nursery where they are propagating a number of rarities, mostly from seed. If you only wish to do the meadow part of the event, meet us at the gate to sign in at 10:00 a.m. sharp. If you can spare an extra hour or two after the meadow tour, bring your gloves and be prepared to help with some weeding or other chores in the garden. The entrance fee for the facilities will be waived as we are volunteers. To reach Fort Rodd Hill, take the turn off the Old Island Highway on to Ocean Blvd as if you were going to Esquimalt Lagoon and watch for the Fort Rodd Hill sign on your left. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday, May 12**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Early Birding Walk on International Migratory Bird Day***

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be joining in with the International Migratory Bird Day events planned for this day at Beaver Lake. We will check out some of the trails and the lakeshore to see what migrants have joined the resident birds in this productive area. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the main parking lot at Beaver Lake. To reach this parking lot, turn on to Beaver Lake Road off Elk Lake Drive (parallels the Pat Bay Highway). There is a large park sign at this intersection. Afterwards you may wish to join in the other drop-in events planned for the day from 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. See more details elsewhere in the Naturalist or on the VNHS web site. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information on the early bird tour.

### **Sunday, May 13**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Scramble up the Back of Mount Douglas***

Join us in birding and botanizing on Mount Douglas. If the weather is sunny, it is also a great spot for butterflies. We should get a good number of warblers. Also Western Tanager, House Wren and Chipping Sparrow are likely. We can always hope for a Lazuli Bunting singing above us in the trees as we slowly climb to the top. The late wildflowers such as woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) should still be good as well. Please note the trail is steep but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot off Blenkinsop Road just north of Lohbrunner Road. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Friday, May 18**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Birding Witty's Lagoon***

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

### **Saturday, May 19 to Sunday, May 27**

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, May 19**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Exploring Botanical Beach***

At this time of year at low tide, this geologically fascinating beach shows off its vast crystal-clear tide pools teeming with algae and marine invertebrates. Please wear appropriate foot wear for scaling wet rocks and slippery seaweed. A walking stick for balance may be helpful. The hike down from the pay parking lot takes about 15 minutes. Bring drinks and a lunch



to eat on the beach. To make the most of the low tide, meet at Helmcken Park & Ride at 8:00 a.m. to car pool. It is about a two-hour drive. Contact Phil at (250) 477-5922 or plambert at pacificoast.net for more information.

### **Saturday, May 19**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Birding Mount Newton***

Join us on this leisurely loop on the south side of Mount Newton looking for spring migrants in this area of mixed forest and large rural lots. This is a great area to see Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Black-throated Gray Warblers and Mourning Doves. Take East Saanich Road to Haldon Road. Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton Heights at 7:00 a.m. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, May 20**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Birding the Power Line off Stewart Mountain Road***

Join us in this very productive birding area. This trail, mostly under power lines, is a great place to see Warblers, Vireos and Flycatchers. This is the most reliable spot for MacGillivray's Warbler. Take the Trans-Canada Highway to the Millstream Road exit. Follow signs to the Highlands and you will be on Millstream Road. Turn right at Stewart Mountain Road and meet at the mailboxes at 7:00 a.m. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Monday, May 21**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

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

### **Friday, May 25**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Goldstream Heights—Higher Elevation Birding***

Bonus Friday event! We will go up the Malahat to the area high above Shawnigan Lake to see what birds are enjoying the wide open spaces in an area that has been clear-cut a number of years ago. Each year as small trees and shrubs come back, so do more birds. It's one of the few spots that you may hear or see both species of grouse that we have locally. Also lots of the migrant flycatchers, vireos and warblers lurk in the bushes. Several different sparrows should be singing everywhere. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday, May 26**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Observatory Hill (Little Saanich Mountain) Birding Walk***

Join us on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain. Flycatchers, Western Tanagers, House Wrens and a variety of woodpeckers are some of the birds we might find. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the bottom of the road leading up the mountain (5071 West Saanich Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, May 27**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Urban Forest Walk—University of Victoria***

This will be another 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. The Centre for Forest Biology has produced a walking tour of the campus (<http://web.uvic.ca/forbiol/sites/default/files/Treewalk.pdf>) that we will use as a guideline for our tour. Some plants are in the Finnerty Gardens but many are simply trees that enhance the campus. The UVic campus is also noted as a Heritage Tree Area so we'll point out some of the trees that prompted this place to be so designated. Meet at 1:00 p.m. in parking lot E, off the Ring Road. No fee for parking on Sunday. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, May 27**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Birding Calvert and Logan Park***

We will be birding in the area around Trevlac Pond and part of Prospect Lake, then back through Logan Park. Meet on Trevlac Place (off Hector Road) at 7:30 a.m. We will also explore a relatively newly acquired Saanich property, Goy Park, which has a small pond. Maybe we'll hear the young Barred Owls hissing in the woods on the final part through Logan Park. Look for the brown park hiking post on Trevlac Place as our starting point. Park along one side of Trevlac but don't block the end of the cul-de-sac. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

## **JUNE**

### **Saturday, June 2**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

#### ***Birding the Power Lines & the Ponds at the Hydro Substation near Francis King Park***

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

### **Sunday, June 3**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)**

##### ***Birding Viaduct Flats***

Join us in birding Viaduct Flats and the surrounding area, including up Broadcast Hill. Not many waterbirds are still around but lots of migrant passerines are flitting about in the trees as well as the residents. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the viewing stand near the parking lot at the foot of Viaduct Ave. off Interurban Rd. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, June 3**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)**

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

Join us on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the lot by the reservoir where we will have an initial look for butterflies and then decide where to go from there. The meeting time may change. Check the website closer to the date for updates. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

### **Saturday, June 9**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)**

##### ***Birding Jordan River Area***

Join us for a trip to Jordan River. It has been a hot spot for rarities in the spring and fall and it is a great place to hear breeding Fox Sparrows singing in the spring. As well as beat the bushes for all the fresh migrants, we will scan the ocean and the shoreline. We never know what might be out there. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Bring a lunch. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, June 10**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)**

##### ***Cowichan River Footpath***

This is an area well known to hikers and fisherman. This is a popular hiking trail but we will slow down to enjoy the birds and flowers along this scenic waterway. We will be investigating the area between Skutz Falls and Marie Canyon. A challenge to find along the route is the rare California tea plant (*Rupertia physodes*). There is also a small segment of Garry oak meadow where we hope to see some of the late spring wildflowers but another highlight of this trail is the abundance of plants found in the "Oddballs" section of the field guide by Pojar & McKinnon. This includes ground cones (*Boschniakia hookeri*) and candy sticks (*Allotropa virgata*). The route is reasonably level but there are many trees roots crisscrossing the first half of the route that some people may find challenging to walk on. Wear sturdy footwear and you might wish to bring a walking stick. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all-day outing. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday, June 16 to Sunday, June 24**

#### **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, June 16**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)**

##### ***Duncan Area Butterflies & Birds***

We will venture farther afield to the Duncan area this week to do some birding and perhaps enjoy some of the area's butterflies. The morning will mostly be spent birding, starting with an enjoyable walk along the productive Dock Road and then we will try to find a nearby Red-eyed Vireo plus other warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Bring a lunch and we will spend time in the afternoon searching for the amazing array of butterflies that are around the Duncan area. It needs to be sunny to make this part worthwhile. Otherwise we'll continue birding in other spots nearby. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool or at 7:45 a.m. at Cowichan Bay Dock Road (north of the intersection of Cowichan Bay Road and Tzouhalem Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, June 17**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)**

##### ***Low Tide at Harling Point***

Low tide at Harling Point uncovers a wide variety of species—if you have help and the patience to look for them! We'll carefully meander over rocks and alongside tide pools looking for invertebrates, fish and algae to discuss their adaptations for survival in this rocky, wave-exposed habitat. On previous trips we've spotted Blood Stars, Leather Stars, Gumboot Chitons, Sea Lemons, Red Sponge Nudibranchs, Umbrella Crabs and more. Sealions and Black Oystercatchers too. Please wear appropriate foot wear for scaling WET rocks and slippery seaweed. A walking stick for balance may be helpful. Meet at the end of Crescent Road adjacent to the Chinese Cemetery at 12:00. Call Tina at (250) 881-4191 with questions or for more information.

### **Saturday, June 23**

#### **FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)**

##### ***Birding Blenkinsop Lake***

Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. Enjoy spring migrants such as Black-headed Grosbeaks and Yellow Warblers. 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 which will take us back to where we started. Meet at 7:00 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.



European Paper Wasp (*Polistes dominula*), VNHS Photo contest winner, Invertebrate category. *Photo: James Holkko.*