

NPSG

SEPTEMBER
2008

CALYPSO BULBOSA
FAIRY SLIPPERS



NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

ONE LESS ORCHID

Fran Benton and Valerie Elliott, with the assistance of many others, have produced a compelling video on our Garry oak ecosystem. Interspersed with wonderful footage of camas meadows in full bloom, Briony Penn and Brenda Beckwith explain the importance and rarity of this landscape, its cultural and ancient history and the threats that have reduced it to an infinitesimal fraction of its former grandeur.

Penn describes the meadows which have been enriched by decaying grasses for millennia, producing rich organic soils, perfect for agriculture, and the dry, sunny, well drained sites that are coveted for residential development. The developers mantra of “win-win” situations where development is shared with preservation rings false with only 1% left to “share”. Benton explains that only one half of one percent of that has any protection at all. Camas guru Brenda Beckwith explains how the Garry oak ecosystem is so different from any other in Canada. The plants go dormant in the dry summer months, conserving their energies until the cool, fall rains awaken the resting seeds and

bulbs. February and March see the new shoots of members of the lily family sprouting and soon flowering before the return of the harsh summer environment.

Penn describes the close relationship that this ecosystem has with First Nations, how they have co-evolved to support each other. The critically important camas meadows were periodically burned to ensure they would remain free of conifers, preserving an important ground food source as well as providing forage for deer and elk with easier hunting sites.

The video describes the contributions of the municipality of Saanich, through its OCP (Official Community Plan) and development bylaws to integrate and preserve sensitive environments within the community, particularly by allowing infill rather than sprawl and designating Garry oak as a protected tree. They also provide many resources to private landowners who wish to preserve or restore sensitive environments on their properties.

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008

Swan Lake/Christmas Hill has been working for many years to rid the park of broom and other invasive species and their admonition is the long term commitment needed to eradicate or control this plant. Robert Bateman is invoked with his comment that he is a small "c" Conservative, trying to conserve something for future generations. Penn muses that by speaking to your neighbours over backyard fences, convincing them to leave a tree or protect some native flora is a valuable tool in the battle to save our remaining Garry oak habitat. These incremental steps are the hope for the future, educating communities and creating refugia of species that can help to repopulate landscapes that will be stressed by climate change.

The Native Plant Study Group meets on the third Thursday of the month from Sept through May except Dec at 7 pm in the MacLaurin Building, UVic.

Please join us. Membership fees are \$15.00 annually or a \$2.00 charge for drop-in. Check for room locations.

For UVic events: Parking policy--pay parking is in effect 24 hours a day. You must purchase a \$2 parking permit for the evening.

October 16 Room D116 Northern BC Alpine Plants Collection and RBCM Herbarium

Join us as we travel (virtually) with Ken Marr to northern BC alpine areas, collecting specimens for the Royal British Columbia Museum.

Ken Marr, Curator of Botany at RBCM, is interested in the classification and conservation of terrestrial vascu-

lar plants. He is also interested in ethnobotany, specifically the origin and domestication of crop species.



CAMAS ECOSYSTEM

November 20 Room D116 Parasitic Plants of BC, with Excursions Else- where.

Dr Job Kuijt is a global authority on mistletoe species and his special interest is the structure and systematics of parasitic plants, mostly the mistletoe families of the New World tropics.

January 15 Room D116 Member's Presentation Night, topics tba

February 19 (Room to be announced) "Borrowing a Root" Transplanting Practices of British Columbia Indige- nous Peoples with Dr Nancy Turner

There is significant evidence from indigenous elders that transplanting useful plants from one location to another was often undertaken, and probably has been going on for centuries. This talk presents actual accounts and examples of indigenous transplanting practices and the implications of such practices.

Dr. Nancy Turner of Victoria is an internationally-distinguished scholar and scientist who has devoted her life to documenting the endangered knowledge of First Nations.

We would like to begin having a native plant display at meetings, to help members with identification. If possible, please bring in labeled plants or specimens

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008

FALL WILDLIFE

I've got bears eating my apples and the butterflies feasting on my plums, to say nothing of the wasps eating anything and everything. There are miniscule baby garter snakes slithering away as I walk just about anywhere sunny and the western branded and woodland skippers are nectaring at the asters and pearly everlasting. Only a week ago at Camas Hill there was a mother cedar waxwing feeding three chicks, hiding within the dense branches of a Scouler's willow. I found the dead carcass of a sculptured pine borer, looking like an exquisitely carved miniature ornament. What appear at first glance to be plain brown or grey moths, on closer inspection, are found to be richly patterned in a tapestry of nighttime hues. A trip to Esquimalt Lagoon on the weekend was a vision of golden yellow gumweed carpeting the spit with Lincoln sparrows chasing each other through the sparse shrubs and along the paths. Vultures soar effortlessly overhead, readying themselves for the long glide across the Strait. Small round puffballs have begun appearing near my workshop and the first fronds of licorice ferns are unfurling on a rocky knoll. A walk along Taylor Beach with my grandson uncovered a multitude of squirming black Blennies sheltering under some carefully lifted cobbles.

I had been lamenting the imminent end of summer but upon reflection I realized that every season in this area holds treasures to be encountered and old friends to be rediscovered. Appreciate this coming season, there are myriad opportunities to enjoy the beauty of our natural world.



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.

Co-chair: Nathalie Dechaine
Co-chair: Valerie Elliott
Speakers... Moralea Milne
Treasurer:
Newsletter: Moralea Milne
Plant Rescue: Todd Doherty
Field Trips: 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
Betty Sherwood
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 Stn. B, Victoria, V8R 6N3

The NPSG Newsletter is written and produced by Moralea Milne

LINKS:

Victoria Natural History Society: www.vicnhs.bc.ca
Native Plant Society of BC: www.npsbc.org
Swan Lake Nature House : www.swanlake.bc.ca
South Van Is Mycological Society: www.svims.ca
Van Is Alpine and Garden Society: www.virags.ca

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008

NOTES

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008

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.
- Garlic mustard removal at Mt Doug park. Contact Judy Spearing at 472-0515 or email to jandd_spearing at shaw.ca
- CRD Regional Parks is gearing up for this year's restoration work at Mill Hill Regional Park. Anyone interested in a couple of weeks of hard but satisfying work removing invasive species, M-F from September 8-19, please contact George Gollmer at ggollmer at crd.bc.ca or 478-3344.
- Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society. Douglas Creek has three projects Sept to Nov 2008. If you feel that you are able to help with any or all of the projects please email Bob Bridgeman at rbridge at shaw.ca If you need more info call 250-477-7464

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 at 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

Fri Sept 19, Habitat Acquisition Trust will host the annual Conservation Connection forum which brings together folks from many organizations working on environmental stewardship and conservation projects at the Burnside Gorge Community Center. The registration fee is \$25 for non-profit organizations and \$30 for other organizations or individuals. The fee includes lunch and refreshments.

Contact hatmail at hat.bc.ca to register.

Sat Sept 20 and Sun, Sept 21 VNHS Victoria's Monthly Butterfly Count. To help call James Miskelly (count coordinator) at 250-477-0490.

Tues Sept 23 VIRAGS 7pm Richard Hebda at 4201 Tyndall, Gordon Head United Church Hall

Sun Sept 28 10th Annual Salt Spring Island Apple Festival Theme: Celebrating Red-Fleshed Apples - THE APPLES OF THE FUTURE Growing over 350 varieties of apples organically. 9 AM to 5 PM Fulford Hall plus 15 farms. www.saltspringmarket.com/apples/

Sun Oct 19 VNHS Koksilah Trees Worth Saving You probably have heard about the big old growth Douglas Fir trees along the Koksilah River in the Shawnigan Lake area. Warrick Whitehead is one of a dedicated group trying to save these trees from being logged. He will lead us into the area and show us why

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008

this stand is unique and must be saved. To find out more about these trees, check out <http://koksilah.blogspot.com> Meet at 9:15 at Helmcken Park & Ride to car-pool to Shawnigan.

Sun Oct 19 SVIMS Wild Mushroom Show 10-4
Discover the world of wacky and wonderful mushrooms of Vancouver Island. Bring your specimens for identification by members of the Mycological Society. Drop-in family program for ages 6 and up. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road.. Donations appreciated. Contact Margaret Lidkea: 250-479-0211.

Sun Oct 19 CRD Cedar Grove to Cougar Ridge. Hike Roche Cove Regional Park (East Sooke) 11am-3pm
Hike to one of the most spectacular viewpoints in the region. Meet in the parking lot off Gillespie Road.

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Valerie and Nathalie are excited to co-chair the NPSG meetings this year. We have some ideas for the upcoming term. In order to best represent the NPSG's members now and into the future we need your help.

Efforts have been made over the years to solicit information through emails and meetings, but so far has yielded limited results. Our new approach is to take 10 minutes at every second meeting to gather input from the membership at large to determine a clear direction so we can build on our success. Here are some of the components we would like to address in this process:

- ... Present

Do the meetings/speakers/outreach activities meet your needs?

Are there things you would like to revise, get rid of, or is it working the way it is?

- ... Future

Where do we see our group going next season, 2 years, 5 years and 50 years from now?

What is our role in the community and should we try to engage a wider audience?

Should we remain a study group of the Victoria Horticultural Society, or review other options?

- ... Past:

Revisit our roots so we better understand where we have come from and try to accurately document our history. We know that much of this information rests in the minds of some of our long-term members. Please consider helping archive our history by providing any archiving materials you have and/or working with others to write a chronicle.

We also are looking for help with some new or renewed tasks. These positions open to anyone able and willing:

- 1.... Greeters (At meeting times. This position is intended to make visitors feel welcome)
- 2.... Treasurer (3-4 hours per month)
- 3.... Writer(s) to assist with presentation write ups (Take notes at the meeting and then write up presentations and forward to the newsletter editor)
- 4.... Display coordinator (The time you spend is up to you. Help to create the display of sample plants for visitors to enjoy)
- 5.... Volunteer coordinator (estimated at 2 hours per month to email and connect with signed up volunteers)

Our goal is to make our time together as positive as possible and to ensure we represent the wishes of our membership. Thank you in advance for participating in any way that you can.

Yours naturally, Nathalie and Valerie

TWO NPSG MEMBERS WIN SAANICH AWARDS

Congratulations!

Judith Spearing in the individual citizen category for her multitude of restoration and education projects, especially her efforts to remove garlic mustard from Mt Doug Park.

Pam Sinclair in the long term achievement category, particularly for her work removing invasive species from Playfair Park.