

NPSG

JANUARY 2008

LOTUS FORMOSISSIMUS
SEASIDE BIRD'S-FOOT TREFOIL



NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

A LIFELINE FOR OUR RAREST SPECIES

Many of us first became interested in native plants and native plant gardening as we slowly recognised the beauty and unique qualities of our local Garry oak ecosystem. Carolyn Mason, outreach specialist with the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team, brought us gifts "hot off the press" (literally received several hours before our meeting) of the new Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook.

GOERT's mandate is to protect and restore Garry oak and associated ecosystems and their associated species at risk. It is a partnership of dozens of agencies and individuals. Teams of scientists and other experts are filling info gaps, mapping and classifying plant communities, finding & assessing species at risk, learning how to manage invasive species and researching native plant propagation. GOERT are involved in outreach and education through field trips and workshops, presentations to groups and local government. They encourage local governments to protect Garry oak ecosystems through model policies and bylaws, including Official Community Plans and they support the work of land trusts, conservation organizations, & stewardship groups.

The Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook is an excellent tool that has been developed to help people make successful gardening choices that will enhance the habitat value of their yards and nurture Garry oak plant and animal communities. It comes complete with garden plans for a variety of situations and lists of plants that will do well in each. The handbook is beautifully crafted with lovely photos and artwork. Donations are appreciated to help cover costs and it was decided at the November meeting that the Native Plant Study Group would make a \$200.00 donation to GOERT..

Garry oak ecosystems have a high biological diversity with about 700 plant species, 7 amphibian species, 7 reptile species, 104 bird species, 33 mammal species and 800 insect and mite species that are associated with Garry oak trees. It is an ecosystem at risk, with only 1-5% left in a somewhat natural condition and most of this in small, disconnected patches.

There is a growing risk of extinction of the ecosystem itself as well as many species at risk. 118 species are on the provincial lists and another forty are listed on (continued on page 3)

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SPRING 2008 SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Feb 21 Rm D228

Dr Richard Hebda *Climate Change: our native flora and ecosystems and what we can do.*

An expert on native plants, Richard is Curator of Botany and Earth History at the Royal BC Museum, a beloved instructor in the RNS program at UVic, author of more than 90 scientific papers and many articles on native flora and ethnobotanical studies.

March 20 Rm D110

Lindsay Coulter *To The Rescue: protecting B C's rich biodiversity*
B.C. is home to 76 per cent of our nation's bird species, 70 per cent of its freshwater fish species and 66 per cent of its butterflies. Unfortunately, the province's biological wealth is under threat – more than 1,300 species are at risk of disappearing. Lindsay Coulter is the Conservation Policy Analyst with the David Suzuki Foundation.

April 17 Rm D116

Todd Manning *Wildlife and Trees in B C*
The slow demise of a tree opens up myriad opportunities to increase and sustain biodiversity in our forests. Todd is a Habitat Forester, Wildlife Ecologist and Arborist as well as co-author of *Wildlife and Trees in BC*.

May 15 Room number TBA

Fran Benton *No Love for Langford* How living in Langford changed Lindsay from a mild mannered botanist into a Garry Oak Meadow activist. Fran Benton teaches at Malaspina University College in the

visual arts, recently she has been working in film and digital media.

The Native Plant Study Group meets on the third Thursday of the month from Sept through May except Dec at 7 at the MacLaurin Building, UVic. Please join us. Membership fees are \$15.00 annually or a \$2.00 charge for drop-in. Check Room Schedule for new meeting locations.

For UVic events: New parking policy--pay parking is in effect 24 hours a day. You must purchase a \$2

parking permit for the evening.

VNHS BOTANY NIGHTS

are held at Swan Lake Nature house, 7:30 pm, everyone welcome, no charge

Tues, Feb 19 Twelve Years of Carpet Burweed (Soliva sessilis) in BC
Adolf Ceska documents the history of carpet burweed in BC from the first report till the situation today.

Can we get rid of this weed?

Tuesday, March 18 Plants and Landscapes of the North Yukon Slope

In 2005, Terry McIntosh travelled by boat with Bruce Bennett collecting plants and lichens at various beautiful sites along the north Yukon slope. Join in the adventure.

Tues, April 15 Treasures of the Cloud Forest: Botanical Explorations in Vietnam's Huang Lien Mountains
The Huang Lien Mountain Range in Northern Vietnam includes high altitude temperate cloud forests possessing remarkable beauty and biodiversity with Brian White



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DELTOID BALSAMROOT

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“Our Future Flies on the Wings of Pollinators”

This is the slogan for one group (www.pollinator.org) that is trying to increase public awareness about the immense value of pollinators and of the risks inherent in their population declines. It is reported that one mouthful in three that we consume is the result of insect pollination. Twenty-five percent of all birds eat seeds and fruit and are dependant on insect pollinators. It is a sobering thought to realize the interconnectedness of insects and our food supply and their value to the health of ecosystems worldwide.

Canada has approximately 1000 species of wild bees plus thousands of species of pollinating flies and beetles but most people only consider the introduced honey bee when they think of pollinators. Honey bees are good pollinators of many plants due to their vast numbers when a hive is placed nearby. Quite a number of our flowering plants are not well pollinated by them though as some plants require a specialised buzzing or a kind of bug dance to ensure the flower releases its pollen. This is an evolutionary tactic that ensures the right insect partner will transfer pollen to the same species of plant rather than randomly over a field of many different types of blooms. Honey bees are apt to be less discerning in their plant



choices and can fly over a much larger range. This means they might be visiting many different species of plants and not necessarily ensuring cross pollination. Native bees and other insect pollinators often stay within 100 m of their nest site. A single female blue orchard bee (aka mason bee aka BOB) can visit 60,000 blossoms in its short lifetime. Native bees however do not produce honey.

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a national scale (COSEWIC), while twenty four are at risk globally.

Key threats are habitat loss and fragmentation due to development, invasive alien species, fire suppression, site planning & management and recreational impacts which can cause plant damage and destruction, soil disturbance, compaction, erosion, facilitate the introduction of invasive/exotic species and cause the disruption of feeding, nesting and rearing cycles.

How can you help? You can practice restoration in your own back yard, remove invasive species, garden with native plants, be a messy gardener, consider an Eco-gift, conservation covenant, or stewardship agreement

Learn more by visiting www.goert.ca or contact Carolyn Masson (250) 383-3427, info@goert.ca



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You can help our declining populations of pollinators by planting pollinator friendly flowers and enhancing pollinator habitat (from Lifecycles website).

- ☀ Native pollinators tend to be attracted to blue, purple and yellow single blossom flowers.
- ☀ Flowers with short tubes or no tubes at all are more likely to attract a variety of bees.
- ☀ Short-tongued bees and hover flies are attracted to small shallow flowers such as in the mustard family (beautiful bitter-cress and sea rocket), carrot family (springgold and fennel), and sunflower family (daisies and asters).
- ☀ Long-tongued bumble bees are attracted to flowers with deep corollas and hidden nectar spurs such as larkspur, columbine, snapdragon, bergamot, delphinium, bell shaped flowers, mint and tomato family.
- ☀ Leaf cutter bees are attracted to beans and peas (legume family).
- ☀ Use native flowers and heritage varieties.
- ☀ Construct and install nest for pollinators for pollinators in your backyard. There are many designs for nesting boxes for species such as mason bees and hunting wasps.
- ☀ Learn to identify beneficial insects and their nest sites and let them flourish in your garden. This allows for a balanced population of spiders, ladybugs, bees and other beneficial insects to fight against the pests in your yard.
- ☀ Provide a water source, like a birdbath, small pond or a dripping faucet which insects can access. Bees need to drink clean water too!
- ☀ Provide mud for mason bee nests by digging a hole as wide as a shovel, past the organic layer and into the mineral layer of the soil. The mineral soil can be easily packed by the mason bee.
- ☀ Leave dead wood in your backyard. Dead wood provides shelter and nesting space for many beneficial insects, including leaf cutter bees and mason bees. They make their homes in old beetle burrows. Entire trees or even branches will suit this purpose.
- ☀ Keep some empty in your yard. For bees that keep underground nests, it is important to keep a small patch of uncultivated and undisturbed ground which is accessible to them.
- ☀ Flower food can be added to your yard by planting high nectar-producing plants each year. Native plants are great for indigenous pollinators!
- ☀ **REDUCE PESTICIDE USE.** Look towards other options first. Organic controls such as soap sprays and pest control techniques with natural parasites are good starters.

References:

www.lifecyclesproject.ca

articles by Rex Welland of Victoria

www.pollinationcanada.ca

The Forgotten Pollinators by Stephan Buchmann et al



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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- The Anti-ivy League of Cadboro Bay is fighting an ongoing battle. Is your warrior spirit ready to tackle the soul-sucking expanse of this pernicious weed? Contact Agnes at 721-0634 or thelynns at shaw.ca for more info.
- Hospital Rock: Contact Agnes as above
- Volunteer at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary For further details contact Joan at 479-0211 or email volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca.
- Beacon Hill Park Ivy Pull, Saturdays (except long weekends), 9 am-Noon southeast woods near Cook and Dallas. Bring gardening gloves. No dogs. Volunteers welcomed. Call Cornelia, 920-3556 or kacy at islandnet.com.
- Oak Bay Native Plant Garden meet every Fri. morning from 9-11, weather permitting. Corner of Beach Drive and Margate Avenue. New members welcome. Guided walks in March and April.
- Brighton Avenue Walkway Restoration. Removal of invasives and re-planting of native species in a Garry Oak rocky outcrop situation. Work each Sun. 9:30 - 11:30. Meet at Hampshire and Brighton, 2 blocks south of Oak Bay Ave.
- GORP Schedule..... 9:30-11:30
Sat Jan 19 Chatterton Hill Park. Remove invasives
Sat Jan 26 Camas Park. Remove invasives
Contact Jennifer Eastman at: 744-1710

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

Every Saturday at 1:30 pm: Tour of Merve Wilkinson's Wildwood Forest, Ladysmith. Jay, 250-245-5540
www.ecoforestry.ca/WildwoodMap.htm

For information on many environmental activities in our area check the Green Diary from the EcoNews website at earthfuture.com/greendiary/

Consult the CRD parks website for detailed information on their programs; wear appropriate clothing for the weather and sturdy footwear for all outings:
www.crd.bc.ca/parks

For all VNHS activities, please contact Agnes at 721-0634 or email her (thelynns@shaw.ca) if you need more information. No pets please. Bring a lunch and plenty to drink for the all day outings. Check the Victoria Natural History Society at vicnhs.bc.ca

- Sun Jan 20 VNHS Royal Roads in Winter
Join Royal Roads University Gardener John Sheridan in a behind-the-scenes meander through the cultivated areas of Royal Roads. Meet in Lot 3 (major parking lot part-way down the hill on right below Hatley Castle) at 10:00 a.m. Bring \$3.00 for pay parking
- Sat Jan 26 CRD 10:30 am Devonian Delights Explore the forests, streams, wetlands, and ocean front. Meet at the information kiosk in the parking lot off William Head Road, Metchosin
- Sun Feb 3, CRD 11-3 Hike Cedar Grove to Cougar Ridge. Meet at Roche Cove parking lot off Gillespie Rd, East Sooke.
- Sat Feb 9, CRD 11-3 Hike Mill Hill to Thetis Lake. Meet at info kiosk in parking lot off Atkins Rd, Langford
- Sun Feb 17, CRD 1pm Mill Hill, Early Signs of Spring. Meet at info kiosk in parking lot off Atkins Rd, Langford
- Sat Feb 23, CRD 1pm Devonian Park, The Plant and People Connection. Meet in parking lot off William Head Rd, Metchosin.
- Sun Feb 24, CRD 1pm Explore Horth Hill. Meet in parking lot off Tatlow Rd, North Saanich
- Sun, Feb 24 VNHS Identifying Native Trees and Shrubs in Winter Wander around Ten Mile Point, visiting Konukson and Phyllis Parks. Start at 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor Ave. Meet at 10:00 a.m.
- Sun Mar 2 CRD 1pm What is that Plant? Meet at Mill Hill info kiosk off Atkins Rd Langford
- Sun Mar 9 CRD 10-2 Upper Thetis and Beyond. Meet at lakeside parking area west of main parking lot. View Royal
- Sun Mar 23 CRD 1-3:30 Bear Hill Spring Prowl. View the wildflowers. Meet at parking lot off Brookleigh Rd, Saanich
- Sun Mar 30 CRD 11-2:30 Mt Wells. Hike to the top and view the spring wildflowers. Meet at info kiosk in parking lot off Humpback Rd, Langford.

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NOTES

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 dependent on approval of the steering committee or, where indicated, by the at-large membership. Activities requiring funding must receive approval by the general membership.

Chair: Angela Deering
Co-chair: Valerie Elliott
Speakers... Moralea Milne
Treasurer: Catherine Fryer
Newsletter: . Moralea Milne
Room Rental Pat Johnston
Plant Rescue: Todd Doherty
FieldTrips: Jean Forrest
Pat Johnston
Membership: Agnes Lynn
Publicity: Valerie Elliott
Room Set-up: Pat & Wayne Robertson
Plant Raffle: . Heather Pass
List-serve: Linda Beare & John Olafson
Refreshments: Pat McMahon
VHS Liaison: Heather Pass

Native Plant Study Group members are required to become members of the Victoria Horticultural Society. Fees are \$25.00/yr and help pay for insurance to cover field trips. Send \$ to Box 5081 Str. B, Victoria, V8R 6N3

The NPSG Newsletter is written and produced by Moralea Milne

Victoria Natural History Society
www.vicnhs.bc.ca
Native Plant Society of BC
www.npsbc.org
South Vancouver Island Mycological Society
svims.ca