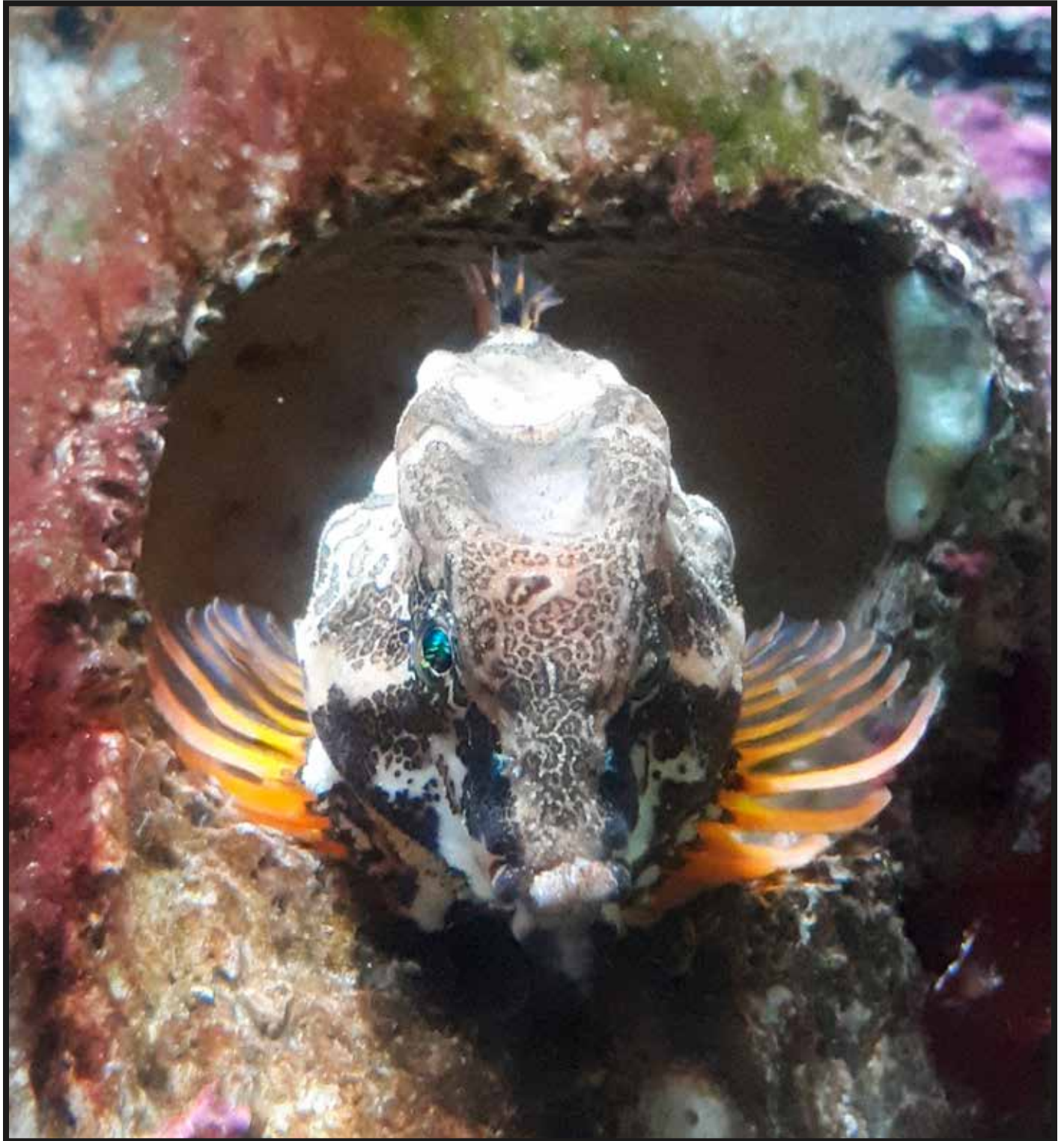




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# The Victoria NATURALIST

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## VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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**[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]**

**Guidelines for Submissions**

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

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

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# Contents

A Message from Your Board.....	4
VNHS Awards 2020 .....	6
Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Herons <i>By Val George</i> .....	8
Valentine Couples Birdathon: Even CTV Considered it a Blast <i>By Alan MacLeod</i> .....	9
In Memory – Lyndis Davis .....	10
In Memory – Tony Embleton.....	11
In Memory – Tannis Warburton .....	12
Spotted Porcupinefish ( <i>Diodon hystrix</i> ) in British Columbia <i>G. Hanke, J. Bedard and D. Ray</i> .....	13
Parksville Herring Trip .....	15
A beautiful 16-spored Podospora (Fungi, Ascomycetes) on rabbit dung at Tixen <i>By Bryce Kendrick</i> .....	16
Does Canada have a 5th Season? <i>By John Neville</i> .....	17
Welcome to New Members .....	17
Salish Sea Creatures: Grunt Sculpin <i>By Tina Kelly</i> .....	18
Calendar .....	21

Cover Photo: Grunt Sculpin. Photo: Tina Kelly.  
See story p.18.

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

No one could expect what people all over the world are experiencing these days. Each day I try to remember that while there are many things that are sad or anxiety-inducing, there are still a lot of things for which we can be grateful: we live in Victoria, on the island, in B.C., in Canada; the weather is generally very mild (not below zero and snowy); flowers are blooming and birds are singing.

Perhaps in time we will find a new normal—one in which we live life at a slightly slower pace, taking time to appreciate the wonders of the world close to us. Perhaps we will discover greater joy in simple things, like the freshness of the air after a rain shower or the glow of sunshine on a newly opened flower. I understand that people are showing new ways to be creative—we have so many amazing artists and photographers among us! I hope to be able to share this art with you in future issues.

In this issue, we remember three long-time supporters of VNHS: Lyndis Davis, Tony Embleton, and Tannis Warburton. Their enthusiasm for the wonders of nature and their leadership in, and support of, conservation have been gifts to us all.

We also have things to make you smile—like the Grunt Sculpin on the cover ... isn't he "cute"?

I want to give a big thank you to Val George for his wonderful articles about the Bird Families in the Victoria area. When he started writing them, he promised to do six... I am glad to say I managed to get him to agree to do more, but the article in this issue is the last. Let Val know how much you appreciate his interesting and informative articles the next time you see him!

Don't forget—all the Naturalist volumes up to 2018 are available on-line. The old issues of the newsletter are accessible at <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?p=9388> An index to issues 1944-2004 is available at <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NaturalistIndex1944-2004.xls>

I hope that you and yours are staying safe but still managing to be connected, and that you are finding ways to enjoy spring in Victoria.

In the words of Dr. Bonnie Henry—"be kind, be calm, be safe".

*Gail Harcombe*



# A Message from Your Board

With the constant barrage of news about the pandemic it is hard to imagine what the situation will be by the time you are reading this. We hope you are able to safely and comfortably physically isolate and that everyone who is important to you has stayed healthy. Nature appreciation provides a welcome relief for most of us, so it is good that, at least at the time of this writing, we are still able to go outside and into natural areas to indulge in our passion.

What seems like ages ago now, and very luckily, we managed to accomplish our Annual General Meeting—literally days before similar gatherings were prohibited. Thank you to the Lamberts, Marilyn and Phil, for handling the hot drinks, and to Gail Harcombe for the generous spread of savories and sweets for the social time beforehand. It was nice to see so many people there and to get a visit in. The presentation by provincial government staffer Rory Fogarty about mammalian carnivores had some very entertaining videos but also sobering conclusions about the populations of some species on southern Vancouver Island.

Your Society is financially sound, and if you are interested in a copy of the financial reports presented by our stalwart Treasurer, please get in touch with Gordon Hart directly. No nominations were received from the floor, so there is still room on the board for anyone who may have an interest in getting involved this way. Phil Lambert's president's report is summarized below:

## VNHS 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

### Funding To Other Organizations

- \$10,000: University of Victoria, Royal Roads and Camosun College for undergraduate and graduate student scholarships
- Vancouver Island Science Fair: \$700
- Swan Lake: \$5,000 annually
- Rocky Point Bird Observatory: \$6000
- Habitat Acquisition Trust: \$5000
- \$250 to fund raptor display at World Migratory Bird Day
- \$1500 for Hummingbird Project
- \$1500 for Pollinator Partnership Canada
- Bluebird Project: Cowichan Valley Naturalists Society: \$5000
- Purple Martin Nest Box Project at West Bay: \$128

### Fundraising

- Bird Checklist and Book Sales: \$694
- Annual Valentine's Day Couples' Birdathon coordinated by Alan McLeod and Jan Brown: \$70
- Donations: \$4288
- Other income and fund-raising: \$5490

### Events/Outreach

- 28th annual Camas Day at Beacon Hill Park: Co-sponsored with the Friends of Beacon Hill Park
- Esquimalt Earth Day celebration
- Garry Oak Meadows celebration: April 28, 2019 at Uplands Park
- CRD and VNHS Hawk Watch and BBQ Social: ~55 members attended last September
- Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival at Uvic
- Judging at Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair—Thanks to Jim Cuthbert
- Wild Arc Open House—Thanks to Bill Dancer
- Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team Conference—Thanks to Darren Copley, VNHS Rep.
- Victoria Christmas Bird Count: Coordinated by Ann Nightingale, who, coordinating with RPBO, added the CBC4Kids (30+ children and parents recorded 28 species)
- Butterfly Count: Gordon Hart leads regular butterfly walks and counts.

### VNHS Free School Programs

In 2019, 1192 children participated in free nature programs offered by the Society—children of all ages and all variety of subjects. Since 2006, Bill Dancer has co-coordinated with John Henigman, along with other volunteers. Bill has retired from the coordinator position and now coordination is being handled by Liz Turner.

### Other Projects

We have worked with Jacques Sirois to publicize the Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary and the VNHS paid for a series of signs that appear around the waterfront identifying the boundaries of the sanctuary.

Scanning of volumes of our magazine back to 1944 has been completed. Thanks to Stephen Ruttan and Adam Taylor. Go to "Resources": Publications: Archive" on the website to view them.

### VNHS Field Trips, Presentations, and Magazine

- Sixty-seven field trips plus weekly Saturday (Rick Shortinghuis) and Tuesday birding (Bill Dancer). Coordinated by Agnes Lynn.
- Thirty monthly presentations. Hosts: Natural History Night -Stephanie Weinstein and Stephen Ruttan; Botany Night -James and Kristen Miskelly; Birder's Night -Ann Nightingale and David Bird; Marine Night -Phil Lambert
- Six issues per year of The Victoria Naturalist thanks to Editor Gail Harcombe. Approximately 204 full colour pdf copies are sent out.

## VNHS Service Awards

In 2019, the VNHS Distinguished Service Award went to Marie O'Shaughnessy and Honourary Life Memberships were presented to Darren and Claudia Copley.

Still on the topic of VNHS Service Awards, two very surprised recipients were recognized at this year's AGM: Leah Ramsay received the VNHS Distinguished Service Award and Ann Nightingale was presented with an Honourary Life Membership. Read the details of their significant contributions to the organization (and beyond) in the nominations on p. 6 and be sure to congratulate them next time you see them for the well-deserved acknowledgment!

Sadly, the Society lost two long-time Honourary Life Members in recent months—Tony Embleton and Lyndis Davis. Both were strong supporters of VNHS for many years. Tony was a major force in conservation, notably CRD's Blue/Green Spaces program started in the 90s. Lyndis was both a strong supporter of the VNHS and of Habitat Acquisition Trust, and had very recently donated through the VNHS for a University of Victoria scholarship in her and her husband's name. Read more about Tony on p. 11 and Lyndis on p.10.

In other Society news, a bequest of \$1000 from the estate of David Stirling, long-time Honourary Life Member who passed away in 2018, has been received by the Society. In keeping with David's lifelong love of birds and his dedication to nature education, your board agreed that an excellent use of money would be to purchase new binoculars and other minor items for the Schools Program volunteers to use with the children. The Society will match the David Stirling bequest to a maximum of \$1000 to ensure that we can buy what is needed.

With gatherings prohibited and schools closed, many of the activities of the Society have been cancelled: no school programs offered, no nature walks, no Science Fair judging, no tables at events, etc. We are lucky that we have social media keeping us connected—be sure to follow the Society's Facebook and Twitter to keep up on what is still happening. And although most of the evening talks were cancelled, Ann Nightingale will have trialed a new technology for members to enjoy a live but online version of April's Birders' Night. It may be something we continue to offer to allow folks from anywhere to participate, and to help reduce the fossil-fuel footprint of these evening talks—who knows?!



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# VNHS Awards 2020

## ANN NIGHTINGALE for Honorary Life Membership in VNHS



Phil Lambert, VNHS President, presenting the Honorary Life Membership Award to Ann Nightingale.

Ann has been a member for many years and is probably one of the most well-known members of the Society due to the amazing amount of time she contributes to VNHS. She was on the board, including as the President, for several years and is now the main organizer of Birders' Night. She has been involved in our evening presentations for many years—helping find speakers, hosting meetings, and being a speaker herself several times. She has been involved when our audiovisual equipment needed upgrading, including assisting with purchasing computers or projectors. You all have seen Ann pop up to the front whenever a problem with these facilities interrupts an evening.

Ann still leads a number of field trips for the Society, and we can always depend on her if we need help organizing a trip. She also set up the Vertical Response system that we use to send emails to contact all members regarding events.

A big job that she does every year and has done for a coon's age is the Victoria area Christmas Bird Count. It is one of the largest Bird Counts anywhere in terms of number of species and participants involved. She started the Sidney and South Saltspring Bird Count (now ably taken over by Daniel Donnecke). Although the Sooke Bird Count has mostly had other

leaders, Ann has filled in either organizing or helping to do recording for this count.

She has actively participated in teaching birding courses offered by the Society, spending time during the week as well as on weekends for these courses and other functions. Even when Ann worked at UVic and Royal Roads, she still took time to work with the Society. Her professional work never slowed her down. She has made sure that members had access to the old Rare Bird Alert and helped set up the current one when the old one ceased to function. She has set up instructions for eBird to assist members to use this facility, and she still manages to keep track of local specialty birds. Ann was the webmaster for VNHS for many years, and her influence can be seen in some of the content in our current site.

She agreed to coordinate the Rare Bird Committee when it was lagging at updating the Checklist of Birds for Victoria and Southern Vancouver Island. The checklist has now been updated at least twice in recent years. It's a difficult job to get the experts to agree on what should be on the checklist and how each bird should be categorized.

Ann, along with Claudia Copley, edited the VNHS book Nature Guide to the Victoria Region. She helped coordinate editors and authors as well as the actual printing. Ann was also one of the Regional Coordinators of the British Columbia Breeding Bird Atlas. This was a 5-year project and Ann coordinated a large number of atlassers and their results.

Ann is very involved with Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) which grew out of the VNHS many years back. Not only has she been a master bander for RPBO but she has been on the executive committee that organizes the RPBO and was President for several years. She is highly involved in the annual Banding Workshop (put on to train banders) and has initiated and encouraged RPBO to lead some birding courses over the years and put on other events to raise money for RPBO. She is like most workers at RPBO and does not get paid, but she helped set up the Executive Director as a paid position to take some of the pressure off the volunteers. This is only a tidbit of what Ann has done for RPBO. Back when Cam Finlay organized the banding of hummingbirds on the Island, Ann was very involved. Fortunately, both Cam and Ann are happy to have Alison Moran take over the Hummingbird Project.

Whenever a group in Victoria wants to hear about birds, they can depend on Ann. She learns a bit about the group and tailors her talk to fit the group. Whenever the media needs to talk about Birds in Victoria or on the island, they automatically contact Ann. She is often quoted in the Time Colonist and we see her talking on TV. She does an excellent job at all times.

In 2014, she was one of the main coordinators of the BC



Nature (Federation of BC Naturalists) Annual General Meeting. Her great organization skills and computer wizardry were invaluable in making that event run as smoothly as it did. She combined the joint resources of VNHS and RPBO to help make this happen. Ann was given the BC Nature Regional Award in 2014 in recognition for her contributions to nature appreciation and knowledge at a regional level.

Ann now has spread her wings further and has become a Director of the American Birding Association. This is one of the main North America organizations that caters to recreation birders and it's great to have her giving them our input and her giving us input from them.

The list continues. She is so involved in so many activities that no one person sees all the things she is involved in. The previous comments list specifics of what she does or has done but that's not what makes Ann stand out as an exceptional

member of the Society. It's how she handles these tasks that sets her apart. She is often one of the first contacts that a person has with the Society. For example, they are often people with an interest in birds but only a cursory knowledge. She patiently identifies anything they ask about and explains how the Society can help them learn more. Ann also supports botany along the way and helps others promote other creatures, such as butterflies, that we are interested in, but birding is the biggest part of VNHS. The number of active birders in the Society is probably close to 200 members. Most of these comments are slanted toward birding, but, by Ann's example, we are also stretching ourselves to learn more about this world around us.

Agnes Lynn and Mary Robichaud

## LEAH RAMSAY for a Distinguished Service Award



Phil Lambert, VNHS President, presenting the Distinguished Service Award to Leah Ramsay.

Leah has been a member of the VNHS for several decades, and in that time, she has contributed in many different ways. From the beginning of her participation, Leah has written articles for the Naturalist magazine, ranging in topics from marine organisms to dragonflies to the Goldstream Art Show, as well as presented to the Society at our evening presentations and been a stalwart of the VNHS's annual Christmas Bird count.

On the topic of the Goldstream Art Show—the Nature of Island Artists, many members will remember that the VNHS was directly linked to the exhibit when it was first conceived and for many years after that, thanks to Leah as the co-organizer of the exhibit. Funds raised in these biannual shows eventually helped pay for the viewing platform that overlooks the Goldstream estuary, providing people with good viewing and minimizing disturbance to wildlife.

In the social media world we live in today, Twitter makes us relevant to younger audiences especially, but all ages in fact. Leah has been handling the Society's Twitter account since 2011. At that time, the board of VNHS had put out a request for help with social media, and Leah stepped forward and agreed to try. She had never used Twitter before but felt up to the challenge. Not only did she learn how to tweet, but she got hooked! It is her continued engagement that helps make the effort the success it is today; Leah tweets out stories on natural history topics almost every day and has nearly 3000 followers. In the nine years since she took on handling this aspect of our social media, Leah has sent out a phenomenal 17,800 tweets—an average of approximately 5 times a day! This is remarkable, particularly in light of the fact that she is a volunteer. Organizations that have paid staff whose sole role is to maintain a social media presence for them do not tweet or retweet with the regularity of Leah. In order to maintain this level of activity, Leah keeps an eye out everywhere for important, relevant, fun, funny and informative items to include. This is a significant commitment of volunteer time.

We are grateful for the continued success of our Twitter profile and we owe this in its entirety to Leah's dedication; making sure we have a presence for people to find and follow. But not just a presence—the Victoria Natural History Society has a really interesting informative Twitter feed. Thank you, Leah!

Darren Copley and Robert A Cannings

# Bird Families of the Victoria Area: Herons

By Val George Photos by author

If there's one bird that everyone—birders and non-birders alike—can identify easily, it's the stately Great Blue Heron. It's one of our most conspicuous birds, standing over 130 cm tall and with a wingspan of 180 cm. In fact, most of the members of the Ardeidae family are very conspicuous, from the white egrets found in most parts of the world to the massive, 150 cm tall Goliath Heron whose range is Africa and SE Asia.

There are just over 60 species in the Ardeidae family. They're variously called herons, egrets and bitterns. They're found on all continents except Antarctica, and in all habitats except the driest deserts and the coldest extremes of the highest mountains and the Arctic. Seven species are on the Victoria checklist.

These birds mostly eat fish and other aquatic creatures like frogs, crustaceans and aquatic insects; some species will opportunistically eat food like bird eggs, small rodents and carrion.

Most species are colonial nesters with colonies sometimes housing several species.

The only common member of the family in our area is the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). These birds may be encountered anywhere from ocean areas to inland habitats where they can hunt for the fish that form most of their diet.

Great Blue Herons nest in colonies that can contain as few as half a dozen nests to as many as several hundred. The nests are bulky affairs built from sticks. They may be repaired from season to season and reused for many years. Three to six eggs is the usual clutch size, and these will be incubated for about a month; only one brood is raised in a season since it takes the parents two to three months to fledge the young.

Two other members of the family are regular in our area: the crow-sized Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) and the raven-sized American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*). Both are uncommon.

The main range of the Green Heron is the southern and eastern States and Central America. We are at the extreme northern end of the range, though this species has been known to breed in our area. The best time to look for Green Herons is at dawn or dusk, when they are actively feeding.

Unlike most herons, Green Herons usually nest singly, building nests of sticks in trees or shrubs and sometimes on the ground. They lay two eggs, which are incubated for about two weeks.

One interesting behaviour of this species is dropping insects or other attractants on the water surface when feeding to attract fish.

The American Bittern is a bird of the tall reed beds where it remains hidden most of the time. It rarely flies, making it difficult to see. Its brown and white vertically-streaked



Left: Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*).  
Right: Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*).

neck adds to its ability to blend into reeds and tall grasses, especially if it adopts its straightened, upright neck and head position when alarmed. In the breeding season it is sometimes easy to locate when it utters its very distinctive loud, low-pitched booming sound.

The range of the American Bittern is most of North America and extending into Central America in the winter. Like the Green Heron, this species most actively feeds at night and at dusk. Its food is mostly fish, but it will take other aquatic creatures.

The white-coloured members of the Ardeidae family are usually called egrets. Three species are on the Victoria checklist, but all are rare or uncommon visitors. The largest is the Great Egret (*Ardea alba*). This species has a worldwide range. In the 19th century it, and the Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) which is also on our checklist, were killed in huge numbers for their showy feathers that were used in the millinery trade in North America and in Europe; conservation measures since have greatly increased their numbers.

The other egret on our checklist is the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*). The usual New World range is south of here in the southern half of the States and Central and South America. This egret only appeared in North America in the mid-20th century. Its first appearance was in the Caribbean area, from where it rapidly spread to the whole southern half of the States; it was first reported in B.C. in the early 1970s.

The remaining member of the family on our checklist is the Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). This species, as its name implies, is mainly active at night. It has a global distribution but here in B.C., we're just outside its normal range, making it a rare occurrence—though a few birds regularly spend the winter at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary in Delta.



# Valentine Couples Birdathon: Even CTV Considered it a Blast

By Alan MacLeod



Left: From left, the couples of the 2020 Valentine Birdathon—women seated in front, their men standing behind—Agnes & David Lynn; Rebecca Golat & Mitchell Ogilvie; Robin & Mark Byrne; Susan and Daniel Donnecke; Jan “Hawkeye” Brown & Alan MacLeod; Barb & Mike McGrenere; Gail & Andrew Harcombe; Courtney and Matt Cameron.

Right: Matt and Courtney Cameron, winners of the 2020 VNHS Valentine Couples Birdathon.



name is Hawkeye, spotted a Great Horned Owl in the dark of Beacon Hill Park, then they overheard two Barred Owls in animated conversation, followed by vocalizing Cooper’s Hawk and Bald Eagle. Four ‘good’ species before sunrise—not bad. They walked 13 km and managed to find 54 species.

For two couples, the 2020 birdathon was a ‘lifer’: their first ever. Robyn and Mark Byrne were particularly pleased

Even the big television network was impressed. The 2020 VNHS Valentine Couples Birdathon, February 9, was covered by CTV and made the six o’clock edition of the Island News. The CTV producer said she and her colleagues loved doing it.

The CTV cameraman took footage of the eight valentine couples happily exchanging war stories after the 22nd running of the birdathon. Then, a few hours later, the rest of Vancouver Island got to have a little taste of the fun they’ve been missing out on all these years. Several people claimed to have been charmed by what they saw on television.

This year’s edition of the valentine event featured a nice blend of veterans—couples who have reveled in the fun for years—and newcomers whose only regret is that they hadn’t signed up long before. As usual, couples gathered in the noon hour at Swan Lake Nature Centre, to brag and bemoan about their morning’s fortunes, both laudatory and laughable.

The host couple, Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod, missed the first three birdathons long ago but have done every one since. They once raced about the count area by car, trying to roll up as big a species count as possible. Then they used their bicycles for a few years. For the last several years they have resorted to a more relaxed approach: they walk out their James Bay door at 6 a.m. or shortly thereafter to count whatever happens to fly in front of their noses. Jan, whose real

with the Spotted Sandpiper that showed itself at Tower Point and the handsome Barrow’s Goldeneye they found at Esquimalt Lagoon. The Byrnes demonstrated in their first try that they will be a couple to reckon with in future counts: they had 79 species for their morning’s work. Young Rebecca Golat and Mitchell Ogilvie also ventured out on their first valentine event and reported having relished a fine time. A Northern Shrike at flooded Panama Flats was one of their highlight birds in a morning that delivered 67 species.

Agnes and David Lynn have had their names inscribed on the prized Anderson Trophy twice in the past, in 2011 and 2013. This year they had 52 species, not quite enough to qualify for a third triumph, but a group of Trumpeter Swans and as many as fifty Cackling Geese at Hasting Flats were among the finds that made the Lynns’ morning one worth getting out of bed for.

Courtney and Matt Cameron returned for an encore performance. Winners in 2016, the Camerons decided it was high time they tried their luck again. Residents of the Happy Valley neighbourhood, the Camerons set themselves a limit on February 9: they would do all their birding within a five-kilometre radius of their home, a decision that hurt them not in the least. The couple had three loon species off Taylor Road beach, and both Ring-billed Gull and Red-breasted sapsuckers near shore. A Wilson’s Snipe at Esquimalt Lagoon

was a happy find, as were the three Snow Geese and single brant they located at Royal Roads. In 2016, the Camerons had 85 species for their morning's work. They had exactly the same total this time!

It must have been something in the air: veteran valentine birders Gail and Andrew Harcombe conducted themselves as the Camerons did: they imposed a geographic limit on themselves, deciding to do all their birding within Central Saanich. A good thing: they had plenty to be happy about among their 67 species, including Northern Harrier at the Longview daffodil fields, two American Kestrels along the road to James Island wharf, and both White-fronted Geese and Western Grebes at Island View Beach.

The McGreeneres—Barb and Mike—are another couple who have enjoyed the valentine count for years and have decided that their way to guarantee both fun and relaxation is simply to walk out their door in the Cordova Bay neighbourhood and bird their way to Swan Lake. Mike and Barb often notice a kestrel on the ridge behind their house but on this occasion, it was another falcon, a peregrine, that caught their eye. Turkey Vulture and Trumpeter Swan at Blenkinsop Lake were two more of the 59 species the McGreeneres' nine-kilometre walk yielded them.

Susan and Daniel Donnecke were winners of this event

in 2017 and 2019. Perhaps relaxation was the day's theme: the Donneckes didn't get going until 8:24 in the morning, a little short of two-and-a-half hours behind some of the other couples. No problem. Daniel and Susan liked the gang of fourteen turnstones and Red-throated Loon they found at Warrior Point, the Eared Grebe off Amity Drive in Sidney, the seven Snow Geese spotted near Hunt and Dooley in Central Saanich, and the two Turkey Vultures sailing over Interurban Flats. Despite the time disadvantage, the Donneckes tallied 70 species: the best result of the morning on a species-per-hour basis.

All in, the aggregate count for the valentine count was 112 species, a pretty good total considering that among the species missed by everyone were Sanderling, Sky Lark, Purple Finch and Red Crossbill.

With their 85-species total, the Camerons will see their names engraved on the Anderson Trophy for a second time. The winners and three runner-up couples departed the post-count event further rewarded by an array of prizes donated by long-time birdathon sponsor, Don Wuest of Wild Birds Unlimited, Shelbourne Street. Thank you, Don, for your continuing support of this event. Apart from all the fun, couples can feel good that all the proceeds of their \$10-per-couple admission cost will go to VNHS conservation efforts.

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## IN MEMORY Lyndis Davis (1932-2020)



VNHS has lost a long-time and very active member. Lyndis Davis passed away on February 16th, 2020, in her 88th year. She succumbed to injuries resulting from a recent fall.

Lyndis was born and educated in England, and emigrated to Canada in 1962. At the urging of a friend and fellow docent at the museum, she joined VNHS in 1980 and immediately became an active member. By the time I joined in 1981, she was already a welcoming force, sharing information and offering encouragement to newcomers. She could always

be found busy at meetings and served the Society in many other ways, including four years on the board, which included time as Secretary. Lyndis received the VNHS Distinguished Service Award in 1989, and was made an Honorary Life Member in 2004.

In 2016, Lyndis made a donation to the Society of \$35,000. Of this, \$30,000 was used to establish the *Dennis and Lyndis Davis Scholarship* at the University of Victoria, with the balance supporting the *Bring Back the Bluebirds Project*, which was very important to her.

While she was deeply concerned about major conservation challenges, Lyndis still delighted in reporting that she saw a Lincoln's Sparrow in her back yard alongside the Lochside Trail. And she did not keep these things to herself; she is acknowledged as a contributor to the landmark four-volume *The Birds of British Columbia*.

Lyndis' involvement in the naturalist community went beyond the not-for-profit organizations she supported so strongly. In the early days of running my business, *The Field-Naturalist*, I saw a need for a part-time assistant. Lyndis and I had one of those awkward conversations in which both of us were uncertain about the response of the other, but after we stumbled through the niceties, I explained that I thought she would be an asset in the store, and she replied that she had been hoping I might ask. Thus began a lengthy "professional" relationship. She was unfailingly loyal, helpful and cheerful—although if something went awry she was known

to mutter “Oh, bother!” on occasion. She came to know more about optics for birding than most in the industry. Lyndis lost her husband Dennis to cancer during her time at The Field-Naturalist, and it was a privilege to see her piecing her life back together in that small niche, as she was doing in her many other pursuits.

In my contacts with Lyndis over many years, I came to see that one of her great strengths was her ability to connect with people on a personal level, to help a new birder solve a thorny identification problem, or to welcome people to VNHS events and activities. Not long after VNHS established Habitat Acquisition Trust in the 1990s, Lyndis began her long career as a volunteer with HAT, keeping track of, and writing

uncounted thank-you notes to, many donors. Conservation work needs big players sometimes, but the person-to-person work of people like Lyndis provide an essential foundation. She knew this and was more than willing to play her role at that level. She was honoured by HAT in 2011 with its Conservation Legacy Award for her long volunteer service.

Lyndis leaves her son Martin and grandson Evan. We will all miss her; but there is an ongoing reminder of her long connection with VNHS in the logo she designed for VNHS, which still appears on the cover of every issue.

Bruce Whittington

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## IN MEMORY Tony Embleton (1922-2020)

Following his retirement in the late 1980s from a career in education in Kamloops, where he was an active member of the Kamloops Naturalist Club, Tony joined us here in Victoria. He very quickly involved himself as a member of the Parks and Recreation Committee, taking on the Chairmanship for much of the 1990s. He and his committee members identified numerous conservation issues and sought means to address them. One of the major efforts involved the identification and documentation of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA's) around Greater Victoria where significant plant and wildlife values were to be found. Among the areas identified were Elk/Beaver Lake Park, Esquimalt Lagoon, and Blenkinsop Lake.

Concurrent with his Parks and Conservation Committee work, Tony served for several years on the VNHS Board of Directors and as the VNHS representative to the Federation of BC Naturalists, and later as the FBCN Regional Coordinator for the Vancouver Island Naturalist Clubs.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Tony represented the FBCN on the provincial government's Public Conservation Assistance Fund Advisory Committee. This committee had responsibility for reviewing and recommending for approval dozens of applications for funding of grass-roots conservation projects throughout the Province.

When the Capital Regional District released its Blue/ Green Spaces Strategy in 1997, Tony's various services and experiences had put him in an excellent position to embark on an ambitious effort to conserve valued green spaces. Tony pulled together a committee of like-minded individuals, which included Norman Mogensen, who designated themselves the Green Spaces Project, (GSP). This committee accomplished wonders—attracting several hundred volunteers who surveyed over 600 sites in five municipalities, including some very large holdings in Highlands and View Royal, and most of the federal lands in the Western Communities. Reports were compiled on the resource values identified on each site along with management recommendations for each. These reports were provided to landowners, government agencies,



non-government organizations and citizen groups. Follow-up action by local governments and NGOs has resulted in the designation of a municipal park in Colwood, an expanded CRD park in Highlands, and designation of 30 conservation covenants on private lands.

In 2006, Tony was awarded Honorary Life Membership in VNHS, in recognition of his many years of conservation leadership, serving as a wonderful example for members and volunteers. His work with the Natural History Society was very important to Tony and the Life Membership was shared proudly with all visitors to his final home at Shannon Oaks Independent Care home in Oak Bay, Victoria. Tony passed peacefully March 21, 2020, still young at heart at 98.

*Much of the information about Tony was derived from the nomination letter for the VNHS Honorary Life Membership Award, or provided by Tony's daughter.*





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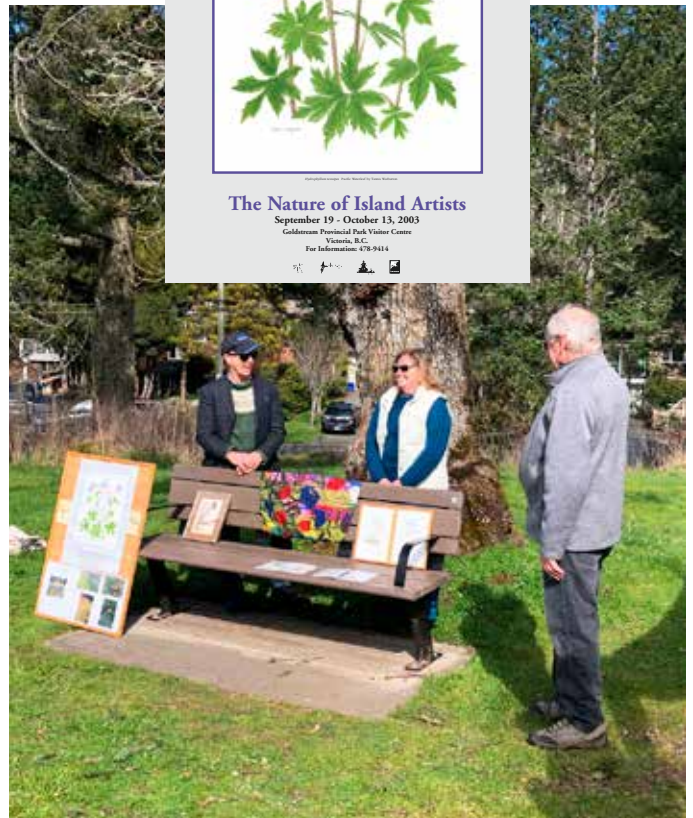
University of Victoria

## IN MEMORY Tannis Warburton (1924-2019)

Tannis Warburton was an avid nature enthusiast and an exceptional botanical artist who many of our members may remember for her unwavering support of Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) and the VNHS through donations of her artwork. Tannis' beautiful watercolour renditions of our local flora were regularly featured in fundraiser art exhibits and graced the original HAT poster, as well as the *Nature of Island Artists* poster for the Goldstream Artshow in 2003.

Although Tannis passed away in January 2019, her memory will live on through the installation of a memorial bench at one of her favourite painting spots—the remnant Garry oak meadow in Falaise Park, right across the street from her house. The Falaise Community Association, in conjunction with the Warburton Family, unveiled the plaque on March 8, 2020—fittingly International Women's Day.

A long time resident of Falaise Crescent, Tannis was an enthusiastic advocate for protecting the park. She discovered the very rare Yellow Montane Violet growing in the park and was responsible for alerting the Ministry of Environment about it.



# Spotted Porcupinefish (*Diodon hystrix*) in British Columbia

G. Hanke, J. Bedard and D. Ray

Deep water surveys conducted over the last two decades have added many fish species to the B.C. fauna. Most of these fishes are adapted to cold water and probably are not new in the strictest sense, just newly discovered in our waters. However, in 2014, during the height of the 2013-2015 warm blob event, two new to B.C. waters fishes were found. These fishes are normally found north to Baja and southern California and represent significant northward stray to B.C.

The first, a Finescale Triggerfish (*Balistes polylepis*; RBCM 16071), was found alive off Vancouver Island. Triggerfishes are not fast swimmers—they scull along at a leisurely pace using their dorsal and anal fins. Even so, Finescale Triggerfish have strayed into southern Alaska during el Niño events in the past. The second, a fresh Louvar (*Luvarus imperialis*; RBCM 16070), was found on the beach near Massett. With its body evolved for open water cruising, it is easy to see how the Louvar made its way this far north (Image 1).

Five years later, on October 5, 2019, a Spotted Porcupinefish (*Diodon hystrix*; RBCM 16424) was found dead at low tide at Jordan River on southern Vancouver Island (48.422043°N; -124.059597°W). The specimen was fairly fresh and had not been scavenged. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know exactly where this fish died along the coast as it may have drifted (Image 2).

The Spotted Porcupinefish is found in warm water around the globe to a depth of 135 m. In the northern Pacific Ocean, this fish ranges from Japan to southeast of the Kuril Islands, and in the east, from Chile to the Gulf of California, and San Diego.

Following the coastline, Jordan River is about 2100 km north of San Diego. This part of the coast of North America is influenced by the North Pacific Gyre. As part of this gyre, the Kuroshio Current flows across the Pacific from north of the Japanese coast. When this water reaches the coast of B.C., the current splits. The south-flowing component becomes the California Current. Any fish travelling north along the coast would have to swim against this current. In addition, upwelling along the coast draws cold water from the depths and the



2. Spotted Porcupinefish (*Diodon hystrix*; RBCM 16424) on the beach at Jordan River.

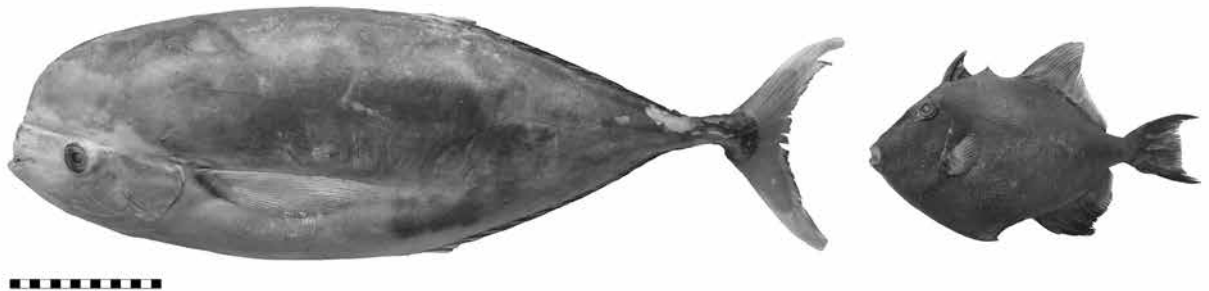
combination of upwelling and south-flowing California Current keeps warm-water adapted species in the south (Image 3).

It is possible, perhaps likely, that this fish took an offshore route to reach the B.C. coast. Spotted Porcupinefish have crossed open ocean to reach Hawaii, Pitcairn, Easter, and the Galapagos islands. During their long larval phase, they remain in open water. This pelagic phase ends when they reach 180-191 mm standard length (SL), and according to Leis (1978), which provides ample time for dispersal. The specimen collected from Jordan River is 237 mm (SL) and had recently ended its pelagic phase.

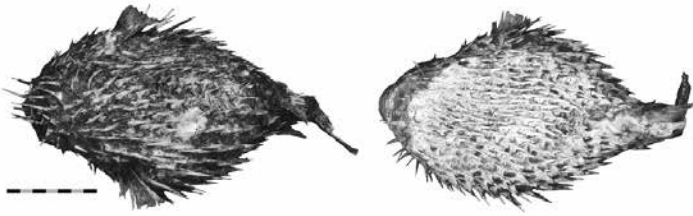
During 2018-2019, the surface water in parts of the North Pacific Ocean was 2-3°C warmer than normal. This anomaly put Juan de Fuca Strait within the temperature tolerance of Spotted Porcupinefish between August and September of 2019 (Image 4)

Another possible origin of this fish is from the pet trade as it is not uncommon to find aquarium fish released into the wild. A recent example is the piranhas found in a lake near

1. Louvar (*Luvarus imperialis*; RBCM 16070) and Finescale Triggerfish (*Balistes polylepis*; RBCM 16071); scale bar = 15 cm.







3. Spotted Porcupinefish (*Diodon hystrix*; RBCM 16424) in dorsal (left) and ventral (right) view; scale bar = 7 cm.

Nanaimo in 2019. We entertained but rejected the idea that the Jordan River porcupinefish was a dumped pet for several reasons.

The *Diodon* species commonly found in the pet trade is the Longspined Porcupinefish (*Diodon holacanthus*), not the Spotted Porcupinefish. Also, the Jordan River fish was over 20 cm—pet pufferfish do not usually reach such a large size in home aquaria. And most importantly, a second porcupinefish was seen on that same stretch of beach on September 26th (based on a communication from Jerrett Taylor). Unfortunately, the second fish was not recovered. The odds of two porcupinefish being abandoned on the same stretch of beach is hard to swallow—these fish don't do well together in captivity, and attempts to keep two together usually result in the premature death of one or both fish.

Were these the first diodontid fishes in B.C.? Yes—as far as we know—but a relative of the porcupinefish, a Burrfish (*Chilomycterus affinis*; RBCM 610), was found in B.C. in July 1939. The Burrfish was dropped off at the Royal B.C. Museum by two boys who claimed they found the fish along



4. The location just west of the Jordan River estuary where the Spotted Porcupinefish was discovered.

Dallas Road in Victoria. The specimen looks like an inflated curio from a tropical tourist trap. Carl and Wilby (1945) were correct to be suspicious of its origins and did not put the Burrfish on the list of fishes known to inhabit our waters.

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## Parksville Herring Trip

Each year we take a trip up to see the spectacle of the annual Pacific Herring spawn and the birds that follow. Massive numbers of sea ducks and gulls will follow the herring in close to where they can be observed feeding on the herring roe. The trip is usually in mid-March and it is surprising how different each year is. We stop in several spots from south of Parksville to just north of Qualicum. You

never know in advance where the birds will be. This year, the scenery was phenomenal from the top of the snowy mountains down to the expansive beaches. Weather was great this year but not as many birds as in some years.



1. Herring roe washed up on the beach. *Photo: Dave Lynn.*

2. Tens of thousands of gulls of several species (Glaucous-winged, Mew, California, Iceland (Thayer's) and Herring) were enjoying the herring feast. *Photo: Val George.*

3. Barrow's Goldeneye were more common than the Common Goldeneye at Parksville Community Park. *Photo: Pauline Davis.*

4. Herring roe washed up on the beach. Note that you can see some of the eel grass that the roe is deposited on. *Photo: Dave Lynn.*

5. Male Red-Breasted Merganser preening on a pebbly sandbar at the mouth of the river. *Photo: Pauline Davis.*

6. Black-bellied Plover searching for roe not far from us. *Photo: Pauline Davis.*

7. Female Red-Breasted Merganser preening on a pebbly sandbar at the mouth of the river. *Photo: Pauline Davis.*



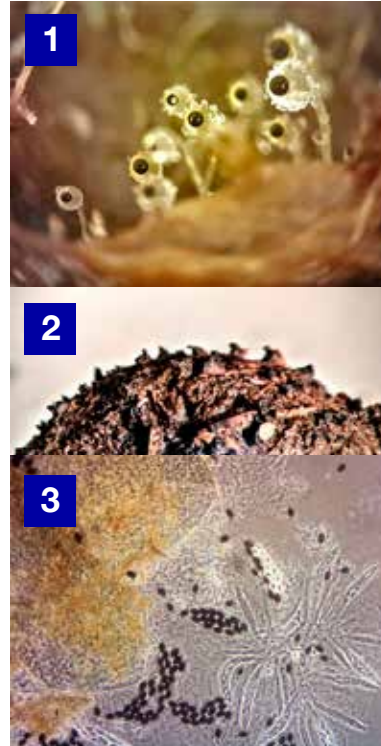
# A beautiful 16-spored *Podospora* (Fungi, Ascomycetes) on rabbit dung at Tixen

By Bryce Kendrick Photos by author

As part of my ongoing commitment to the natural environment, I make frequent excursions to the Tixen nature reserve of the Tsawout First Nation at Cordova Spit (an interesting combination of sand dunes and salt marsh) in order to continue a long-drawn out process of eradicating the broom and gorse that would otherwise take over this almost unique habitat, and to document the unusual plants that grow there. On a recent visit I picked up a few rabbit pellets and took them home. After they had been incubated in a translucent damp container for a few weeks, the most famous of all coprophilous (dung-inhabiting) fungi, the unique spore-shooting Zygomycete, *Pilobolus*, put in an appearance, developing its black sporangia on swollen vesicles at the top of a transparent stipe (Figure 1) and liberally dotting the wall of the container with those very forcibly expelled sporangia. There's a wonderful video on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrKJAojmB1Y>), taken by high-speed photomicrography, of the actual explosions that send the sporangia on their way with amazing acceleration. The movie is enhanced by a stirring musical accompaniment - the Anvil Chorus from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*.

The success of most dung-inhabiting fungi hinges on their being able to get back inside their host, thus being *already present* in the dung when it is deposited, which gives them a head start in the colonization process. So it is essential for the newly-produced spores to be somehow ejected from the dung onto the plants that the host will (it is hoped) soon eat. The coprophilous fungi, members of all major taxonomic groups, have evolved a variety of ways of doing this, which are explored on my website at <http://www.mycolog.com/chapter11a.html> and in chapter 11 of my book "The Fifth Kingdom".

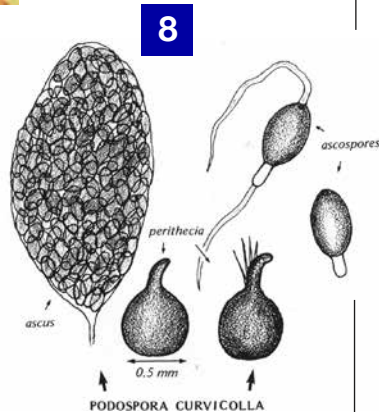
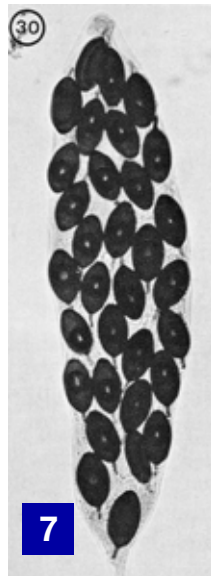
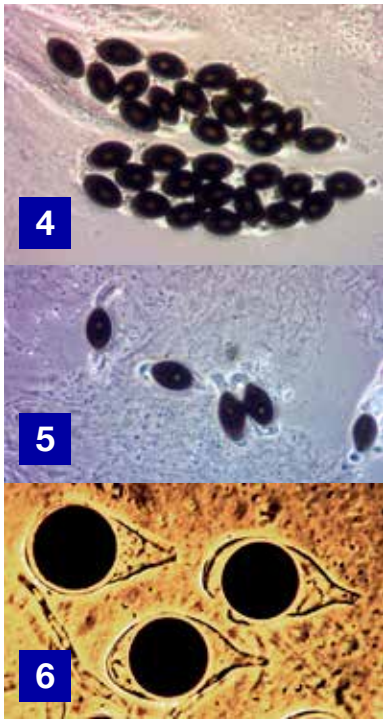
But to continue with the present case, more good things were to come. The outline of some of the dung pellets was soon slightly altered as the tiny flask-shaped black perithecia of *Podospora*, a coprophilous Ascomycete, developed. You can see the small beaked projections in Figure 2. Counting the black perithecia on dark dung pellets was not easy, but I found up to 30 or 40 perithecia on some of the pellets. Now it was time to bring on the magnification. Figure 3 shows one of the perithecia squashed under a coverslip. You can see the tubular sexual sporangia called asci (pronounced "ass-eye") at various stages of development. When each ascus in this species is mature, it contains 16 ascospores, as you can see in the two asci shown in Figure 4. Each spore has a dark body cell, with colourless appendages at each end, as is apparent in Figure 5. The black body cells are quite large (for a fungal spore), about 35 microns in length, and this also helps in



identifying the fungus. A search on Google for 16-spored *Podospora* with spores in that size range brings us to *Podospora pleiospora*. Keep in mind that although these spore bodies are quite large as fungal spores go, it would still take about 30 of them, placed end to end, to measure 1 millimetre.

As anyone with a nodding acquaintance with the Ascomycetes will know, the usual number of spores in an ascus is eight. Following a sexual fusion in the young ascus to produce the only diploid nucleus in the entire life cycle, there is usually a meiotic division

producing 4 haploid nuclei, and then a subsequent synchronous mitosis to give 8. In *Podospora gigantea*, these nuclear divisions don't occur, and a single large ascospore results. This also happens in the jocularly named *Monosporascus cannonballus* (Figure 6). In some other species, the mitosis is left out, and they finish up with only 4 ascospores. Although 8 is the usual number, additional mitoses can drive the ultimate count upward rapidly. *Podospora pleiospora*, the subject of this article, represents only the first step in this process. There are other *Podospora* species that have 32-spored asci, as *Podospora dakotensis* shows in Figure 7, and the numbers climb from there. (It is easy to find illustrations of higher numbers on the web). Some species have 64-spored asci, a few have 132-spored asci, and numbers of 256 (as in Figure 8, of *Podospora curvicolla*), 512 and 1024 are on the books, though in those cases the numbers are hard to count with any precision. Each of those multiples has presumably been selected for by evolutionary pressure as the best way of ensuring the continued survival of the species concerned. Ann Bell found species of *Podospora* growing on the dung of birds, cattle, deer, chamois, goat, horse, rabbit, opossum, sheep and wallaby. It is fascinating, but probably to be expected, that many of the same species of coprophilous fungi can be found



1. *Pilobolus multi*
2. *Podospira perithecia*
3. *Podospira centrum*
4. *Podospira*
5. *Podospira*
6. *Monosporascus cannonballus*
7. *Podospira dakotensis*
8. *Podospira curvicolla*

in numerous countries around the world, having been taken on intercontinental voyages by their herbivorous hosts.

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Lundqvist, N. 1972. *Ascomycetes – Nordic Sordariaceae S. Lat.* Almquist & Wiksell. 374pp. *Another comprehensive work, focusing on the perithecial ascomycetes, which include Podospira.*



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# Does Canada have a 5th Season?

By John Neville

The eight weeks before March 21st are like a prespring, a 5th season. These conditions arise between Victoria, across the Salish Sea to the Lower Mainland and include the Gulf and San Juan Islands. Similar conditions exist in the far southwest of England, Ireland and the area around Melbourne Australia.

On January 24th, 2020, I decided to check out our yard. The weather forecast for the day was rain, wind and a temperature of 9 C—good so far. The garden was bright green. The daffodils were up about 8 cm, snow drops and crocus about 6 cm, and flower buds on some of the rhododendrons and forsythia. The flowers of the forsythia are sometimes referred to as “little golden bells”. The real harbingers of prespring are the stunning light pink, cup-shaped hellebores, *Helleborus X hybridus*, with their lustrous evergreen leaves. They thrive in our wet woodland as long as they enjoy a southerly, partly sunny exposure. These plants originate in Mediterranean countries.

There have been some subtle changes in bird activity during the last week. For six days, two male House Finch have been in full song. The Canada Geese are no longer in flocks but have divided into noisy pairs and are checking out real estate. I've heard the gull-like calls of our local mating Bald Eagles and nest re-construction is under way. The persistent buzzing around our heads, gentle tapping vocal sounds and bright gorget announce the reproductive season for the friendly Anna's Hummingbirds.

A simple measure of prespring, increasing sunshine, temperature and light, is when the seed consumption at our bird feeder drops by about 25%. This is probably due to the softening of the ground and an increased availability of insects, worms, and other food sources.

On January 28th, returning Rough-winged and Barn swallows were reported from Lindholm Rd Pond, on the Galloping Goose Trail in Metchosin. On January 31st, the temperature climbed to 12 C. Then, on February 2nd, the drooping

white bells of the Snowdrops unfolded! This was followed by another wonder of springtime, on February 11th, when the yellow-gold bloom of daffodils trumpeted the changing season.

About 1 hour before dawn on 14 February, the Canada Geese were already busy along the shoreline. It was clear and a brisk temperature for walking. As the sky lightened, a Spotted Towhee gave his territorial trilled song and a Robin sang a few bars of his “cheer-up cheerilly” song. It was a good way to start Valentine's Day.

On February 17th, a neighbour emailed to describe the new, bright, blood-red feathers on the head of the local Red-breasted Sapsucker. Plumage is starting to change on the wintering waterfowl as well. Someone on bcvbirds reported his first account of the song of a skylark, high above his grassy territory at the airport.

On the 19th, it was a clear evening, with a quarter moon and bright starlight. We went out to do our 20th Nocturnal Owl Survey. At Ruckle Park, close to sea level, there were 30 or more Pacific Tree Frogs advertising loudly. Four Canada Geese and a Barrow's Goldeneye flew along the shoreline. We counted five Mule Deer, one Saw-whet, one Western Screech and three Great Horned owls. Two of the latter flew past us only 20 meters away! The male and female were calling back and forth with close attention to each other. It definitely was a beautiful romantic night out.

Two days later, there was the bloom of plum blossom on Salt Spring. The same weekend there were reports of flowering crocus and cherry blossom brightening the Victoria landscape. On the February 28th, I heard the musical trill of the Dark-eyed Junco for the first time. It's like a tiny bell being rung very rapidly. If I have given the impression that the sun is always shining, that's not really true, it's often wet and rainy and keeps me indoors.

Does Canada have a 5th season? What do you think?

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## WELCOME TO NEW VNHS MEMBERS

Our Society grew by 20 new members since the last issue. The following has agreed to have their name published in this Welcome section.

**John Ascah** Victoria. *Natural history, photography, astronomy*

**Jean Greatbatch** Victoria. *Birds, walking, geology*

**Kara Pearson** Victoria. *So many things!! Forest ecology, marine biology, urban forestry, you name it!*

**Adria Hussain** Victoria

**Susan and Craig Burch** Esquimalt.

*Birding, botany, marine life*

**Helen Colbeck** Victoria

**Barbara Hager and Ben Mulchinock** Victoria.

*Birds, conservation, urban wildlife*

# Salish Sea Creatures: Grunt Sculpin

By Tina Kelly

Photos by author (at Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea)

“What is that?” “That lives here?” “What is that animal that hops around like a chicken?” “What is that animal that has a pointed face like a seahorse?” These are some of the questions I have heard when standing before a Grunt Sculpin, *Rhamphocottus richardsonii*, at my workplace.

These small (up to 9 cm) fish are unlike most fish people have seen before. While some divers may be lucky to find them, their ability to camouflage as another species—one many don’t take a second look at—makes spotting them difficult. A Grunt Sculpin’s pointy snout and mottled colour pattern mimic a Giant Acorn Barnacle (*Balanus nubilus*); perched inside an empty barnacle they resemble closed up barnacle valves. If it enters a barnacle shell head first, its orange feathery tail sticks out and resembles a barnacle’s feeding cirri.

The barnacle also plays a role in their reproduction. A female chases a male and corners him in a crevice or empty barnacle; she then lays eggs and guards the male until he fertilizes them. The female will eventually abandon the male, leaving him to guard and protect the eggs.

Grunt Sculpins are not built for speed. These “top-heavy” fish hop or crawl around the ocean floor. When necessary they can do short bursts of swimming but not far.

With their tiny mouth, they feed on crustaceans and plankton. Where does their name come from? When Grunt Sculpins are taken out of water, they make a sound described as a grunt.



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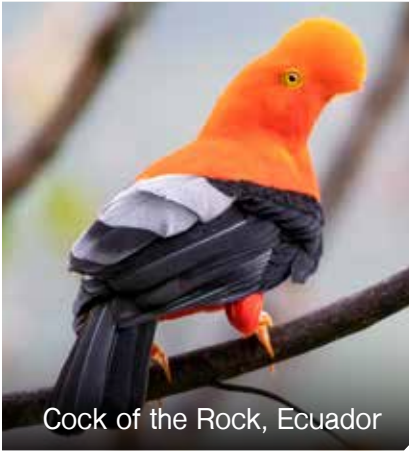
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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**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, 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](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.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**Many of our usual activities are cancelled/postponed due to concerns about public health and safety. Although some activities are listed here, they MAY NOT happen, so please check websites for up-to-date information.**

## MAY

### Saturday May 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### 29th Annual Camas Day

For the past 29 years, the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society and the Victoria Natural History Society have co-sponsored this event in Beacon Hill Park. Each year, there is a wide choice of hourly walks starting with birding at 7 a.m. till early afternoon. Themes such as Birds, Wildflowers, Archaeology, First Nations culture and other aspects of the Garry oak habitat will be covered. Final subjects and leaders are still not confirmed but you can check the Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society website,

(<http://friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca/>) now for the typical schedule and talks. The website will be updated as soon as this year's talks are finalized. For further information, email [info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca](mailto:info@friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca) or call 250-592-6659.

### Sunday May 3

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### Monthly Butterfly Outing

Join us on our monthly butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local butterflies. This outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Rd). Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the lot by the reservoir where we will have an initial look for butterflies and then decide where to

go from there. The meeting time may change. Check website closer to the date for updates. Contact Gordon Hart at (250) 721-1264 or [butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca](mailto:butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca) for more information.

### **Friday, May 8**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Birding Panama Flats***

Bonus Friday event! Join us at potentially one of the best spots in the region for shorebirds if the timing is right. Lots of other birds around the edges too. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the small parking lot near the playground. To reach this meeting place, turn off Interurban Rd at Hyacinth and follow the road to the end. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday, May 9**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### ***Early Birding Walk at Elk/Beaver Lake***

The VNHS Saturday Birding Group will be doing their Saturday walk at Elk/Beaver Lake. We will check out some of the trails and the lakeshore to see what migrants have joined the resident birds in this productive area. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the main parking lot at Beaver Lake. To reach this parking lot, turn on to Beaver Lake Road off Elk Lake Drive (parallels the Pat Bay Highway). There is a large park sign at this intersection. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday May 9**

#### ***World Migratory Bird Day***

Originally scheduled for May 9th, this event has been postponed. Please contact [education@rpbo.org](mailto:education@rpbo.org) for up to date information.

### **Sunday May 10**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Macaulay Point Intertidal Walk***

We will meet at the Fleming Beach boat launch parking lot at the foot of Lampson St. in Esquimalt at 11:00 a.m. and walk out to the rocky intertidal zone on the point. The footing can be wet and slippery so please wear appropriate shoes or rubber boots. The 0.7 ft tide should reveal some interesting critters. For more information contact Phil Lambert at 250-477-5922.

### **Sunday, May 10**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

Join us in birding and botanizing on Mount Douglas. If the weather is sunny, it is also a great spot for butterflies. We should get a good number of warblers, and also Western Tanager, House Wren and Chipping Sparrow are likely. We can always hope for a Lazuli Bunting singing above us in the trees as we slowly climb around to the viewpoint. The late wildflowers such as woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) should still be good as well. Please note the trail is steep but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trail marker off Blenkinsop Rd (south of 4411 Blenkinsop Rd). Parking is just north of Lohbrunner Road if no safe spots at the side of the road. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Saturday, May 16**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

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

### **Sunday, May 17**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

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

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

### **Monday, May 18**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

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

### **Friday, May 22**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

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

### **Saturday, May 23**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***Goldstream Heights - Higher Elevation Birding***

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

### **Sunday, May 24**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

Join us on a birding walk up and around Little Saanich Mountain.

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

### **Saturday, May 30**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

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

We will be going birding in the area around Trevlac Pond and part of Prospect Lake, then back through Logan Park. Meet on Trevlac Place which is off Hector Road at 7:00 a.m. We will also explore a relatively newly acquired Saanich property Goy Park which has a small pond. Maybe we'll hear the young Barred Owls hissing in the woods on the final part through Logan Park. Look for the brown park hiking post on Trevlac Place as our starting point. Park along one side of Trevlac but don't block the end of the cul-de-sac. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, May 31**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 4)

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

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

## **JUNE**

### **Saturday, June 6**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

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

### **Sunday, June 7**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

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

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

### **Saturday, June 13**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

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

Join us in birding Viaduct Flats and the surrounding area, including up Broadcast Hill. Not many water birds are still around but lots of migrant passerines are flitting about in the trees as well as the residents. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the viewing stand near the parking lot at the foot of Viaduct Ave. off Interurban Rd. Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, June 14**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

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

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

### **Saturday, June 20**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2/3)

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

Join us as we walk along Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. Enjoy spring migrants such as Black-headed Grosbeaks and Yellow Warblers. If it's a nice day, we will continue along Lohbrunner Road to the lower reaches of Mount Douglas and walk back south through the park to reach Mt Douglas Cross Road which will take us back to where we started. Meet at 7:00 a.m. opposite Don Mann Trucking on Lochside Drive (off Cedar Hill Cross Road). Contact Rick at (250) 885-2454 or Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.

### **Sunday, June 28**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

#### ***High Jordan Ridge Bogs***

We plan to investigate an area high above Jordan River that contains unique sphagnum bogs usually only found at much higher elevations. Plants include round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), common butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), bog blueberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*) and labrador tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*). We will also be checking out the birds on this trip although there is not a great diversity at this elevation. Be prepared in case of cold and/or wet weather due to the elevation and bring high rubber boots (hiking boots not good enough). A hiking stick is a good idea due to the very uneven ground. Bring food and drinks for the all-day outing. You must pre-register for this trip due to transportation limitations and potential change of plans due to road conditions. Number of participants will be dependent on availability of high-clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicles for carpooling. Starts from Victoria around 8:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information and to register.





Snow Geese on the grassy field by the water. Parksville Herring Trip. *Photo: Pauline Davis.*