

NPSG

APRIL 2006

TRILLIUM OVATUM
WESTERN TRILLIUM



NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

ECOLOGICAL LITERACY AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Land stewardship, environmental ethics and education as they pertain to the preservation of native plants and ecosystems were the topics embraced by Rick Searle at the March 2006 meeting. Passion and enthusiasm for our natural landscape seeped into every part of his presentation, infecting the audience with his energy and dedication. As well as teaching at UVic, Rick has written "Phantom Parks - A Struggle to Save Canadian National Parks" and he was co-host of the sadly missed Enviro-Mental TV show.

Rick warned that native plants are in retreat around the world through habitat destruction, invasive species, habitat alteration (climate change), species manipulation (genetic manipulation) and disconnection from nature (our children are more aware of Pokeman characters than of native species). Rick used the phrase "nature deficit disorder" coined by Richard Lour, to describe the increasing disassociation of humans from the natural world.

B.C. has three biological hotspots, the Garry oak; Antelope brush and Ponderosa pine ecosystems that are all in severe decline. There is little interest shown by our governments in preserving these ecosystems. The Species at Risk Act is only applicable to federal lands. The provincial government has initiated massive cuts to the

environment ministry, there is only 1 park ranger for 7 parks and no enforcement of what regulations that do exist. Nature interpretation programs have been eliminated. Laws do not appear to be sufficient protection for the environment and although education is not a panacea, a new form of learning called transformative education could lead to ecological literacy and environmental sustainability.

Rick pointed out that many of us are disconnected from nature, we need a larger understanding of how Planet Earth works, to realize the interdependence of all life forms and processes. Has nature become a commodity or abstraction as in "natural" shampoos? Some of our problems with drought and pollution stem from our failure to comprehend the hydrological cycle and we only recognize water within the "tap to drain" phase.

Do we have an intrinsic need for first hand experience with the natural world? Edward O. Wilson called this need the biophilia hypothesis. Rick states that we are interdependent on nested hierarchies, in other words, what happens on one level can effect all levels, from ferns in a forest canopy to the soil in the forest floor. Small changes can cascade into larger changes, which can precipitate ecosystem flips. The east coast cod fishery can never come back, it has been damaged beyond restoration.

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Rick quoted David Orr, "to be ecologically literate, our health and well being depends on working with, not against nature". We can unlearn old thinking and adopt stewardship practices. This way of thinking cannot be forced on people, it can't be taught, but the ground can be prepared for "an internally driven awakening" (light bulb comes on!).

This type of teaching, known as transformative learning, starts with the assumption that we are all directed by our own internal operating system, which most of us are not conscious of. This process attempts to convert our values, beliefs and assumptions into our consciousness by learning to ask "worth-knowing" questions or "bull detectors"; engaging in dialogue with others (Erica Jung's "How do I know what I think until I hear myself say it?") and through reflection and allowing time to integrate what you are learning. David Orr was further quoted as saying we need to have a dialogue with a place. Rick Searle gave us the beginnings of a dialogue that we can continue in "our" places, awakening our own "internal operating systems"!

Books and Authors mentioned in presentation:

- Richard Lour, Last Child in the Woods, Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, 2005
- Davis Orr, Ecological Literacy, Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World, 1992
- Larry Giglotti, Journal of Environmental Education, Vol. 3 Issue 1, 1990
- Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business, 1986
- Erica Jung, Fear of Flying, 1974

SCHEDULE OF SPEAKERS

May 18th at 7:00 pm in Room D116,
MacLaurin Bldg., UVic.

Ted Lea will give a presentation on

Historical Garry Oak Ecosystem Mapping For
Southern Vancouver Island

TO PRUNE OR NOT TO PRUNE? THAT WAS THE QUESTION!!

Members ranged on both sides of the pruning fence when asked if one should top prune salvaged shrubs. The good old fashioned way that many expounded (myself included) was to prune back the tops approximately 1/3, to compensate for the loss of roots during the salvaging process. This is said to keep a balance between roots and shoots, so that the reduced root mass is not straining to keep too many leaves healthy.

Other, more up-to-date and cutting edge gardeners let us know that times change and it is now accepted practice to not prune the top of the plant. The leaves "are vital to making sugars that provide energy for forming new roots. Corrective pruning, however, may be necessary. Dead, damaged or misshapen branches can create problems later and should be removed at planting time. Do not remove the central stem, do not leave stubs and never top the tree. In short, follow good pruning practices".



TRITELEIA HOWELLII

Poem by James Miskelly

On June the seventh I took my net
And set off for a tour of small islets
To canoe cove to meet my merry band
And there await the ferry man
Upon arrival in stepped fate
For on the day, the boat was late
To pass the time I looked atop
Of a steep and mossy rock outcrop
When what fair blossom did I spy?
'Twas Triteleia howellii
A plant known to me from San Juan Island
Where it proliferates in both ditch and highland
Arriving home my tale I wrote
And to the CDC I sent a note
In succinct fashion, without this yarn
I reported the find to one Matt Fairbarns
Said he "A good find, but your timing's the pits
The status report has just been writ."

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NATIVE PLANT GARDENING FOR BIRDS

The appreciation of native plants can go far beyond their individual characteristics and values, and if we use them in an ecosystem approach to gardening, we will find that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts”. Meaning that combining native plants (and non-invasive horticultural plants) benefits not only our visual enjoyment but also contributes to enhanced habitat for many creatures, including our feathered neighbours.

Most birds are insect eaters when need for nourishment is great and fruits, nuts and nectar are not abundant, even hummingbirds snack on bugs. Trees with thick, ridged bark, like mature Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Garry oaks (*Quercus garryana*) supply habitat for many insects, which birds such as brown creepers, red-breasted nuthatches and woodpeckers are adapted to locating. Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos albus*) harbour many bugs and caterpillars as well as supplying excellent cover for ground-using birds. A snarl of trailing blackberries (*Rubus ursinus*), as well as a source of berries, provide a favoured nesting site for towhees.

Many of us hang hummingbird feeders outside our windows so that we can marvel at their beauty and territorial battles. To increase their preference for your yard, the March-April flowering of the gummy gooseberry (*Ribes lobbii*) with its scarlet red, fuchsia-like blooms and the pendant flowers of its near relative, the flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) are both a source of nectar for our Anna's and Rufous hummingbirds, as are the dark pink blossoms of the salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*). These are all invaluable food sources when so little else has



begun to flower. In bloom at the end of March and equally welcomed are the pink and white blossoms of the hairy manzanita (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*). April and May follow with red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), twinberry (*Lonicera involucrate*) and western honeysuckle (*Lonicera ciliosa*) coming into flower with their hummingbird favoured blooms. May through June, the flamboyant red columbine (*Aquileja formosa*) and the more restrained Pacific bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*) both contribute to the hummers diets while another favourite, Cooley's hedge-nettle (*Stachys coolyae*), with its red to pink flowers, blooms later in the season. In fact, some of these plants are pollinated almost exclusively by hummingbirds. Many shrubs and trees produce fruit and nuts that last from spring, well into the winter and supply much needed food. Manzanita berries are eaten by band-tailed pigeons (now considered a blue-listed species) and Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) fruit are consumed by fox sparrow and towhees while kinnikinnick berries (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) are munched by grouse, among others. Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) are quickly stripped of their fruit early in the season and Saskatoons (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) provide mid-summer nourishment. All these shrubs require well-drained, sunny areas for maximum fruit production. Even the shade loving huckleberries will produce more fruit if they have the benefit of extra sun. Think of the fields of blueberries (usually a shade lover) growing in full sun on the drive from the ferry to Vancouver. Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), dull Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), huckleberries (*Vaccinium* sp) and many of our currants and gooseberries (*Ribes* sp) do well with light shading and dry to moist soil conditions and are appreciated by thrushes, grouse,



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quail, varied thrush, robins and others. Of course, these plants need supplemental watering if they are to survive the additional sun and the drying out that entails. Sitka mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*), alders (*Alnus* sp), elderberry, bitter cherry (*Prunus emarginata*), crabapple (*Malus fusca*) and black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*) are usually found near streams, lakes and wetlands and as you would suspect, require more moisture.

Purple finch, evening grosbeaks, cedar waxwings, robins and many other birds will devour the fruits and seeds of these plants. American goldfinch, warblers and flycatchers appreciate ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*), another great shrub for riparian areas and grosbeaks find the bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) winged seeds to their liking. Apparently, 23 species of birds, in particular grouse and quail, find the tender buds of Scouler's willow (*Salix scouleriana*) delectable.

Garry oak acorns are quickly eaten by Stellar's jays and band-tailed pigeons. Many birds consume arbutus (*Arbutus menziesii*) berries. Thrushes, pine grosbeaks and red-breasted nuthatches love cedar (*Thuja plicata*), shore pine (*Pinus contorta*) and fir cones and pine siskins eat hemlock seeds (*Tsuga heterophylla*).

As you know, birds appreciate and need plenty of cover nearby to help them to escape easily if something raptor-like appears. However a lot of dense ground cover or shrubs, which towhees, fox sparrows and quail love, can be counter-productive if there are cats nearby, who will wait patiently for unsuspecting birds to land. In that case some cat proof fencing is in order. I used short fence-like edging around my feeder, which gave the birds a "heads-up" when the cat would have to jump over it before reaching them. Lots of stakes in the ground can accomplish the same result at no expense.

Non-native, non-invasive garden plants can be a complementary addition to your naturesscaped garden: fuchsias, weigela, flowering quince and

the honeysuckle vine "Dropmore Scarlet" are all appreciated by hummingbirds. The evergreen California lilac attracts sparrows to its small fruit capsules and we've all seen many birds feast on sunflowers seeds.

Please do not plant any of the invasive species, even though birds might love them. English hawthorn, ivy, holly and cotoneaster are 4 big-time no-no's! They might supply some extra food and habitat for birds

but eventually they decrease these necessities for other forms of wildlife as they turn biological diversity into virtual monocultures.

Naturesscaping is a way to enhance our yards for our enjoyment of wildlife and at the same time, helps achieve a balance that encourages our co-existence with the natural world. Planting native trees, shrubs and flowers is one way that this can be accomplished and once established, needs no more input from us yet gives back many seasons of bird watching pleasure.

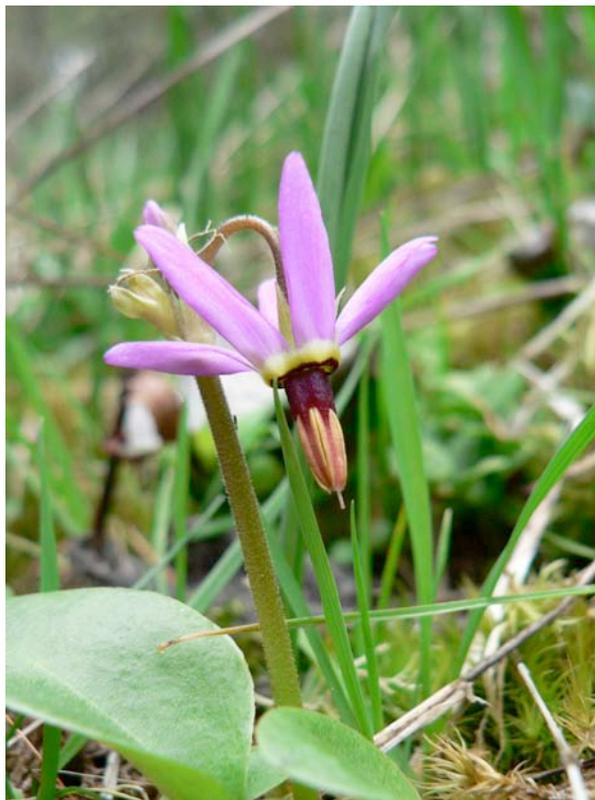
References and Resources:

- Naturesscape Stewardship Series, Caring for Wildlife Habitat at Home. 1995. By Susan Campbell
- The Bird Garden, by the National Audubon Society, 1995
- Canadian Wildlife Federa-

tion has excellent resources for Naturesscaping:

- <http://www.cwf-fcf.org/>
- Naturesscape BC has an thorough guide on Caring for Wildlife Habitat at Home at: <http://www.hctf.ca/naturesscape/resources.htm>
- Another great naturesscaping site: <http://www.wildaboutgardening.org/index.asp>
- PlantNative, is dedicated to moving native plants and naturesscaping into mainstream landscaping practices. <http://www.plantnative.com/index.htm>
- The Habitat Conservation Trust Fund Site, which has great links <http://www.hctf.ca/>

The NPSG meets the 3rd Thursday Sept-May (excluding Dec) at 7:00 pm in Room D116, MacLaurin Bldg., UVic.



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OAK BAY NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Carol Davies was once a teacher whose students must have loved her. She interjected a lot of humour into her member's presentation on the Oak Bay Native Plant Garden. Located opposite the Oak Bay Beach Hotel at Margate Avenue, the garden was originally donated by Mrs. Ada Beaven in the 1939. Although she wanted a native plant garden 'in perpetuity', Ada did not set up a fund to finance the upkeep of the garden. In 2002, volunteers, many former and present Native Plant Study Group members, began a project to restore the garden. It is the size of 3.5 city lots or 1.4 acres and has ponds and resident mallards, as well as the gardens. By the time the project started the gardens were overrun by ivy, morning glory and celandine (a nasty invasive with almost devilish powers of reproduction). Every Friday from 9-11 a.m. finds dedicated volunteers working on maintenance and restoration of a meadow area, using "plant rescue" bulbs and native grasses. This is followed by tea, that can be longer than the work period and occasionally some can make it to the tea but not the work party! Their very own eagle perches above them and rains down fish bones, great for soil amendment! The municipality hauls away any refuse and handles all the pruning. They applied for and received funding from the Canadian Wildlife Society and the Canadian Hallmark Society presented them with an award in 2004. The gardens have been designated an Oak Bay heritage site.

Please contact Carol at ecdavies@uvic.ca if you would like to join this merry, tea drinking team of volunteers.

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

April 1st, the Woodland Trail at Government House will open for the season. Approach is to walk to the west side of Government House and get on the fire road. Continue past the alpine garden, to the viewing platform, where there is information about Garry oak ecosystems, then continue along the fire road to the trail entrance.

April 22 & 23 - Swan Lake's Gardening for Wildlife Native Plant Sale and Demonstration
Enjoy workshops with:
Brenda Costanzo - The Most Versatile Native Plants
Pat Johnston - Replace Your Lawn with Native Plants
Michael Cowan - Microclimates in Your Back Yard
Sylvia Pincott - Biodiversity at Your Doorstep
Nathalie Dechaine - Salvaging Native Plants

April 22, Saturday. CRD. Forest to Seashore. Witty's Lagoon Main Parking Lot at 1 pm

April 23, Sunday. CRD. Flower Prowl. Thetis Lake at 1 pm

All VNHS trips please contact Agnes at 721-0634 for more information. No pets please.

April 29, Saturday. VNHS. Mount Tzouhalem Ecological Reserve with Hans Roemer. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. to car-pool. Bring a lunch and drinks for the day-long outing.

May 6, Saturday. VNHS and Friends of Beacon Hill Park Society. Camas Day in Beacon Hill Park. Birding walk with Tom Gillespie at 9:00 a.m., Archaeology Walk at 11:00 or 1:00 with Grant Keddie, Wildflower Walk with Adolf Ceska and Brenda Beckwith at 11:00 and 1:00. Walks are about one hour each. Meet at the flag pole atop Beacon Hill.

May 6, Saturday. CRD. Marvelous Matheson. Matheson Lake parking lot at 11 am.

May 8, Monday. CRD. Upper Thetis and Beyond. Thetis Lake parking lot 10 am-2 pm

May 13, Saturday. CRD. No Park is an Island. Francis King at 1 pm.

May 24, Wednesday. CRD. Wilderness to Share. East Sooke Park. 10am-2 pm

May 27, Saturday. CRD. Coles Bay Ramble. At 1 pm.

June 24, Saturday. CRD. Two Park Tour. From Francis King to Thetis Lake. Meet at Francis King. 10 am-1 pm.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the Centennial Trail, the Brighton Ave. Walkway is undergoing a restoration project. Contact Carol Davies (475-4412 or ecdavies@uvic.ca if you would like to volunteer.

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BOOK REVIEW

The New Gardening For Wildlife, A Guide For Nature Lovers by Bill Merrilees

I started reading the Gardening for Wildlife book with great enthusiasm but I am afraid that before an hour was out, I realized that I can't recommend it to anyone.

While there is some very useful information on "hard" naturoscaping, such as building ponds and shelters, etc, it falls on its face when it comes to recommending plants for wildlife.

Page 16 has one paragraph which defines weeds, the last sentence of which warns "Still others have become invasive, noxious pests that are a serious nuisance that threaten native habitats and agricultural production". Sounds promising, although I would have preferred a somewhat longer definition of invasive species and description of their impacts.

However, whoever wrote that paragraph obviously did not write the sections on gardening for hummingbirds, spring birds, summer birds, fall birds, winter birds etc. (very bird-centric). These sections have zero regard for the effects of invasive species and recommend many of the worst offenders. Ivy, English hawthorn, butterfly bush, thistles, holly, Himalayan and evergreen blackberries, mullein, morning glory, Russian and autumn olive, cotoneaster, burdock, sow thistle and hairy cat's-ear are all praised for their wildlife feeding and habitat abilities. I've noticed this same approach to wildlife gardening in other publications when the authors focus on one aspect of enhancement to the detriment of others, birders and butterfly gardeners, in particular, are often guilty of this "blindness" approach to enhancing their yards for their favoured wildlife.

Really it is such a shame because a lot of the book provides great tips and projects for naturoscaping and I love that insects, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals are given their due. Unfortunately, I can't assume that someone would read the book and know to disregard the advice on planting the aforementioned invasive species.

As they say "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" or counterproductive advice!

To think of all the work we do getting rid of invasive species, all the articles written, all the bleeding knuckles, it passes belief that these species were allowed into the pages of an otherwise useful book.

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.

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 Stn. B, Victoria, V8R 6N3