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### Guidelines for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We request submission of typed, double-spaced copy in an IBM compatible word processing file on diskette, or by e-mail. Photos and slides, and diskettes submitted will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material. Digital images are welcome, but they need to be high resolution: a minimum of 1200 x 1550 pixels, or 300 dpi at the size of photos in the magazine.

## VNHS MEMBERSHIP

For membership information and renewal, please contact Darren Copley, 479-6622, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4. A copy of our membership form is available on our website www.vicnhs.bc.ca.

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When I look at the cover photograph, I want to revel in the main character because I know just how feisty this type of ant (likely *Formica obscuripes*) can be. They don't avoid a problem, regardless of its enormity. The entire colony will converge and cause whatever it is disturbing them to beat a hasty retreat. Each of those small efforts can really change the outcome. There is a lesson in that for people such as ourselves, who value the natural world: we can make a difference by our efforts and choices (page 6 and 7).

The other feeling that I experience when I look at the cover photograph is sadness. The secondary character on the cover is a noxious invader that is so apparently welcomed in our region it can be purchased in virtually all of our local garden centres. English ivy is among the worst offenders for habitat modification: nothing grows where it grows. But there is hope in this regard as well. Locally, our very own Green Spaces Project continues to be involved with this issue and, recently, the Society board agreed to be a signatory on an Invasive Species Strategy for the province. Put forward by the Fraser Basin Council, this is an effort to develop a comprehensive action plan on invasives. It is available online for those interested in reading it themselves.

But if you could only visit one more website for the rest of your life, then I have a recommendation: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is a massive United Nations-sponsored study that took four years and involved nearly 1,400 experts from 95 countries. Their goal was to "conduct a global inventory of the state of our ecosystems, quantify the effect that human activities are having on them, and make suggestions for the future". Its crucial findings barely registered on the mass-media radar: Change? Why change?! Grrrr... sometimes I get very feisty!

*Claudia*

### COVER PHOTO:

Red Ant by Ann Nightingale, an entry in the VNHS 60th Anniversary Photo Contest.



## President's Message

As I write this, it's difficult not to be distracted by Spring bursting out all over. Flowers are blooming, birds are singing, pollen from the Big Leaf Maples is coating everything in a layer of yellow. It is a challenge sometimes for those of us who would rather be appreciating the great outdoors to turn our minds to the administration of natural history organizations. Yet it is often through the efforts of these organizations that goals are accomplished that lead to the greater enjoyment of nature by many.

Think about how you have personally benefited. Have you enjoyed a natural history presentation or field trip? Have you learned how to identify birds or plants? Has habitat that you visit been protected or restored? Do you appreciate the articles that appear in *The Victoria Naturalist* and the *BC Naturalist*?

The good news is that VNHS is ready for another year. All Board members whose terms expired in 2005 have agreed to continue their roles for another term. But we cannot bask in this success. Several members of the Board will not seek re-election next year. These are no fly-by-night participants. All will have served at least 6 years and some many more than that on the VNHS Board. It's time for them to take a well-deserved break so that they can stop and smell the roses (Nootka, of course!), at least for a while.

Think about becoming a member of the VNHS Board in 2006. The fact that so many stay on for so long is a good indicator that the work is not overwhelming and it is satisfying. We will have lots of projects this year which will allow you the opportunity to get your feet wet: Natural History in the Schools, the VNHS Picnic, Invasive Plant Awareness, and many others. You have a year to prepare. Help us to ensure that the contribution of VNHS continues for the next generation, and those to come.

Ann Nightingale

### Request for Expressions of Interest

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors is issuing this Request for Expressions of Interest with regard to revisions to *The Naturalists' Guide to the Victoria Region*. Although this reference is still available and widely used, it has been many years since it was first published. We are looking for effective and innovative proposals and are open to a wide range of ideas and suggestions. Please send your submissions to the Society address by May 30, 2005.



Fawn Lily (*Erythronium oregonum*), a 60th anniversary photo contest entry. Photo: Sharon Godkin

## Kaye Suttill (1915-2005)

By Gwennie Hooper

Kaye Suttill and her family moved to Victoria in the late 1960's and immediately joined the VNHS and became active members, taking part in all the birding and botany outings and attending monthly meetings and Audubon Society films. Her husband, Dennis, took outstanding photographs of wild flowers and mountains, especially in their beloved Rockies where they loved to hike, and Kaye gave enthusiastic and knowledgeable commentaries at their many slide shows. She always gave Latin names as well as English and spent hours in research. For a time she was a Director of the VNHS. Kaye was also a faithful member of the Tuesday Group and birded regularly every week until her last long illness.

Kaye wrote many articles for *The Victoria Naturalist* in her picturesque language, but it was an article by Linda Gregg, published in the *Naturalist* September 1964, which she asked to be read at her funeral and reprinted after her death in the current *Naturalist*. Kaye died peacefully on 22 February, 2005.

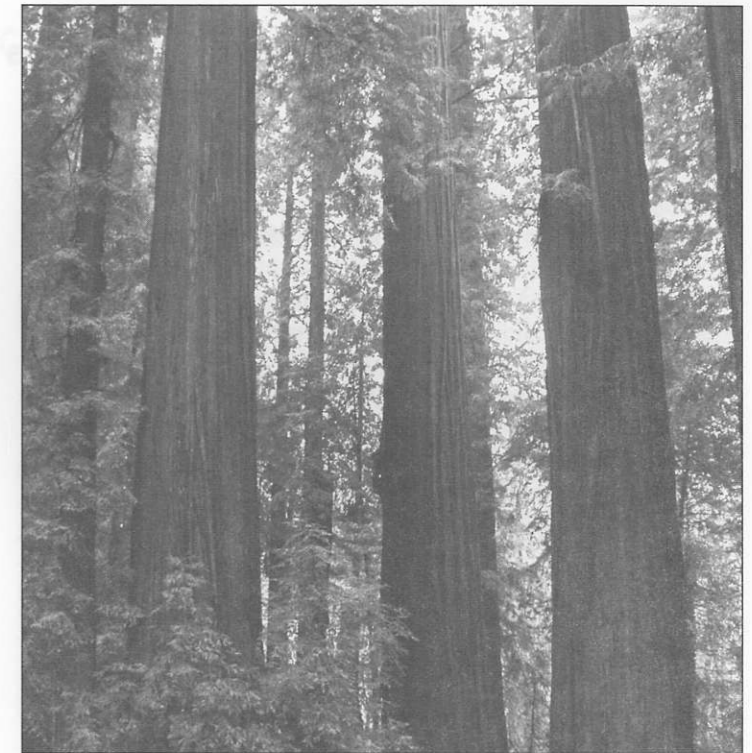


Photo: Darren Copley

### My Church By Linda Gregg

My church is God's world. His trees, flowers, shrubs, birds, insects, fishes, and animals are all members of the congregation. Towering trees, graced with the grandeur of age, are the arches of my church. Their sweeping branches silently usher me into this sacred place. The floor is soft and cushiony, and here and there are bright spots of color. All varieties of mosses, lichens, and flowers are to be found here. Fern moss grows in the shady areas, and nearby can be seen some pine moss, hugging close to a rock. The glossy leaves of the twinflower shine in the sun and its dainty flowers nod in the slight breeze. Old logs, once fine specimens many years ago, now lie in repose upon the forest floor. They are the pews of my church. Many are gaily decorated with colorful slime-molds, mosses, and some even boast a few flowers.

The walls of my church are stately and varied, here an old cedar, and perhaps over there a young maple, struggling for existence. The choir of my church is a fine one. Robins, finches, sparrows, woodpeckers, and even the low bass of the raven, are all here to sing praise to God. The pulpit is a low, rounded rock, and here all the ministers of God's world gather to preach their sermons. Some come in flocks, like the birds, while others, like the squirrel, come alone. Each one has his own message for me from God, and each delights in telling it to me. Whether it be by the way it sings, or by the way it survives.

And now the final touch to my church, the roof. Blue skies, with swirls of white clouds form the roof. They are the Heavens, reaching far into the infinities of space, and coming back to shelter my church and all its congregation.

*Kaye was a beautiful person and she represented what the label "Naturalist" means to me and to all of us who knew her.*

—Adolf Ceska



# New Initiative Targets Politics

By Matt Price, Coordinator, Conservation Voters of BC

Conservationists have faced a dilemma for several years. We knew that BC's political climate had to change if we were to make progress on environmental issues, and that BC's elected officials listen most closely to one thing — votes. Yet, there wasn't a single conservation organization in BC that was working directly to influence voters.

Indeed, people working in non-profits to conserve nature either remain non-partisan so that they can work with whatever government in power, or else they are federally-recognized charities prohibited from directly or indirectly supporting candidates or parties. The result is a focus on "public education," where efforts are made to give citizens the right kinds of information, and the hope is that they will come to the right conclusions on what kind of policy makers to support at election time.

But, in a world where we have thirty seconds in which to convince a busy person of our case, this approach may not be the most effective one. Politicians in BC have learned that they do not have to be as accountable on environmental matters because they can count on passive confusion on these issues in the electorate. Health care and education always seem simpler issues for voters to understand. So, we took a page from our neighbours to the south and created an organization dedicated solely to holding politicians accountable on the environment. The Conservation Voters of BC will take positions on whether or not to vote for specific candidates, and will communicate this simply through endorsements at election time.

We too, however, seek to be non-partisan. We need all of BC's major parties to get better on these issues, so we will



endorse individual candidates across party lines. While it's true that party discipline is a challenge, it's also true that individual politicians hold influence over what the party does.

We are a non-profit society, but cannot become a federal charity because we will be backing candidates. To do our work, we rely on donations from individuals and on volunteers. Our Board is drawn from people active in conservation in BC.

We have an innovative website where we are tracking the comments that MLAs make on environmental issues so that voters can check the record of their representatives. We also dipped our toe into federal politics during the last election by running an ad in the *Times Colonist* critical of Stephen Harper for opposing Kyoto.

In the coming BC election, Conservation Voters will make a handful of endorsements in different parties. We will then work to be on the ground in those ridings, asking voters to strongly consider the candidates we have endorsed. Our desire is to have more environmental champions in the legislature after May 17 than we did before.

And this method can be applied equally to the municipal or federal levels, where key conservation decisions are also made and where we need good people to be elected.

If you'd like to get involved with Conservation Voters, drop us a line. We need volunteers during the election, and as always, donations. We would also be glad to send a speaker if there are gatherings of people who may be interested in hearing more about us.

For more information, visit [conservationvoters.ca](http://conservationvoters.ca) or call 250-661-2965.

# Voting for Nature

By Taylor Bachrach, Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter

May 17 is the provincial election and, although they can't vote, British Columbia's species and ecosystems have a lot riding on the outcome. The Sierra Club of Canada – BC Chapter has put together the following list of five key species and ecosystem-related issues of the past few years.

## 1. Grizzly Bears

These big, charismatic mega-fauna always try to steal the limelight from other species. How many headlines are there about newts? A major policy issue regarding grizzlies bears is hunting, which commenced this season on April 1. While in power, the last government placed a moratorium on the hunt, which the current government overturned when they swept to power in 2001. It is not clear there are enough grizzlies in BC to sustain a hunt – indeed, grizzly populations are threatened in many places.

Another issue involves habitat. The highest density of grizzly bears in North America exists on BC's mainland coast – the Great Bear Rainforest. Conservation groups, industry, and communities have agreed to an innovative solutions package for the region. The package includes ecosystem protection, improved logging practices and investment in community economies. Whether or not the proposed solution becomes reality is up to the BC government, which is responsible for taking the next step in moving things forward.

## 2. Marbled Murrelets

These little seabirds are a real oddity, and scientists don't know enough about them. What we do know is that they need old-growth forests to nest in, and those forests are becoming increasingly rare.

The reason BC's murrelets are getting attention relates to a six-year-long investigation by BC's Forest Practices Board, an arms-length watchdog of BC forest practices.

The Board was investigating whether the Ministry of Forests was adequately protecting murrelet habitat on southwest Vancouver Island. Their final report came out last month, stating "there is a systemic failure in government policy to protect threatened species such as marbled murrelets on crown forest lands."

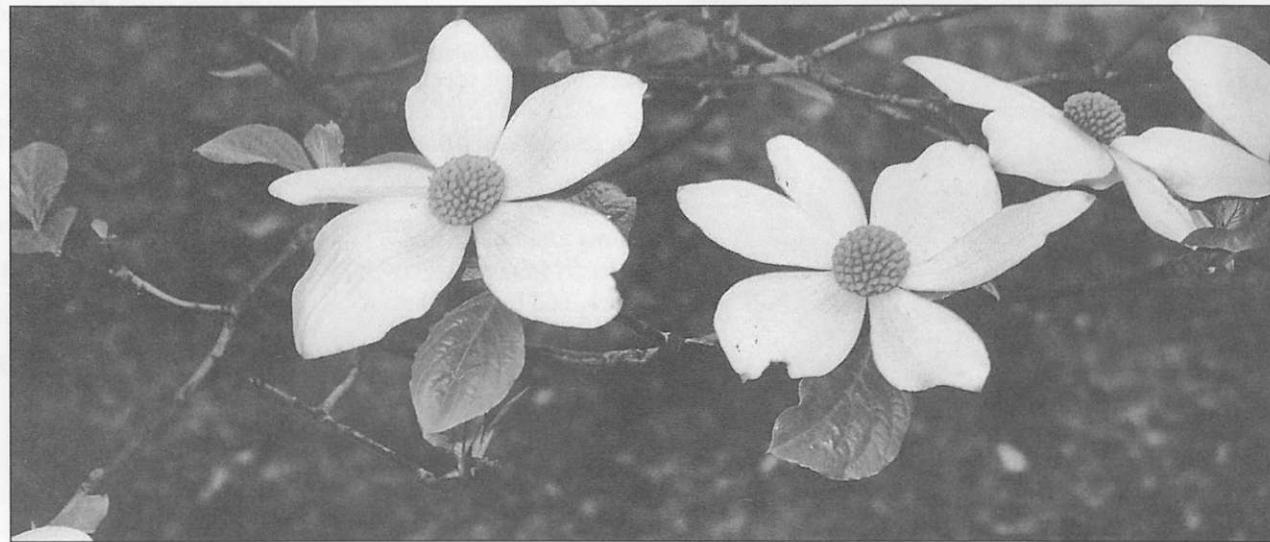
The Board's strong words raise questions about how we ensure a future for all threatened and endangered species, not just the murrelet. BC is currently one of the only Canadian provinces lacking stand-alone endangered species legislation.

## 3. Mountain Caribou

The mountain caribou is a sub-ecotype of the woodland caribou and, like the marbled murrelet, is a red-listed species. Populations of the mountain caribou have declined precipitously in recent years, mainly due to loss of their winter range and conflicts with commercial tourism activities such as heli-skiing. Government-funded efforts are currently underway to study the problem and recommend a solution, which will likely involve drastically curtailing logging activities in the caribou's core habitat. For more information, see [www.mountaincaribou.org](http://www.mountaincaribou.org).

## 4. Burns Bog

After a long battle, the BC government finally joined forces with the federal government, the Greater Vancouver Regional District, and the Corporation of Delta and bought Burns Bog



Pacific Dogwood, a 60th anniversary photo contest entry: Photo: Lyndis Davis

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for preservation. The \$73 million deal includes over 5,000 hectares of the largest remaining raised bog on the west coast of North America. The bog plays a key role in local air quality and is home to a range of species, including the rare southern red-backed vole, a species thought to have been regionally extirpated. Burns Bog was one of the good news stories of the past few years.

## 5. Climate Change

While many don't think that climate change relates to protecting species, the truth is that it is probably the biggest challenge facing most of the species in BC, and indeed, around the world.

The mountain pine beetle is ravaging BC's pine forests because our winters aren't cold enough to control beetle populations. The Fraser River is warmer every year, which threatens wild salmon's reliance on cool water in which to live and spawn.

In fact, a recent study by the International Panel on Climate Change – the body of scientists that advises governments on global warming through the United Nations – warns that more than a million species of plants and animals are at risk of extinction within 50 years due to climate change.

What is BC doing about climate change? Unfortunately, not much. BC continues to aggressively promote fossil fuel production and has not set any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. BC is waiting for our leaders to propose innovative ways to wean British Columbians off fossil fuels and to create new industries in the process.

## What now?

Citizens have a responsibility to make democracy mean more than just voting once every four years. If we are to get better performance out of our elected officials, we need to challenge them to do better.

With this in mind, Sierra Club of Canada – BC Chapter is hosting candidates' debates on the environment, and encouraging voters to speak up about these issues. We have a project called Vote Environment that you can find out more about at [www.sierraclub.ca/bc/vote](http://www.sierraclub.ca/bc/vote). Other groups are doing the same. There is a very good resource on all the decisions of the government at [www.bcfacts.org](http://www.bcfacts.org).

How about organizing an all-candidates forum in your community?

**VOTEenVironment**  
a non-partisan project of Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter

# For Lagoon Lovers

By Bruce Whittington

For several years, VNHS has been a part of a very successful collaboration to maintain the environmental health of Esquimalt Lagoon in Colwood. The Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative (ELSI) has 18 member organizations, including non-profit groups, government agencies, First Nations representatives, Royal Roads University, and the City of Colwood. Our representative in ELSI is Dr. Peter Heron, who is active in Colwood conservation and Smart Growth activities.

ELSI has an important subcommittee that deals with outreach to the community. The Outreach Committee is a small but strong group of volunteer and paid members whose goal is to inform the public about the natural resources of the Lagoon, the threats to these habitats, restoration efforts and how visitors can reduce their impact on the Lagoon and its wildlife. A management plan is currently being developed for the municipal park on Coburg Peninsula (the sandy spit that forms Esquimalt Lagoon.) The committee organizes public events such as Oceans Day and Shoreline Cleanups. VNHS has been especially active in doing what it does best: Teaching people about the plants and animals they will see at the lagoon. We have organized many field trips to the Lagoon, and we are developing interpretive signs on Coburg Peninsula. Two signs are already in place, and a further two will be installed in the coming months.

Bruce Whittington has been the VNHS member on the ELSI Outreach Committee for several years, and he would like to pass the torch to another VNHS member. The time commitment is not onerous – one meeting a month, usually on a weekday afternoon. As other activities are arranged, the committee brings in help from other ELSI member organizations. It is a very rewarding way to give something back to a place which is very important to our members, and a chance to meet conservationists from a number of other groups.

If you would like more information about ELSI, visit the web site at [www.veheap.crd.bc.ca/elsi/](http://www.veheap.crd.bc.ca/elsi/). Contact Bruce at 250-245-5325, or [fieldnat@pacificcoast.net](mailto:fieldnat@pacificcoast.net) if you are interested in this volunteer opportunity.

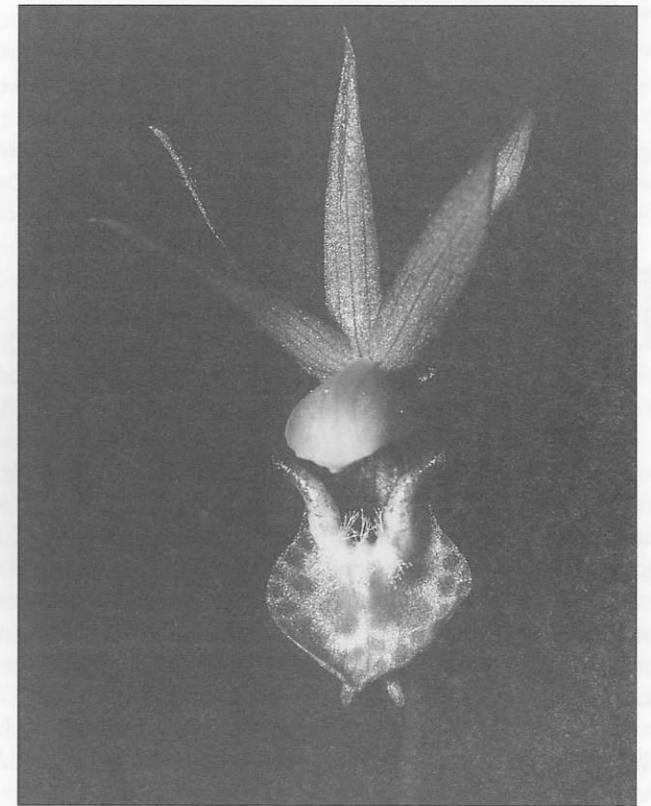
# School Project Needs You!

By David Newell

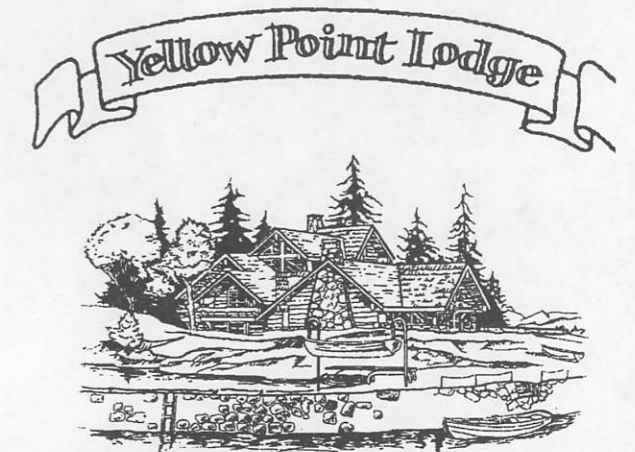
Are you interested in working with kids? Would you like to volunteer your time by going into schools to show off your natural history knowledge or skills? Then we need you. The Natural History in Schools Committee of the VNHS will be giving several hundred dollars worth of natural history-themed books to each school in Greater Victoria on behalf of the late Anne Adamson, a former VNHS member. However, in order to entice teachers to get their students more involved in natural history and using the books, we will be asking them to be in touch with us so that we can organize or assist in a class field trip, a visit to a local green space, or give an in-class lecture.

This is where you come in. We will need people to do these things! We will be as flexible as possible so that you can be as creative as you wish, while still fulfilling the teachers' needs. We will also be respectful of your wish regarding your level of commitment. The kids will most certainly be appreciative. What greater reward is there than seeing the smile of some young person who has never seen or heard a Great Horned Owl, walked down a path through a field of Camas, smelled the fragrance of a Ladyslipper, tasted the root of the Licorice Fern or felt weight the of a dinosaur bone or the jawbone of a Killer Whale? Your actions may trigger a life-long passion for the natural world.

We would like to get the School Project underway, but we will need a list of naturalists who would be willing to go out into the schools. So, if you are interested, telephone the **Goldstream Park Nature House (478-9414)** and ask for Darren Copley, or e-mail me, David Newell, at [dnewell@sd61.bc.ca](mailto:dnewell@sd61.bc.ca).



Ladyslipper (*Calypso bulbosa*), a 60th anniversary photo contest entry. Photo: Sharon Godkin



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**Jim Farrell 477-7291** [jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca](mailto:jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca)



# One Fine Day

By Michael Price

Dawn is on the rise; pastel colours strengthen in the east. The air is still and only the gentle lapping of the sea can be heard as it caresses the shore. The tide is high and so I must wait before exploring the riches this marine environment holds.

A Belted Kingfisher's dry rattle shatters the quiet from the reaches of the surrounding beach fringe. In a downward rush, he skims the shallow waters in search of stickleback and tubenout fishes, eventually taking rest on a neighbouring branch. I have seen this fellow foraging many mornings, yet I am always intrigued by his ability to hover in mid-air, lending a striking resemblance to a hummingbird caressing a trumpet of flowers. Today, however, our resident lad is shaken out of his fishing mood by an incoming rival. They are both trying to lay claim to the relatively rich fishing waters and quiet surrounding forests. Even so, this day's chase is brief and it's not long before our resident settles back on his perch to await life's next challenge.

Pairs of Common Goldeneyes have now slipped into the Bay; Pigeon Guillemots float a-ways offshore, and the elegant call of a lone Pacific Loon massages my ears. Piers Island commuters rush past in their boats en route to work

and play, in Sidney and beyond. A bobbing gull catches my attention as it cocks its head and rushes in the air before plunging, however awkwardly, after juvenile starfish. Though, with the tide folding back and patience waning, it resigns and staggers to solid ground, eventually turning to beachcombing like myself and the numerous surrounding crows. A Pileated Woodpecker laughs at me from a stand of mature Douglas-fir trees as I stumble over barnacle-laden boulders and slip across mats of rock kelp in search of the undiscovered. I make a mental note to myself of the obvious role birds seemingly play in a naturalist's life; they are undoubtedly the most visually vibrant and auditory group of animals we share this space with. They grab our attention with ease with only a brief flick of their wing or initial note of their melodious song. Yet I am made aware that it is often the more subtle creatures that truly charge a naturalist's soul.

As my feet feel their way, I am halted by an expansive forest of sea moss (*Endocladia muricata*) that lies low against the exposed tidal floor. I stoop to gain a finer look and recognise where this walnut-brown seaweed acquired its name. Similar to mosses, this species has evolved to retain moisture and reduce desiccation so vitally important for a marine organism occupying a high intertidal niche. Crouching closer, I am amazed by the hundreds of minute snails grazing the algae pastures covering this semi-aquatic forest. This bay teems with these quaint periwinkles, existing on nearly every exposed rock that defines the surrounding marine environment. Besides providing their nutrient-rich bodies to the odd oystercatcher, they enable one of the



All photos: Clare Aries

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Frosted nudibranchs have the incredible ability to crack snail shells and consume the fleshy bodies that they are dependent upon.

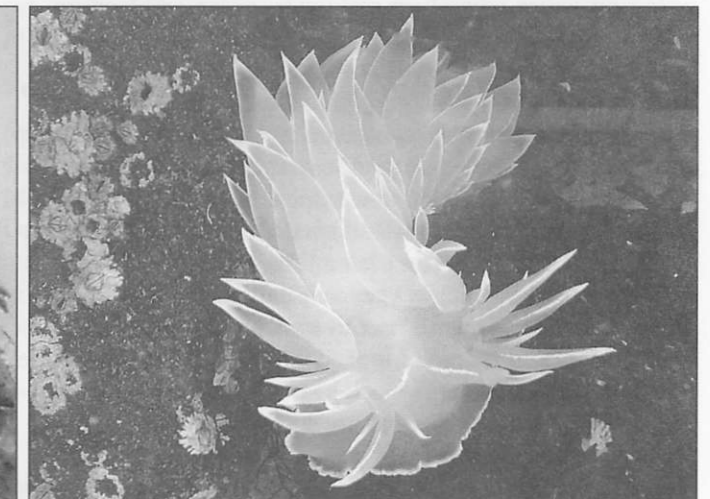
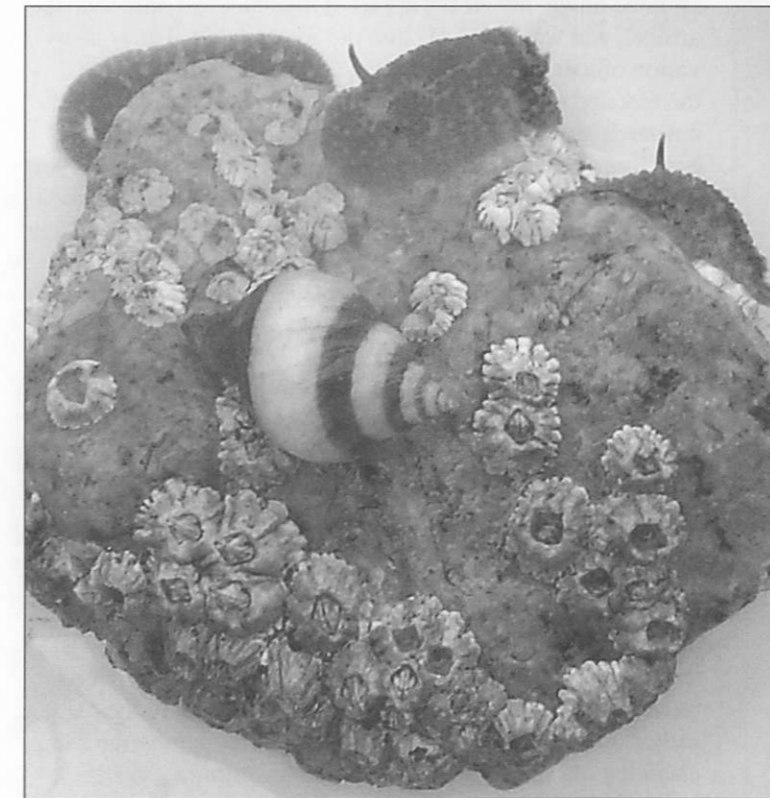
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Pacific Northwest's most unique predators to exist. And it wasn't long before I caught a glimpse of its flamboyant, anemone-like form gliding at the interface of land and water. Frosted nudibranch, they are commonly called (*Dirona albolineata*). These sea slugs have the incredible ability to crack snail shells and consume the fleshy bodies that they are dependent upon. I watch it creep amongst the waving moss forest before silently disappearing from sight.

The further the tide slides, the easier it is to recognise the complexity of this transitional environment. I twist my way to a rocky outcrop where green sea lettuce droops along its surface; most show signs of heavy grazing by visiting American Wigeons. To my left is an exposed channel worn over time by tidal comings and goings. Several species of sea stars cling to the undersides of deep crevices; purple shore crabs dart between their respective shelters in search of algae and whatever else they can scavenge on a day such as this. And out of the corner of my eye, I see yet another unique and fascinating nudibranch. Known locally as the rough mantled doris (*Onchidoris bilamellata*), these carnivores have numerous spine-like projections covering their

oval-shaped, mottled-brown bodies. Though much smaller than their "frosted" cousin, individuals of this species participate in vibrant (vibrant, that is, for nudibranchs) social gatherings during this time of year. Today I have the good fortune of seeing their large congregation and associated mating activities. Between December and May, doris' come together to spawn and produce numerous cream-coloured ribbons of eggs, which cling to the rocks of their communion. Soon, however, they will disperse, perhaps finding deeper waters to explore and reacquaint with past independence.

Eventually, I am chased up the shore as ambient light begins to fade my eyes. The family of otters haven't shown themselves yet, but not to worry, they'll return home when ready. As I step onto the deck of the cabin, a sleek pair of coastal black-tailed deer wanders the neighbouring beach. A Great Blue Heron stands motionless off the point; its dark silhouette reflects its ability to appear as if a shadow of the very boulder it stands upon. The sun has now set; the sea returns to shore. The diurnal life, once evident, now quietens, and the night awakens. I rest my elbows on the deck's railing and lift my head to be greeted by a northern sky of starlight. My eyes then gaze to the horizon below and witness a similar sky, though not one of mere reflection. Green lights of bioluminescence twinkle under passing ocean. A sight I thought was strictly reserved for healthier, less inhabited areas of our Pacific coast. It just goes to show that life is everywhere, at all times, as long as we have the patience to observe it. And although much life has left Swartz Bay under the pressures of change, I can't help but bear witness to the vibrant community that is determined to flourish.



Above: Three rough mantled doris' with a snail and barnacles. Right (above), frosted nudibranch, (below) nudibranch eggs.



# Yard Encounters

By Ed Pellizon

In September of 2003, I moved from my Quadra/Mackenzie area basement suite to a log cabin on 9 acres of property owned by my brother-in-law on Goward Road near Prospect Lake. I am amazed by the mammals and birds that are present on the property. I am greeted almost daily by a number of deer wanting apples from the apple tree that sits about 15 feet from my front door. Little did I know that this tree would become the centerpiece for an unexpected wildlife encounter.

One evening in October 2004, I received a phone call from my friend Chris. He told me that earlier in the afternoon, as he was driving down Goward Road, he had seen a black bear cross the road a few doors down from my place. I was very surprised! He also told me that he had heard on the local news that a black bear had been spotted a few days earlier, near Knockan Hill Park. I guessed that this was the same bear, probably very lost or maybe making its way toward the dump. I wished I had been able to see the bear; it would have made a great "yard list" addition.

I have a morning routine that I follow during the week when I am working: I get up at about 6:30 am, shower, make some breakfast, load up my van for the days' work, and then leave at about 8:30 am. And every day, especially during the warmer weather, when I am making breakfast and loading my van, I leave the front door to the house open because I enjoy listening to the birds at the feeders and around the yard. On the morning after the phone call from Chris I did my usual routine: got up, showered, made some breakfast, (this time bacon and eggs), and started to pack my van to leave. I left the door to the house open, as usual, but, after loading my van, I realized that I needed to wash the dishes. As I went inside my place, I felt a little cold so I decided to close the door, which is very unusual for me. I did my domestic duties and was about to walk out the door. As I grabbed for the doorknob I looked through the window of the door and saw a very large black bear standing on my door mat. I could hear it sniffing at my door (I figured it smelled the bacon). Needless to say, I was very surprised and a little scared. I watched it for about 20 seconds through the window before it wandered across the driveway around my brother-in-law's house, and then disappeared into the forested area of the property. At that point I realized that if I had have left my door open as I usually do, that bear would have come into my house!

I let my in-laws and neighbours know that I had seen the bear, and one neighbour down the road said that it had been in their garbage the day before. I phoned a conservation officer to let him know about the bear and he thought it was probably moving toward the dump and that I would probably

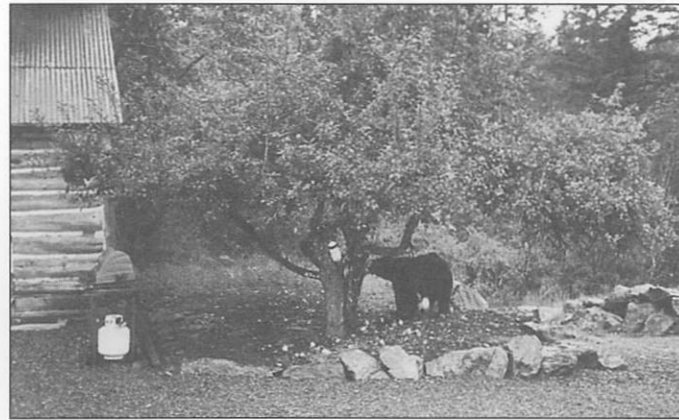


Photo provided by Ed Pellizon

not see it again. It took a few days for the bear scares to subside and for me to leave my door open in the mornings again.

About a week later, as I arrived home from work later in the afternoon, my in-laws came out of their door. They were very excited and a little spooked: our friend had returned. It had been around the yard earlier and they had been watching it through the window of their house. It climbed the apple tree next to my door, knocking down some apples before falling asleep in the tree for about an hour. The bear then climbed down, ate all the apples it had knocked onto the ground, and wandered off into the forest again. The conservation officer came that evening and set up a bear trap in the forested area, but the bear was never caught and we did not see it again. I did look around the property to see if the bear had done any damage and sure enough, one of the other apple trees had a huge limb broken off of it and the bear had sharpened its claws on another tree. The evidence being huge claw marks running down the tree trunk!

On a sunny April afternoon in 2004, I was sitting at my computer desk answering emails and, as usual, I had my door open. The cabin is about 24 by 20 feet, and my desk sits in one of the corners. I was working away when I heard a noise coming from the opposite corner of the cabin, where I keep my surfboards. I have had a number of birds fly into the place and the noise sounded like a small bird on the floor in the corner. I peered over my desk and saw nothing, and the noise had stopped. I resumed my computer work and the noise came again. This time it sounded a little closer, on the other side of the bookcase near my desk. I peered under my desk, and sure enough the culprit making the noise showed itself: a mink was walking toward my desk. I stood up and moved aside as the mink walked under the desk to the corner, turned around and proceeded to wander throughout the cabin, checking out the kitchen, bathroom, and entrance closet before it exited through the front door!

# Sooke Christmas Bird Count (Bcso 105)

Monday December 27, 2004

By Jack McLeod, Coordinator and Compiler

**Weather:** It was a most beautiful day. It was quite chilly with frost in the morning warming to about 7 degrees Celsius in the afternoon. The sun shone all day and it was calm.

**Turnout:** 50 participants, tying the record turnout.

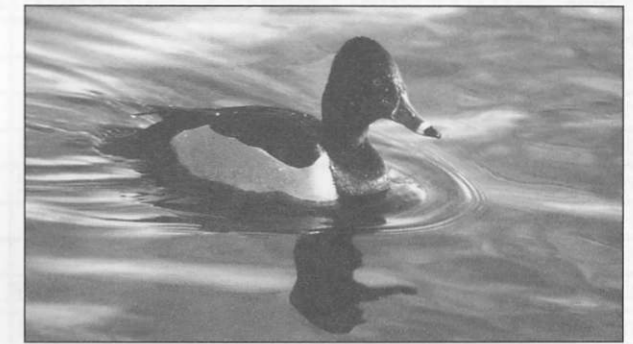
**Species:** 114 – the record was 118 (Count 101).

**Unusual species:**

- **Cackling Goose** – a newly designated species split from the Canada Goose. A single individual in a flock of about 145 Canada geese in flight off the Sooke Bluffs. It was Mallard-sized. (Danny Carsen and Robin Robinson).
- **Gyr Falcon** – new to the circle. A single bird observed in the morning off the Sooke Bluffs. (Danny Carsen and Robin Robinson).
- **Black-legged Kittiwake** – seen from a zodiac 1km south of Whiffin Spit along the Strait of Juan de Fuca with a group of gulls. This is the second sighting of this species. (Rick Schortinghuis and Bruce Whittington).
- **Rufous Hummingbird** – new to the circle. A common breeder but rarely seen on the South Island at this time of year. Present for several days at a feeder near Otter Point. Several excellent photographs of the bird. (Renaat Marchand).

Noteworthy was a significant increase in the number of Anna's Hummingbirds (10, a high count) compared to the previous high of 4. Pine Siskins (728) declined sharply compared to the previous count (BCSO 104) of 1,765 and the all-time high of 7,693 (BCSO 101).

There were many all-time high counts. Raptors: Bald Eagle (85), Cooper's Hawk (11), Red-tailed Hawk (31).



Ring-necked Duck, a 60th anniversary photo contest entry. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

**Waterfowl:** Mallard (740), Surf Scoter (1378), Bufflehead (1,816). **Cormorants:** Double-crested Cormorant (1,329), Pelagic Cormorant (502) and Cormorant sp. (153). **Woodpeckers:** Downy Woodpecker (23), Hairy Woodpecker (21). **Passerines:** Chestnut-backed Chickadee (655), Spotted Towhee (233), Fox Sparrow (238), Lincoln's Sparrow (4), Red Crossbill (586), and, regrettably, House Sparrow (240). Other species: Bonaparte's Gull (5062), Belted Kingfisher (41).

**Count Total: 26,756;** one of the higher counts of recent years.

**Owling:** Two groups participated, yielding Great-horned Owl (8), Northern Pygmy Owl (4), a high count, and Barred Owl (2). Thanks to Denise Gubersky and David Allinson.

**Feeders:** Not done this year – we need a volunteer for 2005.

**Special Thanks:** To Area leaders Danny Carsen, Denise Gubersky, Rick Shortinghuis, Alan MacLeod, Colleen O'Brien, Mike Shepard, David Stirling; and to Bruce Whittington and Gary Fletcher for water surveys. Thanks to Jean McLeod and Terri Muir for hospitality and tasty food at the McLeod's in Sooke. Finally, heartfelt thanks to all the participants who helped make this year's Sooke Count such a success.

## Welcome to New Members

**Bryce Kendrick**  
Lochside Drive  
*fungi, birds, botany, marine*

**Jeremy B. Tatum**  
Poplar Avenue  
*birds, butterflies, astronomy*

**Norma Lofthouse**  
Colin Place  
*birds*

**Michael Price**  
Pachena Place  
*wildlife*

**Lea Goward**  
Harriet Road  
*botany*

**Ted Hart**  
Wain Road

**Marilyn Kan**  
Simcoe Street  
*birds*

**Lynda Joiner**  
Cathedral Place

**Sharon Belton**  
Seawood Terrace

**Ken Suttill**  
Lockehaven Drive  
*son of Kaye Suttill*

**Judith Fraser**  
Cordova Bay Road

**Bruce and Laurie Hardy**  
Viaduct Avenue West  
*birds, marine, eco-restoration*



## Sooke Christmas Bird Count, Monday December 27 2004, Summary Sheet

Coordinator: Jack McLeod, 6727 Eakin Dr Sooke BC V0S 1N0. Tel:250-642-5369.E-mail: jmmjem@shaw.ca

Species	Number Observed								TOTAL	
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8		
Red-throated Loon					1		1		2	
Pacific Loon		1		84	2		1		88	
Common Loon	4	4	1	1	1		1		12	
Pied-billed Grebe	1	2	1				7		11	
Horned Grebe	160		2	15		17	1	4	199	
Red-necked Grebe	5			1		7			13	
Western Grebe	5			2					7	
Double-crested Cormorant	504	210	20	409	147	38	1		1329	HC
Brandt's Cormorant		1	4	551	773	20			1349	
Pelagic Cormorant	188	18	35	109	132	16	4		502	HC
Cormorant Sp.				150					150	HC
Great Blue Heron	1	4	10	6	3	2	4		30	
Mute Swan		4	3	4			2		13	
Canada Goose	144	217	192	60	147	2	46		808	
Cackling Goose*	1								1	N
Green-winged Teal	2	3	18				1		24	
Mallard	12	179	424	37	16		28	44	740	HC
Northern Pintail			51						51	
Northern Shoveler							2		2	
Gadwall			8						8	
Eurasian Wigeon			5						5	
American Wigeon	135	315	169		5		1	202	827	
Ring-necked Duck		1			2	6	5	6	20	
Greater Scaup		4	90	100		2			196	
Lesser Scaup	4								4	
Harlequin Duck	5	15			4		2		26	
Long-tailed Duck	1	25		6					32	
Surf Scoter	45	58	1080	95	89	5	6		1378	HC
White-winged Scoter			6	25	3	3			37	
Common Goldeneye	9	24	64	1	7	10			115	
Barrow's Goldeneye			11	79					90	
Bufflehead	186	795	286	191	70	215	53	20	1816	HC
Hooded Merganser	8	10	12	4	12	26	2	4	78	
Common Merganser	24	28	13	28	37		8	1	139	
Red-breasted Merganser	45	1	23	4		11	16	18	118	
Turkey Vulture							3		3	
Bald Eagle	4	18	6	29	15	8	4	1	85	HC
Sharp-shinned Hawk		2	2	1		1	1		7	
Cooper's Hawk	2	3	1		2	1	1	1	11	HC
Red-tailed Hawk	1	8	7	2	4	3	5	1	31	HC
American Kestrel								1	1	
Merlin	3	3	2						8	
Gyrfalcon*	1								1	N
California Quail	8	3	49	6	24	2	18	3	113	
Virginia Rail						2			2	
American Coot	1		3			5			9	

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Species	Number Observed								TOTAL	
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8		
Kildeer	20	1	14	2					37	
Black Oystercatcher						34			34	
Spotted Sandpiper		1	1				1		3	HC
Black Turnstone		50	5	7	33	2			97	
Surfbird			4	2	6				12	
Common Snipe			1						1	
Bonaparte's Gull					3				3	HC
Mew Gull	185	71	109	288	4400	7	2		5062	HC
Ring-billed Gull					1				1	
California Gull		4							4	
Herring gull		1	4	2					7	
Thayer's Gull		1	10		462				473	
Western gull			2	1					3	
Glaucous-winged Gull	360	194	180	528	405	104	71	67	1909	
Black-legged Kittiwake*				1					1	US
Unidentified Gull		8	11						19	
Common Murre	1	1	1	81	36				120	
Pigeon Guillemot.	1	1		2	6	4			14	
Marbled Murrelet	4			13		5			22	
Ancient Murrelet				42	100	6			148	
Rhinoceros Auklet				2					2	
Rock Dove		6							6	
Great Horned Owl		2	1		1	3	1		8	
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1		1		2				4	
Barred Owl			2						2	
Anna's Hummingbird	1	5	1			1	2		10	HC
Rufous Hummingbird*	1								1	N
Belted Kingfisher	2	7	8	8	4	5	5	2	41	HC
Red-breasted Sapsucker		1	2		1		2		6	
Downy Woodpecker		4	4	4	4	3	3	1	23	HC
Hairy Woodpecker	1	2	4	6	1	2	4	1	21	HC
Northern Flicker	8	30	34	25	15	5	19	14	150	
Pileated Woodpecker	1				1	4	4	1	11	
Steller's Jay	5	22	10	14	45	4	53	16	169	
Northwestern Crow	21	293	214	4	19	3	13	10	577	
Common Raven	6	10	11	23	8	21	7	64	150	
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	75	83	134	164	19	69	36	75	655	HC
Bushtit	3	55	29				42		129	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	17	9	31	3	8	16	19	108	
Brown Creeper	1	1	7		1	8	19	4	41	
Bewick's Wren	3	4	11	6	1		7	8	40	
Winter Wren	5	17	39	38	18	23	27	9	176	
Marsh Wren					2				2	
American Dipper		1							1	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	10	7	133	84	45	56	63	78	476	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	23	31	30	23	11	4	17	13	152	



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Species	Number Observed								TOTAL
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	
Hermit Thrush		1	3	1		3	6	1	15
American Robin	1	29	96	24	75	34	68	25	352
Varied Thrush	15	17	11	35	12	6	3	23	122
American Pipit					1				1
European Starling	187	111	244	130	24		183	110	989
Hutton's Vireo					1				1
Yellow-rumped Warbler				1			1		2
Spotted Towhee	7	39	54	17	18	33	23	42	233 HC
Fox Sparrow	10	72	69	12	1	19	8	47	238 HC
Song Sparrow	5	79	73	20	15	24	27	12	255
Lincoln's Sparrow		1					3		4 HC
White-throated Sparrow		1							1
Golden-crowned Sparrow	17	57	22	2	12	23	26	36	195
White-crowned Sparrow		9	3				3		15
Dark-eyed Junco	79	213	221	98	32	118	51	123	935
Red-winged Blackbird	30	8			9		13		60
Western Meadowlark		2							2 HC
Brewer's Blackbird	10	38					12	70	130
Purple Finch	1	5	19		1				26
House Finch	8	68	45	11	12	3	17	12	176
Red Crossbill	130	205	70	28	71	25	57		586 HC
Pine Siskin	155	201	180	16	70	70	16	20	728
Evening Grosbeak		1	27						28
House Sparrow	25	108	65	16			24	2	240 HC
<b>COUNT TOTALS</b>	<b>2932</b>	<b>4152</b>	<b>4826</b>	<b>3812</b>	<b>7537</b>	<b>1115</b>	<b>1171</b>	<b>1211</b>	<b>26756</b>
<b>SPECIES TOTALS</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>114</b>

\*= Field description required

dup = duplicate record

US = unusual species

HC = high count for circle

N = new to circle

Area 1 = Otter Point/Young Lake

Area 2 = Sooke Townsite/Whiffin Spit

Area 3 = Billings Spit/Sooke R./Sooke Basin (north)

Area 4 = E. Sooke Pk./Sooke Basin (south)

Area 5 = Rocky Point/Race Rocks

Area 6 = Beecher Bay, Matheson Lk. Pk.

Area 7 = Metchosin/Pedder Bay

Area 8 = Roche Cove/North Metchosin

Area 9 = Pelagic - Beecher Bay to Otter Point

## WiTS Report for the Capital Regional District, 2004

By Gwen Greenwood

This Wildlife Tree Stewardship (WiTS) report for 2004 covers the area from Sooke to Sidney, including some observations for the smaller Islands close to Sidney. Tara Tompkins will be the new coordinator for the Sooke area for 2005; subsequently the report will cover Metchosin to Sidney.

### Bald Eagle:

- 26 young fledged out of 28 territories (10 of those nests successfully fledged two young, six fledged one, and 12 either had early activity only or none)
- four new nests (territories) were documented, three of which were active
- seven nests inactive in 2004 that were active in 2003

In April, at Whiffin Spit, two pairs of adult eagles were observed fighting near the nest site and one pair was later found on the ground injured (see photo). The SPCA was called but both eagles eventually disappeared of their own accord. There was no further activity at this nest site.

In August, one of the juveniles from the Willows nest went on an exploration of his own and ended up *inside* a waterfront home in the Uplands. The owner, who is well into her 80's was home alone and saw this very large bird trying to get out of a bay window. She was able to open the small window on the side, talk calmly to the bird and with her hands around its neck, push it halfway through the window. At this point she had to readjust her hands and shove the following wing through. In the process the bird clung to one of her fingers with its talon, but she was able to open the foot with virtually no damage to herself (see photo).

In early August at Towner Bay, one young eaglet was seen dead, hanging over the edge of the nest. The remaining eaglet survived to fledge.

Observations were sporadic this year on the islands off Sidney. At least five eagle nests were active although productivity was uncertain.

### Osprey:

- eight osprey nests were observed
- four of those nests produced 10 young. The rest appeared to have been depredated.

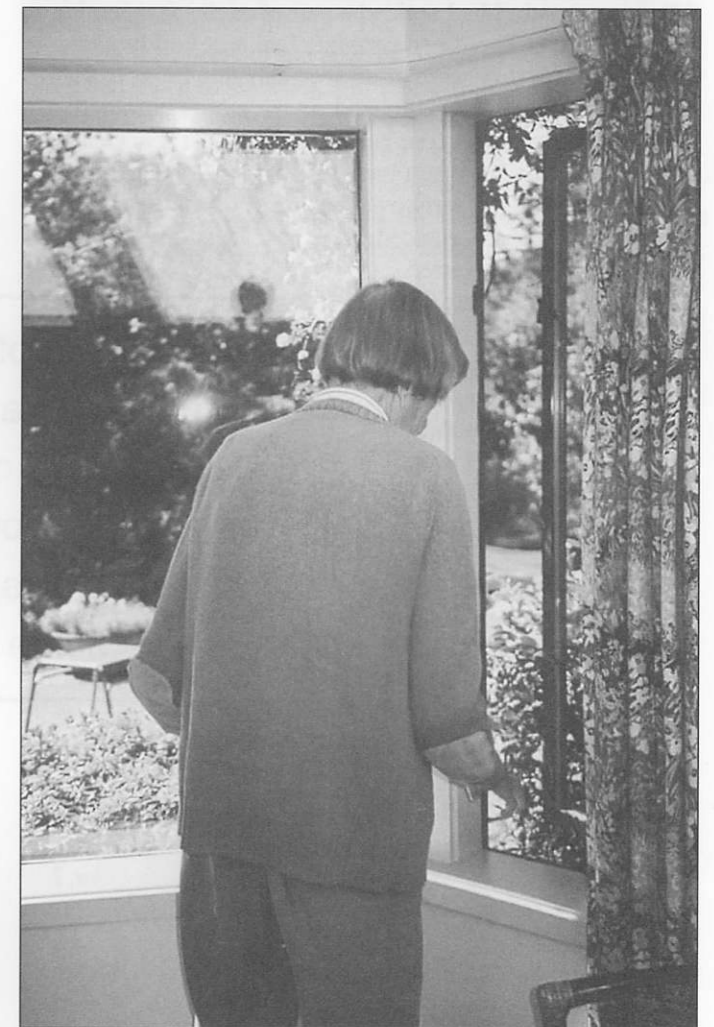
### Red Tailed Hawk:

- only one nest was observed this year – producing one young

### Great Horned Owl:

- three nest sites were observed
- one site was active, producing three owlets, with two surviving

Many thanks to the many supporters, monitors, the working committee, and most of all to the magnificent creatures and woodlands that give us so much joy!!



Above: Pair of injured adult eagles at Whiffin Spit.

Photo: Anne Pagett

Below: Uplands resident showing the window the young eagle entered through. Photo: Gwen Greenwood



# Those Celebrated Eagles of Willows Beach, 2004

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

'Nest Failure', were the words I wrote in my bird observation diary for May, 2003. This was a disappointing end to what should have been a great beginning for the eagle pair in Oak Bay. During the week following the hatching of the eggs in the nest near the Fire Hall, something had taken the chicks. This event was the impetus for the adults to abandon the nest. Their twiggy structure in the tall fir tree had been used to raise several generations of noisy Bald Eagles. Suddenly it had become empty and lifeless. The question now was: 'Where had the adults disappeared to?' I was bound and determined to find out.

During my leisurely walks along Esplanade Road the following month, I had noticed a pair of eagles frequenting Willows Beach. These two certainly had nest building on their minds, for they were often seen carrying twigs in their talons. It was now June 2003 and, as the month unfolded, it was full of surprises. The beginning of a nest was clearly taking shape in a large elm tree. This unusual choice of tree was situated on a property overlooking Willows Beach. During those times that I glanced at the nest I wondered which

pair of eagles had invested in this prime real estate. The close proximity of it to the Fire Hall location had me believing that this was my own special pair. The more I watched, the more I was convinced. I had really come to know them over the years. The female of the pair has what I consider a delicate, gentle expression. This was a feature I could recognize. Unlike the harsh frowning stare that some eagles exhibit, hers was inviting. Willows Beach was now, I believed, home to My Eagles.

Throughout that summer, fall, and winter season (2003/2004), the eagles would add branches to their nest. At times when the autumn 'westerlies' blew hard across the water, I was convinced that the exposure of this nest would surely be its demise. The nest, however, remained firm in its footing and I watched it grow in depth and circumference. The eagle's courtship display of sky-dancing in February lifted my spirits as the winter months dragged on. Their sky ballet was performed on bright sunny days over the waters off the marina. This fascinating choreography announced that the breeding season was about to begin. By March 2004, 'My Lady' was sitting comfortably on eggs. Some days I observed



Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

her with her head just above the rim of the nest. During inclement weather she remained well secluded, deep in the nest bowl. She would be relieved of her duties by her mate, who would sit in the tree 'whining', for want of a better word. He desperately wanted to share in the long incubation period of 34-36 days. She would eventually fly off to stretch her wings and take a well earned break, at which time the

male would fly from his perch into the nest and carefully settle on their precious treasure. Incubation progressed without incident.

With incubation well established, several stories of the pair started to appear in the local newspaper. Health-conscious citizens of Victoria, on the beach for their spring walk along the esplanade, gathered to watch the activities of the male and female eagle. My visits

to the nest were becoming more frequent now that April had arrived. I noticed quite a community of curious souls congregating along the beach front. They were seen collectively sitting or chatting together. Many of them shared a genuine interest for these magnificent birds. At times the 'bird experts' were there to answer questions. Spotting scopes, binocular and an assortment of cameras were all positioned for the best opportunity to observe these birds. The lengthening days of April unfolded. The human community below the nest swelled. April 18th and 19th were significant. The behaviour of the adult eagles had changed. The male was now bringing food and the female was gently tilting her head to feed something very small in the nest bowl. The eggs had hatched.

It was shortly after hatching that I had to leave to visit the United Kingdom for three weeks. Upon my return – May long weekend – I headed back down to the beach. At this time I noticed two young eaglets visible well above the nest edge. They had grown rapidly while I was away, and were now amply feathered in brown. Patches of disappearing grey down was also visible. Much of their day was spent sleeping in the nest bowl. The eaglets were fed every three to four hours. The male, as key provider, supplied his hungry family with one or two kills each day. The remains littered the beach below the nest. Gull carcasses were the most abundant prey item. Occasionally the bony spine of a fish or smaller mammal was evident, but the breast muscle of the ubiquitous Glaucous-winged Gull was most favoured. Draped over the nest edge and caught between branches of the elm tree were several discarded feathered corpses. These grey and white remnants of a once noisy gull hung stiff and lifeless.

With ample food caught within this picturesque location, it was soon evident that the youngsters were growing in size and strength. During the month of June the eaglets were often alone. Some of the time one could see the female on a channel marker within sight of the nest. On other occasions she would be seen partially hidden on a leafy branch, away from her brood. She was, however, ever watchful of her creeping, pouncing, mobile young. The male was diligent in supplying the food for his growing family. The two eaglets tolerated one another very well. A code of behaviour was established within the nest. I never once observed any sibling rivalry or aggression during feedings. Both chicks stood side by side before the female while she tore off little chunks of meat to feed the young. Each one received its fair share. Occasionally, when the meal was over, the female would join her mate on one of the channel markers or small islands close by.

Activity and noise at the nest began to increase as the days warmed. The two eaglets were observed strengthening their leg muscles. They used their nest as a make-shift trampoline. Their enormous wings gained power with intermittent bouts of flapping. I observed one afternoon, the 4th of July, that one eaglet, noticeably the alpha chick, take its first tentative hop from the nest to a branch. It had now become a 'brancher', in birding terms. As crawling and standing are to the proper development of the human child, so it is that the larger birds, such as raptors, need to follow the proper developmental milestones in order to fledge safely. This may take as long as twelve weeks when considering eagles. Life as 'Branch Managers' opened up a whole new world for the eaglets. When out on a limb they learn to balance and explore the leafy canopy. Within two days the younger joined its sibling.

This new exploration out of the nest wasn't without its dangers. One afternoon, the younger eaglet appeared to lose its footing and fell 4-5 feet below the nest. Luckily, a substantial branch was there to catch the fall. Here the young eaglet spent a night, albeit rather prematurely out of the nest. The following afternoon it had made its way back up to the nest, much to the joy of many anxious onlookers. Hunger is a great incentive. I had observed the female the previous

afternoon feed only the alpha eaglet in the nest. Although the female had flown from her perch at the time of the commotion to her capricious youngster, she did not so much as utter a sound of encouragement, nor stay with it. She flew back shortly to a branch closer to the nest. The youngster remained quiet and alone for hours on the branch. For those of us who stood anxiously watching and waiting, moments like these can be nerve wracking.

The hazy summer days of July waxed and waned. Activity in the nest increased. Hopping, jumping, and gaining height with wings extended was the norm for the eaglets. Their calling for food took on a new and urgent pitch. As the alpha chick explored its leafy world, the female eagle kept a close watch on the younger eaglet. Food delivery was now being done by both adults. The curious humans below the nest started bets among themselves as to when the eaglets would fly. The dawn of the 17th of July was going to be different. It was particularly memorable for those of us who arrived down at the beach at an early hour. Both eaglets flew that morning. They may well have taken to the skies at first light but observing them between 9 and 10 am was witness enough to the great event of 'lift off'. The neighborhood reverberated with the cheers of the adoring public. These magnificent birds had taken to the skies, but when it comes to landing the local trees nearby suddenly became the crash landing site for clumsy eaglets. The nearby roof tops offered a more secure landing. During the following days, we observed the eaglets down on the sandy beach, the rocks and any other firm surface. The female eagle was most attentive while her young explored the neighborhood. She was bringing food to them while they waited together in the nest tree. The power to glide soon became apparent so we watched in amazement as these two young circled overhead. Their new world of flight was ever expanding.



Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy



The days passed and the eaglets flew with more grace and strength. Eventually their flying technique and endurance allowed for greater distances. We could see from the beach the family on the smaller Islands off Oak Bay. Now was a crucial time for lessons to be learned in order to survive. As each day passed in August, we saw the family less. By the middle of August these eagles were seen no more in Oak Bay. The resident gull population let out a huge sigh of relief. The eagles were on their way to join other families of eagles to fly to places unknown. Their annual migration out of this area had begun. In past years it would appear that the eagles leave the Victoria area for six to eight weeks. Perhaps the adults take their young to salmon spawning rivers where there is sufficient food for all.

Eventually the adults of Willows returned. One as early as September 21st, the other, the 30th. Parenting responsibilities were now over. Both adults had returned and could defend their established territory. Last fall, they were seen hunting together off the waters near the marina. The juveniles had been abandoned so that they could learn to survive

on their own. Co-operation and team work by this bonded pair of eagles had paid off. They had successfully raised two more of their own. Their visible breeding activities had given enormous pleasure to many locals and visitors down at the beach. Now that the juvenile eagles are casually returning to their natal nesting areas, the adults are beginning to perform together once more. The new breeding season has begun and those youngsters that stray into established territories are in for a big surprise. Only yesterday I witnessed an aggressive encounter of an adult sky-fighting with a juvenile. It is the season for war among breeding adults, vying for territories and new mates. However, it is not entirely war out there. When the sky is blue and the winds are warm, a beautiful sky ballet is being choreographed. Later, as adult eagles renew their bonds they soar to great heights and there begins 'The Dance'. With eagle talons locked these great birds twirl in circles, free-falling from the blue canopy above. Their exuberant calls can be heard as they chase one another. As each one of us embraces the new season, don't forget to look to the skies. It is here that you will be amazed at what you will see.

## Everybody is a Winner in the 2005 Valentine Couples Bird Count

By Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod

The 2005 edition of the Valentine Couples' Bird Count featured some good news and a bit of bad. Unfortunately, with only four teams participating, the turnout was the lowest in the eight years since this event first made the Valentine weekend something to *really* look forward to.

For some long-time participants, the lure of the Valentine count is the opportunity to best everyone else for the day's highest species count. Barring ties, only one couple ever gets to enjoy those bragging rights. Some like the prospect of going home with one of the great prizes routinely put up for grabs by generous local restaurateurs and others. The good news this year is that *everyone* went home a winner in that department. For some couples it's neither glory nor prizes that keep them coming back – just the simple pleasure of going out with a spouse, partner or friend to look for birds.

This year our high count was 70, the least ever. On the other hand, with only four teams participating, the low count was 61, which just happens to be the best last-place finish ever.

Jerry and Gladys Anderson are the only couple who can boast of having participated in every one of the eight Valentine counts. Their loyalty and diligence were rewarded: with 70 species in their tally Jerry and Gladys scored the highest count for the fourth time and took first prize, a gift



Immature Heerman's Gull (1st winter).  
Photo: Alan MacLeod

certificate for breakfast, lunch or dinner for two, compliments of **Floyd's Diner** at Quadra and Yates in Victoria.

For the second straight year Jan Brown and Alan MacLeod did the count entirely by bicycle – a suitably romantic way for couples to count birds at Valentine's, they insist – and for their troubles finished second again, with 66 species. Their prize was a \$25 gift certificate donated by the **Fable Lodge Ribs & Chowder House**, Cordova Bay Road.

Bill Dancer-Anne Algard tied with Dannie Carsen-Nikole Varlis-Love for third place, at 61 species each. These teams also won restaurant gift certificates, from **Radars Roost**, Keating Cross Road in Saanichton, and the **Canoe Cove Coffee Shop** at the Canoe Cove Marina,

North Saanich. As if that weren't enough, there was one more piece of treasure – a box of fine chocolates donated by **Susan Carsen**, won as a spot prize by Bill and Anne, then generously shared with the other teams.

The aggregate total of birds seen in this count was 96, well off the all-time high of 118, set in 2001 and matched in 2002 and 2003. Some of the birds considered for designation as bird-of-the-day included a pair of Western Grebes at Tower Point, two Whimbrels at Funnel Cove in Oak Bay and the first-winter Heerman's Gull present all winter in the Ogden Point area, but in the end the honour went to the White-throated Sparrow Bill and Anne found at Mystic Pond.

The well-known object of the Valentine count is for birder duets to have fun finding as many birds as possible between the hours of 6 a.m. and noon on a Valentine's Day weekend morning. In the beginning the count was conceived as a way for couples – the matrimonial kind – to mark the Valentine's holiday while indulging their passion for birds, but it has evolved into an event for any twosomes, matrimonial or otherwise, who want to have fun chasing birds.

Dannie Carsen, who founded the Valentine Count in 1998, organized this one too. All of us who enjoyed this year's count are grateful for Dannie's efforts – and for the kindness of the businesses and individuals who provide prizes for this event. We always have a good time anticipating and participating in the Valentine Count, and we aim to do our best to get more people involved next year. This much fun should be spread around.

## 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 Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Presentations:** the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Murray and Anne Fraser 159, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Murray and Anne Fraser 159, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca>.

### MAY

#### Sunday, May 1

##### *Wild Flowers and Birds on Mount Tzuhalem*

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a hike to the Ecological Reserve on Mount Tzuhalem, and to other areas close by. Bring a lunch and a drink. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:00 a.m. This will be a full day. Call Rick at 652-3326 if you need more information. No pets please.

#### Sunday, May 1

##### *Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon*

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. We should see a good variety of migrating shorebirds and passerines. Meet at the south end of Esquimalt Lagoon by the washrooms at 7:30 a.m. This is a 3-4 hour walk. Bring a snack and a drink. Call Ann at 652-6450 for more information. No pets please.

## Nature Trips 2005

led by Canadian Professionals

Bathurst Inlet, Nunavut  
Brazil  
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Galapagos & Ecuador  
Iceland  
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St. Paul's Island, Pribilof  
South West England  
Tuscany & Florence



Tel. 604-461-4289 or [josephine@bestway.com](mailto:josephine@bestway.com)  
[www.skiesunlimited.com](http://www.skiesunlimited.com)



**BESTWAY**  
TOURS & SAFARIS (BC Reg #592)  
8678 Greenall Avenue, Ste #206 Burnaby, BC V5J 3M6

#### Saturday, May 7

##### *Birding Viaduct Flats and Quick's Bottom*

Meet where Viaduct Avenue meets Interurban Road at 7:00 a.m. Leader TBA.

#### Saturday, May 14

##### *National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day*

Are you tired of your neighbor's cats killing birds and other wildlife on your property? Concerned about the health and well-being of your outdoor cat? Interested in learning how to turn your outdoor cat into a contented indoor pet? Concerned about the impact of cats on wildlife in your local park or community? Interested in getting local cat ordinances passed to address cat overpopulation? Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats, was initiated to end the unnecessary suffering and death of birds and other wildlife caused by free-roaming domestic cats. Cats Indoors! seeks to educate cat owners, decision makers and the general public that



free-roaming cats pose a significant risk to birds and other wildlife, suffer themselves, and pose a threat to human health. Cats Indoors! encourages cat owners to keep their cats indoors and advocates laws, regulations, and policies to protect cats and birds. The campaign promotes grassroots efforts to address the issue at state and local levels. Educational materials developed for Cats Indoors! can be downloaded from their website: [www.abcbirds.org/cats](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats).

### Saturday, May 14

#### *Investigate Mount Wells with Chris Gilbert and Agnes Lynn*

This is a gateway to the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve. Enjoy views of Juan de Fuca Strait and the Sooke Hills, while enjoying the later spring wildflowers. Please note: the trail is steep and challenging but will be taken at a leisurely pace to enjoy the habitat. Take the up-island highway towards Goldstream Park. Turn left on Sooke Lake Road shortly before you get to Goldstream. Turn left on Humpback Road at Ma Miller's pub. At the intersection with Irwin Road, stay right. Follow Humpback Road to the park entrance. Meet at the parking lot at 10:00 a.m. No pets please. Call Agnes at 721-0634 for more information.

### Saturday, May 14

#### *Cowichan River Birds and Flowers*

Join **Dannie Carsen** for a spring hike along the Cowichan River Trail, listening for singing warblers and enjoying spring wildflowers. We'll meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:00 a.m. to carpool. Participants will rendezvous at Skutz Falls at 8:15 a.m., parking near the bridge that crosses the river. Bring good hiking shoes, raingear, and a lunch. I'll pack Sibley if someone else packs Pojar and MacKinnon! We'll stop somewhere near the river for lunch and to observe singing American Dippers. Please call Dannie Carsen at 544-2117 for more information.

### Sunday, May 15

#### *Birding Blenkinsop Lake*

Join **Bill Dancer** in birding the Blenkinsop Lake area and Lochside Trail. Meet at the south end of the bridge at the end of Lochside Drive at 7:00 a.m. Call 721-5273 for more information. No pets please.

### Friday, May 20

#### *Birding Mount Newton*

Join **Cheryl Mackie** for a birding walk on Mount Newton's south slope. We should see Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Tanager, as well as many other migrant and resident birds. Meet at the corner of Haldon Road and Newton Heights at 7:00 a.m. No pets please.

### Saturday, May 21

#### *Birding Swan Lake*

Join **Chris Saunders** for a birding walk around the Swan Lake area. Meet at the main parking lot at 8:00 a.m. No pets please. Call Chris at 391-1159 for more information.

### Saturday, May 21 and Sunday, May 22

#### *Victoria Butterfly Count*

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers, so get out your field guide! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 477-0490.

### Sunday, May 22

#### *Uplands Park Exploration*

Uplands Park is an area of rare and endangered plants in an urban setting. Conservationist **Matt Fairbarns** will show you many reasons why it is special. Cattle Point/Uplands Park is on Beach Drive between Oak Bay and Cadboro Bay. Meet at the nature sign by the Cattle Point waterfront parking area at 10:00 a.m. No pets please. Call Agnes at 721-0634 for more information.

### Sunday, May 22

#### *Natural History near Francis King Park*

Join the **Gattens (Barry and Jeremy)** on a walk along the power lines that border Francis King Park and the area around the hydro substation. We will be stopping to look at the flowering shrubs, butterflies and birds along the way. This is a great area to hear or see most of the warblers, vireos and flycatchers we have in our area. Bring a lunch and a drink, and meet at the nature house on Munns Rd. at 7:00 a.m. This will be a 3-4 hour walk. Call Barry at 652-4357 for more information. No pets please.

### Monday, May 23

#### *A Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail (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 the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km up Sooke River Road at 8:00 a.m. Bring a cool drink and a lunch. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

### Friday, May 27

#### *Birding the Colquitz River Trail*

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a 3-4 hour birding jaunt between Marigold Avenue and Wilkinson Road, and on to Quick's Bottom. Snacks and drinks are a good idea! Meet at Hyacinth Park on Marigold Ave. at 7:00 a.m. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

### Saturday, May 28

#### *Green Spaces Project Guided Hike On Threatened Federal Lands In Colwood*

Meet at the north end of Coburg Peninsula (Ocean Boulevard), at the bridge just south of Fort Rodd Hill at 10:00 a.m. The walk should last until 3 or 4 p.m. Bring lunch and plenty to drink. Wear sturdy footwear and perhaps gloves. Bring field guides covering your interests, and binoculars. We will inspect some of the natural history treasures and related points of interest on federal lands that may ultimately be disposed of as surplus to government needs. Most of what we will look at along Ocean Boulevard is not accessible by trails, so be prepared for some bush whacking (thus the gloves). Most of Royal Roads sights are almost accessible by well established trails. Maximum altitude gain – 50 meters (maybe a few times). Total distance: 12 to 15 km. Your leader will be **Norm Mogensen** at 477-9114, or [nmogensen@shaw.ca](mailto:nmogensen@shaw.ca) for more information.

### Sunday, May 29

#### *Victoria Natural History Society's 2nd Annual Picnic*

Come out and join with fellow naturalists to participate in a multi-discipline field day and Annual Picnic at Tower Point in Witty's Lagoon Regional Park. VNHS is partnering with CRD Parks to

present a full day of activities – see the back cover of this magazine for times and other details. The day is free – bring your lunch and a friend and learn about the birds, native plants, insects and intertidal life of this accessible park in the Western Communities. For more information call Donna 384-5327 or Rick 652-3326.

## JUNE

### Saturday June 4

#### *Geology Field Trip*

**Nick Massey and Vic Levson**, both local geologists, will lead a geology field trip along the Dallas Road shore line from Finlayson Point to Holland Point. We will look at the bedrock geology and Quaternary (glacial) deposits. We could also touch a little on earthquake hazards, etc. The trip will last 3-4 hours. Meet at Finlayson Point at 8:30 a.m.

### Saturday, June 4

#### *Birding Elk and Beaver Lakes*

Join **Tom Gillespie** for a birding walk in Elk Lake/Beaver Lake Regional Park. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the parking lot on Jennings lane, which is just south of the Rowing Club boathouse on Elk Lake. Bring a drink and a snack, it should be about a three hour walk. Call Tom at 361-1694 if you need more information

### Sunday, June 5

#### *Top Secret Botanical Adventure*

Visit an area northwest of Shawnigan Lake that the Nature Conservancy is working towards protecting for its unique habitat. Conservationist **Hans Roemer** will point out such features as the diversity of native grasses and other endangered species. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch for an approximately 5 hour outing. **And please make sure your boots are free of all soils: this special area is (so far!) relatively free of invasive species.** No pets please. Call Agnes at 721-0634 for more information.

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Help still needed with the Naturalist magazine mail out!

This bi-monthly project still requires a volunteer or two. Please call or email **Tom Gillespie** at 361-1694/[twg@horizonnet.ca](mailto:twg@horizonnet.ca)

### Are you going on one of the VNHS field trips?

Willing to pick up a VNHS member in James Bay? If yes, then please telephone 384-7553. Thank you for your consideration.

### The Goldstream Artshow (Sept. 17 to Oct. 10, 2005)

"The Nature of Island Artists" is held at the Visitor Centre in Goldstream Provincial Park every second year and showcases artists from Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Each exhibit, members of the Victoria Natural History Society have volunteered their time to make the show a success. These tireless efforts go towards supporting the salmon run school programs. If you can support this great cause, please leave a message at Goldstream (478-9414) for our volunteer Volunteer Coordinator, **Judith Parish**.

### Sunday, June 5

#### *Hummingbird Banding Demonstration*

Join **Cam Finlay** at the Nature House at Goldstream Provincial Park. Cam will explain the process of banding hummingbirds; he has been banding them in our area for the past nine years. Cam has five sites on Vancouver Island that are part of the North American Hummingbird Monitoring Network. Last year his teams banded over 2000 birds. It starts at 8:00 a.m. Call Cam at 479-9833 if you need more information.

### Saturday, June 18

#### *Butterflies in the Duncan area*

Join **Derrick Marvin** in looking for butterflies in the Duncan area. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 8:00 a.m. to car pool. Others can meet Derrick at Somenos Marsh at 9:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and a drink; we are going to take up most of the day. Call Derrick at 250-748-8504 if you would like more information.

### Saturday, June 18 and Sunday, June 19

#### *Victoria Butterfly Count*

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers, so get out your field guide! **James Miskelly** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 477-0490.

### Saturday, June 25

#### *Urban Trees, Native and Exotic*

**John Henigman** will lead a field trip around various locations in urban Victoria to identify the many tree species that grow in the city. We will have a look at local trees such as red alder, western hemlock, Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and grand fir, and will see many exotic trees brought here by people from around the world such as Lawson cedar, American elm, American linden, Spanish chestnut, London plane, horse chestnut, Japanese flowering cherry, American beech, Atlantic cedar and Catalpa. We will start at the Ross Bay Cemetery, corner of Arnold Ave. and Fairfield Rd., at 10:00 a.m. and will finish about 1:00 p.m.

### What's that in your freezer?

Rocky Point Bird Observatory is accepting bird specimens for educational purposes as permitted under their federal salvage permit. Ideally, specimens should be labelled with the date and location they were obtained, but we can still use them even with this information missing. Please contact **Rick Schortinghuis**: 652-3326 or [shylo@islandnet.com](mailto:shylo@islandnet.com).

### CRD Parks

To check out what field trips are going on at CRD parks, go to their web site:<http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/>

### Bird Walks at Swan Lake

There are regular guided bird walks at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary on Wednesdays and Sundays. Meet at the main parking lot at 9:00 a.m.





**The Victoria Natural History Society with CRD Parks'**

## **2nd Annual Picnic and Field Day**

**Tower Point at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park**

**7:00 AM to 3:30 PM**

7:00-9:30 am – Birding with Gordon Hart & Marie O'Shaughnessy

10:00-12:00 am – Botany with Agnes Lynn & Joy Finlay

12:00 Picnic

12:30-2:00 pm – Insects with James Miskelly

1:30-3:30 pm – Intertidal exploration with

Phil Lambert & CRD Naturalists

**Everyone welcome!**

Come out and join in the fun, discovery and friendship.

Bring a picnic lunch and a friend.

**Sunday May 29, 2005**

For more information call Donna 384-5327 or Rick at 652-3326

Parking is limited so carpooling is encouraged

