



Victoria Natural History Society's *Enjoy the Outdoors* Calendar





# January

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Indian Plum and Beaked Hazelnut (native shrubs) begin to bud.
- Owls calling to maintain their territories.
- Wetlands and the ocean covered with overwintering ducks, geese, loons, and grebes.
- Bird nests from the previous year are easy to spot in the leafless trees.



Dylan Church

Vancouver Island has many non-native mammals. Two species of rats have been introduced, along with House Mouse, Grey Squirrel, muskrat, and both species of rabbits.

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Raccoons have adapted well to urban life and do get into things we'd rather they didn't! The garbage depicted in the artwork contains organic items that can all be readily composted. For more information and school programs about composting see the **Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre** website: [www.compost.bc.ca](http://www.compost.bc.ca)



Alyssa Liao







# February

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Pacific Treefrogs begin chorusing in local wetlands. Get involved in FrogWatch to learn more: [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frogwatch/](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frogwatch/)
- Winter Wrens and Song Sparrows begin singing.
- Indian Plum begins to flower and the tips of wildflower bulbs are peeking up through the soil. Get involved in PlantWatch to learn more: [www.naturewatch.ca/english/plantwatch/](http://www.naturewatch.ca/english/plantwatch/)

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- 29 *Leap Year*

Great-horned Owls begin nesting as early as February. In Victoria, only the Great-horned and Barred Owl are very common. Some other species of owls have become very rare due to the loss of habitat. See the **Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team's** website:

[www.goert.ca/](http://www.goert.ca/)



HUMMINGBIRDS  
DRINK  
NECTAR

CARMEN



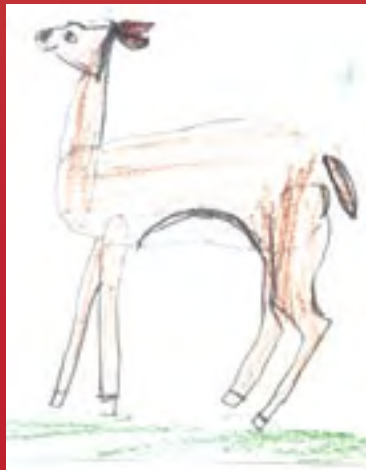
# March

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Rufous Hummingbirds and Violet-green Swallows return.
- Anna's Hummingbirds are already nesting.
- Blue Orchard Bees emerge and begin pollinating our fruit trees.
- Satin Flowers, Spring Gold, Skunk Cabbage, and Coltsfoot all begin to bloom.
- Mornings are filled with the sounds of birds singing to establish their territories.
- Pussy willows become noticeable on our native willow trees.



Delaine McDonald



Nikki Charles

To learn more about bees, wildflowers, or local birds, visit the **Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary**: [www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca) or 479-0211.

They offer school programs and public programs on a great variety of topics.

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Woodpeckers are incredibly important because of the nest cavities they excavate each year (usually in a dead tree). After the woodpecker finishes with it, these nest holes will be used by owls, swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, and wrens. You can help maintain habitat for these birds by leaving dead and dying trees whenever possible, and putting up nestboxes for birds. Please make sure the entrance holes are the right size to keep non-native House Sparrows and European Starlings out. This information can be found in the **Naturescape Kit**:

[www.hctf.ca/nature.htm](http://www.hctf.ca/nature.htm)



Hannah Gordon





# April

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Many native shrubs, trees and wildflowers start to bloom, including Easter Lilies, also known as White Fawn Lilies (above, below).
- Butterflies will start to appear more regularly.
- Warblers, famous for their songs and bright colours, will return from their southern wintering locations.
- Trumpeter Swans will leave for points north.
- Chestnut-backed Chickadees are nesting. They usually have 4-5 chicks and are great at naturally controlling insect populations in your garden.



Brandi Sandford

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Although they are important decomposers and "earth movers", none of the earthworms commonly found in your garden are native. Despite their introduced status, earthworms and the many other organisms in our soil are essential, so avoid the use of pesticides when gardening. For more information and school programs about earth-friendly alternatives, go to the **City Green** website:

[www.citygreen.ca](http://www.citygreen.ca)



Ramandeep Sanghera



Colton Askey





# May

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Columbia Black-tailed Deer fawns are born. On Vancouver Island they almost always have twins.
- The last few of the loons will leave our ocean to head inland to breed on lakes.
- Peak flower blooms will occur, including Camas (left and right above) in the open woodlands and Trilliums (centre) in the darker forested places.
- Insects of all descriptions will be active. Watch for dramatic species such as the swallowtail butterflies. We have three species of swallowtail in our region.
- Brant Geese and many species of shorebird pass through our area this time of year—heading north to breed.
- Non-native bullfrogs line pond edges, making a loud NERRPP! when disturbed by passersby.
- Purple Martins return to their breeding colonies at local wharves.
- Many species of birds will have eggs and even young in their nests.
- Bats will be out in the evenings foraging on the abundant insects (including mosquitoes!). They give birth to only one baby per year and can be very long-lived (up to 30 years). The **Nature House at Goldstream Park** has a video camera set up on the bat colony in their attic — call **478-9414** for more info.

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Pine Martens are rarely seen in the Victoria area, but both Mink and River Otter are species that are regularly seen. Both swim and hunt in the ocean, so they can be mistaken for Sea Otters, which are even less likely than Pine Marten! Mink and River Otter don't spend time in the trees like the Pine Marten depicted below. To see these critters, head out to a local **CRD Park** and keep your eyes on the trail ahead or watch the shorelines of lakes and the ocean.

[www.crd.bc.ca/parks/](http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/)

**CRD Parks** also offers school programs and public programs.



Danica Neral



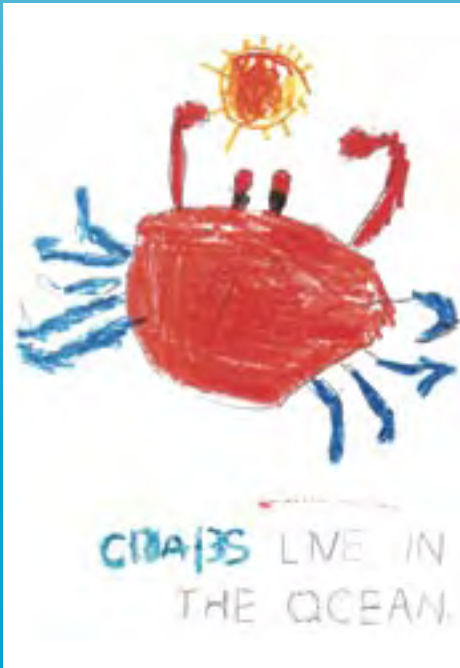




# June

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- The strange collar-like eggs of the Moon Snail can be found on local beaches. **Bamberton Provincial Park** is one of the best places to see these locally. Call **478-9414** to book a school program at Bamberton beach.
- June has the best daytime low tides of the year so get down to the nearest seashore to explore! To learn more about all things marine, check out the **Marine Ecology Station** in Sidney: [www.mareco.org](http://www.mareco.org).
- Salmonberry fruit begins to ripen.
- Listen for cicadas in the trees — they make a buzzing sound with a drum-like organ on their abdomen.



Liam Horgan

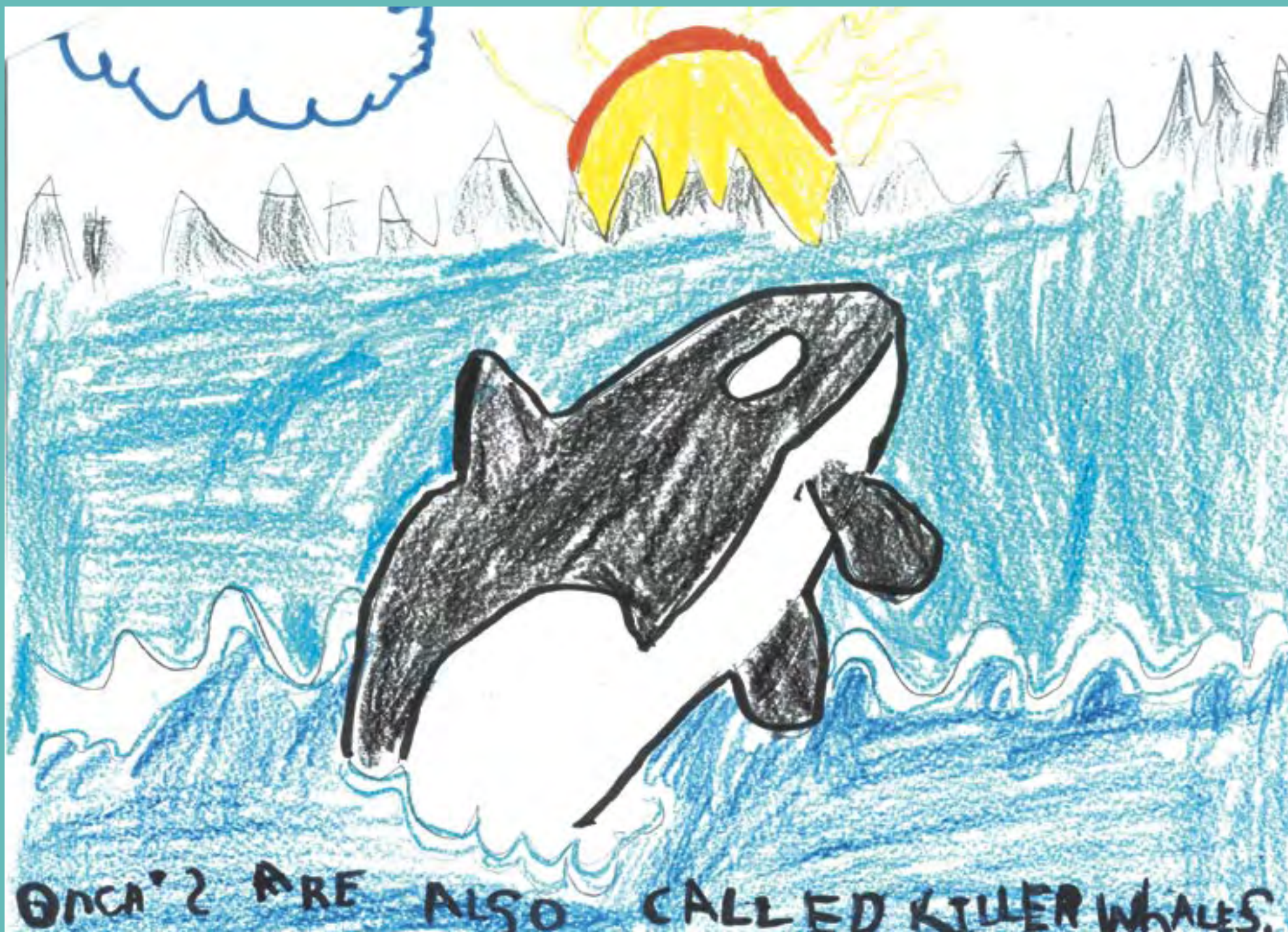
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5. *World Environment Day*
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There are two types of Killer Whales (Orca) commonly found in our area: "Resident" and "Transient". The differences between the two are many: diet, vocalizations and appearance. The easiest way for you to tell the difference is the size of the pod: fewer than six individuals usually means you are watching transients. They eat marine mammals rather than fish, so they keep quiet as they hunt.



Abbigail Christ-Rowling





ORCA'S ARE ALSO CALLED KILLER WHALES.



# July

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Harbour Seals will have pups this time of year.
- Indian Pipe, a strange white plant, blooms this time of year. It cannot make food for itself — instead it parasitizes the nearby trees and fungus growing with the tree.
- Listen for flycatchers and Common Nighthawks this time of year.



Mountain Sneezeweed is an example of just one of the more than fifty rare plants in our region. It grows in Uplands Park in Oak Bay.

Jason Buckley

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- 11 *World Population Day*
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Nic

There are more than a dozen rare butterflies that occur (or used to occur) on Vancouver Island. The **Victoria Natural History Society** has a butterfly survey that happens every year during the spring, summer, and early fall. Anyone who is interested can participate.

[www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)



Noah Anderson







# August

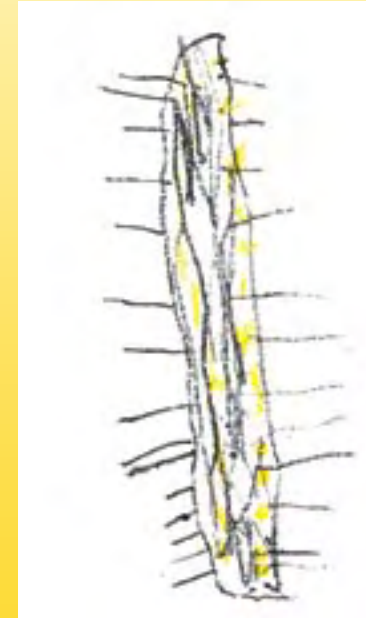
## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Northern Alligator Lizards give birth this time of year. They are our only native lizard on the Island.
- Fireweed (see below) seed heads will be releasing their fluffy seeds far and wide.
- Termites are flying around in August as well: finding mates and new rotten logs to move into.
- Steller's Jays return to Victoria on the years the Garry Oaks produce a bumper crop of acorns.



Katelyn Bowers

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- 8 *International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples*
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Mark Blundell

The large millipedes seen in our forests are coloured black and yellow to serve as a warning: they can secrete cyanide to keep predators away. It can be detected as a sweet almond smell.

We only have Black Bear living on the Island (no Grizzly Bears), but they do come in a variety of colours, including brown. The best locations to see one are salmon-spawning rivers.



Alanna Brooks







# September

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Field Crickets singing: the frequency of their song depends on how warm they are!
- Fungi popping up everywhere after the first fall rain.
- Shorebirds pass through on their way south, but many of the ducks stop and stay for the winter.
- Few native flowers are blooming: asters typically are all that are still showy, but the shrubs and trees are loaded with fruit that birds will enjoy for months.
- Turkey Vultures start to fly in groups, called "kettling", in preparation for their trip southward. They are easily mistaken for eagles because they are large.



Brandon

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- 16..... *International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer*
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- 21..... *International Day of Peace*
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Emily Crooks



Carmen Eilertsen



MacKenzie Byng





Shayna Richards

# October

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There are at least six commonly seen species of gulls in Victoria, but at this time of year some different gulls can sometimes be found hanging around places like Goldstream River — drawn there by the annual salmon run. Ring-billed Gulls like the ones depicted above are an uncommon species. As with all gulls, the markings on the bill are for the gull chick to peck at to encourage its parents to feed it. Only one species of gull, the Glaucous-winged Gull, has completely adapted to urbanization in our region: it even nests on the roofs of buildings downtown.

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Spawning salmon in our region's larger streams and rivers. For best viewing and to book salmon run school programs, call the **Goldstream Nature House** at 478-9414.
- Fall colour and falling leaves.
- Fox Sparrows, Golden-crowned Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos reappear in large numbers at bird feeders.



Mackay Porter



Tamsyn Cullimore





# November

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Varied Thrushes return to our wooded areas. Their ethereal trill can be heard throughout the day, but especially in the morning.
- Trumpeter Swans return for the winter. They will stay until mid April and then make their way northward to breed. These are the heaviest native species of bird in North America, and swans also hold the record for having more feathers than any other species of bird. Trumpeter Swans are a conservation success story: their numbers dwindled to fewer than 100 birds, but they have rebounded and are no longer considered endangered.
- Seeds of annual spring wildflowers such as Sea Blush and Blue-eyed Mary have germinated from the fall rains. The young plants can be seen on rock outcrops, but, without flowers, they are difficult to identify!



Jean Newell



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- 6 *International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict*
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- 11 *Remembrance Day*
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Individual species can be considered endangered, such as the resident Killer Whales in our region, or an entire ecosystem can be considered endangered, such as the Coastal Douglas Fir forest, represented above by a female cone. Killer Whales are being negatively impacted in a number of ways: boat traffic, salmon and other fish species declines, and toxins. The Douglas Fir forests are being lost to housing and other forms of urbanization, as well as logging and agriculture. Less than 5% of the original old-growth forested areas remain, and this ecosystem provides a home to a myriad of species.

Valuing the species that occur in our region will go a long way towards ensuring their preservation.



Christa







# December

## Some things to watch/listen for:

- Bald Eagles gathering at salmon-spawning rivers to feed. Courtship behaviours can be observed as well.
- Owls calling as they establish their territories.
- Male Anna's Hummingbirds territorial displays can be heard and seen: he flies straight up, "sings" a little, dives down in a deep arc and making a loud, explosive noise at the bottom of the dive. The **Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary** is a great place to see hummingbirds and learn more about them: [www.swanlake.bc.ca/](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/)



Avneet Atwal

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- 10 *International Human Rights Day* .....
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Bald Eagles come from as far away as California to feed on spawned out salmon in British Columbia. Some years there have been as many as 300 Bald Eagles counted in the estuary at **Goldstream Provincial Park**. There are excellent wildlife viewing opportunities and school programs centred on birds of prey. Call **478-9414** for more information or to book.



Kassidy Stirling





Geoffrey Newell



## Victoria Natural History Society

The Victoria Natural History Society formed in 1944, and currently has about 750 members. Members have developed their interest in natural history in a wide variety of ways—some are professional biologists, others are students, most are amateur or volunteer naturalists, and many have taken up birding, botany or other natural history interests late in life. VNHS provides an opportunity for those interested in the natural world to come together to share their ideas and experience. The Victoria Natural History Society is a registered charity that is run by its volunteer members.

## Mandate of the Victoria Natural History Society

The primary objectives of the Society are:

- To stimulate active interest in natural history
- To study and protect flora and fauna and their habitats
- To work with other societies and like bodies having interests in common with this Society.

For more information please visit our website:

**[www.vicnhs.bc.ca](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca)**



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