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The Victoria NATURALIST

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[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]

Guidelines for Submissions

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

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

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Erratum: Apologies to David Genn for the misspelling of his name as author of the Hummingbird story in the March/April 2018 newsletter.

*Cover Image: Lapland Longspur, VNHS Photo contest second place winner, Birds category.
Photo: Gordon Hart.*

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

When you read this, it will be July—the heart of summer and hopefully one of the best times to get out and enjoy nature in all its splendour. I hope you enjoy this issue, as it has articles about adventures and “creatures” from Victoria to Duncan to Oregon and Washington.

As I sit in our garden and watch birds in the trees and “playing” in our small stream and pond, I am somewhat tempted to stay close to home, but there are so many great field trips planned...birding, butterflies, wildflowers and more...which are really hard to resist!! Included are a number of trips to the Olympic Peninsula, which, if you have never visited there, is well worth the trip.

On a side note...as I often do while scanning various sources for interesting tidbits of natural history/science, I found an interesting item in a recent issue of the *Times Colonist* (and a couple of other sources): Dino-killing asteroid also shaped bird evolution. Scientists studying plant life around the extinction of the dinosaurs have made an interesting discovery—it appears that of all the birds living at the time, only the ground-dwelling species survived. According to the article, an asteroid struck Earth about 66 million years ago on the Yucatan Peninsula, leveling trees within a 1500-km radius and likely igniting forest fires worldwide. Dinosaurs were completely wiped out, but some feathered relatives managed to recover and diversify to the birds we know today. It is thought that when trees were lost, any birds that lived exclusively in trees also would have gone extinct. Ferns were among the first plants to colonize the devastated landscape, and once these and other flora began to proliferate, birds that were seed-eaters and those that had “ground-dwelling features”, such as relatively long legs, were the most likely to survive. Loss of plant diversity and habitat negatively influence birds, and the “early-Paleocene low-diversity floral phase may have adversely affected avian communities at that time.” It is possible that findings from this study might help researchers better understand the evolution of birds and also shed light on the challenges for birds today, whose populations have been threatened by human activity.

<http://www.timescolonist.com/islander/dino-killing-asteroid-also-shaped-bird-evolution-study-1.23315645>

Gail Harcombe

A Message from Your Board

A few things go on in the summer that involve the board directly, but in general we take the same break everyone likes to when the fine weather arrives, so this message will be brief.

Bookings for the fall presentation space at the University and Swan Lake happen at this time of year- it is critical to reserve the space waaaayyyy ahead! On that note—please consider volunteering to present on the topic of your choice—it is great to learn from other members. Some fall evenings will already be spoken for, but get in touch and find out if there is an opening on the right night for what you're interested in presenting. Alternatively, you may have attended a talk that you think all the members would enjoy—pass the tip along to an evening host.

Another item of note in terms of board activities: a letter has been sent to Saanich Mayor and council regarding the damage being done by off-trail cyclists. The cycling is not just off-trail, it involves rearranging the forest to create jumps and other hazards. The result is quite damaging to this already beleaguered remnant of Douglas-fir forest. While being outdoors is encouraged, the destruction is not welcome and our letter indicated the Society's position on the matter. It is our hope that a play park can be retrofitted to accommodate these interests and natural areas can be maintained as natural.

Your board will be meeting for a brainstorming/planning session this summer, and there are a couple of issues on the agenda. The most prominent one is the winding down of one of the stalwart schools program co-organizers: Bill Dancer is easing out of the role. He has been such an energizer bunny for so many years—no one is surprised he wants a rest! If the VNHS values being able to offer free outdoor experiences to

children then we need to plan ahead and hopefully recruit some help in maintaining it. Please be in touch if you see yourself as part of those outdoor education experiences that the Society has been offering. The sooner the better so that others can be mentored by Bill in the magic of engaging young minds.

On a sadder note, the Society lost an honorary life member in late March: Dr. Bill Austin. Bill was a highly regarded marine biologist, environmentalist, and educator. Bill was recognized by our Society with our highest honour because he was deeply involved in environmental preservation and fought for the protection of B.C.'s rare 9000-year-old glass sponge reefs. He also had a long history of educating people about marine life through the Marine Ecology Centre, which later formed the nucleus for what is now called the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea. Bill inspired people with his unparalleled knowledge and passion for marine life and the environment.

Field trips are the real activity of the season—do try to get out and enjoy one of the trips offered. During low tides in the spring, there were two intertidal forays that captivated participating members: one to Macauley Point and one all the way out to Botanical Beach. In addition to the botany trips close to home, we had a special trip with Marilyn Lambert and eco-reserve warden Genevieve Singleton to the ecological reserve in the Cowichan River area that is home to Pink Fawn Lilies. A real treat. And once again VNHS was part of a successful World Migratory Bird Day event held at Beaver Lake Park. Consider offering to lead a field trip if you have a favourite spot you want to show off.

Watch for information about the annual Hawk Watch and member BBQ in September.

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An Interesting Morning for the Tuesday Birders

By Bill Dancer



Female Western Bluebird. Photo: Jody Wells.

May 22, 2018, turned out to be not just another Tuesday Birders morning outing for three reasons. First was a visit to one of our members friends home which looks out on Mystic Pond in Cadboro Bay and where we spent 10 minutes or so watching both the male and female Bullocks Orioles that nest yearly in a tree in their back garden. Among other behaviours, we witnessed what appeared to be submissive behaviour by the female.

Second, our area of choice for the day was the Blenkinsop portion of the Lochside Trail, and the target bird, the female Western Bluebird. We spent about 10 minutes watching until the bird flew into the box on the fence on the north side of the Blenkinsop Road property*. Some minutes later she popped out and settled on the barbed wire fence close to a support pole for enough time for all 15 or so members of the party to get a good look through the three scopes available.

For me, the third reason was by far the most interesting, involving Bald Eagles and a Glaucous-winged Gull. At around 9:20 a.m., our attention was drawn to two Bald Eagles intent on hunting down a Glaucous-winged Gull off Willows Beach at Bowker Avenue, the group's regular meeting place. The pursuit went on for a few minutes and ended with one of the eagles picking the gull out of the air adjacent to the southern most lighthouse. What happened next was really interesting. The less fortunate eagle flew off to Mary Todd Island, perched on a log, and remained there throughout while the second eagle dropped to the water with the gull and after getting sorted out began to paddle, using its wings as paddles, toward Mary Todd Island with the gull streaming behind feet up like Monty Python's Norwegian Blue Parrot—but in this case there was no question, it was DEAD. There was concern

*See related Western Bluebird article, page six.

that the eagle would drown as distance to Mary Todd was, I would say, several hundred meters. It took several minutes of paddling for the eagle to reach shore where the event ended with a shower of feathers as the gull was devoured.

I have seen eagles paddle many times before but never over this distance or for this amount of time, with strong continuous strokes much like somebody rowing a dory. Birds never cease to amaze me and in that vein, we have a Junco nesting 13 feet off the ground in our Lapageria vine, go figure.



Female Bullock's Oriole. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy.



Male Bullock's Oriole. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy.

Western Bluebird Builds Nest in Blenkinsop Valley

By Julia Daly, *Bring Back the Bluebirds* Project Coordinator, Greater Victoria

When I joined the Bring Back the Bluebirds Project as Project Technician in the spring of 2012, Western Bluebirds had been extirpated on Vancouver Island for almost 20 years. After six years of active translocations, habitat restoration and the reestablishment of a network nest boxes in remaining habitat, the Cowichan Valley now hosts a population of at least 13 adults. And these birds are currently caring for four fledglings and 17 nestlings at five nest sites (so far) this season. Western Bluebirds are once again “carrying the sky on their backs” over Vancouver Island, and it would not have been possible without the diverse team of people and organizations working together to restore this species to Garry oak ecosystems.

From time to time, Western Bluebirds are spotted in the Greater Victoria area, and on May 21st, I was alerted about a female that had been spotted on private property on Blenkinsop Road. When I arrived to investigate, I met Jody Wells, a local birder and project volunteer who installed several nest boxes on the property two years ago after documenting three unbanded Western Bluebirds in the same area. We spent an hour watching the female forage for insects, preen and bring nesting materials into one of the boxes on the property (Figure 1). Identified by four unique leg bands (Figure 2), we know that this bird hatched in the Cowichan Valley last summer, from a pair’s second clutch. Sadly, with no other bluebirds seen in the area, the female’s nesting efforts were in vain. After building a fine grass nest she stayed on the property another two weeks before apparently departing. A female building a nest without a mate is highly unusual. Pair bonding generally happens in the winter and spring, and bluebirds typically migrate in groups rather than individually. Had her mate recently died or perhaps been eaten by a predator? Had he found another female with whom

to pair off? Whatever the case, I look forward to hearing where she shows up next.

Just yesterday, I learned that a female Western Bluebird that fledged on Vancouver Island has shown up on San Juan Island where she has paired with a local male. It is encouraging that these rebounding populations are mixing; however, their future in the Salish Sea will depend on our ability to address the loss and degradation of critical Garry oak habitat and problematic invasive species like House Sparrows. To report a Western Bluebird sighting, please call bluebird hotline at 250-710-5618.

Acknowledgements: special thanks to Genevieve Singleton, Project Manager, and Cowichan Valley Naturalists’ Society for taking over the leadership of this important project from Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, who started the project, The Victoria Natural History Society for their generous support over the years, Avian Ecologist Gary Slater of Ecostudies Institute for overseeing the reintroduction ecology aspect of the project, Vertebrates at Risk Biologist (retired) Trudy Chatwin and the BC Ministry of Environment, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, 2018 Project Funders: Victoria Natural History Society, BC Nature Foundation, Cowichan Valley Regional District Municipality), Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Geoffrey Newell for originally reporting on this lone female, the donors of previous years and the project’s many dedicated volunteers, including landowners, nestbox trail builders and bluebird monitors. Thank you!

For more information and project updates see:

<https://www.facebook.com/CowValleyNaturalists/>
<http://www.goert.ca/activities/bluebirds/>
<https://sjpt.org/places-projects/stewardship-projects/western-bluebird-project/>
<https://cascadiaprairieoak.org>



Figure 1 (left): Lone female entering nestbox with nesting materials 21 May 2018.

Figure 2 (right): Lone female showing unique set of leg bands (left leg: yellow over numbered aluminum band, right leg: green over light blue band). 21 May 2018.

Photos: Jody Wells



Salish Sea Creatures

By Tina Kelly

Photo by author



How big is this Gumboot Chiton? About a women's size 9.5! In metric, this mollusc maxes out at a whopping 33cm; the largest chiton in the world. Unlike other chitons, the Gumboot Chiton's eight shelled plates are not visible, but instead are covered by a leathery girdle. The texture and colour of this girdle, along with its algae-rich, low-tide rocky shore habitat make it well camouflaged. Its scientific name "*Cryptochiton stelleri*" reflects both its hiding ability and pays homage to German naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller. Steller appears in many common names of species he discovered – Steller's Jay, Steller's Sea Lion, Steller's Sea Cow and Steller's Sea Eagle.

Look for this slow moving grazer during low, low tides on rocky shores from Alaska to California. This particular gumboot chiton was found at Victoria's Macauley Point.



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Birding in the High Desert of Oregon

By Vicki Metcalfe

Photos by Edward Celnicker



White-faced Ibis.

I started birding in Jekyll Island, Georgia, where egrets and ibis were impossible to miss. A friend from those days, now living in Portland, Oregon, invited me to accompany him on his annual pilgrimage to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in the high desert of southeastern Oregon. Ed's a fine bird photographer and I'd enjoyed his pictures from Malheur for years, so it was an immediate "yes". It was the right answer.

We started from Portland on the first of May and drove for six hours through the clouds near Mount Hood and then across endless miles of high desert: tumbleweed, mesquite, sagebrush, and cattle. We paused at a highway rest stop for my first mountain bluebirds—from a distance I couldn't distinguish the neon blue flags marking a gas line from the bluebirds themselves, the colour was that intense.

Ed normally stays in a trailer at the Refuge field station, but they were having problems so he booked a sweet cottage near Burns. And a good thing it was. As we headed out early Tuesday, we saw hundreds of tall dark birds bent over feeding in the wet fields—White-faced Ibis! Those wet fields offered a terrific selection of shorebirds: Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet in breeding colour, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Sandhill Crane, Wilson's phalarope, and many others. And Ed taught me how to look for Burrowing Owl terrain. After several tries at a known Burrowing Owl location (rich with meadowlark and with a Golden Eagle soaring close overhead), our best view

ended up being across the road from our favourite pond with all the shorebirds.

The refuge and surrounding area are vast, with the distant snow-capped Steens Mountains to enhance the view. We did a lot of driving. Each day we went twice to the Refuge Headquarters, where there was a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist on staff and birdfeeders scattered about. Each day brought more birds in migration. It was almost frosty on our first full day but I saw my first Yellow-headed Blackbirds – as plentiful, and as noisy, as the Red-winged Blackbirds. As the weather warmed we spotted Harris's and several other sparrows, Western Tanager, White Pelican, Brewer's Blackbird, Great Horned Owlets, Great Egret, Wilson's and Nashville warblers... My list kept growing. Speaking of list, I had my name put on the HQ whiteboard for the first sightings of Bullock's Oriole and Lazuli Bunting. The bunting was seen that day only so it was a coup.

The astonishing thing to me was that each day I was seeing at least twenty new and different birds. Ten life birds and two confirmations of birds that had been only glimpses in the past. On our fourth and final day we went north to the Malheur National Forest to look for three local specialties: the White-headed Woodpecker, the Mountain Chickadee, and the Pygmy Nuthatch. I wasn't lucky enough to see the nuthatch (scanning tree trunks for a tiny tree-trunk-coloured bird) but I did get a glimpse of



Lazuli Bunting.

the woodpecker and found the Mountain Chickadee as curious and friendly as all chickadees.

The Malheur HQ had not only its own biologist, but also a photographer resident for a month, and a biologist from the Portland Audubon Society who was resident for three months and was working with the Fish and Wildlife Service on their conservation strategies. I was lucky to eavesdrop on her talk to a group of visiting Portland Audubon Society members, when she covered the history of the area from prehistoric times through native settlement and the ranching era, and then the establishment of the refuge as a migratory bird sanctuary in 1908. (Ranching is still the dominant activity in that



American Avocet.

part of Oregon; we saw countless beef cattle that entirely minded their own business as we poked around unfenced roadsides. At times their bawling was the only sound.)

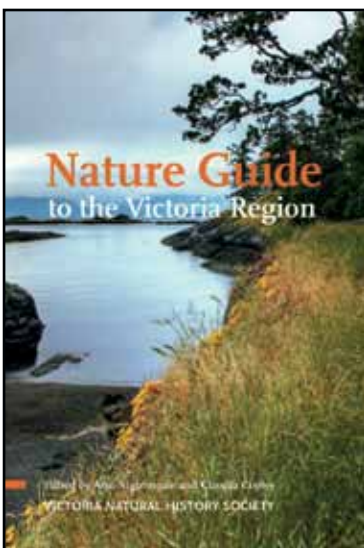
Highlights aside from the landscape and the bird diversity? A massive Golden Eagle's nest perched on a rock face. A wildlife and migratory bird sanctuary that covers more than 187,000 acres with 120,000 of that as managed wetlands. Antelope and coyote. A selection of "concealed-carry" jackets, vests and purses at the historic Round Barn gift shop and museum—another first.

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/malheur/>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur>

https://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp_parkPage&parkId=209

<https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/23086949?locale=en>



Nature Guide to the Victoria Region

Edited by Ann Nightingale and Claudia Copley

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

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

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Calling All Habitat Guardians: HAT Needs Your Help to Protect Habitat in the Highlands!

By Ashlea Veldhoen, Habitat Acquisition Trust



Become a Habitat Guardian and help HAT protect life-sustaining ecosystems in the highlands just like this one—forever. Visit: hat.bc.ca/habitatguardians to make a donation today. Photo: Ashlea Veldhoen.

Vancouver Island is brimming with life. People from all over the world visit our rugged coastlines and dense, towering forests to enjoy the picturesque views, explore extraordinary habitats and rejuvenate themselves in the peace of untouched nature. But will these untouched, special places be protected forever?

Living on an increasingly urbanized island, one quickly learns of the continual development pressure placed on our natural areas. Every year, more natural habitat is scraped



away to build roads, new homes and grow industry. As a result, our fauna are fragmented and isolated, crammed onto smaller parcels of land, and confronted with invasive species and scarce resources. Over time, this threatens the survival of not only individual plants and animals, but entire populations of wildlife as well. Already under the pressures they would naturally face, loss of important habitat and resources cause species to struggle to survive and reproduce. If we want to continue enjoying wildlife—seeing young songbirds learning to fly, peeking at black-tailed deer fawns sleeping among the wildflowers, hearing the high-pitched whinny of the Western Screech-owl or witnessing the aerial acrobatics of the Little-brown Myotis bat scooping up insects during flight—we must work together to connect and protect as much natural land as we can.

Healthy ecosystems and intact natural areas are critical not only to the survival of our wildlife, but are essential to our survival as well. Our communities rely on the invaluable services provided by healthy functioning ecosystems such as climate control, clean air and water, and food production, to name just a few. Healthy functioning ecosystems bring us warmth in our hearts as well, for learning, soul-searching, creative inspiration, and connecting to the land.

Habitat Acquisition Trust's mission is to protect and connect as many large natural areas as possible to create continuous habitat for local wildlife and our communities. Many of the natural areas remaining on the island are owned privately, so we do our best to make connections with nature-loving landowners to voluntarily protect their property from future threats.


Through the incredible support of caring and passionate members of our community, HAT, in partnership with Cowichan Community Land Trust, was able to ensure the protection of Calypso Woods. This six-acre property is a striking and beautiful coniferous forest ecosystem patterned with pristine creeks and babbling brooks, and dotted with the delicate Calypso Orchids from which it gets its name. Now, thanks to the support of the many supporters we call Habitat Guardians, Calypso Woods is protected from development forever.

A covenant is a legally binding agreement between a land trust or conservancy and a private landowner to protect an ecologically significant portion of their land from development *forever*, even through future changes of ownership. Establishing a covenant on a parcel of land is one of the incredible ways you can leave a conservation legacy. This generous and thoughtful action makes a strong, long-lasting and positive impact in conserving natural areas in your community and beyond. However, protecting our important resources can be an expensive process. From beginning to end, a conservation covenant costs over \$10,000 to establish, and lots of time, energy and expertise. As a non-profit, HAT relies on public support to carry out our mission.

This year we are seeking support in raising \$10,000 by July 31 towards the protection of a spectacular habitat in the Highlands, just 30 minutes outside of Victoria, BC. Become a Habitat Guardian by making the pledge to become nature's sentinel—a protector of the bats and owls roosting in tall trees, snakes slithering between rocks, and slugs dwelling on the forest floor. Become a Habitat Guardian and help HAT to protect habitat in the Highlands today. Every dollar brings us one step closer to creating a conservation legacy that benefits us all and generations to come.

Visit hat.bc.ca/habitatguardians or call Ashlea Veldhoen at 250-995-2428 to join the growing league of Habitat Guardians.

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The Victoria Natural History Society's Schools Program

By Bill Dancer



I have coordinated the Schools program over the last 11 years, lately with John Henigman and am writing this as 2018 will be my last year as coordinator as age is now a factor and I have cut back on my volunteer time on this and several other endeavours.

Over these years the number of children attending either classroom talks or mostly outside trips has grown from around 900 in 2007 to over 1800 in 2017. Calling this the Schools Program is rather misleading as all the various divisions of Scout s Canada, Pre-schools, Summer Camps and The Bateman Sketchers all use or have used our program. Looking back over past records I would say that children in Grades Kindergarten to Four make up over 95% of the participants.

The success of the program is due to a band of wonderful volunteers, perhaps not great in numbers but who have shared their knowledge with the children with the aim of making them aware of the natural world and that with that awareness and facilities that homo sapiens are blessed with, will take on a degree of responsibility for health of the natural world in future years.

Speaking for myself being part of this program (I intend to carry on as a volunteer) is a joy and the fact that the predominant age group participating is young and eager to learn, for me, helps not only in regard the teaching element but also in what you learn from the children and also in many cases from the parents that accompany them

If you are interested in taking over the Coordinator's role or becoming a volunteer please let me or the Board know, I would certainly pass on what the job entails.

Last I would say the letter, which is part of this article, is the typical response the program receives from those that use it.

Thursday, April 12, 2018
Re: Todays Nature Walk

Hi Bill,

Thank you so much for this list, and for such a wonderful afternoon! We learned so much about our local birds and plants during our time with John and you. Thank you for bringing your scopes and binoculars, allowing the Kindergartens an opportunity to use these birding tools.

We really appreciate the time that you spent with us, and feel fortunate to have had this opportunity to do so. I'll definitely be contacting the VNHS again next year, and hope that we can have such another beautiful afternoon to explore Cattle Point and Uplands Park. Please extend my gratitude to John.

Warm regards,
Janna Sullivan
Kindergarten | Glenlyon Norfolk School

Shorebirds and Waterfowl at Gray's Harbour

By John Neville

Photos by Heather Neville

April 17, we crossed the Juan de Fuca Strait on the M V Coho and headed south on Highway 101 East. It's quite a pleasant drive past recreation areas, parks, the Salish Sea and river estuaries. A turning to the right on Hwy 108 took us to Gray's Harbor County. The local Audubon Society web site provided us with detailed routes, birding hotspots, rare sightings and more.

We tried Brady Loop Rd first: which was a mixture of wetlands and open fields. A farmer told us that the wintering Trumpeter Swans and Snow Geese had left the area 4 to 6 weeks ago. We did enjoy a Harrier stooping for a mammal in the middle of a field of golden Daffodils. Savannah and White-crowned sparrows were calling in the grasslands. Cottonwood trees were providing nest sites for Tree Swallows. A male Killdeer gave his typical calls as we drove slowly by and the female gave her high pitched trilling alarm call: we must have been very close to her scrape in the roadside gravel. The male flew away to distract us, but the female only moved a few meters.

We travelled on about 65 km to Ocean Shores. The main hotspot for us in this area was the Ocean Beach, which we approached from Chance a la Mer Rd. Vehicles are allowed to drive on the beach. The wind carried the rich aroma of crab as the roaring waves crashed on the shore. People were harvesting Razor Clams but our interest was the birds! Western/Glaucous-winged hybrids were the norm, locally known as Olympic Gulls. The highlight was a swarm of about 2000 shorebirds. As far as we could tell they were all Least Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, and Sanderling. All three species were foraging along the surf line. We were allowed to stand just a few meters away without interrupting their feeding. On a second visit there were Semipalmated Plover and Dunlin amongst the swarming flocks. On a third visit we spotted a Short-billed Dowitcher using its bill like the needle on a sewing machine to probe for food in the shallow water.

Another hot spot for us was Perkins Lake near the end of the Ocean Shores peninsula. Just before dawn, deer were still asleep on front lawns. The lake water was perfectly calm, but the low roar of the ocean could be heard in the background. The Pacific Tree Frogs were noisy until dawn broke. A statuesque Great Blue Heron stood poised, waiting for breakfast to arrive. A silent Common Loon stayed in the middle showing off his bright white plumage! The distinct "wahwah" call of a Hooded Merganser came across the lake. A Belted Kingfisher circled the lake being careful to avoid the bank where we stood. A raucous mob of about 50 crows collected on a power line by the lake before dispersing to parts unknown. A male Mallard came and went several times,



Western Sandpiper.

calling incessantly. Like a burst of wind or a jet landing, a flock of Sanderling rocketed by, more leisurely chevrons or V formations of Snow Geese honked, as they flew by. There were three Lesser Scaup on the water, the male in breeding plumage. A Song Sparrow was mimicking a Bewick's Wren, which also had a territory in the salal.

We used the campground in the state park. For a treat we enjoyed breakfast out with Razor clams, shrimp and crab omelets. Then another day at lunch, seafood pie at the Irish pub, yum!

The local Audubon Society has a shorebird festival at the end of April each year. You can find maps, routes, hot spots, rarities and more, at Gray's Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival, www.shorebirdfestival.com. There's also an info center at Ocean Shores, but we relied on the website and our shorebird books. Above all, the presence of shorebirds, Snow Geese cleaving their way north, and longer days all proclaim that spring is with us again.



Mostly Dunlin with some Western Sandpiper and Marbled Godwit in background.

LETTERS

To VNHS

I am grateful to Bill Dancer who went to a lot of trouble to introduce this out-of-towner to the Tuesday morning birding group. If I return next March, as I plan to at the moment, I will join the Society.

D. Payne

Thank you for sponsoring the Natural History Award at the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair. I felt honored to walk down the auditorium stairway with my class and family cheering me on. I am glad you picked me for the award because it encouraged me to continue with science and my project. I was very pleased to see that my hard work was recognized.

I am a grade eight student at Pender Island's School. My project was about E-waste, where it goes, what happens to it and who it impacts. Our school entered 14 people this year and have been part of this fair for three years now. We won awards this year which is a new school record that you helped us achieve.

I wish you and your organization the best of luck and that you continue to sponsor the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair.

Sincerely,
A.Croft, Pender Island, B.C.

Thank you for your generous support towards the Science Fair.

I was fortunate to be one of the selected winners to receive an award provided by your organization. This is my first year participating in the science fair. My project was Aquaponics Garden.

I received an \$100 check and my mom said that she will put the fund for my next year's science project. I also received the book Nature Guide to the Victoria Region as the prize.

Around a week ago, I found a mushroom that looked very interesting. The mushroom was called an "Morchella angusticeps" according to your book, the Nature Guide. I enjoyed reading your Nature Guide to the Victoria Region as there was a lot of information that I did not know. Thank you for making this amazing book and thanks again for your generous support and encouragement.

Best regards,
K. Chen

I was a participant in the Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair and I was awarded the prize of the Nature Guide to the Victoria Region book. The donation was very well received and I am very thankful for your substantial gift. I am looking forward to reading the book and learning all sorts of interesting things about the local population of plants, animals, and fungi. Your donation will not be forgotten and was greatly appreciated. I can finally find out what all the different little bird and plants in my backyard are!

My science project was about parabolic solar ovens and their applications in the real world, such as heating up water in water pipes, cooking food or focusing light onto a tiny solar panel to produce more electricity with less expensive solar panels. I designed a type of solar oven made of only cardboard and paper, but which is still stable and can be taken apart and fitted into an envelope.

Sincerely,
A. Watts
Grade 8, Central Middle School

This letter is regarding the bursary that you so graciously gave me. As I'm sure you know, I'm a student in the Environmental Technology program [at Camosun College]. My academic plans will be, if all goes well, to finish the program in spring of 2019. I had considered going to school to turn the diploma into a Bachelor of Science. Educational goals now are to finish this program and return to the working world. Career goals are to look for monitoring technician or field technician jobs for after completion of a co-operative education program/ after graduation. This bursary introduced me to this society, so I applied to volunteer. Ideally, I would do volunteer work with various organizations to gain practical experience to negate the need for further education. Hopefully there will be career options on Vancouver Island, so I can work outside in the beautiful nature of Vancouver Island.

This bursary means the world to me. I'm so honoured that you chose me as one of the recipients of this bursary. School is very financially, emotionally and mentally stressful so knowing that a donor chose me for a bursary makes me so happy. I've been filled with joy when I remember. I've never been chosen for a bursary and it made me feel so good about myself. I don't know how to express how grateful I am.

Thank you so much for choosing me for this bursary.

Sincerely,
A. Ogilvie

BULLETIN BOARD

Birder's Night coffee-making volunteer needed!

Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) is looking for a volunteer to take over the Birder's Night coffee-making duty. Many thanks to our previous volunteers, Ken Walker and Carleton Monk, for taking care of this function for the last four years. Mary Robichaud has been assisting and has kindly offered to stay on in that role. What we need is someone to take on the main responsibility. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Marilyn Lambert (250-477-5922) for instructions and equipment. Thank you.

Volunteer opportunity!

Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative (ELSI) needs volunteers to monitor fish populations in the creeks entering the lagoon, approximately 2-3 hours/day over two consecutive days, once a month June to October. On-site training and equipment will be provided. To learn more, see www.elsi.ca Contact: info@elsi.ca Beth Mitchell 250-474-4446, Kitty Lloyd 250-360-3299.

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 July 8 and August 12 at 9 a.m.

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

Get yours now! Limited number available...

A Guide to Bird Calls of Southern Vancouver Island (CD/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

Photography contest

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 District's 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

Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 17 new members since the last issue and the following have agreed to have their names published in this Welcome section.

Thomas Barbin

Victoria
*Nature photography.
Terrestrial animals of all sizes.
I enjoy it all though.*

Ruth McDonough

Victoria
*Anything nature and outdoor
related*

Jochen Moehr

Victoria
*General, biodiversity, nature
conservation*

Mark Turner

Victoria
Plants

Kathy McLennan

Victoria
Birding

Emily Crowder

Victoria
Birding, nature walks

Zoe McCormack

Victoria
*Plants, medicinal plants, wild
crafting*

Lisa Gould

Victoria
*Mammals, birds, conservation
projects, censusing, habitat
restoration*

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.

JULY

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Sunday July 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join **Gordon Hart** on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This outing is weather dependent—must be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Rd). 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. Contact Gordon at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Sunday, July 8

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Urban Forest Walk—Government House

This is another one in a series of walks to areas where the cover of vegetation consists of both native and introduced trees and shrubs. We need to be reminded that these areas of Urban Forest are very important to our wild creatures and to us. As we wander, we'll talk about why trees are important. The grounds surrounding Government House include woodlands that were cleared of invasive plants a few years back plus extensive beds planted up and maintained by volunteers. We will visit both areas concentrating on looking mainly at the trees, both the native and introduced varieties. Government House grounds are noted as a Heritage Tree Area

so we'll point out some of the trees that prompted this place to be so designated. Enter through the main driveway and park in the spaces near the front of Government House. More parking is at the lower lot if needed. Meet at 1:00 p.m. where the main pathway cuts off the entrance roadway and the path starts down into the gardens on the west end of Government House. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Saturday, July 21 to Sunday, July 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.

Sunday, July 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Olympic Peninsula Cape Flattery

We will be picked up by a small bus/van after getting off the Coho ferry in Port Angeles and head for Cape Flattery. This is the most northern point on the west coast of the continental United States and is one of the closest locations to Victoria where you might see Tufted Puffins. Tatoosh Island and other small islands off the point are home to thousands of seabirds throughout the year and many birds perch or fly around our immediate area. We will observe the birds from platforms that are about a half hour's walk through the forest from the parking area. Sea Otters are also becoming more common from this point as well. The entire Cape Flattery area is part of the Makah Reservation and it is with their permission that we visit the area. While checking out a few other spots on the way there and back, we may not see too many different birds than at home but the varying habitats make for a very enjoyable experience. These locations will be mostly near sea level and we'll visit as many interesting sites as time allows. It could be cool or rainy so dress appropriately. Bring a lunch and drinks. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the MV Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket that costs about \$50 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH US CUSTOMS.** We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). Also there is usually good birding from the ferry going both ways. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$85.00 CDN. Number of participants is limited so reserve your spot and pay early. VNHS members get priority. You may not book after July 8. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay the cost of the tour online (get the link when you reserve) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

Sunday, July 22

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Mount Washington Botanical Day Trip

This trip is planned for peak bloom time but the area is interesting over several weeks with a succession of subalpine flowers so there will be lots to see even if the season is a bit early or late. The plan is to walk around the Lake Helen MacKenzie— Battleship Lake loop. We will also fit in a short tour around Paradise Meadows. We always hope to see the illusive American Three-toed Woodpecker in that area. Plans may change if the loop is not yet ready for good flowers and we might end up doing an extensive trip around Paradise Meadows and up the chairlift as an alternate plan. Watch for interesting butterflies as we meander around because this entire area is known to have some very good ones. We will leave Victoria at 7:00 a.m. and return late, stopping for a quick supper on the way home. We'll eat our bag lunch someplace out on the trail. Your bonus for going on the trip is a list with the names of all the plants on it. You must register by contacting Agnes. Everyone will be asked to carpool. We will assist in organizing this beforehand. Cost will be about \$40 for the day from Victoria. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation, it could be quite cool or rainy. Also wear sturdy footwear and hiking poles might be handy. Bring a lunch and drinks. Remember to bring money for the chairlift (in case this becomes part of our plans—about \$11.00) and also to pay for a fast-food supper. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to register or if you need more information.

Saturday July 28

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Florence Lake & Langford Lake Birding

Join the **Saturday Birding Group** who will be going to Florence Lake & Langford Lake. We will meet at the boardwalk at Florence Lake at 7:30 a.m. To reach our starting point, go out the Island Highway and take Exit 15 McCallum Rd. Turn right at the stop and you will be on McCallum/ Spencer Rd. Turn left on Springboard Pl (formerly Brock Ave). Park at end of road (not in turnaround) where we will meet. It's about a half block to the boardwalk from there with a great view of the lake. Listen for Soras or Virginia Rails. Sometimes we'll get Steller's Jays and Band-tailed Pigeons and other birds not that common in town. After that, we will continue to Langford Lake. To get there, return on McCallum/ Spencer Rd to the corner by the Shell station. Curve around the front of the gas station on to the frontage road that leads to the Leigh Rd overpass. Left at Leigh Rd and cross the highway on the overpass. Turn right on Goldstream Ave. Park at the west end of Goldstream Ave just before it dead ends at the highway. Meet at the parking pullout and the group will meander down to the boardwalk from there. The marshy area often yields interesting birds as well as the walk through the forest to the lake usually gives us woodpeckers and other good woodsy birds. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday, July 29

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

Olympic National Park Hurricane Hill Wildflowers

We will be picked up by a small bus/van after getting off the Coho ferry and it will take us up the hill to Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park to enjoy the subalpine flowers at their peak. Most wildflowers at sea level have finished flowering for the season by then but up higher where we are going, they will still be in full bloom. This area has a vast array of wildflowers, many easily seen from this trail. Your bonus for going on the trip is a list with the names of all the plants on it. We also often get close-up views of the Olympic Marmots, including their young ones, plus the butterflies are usually very good. Sometimes we see nesting birds such as Horned Larks, pipits and maybe grouse. We get dropped off right at the base of the Hurricane Hill Trail. We will then take a leisurely pace so as to enjoy all the flowers and the fabulous views. Although the weather is generally sunny and clear, due to the high elevation, it could be quite cool or rainy so dress appropriately. Also wear sturdy footwear and hiking poles might be handy but the trail is mostly very well surfaced. Bring a lunch and drinks. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the MV Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket that costs about \$50 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH US CUSTOMS.** We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). Also there is usually good birding from the ferry. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$80.00 CDN. Number of participants is limited so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Please do not book before July 6 or after July 22. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay the cost of the tour online (get the link when you reserve) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

AUGUST

Sunday August 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Join **Gordon Hart** 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 Rd). 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. Contact Gordon at (250) 721-1264 or butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca for more information.

Sunday, August 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

The Hoh Rain Forest and Rialto Beach on the Western Olympic Peninsula

We will be picked up by a small bus/van after getting off the Coho ferry and the first stop will be at the Hoh Rain Forest on the west side of the Olympic Mountains inside Olympic National Park. The area is full of magnificent tall conifers covered in very long trailing mosses, lichens and ferns. Wildlife abounds in the forest, including Olympic Elk. Let's hope we can see them up as close as last time when several of them were lounging around right in front of us. We will take a short walk along the Hall of Mosses trail to get good views of the amazing vegetation. The trail is mostly level but has some messy spots to pick through. Then we will head for the Pacific coast at Rialto Beach with the fascinating haystack formations. We should see shorebirds and, if we are lucky, some Brown Pelicans. If there are no Pelicans here, we may have time to stop at nearby LaPush to try again for the pelicans. Dress for potentially changeable weather. Bring a lunch and drinks. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 5:45 a.m. for the 6:10 a.m. sailing of the MV Coho. Allow time to park and purchase your ferry ticket that costs about \$50 CDN return. The ferry cost is not included in what you prepay. **IMPORTANT!! YOU WILL REQUIRE A PASSPORT OR ENHANCED DRIVER'S LICENCE FOR GOING THROUGH US CUSTOMS.** We will return on the 5:20 p.m. sailing from Port Angeles (90 minute crossing). Also there is usually good birding from the ferry. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is \$85.00 CDN. Number of participants is limited so reserve your spot early. VNHS members get priority. Do not book before July 6 or after Aug 5. First contact Agnes to reserve your spot. Then pay the cost of the tour online (get link when you reserve) or you can pay by cheque. Send cheque to VNHS, Box 5220, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to reserve or if you need more information.

Saturday, August 18 to Sunday, August 26

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 August 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Island View Beach & Saanichton Spit Birding

Join the **Saturday Birding Group** who will be going to Island View Beach and Saanichton Spit. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the north end of the parking lot. It's the time of year that we might find some interesting shorebirds on their return migration and we might still see a few beach flowers in the dunes as we walk along. 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 a left on Homathko Rd that leads to the parking lot. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

Sunday August 26

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Visit to Haliburton Farm Restored Wetland

Haliburton Farm is a collection of small-scale agricultural groups producing organic crops on the property. In 2009, the farm contained a degraded wetland/meadow and a group of volunteers gradually transformed this area into a diverse wetland that now is surrounded by native plants and teams with aquatic insects including dragonflies plus frogs, birds, bats, snakes and the occasional salamander. Two of these volunteers are **James and Kristen Miskelly** (organizers of our Botany Nights) who will show us around describing how the restoration was accomplished. Also it's a hard time of year for our pollinators to find enough to satisfy their needs so we will specifically be on the lookout for any plants there that are good pollinators for the many native bees to enjoy at this time of the year. As a bonus after the tour, they will show us around their native plant nursery called Saanich Native plants that is right there on the farm. Luckily they also will have in stock many of the plants you will see in the wetland that you can buy if you are planning your own wetland. Of course they have many other native plants for sale as well and you may also want to purchase produce grown by other members of the Haliburton 'family' while you are visiting. The tour starts at 9:00 a.m. Haliburton Farm is at 741 Haliburton Rd, not far off the Pat Bay Highway. Please park on the grass next to the farm centre and along the laneway. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Monday August 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

Sidney Spit Birding

It's the time of year to make the trek over to Sidney Spit on Sidney Island to look for interesting shorebirds on their southern migration. There are always good ones reported from there—Baird's Sandpiper, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers and Plovers, maybe even that illusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper we hope to see! Also close-ups on Purple Martins and we'll see other passerines in the woods. You will be impressed with the recent impressive removal of invasives plants from the Spit to allow more habitat for native plants and areas for nesting birds. Bring a lunch and drinks. Due to the over-crowding on the ferry on the weekend, we have chosen to go during the week. We will go over on the ferry from Sidney that leaves at 10:00 a.m. Be there about an hour early to buy your ticket as it can sell out. Cost is \$19 for adults (\$16 seniors). Ferry leaves from the foot of Beacon Ave. Allow enough time to find a place to park. Parking rates vary on how far you are willing to walk. The return ferry leaves the island at 1:00, 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. so you can choose how long you wish to stay. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.



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INSURANCE,
and
RETIREMENT
PLAN
DESIGNATIONS**

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

 SWAN LAKE
CHRISTMAS HILL
NATURE SANCTUARY



• Female Blue Dasher, VNHS Photo contest winner. *Photo: James Holkko.*