

There are important vacancies in the BC Nature Board: Co-secretary to assist our Secretary, Susan Thorne. Most important, from my personal point of view, we need a new President and Vice-president so that I can disappear into the sunset. With a very active Executive Director and excellent staff and contractors in place, now is a good time to join the Board – so please give that serious consideration. Let's keep BC Nature active and effective in the face of unrelenting threats to nature and the environment.

A huge note of thanks to the Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club (CONC) and their conference committee for staging the AGM this spring. Hosting the first in-person BC Nature general meeting in three years at a time of COVID uncertainty took a lot of courage. I am confident that this will be a successful meeting and I look forward to seeing many of you in Kelowna. And finally, major thanks to you – all our BC Nature members – for continuing to make this a vibrant, welcoming, and effective federation. ♡

Conservation Committee Updates

Submitted by Peter Ballin and the Conservation Committee

BC Nature has switched into a higher gear of conservation advocacy and action, greatly aided by the stage-setting vision and hard work of past president Harry Crosby. We have increased our capacity with the appointment of an Executive Director, Stewart Guy, who brings decades of government managerial experience in environment to BC Nature. Conservation Coordinator Simon Valdez-Juarez has completed an action plan to coordinate invasive plant species removal amongst clubs in the Fraser River Estuary. BC Nature was selected as a host for a UBC Sustainability Scholar, MSc Candidate Kephra Beckett. She will work with Simon, the Lower Mainland clubs, and the Invasive Species Council to find the areas where BC Nature clubs might support each other's actions for invasive plant management in the Lower Mainland. Liam Ragan, our IBA/KBA (Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas/Key Biodiversity Areas) Coordinator is energetically exploring the province and enlisting volunteers and funds to manage these precious conservation sites, using new Environment Canada funding to support Caretakers and build on First Nations partnerships to fill in the gaps in understanding of the most critical locales for wild birds in our province.

What the committee (not to mention your community) needs is for you to work on a conservation project! The committee seeks representation from all clubs, to better link your club's conservation work to other clubs and to establish a province-

wide representation of our collective work. Let the BC Nature Conservation Committee know about your projects, not only so that we may support them, but also so that other clubs can know how you are protecting or enhancing your local habitats.

Here are some focal areas of our activities in the last few months:

- Fraser River Estuary
- Roberts Bank Terminal 2
- Fortis Expansion Project: Tilbury Island
- Bill S-5: Reforms to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act
- Species at Risk
- Caribou Update
- Wolf Update
- Herring
- Fisheries and Forests
- Coastal and Marine Strategy
- Climate Change
- Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas
- Nature Salt Spring in Action

Other Club Conservation Initiatives

- Meeting with Minister David Eby
A New Provincial Ministry: Land, Water and Resource Stewardship
- Conservation Collaborations

Fraser River Estuary

Conservation Coordinator Simon Valdez-Juarez reports: BC Nature is actively seeking to increase its capacity for conservation and advocacy; collaboration between BC Nature clubs can increase conservation capacity by promoting the exchange of expertise and mutual support among clubs. Simon sent a survey



Photo: V. Hayes

Juvenile Pied-bill Grebe

to 13 representatives from clubs in the Lower Mainland as a first step to finding common goals for collaborative work with invasive species management in the estuary, and thanks to all who replied. Invasive species management by BC Nature clubs in the Lower Mainland focuses on Himalayan Blackberry and Reed Canary Grass near streams. A recent report by the Invasive Species Council (Tamburello and Litt 2021) found both of these invasive species pose a high threat to Species at Risk. The Himalayan Blackberry thickets threaten Oregon Forest Snail, Western Painted Turtle, Dun Skipper, and Streaked Horned Lark. Reed Canary Grass reduces the habitat area and quality of the Nooksack Dace (COSEWIC 2018). From May to August 2022 our Sustainability Scholar, Kephra Beckett, from Tara Martin's Lab at UBC, will conduct expert elicitation workshops with clubs and Species at Risk experts to find how BC Nature clubs' collective actions could most benefit species at risk.

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For more information: COSEWIC 2018. COSEWIC *Assessment and Status Report on the Nooksack Dace (Rhinichthys cataractae)* Canada 2018 <https://bit.ly/3Fmj4C5> Tamburello, N. and Litt, A. 2021. *Species Impacts to Species at Risk in British Columbia*. Report prepared for the Invasive Species Council of BC (ISCBC). 27 pp + Appendices. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3s8bK7D>

On March 18, BC Nature received a reply <https://bit.ly/39xSMRp> from Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard (DFO), Minister Joyce Murray in response to our November letter about the Connected Waters Initiative led by the Watershed Watch Salmon Society. In the letter, Minister Murray wrote that DFO acknowledges that the health of the Fraser River ecosystem is threatened by climate change, habitat degradation, and other human caused factors, and shares our concerns about the loss of fish access to historically connected waters in the lower Fraser River. DFO works with all levels of government as well as other stakeholders to address these concerns.

Since this is a multi-jurisdictional issue, the pathways to action are not so straightforward. Municipalities are responsible for the installation and maintenance of flood control structures authorized by the province. To better inform that work, the Fraser Basin Council is developing a *Lower Mainland Flood Management Strategy* <https://bit.ly/3y3NcjT>. DFO also expects to be engaged in flood infrastructure decisions in either a planning or project review capacity, guided by the *Existing Facilities and Structures Position Statement* <https://bit.ly/3y7yA2V>. This statement provides an overview on how DFO will interpret the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of *The Fisheries Act* as they relate to existing facilities and structures.

Roberts Bank Terminal 2

BC Nature signed on to the February

7 letter <https://bit.ly/3ktrJjc> to Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, from scientists regarding Roberts Bank Terminal 2, urging him to consider this project within the scope of stated biodiversity and species recovery commitments. From the letter: “If the recovery of Canada’s endangered and iconic wildlife is a priority for the government of Canada, as stated, then it must reject the proposed Terminal 2 project.” The letter is detailed and underscores the arguments that you have read about in this magazine many times. Good move: our Conservation Coordinator, Simon Valdez-Juarez, signed for BC Nature with his PhD behind his name. And joined other organizations in a follow-up letter.

After a more than eight-year process, the Environmental Assessment for the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority’s (VFPA) Roberts Bank Terminal 2 (RBT2) project closed on March 15. Now, the federal government must decide. Roger Emsley, BC Nature Special Representative for Roberts Bank, reports that the Governor in Council (federal cabinet) will almost certainly make that decision. Although the deadline for sending in comments on RBT2 to IAAC has passed, we encourage you to write to Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, stating your opposition.

Roger reports further, that the very foundation for the intertidal food web and its importance to wildlife depends on a “salinity trigger”, which causes the diatoms in biofilm, uniquely present on Roberts Bank, to generate large pulses of fatty acids at the time of spring migration. Western Sandpipers (WESA), other shorebirds and wildlife rely on this “fuel” to remain healthy. Since the RBT2 Panel Hearings in 2018, important new science findings regarding biofilm and its importance to wildlife, especially to WESA, have been published by internationally recognized independent experts in top ranked, peer-reviewed scientific

journals. Their conclusions support and elaborate on Environment and Climate Change Canada scientists’ concerns presented during the public hearings and in subsequent submissions that RBT2 will result in hydrological and salinity changes that negatively and immediately impact the production of fatty acids from biofilm relied on by wildlife. Overall, the scientific evidence, on which the Minister and Governor in Council must base the decision, is overwhelming and compelling in predicting that RBT2 would result in significant adverse environmental effects that are immediate, irreversible and cannot be mitigated.

Along with the scientists, citizen scientists and many major environmental organizations submitted hundreds of opposing submissions. The cities of Delta and Richmond also reiterated their opposition. Severely critical comments were levelled at the draft conditions for approval, noting that their proposed mitigation measures were ineffective, that mitigation by re-creating biofilm on a large scale is not possible and that the conditions of approval failed to provide any means to halt the project should significant adverse environmental effects emerge. The Fraser Estuary has already lost more than 70% of its natural habitat. BC Nature posits that the Fraser Estuary, specifically Roberts Bank, simply cannot withstand any more industrial or port development.

Fortis Expansion Project: Tilbury Island - Further to intrusions upon the Fraser River Estuary, on April 12, BC Nature sent a letter <https://bit.ly/3vzHFzR>, with the guidance of Conservation Committee member Anita van Dikken, to the Executive Project Director and Project Lead regarding the Proposed Environmental Assessment Project for the Fortis Expansion Project. We expressed the following concerns:

1. A need to identify the full objective of the project

2. The scope of the project excludes the shipping terminal on the adjacent property.
3. Negative impacts of more LNG on climate change, including the impacts of shipping and use.
4. Negative impacts in relation to the carbon reduction goals of adjacent cities such as Richmond, Vancouver, New Westminster and Burnaby, and in relation to provincial and national target reductions for greenhouse gases.
5. Negative impacts of fracking, particularly of the sites in north-eastern B.C. Some issues to consider:
 - methane emissions from fracked sites
 - impacts upon drinking water and human and animal health
 - meaningful liaison with Indigenous Peoples
 - earthquakes
 - number of sites; current estimates: more than 20,000
6. Safety aspects of the location of a large LNG storage facility
7. Shipment of LNG containers along the Lower Fraser River and the impacts upon other species in the Lower Fraser and the Salish Sea

Bill S-5: Reforms to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) - On February 28, BC Nature wrote to the Senate of Canada <https://bit.ly/3ONNDVo> with concerns about reforms of the CEPA, legislation intended to protect us from dangerous environmental pollution and toxic chemicals. BC Nature and its members have written to provincial and federal governments about these concerns and requested greater action to reduce and eliminate known effects (e.g., bans on harmful neonicotinoid pesticides, improve regulations and enforcement of chemicals used to control plants and animals, providing information on safe and effective alternatives). Unfortunately, we have noted very little legal or on-the-ground progress towards reducing or eliminating the ongoing harm that these pollutants



Photo: R. Rudland

Mountain Emerald

and toxic chemicals cause. This law was last modernized more than two decades ago, and this is the third parliament to look at its reform. In the ensuing 20 years, our scientific understanding of the impact of environmental and toxic pollution has evolved. Passing a strong Bill S-5 would mark the beginning of a much-needed process of eliminating the continued use of harmful pollutants and toxic chemicals in Canada and allowing our environment to recover. Of added significance: it would establish the legal right, for the first time in Canadian federal law and in keeping with 156 United Nation member states, in granting our citizens the right to a healthy environment.

In Minister of Environment and Climate Change Guilbeault's mandate letter from the Prime Minister, he was asked to:

- Enact a strengthened Canadian Environmental Protection Act to protect everyone
- Identify and prioritize the clean-up of contaminated sites in areas where Indigenous Peoples, racialized, and low-income Canadians live.
- Recognize the "right to a healthy environment" in federal law and introduce legislation to require the development of an environmental justice strategy and the examination of the link between race, socio-economic status, and exposure to environmental risk.
- Work with the Minister of Health to implement a comprehensive action plan to protect Canadians

from exposure to toxic flame retardants found in household products.

Eliminating and reducing pollutants and toxic chemicals is critical to meeting the government's commitments to protecting all peoples, especially marginalized communities, other species, and our ecosystems from continued harm. We asked that Bill S-5 include amendments that ensure no loopholes exist for substances of the highest risk to remain a threat to the public, and that assessments of dangerous chemicals proceed with no delay and assessment results and rationale for decisions be made public.

Species at Risk - In September, Ben van Drimmelen formed a Wildlife Subcommittee (of the Conservation Committee), with optimistic objectives of being a "working group" to:

1. Conduct detailed investigations into wildlife conservation issues
2. Formulate a clear stance on wildlife conservation issues and develop draft submissions to the provincial government and legislature
3. Assist the Conservation Committee, the BC Nature Board, the Executive Director, and the President to have BC Nature speak for wildlife and wildlife habitat conservation, and
4. Develop a strategy on the most effective ways to influence the provincial government on wildlife issues

Those broad objectives led to a number of actions:

1. Renew a push, along with other non-governmental organizations, for the B.C. government to pass the promised provincial *Endangered Species Act* or alternatively, a *BC Species at Risk Act*. The subcommittee began by reaching out to other environmental organizations that had made submissions to government during the 2018

consultations on this act. From January through March committee member Jacqueline Sherk received replies from 18 of 45 organizations. Of those 18 replies, no strong support emerged for the above-mentioned legislation; there was, however, support for legislation to conserve and protect biological diversity. A *B.C. Biodiversity Act* would include species at risk and their habitats.

2. Monitor development under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*, particularly around recovery plans and strategies for species at risk in B.C., as we have seen for caribou.
3. Monitor government management of the habitat of BC's wide-ranging species such as caribou, grizzly bears, and wolverines.
4. Encourage both the federal and B.C. governments to meet international commitments to conserve biological diversity. Fortuitously, the Wilderness Committee recently began a campaign to promote a *B.C. Biodiversity Act*. Other organizations are likely to join in. The subcommittee suggests that we assist the current campaign for a *B.C. Biodiversity Act* and join the BC Wildlife Federation's Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Coalition - <https://bit.ly/38HpXBs>
5. Support actions of BC Nature member clubs in support of wildlife at risk and their habitats
6. Promote an expansion of a property tax exemption for habitat conservation on private lands (currently restricted to a number of Gulf Islands).

Simon Valdez-Juarez adds: Citizen science is another area where collective efforts translate into large conservation initiatives. The *iNaturalist* app connects naturalists and provides a place to share their sightings. Over the years, the thousands of entries in *iNaturalist* have created a massive database of species records with spatial and temporal coverage. This collective database helps the government and academia to map the range of



Photo: N. Dougan

Short-tailed Weasel

species at risk and monitor the spread of invasive species. BC Nature clubs have a wealth of naturalists, many already active members of *iNaturalist*. Their collective observations could increase the visibility of the clubs' conservation actions and contribute to other conservation initiatives. IBA/KBA Coordinator Liam Ragan and Simon are launching an AGM BioBlitz to promote *iNaturalist* use by BC Nature members during the AGM and after. We look forward to increasing BC Nature's presence in citizen science initiatives in the future and contributing to this massive collective effort.

Caribou Update - Joan Snyder: A provincial *Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan* was developed in partnership with the community of Fort Nelson and with four separate First Nations groups. The draft plan can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3LHsrhR>

The predator reduction program has been scientifically supported as a conservation tool by the government, and this past winter's results for three mountain caribou groups (southern, central, and northern) indicate removal of 280 wolves and 41 cougars. Positive effects for the B.C. caribou herds have been observed in most treatment areas. The government will maintain these actions as tools used in coordination with habitat restoration and protection, maternal penning, and conservation breeding where possible. B.C. caribou herd surveys for the past year were conducted to estimate population size for 16 herds, and to estimate the population composition for nine

other herds. The Central Selkirk herd observed 24 animals present, but the survey was focused on only collared groups to facilitate maternity pen capture. Information on the population herd estimates is posted on <https://bit.ly/3N8Ssbe>. The government will carefully monitor the density of predators in areas of treatments as well as the response of ungulates in the 2022.

There is also exciting information regarding two maternity pens for pregnant caribou. The Arrow Lakes Caribou Society protected maternity pen contains eight females, seven of which are pregnant. The other very large pen developed by First Nations groups is farther north and has been functioning for about eight years and is producing enough calves to have effectively increased the population of that herd.

Update on Wolves - Jacqueline Sherk: Wolves continue to be culled as part of the B.C. government Caribou Recovery Program. This past winter saw 280 additional wolves killed by aerial gunning.

The extermination program is an effort by government to support struggling Mountain Caribou herds that have largely been affected by loss of habitat. Since the wolf cull began in 2015, more than 1,700 wolves have been exterminated at a total cost to taxpayers of almost \$6.5 million dollars.

While fewer predators are deemed somewhat effective in calf survival, so has been maternal penning. The larger factors affecting caribou decline are deforestation and other habitat disturbance, such as the building of roads to accommodate human activity including logging, gas and oil, and recreation. These industries continue to be permitted in critical Mountain Caribou habitat.

British Columbians and Canadians across the country argue that wolves, as a native species in this province, have an inherent right to exist and

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 should not be scapegoated for the sake of industry. History also has shown that apex predators are extremely important to ecosystem balance. The legality of the wolf cull has been challenged in court by the environmental group Pacific Wild, and we await an outcome.

Herring - On April 19, BC Nature sent a letter to the Minister Joyce Murray, Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard (DFO), expressing our concern for the state of B.C.'s herring populations <https://bit.ly/3kvpFQH>. We echoed local concerns at Hornby Island, where the fish's March arrival proved to be one of the smallest and lightest in recent history. The commercial fishers managed to catch only 3,407 tonnes of their 7,850 -tonne quota... a quota which Minister Murray had already reduced by 50%. Only three of the 12 DFO-recognized spawning sites were actively used during the recent roe fishery. The Salish Sea critically requires this keystone species for ecosystem health, including for the replenishment of extirpated breeding populations, especially those on its eastern shores.

BC Nature's Liam Ragan recently visited a number of herring spawning sites and suggested that just about every site with healthy herring spawns could be attributed to First Nations' stewardship. In Kitasu Bay, Kitasoo First Nations successfully blocked DFO's attempt to fish it, <https://bit.ly/30TNL5S>, and now wishes to designate it as an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area. This healthy spawning site story repeats itself in Barkley Sound IBA, K'ómoks IBA, and likely in other places.

BC Nature had asked for a moratorium on the commercial herring fishery immediately, (to prevent the special fishery opening on May 1.) We also suggested introducing a Herring Recovery Program to protect and restore these herring stocks, so vital to all the inhabitants of and migrants through the Salish Sea. The future of the entire marine ecosystem depends



Photo: R. Beardmore

Pine Grosbeak - male

on healthy herring stocks.

Fisheries and Forests - On February 24, BC Nature wrote to Joyce Murray, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard (DFO) regarding the management of B.C. fisheries and old-growth forests <https://bit.ly/3MJSPwl>. This was a follow-up to a Constituent Meeting held on January 28. BC Nature reinforced these points:

- We require an inclusive, long-term vision at the watershed level to rebuild British Columbia's fish stocks and maintain our remaining fragments of old-growth forest, collaborating with First Nations and respecting their wisdom. (The B.C. government announced funding on April 21 for such actions.)
- We require increased enforcement of conservation policies.

We urged the Minister to urgently:

- Address connectivity of waterways to enhance fish populations as part of the federal relief to aid Fraser Valley reconstruction and flood control.
- End open-net pen salmon farming and support transition to closed containment salmon farms.
- Deny licenses for open-net pen salmon farms when they come up for renewal in June.
- Encourage and support development of First Nations' salmon parks.
- Restore herring stocks and their diversity of spawning sites.
- Increase federal funding to support B.C. old-growth logging deferrals.
- Continue to protect open ocean benthic communities, including

the expansion of Marine Protected Areas, with adequate enforcement.

Coastal and Marine Strategy - On March 22, Stewart Guy, James Casey, and Peter Ballin attended a "huddle" of ENGOs convened by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) to prepare for a meeting with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, the purpose of which was to elaborate upon a 2020 mandate to establish a Coastal and Marine Strategy. Peter briefed the attendees about BC Nature's involvement with issues related to the coast. Stewart emphasized that forthcoming initiatives needed to generate measurable results, with monitoring throughout, and that the path to success be rooted in education and encouragement. James stated the importance of climate adaptation, and pointed out the current lack of infrastructure to deal with several marine issues. Stewart further suggested attention to invasive species, species at risk, and protected areas. We all agreed about the importance of enlisting people in local communities to address environmental issues. Peter attended the first of two parallel government-led meetings on March 29, along with about 28 others from 21 organizations, ranging from the B.C. Chamber of Shipping to the B.C. Seafood Alliance to the World Wildlife Fund. The scope of the government plans covered all of the bases, while acknowledging how limited comprehensive action might be, given all the vested interests. B.C. lags behind other jurisdictions in regulating coastal marine activities... somewhat of an embarrassment. Governance is tricky since marine issues fall under federal, provincial, municipal, and First Nations authorities.

Because B.C. doesn't have a comprehensive coastal and marine strategy, this mandate includes a service plan for stewardship, reconciliation, and community resilience. The new Ministry of Land,

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Water, and Resource Stewardship, under Minister Josie Osborne, will now take on this file. Points of discussion following the presentation included the necessity to establish vision, endpoints, and goals; the need to improve monitoring and enforcement; keeping ecosystem health foremost; addressing recreational use, including us naturalists (Louise Pedersen, Outdoor Recreation Council ED) and the roles that our community scientists, such as our club members, might serve.

Climate Change Action - Cheryl Lewis.

Recent committee activities:

- Worked with Nature Canada to facilitate a B.C.-focused webinar on Nature-based Climate Solutions, attended by approximately 60 BC Nature members.
- BC Nature joined the West Coast Climate Action Network (WE-CAN) and the Climate Emergency Unit.
- Building upon a Drawdown B.C. five-session climate action workshop in the fall of 2021, held an introduction webinar for Prince George Naturalists in April 2022
- Some committee members participated in Nature Canada's program 'Nature on the Hill' in February, which provided training and background information to effectively engage with MPs and senior levels of government. The objectives were to lobby for permanent funding for Indigenous-led conservation initiatives and an action plan to halt the loss of primary forests, grasslands, and wetlands, with the goal to protect at least 30% of land, freshwater, and ocean by 2030.
- Met with the B.C. Liberal MLA Renee Merrifield, the shadow caucus climate critic, to discuss the CleanBC plan
- Some committee members are developing an educational webinar to help BC Nature members take climate action. This webinar is called "Reimagining Your

Yard: Landscaping to Support Biodiversity, Sequester Carbon, and Be Climate Resilient" and is planned for launch in fall, 2022.

- Requested BC Nature members to submit their observations, stories and pictures on the impact of the 2021's heat dome on nature, with a plan to mark the one-year anniversary of this event by sharing the impacts the extreme heat had on nature in B.C. communities and wild places.

The climate committee's founding chair, Karen Crosby, moved on earlier this year. We greatly appreciate her hard work, enthusiasm, and leadership. The committee is continuing the work she inspired and currently includes 10 active members from Vancouver Island, northwestern B.C., and the Lower Mainland. The committee seeks additional members to better represent each B.C. region. Please contact ClimateCommittee@protonmail.com

Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA)- Liam Ragan.

Thanks to an influx of support from Environment Canada, the IBA has been pedal-to-the-metal working with its network of supporters and volunteer caretakers to conduct surveys of some of our data-deficient sites. In the last two months this has meant working with more than 50 volunteers, 13 Naturalist clubs and seven First Nations to conduct 20 surveys in 13 IBAs, ranging from Klemtu to Osoyoos, Ucluelet to Oak Bay (see the IBA article page 15). As exciting as that's been, even more exciting is the precedent we're setting of increasing monitoring to ensure B.C.'s globally and nationally significant IBA sites get the attention they deserve as we look to graduate them to Key Biodiversity Areas. Some upcoming highlights in the next few months include:

- Our Provincial Coordinator hosting meetings in Ottawa with some of our key supports including Environment Canada, Wildlife Conservation Society, and Nature

Canada

- Partnering on a UVic student-led survey of Hesquiaht Lake IBA's Marbled Murrelets in tandem with the Hesquiaht First Nation
- Our 5th annual South Okanagan IBA survey, this time of Osoyoos Oxbows IBA, being organized by Matthias Bieber with funding from BC Field Ornithologists.

Club Conservation Initiatives - Nature Salt Spring in Action:

Development pressures are intense on Salt Spring Island. Nature Salt Spring has sprung to the defense of the Fulford Estuary, opposing the Vortex development that plans to build tourist accommodations in an environmentally sensitive area. They also back a campaign to purchase and protect the Creekside Rainforest, a rare habitat on this otherwise drier island. BC Nature sent a supporting letter to the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee.

North Okanagan Naturalists' Club conducts several projects in the Vernon area:

- Swan Lake Nature Reserve Park Habitat Enhancement and Restoration - within the past two years the club added an observation tower, osprey nesting platform, bat house, mason bee house, bluebird nesting boxes, brush piles for small mammals, and interpretive signage.
- Wetland Protection - striving to turn Rose's Pond into a protected natural area; saving remnant wetland on Anderson Ranch property; keeping development out of Marshall Wetlands.
- Bluenose Mountain - keeping Tolko from logging near hiking trails and important habitats.

Meeting with Minister David Eby -

Along with a few other constituents, Peter met with Housing Minister and Attorney General David Eby on April 29, for a very positive discussion about the new Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship, species at risk

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 legislation, old-growth forest deferral actions, First Nations resource relationships and the Fraser River Estuary. A few summary points:

- Species at Risk discussions are progressing with First Nations. The authors of the old-growth strategic review have said that the framework can be done through existing law or elsewhere. Minister Eby assured us that the work will be completed. Peter volunteered that while time progresses linearly; the path to extinction may be exponential.
- Forestry reform is progressing with First Nations, including new tenure opportunities and increased funding. The federal government has pledged money, although not enough, but how it will be distributed is not yet clear. Minister Eby suggested that this process will move more smoothly with the new LWRS ministry. He seemed frustrated about the clarity of information regarding missing maps and active logging in proposed deferral areas.
- Minister Eby more than acknowledged our concern with impacts upon the Fraser River Estuary from RBT2 and the Tilbury LNG project.

A New Provincial Ministry: Land, Water and Resource Stewardship

From their webpage <https://bit.ly/3s5FBNI>: “The Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship is accountable for integrated land and natural resource management, including objective setting for land and marine environments, effectively managing cumulative effects, and advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, environmental sustainability, and economic growth.” Here is their mandate:

- Build a co-managed (First Nations and government) land and natural resources management regime.
- Modernize land use planning for ecosystems, forests, land, and water.
- Protect drinking water.
- Lead “Together for Wildlife”



Photo: Man-Kay Koon

Trevor the Mandarin Duck

- strategy to protect wildlife and habitat corridors.
- Lead a coastal marine strategy to better protect coastal habitat.
- Protect species at risk and protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Implement the old-growth strategic review recommendations.
- Manage cumulative effects of development.
- Lead work with federal government to protect and revitalize wild salmon populations.

The Honourable Josie Osborne promises to be a strong ally for BC Nature!

In our meeting, David Eby said that by having a dedicated new ministry we’ll be able to have more effective land management plans and work more closely with First Nations.

Watersheds - An ongoing and critical theme in conservation is the protection of watersheds. The provincial government recently posted <https://bit.ly/3vymbn4>: “An ongoing effort to restore watersheds and wetlands in the province is creating a healthier future for British Columbians by mitigating the impacts of climate change on communities, strengthening ecosystems and securing quality drinking water. “Premier John Horgan highlighted the Budget 2022 commitment of \$30 million to continue to improve B.C.’s watersheds.” Along with this announcement came one from Joyce Murray, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans

and the Canadian Coast Guard: approval of 22 new projects totaling \$30.5-million in funding for support monitoring, research and planning processes that will help to understand the critical factors affecting dwindling local salmon populations, meaning a focus on watersheds.

Conservation Collaborations - In April, Peter participated in about 20 hours of workshops conducted by the Thompson-Nicola Conservation Initiative, along with steering group member Jessie Ritcey, Melissa Maslany, Nancy Flood, and intern Tay Powrie of the Kamloops Naturalists Club.

This initiative began over a year ago to explore options for greater support for, and collaboration among, groups doing conservation work in the Thompson Watershed. Conservation Committee member Anne Hetherington reports that the province developed Structured Decision-Making workshops to enable more effective and collaborative watershed work planning amongst volunteers. She was part of the pilot project in Terrace (Lakelse Lake Watershed 2008). The group is still going; previously, groups were unintentionally competing with each other for volunteers and funding; now, they have a short and long-term strategic plan.

Our Executive Director, Stewart Guy, member of Victoria Natural History Society, chairs the Resilient Saanich Technical Committee. Our Conservation Coordinator, Simon Valdez-Juarez developed an action plan for Fraser River Estuary clubs to collaborate on invasive species removal. Many of you participate in similar groups whose goals dovetail with those of BC Nature. The point: **ACTION**. Consider participating, as clubs and individuals, to influence those where you live to act for the healthy ecosystems necessary for a sustainable future! 🌱