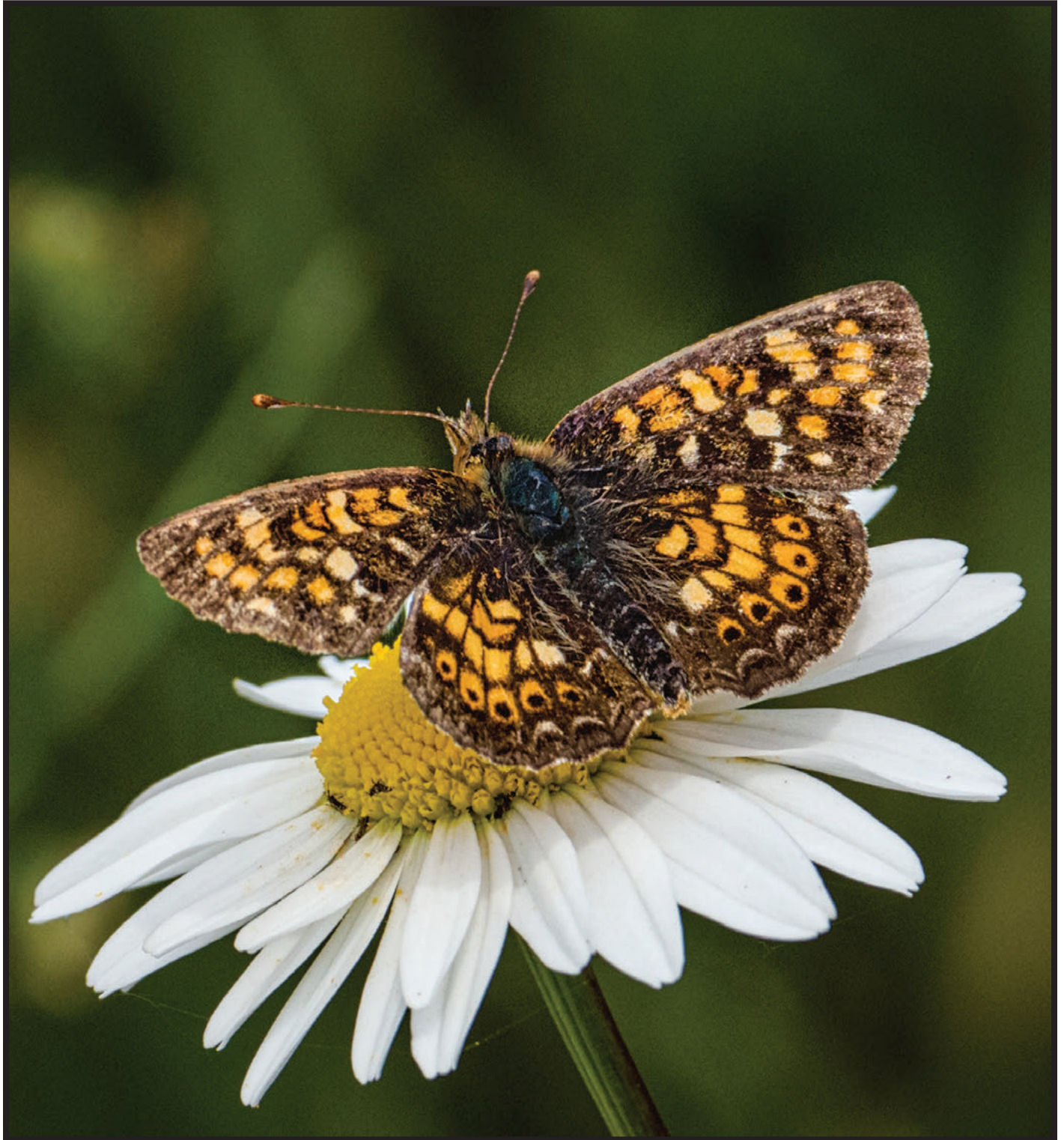




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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





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*less discount: Senior \$5 or Student \$10

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Deadline for next issue: February 1, 2020

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

Guidelines for Submissions

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

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

7.5" (2 columns) wide 2250 x 1600 pixels

3.5" (1 column) wide 1050 x 800 pixels

If you supply hardcopies, once scanned and input, hardcopy materials will be returned to the sender if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

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Ad Size	Price	Dimensions (in inches)
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Cover Image: Field Crescent. Photo: Gordon Hart.
(See article page eight.)

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I hope you take time to enjoy the beauty and magic of nature and take advantage of the variety of excellent presentations and field trips offered through VNHS!

You may think a butterfly is an odd choice of cover photo for the winter issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*. . .well, I saw it and it made me think of sunny warm days, and we can all use a bit of that feeling to combat the grey days. Beside which, I think it is a great picture—thanks, Gordon!

I hope you enjoy this issue, with articles about everything from bats to rats, birds to butterflies, and don't forget those cute veiled chitons (see *Salish Sea Creatures*, page 16). Each issue is different—I never know what I will receive. . .a bit like having Christmas six times a year. It is a great way to share your photos, drawings, and stories (short or long) with our members (and now that we have the older newsletters on our website, we can share more widely).

I said in my last Editor Note that you should not be surprised to see more bird idioms (by Melissa Mayntz <https://www.thespruce.com/bird-idioms-explained-386739>) in future issues. Well, here are a few fun ones:

1. **Graceful as a Swan**

Meaning: Elegant, beautiful, and sophisticated

The Birds: Swans are often symbols of romance and beauty because of their white plumage and the graceful curves of their long necks.

2. **Proud as a Peacock**

Meaning: Arrogant, vain, or prideful

The Birds: The peacock's stunning tail (actually its upper tail coverts) is seen as a symbol of pride or showing off, just as the bird uses its tail to court a prospective mate.

3. **As Scarce as Hen's Teeth**

Meaning: Limited or nonexistent

The Birds: Hens, like all birds, don't have teeth, so this idiom describes scarcity. Birds don't need teeth, however, as their bill shapes are adapted to different foods and foraging styles.

4. **As the Crow Flies**

Meaning: A straight-line path, the most direct route

The Birds: Birds do not rely on roads or established routes, and instead can fly direct to their destination, easily soaring above obstacles.

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

Enjoy the next couple of months...

Gail Harcombe

A Message from Your Board

Happy New Year to everyone from your Board of Directors! We hope 2019 saw you out in nature as often as possible, and if not, perhaps that can be your new year's resolution for 2020. It's always good to resolve to do things you know you will enjoy!

As of the December board meeting, we have added a new face to the board - join us in welcoming Liz Turner to the Board of Directors in the role of coordinating the Schools Program, officially titled VNHS's *Connecting Children to Nature Program*, since we involve many other groups besides school groups. Liz has been coordinating the program for a while now, and it is fitting to have her fill a board position in that important role. Despite the impacts of the strike in Saanich, in October and November, 95 students and 15 parents and teachers participated in the program. More VNHS volunteers would be welcome to help lead the various field trips, especially anyone with a marine interest - intertidal explorations are frequently requested.

In addition to being on the Board or helping with the Schools Program, there are many ways members help keep

the Society running smoothly. There are too many people to thank you all individually, but you know who you are! Just by way of example, the only way this magazine gets produced and to your door or inbox every two months is through the work of many volunteers: article writers, photographers, field trip and evening presentation coordinators, editor, mail-out elves, membership handling, advertisement billing, etc., etc. Even with the success of getting it to you each month, there is still room for more participation, as well as in all the other aspects of the organization. Please let our Volunteer Coordinator, Vicki Metcalfe, know if you have some time to contribute, and she will find a role for you.

Volunteers have helped the Society have a presence at various events recently, and more are coming up in the new year. Penney Edwards and Phil Lambert staffed a table at the Banff Film festival tour, and Penney represented the VNHS at a CRD Harbours Atlas User Group Workshop and will continue to attend these on our behalf. Susan Wilson has taken over monthly staffing of the VNHS table at Swan Lake for the Sunday special events your Society sponsors- thank you, Susan!

A major success of 2019 was online access to all the issues of the Society's magazine, dating back to 1944. Thank you to Adam Taylor for continuing to be our volunteer webmaster and seeing this effort through to completion. See them for yourself by going to <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?p=9388>. Indexing for the most recent magazines is a work in progress, so stay tuned.

A \$10,000 funding request was submitted to the Victoria Natural History Society for the Western Bluebird reintroduction project. At this point, we have committed to \$5000 and would like to see their plans for how the money will be used this coming year. Regular updates are provided to the membership via articles in this magazine and presentations at Birders' Night, so everyone can follow the progress of this important initiative. It is currently still focussed on the Cowichan Valley but with the hope that the birds will re-establish throughout their former range. For more information: <https://cowichanbluebird.wordpress.com/>

On the topic of supporting projects, the Society has sent in a letter of support for the continuance of a mesocarnivore project in the Jordan River area. Join us for the annual General Meeting in March to hear all about how Pacific Marten, American Mink, and Vancouver Island Ermine are doing in this region. See notice this page (left). We really hope to see many of you there for some sweets and socializing, a summary of the past year, and an excellent speaker. Cheers!



**VICTORIA NATURAL
HISTORY SOCIETY**

Notice of Annual General Meeting

**March 10, 2020 7:30 p.m.
Rm 159, Fraser Building,
University of Victoria**

**Evening presentation to follow AGM:
*Evaluating Furbearer Populations on
Southern Vancouver Island***

*Rory Fogarty, Mesocarnivore Project Biologist,
BC Ministry of Environment and
Climate Change Strategy*

*Learn about the study of coastal marten,
mink and ermine populations taking place
in the Jordan River area.*

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

VNHS Awards: Call for Nominations for 2020

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 Honorary 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, 2020. 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 Tom 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
2019 Marie O'Shaughnessy

VNHS Honorary Life Members

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



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Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Gulls

By Val George

Photos by author



Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*).

Gulls are placed by taxonomists in the family Laridae, along with terns and skimmers. Their global distribution is worldwide, breeding on every continent, including Antarctica. There are just over fifty species of gulls in the world. Close to half of these have been recorded in B.C.; nineteen are on the Victoria checklist.

Gulls present birders with some of the most challenging identification problems. Most of the species in our area go through several distinct plumage changes before reaching maturity at three or four years. Additionally, some change plumage in winter. Furthermore, to add to the identification difficulties some of our species commonly hybridize, leading to a variety of intermediate plumages. All these factors result in several dozen recognizably different plumages for just our nine regularly occurring species - and that doesn't even



Western Gull (*Larus occidentalis*).

account for the further ten rarities. Even some gull experts must sometimes admit to not being able to identify some birds with absolute certainty.

Most of our local gull species are colonial breeders. They usually nest on the ground, though some use trees or cliff ledges depending on the species. Usual clutch size is two to three eggs, with incubation taking three to four weeks. Another one to two months is required to fledge the young.

Our local gulls are omnivorous. They'll eat almost everything, from fish and other aquatic creatures to insects to anything they can scavenge from landfill sites to bread fed to them by us.

The most common gull in our area is the Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*). This species is present in considerable numbers throughout the year. It's the only species that breeds in our area, breeding in colonies on the ground or on cliff ledges. The Glaucous-winged Gull should be one of the easiest of our commonly occurring gulls to identify - and usually is - due to the lack of black or dark colouration in its wing tips. However, identification is sometimes complicated because this species regularly hybridizes with Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis*) and Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), resulting in some intermediate birds having dark tips to their primary feathers.

The next most common local species is probably the Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) which, though it doesn't breed here, is present in some numbers all year. Mew Gulls breed in Alaska, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and most of western B.C., nesting on rivers and lakes.

The Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*) is our most distinctive gull in appearance with its all dark plumage - unusual for gulls - and bright red bill in adult plumages. This species breeds locally in Mexico and disperses after breeding when many of them reach southern Vancouver Island; by late November or early December they've flown south again.

Bonaparte's Gull (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) is another common local gull. It's our smallest regularly occurring species. This species is fairly easy to identify when flying due to its tern-like flight as it daintily picks up small fish from the ocean surface or insects from the air at its nesting sites. It breeds across the northern interior areas of the continent. Unusually for the gull species we commonly see in our area, it normally nests in trees.

California Gulls (*Larus californicus*) are present in the Victoria area most of the year. This species is a colonial breeder, nesting on the ground on sparsely vegetated islands in inland lakes and rivers. It's widely distributed in western North America from the Northwest Territories to California.



Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*).

One other species is common in the Victoria checklist area: the Thayer's subspecies of the Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides thayeri*). This gull used to be considered a separate species from the Iceland Gull but was recently "lumped" with it. Iceland Gulls breed on cliff ledges in colonies in the arctic. They migrate south in winter and are then found in fair numbers along the Pacific coast. Three other species are regular - though not common - in our area: Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*); Herring Gull; and Western Gull.

The remaining ten species on the checklist are all classified as rare or accidental.



Bonaparte's Gull (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*).



California Gull (*Larus californicus*).

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Date: March 4, 7 to 9 pm

Location: UVic Campus **Fee:** \$28 plus GST

Backyard Botany

Date: April 18, 10 am to noon

Location: UVic Campus **Fee:** \$28 plus GST

Love Them or Loathe Them: Insects in Human Culture - Series

Date: May 23 to June 6, 10 am to noon

Location: UVic Campus **Fee:** \$79 plus GST

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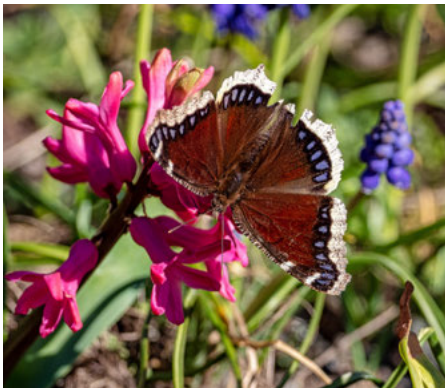
2019 Butterfly Count Report

By Gordon Hart
Photos by author

The Victoria 2019 butterfly season had an average number of species and butterflies, at least for recent years. Although some butterflies are always seen in March and April, we decided this year to have five monthly counts, and butterfly walks from May to September. Even without an April count, 28 species were recorded on the five counts, an average number for the Victoria area. The total number of individuals counted was similar to or greater than previous years, after correcting for April. Again this year, there were no Two-banded Checkered Skippers, Milbert's Tortoiseshells, or Western Pine Elfins reported on the counts. They can still be found occasionally in the Greater Victoria area, but not as reliably as a few years ago. The only two Mylitta Crescents were seen by Jeremy Tatum near Millstream Road in the Highlands. They used to be fairly common in various locations in Victoria, such as the Blenkinsop Valley. Field Crescents were reported again from Central Saanich, but they are not in the count area, which is the Christmas Count Circle for Victoria. May and June are always the biggest months, with 18 and 17 species recorded this year, declining to 14 species in July. By September, with

the warm dry weather, there were few butterflies to be found, although six species were counted, including 12 Painted Ladies and 172 Cabbage Whites. A few butterflies were seen in October on nice days, and a Cabbage White was seen on November 1 by Kirsten Mills. On November 17, Anne-Marie Hart spotted a fresh California Tortoiseshell in the Highlands area of Victoria, which at the time of writing, was the last butterfly of the year.

The 2020 butterfly season will soon be here with the first sightings on sunny days in early spring. Monthly butterfly walks will begin in April or May, so watch the VNHS calendar in The Victoria Naturalist or on the website, http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518. To add your name to the reminder list for the walks or the counts, please email Gordon Hart at butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca. New participants are welcome. Binoculars are helpful, especially those with close focus ability. We can also direct you to some resources for identifying local butterflies. To keep up on sightings of local invertebrates, including butterflies, be sure to check the InvertAlert, coordinated by Jeremy Tatum, on the VNHS website at <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?cat=8>.



Mourning Cloak.



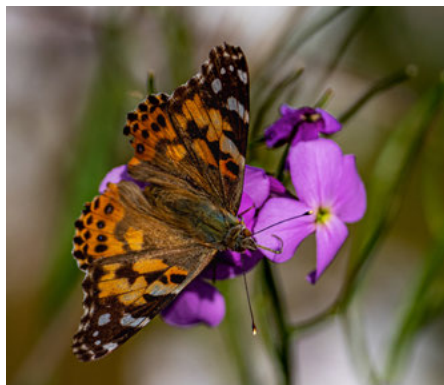
Cedar Hairstreak.



Green Comma.



Moss' Elfin.



Painted Lady.



Red Admiral on asters.

Butterfly Count Results 2019	May	June	July	August	September	TOTAL
Anise Swallowtail	5					5
American Lady	1	1				2
Brown Elfin	4		1			5
Cabbage White	460	852	687	538	172	2709
California Tortoiseshell		1	1		2	4
Cedar Hairstreak	12					12
Common (Van Isl) Ringlet. "Large Heath"	47	27	3	49		126
Common Woodnymph						
European (Essex) Skipper		240	18			258
Field Crescent						
Great Arctic						
Green Comma		3				3
Grey Hairstreak	2	1	2	2		7
Lorquin's Admiral	2	339	124	17	1	483
Milbert's Tortoiseshell						
Monarch						1
Moss' Elfin	1					1
Mourning Cloak	4	2				6
Mylitta Crescent			2			2
Orange Sulphur						
Painted Lady	21	50	63	29	12	175
Pale Swallowtail	21	21				42
Pine White			131	20		151
Propertius Duskywing	8					8
Purplish Copper		1		2		3
Red Admiral		1	1		2	4
Sara's Orangetip	4					4
Satyr Comma	7	1				8
Silvery Blue	2					2
Sulphur species						
Two-banded Checkered Skipper						
Westcoast Lady		1		1		2
Western Pine Elfin						
Western Spring Azure	90	1	1			92
Orange Sulphur						
Clouded Sulphur						
Sulphur sp.-probably Clouded						
Western Tiger Swallowtail	47	242	49			338
Woodland Skipper			21	455	4	480
Total	738	1784	1104	1113	193	4932
Number of Observers per month	10	11	13	12	8	
Number of Reports	25	32	29	22	19	127
Number of species	18	17	14	9	6	28

2020 marks the 7th year of the BC Community Bat Program



Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) seeks residents who want to become stewards of bats in our effort to protect the animal across the province

By Paige Erickson-McGee and Mandy Kellner



Bat Group at Bat Training Night. *Photo:* Estraven Lupino Smith.

The BC Community Bat Program is a network of community bat projects across B.C. that promotes bat conservation. Goals of the network are to:

- 1) increase the number of known roost sites in human-made structures through public education;
- 2) encourage landowners and businesses to protect bat roost sites or use bat-friendly exclusion methods;
- 3) promote a province-wide Citizen Science 'Annual Bat Count' to engage the public and detect population declines due to White-nose Syndrome and other threats; and
- 4) enhance bat habitat in human-altered landscapes by encouraging the installation and monitoring of bat-houses.

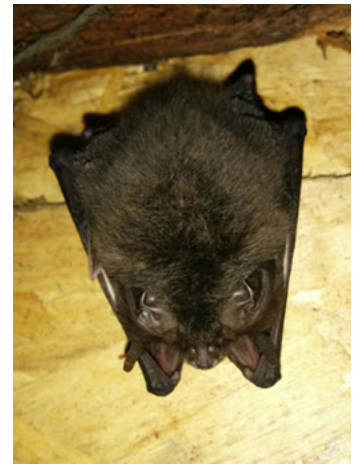
The provincial BC Community Bat Program (BC CBP) began in 2014, modelled on the successful Kootenay Community Bat Program, in an effort to increase bat awareness and conservation across B.C., while reducing redundancy in conservation efforts. Since that time, the program has grown to encompass the entire province. As awareness of bats and the conservation crises they face has grown, so too has interest and demand on our program.

The BC CBP continues to work to provide bat education and to promote on-the-ground conservation actions for bats in human structures. The organization envisions a future where bats are not viewed as pests but as a valued ecosystem component. The new Bat-friendly Communities Program encourages local stewardship groups and municipalities to adopt higher-level bat-friendly practices at a local government level.

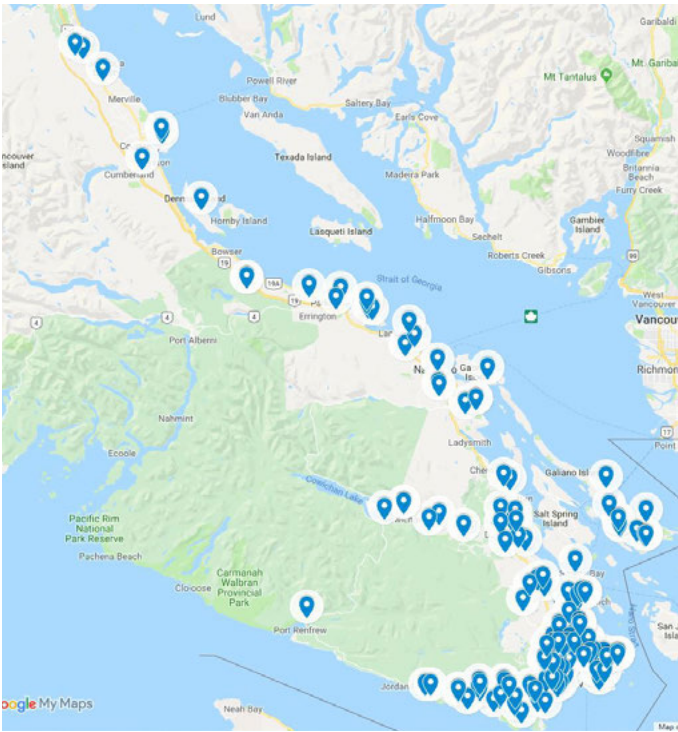
Implemented by established stewardship organizations with direct landowner contacts in each region, the importance of this initiative has been widely recognized by the BC Government and BC Bat Action Team, and support for the program is a high priority action item in the BC Bat Action Plan. Nationally, this program is a model for Community Bat work and outreach efforts across the country, and BC CBP currently participate in several national and international working groups on topics including bat boxes, public outreach and communication, and industry outreach.

Between 2016 and 2019, the BC CBP accomplished the following:

- responded to over 6800 phone and email inquiries about bats
- identified 829 bat roosts
- protected 122 colonies of bats by ensuring safe exclusion methods
- installed 765 bat boxes
- counted 495,961 bats at 389 roost sites
- engaged 1136 members of the public in the Annual BC Bat Count
- connected with 256 companies that may come in contact with bats in buildings (pest control, roofers, builders, chimney sweeps, realtors)



Townsend's Big-eared Bat during hibernation. *Photo:* Paige Erickson-McGee.



Bat Map Active Roosts May 2019.

- presented information on bats and bat-friendly practices at the provincial Structural Pest Management Association of conference
- presented 1-hour and ½ day in-person workshops to industries that may come in contact with bats

“The main challenge in the last three years is the overwhelming increase in community need and the demands on the BC Community Bat Program” says Mandy Kellner, provincial coordinator for the BC CBP. “In the last four years, the number of requests for assistance or information regarding bats has more than doubled. Human development in B.C. continues to destroy bat habitat at an alarming rate, with additional pressure on bats that roost in human structures because of inaccurate biases against bats.”

Furthermore, in the last three years, the deadly bat disease White-Nose Syndrome was found in Washington State, just 150 km from the B.C. border. It is expected to be confirmed in this province in the very near future. More data about bat habitat and populations are desperately needed, and without provincial Species At Risk legislation (not yet in place for B.C.), bats are vulnerable to habitat destruction. Increasing awareness of industries that may come in contact with bats has been identified in the national Recovery Strategy for bats at risk (Environment Canada 2015); we see this as a key avenue to assist in protecting and reducing harm to bats that use buildings. The BC CBP continues to rise to the challenge with minimal staff and dedicated volunteer team, focusing on voluntary land protection, working with residents to become habitat stewards and follow best practices in protecting native species including our bats. However, our capacity is limited, and we are thus investigating the online-training approach to increase our reach.

In 2020, the BC Community Bat Program hopes to promote the year as “The Year of the Bat”, and the 7th year the provincial bat stewardship program has been running. Locally, it is Habitat Acquisition Trust that leads volunteers into the dark to count the bats. You can sit in on a talk *All About Bats* by Paige Erickson-McGee, Stewardship Coordinator of Habitat Acquisition Trust in February on Natural History Night. See the Calendar for more information.



Visit bcbats.ca for more bat information, or to donate to bat stewardship, visit hat.bc.ca/donate. Questions about bats, bat houses, and volunteering to count bats? Email bat@hat.bc.ca.

(Left) Rocket Bat Box. Photo: Paige Erickson-McGee.



(Below) Silver-haired Bat in wood shed.



Group attending HAT Bat talk. Photo: Paige Erickson-McGee.

Rat Poison Is Killing Much More Than Rats

By Melissa Hafting



Barn Owl. Photo: Melissa Hafting.

Rat poison is silently killing more owls than ever. We focus a lot on climate change, urban development, and habitat loss that does put a lot of pressure on our owls, but sometimes we forget about the effects of widely-used rat poison. We tend to think only owls or raptors close to cities or farmland (human activity) are affected, but new research out of California has proven that rodenticide had wider-reaching effects - Northern Spotted Owls are now dying from it. Northern Spotted Owls live in old growth forests usually quite removed from human activity, and this endangered bird now has one more thing to fight against.

The secondary anti-coagulants, such as bromadiolone, are the silent killers that we don't talk enough about. Even the first generation rat poison like warfarin that everyone can buy is killing not only our rats but our owls. Too many pest companies and people are using rat poison to get rid of rodents. Some fail to realize though, that it doesn't kill the rodent instantly. They die a slow painful death and then an owl who sees a sluggish rodent on the ground takes the easy prey. The owl ingests that prey and then they too die a slow painful death.

The city of Richmond and other municipalities give out free rat poison in bait boxes to all residents suffering with rodent problems. These bait boxes are deemed safe because Raccoons and pets can't get into the poison, but the rats and mice eat the poison and come and go while doing so. The rodents die slow deaths and become easy prey for owls, hawks, raptors, Raccoons and Coyotes, and even house pets like cats and dogs.

There have been numerous news stories in the lower mainland about this problem with owls. Recently, Barred,

Great Horned, Northern Saw-whet and Barn owls have been most affected locally. Barn Owls in the lower mainland are declining so fast that extirpation is a real threat. The federal government announced they would upgrade the owl to "threatened" in the Species at Risk Act as per the recommendation of The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

The Vancouver Sun and other news media outlets like Global, CTV and CBC news, along with Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society (OWL) have been doing many interviews on this situation. Read this scary statistic excerpted from the Vancouver Sun:

"A 2009 Environment Canada study of the livers of 164 barn, barred and great horned owls from B.C. and the Yukon found evidence of at least one anticoagulant rodenticide in 70 per cent of cases. Barn owls are a threatened species in B.C. Of those, more than 41 per cent contained more than one rodenticide, most often the second-generation poisons, including bromadiolone, which are now restricted to indoor use or against the outside walls of dwellings, including farm buildings and restaurants

Health Canada explained in a news release that anticoagulant rodenticides fall into two categories: first-generation products (chlorophacinone, diphacinone, warfarin) and second-generation products (brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone)."

Rat poison should never be placed near wildlife areas, but there is rat poison and bait boxes at a federal government building right beside the bird sanctuary Maplewood Flats. Three owls died in Maplewood in 2018 - two Northern Pygmy Owls and one Northern Saw-whet Owl. They died from confirmed rat poison ingestion. Unfortunately, it was legal to have the rat poison placed beside this bird sanctuary at Environment Canada's Pacific Environmental Science Centre. Many birders wrote to them and they said they had removed the rat poison from inside the boxes, but the bait boxes still remain.

In an Audubon magazine article, Pierre Mineau, an ecotoxicologist from Environment Canada's National Wildlife Research Centre, said "There are high levels of exposure in every species we've looked at. Not just in the rodent eaters but in the accipiters [which eat mostly birds]. I wouldn't have expected that. It's still a mystery how this stuff is moving through terrestrial food chains. Insects may be picking it up and passing it to the songbirds that eat them. That might account for the accipiter [poisoning] connection."

In May 2019, Owl stated to the Vancouver Sun Newspaper that 100 owls had been brought to them in the last year - most likely died from rodenticide poisoning. Rat poison is a cheap, easy and effective fix. It is now time for us to understand that



Barred Owl that died from rat poison in Vancouver in October 2019. *Photo: Robyn Hunt.*

our cheap easy fix is coming with a terrible cost and we can no longer sit idly by and allow our birds to suffer.

Recently in Vancouver, a three-year-old Barred Owl went blind from the ingestion of secondary rat poison. The owl could not hunt properly and was getting mobbed by crows and coming too close to people. He was sick and could not be released back into the wild. OWL decided to humanely euthanize it. It was especially sad for one of the young birders in my young birder program, after she had been following him in her neighbourhood all summer.

We all owe a huge thanks to OWL who tirelessly help raptors that are poisoned and injured. They have been trying for years to get the word out about the dangers of rodenticide (and also lead poisoning from hunting) use on the news and in media, but laws have not changed.

Hopefully the government will amend regulations so that rat poison is illegal for all, even professionals. Unfortunately, many city municipalities still use rat poison bait boxes. I have seen them in peoples' homes, businesses, the Vancouver Aquarium, you name it. They are everywhere, and yes, we have a rodent problem. The more people a city has, the more rats it will have.

The best way to combat this is to manage the attractants of rodents.

- Remove bird seed from your backyard or at least clean up the waste and spilled seed on the ground daily.
- Use seed catching trays and put feeders up on poles with baffles.
- Make sure you don't put food scraps in the garbage or leave garbage out.

- Make sure your garbage is secure and make sure you seal up your home so the rodents cannot get in. They can get in the smallest of spots so use preventative measures to decrease problems.

Some residents use glue traps, but they are cruel. The animal dies a terrible death and other animals like skunks and squirrels and birds can get trapped and die. Even bug glue traps kill birds (the TrapStik being the worst) that has killed many songbirds like chickadees in Canada.

The most humane way to remove rodents is by trapping and releasing, but this just creates a problem for someone else. Although you think you are not being cruel by letting them loose in a forest, you actually are. The best way to remove rodents is to use snap traps. However, snap traps should only be used inside the home because outdoors they can trap birds, squirrels and skunks. It is not pleasant, but it kills the animal instantly.

There is a new option for outdoor use which is a CO2 canister made by a company called Goodnature that kills the rat with carbon monoxide poisoning. It is an extremely effective, quick and humane tool that can be purchased in Canada at the website automatictrap.com. Other effective outdoor traps are electrocution traps and the application of store-bought Coyote urine to deter rats.

Too many animals are dying from rodenticide poisoning. Hopefully attitudes will slowly change and the message will trickle through. Some things you can do to help are to please stop using rat poison and tell all you know to stop using it as well. Many bird and animal lives will be saved if the government would deregulate the use and people would stop using it.

We need to continue to write our MPs, MLA's, Mayors, Ministry of Environment and Environment Canada so that things change. Numerous letters have been written, but little has yet to come of it. It will take persistence and a strong movement of all us birders and nature lovers coming together to make that happen. For example, Delta has no formal policy, but after complaints, they removed several rat poison bait boxes around the concession stand at Boundary Bay Regional Park (an area rich with owls). Change is never easy, so we must not give up. In my opinion, rodenticides need to be banned across Canada, and people need to use other methods of removing rats.

We need to do our part to save owls and other raptors from a sad fate. We should also not forget the effects rat poison can have on Racoons, Coyotes, bears, Fishers, Cougars, dogs and even house cats that eat rats or mice. As well, rodenticide attracts non-target species such as voles, shrews and deer mice. None of these animals should suffer due to human use of rat poison and humans attracting the rodents to the area in the first place.

Prevention is key. Remember, there is a consequence to rat poison use and it is not only the rat that pays the price. In a world where animals are under so much pressure from us already, let's do our part and not put any more on them.

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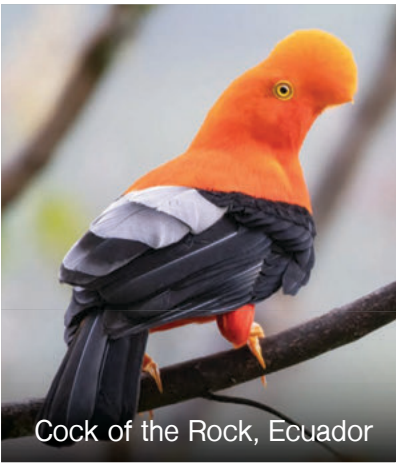
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Salish Sea Creatures: Veiled Chiton

By Tina Kelly

Photos by author (taken at Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea, Sidney, BC)

Veiled threat takes on new meaning when it comes to the Veiled Chiton (*Placiphorella velata*). While many chitons are herbivores, grazing away on algae, this chiton species is a carnivore and actively traps prey. Circling the chiton's eight boney plates is muscular tissue called a girdle. On most chitons, this girdle has a consistent width; on a Veiled Chiton, a section of the girdle—the veil—can be 1.5 times wider than the rest. The chiton sits with its “veil” raised; should a small crustacean pass by, this veil drops and pins it down to be devoured.

Look for this chiton along exposed and high current, rocky shores where coralline algae is prevalent. Lucky beachcombers may find it at an extreme low-tide, divers may spot it as deep as 20 m. Look carefully, their shells mottled with pink, brown and blue, and their pink girdle rimmed with bristles or setae, all contribute to their ability to camouflage.



Dorsal surface of a Veiled Chiton.



Ventral surface of a Veiled Chiton.



Veiled Chiton with trap set (veil raised).



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UVic Observatory Trip October 10

VNHS members had a very enjoyable evening on Thursday October 10. We were lucky to have VNHS member and UVic Astronomy instructor, Dr Karun Thanjavur, lead us on a private tour of the University of Victoria Observatory in the Bob Wright Centre. We had a few minutes of discussion before going out on the roof where several telescopes were set up, and we enjoyed seeing some planets as well as interesting stars. Then we went inside to warm up and ask more questions. After that, we got to go up to the large telescope (it is mostly enclosed so warmer than the first part of the tour). A most enjoyable couple of hours just as it was getting dark.

If you missed this tour, you might wish to go to one of the Astronomy Open House evenings. These are mostly every Wednesday from 8–10 pm from September to April (except last two weeks of December). Choose a clear night for the best viewing. The tours are operated by Astronomy students. For more details, consult the web site <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/arc/outreach/astronomy-open-house/index.php>. No need to reserve. Check the parking instructions and remember to dress warmly for the outside part of the tour.



UVic Observatory Trip. Photo: D. Lynn.

HAT Annual General Meeting & Mingle

Location:

Hatley Castle Drawing Room

Royal Roads University

2005 Sooke Road, Colwood



Date:

Thursday, 30 January 2020

Snacks & Socializing at 6:00 pm

Meeting from 6:30 pm - 8 pm

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HAT's Annual General Meeting 2020

Photo by: Monique Anstee

Shooting Birds Can Be Fun...With a Camera

By Enid Lemon

The equipment might be very different, but the thinking is the same today.

[Excerpts from article in The Victoria Naturalist, Vol.32, No. 7 March 1976. Contact the editor for the full article]

“The great points about successful natural history photography are the possession of suitable apparatus to work with, an aptitude for taking care in stalking timid creatures, and plenty of patience and determination to wait for and get what is wanted in spite of obstacles.”

This was written by Richard Kearton in “With Nature and a Camera” published in 1897. His message will hold forever. But how different is the “apparatus” of today. In their day the pioneers carried heavy and awkward equipment—plate cameras, cumbersome tripods and other weighty and fragile photographic hardware. Today [1976] we use lightweight cameras and the film comes in cassettes weighing a few ounces.

Before starting a bird “shooting” expedition, a few “musts”, the basic ethics, should be noted. The interests of the bird come first, particularly when working at a nest. Here the camera bearer is taking advantage of the parental instincts of his subject; carelessness or lack of consideration can be disastrous.

Always leave the area as you found it. Do not leave a trail to the nest. And be sure to “fluff up” any vegetation you trampled down.

Remember, too, there are only a few days when photography is possible close to a nest. Young birds should not be “shot” when there is a possibility of their getting a chill. Be sure the nestlings are well covered with down or, preferably, with the juvenile feathers beginning to appear before setting up the photography. Another danger is that of the young birds leaving the nest before they are ready. Take the pictures after the fuzzy

youngsters have been fed, when the adult bird is about to leave the nest.

Equipment

...Your tripod should be rigid and strong. Never sacrifice rigidity for lightness. An unsteady tripod is useless. The type with a centre elevating post is not recommended because it is amazing how that post can shake. ...

Going through the bush with a tripod can be maddening. Three legs hanging behind you have a wonderful knack of catching the shrubbery. ...

Clothing and Blinds

Birds can see red, green, and yellow, but blue appears as grey to them. Therefore wear blue or drab coloured clothing. With your camera set up, you will need one of the most important items in a bird photographer’s “bag of tricks”—a blind. It need be only a simple affair. ... Don’t forget a light and comfortable folding seat. You may be in your burlap house for hours. Birds apparently cannot count, so if possible have a companion walk with you to the blind and when you are “in situ” have him move away.

Birds seldom take notice of a person in a car, and the vehicle serves as a good blind. Be sure, however, not to make any quick movements. Have a window open before approaching your “shooting” area and have your camera and lens ready for action. ...

Should you experience frustration with birdlife—and this can happen—remember fungi, flowers and marine life captured on film can also be most rewarding. They don’t fly away!



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Welcome to New VNHS Members

Our Society grew by 21 members since the last issue.

The following have agreed to have their name published in this Welcome section.

Kim K. Hollingsworth

Victoria
birds and botany

**Charlotte Carone
and**

Gwenna Moss

Victoria
birding

Wendy Lynden

Brentwood Bay
birding

Diane Wolfe

Victoria

Louise Gobert

Victoria
*golf, walks, knitting, reading, and
yoga*

David Macdonald

Victoria
painting, photography

Valerie Wishlow

Saanichton
Bird watching, hiking

Paul deNiverville

Victoria
birding

LETTERS

Dear VNHS Board and Members,

Pollinator Partnership Canada (P2C) thanks you for your generous donation to the Youth Pollinator Squad (YPS)! Your donation will help us provide the Squad members with training, materials, and on-going support and mentorship as they learn about pollinators, monitor pollinators in the city, and share their knowledge with the community.

We invite the VNHS to participate in the YPS program

through attendance in the training sessions and Squad meetings. We will keep the VNHS up to date on YPS training, meetings, events, and outcomes. Please contact P2C at the email below with any questions regarding this program.

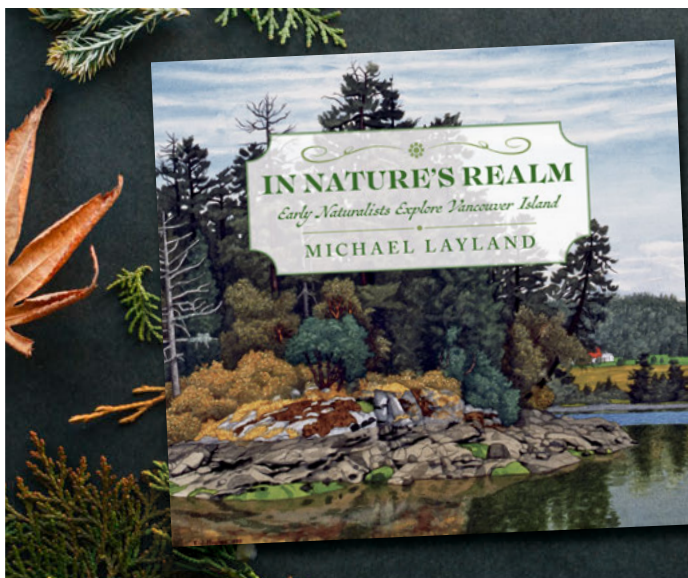
Sincerely,

Lora Morandin, PhD

Western Canada Program Director

Pollinator Partnership Canada

lm@pollinator.org



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BULLETIN BOARD

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

January 12 and February 9 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. These 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

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 <https://www.swanlake.bc.ca/programs/adult-programs-2/>

Enjoy the outdoors and contribute to Citizen Science, no matter where you are—at home or traveling

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count 14-17 February, 2020. A four day annual event that provides a snap shot of where birds are around the world, last year there were **6699** species recorded and **204,921 checklists submitted!** It is taking place. People are asked to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter

their sightings at BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track changes in bird populations on a massive scale. Birds Canada is proud to be a partner in the Great Backyard Bird Count, a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. For instructions, see http://gbbc.birdcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2016Updates_English_DownloadableInstructions.pdf For last year's results, see <https://gbbc.birdcount.org/all-summaries/2019-gbbc-summary/>.

Know your bird sounds...not just their songs!

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. To help year-round birding, buy yourself or a birder friend 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. For information or purchase (discount for RPBO members), contact 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 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, one block south of the foot of Bowker Ave on the waterfront (off Beach Drive) at 9:00 a.m. or at the foot of Bowker Ave at 9:30 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.

JANUARY

Saturday, January 4

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Esquimalt Lagoon

You are welcome to join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group who will be 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 70's 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.

Sunday, January 12

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. 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. Plan to arrive early as parking is crowded. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to confirm attendance or for more information.

Tuesday, January 14
NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

Death Cap Mushrooms in B.C.

January's presentation will fan VNHS members' inherent mycophobia by focusing on the introduced Death Cap mushroom (*Amanita phalloides*). The evening will begin with a quick review of mushroom biology. We'll also consider important questions such as: how did this species arrive on our shores; how and why is it becoming more widespread and abundant on southern Vancouver Island; and how long before it kills us all (and all of our pets also)? **Andy MacKinnon** is a retired forest ecologist, and President of the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

Saturday, January 18

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Saanichton Bay Park

You are welcome to join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group who will be going to 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.

Tuesday, January 21

BOTANY NIGHT

How I Spent My Summer Holidays (with apologies to W.O. Mitchell)—three weeks of botanizing in southern Namibia and Richtersveld National Park, South Africa.

In August and September 2019, **Mark Fraker** accompanied two botanists for an exploration of the plant life of southern Namibia, including Fish River Canyon, and Richtersveld National Park in South Africa's Northern Cape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This region is the source of a number of our cultivated ornamental plants, such as members of the genera *Pelargonium*, *Osteospermum*, *Nemesia*, and *Gladiolus*. In this talk, Mark will describe their travels, with a focus on species of particular interest, such as *Kissenia capensis*, *Welwitschia mirabilis*, aloes, and quiver trees. A highly unusual flora, with a large proportion of endemics, has developed in this extremely arid and forbidding environment. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Wednesday, January 22

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Bugs & Birds: Parasitism on local passerines

Birds can be hosts to a number of interesting parasites that often go unnoticed by casual bird watchers. Join **Samuelle Simard-Provencal** from Vancouver Island University to have a close up look at what kind of bugs some of our local birds are carrying and the impacts associated with these parasites. Samuelle will be giving us an update on a couple projects, including her undergraduate research on the parasites carried by the parasites of birds! We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Come early to socialize! Presentation begins after VNHS announcements and coffee. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

Sunday, January 26

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 27

MARINE NIGHT

Marine snails: shape changes during development and evolution

Gastropod molluscs ("snails") have evolved feeding structures to utilize a diversity of food sources. Some gastropods have retained the ancestral pattern of grazing on algae, while others have become suspension feeders, sediment feeders, or predators. Remarkably, however, this diversity has occurred despite the fact that most gastropods begin life as a free-swimming, planktonic larva that must feed on microalgae. **Dr. Louise Page**, Department of Biology, UVic will explore three questions: 1) how is the larval feeding system of gastropods transformed into the radically different feeding systems of juvenile & adult gastropods; 2) how is this transformation accomplished so quickly, even in predatory gastropods with highly complex feeding systems; and 3) has the developmental system contributed to the rapid evolutionary diversification of predatory gastropod feeding systems. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 1

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Birding Saxe Point and Macaulay Point Parks

You are welcome to join the VNHS Saturday Birding Group who will be going to Saxe Point Park & 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 9

EVENT

22nd Annual Valentine Couples Birdathon

This event delivers the gift of a morning of birding with your very own valentine. Join other valentine couples out to find as many species as they can crowd into the six-hour window, 6 a.m. to noon. Some duets do their counting on foot, others ride,

many do it by car. No one ever complains about lack of fun. As usual we meet afterwards at the Swan Lake Nature Centre to celebrate what we've collectively found, commiserate about what we missed. The per-couple fee is still what it has been for uncounted years: ten dollars, the entire proceeds of which go to supporting VNHS conservation efforts. Also as usual, the couple with the biggest tally get to have their names inscribed on the Anderson Trophy. There will be other prizes too. To register or for answers to questions, contact Alan MacLeod bigadore@gmail.com

Sunday, February 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Urban Forest - High Broadmead Tree Walk

The area between High Broadmead and Royal Oak Burial Park is a nicely forested area that is mostly in Boulderwood Park. We will walk along an area behind the upper streets of Broadmead and often will be out of site of the houses. There will be wooded areas plus rocky cliffs and great lookouts facing different directions. Trees include big-leaf maple, red alder, Douglas-fir and western redcedar. In the higher open areas, we will encounter arbutus and Garry oak. At this time of year, we won't see much in the way of the wildflowers that are tucked away under the trees and bushes, but we may come across a few mushrooms. There are plenty of deer and Raccoons as well as other wildlife who relish the undisturbed area. Meet at 1:00 p.m. on Boulderwood Dr next to the tennis court near the Perez Park and Walking signs. Contact Agnes Lynn at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

Tuesday, February 11

NATURAL HISTORY NIGHT

All About Bats

VNHS is thrilled to invite you to join **Paige Erickson-McGee**, Stewardship Programs Coordinator at Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), to learn about bat ecology and conservation. Many of B.C.'s bat species are endangered and face threats to their survival. Paige will highlight the latest work being done to support bat populations on Vancouver Island and across the country, as well as the work of HAT to engage people in citizen science and other programming to support bats. HAT is a regional land trust that conserves nature on south Vancouver Island. Through stewardship, conservation covenants, restoration, and education, they work to create a future where the full array of natural habitats on south Vancouver Island and southern Gulf Islands is healthy and conserved. See their website for more information <http://hat.bc.ca/> We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

Saturday, February 15

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. 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 at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 to confirm attendance or for more information.

Tuesday, February 18

BOTANY NIGHT

The curious case of rare plants on southern Vancouver Island

Almost half the rare plants of southern Vancouver Island are mysteriously absent from the neighbouring San Juan Islands, the Gulf Islands or both. Even among those contiguous on these Islands most show a wide gap from the next nearest sites where they occur further to south. By examining their dispersal capacity, habitat and distribution **Ryan Batten** will look at the significance of that gap and some probable scenarios for their presence in our area. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Sunday, February 23

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

Common Lichens of Southern Vancouver Island

Hans Roemer and **Ryan Batten** will lead us on a walk concentrating on lichens at 1:00 p.m. If you are interested in such a walk, pre-register as the number of participants will be limited to minimize habitat damage and allow optimal exchange of information. Place will be determined closer to the date. 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 after Feb. 1 to register.

Monday, February 24

MARINE NIGHT

Listening to the North: Studying How Underwater Noise Impacts Arctic Marine Mammals in a Changing Climate

Dr. William Halliday is an Associate Conservation Scientist with the Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada. In the Canadian Arctic, marine life that evolved to live in a frozen landscape is now dealing with less ice, and also the increased human activity that comes with a less-frozen seascape. In this talk, Dr. Halliday will discuss how he studies whales and seals in the Canadian Arctic using underwater listening (i.e., acoustic monitoring), and how these animals are changing their behaviours in response to decreased sea ice and increased human activities. We meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, University of Victoria. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.

Wednesday, February 26

BIRDERS' NIGHT

Birding Southern Ecuador and the Napo River

Mike McGrenere and **Val George** will share pictures and experiences from a recent birding trip to four of the Jocotoco reserves in southern Ecuador and the humid habitats of the Napo River, an upper tributary of the Amazon River. We meet in Room 159 of the Fraser Building, UVic at 7:30 p.m. Come early to socialize! Presentation begins after VNHS announcements and coffee. Everyone is welcome. Note: UVic parking is \$3.50.



Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). Photo: Val George. See article on Bird Families in Victoria Area: Gulls, page six.