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# The Victoria NATURALIST

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## VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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**Phone: 250-652-3508 e-mail: [publications@vicnhs.bc.ca](mailto:publications@vicnhs.bc.ca)**

**[Subject: VNHS newsletter submission]**

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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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Cover Photo: Western black elfin saddle  
(*Helvella vespertina*), Goldstream Provincial Park.  
Photo: Brian Starzomski.

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

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So many things are different these days...and yet we can still find things to be glad about. We are so lucky to live where we do in Canada, and fortunate that we have access to beautiful places “right in our own backyard”. With more people staying closer to home and the (likely related) overall reduction in traffic noise, people say they are hearing a lot more bird song. Certainly true for MY own backyard and surrounding neighbourhood.

Those beautiful places (and one further away), and some ways to add to and share our enjoyment of nature are to be found in this issue. We have an article about birding in Mexico...I have been on two trips and found it a great place to discover new (to me) birds. Hopefully one day soon, we’ll travel there again. Closer to home, we have another cute Salish Sea creature, Broom Hill, and even something about one of the newer residents in our area.

*In Nature’s Realm* (thanks to Stephen Ruttan for the book review) tells of early naturalists and includes images and descriptions of some of their records. In this issue, we offer a **new** way to record and share your finds with others. You may remember that in the September 2019 Note from the Editor, Claudia (filling in for me that issue) wrote about iNaturalist and how she was sceptical at first, but is now supportive. Now, five issues of the newsletter later, we have an entire article devoted to iNaturalist—learn how you can foster the citizen scientist in you and share your notes and images with others. And speaking of sharing—with venues for VNHS presentation nights unavailable this coming fall, VNHS is will be trying out a new way to share these evenings with all of you (see p. 6 re Zoom). Try it! I think you will like it!

As always, I thank those who contributed to this issue, and encourage you all to do so in future issues...no story too small...can even be a single image (painting, illustration, photo) that sparks a smile or sense of wonder.

As I said in the previous issue, I hope that you and yours are staying safe but still managing to be connected, and that you are finding ways to enjoy nature. Take care and safely enjoy your adventures.

*Gail Harcombe*

# A Message from Your Board

Some generalizations about naturalists: enthusiastic about nature, enjoy going outside, delight in quietly observing wildlife -may make us especially well-suited to the physical distancing and isolation of a pandemic. Dr. Bonnie Henry says “go outside”—and we say “we’re already outside” or “oh alright!”! So, although other necessities, hobbies, and activities may have been affected, your love of the outdoors has hopefully shielded you from some of the frustrations that others are feeling.

As a club we have had to adjust. At first we cancelled everything to meet the requirements of Phase I as outlined by the provincial health officer. But now we are in Phase II, so, with the lifting of some restrictions on gatherings, we have decided that field trips can go ahead, but with some “COVID caveats”—see opposite page. Please read these carefully and abide by them. As the situation evolves, or new recommendations are made, they will be reviewed. We will also post them on the website, and they will undoubtedly be mentioned by field trip leaders and organizers when you attend an event.

VNHS summer field trips often include trips to Washington State to see the wildflowers of Hurricane Ridge or a trip all

the way out to Cape Flattery, but at the time of this writing the international border is still closed. Although it may reopen on June 21, we cannot plan as though it will, so these trips will have to wait until next year.

Another adjustment we intend to make is with our evening presentations in the fall. The University of Victoria is going to offer online classes instead of opening and the Swan Lake Nature House is too small to physically distance, so we can assume that those venues will not be available to us. If the second wave of infections occurs as predicted, everything will be under lockdown and no venue will work, even if we were able to book a suitable alternative. So we have decided to embrace the car-free option and ask our presenters to tell us their natural history tales from the comfort of their home office, all while you also enjoy it from home. The success of the regular ZOOM presentations of our closely associated club, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, have shown us it can be done. In fact, many people who otherwise could not attend for whatever reason can now participate.

To help us make this transition, Ann Nightingale has written a how-to-ZOOM article in this same issue (see page six). Information about participating in our usual fall evening lecture series will be made readily available when the time comes. In the meantime, if you are hesitant or nervous about it please get in touch. We really hope that this will work for those that usually make the trek out in the cold and dark to attend, but also for those that don’t usually come. It may also mean we can book speakers who would not normally be considered because they are so far away - another silver lining. If you have some ideas about that please send them our way.

Your board will need to adjust as well. We normally meet at the Swan Lake Nature House, so instead we will probably also ZOOM for these monthly meetings until we are given the word that such things are no longer required. When we next meet we will be joined by Leah Ramsay- we are grateful she agreed to join the board and welcome her at an incredibly strange time. Leah has been handling the Society’s Twitter for many years so brings much-needed social media skills to the board table. Perhaps more so now than ever, since so much of our lives has turned to digital formats - many of us have stayed connected through screens for the last few months.

Finally, to what has not changed: our shared passion for the natural world. It is what brings most of us to the Victoria Natural History Society in the first place, and it has become even more important during this crisis. We thank you for your patience with the cancellations and adjustments we have had to make. Now that some of the social aspects of the Society have been reinstated, we look forward to seeing you on a field trip or “at” a meeting.



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# Field Trip Guidelines (for the COVID-19 environment)

In this “new abnormal environment”, when many events and activities are being cancelled, Dr. Bonnie Henry encourages us to get outside. For VNHS members, the preferred activity is a field trip.

Yes, trips are still possible, if they can be done safely according to public health directives and using common sense.

Following are what we hope will be temporary guidelines for leaders and participants.

1. For now, trips are to be limited to 10 participants, including the leader. However, if there are more than 10, the leader has the option of splitting the group.
2. Please respect physical distancing, two metres apart, while on trails and in groups.
3. Please bring a face mask to be used if physical distancing is not possible.
4. Please ensure that your field trip waiver (attached to the membership application and renewal form) is current and

signed. As stated on the form, you are attending field trips at your own risk.

5. Please do not carpool unless all occupants are from the same household.
6. Please bring your own binoculars and/or spotting scopes and avoid sharing them.
7. Please stay at home if you are feeling ill, especially if you have any possible COVID-19 symptoms, or even feel unsure about being with a group of people.
8. Please respect the trip leader’s right, and obligation, to limit the number of participants in any field trip. The leader also has the right to alter or even cancel a field trip. Please remember that our field trip leaders are volunteers, giving their time and knowledge freely and generously.
9. Finally, please check the VNHS website ahead of time to ensure that the trip is still scheduled to take place.

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# Zooming in to VNHS Presentations



The Spring of 2020 will be one to remember. The novel coronavirus CORVID-19 was bursting out all over the planet, and the only thing that anyone could think to do to stop it from becoming as deadly as the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic was to severely restrict personal contact. Almost overnight, workplaces, schools, and businesses were closing, and people were advised to stay close to home. The Victoria Natural History Society cancelled all presentations after the middle of March. Field trips came off the calendar until further notice. Everyone moved into a state of isolation, except from their own household members. We've missed you!

It's been said that necessity is the mother of invention, and it didn't take long for the naturalist community to step up. I had been a participant in Zoom meetings as a member of the American Birding Association Board. The platform had been recommended by Mike McGrenere due to his experience with it for the BC Field Ornithologists. Could it be used for presentations as well?

Rocky Point Bird Observatory had to cancel its annual bird monitoring workshop and was looking for a way to continue educational programs. A test was done, and within a couple of weeks, volunteers were offering three to five online talks each week! In April, Eric Demers stepped up and conducted

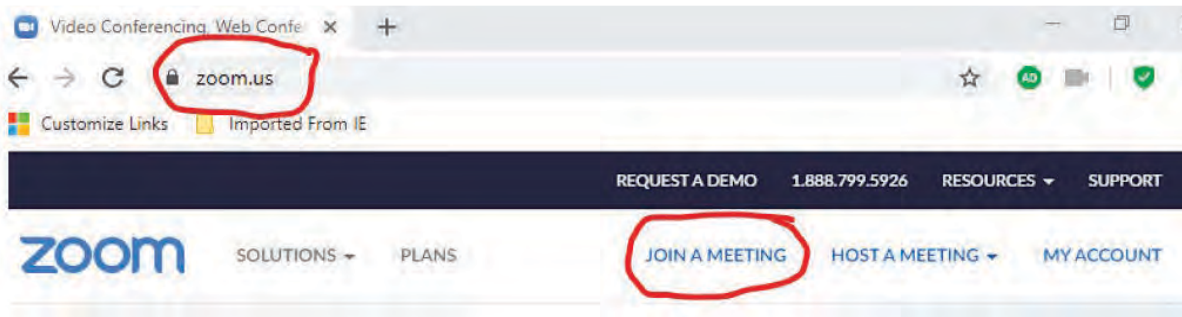
VNHS's first online Birders' Night. About 45 people attended his presentation on the bird projects managed by Vancouver Island University.

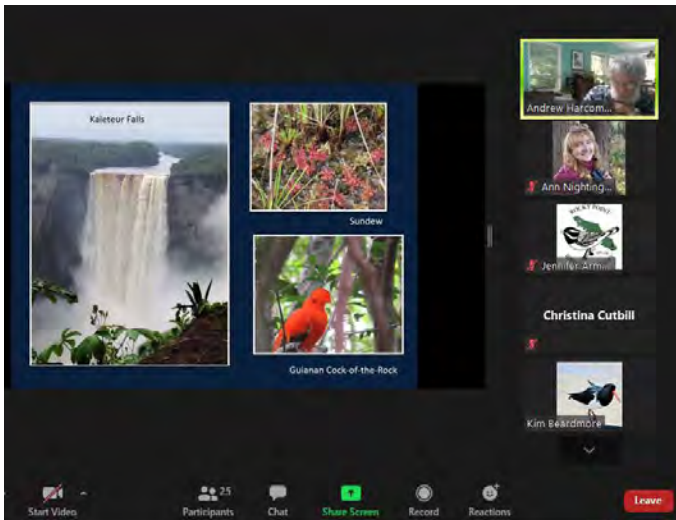
RPBO's talks have continued, with more than 200 people joining in for at least one presentation. They have been using the meeting format (as opposed to webinar format), which provides opportunities for people to interact with the speaker and others present. It's not quite the same as being there, but in many ways, it's pretty close! Many of the people had never attended an online meeting or presentation before, but they've found it very easy to use.

With UVic closed for in-person meetings in the fall, VNHS is going to go this route in September. In the September/October Naturalist, you will find a meeting ID number and password for each of our presentations. If you have a computer, tablet, or even a smartphone, you can join in.

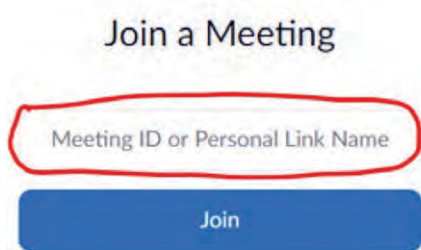
If this will be the first time you use Zoom, you will need to download a file to your computer, or to opt to use Zoom from your browser. Either will work, but the downloaded file will make this smoother. You can do this anytime before the presentation you wish to join.

Using your Internet browser, go to **zoom.us** and click on **Join a Meeting**.





Enter the **meeting ID** and click the **Join** button.



Follow the prompts from there. You will be asked for your name and email, but you don't have to use your full or real name unless you want to. First names, initials, nicknames are all fine, if you'd prefer a bit of anonymity.

When you join the room, you will be able to see who else is there, and will have an opportunity to use your computer microphone and webcam, if you'd like. Or you can just watch the presentation. If you have a computer that does not have speakers or a microphone, there will even be a way that you can dial in on your phone to participate in the audio.

We'll make sure that there is a host present at least 15 minutes ahead of the meeting start time to explain how everything works for new users.

RPBO has found that people are really enjoying the presentation format, with many participants coming to multiple sessions each week. If you would like to check it out before VNHS gets started in September, you are invited to attend the RPBO presentations. The links can be found at [http://rpbo.org/online\\_presentations](http://rpbo.org/online_presentations).

One of the benefits of this kind of presentation delivery is that people who would otherwise be unable to attend in person can join us online. You can even attend in your pajamas!



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# Calling All Citizen Scientists! Help Document Biodiversity in BC's Parks with the BC Parks iNaturalist Project

By Kelly Fretwell



Aimee Pelletier iNaturalist-ing. Photo: Brian Starzomski.

**D**o you enjoy taking photos of the flora, fauna, and fungi you see while out hiking, paddling, and exploring in B.C.'s provincial parks? Help document and celebrate the biodiversity you see in these beautiful spaces by contributing your photo observations to the BC Parks iNaturalist Project! This joint citizen science initiative between BC Parks, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, and the BC Parks Foundation encourages British Columbians and visitors to our province to use the online citizen science tool iNaturalist when visiting parks and protected areas.

## What is iNaturalist?

iNaturalist is a free app and website that provides a space for naturalists to share photo observations of species, learn about species identification, and connect with other naturalists in a global online community. Users take photos of plants, animals, fungi, and other organisms using their phones or cameras and then upload those images to the app or website. Other signs of life such as nests, tracks, and even sound recordings of calls can also be submitted as observations. iNaturalist's image recognition technology can help identify species from photos; other users in the online community then act as identifiers and help confirm or correct identifications.

While iNaturalist itself has been around for a number of years, this initiative to collect and encourage observations in B.C.'s parks and protected areas is new as of this past spring and summer, launched by a "BC Parks Big Summer" of mini-bioblitzes around the province by a top-notch team of field technicians. Observations made by anyone out enjoying B.C.'s provincial parks and protected areas are now automatically added to the BC Parks iNaturalist Project, allowing

citizen scientists to contribute data that can help BC Parks and researchers develop a deeper understanding of what our parks are protecting.

## Why join the BC Parks iNaturalist Project?

iNaturalist is a great tool for new or aspiring naturalists who want to expand their knowledge, as well as experienced naturalists who are well-acquainted with the species they encounter and have expertise to share, and anyone in between. It's also great for kids (there is even a kid-friendly version called Seek) and perfect for nature-loving photographers looking for a space to share their shots!

By using iNaturalist in B.C.'s protected areas, you can create an interactive record of your own explorations in these beautiful spaces and learn more about the biodiversity you encounter, while also helping improve the understanding of biodiversity found in these areas (e.g., rare, at-risk, and invasive species) and how species distributions are shifting with factors like climate change. There is also an important role for experienced naturalists to help others identify what they've found: the data quality will improve as more users with expertise help confirm or correct the findings of others.

## The BC Parks iNaturalist Project in Numbers

There are now close to 140,000 observations of over 5000 species in the 1000+ provincial parks, ecological reserves, conservancies, and other protected areas. These observations are thanks to the contributions of over 2800 observers and



Gooseneck barnacles (*Pollicipes polymerus*)— Botanical Beach at Juan de Fuca PP. Photo: Kelly Fretwell.



Pacific trillium (*Trillium ovatum*)— Cowichan River PP. Photo: Brian Starzomski.





Genevieve Reynolds in Juan de Fuca PP. *Photo: Kelly Fretwell.*

the more than 3100 identifiers who have helped improve data quality.

We can also break down the numbers for each park: every park or protected area has its own project page on iNaturalist, all of which are contained within the BC Parks “umbrella”—so you can see what plants, animals, fungi, and other species have been found and recorded in your favourite parks so far. Nearly 30 parks have surpassed 1000 observations—including Goldstream, Juan de Fuca, and Gowlland Tod— with others fast approaching that mark. But many well-travelled and accessible parks still number in the low hundreds or less, including many within an easy distance of Greater Victoria, such as French Beach, John, Sooke Mountain and Sooke Pot-holes, Ruckle Park and Mount Maxwell on Salt Spring Island, and West Shawnigan Lake. Help bump these numbers up by joining iNaturalist and sharing your provincial park shots!

### How Do I Join?

You only need three things to get started with iNaturalist and your BC Parks iNaturalist contributions:

1. An iNaturalist account. Sign up for a free account at [iNaturalist.ca](http://iNaturalist.ca)
2. A camera or smartphone to capture your observations
3. A computer or smartphone to upload the photos you take to your account. Use the iNaturalist free mobile app available for iOS and Android, or upload your observations directly to [iNaturalist.ca](http://iNaturalist.ca)



Giant Green Anemone (*Anthopleura xanthogrammica*) — Botanical Beach at Juan de Fuca PP. *Photo: Kelly Fretwell.*



Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)— Bodega Ridge PP. *Photo: Jason Headley.*



Menzie's larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*)—Goldstream PP. *Photo: Genevieve Reynolds.*

For more information on how to get started, photography tips and tricks for good-quality observations, and some fun resources like PARKS bingo cards and ideas for clubs and groups to get involved, download the BC Parks iNaturalist Project toolkit from [bcparksfoundation.ca/inaturalist](http://bcparksfoundation.ca/inaturalist) Browse all the observations that have been made so far and see how your favourite parks stack up in observation numbers at [inaturalist.ca/projects/bc-parks](http://inaturalist.ca/projects/bc-parks)

Questions or comments? Contact us at [citizenscience@bcparksfoundation.ca](mailto:citizenscience@bcparksfoundation.ca)

### Share Your Shots!

We would love to see your photos of the species you find in BC's parks and protected areas. For a chance to have your observation featured in the BC Parks Foundation e-newsletter or social media share your favourites on Instagram or Twitter and tag [@bcparksfdn](https://www.instagram.com/bcparksfdn) and [#iNatBCParks](https://twitter.com/iNatBCParks), or tag [@bcparksfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/bcparksfoundation) on Facebook—after you post your observations on iNaturalist of course!

We're also looking for landscapes: each individual park and protected area's iNaturalist project page has a banner photo, and we're still looking for banner photos for many parks. Got a great landscape shot of your favourite park? Send it our way so we can share it with the BC Parks iNaturalist Project community.



Victoria's Paintbrush (*Castilleja victoriae*)— Oak Bay Islands ER. *Photo: Brian Starzomski.*

# Broom Hill in Springtime

By Pauline Davis Photos by author

What a time to be in the woods. It is May 6th, the sun is shining and I am rambling up the trail to Broom Hill with my camera. As Pojar and MacKinnon say, this is a great time of year to be out in the woods when the list of blooming flowers is long, including starflowers, vanilla leaf, false lily of the valley, thimbleberry, chickweed, common camas, yellow monkey flower, spotted monkeyflower, Calypso orchid, death camas, sea blush, salal, Vancouver groundcone and western coralroot.

At the lower level of the hill, I spot a yellow groundcone, *Boschniakia hookeri*, poking up from the ground next to the brown remains of last year's inflorescence which could easily be mistaken for a pinecone. This plant together with western coral root, *Corallorhiza maculata* ssp. *mertensiana*, is categorized as a mycoheterotroph which means that lacking their own chlorophyll they slyly obtain nutrients through mycorrhiza attached to the roots of a vascular plant. The Vancouver groundcone favours salal while the western coralroot grows in association with conifers.

At the higher level there is a patch of yellow monkeyflowers, *Mimulus guttatus*, happily facing the sun in an open rocky seepage area. In the same open area common camas, *Camassia quamash*, is blooming and my photograph shows two of the characteristic features which distinguish this species from great camas. Both flowers have six tepals but whereas great camas flowers are radially symmetrical, those of common camas have one long tepal pointing downwards while the other five curve upward. In the woods on the north side of the hill beautiful little rose-coloured flowers of the Calypso orchid, *Calypso bulbosa*, peek shyly from the mossy ground cover.

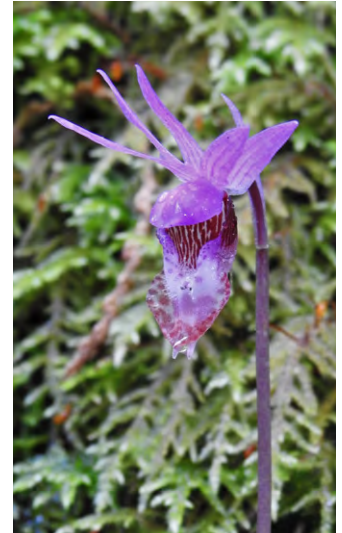
Indeed, it is a day to remember!



Common camas, *Camassia quamash*.



Western coral root, *Corallorhiza maculata* ssp. *mertensiana*.



Calypso orchid, *Calypso bulbosa*.



Yellow groundcone, *Boschniakia hookeri*.

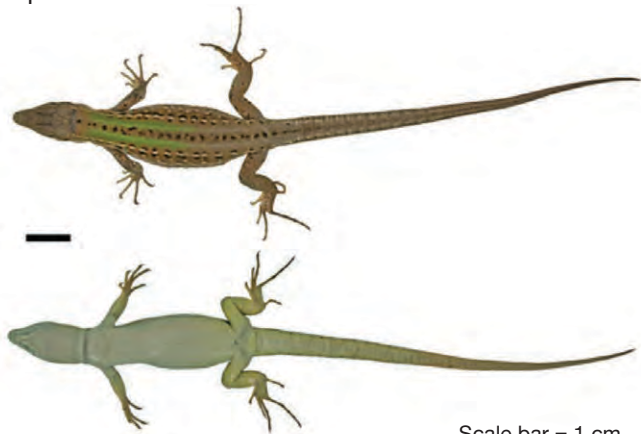


Yellow monkeyflowers, *Mimulus guttatus*.

# A Second Wall Lizard Species in British Columbia

By Gavin Hanke

Common Wall Lizards (*Podarcis muralis*) are easy to identify with their mottled green colouration, belly and throat with black blotches, small scales on the back, and long toes relative to the leg. Young Wall Lizards are coppery brown like young Northern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria coerulea*) but still have minute scales and long toes for their size. The Common Wall Lizard was first released in B.C. in 1967, another 12 or so were released in 1970, and now they have spread widely on Vancouver Island and Denman Island. They also have appeared in three locations on the B.C. Mainland (Osoyoos, Summerland, North Vancouver) but do not persist there.



Scale bar = 1 cm.

On June 19, 2019, a second wall lizard species, the Italian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis siculus*) was discovered in B.C. (above, now preserved and catalogued as RBCM 2187). It was caught in an industrial area along the northern arm of the Fraser River Delta in Vancouver. It probably was a stow-away – but we don't know where it came from. The single Italian Wall Lizard found in Vancouver was female, and likely did not lay any eggs.

This species also has been found on Orcas Island (and scattered locations in southern California), and according to landowners, wall lizards had been on Orcas Island for 10 years. Initially, these Orcas Island wall lizards were thought to be Common Wall Lizards transplanted from Vancouver Island. In 2017, a photo by Corey Raimond on Flickr brought this Orcas Island population to my attention. It was immediately obvious that they had Italian Wall Lizards. The Vancouver specimen and the lizards on Orcas Island can easily be identified to subspecies: *Podarcis siculus campestris*—the more northern of the two subspecies of Italian Wall Lizard.

The Orcas Island population greatly increases the risk that the species will appear here from accidental transport in lumber, livestock trailers, camping gear, or by intentional transport. This lizard has the same general body proportions

as a Common Wall Lizard, but the colouration differs radically. The Italian Wall Lizard has distinct, evenly-coloured green stripes along each side of the body, a lateral row of light coloured spots on each side, and the belly and throat is pale and lacks dark blotches.

Since we are trying to keep a handle on the spread of wall lizards in British Columbia, regardless of species, we are now encouraging people to add photos and location information directly to iNaturalist. The basic web page is: <https://www.inaturalist.org/home> but we also have a specific project in iNaturalist on wall lizards in North America: <https://inaturalist.ca/projects/common-wall-lizard-spread-in-north-america>

Please join in, take your smart phone for a walk and photograph lizards—even if you are walking where lizards are common (like Brentwood Bay). Every dot on the map shows us how evenly (or not) lizards are distributed in the environment, and which structural features attract lizards in urban areas. All this information helps not only map the range of wall lizards, it also helps predict how far other invasive species will spread if they do best in urban environments.



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# Birding Off the Radar in Southern Mexico

By Paul Lukaszek Photos by author



White-winged Dove in early morning sun of Oaxaca Valley.

I, like most birders, enjoy staying at lodges in nature reserves when travelling in bird-rich countries and regions. Such lodges are usually located in areas where birds are abundant; walking trails near the lodge provide good bird sightings; and feeders on the property provide close-up views for many birds. But some great birding areas do not have such birding-friendly infrastructure. In these places, one must work harder to find birds and the knowledge and experience of a guide becomes even more important.

I recently went on a birding trip in southern Mexico where there were no bird-friendly lodges to stay at. After spending two weeks driving and birding across the entire States of Oaxaca and Chiapas, we found hundreds of bird species, but no other birders. Southern Mexico seemed to be completely off the birding radar compared to bird-rich areas in countries like Costa Rica or Ecuador. An internet search shows that other bird tour companies offer trips to either Chiapas and/or Oaxaca; but we saw no sign of them in January 2020. The closest we came to another birder was the local guide that our main Mexican guide used when we went birding on private indigenous land in the mountains outside of San Cristobal de las Casas.

Staying at Mexican hotels, instead of lodges, meant early starts everyday with breakfast in the field since our hotel restaurants did not offer an early breakfast. Heck, almost none of them even provided early morning coffee. Luckily, our driver, and field breakfast provider, always had a large thermos of morning coffee ready. I have no idea what time he

got up. Typically, we would leave our hotel around 6:00 am and drive for 45 minutes or an hour before stopping at a good area for seeing birds while we ate breakfast.

A major focus of this trip was on finding endemic species. We were not disappointed. Many people may not know that Mexico has more endemic species than any Western Hemisphere country except Brazil. This is probably due to its geographic location relative to the equator. The climate and habitats of Mexico seem so good that many birds have no reason to leave. For some reason, wrens appear to really like Mexico since there are 32 wren species in the country. We were lucky to have as our guide one of the top wren experts in Mexico. We saw 12 wren species in southern Mexico, including five endemic ones; and our guide identified five additional wrens by sound only.

In searching for the rare Sumichrast's Wren, we drove deeper and deeper into sugar cane fields until we found ourselves on little more than a narrow and deeply rutted farm track. The road was also wet and muddy thanks to an unseasonable Caribbean low-pressure system that brought some rain the previous two days. At some point, our guide asked the driver to stop and let us off on the muddy road. He then led us into a forested area along a band of rocks. Even with



Zapotec weaver showing traditional hand-woven rugs.



Sunrise in the Chiapas lowlands.

GPS coordinates, this location would have been pretty well impossible to find. The ground skulking Sumichrast's Wren refused to show himself when calls were played repeatedly. During our 40-minute stake-out, a few members of the group finally managed a fleeting glance when the bird moved along the ground from one spot to another.

In addition to leaving our hotels early for morning birding, on many days we had to drive fair distances on mostly slow roads. Our trip itinerary took us from the Gulf coast of Veracruz, up into the highlands of Oaxaca, down to and along the Pacific coast, back up into the highlands of Chiapas, down to the jungle area near Palenque and finally into the wetlands of eastern Chiapas and Tabasco State. We also spent a fair amount of time on gravel backroads since we were going to many bird specific locations. Not every day involved driving to a new hotel, but on every day we were either birding or travelling for a good 12 hours, punctuated by lunch at a restaurant.

Staying at hotels instead of lodges provided more opportunities to take in some non-birding experiences. The States of Oaxaca and Chiapas both offer a rich menu of indigenous culture and history. Each State has an archeological site that represents the zenith of two civilizations. The Zapotecs built Monte Alban outside present day Oaxaca and the Mayans built their famous city at Palenque. Not only were the ruins interesting places visually and historically, but each site also offered good birding. The Oaxaca area is also famous for its cuisine and traditional artisan crafts.

Southern Mexico may be off the radar for many birders, but even fewer people are familiar with the great wetlands that straddle a large area where the States of Chiapas, Tabasco and Campeche adjoin. This area is known locally as the Usumacinta marshes. Our Mexican guide calls it Mexico's 'little Pantanal'. His name for this area was appropriate. As we slowly wandered the wetlands and backroads for 10 hours on the last day of our trip, we saw 85 bird species. And there



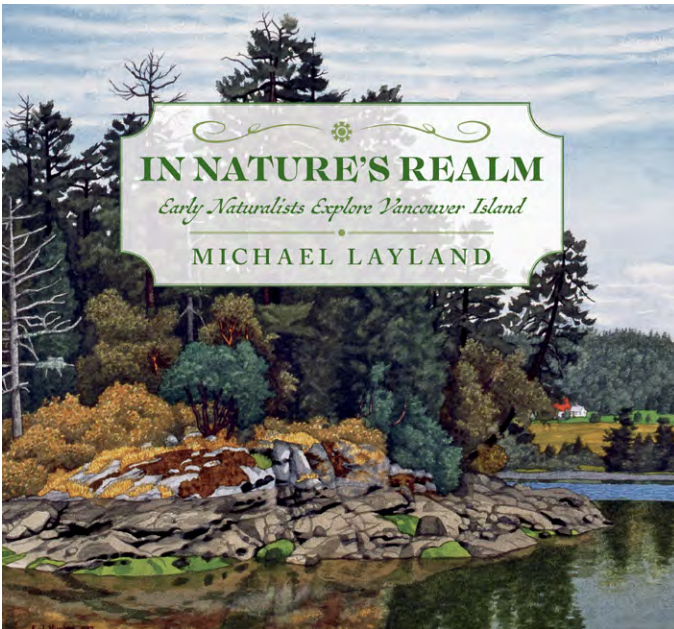
Low hanging clouds provide mystical mood for Mayan temple at Palenque.

was also other wildlife like Howler Monkeys, Iguanas and the Morelet's Crocodile. While many of the birds had been seen on previous days, some first-time sightings like the Jabiru Stork, Pinnated Bittern and Limpkin were memorable trip birds.

By the time we reached our end point in Villahermosa, I had recorded 332 species seen (the group total was 368). Every species was seen in its natural habitat, including 23 species of hummingbirds. The most numerous species for a bird family was warblers. Of the 38 warbler species seen, one arguably caused the most excitement of any bird on the trip. Back in the Chiapas highlands near San Cristobal de las Casas, the local guide led us to sightings of the range specific Pink-headed Warbler. The wow factor for this bird was not its rarity, but rather its very unusual coloration for a warbler. The birds, geography, habitats and indigenous culture of southern Mexico should put this area on the radar for birders who want a non-lodge-based birding adventure.

# Book Review: In Nature's Realm by Michael Layland

Reviewed by Stephen Ruttan



Michael Layland has done it again. In the past few years, he has written award-winning books on the early mapmakers and explorers of Vancouver Island. Now he has turned his attention to the naturalists. In his new book, he has prepared a major study of the early naturalists who explored Vancouver Island. To say this fills a gap in our knowledge is an understatement. To my knowledge, we have had nothing like it. Now, though, we have a large, comprehensive work, that covers many people and topics. For some of us it opens a new area of study.

In his introduction, Layland tells us that the book is divided into four parts. First comes indigenous knowledge and use of the region. In the next section, he covers the earliest European records. This was a golden age of European discovery, and included people such as Cook from Britain, and Malaspina from Spain. The third part is the settlement area, with the settlers writing about the nature of their new surroundings. The fourth section of the book is especially wide-ranging. He writes about organized expeditions, such as those of the federal government. But he also has chapters on special topics, such as women and botany, and the history of importing songbirds to this region.

The chapter on Indigenous use shows the book's diversity. He describes the different Indigenous groups, and their use of the land and sea. But he also covers some special topics. He has a section on the clam gardens constructed by local groups. He writes on Nancy Turner, and her important studies on local ethnobotany. And, on a topic new to me, he writes about the bird-net poles, up to thirty metres high, that

were constructed by Indigenous people to catch migrating waterfowl.

From pre-contact times till the First World War, Layland covers the work of many naturalists. Some, such as David Douglas and John Macoun, are well known. Others, such as many on the Spanish ships, are almost unknown. Sometimes the famous and the obscure complement each other. Archibald Menzies, for example, was one of the most important collectors on the coast, and has a whole chapter devoted to his career. But important to understanding Menzies work is the research of a twentieth century scientist, Eric Groves. Groves has researched and written several papers on Menzies' work. These papers are central to our understanding of Menzies, and Layland includes an article on him in the Menzies chapter.

As well as text, the book includes dozens of illustrations which complement the writing. Layland has obviously searched far and wide for the appropriate pictures; I see, for example, that some come from institutions in Madrid. But some of the best comes from right here at home. Botanical and landscape paintings by Emily Carr, Emily Sartain, E. J. Hughes, and others show how our natural world has inspired some of our best artists.

Finally, I would like to mention something that might get overlooked: the notes and bibliography. Not only has Layland created the basic text for this subject, but in his twelve pages of notes and eight pages of bibliography, he takes us much beyond the bounds of this book. The bibliography is very wide-ranging, and some items might be hard to discover on your own. This will be a standard reference text on Vancouver Island for years to come.



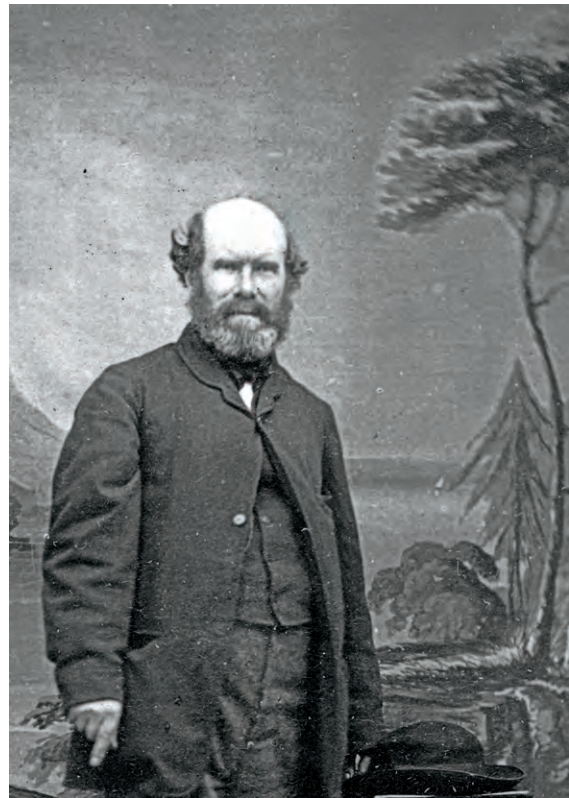
Heartsease violet, a plate from John Lindley's *Ladies' Botany* probably painted by Sarah Lindley guided by "Ducky" Drake. Plate IV2 from Lindley's *Ladies' Botany*, 1834, from author's collection.



William Ellis's *Alca cirrhata* (tufted puffin) in breeding plumage. Natural History Museum, plate #37, © Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London.



*Pinus douglasii*, the fir renamed for David Douglas but first reported by Archibald Menzies. From *Flora Boreali-Americana*, plate 183.



Dr. William Fraser Tolmie in about 1860, as he was settling into Cloverdale, his house and farm near Victoria. Image I-61857 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives [image edited].

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# Salish Sea Creatures: Two-spot Keyhole Limpet

By Tina Kelly Photos by author. All images taken at the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea.

The “Imposter Limpet” is the common name I would have chosen for this species had I been tasked with the job. Limpets can typically be described as volcano-shaped and often bland in colour. Shield Limpets (*Lottia pelta*) and Plate Limpets (*Tectura scutum*) are perfect examples. Even the Rough Keyhole Limpet, previously featured in this column, fits the bill but with a hole at the shell’s apex. Enter the Two-spot Keyhole Limpet, *Fissurellidea bimaculata*, a stray from those descriptors.

When pressed for a guess, some may think this species is a nudibranch. Throwing off the identification may its soft and colourful body. This limpet’s shell is reduced to only a small portion of its dorsal surface and can be partially covered by the surrounding, brightly coloured soft body; the soft body can be red, orange, yellow or more drab colours like green and brown. It may also have spots or a mottled appearance.

Although it lives in the intertidal and subtidal zones, it is not a common find. Look for it among holdfasts, sponges, or colonial tunicates. The latter two are a part of this limpet’s diet.



## WELCOME TO NEW VNHS MEMBERS

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

**James Casey**, Victoria.

**David Greer**, Victoria, *Birding, botany.*

**Zobeida Philp**, Victoria, *Flora and fauna of the area, also history. Field trips and history presentations.*

**Sarah Weaver**, Victoria, *Nature protection, nature appreciation.*



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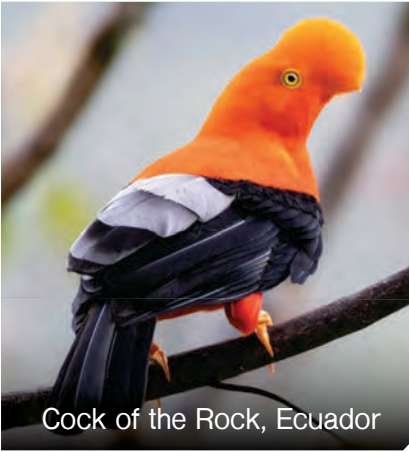
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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

In these unprecedented times, the VNHS is exploring alternatives for Board meetings and evening presentations. We will do our best to keep you informed as things develop. Because UVic will not be available to us for the foreseeable future, nor will Swan Lake Nature House, the VNHS is planning to use Zoom for our Board of Directors meetings and Presentation Nights (see page six). The schedule should remain the same as previous years, but please check the website to make sure you have up-to-date information. See the VNHS Calendar at: [http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518)

**Board of Directors meetings:** *the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.*

**Natural History Night:** *the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.*

**Botany Night:** *the third Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.*

**Birders' Night:** *the fourth Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.*

**Marine Night:** *the last Monday at 7:30 p.m.*

**PLEASE NOTE: EVENT DETAILS ARE ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION BUT CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES OR ADDITIONS.** 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.

*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.*

**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.**

*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.*

## 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:**

**Although some activities are listed here, they MAY NOT happen, so please check the website for up to date information. Please also be aware that new field trip guidelines have been developed according to public health recommendations and will be implemented. See page five.**

## JULY

### **Sunday July 5**

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Monthly Butterfly Outing*

Join **Gordon Hart** on our monthly Butterfly outing. Each outing is intended to help us learn more about our local

butterflies. This outing is weather dependent. It needs to be warm and sunny to make it worthwhile. We will start at the top of Mount Tolmie (off Cedar Hill Cross Rd). Meet at 1:00 p.m. in the lot by the reservoir where we will have an initial look for butterflies and then decide where to go from there. Contact Gordon at (250) 721-1264 or [butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca](mailto:butterflies@vicnhs.bc.ca) for more information.

## Sunday July 12

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### *Plants and Birds of Cattle Point and Uplands Park*

This is an area of interest both to botanists and birders, so we'll enjoy some of each even though it's past prime season for a good number of the botany treasures. We can enjoy watching for seeds! Dr. Chris Brayshaw spent many years documenting the rare plants in this area so we will try to find some of these as well as enjoying the birds along the way so bring your binoculars too. We will be on some rocky bits, but this is basically a level trail so is an opportunity for those who can't handle the usual Southern Vancouver Island rocky terrain where the wildflowers typically grow. Cattle Point/Uplands Park is on Beach Drive between Oak Bay and Cadboro Bay. Meet at the nature sign at the Cattle Point waterfront parking area at 10:00 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

## Saturday July 25

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

### *Florence Lake & Langford Lake Birding*

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

## AUGUST

### Sunday August 2

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 2)

#### *Monthly Butterfly Outing*

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

## Sunday, August 9

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### *Urban Forest Walk—Gonzales Hill Regional Park Area*

This will be another one in a series of walks around areas where the cover of vegetation consists of both native and some introduced trees and shrubs. We need to be reminded that these areas of Urban Forest are very important to our wild creatures and to us. As we wander, we'll talk about why the trees are important. A highlight of the area is the Gonzales Observatory which was originally a meteorological station that recorded weather and took astronomical and seismic readings. Plus we will also enjoy the fabulous views from the top. It is mostly an area of native trees and shrubs but some of the introduced trees have been there for many years and they contribute to the value of the Urban Forest. Note that we will be scrabbling around the rocks so wear good walking shoes. Bring binoculars if you wish. We will start our tour at the parking lot of the Gonzales Hill Regional Park at 340 Denison Street. Meet at 10 a.m. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

## Saturday August 15

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### *Island View Beach & Saanichton Spit Birding*

Join the Saturday Birding Group who will be going to Island View Beach and Saanichton Spit. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the north end of the parking lot. It's the time of year that we might find some interesting shorebirds on their return migration and we will still see a few beach flowers in the dunes as we walk along. Ask the leader to show you a Black Widow Spider if that interest you. Most people don't even know they are there. To reach Island View Beach, go north on the Pat Bay highway, turn right at the lights at Island View Rd (Michell's Market) and follow that to a left on Homathko Rd which leads to the parking lot. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 if you need more information.

## Monday August 24

FIELD TRIP (LEVEL 3)

### *Sidney Spit Birding*

It's the time of year to make the trek over to Sidney Spit on Sidney Island to look for interesting shorebirds on their southern migration. There are always good ones reported from there—Baird's Sandpiper, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers and Plovers, maybe even that illusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper we always hope to see! Also, close-ups on Purple Martins, and we'll see other passerines in the woods. You will be impressed with the recent removal of invasive plants from the Spit to allow more habitat for native plants and areas for nesting birds. Bring a lunch and drinks (no water available on island). Due to the over-crowding on the ferry on the weekend, we have chosen to go during the week. We will go over on the ferry from Sidney that leaves at 10:00 a.m. Be there about an hour early to buy your ticket as it can sell out. Cost is \$19 for adults (\$16 seniors). Ferry leaves from the foot of Beacon Ave. Allow enough time to find a place to park. Parking rates vary on how far you are willing to walk. The return ferry leaves the island at 1:00, 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. so you can choose how long you wish to stay. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or (250) 721-0634 for more information.



Rufous Hummingbird...a “perky little fellow” seen at Witty’s Lagoon in May. *Photo: Pauline Davis.*