



Cowichan Valley  
Naturalists

MAY/JUNE 2026

# *Valley Naturalist*



Violet Green Swallow in the Cowichan Estuary. Photo by Willie Harvie.

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# Nature Cowichan Speakers Report 2025-26

By Carol Milo

We are grateful to all of the speakers who took the time during this past year to share their experiences with us.

Thanks also to everyone who helped with finding topics and presenters.

## Coffeehouse

October 6	Val George	Butterflies of Vancouver Island
November 3	Christoph Steeger	The Cowichan Watershed
December 1	Hilary Emberton	Tanzanian Safari
January 5	Bernhard Juurlink	Bat Monitoring
February 2	Helen Davis	Black Bears
March 2	Dave Manning	Bald Eagles
April 6	Don Feil	Flora and Fauna of the Arctic and Antarctic

## Evening Program

September 16	Mike Dedels	Grasslands Conservation
October 21	Lindsay McCunn	Becoming an Environmental Psychologist
November 18	Nora Carlson	Mobbing Behaviour in Birds
December 16	James Thompson	Sea Otter Natural History and Photography
February 17	Joseph Antos	Mount St Helens: Vegetation Recovery
March 17	Amorina Kingdon	Sing Like Fish-How Sound Rules Life Underwater
April 21	Christine Lowther	Blockade-Diaries of a Forest Defender

Coffeehouses are held on the first Monday of each month, at the Fish Health Building in Duncan. The Evening Program is held via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month.

A big shout out to the Coffeehouse set-up team, led by the amazing Jim and Lyn Wisnia, as well as to our fabulous bakers!

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# Report from Acting Bookkeeper

By Gail Mitchell

Nature Cowichan does not have a Treasurer at the moment. Thanks go to Judy Wilson who took this on for the best part of two years, but due to illness has stepped down. I am past my "best before date" as far as book-keeping is concerned and am only stepping in until someone takes this on. Have a look at the Balance Sheet. Our Account Balance has gone down over the last few years. Although our memberships number has stayed about the same, we have increased our honorariums for speakers. We also increased our High School Bursary from \$500 to \$750 and offered two each year. You will see that the High School Bursary is in a deficit situation. At our Board meeting on April 14th it was decided to move \$2000 from the Operating Fund to allow us to keep the High School Bursary going. It is likely that we will only offer one High School Bursary this year. We need more donations as membership fees do not keep this fund going. When you make a donation to Nature Cowichan, please indicate if you would like it to go toward (a) our High School Bursary, (b) the Eric Marshall Memorial Bursary Fund for a child to attend a camp at the Estuary Nature Centre (c) for the Bring Back the Bluebirds Project or (d) the Operating Fund which includes money to cover the honorariums we offer Speakers and Field Trip Leaders.

The BC Nature Foundation Club Grant money is residue from a plant project we helped with a couple of years ago. This money will be used in a project involving plants. The specific project is yet to be determined.

The money in the Shawnigan Basin Project will be donated to the Shawnigan Basin Society.

If you have any questions, I will try to answer them.

Thank you,  
Gail Mitchell

**Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society**  
**Balance Sheet at 03/31/2026 and 12/31/2025**

<b>Assets</b>	<b>\$ Balance 03/31/2026</b>	<b>\$ Balance 12/31/2025</b>
Island Savings: Cheque Account	29,112.65	21,293.26
Island Savings: Shares	6.80	6.56
<b>Total Island Savings</b>	<b>29,119.45</b>	<b>21,299.82</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>29,126.25</b>	<b>21,306.38</b>

<b>Projects</b>	<b>03/31/26</b>	<b>12/31/2025</b>
Eric Marshall Memorial Bursary Fund	4,086.61	4086.61
High School Bursary Fund	(328.83)	421.17
Bring Back the Bluebirds	518.98	518.98
BC Nature Foundation Club Grant	755.18	755.18
Shawnigan Basin Project	200.00	200.00
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>5,231.94</b>	<b>5,981.94</b>
<b>Operating</b>	<b>23,880.71</b>	<b>15311.32</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>29,112.65</b>	<b>21,293.26</b>
Cheque Account balance per ISCU statement	<b>29,112.65</b>	<b>21,293.26</b>
Deduct unrepresented cheques - Bluebirds	<b>(10,484.56)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cheque account balance per books</b>	<b>18,628.09</b>	<b>21,293.26</b>

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# *Book Review - "The Serviceberry" by Robin Wall Kimmerer*

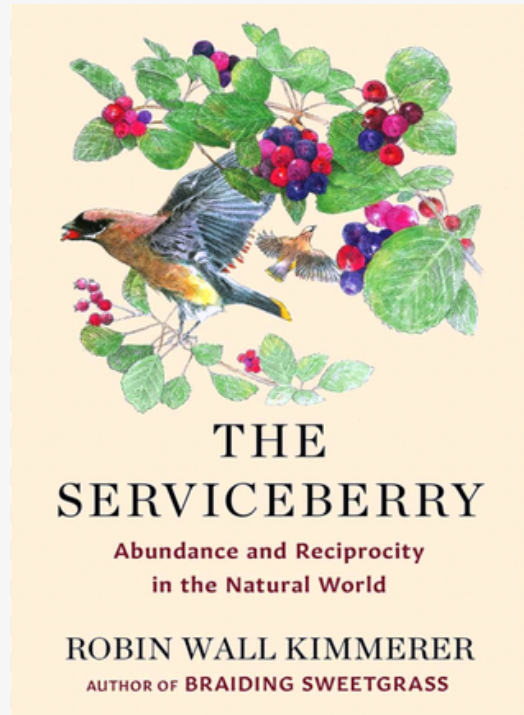
**By: Gail Mitchell**

From the author of "Braiding Sweetgrass", here is another gem. Robin Wall Kimmerer's writing is warm and inviting. How can you not be drawn into a description of picking berries along with the birds?

Expanding from her earlier book's theme of reciprocity, Kimmerer introduces us to the concept of a gift economy. The birds take what they need and help the tree by propagating the seeds. We humans may fill up our baskets without any thought of our actions.

I am (again) struck by the wisdom of Indigenous peoples who, through their close connection with the land, including all living species, are observant and have practiced a gift economy before we colonists introduced our greedy ways.

This little book - just over 100 pages - is small enough to fit in your pocket. If there is any criticism, it is too short. However I think the brevity is intentional. Economics can be a dry topic, so by keeping this book brief, the author does not labour the point. Instead she suggests other authors, such as Kate Raworth's "Doughnut Economics" for an alternative to our current system where growth is the key word. John Burgoyne's delightful illustrations complement the text in this little volume. Highly recommended!



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# The Legacy of Luna

*By John Scull with an introduction by Linda Hill*

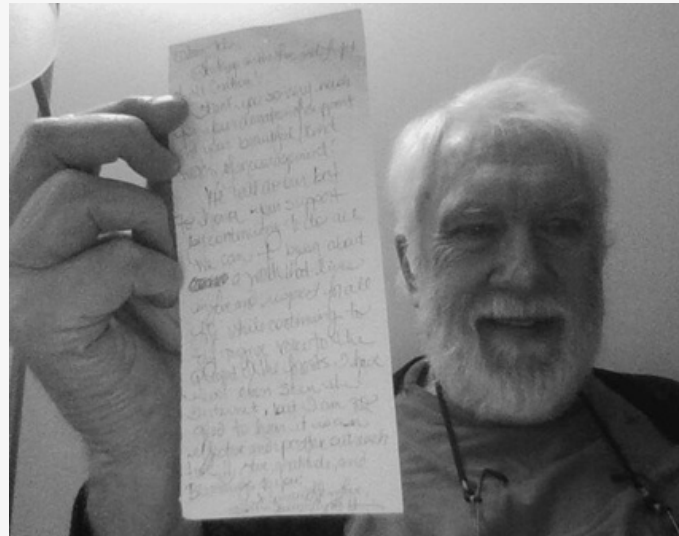
*Here I am at age 71 doing what I can to explore the woods and waterways of our beautiful island with my grandchildren while doing my best in the company of Nature Cowichan Members and others to stand up for East Sooke Park to remain a park, for Fairy Creek Forest to remain an Old Growth forest, for the Cable Bay Trail to remain a trail, for our Municipal Forests to continue to be places where trees, ferns, salmon berries, elk, bears, deer, cougars, woodpeckers, wrens, newts, salamanders and creeks and springs and moss and, and, and.... can continue to live and grow and regenerate.*



*Sometimes I wonder, what would my late partner John Scull do? He would do just what I'm doing. I miss our team work, but I know many of his legacies live on even though I cannot do all he was doing and even though the way I go about caring for nature and guiding others to care for nature is my own way.*

*To inspire anyone reading this to think of yourself as a leaver of legacies, this is a brief article John wrote about the Legacy of Luna.*

Thirty years ago, 23 year old Julia Butterfly Hill began living living in the canopy of Luna, a threatened California Redwood tree. She did this to make the world aware of the plight of ancient forests. Her message has been heard by many, but apparently not by governments, including my own, that continue to allow destruction of old-growth forests. In 1998 I was inspired by an article on CompuServe (remember that?) about Julia's vigil. I sent a cheque for supplies to her support team in California. In response, I received a small hand-written note from Julia. She wrote:



*"Dear John,*

*Greetings in the love and light of all creation. Thank you so very much for your donation of support and your beautiful kind words of encouragement! We will do our best to honor your support by continuing to do all we can to bring about a world that lives in love and respect for all life while continuing to try to give voice to the plight of the forests. I have never even seen the Internet, but I am so glad to hear it is an effective and positive outreach tool!! Love, blessings, and gratitude to you.*

*In service of life in love, Julia Butterfly"*



A few years later I was at a presentation Julia made at the University of Victoria and bought a copy of her wonderful book, "The Legacy of Luna." For the past 20 years her vision and commitment have continued to inspire and motivate me."

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# *RWANDA: Parc National des Volcans, February 2007*

*By Hilary Emberton*

The infant climbed onto a log and stood unsteadily. It thumped its chest, promptly falling backwards into the soft undergrowth. After only twenty minutes of hiking along a path, and a few more minutes bushwhacking, we had reached the gorilla group. My first glimpse was just a small, dark shape behind a bush, but it was a thrilling moment.



Suddenly, the group's enormous silverback crashed out of the vegetation and stood at full height beating his chest. The two people standing next to me fled leaving me alone and insignificant in the shadow of this immense mass of fur and muscle. Having asserted his dominance, he sat down quietly to eat leaves, his arm gently around a juvenile scaling his fat tummy.

We continued, to find Akareruro, a playful young male. He appeared, walked to within arms length of me and sat down. We gazed at each other transfixed, till our guide moved me away. Akareruro laid on his back, arms and legs in the air and then rolling on his side, rested his head on his arm with a dreamy gaze. Getting up, he climbed a small tree, and with immense strength effortlessly bent the trunk over until it snapped. He turned to look at us, then sat and munched on the leaves. Eventually our guide moved us on, but Akareruro quickly rose to follow and as I was walking round to better view him, he came to me and took hold of my forearm. I stood still, eyes averted, thinking for an instant he would pull me toward him but after a few seconds he let go. I will never forget the softness of his hand and the gentleness of his grip.

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# *Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre*

*By Moira Hawk*



Photo by: Willie Harvie.

Our School program, designed and delivered in partnership with Sea Change has been very popular this year. We are almost completely booked on Thursday's between now and the end of the school year.

Our summer camps are filling up quickly. We were approved for our Canada Summer jobs funding.

Our AGM is **Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30**. Everyone is welcome.

We are hosting **Low Tide Day** on **Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> at 11:00am - 3:00pm** in partnership with Nature Cowichan. This will be a fundraising event for the Nature Centre. Stay tuned for more details.

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# Nature Cowichan 3 Earth Day Walks

By Bruce Coates and Joy Emmanuel

On Earth Day (April 22) Nature Cowichan offered three walks in nature.

In the morning, Larry White, native plant aficionado showed off his own garden and then took a group totalling nine through Owl Hill Preserve. As Joy reported:

*There were two plus people who showed up from the Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve (CGOP). The Land Trust has a facility agreement with Nature Conservancy Canada to manage this property. The "plus" was a woman with a small baby. I was wondering how it was going to work for her on the walk, but (thankfully) she only came for the native plant talk. Larry's garden is amazing with the native plants! We were all enthralled!*

The walk was 2 hours long and quite tiring for some, with the steepest and most difficult part toward the end. Once again it is important to recognize ones limitations and in future this walk might be labelled as "challenging" or something similar to help people self-assess if they can manage it. Too bad as it sure was a beautiful walk with lots of native plants along the way. This is another place where a letter would be good - to help protect this "conservation area" from dirt bikes tearing up parts of the forest!

Also in the morning, out in the Estuary a walk with 8 people was led by Luke Downs who pointed out some of the birds and the native planting that had been done a month earlier - primarily by CERCA members.



Photo by: Willie Harvie.



Bernie Juurlink, Jesse Milani, Bill Heath (back), Bill Lawrence, Luke Downs, and some folks from the Westview Learning Center on the morning walk along the North Arm (Blackley) Dike.

During the walk the group crossed paths with Bernie, Jesse and Bill who were talking to a CBC reporter about CERCA's recent microplastics report. The reporter used Bill Lawrence's camera for the photo. The highlight of the walk for Luke was a Cinnamon Teal, but just being out on a spring morning was inspiring for everyone - especially one young lad from the Westview Learning Center!

Later in the evening I led a third walk in the Estuary with 5 people. It was clear and sunny then, so a bit disappointing that more people didn't attend. Unfortunately I was busy with Merlin and didn't take any pictures. Two energetic, young gals Andrea and Alayna attended. You might run into them out at the Estuary Nature Center where they volunteer a lot.

David Aldcroft also led a very successful bird walk along Somenos Creek on April 11th.





**Stay tuned, more walks coming soon...**

1. **Saturday May 9** - Butterfly and Botany walk – Val George – Meet at 12:00 pm at The Hub. Bring your lunch. Depart from the Hub 12:45. Group size open.
2. **Sunday May 31** - Seine Netting and Low Tide Walk - Cowichan Estuary, 11 to 3, Low Tide Day with Bill Heath & Estuary Nature Center .... Open to everyone.
3. **Saturday July 11** - Bee Walk with Jade Lee – 10:30 – Centennial Park – Gather near the cob oven. Jade Lee with melittology student(s) and Ted Leischner – Open to everyone.

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## What I Saw...

*A section where members can share photos and words about something they've recently experienced in nature, celebrating the beauty and wonder of the world around us.*

Seen by Willie - it's March and the Great Blue Herons are back at the rookery in Cowichan Bay and building their nests. The two birds pictured were tugging on the same branch as they tried to find a spot to put it



Seen by Gail - Big Leaf Maple flowers are edible but leave lots for the bees!

Luke Downs saw this critter on March 28<sup>th</sup> and wondered if it was "a different kind of ladybug or a juvenile stage?"

Claudia Copley at the RBCM said: "Anthrenus - a genus of Dermestid beetle. Maybe Anthrenus verbasci - a troublemaker in museum collections. Immature beetles are larval - like caterpillars are for butterflies."



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## What I Saw...



Seen by Willie - My first butterfly of the spring was spotted at Chemainus Lake, April 8th. Looking at Val George's Butterflies of Vancouver Island, I believe that this is called a California Tortoiseshell.

Seen by Gail - A Common Bushtit's nest just outside my backyard, about 10 feet up on the branch of an ornamental maple. Sometimes I am lucky and see one of the pair darting in or out.



**Did you see or hear something special in nature recently? Send a photo and a short description to [anna.scouten@gmail.com](mailto:anna.scouten@gmail.com) or [cvns@naturecowichan.net](mailto:cvns@naturecowichan.net) to share “What I Saw” with our members in the next newsletter!**



# NATURE COWICHAN: With Nature, For Nature

Naturalists live in the midst of a global environmental crisis. Not surprisingly, new definitions are being forged for the 'modern' naturalist who must now take part in conserving the species and habitats he or she enjoys observing. They must take their knowledge of the natural world beyond just a personal interest and interpret it for the politicians and the public so that conservation may become a guiding principle rather than an afterthought.

Evening meetings are the third Tuesday of the month from September to June.

Morning CoffeeHouses are the first Monday of each month, October to May.

**For our programs are held via Zoom, links will be sent out ahead of time.**

The newsletter is published five times a year.

**Next issue:** September/October 2026

**Submission Deadline:** August 20th, 2026

**Email submissions to:** [anna.scouten@gmail.com](mailto:anna.scouten@gmail.com)

Advertising rates: Business Card: \$30.00 per year. Half page: \$60.00 per year (5 issues).

## Executive for 2025/26

**President:** Bruce Coates 250-732-6235

**Vice President:**

**Secretary:** Catherine Waddell

**Treasurer:** Judy Wilson

**Past President:** Gail Mitchell 250 746-9916

**Membership:** Bruce Coates 250 732-6235

**Directors:** Sierra Harvey 250-589-2139

Jacquie Taylor 250-889-1892

Carol Milo 250-416-0031

Joy Emmanuel

## Contact persons:

Birding: Dave Aldcroft

Bluebirds: Jacquie Taylor

Botany: Genevieve Singleton

Bursary: Catherine Waddell

Coffeehouse: Jim/Lyn Wisnia

Conservation:

Speakers: Carol Milo

BC Nature: Bruce Coates

Marmots: Sally Leigh-Spencer

Newsletter: Anna Scouten

Outings:

Publicity: Gail Mitchell

Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society: Sarah Mullock

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable: Genevieve

Singleton

Cowichan Community Land Trust: Bruce Coates

Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre: Sierra Harvey

Life Members: Linda Hill, Dorothy Marshall, David Aldcroft, Genevieve Singleton and David Polster, Gail and Steve Mitchell, Sheila Sanders, Val George

# Nature Cowichan Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Town/City \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

New member? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Rates:**

Individual \$30.00/year

Family \$45.00/year Children under 16 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **(Receipts issued for donations greater than \$25)**

Hardcopy newsletter \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00/year for mailed newsletter (instead of emailed)  
(One per household)

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Interests \_\_\_\_\_

Please E-transfer to [cvns@naturecowichan.net](mailto:cvns@naturecowichan.net) and email this form separately  
or mail your cheque and this form to: CVNS, 6 – 55 Station Street, Duncan BC V9L 1M2  
or pay by cash or cheque and submit this form at an in-person meeting