



ROSA NUTKANA

NOOTKA ROSE

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

Let's Do Less To Help Nature BY KRISTEN HARRISON

As spring approaches most of us will be heading outside more often. Claudia and Darren Copley, president and editor for the Victoria Natural History Society, respectively, suggested a different approach to enjoying our backyards this year. All of us could be doing more to help out the natural world and sometimes that means doing less! Trying to “tidy” nature not only is energy-expending but usually has harmful effects on the environment. Compromising the structural complexity of an ecosystem by maintaining picturesque lawn, removing brush piles and cutting down trees ultimately leads to a loss of biological diversity.

There are a number of different ways to promote life in an area that involve letting nature do her thing. For example, forgo the lawn and concentrate on conserving native shrubs and trees. Native plants are absolutely vital to a healthy ecosystem. Having evolved with local fauna, native plants will attract more wildlife than non-native plants because they're specially adapted to meet the needs of the local wildlife. For example, local conifer trees will attract bird

species like House Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine siskin and Purple finch which are specialists at extracting the seeds by prying the bracts of the cones apart. Seed production in general is important for local birds. Birds such as Chipping sparrows, Savannah sparrows and American goldfinch rely on the seeds of plants like Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*) and Siberian Miner's lettuce (*Claytonia sibirica*). Arbutus (*Arbutus menziesii*) is an important fruit tree which the threatened Band-tailed pigeon enjoys, as well as Cedar waxwings, Varied thrush and Northern flickers. Other important fruiting species include Saskatoon (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) and Black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*). Be mindful of the fact that birds depend on these food crops before cutting them back prior to the fruit and seeds having been harvested. Rufous hummingbirds are attracted to hedge nettle (*Stachys cooleyae*) Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), Red-flowering current (*Ribes sanguineum*) and Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*) for their bright colours

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

MARCH 2009

that signal sweet nectar. The curved branches of Oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*) are preferred by Bushtits for nest building while Anna's hummingbirds use lichens and spider webs to build their delicate but strong nests.

Another way to support nature by doing less is to leave dead trees standing. Dead trees are vital to the lives of cavity nesting birds, insects and other invertebrates. Insects are a critical part of many birds' diets like our native warblers and are always used for rearing the young of local birds. They're called wild-life trees for a reason.

Animals will be especially drawn to any area that has water and are particularly encouraged by running water. A shallow pool or pond will attract insects like dragonflies and birds such as Wood ducks, Red-winged blackbirds, Mallards and Barn swallows.

Promote wildlife by encouraging a healthy balance of predator and prey (yes, this includes us). One statistic suggests that cats in the US alone kill several hundred million birds and a billion small mammals a year. We can expect a similar statistic for Canada. It is NOT cruel to

keep a cat indoors but it IS cruel to allow this stealth predator to feast on local birds with which they have not evolved. Ground nesting birds like Song sparrow, Pacific-slope flycatcher and Killdeer are particularly at risk from house cats.

As Claudia put it, "we need to blur the boundaries" between urban and natural areas and use our own backyards as a means of connectivity between habitats. Wildlife is a gauge to how well we're doing at creating healthy ecosystems. Next time you're trying to "clean-up" nature remember that for animal diversity to thrive it needs structural diversity. It's simple: You will attract more wildlife by maintaining a habitat that is complex; giving nature the opportunity to do the work means less work and more fun for you!



HOLODISCUS DISCOLOR OCEANSPRAY

NPSG SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Unless otherwise noted all meetings are held in room D 116 MacLaurin Building, UVic at 7 pm.

April 16

Member's Night Presentations
Moralea Milne and Camas Hill
Ruth Keogh and Green Roofs

May 21

"Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: A Refresher Course in Conservation Imagination"

Rare species, native plant gardens and the changes that have occurred and are occurring at this destination nature sanctuary. June Pretzer joined the Nature Sanctuary staff in April, 2008. June, a graduate of the Restoration of Natural Systems program at UVic, has a real passion for restoring and preserving the ecosystem within the Nature Sanctuary.

The Native Plant Study

Group meets on the third Thurs-

day of the month from Sept through May, except Dec, at 7 pm at the MacLaurin Building, UVic. Please join us. Membership fees are \$15.00 annually or a \$2.00 charge for drop-in. Check the Room Schedule for new meeting locations.

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

The NPSG gratefully acknowledges the support of the RNS program at UVic in securing the use of the rooms and facilities.

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

MARCH 2009

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

CRD Parks: www.crd.bc.ca/parks

South Van Island Mycological Society: www.svims.ca

Van Island Rock and Alpine Society: www.virags.ca

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: www.swanlake.bc.ca

Victoria Natural History Society: www.vicnhs.bc.ca

Native Plant Society of BC: www.npsbc.org

For all VNHS events: No pets please. Bring a lunch and drinks for the all day outings. Where appropriate attire and footwear. Contact Agnes at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 if you need more information.

Sun, Mar 22 VNHS Satin Flowers and Birds at Juan de Fuca. View early spring flowers and check out birds. Meet at Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre, 1767 Old Island Highway, at 10 a.m. We will start from the end of the parking lot nearest to town.

Sun, Mar 22 CRD Parks Bear Hill 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Follow a naturalist up Bear Hill, looking for wildflowers and birds. Meet at the boat launch parking lot off Brookleigh Rd.

Tues, Mar 24 VIRAGS Western Alpines
Doors open at 7 p.m. at Gordon Head United Church Hall, 4201 Tyndall, Victoria B.C.

Sun, Mar 29 CRD Parks 10-noon and 1:30-3:30
It's spring wildflower time, and Mill Hill boasts a riot of colour. Meet at the information kiosk in the parking lot off Atkins Avenue.

Sun, April 5 VNHS Satin Flowers on Mount Wells
Enjoy an extensive display of early spring wildflowers. Please note the trail is steep and challenging. Take the Trans-Canada Highway towards Goldstream Park. Turn left at the new Westshore Parkway shortly before you get to Goldstream. Turn right at the roundabout and carry on left when you reach Sooke Lake Road. Turn left on to 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 on the right at 10 a.m.

Fri, April 10 VNHS Two for One Bargain – Horth Hill and Bear Hill Wildflowers

Despite the close proximity of these two areas, the flora is quite different. Please note the trail is steep. Meet at the parking lot at Horth Hill at 10 a.m. To get to Horth Hill, take the Pat Bay Highway north to the Wain Road exit. Follow Wain Road west to cross the highway, then turn right on Tatlow Road to the park entrance on the right. To get to Bear Hill from Horth Hill, return to the highway and go south. Turn right at Island View Road, left on Saanich Cross Road to Central Saanich Road. Continue south on Central Saanich Road to right on Keating Cross Road, left on Oldfield Road and left on Bear Hill Road to the parking lot.

Sun, April 12 VNHS Oak Haven & Gore Parks
What better way to spend Easter morning than in these two delightful Saanich Peninsula parks with their exquisite spring wildflowers. Oak Haven does have a climb to the summit but Gore Park is level. Meet at 10 a.m. at the entrance to Oak Haven Park on Garden Gate Drive, off Benvenuto Ave, off West Saanich Road. To reach Gore Park from Oak Haven Park, return along Garden Gate Drive to Benvenuto Ave. When you cross Benvenuto Ave, Garden Gate Drive becomes Amwell Drive. Follow Amwell Drive to reach Greig Road. Turn right to park entrance on right. Call Rick at 250-885-2454 if you need more information.

Mon, April 13 VNHS Lone Tree Hill
Diversity of species on this hill is amazing. Please note the trail is steep but not as challenging as some of the other areas. Start at 10 a.m. Follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Road exit. Turn right on Millstream Road and continue to the junction of Millstream Lake Road. Keep left to continue on Millstream Road to the park entrance on the right.

April 18 and 19

Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary 10-3 Native plant sale and gardening workshops. Come to buy or learn or volunteer to help out. Admission price is \$3/day, \$5 for weekend pass. Phone 250-479-0211 for more information.

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

MARCH 2009

Sun, April 19 VNHS Jocelyn Hill Join Rick Schortinghuis to enjoy the wildflowers and the birds as well, we'll hopefully see Gold Stars in bloom. Please note the trail is steep and challenging. Follow the Trans-Canada Highway to Millstream Road exit. Turn right on Millstream Road and continue to the junction of Millstream Lake Road. Keep left to continue on Millstream Road. Go past Lone Tree Hill Park on your right and watch for Emma Dixon Road on the left. The trail head is on Millstream Road just past that intersection. Park on the right-hand side of the road. Meet there at 9 a.m. Call Rick at 250-885-2454 for more information.

Tues, April 21 BOTANY NIGHT VNHS The Story of Richard Layritz
Leslie Drew will talk about Richard Layritz, his life and his contributions to the botanical richness of the Victoria area. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Fri, April 24 VNHS Saltspring Botanical Adventure
We plan to explore a few areas that have been recommended as having a diverse selection of wildflowers. Please note some trails may be steep and challenging. We will carpool to catch the 9 a.m. ferry, returning around supper time. Participants will be expected to share in transportation expenses. You must register for this event to assist in planning. Contact Agnes after April 1 at thelynns at shaw.ca or 250-721-0634 to obtain final details.

April 30 - May 3 BC Nature Conference & AGM
The spring conference and annual general meeting will be in Duncan this year; hosted by the Cowichan Valley Naturalists. Registration information will be posted on their website (bcnature.ca/index.html). Field trips and presentations focused on the region make these events a terrific opportunity to learn about an area.

July 16 - July 18 Botany BC
In 2009 Botany BC will be centered out of Muncho Lake in the northeast corner of BC. Further information about registration and the program will be

found, as it becomes available (Feb/Mar '09), on the Botanical Electronic News website at:
www.ou.edu/cas/botany-microben/

**Have you visited our website? www.npsg.ca
Designed and maintained by NPSG co-chair Valerie Elliott, co-owner of design company iD2 (id2.ca).
Thanks Valerie and Stephan for the superb work and generous commitment!**

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.

Garry Oak Restoration Project

If you would like to volunteer with restoration of these Saanich parks, please contact Jen Eastman at ferns1 at telus.net All times are 9:30-11:30 am. on Saturdays. Gloves and equipment provided as well as juice and snacks.

April 4 at Wetherby

The Haliburton Wetland Restoration Team is looking for native shrubs to use in hedgerows at the farm. Contact Kristen at 598-6546 or kristenh at uvic.ca

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

MARCH 2009

SWAMP LANTERN SEX

Through the damp mist, glowing like a brilliant yellow beacon, the swamp lanterns rise from the wetlands and swamps to announce spring; what a wonderful sight for eyes tired by unrelenting grey skies. More prosaically known as skunk cabbage, this tropical looking member of the Arum family is one of the first plants to appear in late February and March. The eastern species can generate heat more than 30°F warmer than its surroundings, melting ice and snow to emerge. Our western species (*Lysichiton americanum*) does not have (nor need) this ability but it has a few tricks of its own up its spadix.

The first scent, often overlooked, that is emitted from these harbingers of spring is a sweet, coumarin-like fragrance (coumarin produces a scent similar to new mown hay). Enticed by its flag of brilliant yellow and the “come hither” alluring scent, the winged rove beetle (*Pelecomalius testaceum*) arrives to feed on the pollen and in doing so, transfers the pollen so that the plant is fertilized. After engorging themselves on the rich pollen, the beetles mate and retreat to the protective and hidden base of the spathe and spadix. The skunky smell for which it is renowned comes later, when the flowers have wilted and the leaves are more fully developed.

Reference:

Ogilvie, R.T., Pollination of skunk-cabbage. March 1997 NPSG Newsletter

Pellmyr and Patt, Madrono, 1986, 33 (1):47-54



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: Valerie Elliott
Co-Chair: Nathalie Dechaine
Speakers: Moralea Milne
Treasurer: Joan Varley
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
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

NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

MARCH 2009

NOTES