



NOTES

Native Plant Study Group

of the tree layer with the occasional Garry oak, cascara, shore pine, western flowering dogwood, western yew or western redcedar. Oceanspray can be common along with snowberry, Oregon grape, baldhip rose, saskatoon, salal and huckleberry vines. The incomparable *Calypso bulbosa* or fairy slipper orchids as well as the wonderful variation in the leaf of the rattlesnake plantain are jewels in the groundcover. Two of our rarest plant species, white top aster and Howell's triteleia can also be found here.

A third rare plant community is the rock outcrop or mossy bald which often occurs as small openings in forested areas. With gentle to moderate slopes and thin soils this plant community is generally devoid of trees and shrubs but is home to kinnikinnick, junegrass, yarrow, harvest lily, Hooker's onion and hoary rock moss. In the seepage areas and vernal pools that remain wet all winter and spring but dry out in the summer you will sometimes find the rare winged water-starwort and creeping spearwort or the delicate and lovely slim-leaf onion. The moss layer here is very fragile and the plants are easily dislodged by even a hikers boot. ATV's, horses and mountain bikes can devastate in minutes what it took the landscape centuries to evolve. These sites often offer spectacular views as well as exceptional wildflower displays and they are rapidly being lost to development as house sites.

These remnant pieces of the coastal Douglas-fir mosaic are with our attention and preservation. When they are gone, they will never return, so perhaps it behoves us to consider what avenues we may explore to ensure their continued existence within Metchoshin.

BOOK REVIEW

Moss Gardening, Including Lichens, Liverworts and Other miniatures by George Schenk, 1997. Published by timber Press, Portland, Oregon

This is a terrific book for the native plant gardener with an eye to incorporating those small green jewels of forest floor and moss bald. It covers a great number of species of mosses, many which are cosmopolitan in nature and can be found in our ecosystems. There are many "how to" directions as well as species descriptions, lyrical text and fine photographs that capture the charm and mood of mosses. On a cautionary note, one of the recommended methods of acquiring mosses is transplanting from the wild. While some mosses can be quite efficient at recolonizing a site, I know that most of us realize that when we disturb an ecosystem by removing plants that we not only risk local extirpation of a plant but that we also provide space for invasive species to colonize. However, for those involved in Plant Rescue activities, here is an opportunity to cultivate further plant material. The same cautions can be said for removing rocks and logs from the natural environment. With that caution aside, the book is a pleasant and informative read and a valuable addition to native plant appreciation.



NEWS

Native Plant Study Group

NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

(Sub-group of the Victoria Horticultural Society)

The NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP is a non-political group dedicated to learning about B.C. native plants, as wild populations and in garden settings, and to supporting conservation of native plants and their habitats. The group is guided by a volunteer steering committee. Members are encouraged to volunteer for this committee. Participation in outside events, by the group, or by individual members using the NPSG name, is dependant on approval of the steering committee or, where indicated, by the at-large membership. Activities requiring funding must receive approval by the general membership.

Tim Ennis spends much of his worklife at the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve aka the Elkington property, but he left that bit of paradise to give us an overview on the various projects in British Columbia in which the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is involved. In operation since 1962, NCC now stewards over 1.8 million acres of land across Canada, approximately 1/2 million of which are in BC. Originally they were run from Ontario but in 1998 they opened their first operation base in BC, with new offices now running in the Rocky Mountains and the Chilcotin.

The NCC plans and prioritizes its acquisitions by ecoregions, such as the Georgia Basin-Willamette Valley-Puget Trough ecoregion. In this case they might partner cross border with US and Canadian governmental and non-governmental agencies to protect valuable and sensitive habitat that has like characteristics. Ecoregional planning shows where conservation values are across the region and sites with the highest values and highest threats are areas to watch and protect.

The Elk River Valley in southwestern BC is a north/south valley that is important for carnivore movement, Elk River bull trout, 400 year old cottonwoods, interior rainforests and grasslands. Using various conservation tools, the NCC has protected 100,000 acres of land, including 22,000 acres of Mt Broadwood.

The Upper Columbia contains a remarkable 158 km of continuous wetlands as well as grasslands and many endangered species and is also home to significant populations of large carnivores and ungulates.

This area is in the Interior Douglas-fir and Ponderosa Pine biogeoclimactic zones, with larch, aspen, lodgepole and ponderosa pine and a grassland understory of rough fescue (*Festuca campestris*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), needlegrasses (*Achnatherum* sp.) and forbs such as Arnicas, Lomatiums and arrow-leaved balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*). Using a management method called "biodiversity ranches", 4000-5000 acres have been given some protection in the last year.

In the southern Okanagan Valley bobolinks still construct their nests on the ground in hayfields, meadows and open tall grass fields. This is possibly the last place in BC where they still breed. NCC is at work on a regional assessment for this area.

The Tatlayoko Lake Valley of the Chilcotin drains west to Bute Inlet and is an important corridor for animal movement. NCC has purchased the 940 acre (380 ha) Tatlayoko Lake Ranch which contains old growth Interior Douglas-fir forests that provide winter range for mule deer and extensive wetlands for migrating

SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS MAY 2005

May 19, 2005 - Sylvia Pincott
The Beauty of Small Things

May 19th, 2005 at 7 p.m.
Room D116
MacLaurin Building, UVic.



WHAT'S UP

UPCOMING EVENTS



Saturday April 23 - Camas Day in Beacon Hill Park. Birding walk with Tom Gillespie and Agnes Lynn at 9:00 am, Archaeology Walk at 11:00 or 1:00 with Grant Keddie, Wildflower Walk with Adolf Ceska and Brenda Beckwith at 11:00 or 1:00. Walks are about 1 hour each. Meet at the flagpole atop Beacon Hill. Jointly sponsored by VNHS and Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society.

Sunday April 24 - Spring wildflowers on Lone Tree Hill with Moralea Milne and Agnes Lynn. Start at 10:00 am. Follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Road exit. Turn right on Millstream Road and continue to the junction of Millstream Lake Road. Turn left to continue on Millstream Road to the park entrance on right.

May 1, 2004 - Trial Island. Meet on the Beach at the foot of Transit Road, in Oak

Bay at 9 a.m. for a short crossing by Zodiac to this small island with unique plant life. Wear waterproof clothing, and bring your camera, sketchbook, and lunch.

FEE: Friends of Ecological Reserves Members - \$10, Non-members - \$30, Seniors/Students - \$25 (includes a 1-year membership to FER) Trip limited to 15 people TO REGISTER or FOR MORE INFORMATION call 477-5922 or email us at ecoreserves@hotmail.com

Sun May 1- Guided tour of the VIRAGS garden and surrounding camas meadows in Beacon Hill Park. Contact Agnes Lynn for details

Saturday May 14 - Investigate Mount Wells, a gateway to the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve, with Chris Gilbert and Agnes Lynn. 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 Millar'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 am. No pets please.

Sunday May 22 - 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 am. No pets please.

Sat Jun 4 - Day trip to Lohbrunner Rock Garden at UBC Botanical Gardens. Contact Agnes Lynn for details

Sunday June 5 - Visit Eagle Heights, 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 am to car-pool. Bring a lunch for an approximately 5-hr outing. No pets please. Agnes Lynn 721-0634 or thelynns@shaw.ca

HONEYMOON BAY WILDFLOWER RESERVE

If you haven't been yet, a trip to the Honeymoon Bay Wildflower Reserve is a treat you shouldn't deny yourself. The trilliums and pink fawn lilies are absolutely superb and even though it was raining the proverbial cats and dogs (and snow and sleet) this past weekend, it wasn't the least bit onerous to wander the moss draped and soggy trails. Bring boots, camera and a capacity for awe.



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waterfowl such as trumpeter swans. It also conserves important movement corridors for grizzly bears and other animals. The NCC is working towards protection of adjacent properties through conservation covenants and sustainable ranching methods.

NCC has been busy on the coast as well and has protected 3000 acres around Jervis Inlet. They secured 2200 acres at the head of Princess Louisa Inlet with the help of the Tula Foundation and Weyerhaeuser, among others, to provide habitat for bald eagles, northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, black bears and diverse marine and intertidal life forms.

In 2000 they purchased land on the Campbell River Estuary to help

rehabilitate critical salmonid rearing habitat that had been severely degraded from industrial activity. Already restoration projects are showing signs of success. The tidal area includes the rare Henderson's checker-mallow (*Sidalcea hendersonii*), sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), sedges (*Carex* sp), shooting stars (*Dodecatheon* sp) and paintbrushes (*Castilleja* sp).

Most of us know about the purchase of the Elkington property, possibly the most intact deep soil Garry oak meadow ecosystem left in British Columbia. It is a living laboratory for research into many Garry oak related subjects. Recently the NCC has purchased an additional 27 acres of adjacent farmland that stretches to Quamichan Lake with an eye towards

future restoration. They claim to have the largest diameter Garry oak in Canada on the property, with a DBH of almost 2 metres (hmmm-perhaps we should start a Garry oak big tree contest?).

A new site they are considering is Eagle Heights, not a new subdivision in Langford but an almost pristine grassland ecosystem near the Koksilah River by Duncan. Many more properties have been protected and many more are up for consideration. The Great Bear Rainforest in particular is in urgent need of a landscape analysis and protection plan.

Where my notes and memory have failed me, some information has been cribbed from the NCC website: www.natureconservancy.ca

RARE PLANT COMMUNITIES OF METCHOSIN

[Reprinted with gracious permission from the April 2005 edition of the Metchosin Muse. This article was penned with Metchosin residents in mind but it holds true for many communities along Southern Vancouver Island and since I am pressed for time and thoughts, I hope no-one minds if I reprint it here.]

The combination of the climate in our area and the varied geography of Metchosin unite to produce a series of linked landscapes within our community. From the sand and cobble beaches along Metchosin and William Head Roads to pastoral farmlands, from Garry oak meadows to upland mountain tops, we are unique on the lower island in the diversity, complexity and relatively pristine condition of our ecosystems. Some of these are considered rare plant

communities. Plant communities are a certain mix of plants that occur together because of growing conditions that include soil type and fertility, moisture, slope and light. One of the most well known rare plant communities is the



Garry oak ecosystem over which many words have been spent, but did you know we have other, equally uncommon and remarkable plant communities? On gentle slopes and along ridgetops on shallow, fast draining soils over bedrock you will find the rare plant community known as Arbutus-hairy manzanita. These slopes generally face

from southeast to southwest, have an exceptionally pronounced dryness and very poor to medium soil richness. Shore pines with deep ridged bark stand alone or in small groups. Rolling rocky knolls are thickly covered with a variety of mosses and lichens and bonsai-like manzanitas with their blue-green evergreen leaves and crimson bark appear as if they were lifted from an ancient Japanese garden. Scattered on the ground you will find blue wildrye and Roemer's fescue, interspersed with rattlesnake plantain, yarrow and wild strawberry. A few white fawn lilies, tigerlilies and death camas round out a scene of exquisite beauty.

Another rare plant community is the Douglas-fir-arbutus community. It occurs on similar dry southerly exposures or on flat well drained gravelly soils, with very poor to medium fertility. The large old growth Douglas-fir are rare as hens teeth but some younger trees are becoming mature and with arbutus comprise most