



# The Victoria **NATURALIST**

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





# The Victoria NATURALIST

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**Deadline for next issue: February 1, 2019**

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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.,

7.5" (2 columns) wide 2250 x 1600 pixels

3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

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Cover Photo: Humpback Whale seen from the October Fantasea pelagic trip. Photo: Rob Gowan.

**ERRATUM:** The caption on the gull photo in the Christmas Bird Count article (page 7 of the November/December issue) is incorrect. It should be Western Gull. My apologies to the photographer.

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Another busy and interesting year has flown by! I hope you are looking forward to 2019. Take time to enjoy the beauty and magic of nature and take advantage of the fascinating presentations and field trips offered through VNHS!

I came across two things while compiling content for this issue...the first is about an exciting project describing how **Canadians and their smartphones** are helping scientists map species diversity.

“For more than six years, an army of citizen scientists across Canada has been scouring gardens, trails and vacant lots, in search of butterflies. Their observations have poured in by the tens of thousands, arriving at an online repository known as eButterfly, where researchers sort and sift through a growing mountain of reports and photos to see if they say something interesting about the colourful, winged insects. ...As climate change and human activity transform the continent at a head-spinning rate, perhaps the best hope scientists have now to document what is happening lies with citizen scientists with smartphones in hand, who can act as their eyes and take note when a butterfly alights nearby.”

For the full story:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/technology/science/article-the-butterfly-effect-how-canadians-and-their-smartphones-are-helping/>

The other was from the October 1976 newsletter. And I quote [excerpts]:

### “The Naturalist Needs...

Among the periodic delights of editing a magazine such as the Victoria Naturalist are those little unsolicited articles that come in from members from time to time describing some incident or find. Unfortunately, one of the despairing aspects of editing a magazine such as the Victoria Naturalist is those same little unsolicited articles, because there **aren't enough of them.**

Your stories about your finds ... would certainly interest the rest of us. So why not let us all in on your little secrets. ... And don't think that this plea is restricted to written submissions. Other forms of visual expression, with a natural history vein, particularly photographs for the cover, would be welcome. ... And don't let me forget drawings or sketches...

So how about adding to my delights with more of everything?”

I hope to receive lots of your photos, drawings, and stories (short or long) for upcoming issues!

Don't forget to send your nomination(s) for VNHS Awards (see page five), due 28 February.

Enjoy the next couple of months...and remember, “there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad equipment”...our winter is hardly considered winter by the rest of Canada.

Lucky us! Happy New Year!

Gail Harcombe

# A Message from Your Board

Because it is that time of year when we say “Happy New Year”, it seems appropriate to focus on some happy new items.

One of the newest happy things is the completion of the boardwalk replacement at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. This project has been underway for a long time and the Victoria Natural History Society was a major contributor. The portion that was in the worst shape was replaced first, and your Society gave \$75,000 towards this effort. With the portion through the willows accomplished, visitors and Saanich council could see the quality and permanence of the new versus the old, and the remaining funds were forthcoming to complete the span. The grand opening was the 2018 Thanksgiving weekend.

We have had a relationship with the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary since its inception in 1971, including giving them up to \$5000 per year each year for their activities. In addition to financial support, VNHS members often volunteer their time to lead the weekly bird walks. Currently Rick Schortinghuis and Liam Singh are sharing the role, after Liam’s schedule became too full to do it all himself. Thank you to both of them for keeping these trips going!

On the topic of dedicated volunteers and fresh starts, the Board is pleased that a volunteer, Liz Turner, and potentially one other person have agreed to fill the giant shoes of Bill Dancer and handle the coordination of the *Connecting Children With Nature* schools project. This is a major relief: volunteer naturalists interacted with 1562 children this past year, all at no cost to the school groups, and this number has grown year over year. Bill will remain involved and guide the handover, so we feel confident this successful program has a bright future.

Another happy new thing is the interpretive signage installed at the two wetland lookouts at Viaduct Flats. These were paid for by the Society, and installed by Saanich Parks. We hope that these signs will serve visitors to the wetland that cannot manage the stairs of the viewing platform, and reinforce the importance of the area for wildlife to all visitors to the wetland.

The Victoria Natural History Society was invited by CRD Parks to participate in a planning process for acquisition of new natural areas in the Capital Regional District. Board members Jim Cuthbert and Claudia Copley attended an evening session and heard about how areas of high ecological value were determined. Three regions were highlighted to the audience and then we broke into groups to talk about whether some significant region had been missed in their analysis,

what the various representative groups hoped to be able to do in these protected areas, and what potential conflicts people saw for these regions.

While many of the invited user groups only see value in places they can access and recreate in, the VNHS’s mandate includes “To study and protect flora and fauna and their habitats”, so access is not of primary importance, protection is. It is understood by our membership that, without proper protection, there will no longer be the same diversity of native wildlife in our region. We can all see that CRD parks in their current form do not offer much protection for the species that live in them. The current level of management allows for “death by a thousand cuts” for nature, while at the same time encouraging human-uses to reign supreme. Our Society saw the first-hand effect of this lack of commitment to conservation in the final management strategy proposed for Island View Beach. The loudest voices overcame any of our efforts to provide a voice for nature there. This concern was conveyed to the CRD park staff facilitating the evening, and it is hoped that a different management strategy for these apparently “high ecological value” sites will be employed. If the current management strategy is instead maintained, then CRD Parks should be encouraged not to purchase valuable wildlands that are doomed to be harmed, but instead purchase cheaper, already damaged properties, so that it does not matter what they allow in terms of recreation. If you are interested in learning more about the CRD’s strategy and seeing the areas it is focussing on, here is a link to the information: <https://www.crd.bc.ca/project/regional-parks-landscape-evaluation-project>.

Also new in this new year: The board decided to include a territorial acknowledgement at the start of our evening lectures at the University of Victoria and Swan Lake. This an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous people who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home. This is not tokenism, this is about truly considering what happened in the past and what changes can be made going forward in order to further the reconciliation process. While these statements of acknowledgement are becoming more widespread since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s 94 Calls to Action were published in 2015, the reality is territorial acknowledgements have existed for hundreds of years as part of many Indigenous cultures, so are really only new to us.

# VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations for 2019

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways: writing articles for the Naturalist, leading field trips, or serving on the board or committees. Some go out of their way to ensure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities by visiting shut-ins or driving others to Society functions. The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time over a long period, in a variety of ways, for the Society. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication.

The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. Nominations should be forwarded by February 28, 2019. All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

## VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman  
1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve  
1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof  
1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve  
1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock  
1994 Kaye Suttill  
1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington  
1996 Gordon Devey  
1997 Michael Carson  
1998 No recipients  
1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson  
2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce  
2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol  
2002 Norm Mogensen  
2003 Bob Chappell  
2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska  
2005 Rick Schortinghuis

2006 Phil Lambert, Tom Burgess  
2007 No recipients  
2008 Ann Nightingale  
2009 No recipients  
2010 Gordon Hart, Agnes Lynn  
2011 Claudia and Darren Copley  
2012 Bill Dancer  
2013 No recipients  
2014 John Henigman, Jeremy Tatum  
2015 Hans Roemer  
2016 No recipients  
2017 No recipients  
2018 No recipients

## VNHS Honorary Life Members

Mr. David Anderson, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mr. Tony Embleton,  
Mr. Bruce Whittington



**VICTORIA NATURAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY**

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

**March 12, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

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

**Evening presentation to follow AGM:**

***Speaker and topic to be determined.***

***Stay Tuned.***

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

# 2018 Butterfly Count Report

By Gordon Hart  
Photos by author

Six monthly counts were held from April to September using the Christmas Bird Count Circle for Victoria. Butterfly walks were conducted in each month as well. The butterfly year started with 11 species on the April count, with the most numerous being Western Spring Azure at 150, one more than Cabbage White (149). As expected, May had the highest species diversity with 17 species, including high numbers for Spring Azures (129), and Common or Vancouver Island Ringlets (106).

June had the highest total number of individuals with 1641 butterflies counted. High numbers reported were Essex Skippers (293), Cabbage Whites (533), Lorquin's Admiral (386), and Western Tiger Swallowtail (323). A rare sighting for the Victoria area in June was a Dun Skipper, seen just after the official count period on June 26.

By July, the spring butterflies were much less numerous, and species associated with the summer months had appeared. Two species counted in July but not in June were Pine Whites (351) and Woodland Skipper (215).

In August, the butterfly season was winding down with the hot dry weather, and numbers of all species dropped, except for Woodland Skipper, increasing to 677 individuals.

The September count was very low, with few butterflies other than Cabbage Whites. Pine Whites were not counted, although some still continued to be seen outside the count circle. September is also the season for migrants or late-emerging second generations, so a California Tortoiseshell and the year's only American Lady were seen then. A very interesting sighting by David Fraser was of a Monarch in Uplands Park on September 26. Outside the count period, there was a Mourning Cloak on Sept 28, a Grey Hairstreak and a Painted Lady.

October had a few Cabbage Whites, and a few sightings of other species, such as Red Admiral on October 10. It seems that the last butterfly of the year was a Cabbage White reported on November 2 by Kirsten Mills.

Although 27 species were recorded on the six monthly counts, there were some notable misses and low numbers. No Milbert's Tortoiseshells, Westcoast Ladies or Two-banded Checkered Skippers appeared on the counts. Formerly a fairly common species, only one Mylitta Crescent was reported this year in Victoria. Field Crescents were found in Central Saanich again, but not in the count circle.

The 2019 butterfly season will soon be here, with a walk scheduled for April 7. To receive information on the 2019 butterfly counts and monthly walks, please contact me, Gordon Hart, at [butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca](mailto:butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca) or watch the calendar at [vicnhs.bc.ca](http://vicnhs.bc.ca) for dates.



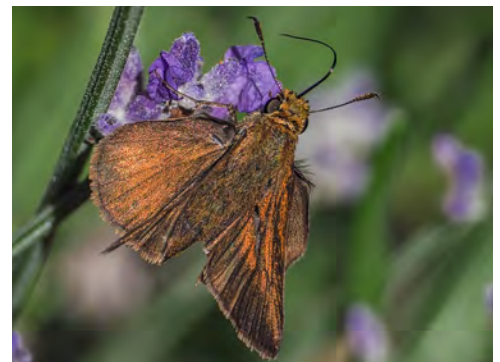
Lorquin's Admiral.



Moss' Elfin.



Anise Swallowtail.



Dun Skipper.

Butterfly Count Results 2018	April	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL
Species							
Anise Swallowtail		11	2	9			22
American Lady						1	1
Brown Elfin	4	3					7
Cabbage White	149	396	533	575	321	150	2124
California Tortoiseshell	2					1	3
Cedar Hairstreak		9	2				11
Common (Van Isl) Ringlet. "Large Heath"	1	106	42	2	87		238
Common Woodnymph							
European (Essex) Skipper			293	12	6		311
Field Crescent							
Great Arctic							
Green Comma	5	1	1				7
Grey Hairstreak			2				2
Lorquin's Admiral		2	386	139	9	1	537
Milbert's Tortoiseshell							
Monarch						1	1
Moss' Elfin	1						1
Mourning Cloak	2	2					4
Mylitta Crescent		1					1
Orange Sulphur							
Painted Lady		15	7	2		2	26
Pale Swallowtail		44	44	3			91
Pine White				351	24		375
Propertius Duskywing	17	23					40
Purplish Copper				1	4		5
Red Admiral		3	4	3		1	11
Sara's Orangetip	75						75
Satyr Comma	4	2					6
Silvery Blue	7	5					12
Sulphur species							
Two-banded Checkered Skipper							
Westcoast Lady							0
Western Pine Elfin							
Western Spring Azure	150	129	2				281
Orange Sulphur							0
Clouded Sulphur							0
Sulphur sp.-probably Clouded							0
Western Tiger Swallowtail	1	70	323	71			465
Woodland Skipper				215	677	12	904
<b>Total</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>1641</b>	<b>1383</b>	<b>1128</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>5561</b>
Number of Observers per month	20	19	15	15	11	10	
Number of Reports	38	41	37	30	39	13	198
Number of species	11	17	13	12	7	8	27

# Ollie the Sea Otter

This adorable looking marine mammal, a SEA OTTER that has resided at Race Rocks for almost five years, is often seen rolled up and sleeping in his bull-kelp bed. Looks can definitely be deceiving! He isn't nearly as cute as he looks—stories have circulated that he has killed a couple of hapless River Otters. No wonder he is always alone, having never found a female of his own kind. Photos: Marie O'Shaughnessy.



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# Transvolcanic Jay in the Jalisco Highlands

## Birding at San Sebastian and Cerro de la Bufa

By Aziza Cooper

Photos by author



San Sebastian. *Inset:* Red-headed Tanager.

**T**ransvolcanic Jay, a recent split from Mexican Jay, occurs in the highlands east of Puerto Vallarta. To plan my trip, I googled birding trip reports and searched eBird checklists. San Sebastian del Oeste, a colonial mining town and tourist destination, is a convenient access point. The town and nearby viewpoint of Cerro de La Bufa had many birds reported which were potential lifers for me.

In November, I spent three days at San Sebastian and Cerro de la Bufa and found three life birds—Transvolcanic Jay, Golden-browed Warbler and Red-headed Tanager. I saw 17 wood-warbler species, plus Yellow-breasted Chat and Olive Warbler. Full checklists, including photos, are at the eBird hotspots of San Sebastian del Oeste and Cerro de la Bufa.

The pine/oak forest is similar to the forest of the southeastern Arizona mountains, but the birds and plants are more exotic. Some of the oak leaves are a foot long, and some ferns are Jurassic. Many flowers were new to me, as were some of the butterflies.

San Sebastian is quite easy to get to by car or bus/taxi from

Puerto Vallarta. The ATM Red Line bus station is at Havre and Lucerna streets. There are six trips per day going through La Estancia, the access point to San Sebastian. The cost is 100 pesos each way. Check times of the return trips at the station.

The trip by second-class bus took two hours on a steep, narrow but good highway. Just before La Estancia it goes over Barranca San Sebastian, a very long bridge and deep canyon. At Estancia, the taxis wait across the street. The ride to San Sebastian costs 120-130 pesos and takes about 10 minutes.

San Sebastian is a well-preserved colonial town with cobbled streets. There are hotels and souvenir shops, some restaurants, a few stores. A sign with a map of the town is at the plaza. Buses with tourists come for the day; at night few visitors are around. The elevation is 4500 feet, so the air is much cooler than at sea level, although the sun is hot.

I stayed at a budget hotel right on the plaza: Los Arcos del Sol, built in 1696 and named for the arches along the courtyard. Martina, the hostess, was friendly, helpful and informed, and my limited Spanish was adequate. The hotel was quiet and peaceful.

Brown-backed Solitaire.



Slate-throated Redstart.

White-eared Hummingbird.



Tufted Flycatcher.

My small room had thick walls and a heavy wood door, and was clean and nicely furnished. The antique ironwork on the door was amazing – the door locked on the inside by a foot-long iron bar. The hotel restaurant has tables on the verandah with a view of the plaza and old buildings. Bat Falcons perch on the church cross high in the air. Brown-backed Solitaires sing their tinkling ascending song and car radios play old Beatles songs.

I spent my first day birding the town, which was pleasant. Notable birds were Lesser Ground-Cuckoo, Zone-tailed Hawk, Tufted Flycatcher and Laughing Falcon.

The next day I got the hotel staff to phone for a taxi for Cerro de la Bufa. The cost was 350 pesos and the trip takes 40 minutes to go a steep 9 km. From the taxi I had a fleeting view of a trogon in flight – the only one of my visit. The road is rough but drivable by regular car.

Cerro de la Bufa is a summit (8144 feet) with a sweeping view down to Puerto Vallarta and the ocean. White-eared Hummingbirds were at flowers near the parking lot. Hermit Warbler, Olive Warbler and Red-headed Tanager were along the trail to the summit. Down a disused trail to a road below the summit there was excellent birding. I encountered a big mixed flock of 10-20 species. In a short time I saw Red Warbler, Red-headed Tanager, Rufous-capped Warbler, Golden-browed Warbler, Olive Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Arizona Woodpecker and Slate-throated Redstart. The redstart is a flashy forager, dashing around and fanning its huge tail.

After two hours near the summit, I walked down through the pine forest to the “saddle”, a crossroads with a big borrow pit. I saw Transvolcanic Jay flocks three times, with a few close views. Painted Redstart, Brown-backed Solitaire and Hepatic Tanager were notable, but most of the walk was quiet with very few birds. The road is steep and sometimes surfaced with roughly cut rocks, not easy to walk. Crossing the road was a 100 km trail – “Maratón MTB Mascota”.

Below the saddle, another flock gave me views of Green Jay, Squirrel Cuckoo and Red-faced Warbler, one of eight additions to my Mexico life list. I’d planned to walk back to town, but the taxi driver passed me again later and gave me a lift. I was grateful for the ride after the long walk, and I was glad to be in a car when we encountered some loose cattle on the road.

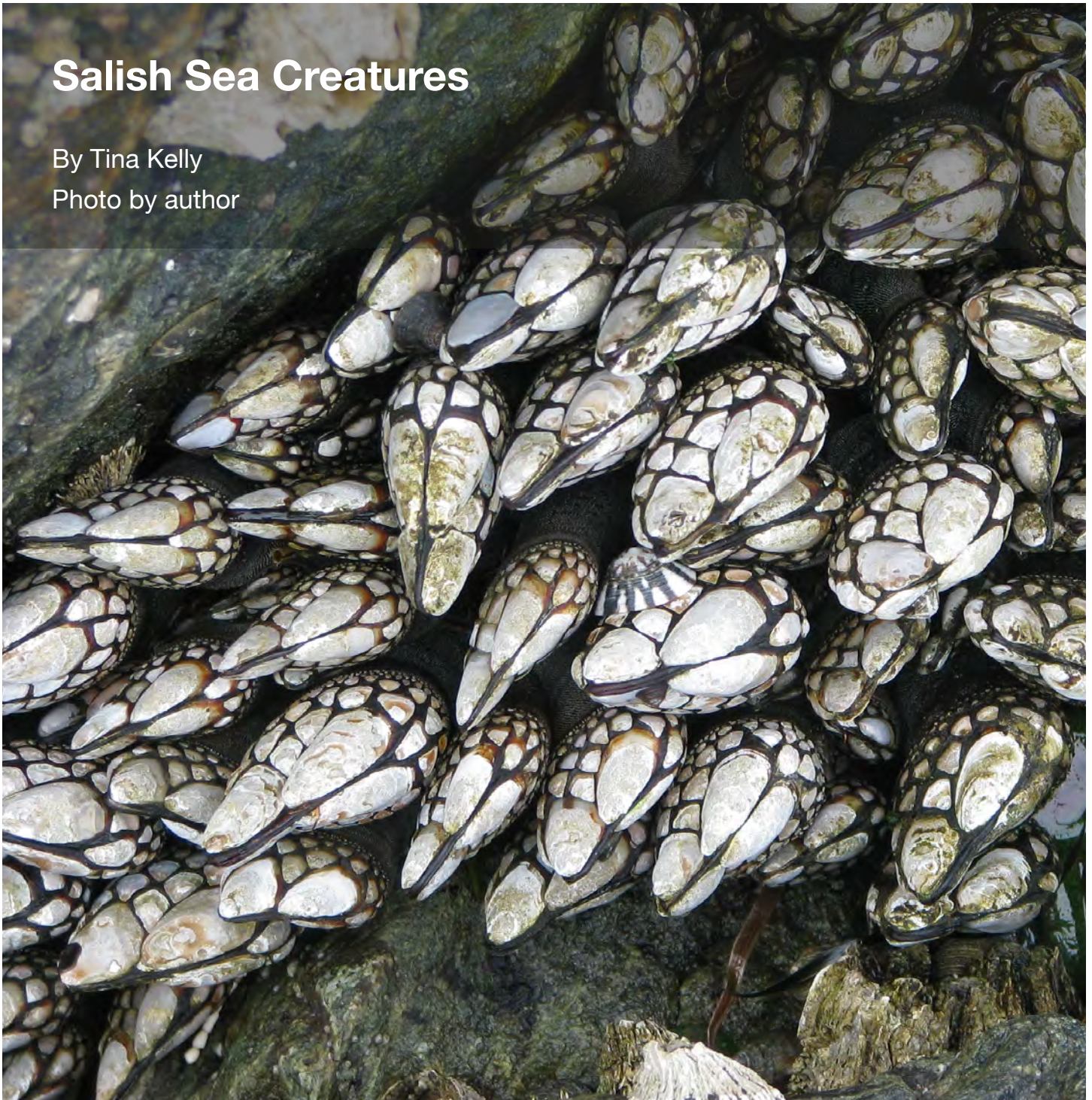
On my last morning I left early and walked up the La Bufa road, and soon a kind Mexican gave me a lift up to the saddle. At first the birds were quiet, but after it warmed up at about 9 am, another of the foraging flocks went through. It was very intense, all of sudden being surrounded by many birds. I saw Red-faced Warbler and Red-headed Tanager again, plus a pair of Acorn Woodpeckers. Along the two-hour walk back I saw Yellow-throated Warbler, Blue Mockingbird and Yellow Grosbeak.

It was wonderful to spend some time in the highlands, and there are still many birds, such as Elegant Euphonia and Mountain Trogon, to look for on a second visit.

# Salish Sea Creatures

By Tina Kelly

Photo by author

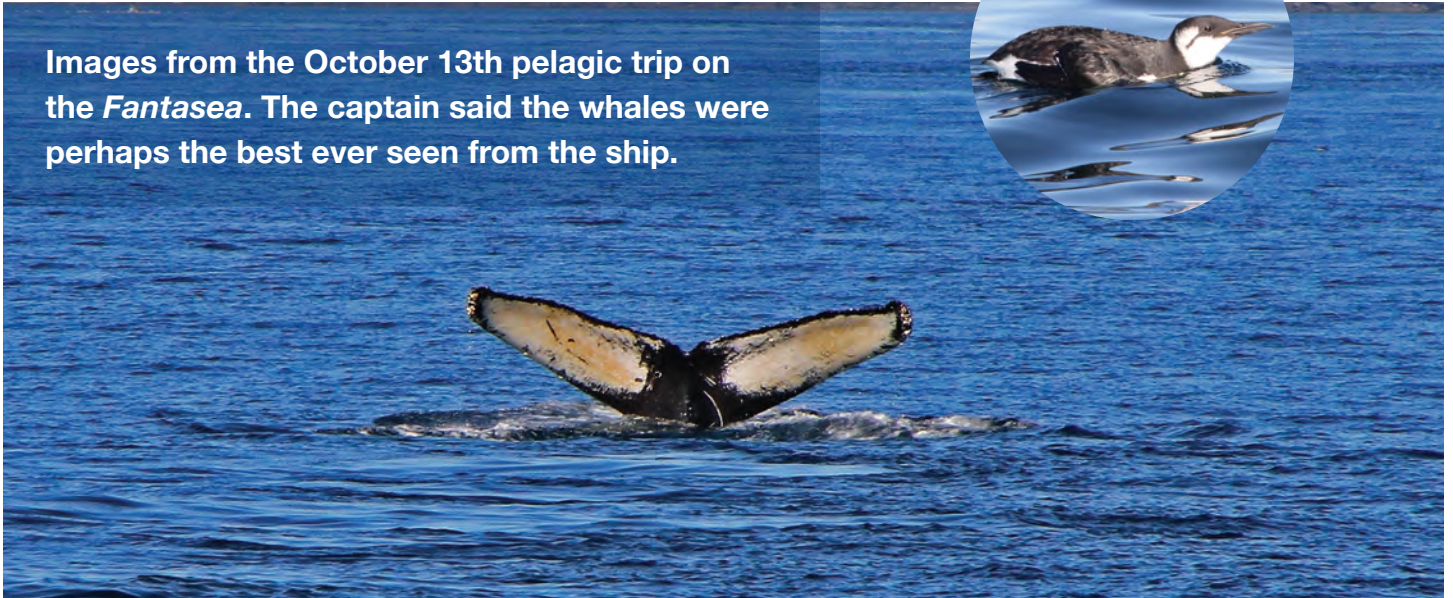


**W**ith a cursory look, Gooseneck Barnacles look nothing like a goose or the barnacles we know and (don't) love for their sharp exoskeleton and ability to quickly slice our skin open. Gooseneck Barnacles, *Pollicipes polymerus*, grow in tightly packed clusters—or colonies—sometimes tucked into cracks and crevices. With a closer investigation, you may see a long, dark, flexible leathery stalk; this perhaps inspired the gooseneck moniker. At one end they are strongly attached to a rocky substrate, or sometimes to California Mussels or each other, and at the other visible end, you'll see a series of white armored plates of various sizes.

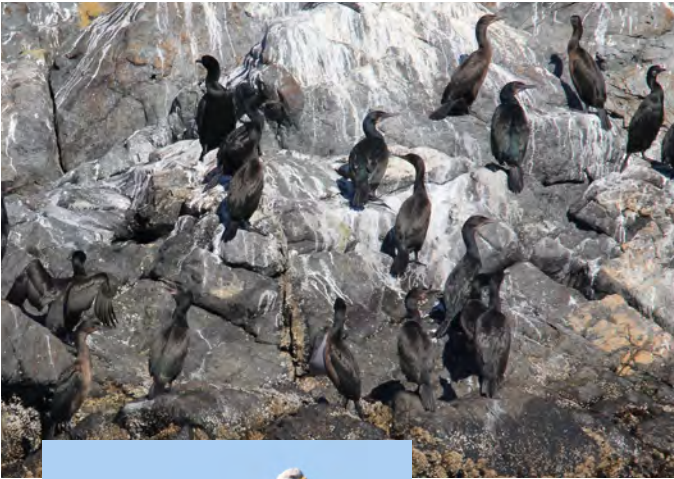
Look for Gooseneck Barnacles intertidally, in exposed areas with heavy wave action. Individuals in a cluster are often oriented in the same direction, facing the current. While exposed, these barnacles are sealed up tight to prevent desiccation. While submerged, feathery cirri extend out to capture small planktonic prey. The barnacles themselves are eaten by Glaucous-winged Gulls and Ochre Stars.

# October on the *Fantasea*: Birds and So Much More!

Images from the October 13th pelagic trip on the *Fantasea*. The captain said the whales were perhaps the best ever seen from the ship.



Humpback Whale tail. *Photo: Kay Steer.* Inset: Common Murre. *Photo: Rob Gowan.*



Above: Cormorants.  
*Photo: Rob Gowan.*

Left: Bald Eagles.  
*Photo: Rob Gowan.*



Breaching Humpback. *Photo: Kay Steer.*

# The Protected Places Declaration—A Natural Legacy

## A request from Nature Canada...

**W**e have a generational opportunity to protect the biologically diverse areas that we have grown up loving. Consider adding your voice to the movement towards protecting our land and waters by signing this declaration. We firmly believe in the wonder of Nature and are working to defend it for all Canadians. Every voice counts.

Planet Earth is a shared home for humankind and millions of other species and our fates and well-being are interdependent. Recognizing our responsibility to the whole, we, the Signatories, urge governments, civil society and business leaders across Canada to:

- Develop, initiate and invest in action plans to protect at least 17 percent of our lands and inland waters and 10 percent of our coastal and marine areas by 2020;
- Ensure that these action plans are designed and implemented to achieve ecologically representative, well-connected protected areas networks in every province and territory, based on both Indigenous knowledge systems and science; and
- Ensure protected areas identification and management decisions respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent.

We [Nature Canada] have signed this declaration:

- Because a mass extinction unlike any since the disappearance of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago has already resulted in global wildlife populations decreasing by over half since the 1970s;
- Because protected areas directly address the primary driver of extinction, habitat loss and degradation;
- Because a sustainable and equitable future requires that we address this threat and protect natural areas of sufficient size, diversity and number so that all life in Earth may continue and thrive;
- Because international agreements, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to free, prior and informed consent;
- Because protected areas established and managed by or in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples can serve to sustain and strengthen Indigenous knowledge and value systems and cultural practices;
- Because Canada signed the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity, an international treaty that aims to

conserve the diversity of life on Earth and ensure that its resources are sustainably and equitably shared by all;

- Because Canada and the other signatory countries to the Convention adopted the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which include Targets 11 and 18;

### **Target 11:**

By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes;

### **Target 18:**

By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.

- Because all of Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Ministers of Environment, Parks and Wildlife signed A Statement of Commitment to Complete Canada's Networks of Protected Areas in 1992, and this work remains unfinished;
- Because Canada has ample opportunity to protect natural areas and meet the Aichi targets given the country's vast size and relatively small human population;
- Because it is in our collective interest to maintain the many ecological, social, cultural, health and economic benefits that are derived from natural areas, including clean air, clean water, wild foods, genetic resources, nature-based development opportunities, and much more.

Our common future and the health of the planet depend on protected places.

Sign the Declaration:

<https://naturecanada.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b3e6701b306716a2a740b27a8&id=b29b19ca63&e=2a0abfc38f>

To see other organizations who have already signed check out our website.

<https://naturecanada.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b3e6701b306716a2a740b27a8&id=1dd9a4b062&e=2a0abfc38f>

# Food is Where You Find It!

By Giff Calvert

[Excerpts from *The Victoria Naturalist* October 1974, v.31, no. 2]

In a recent [issue] of the National Geographic there was an article about a Green Heron that had learned, on its own, to use artificial fish-food pellets to attract food. Not only that, but he was also apparently teaching a brother to do likewise!

This made me think of some other unusual techniques used by birds to get food. For example, the Egyptian Vulture's use of stones to crack open Ostrich eggs; or the habit of Britain's Blue Tit which, on the introduction of milk bottles with cardboard caps in that country, almost immediately learned to pry up these lids to get at the bream beneath.

There are many such instances of the adaptability of birds and mammals but I came across two new ones (new to me at least) in the past year. ...

One evening a Raven was heard making an unusual amount of aggravating noise, even for a Raven. We found him perched on a branch above a wasp's nest and at first thought he had been stung. Which may have been so but after only a brief rest, he took off and flew straight away from the nest for about 50 feet where he wheeled and returned at top speed, striking the nest and dislodging a large chunk of it. The chunk fell to

the ground with the Raven in hot pursuit. Landing beside the piece of nest, he began picking the wasp larvae from their cells.

After a few such attacks, the nest was a total loss. Examination of the pieces of the ground revealed that the comb had been picked clean of larvae.

The second instance involved a pair of Steller's Jays.

Behind our house is a large moss-covered expanse of rock which, in late summer, was used by grasshoppers as a feeding and sunning place. The moss was brown and the grasshoppers well-camouflaged and difficult to see except when disturbed or flying. It was apparently for this reason that the jays would slowly walk onto the rock where one of them would suddenly leap up about 3 feet, disturbing the grasshoppers in the process and making it easy for both jays to ounce on at least one grasshopper at each performance.

Such observation may not have great scientific import but they are interesting and often amusing.

*[Tell us YOUR interesting and unusual observations of animal behavior—not just birds. We'd love to hear about them!]*



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## Welcome to New VNHS Members

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

**Rebecca Verwolf**

Victoria  
*Birds, botany*

**Christine Bender**

Sidney  
*Botany, bird, oceanography*

**Forrest Hagen**

Victoria

**Mylon Marshall**

California, USA  
*Birding and other wildlife  
walks and hikes*

**Patrick Weston**

Victoria  
*Bird watching*

**Barbara Sutton**

Victoria  
*Birdwatching*

**Maureen Thomas**

**North Saanich**  
*Mushrooms, trees*

**Allan Galambos**

Victoria  
*Mycological*

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### The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society is seeking nominations to its Board of Directors

The Nature Sanctuary Society is a leader in the stewardship of healthy, diverse ecosystems, and provides an urban sanctuary that brings people and nature together.

The Society's mission is to foster understanding and appreciation of nature through direct experience. Its work is based on four values:

- Collaboration to accomplish together what cannot be done alone.
- Commitment to fostering community understanding of our work
- Excellence in conservation, education and innovation
- Respect for the land we steward, the ecosystems within it, and the people who care for it.

The Society is seeking enthusiastic new Board members with one or more of the following skill sets: legal expertise, financial acumen, natural history or natural area conservation background, fundraising experience, and an understanding of non profit organizations.

Directors are committed to the vision, mission and values of the Nature Sanctuary Society and serve as visionaries and ambassadors for the Society. Members of the Society elect the volunteer Board of Directors at its Annual General Meeting. Individuals interested in serving on the Board must be members in good standing of the Society, and be nominated by a current member in good standing.

Interested individuals are asked to submit a nomination form, as well as a resume outlining their related experience. For more information on being a member of the Board of Directors, contact Christine Morissette, Chair of the Nominating Committee, at [cmorissette@telus.net](mailto:cmorissette@telus.net). For a nominations form, contact Kathleen Burton, Executive Director, at [kburton@swanlake.bc.ca](mailto:kburton@swanlake.bc.ca).



## Leave a Lasting Gift

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

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

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# BULLETIN BOARD

## CRD's Tower Point Sea Watch for Winter Birds

Join Geoffrey Newell on Saturday, February 9, for this fun event (9:00-11:30am) at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park. Meet at the Tower Point parking lot off Olympic View Drive.

## Victoria Seedy Saturday

Presented by the James Bay Market Society, Seedy Saturday 2019 will be held on February 16, 10am-4pm at the Victoria Conference Centre. Admission \$8, under 16 free. For more information see <http://jamesbaymarket.com/SeedySaturday/>

## Countdown to the 2019 Great Backyard Bird Count

Save the dates (February 15-18, 2019) for the next GBBC, take a free eBird course, and try the new Explore Species tool. Share your sightings, enter the photo contest, and learn about this global event at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)

## Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

### Sundays January 13 and February 10 at 9:00 a.m.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory hosts guided bird walks at Outerbridge Park in Saanich on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The easy walks, suitable for people with mobility concerns, begin at the parking area off Royal Oak Drive. For dates and

details, see <http://rpbo.org> Download the bird list [http://www.rpbo.org/outerbridge\\_park.pdf](http://www.rpbo.org/outerbridge_park.pdf)

## 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>

## Start the New Year with 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](mailto:rpbo@rpbo.org)

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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.

## JANUARY

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### Saturday, January 5

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Birding Esquimalt Lagoon*

You are welcome to join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group, going to Esquimalt Lagoon and surrounding area. It's a great area to get a good leg-up on your new Year List if you keep one or to simply enjoy the amazing diversity of water birds and passerines that this area provides this early in the year. We have got counts in the 70s of species in past years. This trip will cover the ocean birds along the lagoon and will go into the fields back behind the lagoon to provide a variety of birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m. near the bridge. Esquimalt Lagoon is on Ocean Blvd, off the Old Island Highway. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

### Tuesday, January 8

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

#### *Zuul: an exceptional armoured dinosaur from Montana*

Armoured dinosaurs, like the iconic Ankylosaurus, are rarely found as complete skeletons, leaving many questions unanswered about their anatomy, evolution, and behaviour. An exceptional new specimen is helping to change that. Named *Zuul crurivastator*, after a monster from the 1984 film Ghostbusters, this amazing fossil preserves a nearly complete skeleton: a beautiful skull, its sledgehammer-like tail, and even the skin and spikes covering its back. The Royal BC Museum's new Curator of Paleontology, **Dr. Victoria Arbour**, will share her latest research on this outstanding ankylosaur and how it's changing our understanding of these unusual and charismatic dinosaurs. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Note: UVic parking is \$3.

## Sunday, January 13

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 1)

### *Birding via Gulf Island Ferry*

We are going to do a day trip on a Gulf Island Ferry and spend about 4 hours birding by boat. There are usually a lot of birds on the water at this time of year so we should get a good look at the water birds that we generally strain to see from land. We will leave on the 9:35 a.m. ferry and return to Swartz Bay about 1:15 p.m. The ferry will stop at Pender, Galiano, Mayne and again at Pender before returning to Swartz Bay. We don't get off the ferry at the stops. Bring a lunch as food services are minimal on the ferry. Don't forget your binoculars and dress warmly as we will be outside most of the time. Fare is less than \$15 for a foot passenger. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to confirm attendance or for more information.

## Tuesday, January 15

BOTANY NIGHT

### *Potato diversity and climate adaptation*

Potatoes are the world's fourth most important food crop and the most important non-grass crop. Despite the narrow choice of varieties used in western food systems, thousands of diverse varieties are grown around the world, offering thousands of choices for an ideal crop for local adaptation to climate change. Join **Richard Hebda** as he explains the potato Crop-Climate project and describes fascinating results from trials of biodiverse potato varieties across Canada. Learn about non-conventional varieties that yield as well and mostly better than the old standards. Hear the remarkable stories of two special B.C. potatoes. And maybe get an unusual spud to grow in your garden in the coming year. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

## Saturday, January 19

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### *Birding Saanichton Bay Park*

You are welcome to join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group at Saanichton Bay Park. As this is a birding hot-spot for wintering waterfowl, we should see loons, grebes, diving ducks and dabbling ducks. It is also a good area for passerines. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot off Mount Newton Cross Rd, just a short distance past the all ways stop with Lochside Drive. Watch for the Central Saanich Park sign on the left. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Wednesday, January 23

BIRDERS' NIGHT

### *Bird Banding in Mongolia*

**Jannaca Chick** of RPBO spent 2 weeks volunteering at the Khurkh Bird Ringing Station in northeastern Mongolia in May 2018. She then traveled for a week birding and camping. She will talk about her experiences and share photos of the country and some of the remarkable birds she saw there. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Presentation will follow announcements and a brief break. Note: UVic parking is \$3.

## Sunday, January 27

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### *Common Mosses of the Victoria Area*

Our trip leader **Kem Luther** has stated that if we learn just 20

of the common moss species in the area that we will recognize about 95 percent of the moss plants we see in the woods around Victoria. Kem will show us most of the twenty to get us started. You must pre-register as the number of participants will be limited to minimize habitat damage and allow optimal exchange of information. So register early. You are encouraged to bring a hand lens if you have one and dress for the weather. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 for further information such as time and place and to register.

## Monday, January 28

MARINE NIGHT

### *Ocean Acidification around Vancouver Island and its Potential Impact on Pteropods*

Human activity is causing a process, known as ocean acidification (OA), which makes it more difficult for marine organisms to build their shells or skeletons out of calcium carbonate. The pteropod, *Limacina helicina*, belongs to a group of marine snails commonly called "sea butterflies" that swim using two "wings" and are a major food source for other organisms, including pink salmon. **Matthew Miller** is a master's student in the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences at UVic. He will explain how OA is affecting organisms, and describe his current OA research on pteropods around Vancouver Island and potential solutions, including what you can do to help with this problem. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Note: UVic parking is \$3.

## FEBRUARY

## Saturday, February 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### *Birding Saxe Point and Macaulay Point Parks*

You are welcome to join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group who at Saxe Point Park and Macaulay Point Park. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the end of the road in Saxe Point Park. To reach the park, turn south off Esquimalt Rd on to Fraser St which ends in the park. We can enjoy the ocean birds as well as some that are tucked away close to shore in protected waters. There are also some good bush birds and often we see the resident Cooper's Hawk. Macaulay Point is more open and surprises there have included a Spotted Sandpiper and a Meadowlark, even at this time of year. One challenge is to find the California Quail who hide in the thickets. Call Rick at (250) 885-2454 or email Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca for more information.

## Sunday February 10

EVENT

### *20th Valentine Couples Birdathon*

The Valentine Couples Birdathon has at last reached adulthood. The birdathon is **21 years old** in 2019. This event gives birder couples a golden opportunity to share a morning of birding fun while engaging in light-hearted competition with others out to find as many bird species as can be crowded into a February morning. Whether by car, bicycle or on foot, couples count every species they can find in the Victoria checklist area between the hours of 6 a.m. and noon, Sunday, February 10. As usual, participants will gather immediately past noon at the Swan Lake Nature Centre to report on their hits and misses. As usual, the \$10-per-couple admission fee will go entirely

to supporting VNHS conservation efforts. Usual detail: the winners will get to see their names inscribed on the cherished Anderson Trophy. An array of other prizes will be on offer, too. To register contact Alan MacLeod [bigadore@gmail.com](mailto:bigadore@gmail.com)

## Tuesday, February 12

### NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

#### *Littered with Lizards—Pets as a Form of Pollution.*

Is there anyone in Saanich who has not seen a European Wall Lizard? It was the first exotic lizard to become established in our region. The second species, the Italian Wall Lizard, can be found just over the U.S. border on Orcas Island. Reptiles and amphibians are popular in the pet trade and many are abandoned each year. **Dr. Gavin Hanke**, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology at the Royal British Columbia Museum, will detail the diversity of herps released here in the last decade and present the latest on the European Wall Lizard in BC. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Note: UVic parking is \$3.

## Saturday, February 16

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### *Boundary Bay and Raptors*

Join us for a trip to Boundary Bay in Vancouver. We can expect to see large flocks of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. There should be time for a trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary as well. Bring a lunch and drinks as we will not be stopping for refreshments. Dress warmly as it can be windy near the water. We go rain or shine. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Lake Regional Park Sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:45 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. ferry sailing. We plan to return on the 5:00 p.m. sailing. You must pre-register by contacting Agnes. First 8 people to sign up have the option of coming in her van. Others to carpool by pre-arrangement as number of cars are limited. Cost to come in the van or carpool with others will be about \$70 for the day from Victoria. Contact Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or (250) 721-0634 to confirm attendance or for more information.

## Tuesday, February 19

### BOTANY NIGHT

#### *Plants of Western Australia*

Western Australia is an enormous and diverse area with a diverse flora to match. The ancient soils and millennia of stable climate have allowed evolution to run wild. Today many genera of plants contain hundreds of species. Orchids in their thousands of species are, perhaps, the best known of the plants but other groups that are less familiar are equally of interest. In addition to photographs of the plants **Ron Long** will give us details of pollination strategies that are hard to believe. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

## Sunday, February 24

### FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Lichens of the Victoria Area*

Details for this event are not yet finalized. Date, time and place are still to be determined. If you are interested in a Lichen outing around this date, pre-register as the number of participants will be limited to minimize habitat damage and allow optimal exchange of information. Once further details are available, then you can decide if you want to come. You are encouraged to bring a hand lens if you have one and dress

for the weather. Contact Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or (250) 721-0634 for further information and to register.

## Monday, February 25

### MARINE NIGHT

#### *Shellfish Archaeology in B.C.*

The intertidal zone is an exciting place, with many hardy creatures braving the crashing waves and hot sun to make homes in the rocky intertidal splash zone. Many shellfish make their home in the intertidal zone, from the spiky sea urchins and the fancy snails to the hardy clams and bright purple mussels. The food chains in the splash zone are complex and often involve birds and sea otters feasting on the creatures who make their homes there. **Meaghan Efford** is a graduate student working on shellfish archaeology in Barkley Sound, in particular looking at the dietary role of gooseneck barnacles to the First Nations people. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Note: UVic parking is \$3.

## Wednesday, February 27

### BIRDER'S NIGHT

#### *The Hummingbirds of British Columbia*

**Alison Moran** will talk about the hummingbirds we see in B.C., sharing some of what RPBO's Hummingbird Project has learned about their migration, habitat use and breeding. She will also describe recent research into Rufous Hummingbird diet and some of the team's investigations into hummingbirds in areas contaminated with agricultural pesticides. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Rm. 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic. Everyone welcome! Come early to socialize! Presentation will follow announcements and a brief break. Note: UVic parking is \$3.



  
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Red-naped Sapsucker. *Photo: Derrick Ditchburn.*