



**The Magazine of BC Nature**

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# BCnature

Volume 64 No. 2

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Photo. H. Sellers

*Nothing common about this Common Raven*

### Cover Photograph

Photographer: Charles Fortin - Sea Wolf scavenging the Pacific shoreline of Vancouver Island.

### Objectives of BC Nature (Federation of BC Naturalists)

- To provide naturalists and nature clubs of BC with a collective voice on conservation and environmental issues.
- To foster an awareness, appreciation, and understanding of our natural environment, that it may be wisely used and maintained for future generations.
- To encourage the formation and cooperation of nature clubs throughout BC.
- To provide a means of communication among naturalists in BC.

*We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, style, and clarity.*

**Articles and advertising in *BCnature* magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of all BC Nature members.**

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We welcome your articles, photos, and letters. Please email them to [communications@bcnature.ca](mailto:communications@bcnature.ca)

Advertising and article submission deadline for the Fall edition: August 15, 2026

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All references that were submitted with the articles can be found in the e-version edition.

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## Investing in Nature's Future

For decades, BC Nature has built one of the most far-reaching grassroots conservation networks in British Columbia—connecting more than 65+ clubs and thousands of people working to monitor species, restore habitats, and advocate for the protection of the natural world. From coastal estuaries to interior grasslands, from northern forests to urban shorelines, this collective effort has become one of the most powerful conservation networks in Canada.

### But it is reaching its limits.

The demands of coordination, advocacy, and growth have outpaced what a volunteer-led structure can sustain. As conservation pressures intensify across the province, BC Nature faces a clear choice: remain as it is—or build the leadership needed to meet this moment. BC Nature cannot move forward at the scale this moment demands without dedicated leadership.

### Hiring an Executive Director is the critical next step.

For years, BC Nature has achieved remarkable impact through the commitment of volunteers. But the scale, complexity, and urgency of conservation work in B.C. have grown—and with them, expectations from member clubs, partners, funders, and government.

Opportunities to expand are within reach - but only if there is capacity to lead them.

An Executive Director is not simply an organizational addition. It is the key to unlocking BC Nature's full potential.



## Legacy Giving make projects and research possible





Opportunities to expand impact are within reach—but only if there is the capacity to lead them.

With dedicated leadership, BC Nature will be able to:

- Strengthen coordination across its network of clubs
- Expand fundraising, including major and legacy giving
- Amplify advocacy with a strong, unified provincial voice
- Build partnerships that extend conservation impact
- Support local clubs with the tools and resources they need to thrive

This role directly supports the work already happening across British Columbia—ensuring it is connected, amplified, and sustained.

**Without it**, growth is limited.

**With it**, impact expands across the entire

province.

At the same time, this moment calls for more than immediate action. It calls for long-term vision.

**BC Nature’s mission captures both: to help people with Knowing Nature—and to Keep it Worth Knowing.**

To fully realize that mission, we must invest in two complementary priorities.

**First**, we must strengthen BC Nature today. Operational funding is essential to hire an Executive Director, support coordination across the federation, and sustain the work already underway in communities across the province. This is what enables BC Nature to function as the connective force linking clubs, people, and conservation efforts.







**It is about ensuring that the richness of B.C.'s Landscapes and wildlife is not only experienced today but safeguarded for the future.**

**Second**, we must build for the future through the BC Naturalists' Foundation.

By growing long-term funds—particularly through legacy giving—we can create a stable financial foundation that supports conservation, education, and stewardship for generations to come.

Over time, as long-term funds grow, they can help provide stable support not only for conservation initiatives, but also for leadership itself—creating a sustainable cycle in which today's investment strengthens tomorrow's capacity.

A gift today helps BC Nature take this essential step—moving from a volunteer-driven model to one with the leadership capacity needed to meet the scale of

this moment.

It ensures that:

- The work of 65+ clubs is better supported, connected, and amplified
- Conservation efforts across British Columbia are coordinated and strengthened
- Opportunities for funding, advocacy, and partnership are fully realized
- A long-term vision for sustainability begins to take shape
- It transforms a strong network into a truly powerful one.

**These two priorities are deeply interconnected.**

### **BC Nature Supports Science Fairs all over B.C.**

Dear Ms Nancy Flood,

Thank you for the donations you made for Science fair. I enjoyed telling people about sea turtles and the dangers of plastic.

I love learning about BC nature and animals, so much that I want to have a career that involves animal rescue. I'm looking forward to the next Science fair next year and to see all the other projects. Thank you again for your donations to the Science fair.

— A junior scientist: Toni Binger —

**Monthly giving provides reliable, ongoing support that sustains this work from day to day.**

**Legacy giving creates enduring impact that will carry it forward for generations.**

**Together, they form a continuum of care for the natural world.**

**What your support makes possible**

- **Conservation Advocacy**
- **Citizen Science**
- **Education**
- **Club Support**
- **Youth Engagement**



Legacy giving promotes long-term sustainability



## It is about Knowing Nature now - and Keeping It Worth Knowing for generations to come

**There are several meaningful ways to be part of this work.**

**Support BC Nature** directly, helping fund the Executive Director role and core operations through monthly giving or a monthly donation.

**Contribute to the BC Naturalists' Foundation**, building long-term strength through endowment and legacy giving or one-time or monthly giving.

**Or do both**—supporting conservation today while securing it for the future

*<https://bcnature.org/donate/> or <https://bcnature.org/ways-to-support-the-foundation/>*



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## Editorial

### Are You a DNA Elitist? An exploration of how we decide which species to protect

*Submitted by Peter Ballin*

**B**efore you read further, make a mental short list of your favourite organisms...

So, what does it mean to be a DNA elitist?

It means that you favour some species over others based upon how closely their

DNA resembles yours. I'm making a bet that your list includes only mammals, whose DNA is closest. And maybe some birds. Ok; some of you botanists may have selected plants. If you are more likely to step up for mammals and birds when you voice your conservation concerns, then you are a DNA elitist. Because of limited resources, we triage which species to protect, and we should prioritize those that mean the most for healthy ecosystems over those that we simply like better. As an egalitarian, should you not be as concerned for the welfare of an endangered moss (as Terry Taylor might well be) or a lichen (as Trevor Goward might well be)? Let's explore this.

Are our closest relatives, especially those that you consider sentient, more worthy than our more distant relatives? Such elitism might even get translated into law. The late Senator Murray Sinclair introduced the Jane Goodall Act into parliament in 2020 to prohibit keeping elephants, great apes, and about 800 other species in captivity (the 2025 election got in the way of considering Bill S-241/S-15). Perhaps he was echoing his Indigenous values, where animals are regarded as relatives deserving respect. All organisms code with DNA (except for some viruses). We speak the same language that governs the development of our bodies and functions. We, all organisms, are related!

But wait! What if we are all DNA elitists by nature? The sociologists' term *homophily* describes a propensity to be in the company of those most like us. In the 1960's two British evolutionary biologists, W.D. Hamilton and J. Maynard Smith, refined a theory called *kin selection*. It basically states that you are most willing to go out on a limb (engage in altruistic behaviour) for those most closely related to you. Thus, you will be more willing to self-sacrifice for your children and brothers and sisters than others because they share more DNA with you. Then you go to the next best representatives of your DNA, such as your cousins. In this way you increase the chances of DNA like yours projecting into the future, even if you don't contribute directly. Another

way of expressing this concept is *inclusive fitness*: individual survival and reproduction (direct) plus any contribution to the survival and reproduction of relatives (indirect). Might the mechanisms of *kin selection* extend beyond our immediate relatives and predispose us to care more for the organisms whose DNA is most like ours?

In 1973, the sociologist/psychoanalyst Erich Fromm coined the term *biophilia*: "the passionate love of life and of all that is alive". E.O. Wilson popularized the concept with his 1984 book of that title. He hypothesized that our DNA leads us to need connections with other life forms, and, indeed, all of nature. He went further: connection with nature is necessary for our well-being. We came to this need for connection by evolving with the world around us. Think of the intimate and respectful relationships with nature common to traditional hunter-gatherer societies such as the !Kung (San) of the Kalahari. Might we be predisposed to deeply bond with our surrounding "natural" world?

We are all related. The DNA most like yours after your family would be your tribe, the humans with whom you share the most physical similarities. Then, if you are a staunch DNA elitist, you would be most concerned with human well-being. After that come chimps and bonobos, and so on. The degree of relatedness between organisms is determined by how recently they shared a common ancestor. You and I share a common ancestor, as do all primates, but we can go back further to all mammals, then all vertebrates, animals, fungi, plants, protists, bacteria, and archaea. We have gone back four billion years! That means that part of your DNA is very, very old! While we may favour our own species, we realize that we would cease to exist if we don't take care of others and their environments.

When it comes to conservation concerns, whose DNA should we prioritize? A look at BC's species at risk file <https://bit.ly/4f8ej2U> reveals no DNA bias. But if we allow a possible underlying script to guide our conservation actions in favour of warm furry creatures, we could easily err in the quest to maintain and restore healthy ecosystems. We are all related and connected, and we have much to learn to properly understand those connections and properly honour all our relations, irrespective of how similar we might be to them. The survival of our DNA depends upon it. ✂





## President's Report

*Submitted by Harold Sellers*

Only a couple of days before I sat at my computer typing this, my inaugural President's Report, my wife and I enjoyed several days in Kamloops. We were attending the 2026 AGM & Conference for BC Nature.

The Kamloops Naturalist Club did an outstanding job, and they did it without

the usual two years of prep time. When we didn't have a sponsoring club for 2026, they stepped forward.

The gathering was a scaled-back event, compared to normal, but it still attracted more than fifty attendees from around the province. The necessary business meetings were held, along with a banquet and award presentations. Field trips introduced us to nature spots in the Kamloops area that were new to many of us.

We at BC Nature recognize that travel and accommodation expenses for a weekend, some distance from home often deter some from attending these annual get-togethers. The organizing groups do their best to manage costs and for those who are able to attend, we usually hear that it was worth it. That was the conclusion I came to about this Kamloops meeting.

As I've mentioned, the opportunities to explore places you've never been to before and perhaps to see species that are less common in your home area are something to look forward to.

Naturalists are "species of humans that enjoy solo as well as group outings". Even with modern aids, such as Merlin and iNaturalist, to help us identify species, it's even better when others in the group say, "Did you see that?" or "Look here!" More eyes, more ears, and especially more knowledge and expertise benefit us and help us improve our own skills.

I also find that I benefit from exchanges with other naturalists about the "business of nature". Most of our clubs are busy advocating for nature and stewarding nature where they live. We have much in common; geography might be different, but usually the issues are similar. We are encouraged as we hear what others are doing. We get inspired to keep trying or to try a new idea.

So, again, congratulations to the Kamloops Naturalist Club for checking all the boxes. In 2027 we'll be meeting in Victoria, back to a more normal format. I hope to see lots of you there, so we can learn, be encouraged, and be inspired to keep doing what nature needs us to do. Be nature champions! Before I go, you might want to know a bit about who I am and how did I get here.

I came to BC Nature through the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club (NONC), which I joined in late 2009, immediately after moving to Vernon from Ontario. NONC is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, having been founded in 1951. NONC was also one of the clubs that initiated the formation of the Federation of BC Naturalists. At NONC, I have been president a couple of times. I've also been the newsletter editor and Facebook administrator.

I've enjoyed several careers, and I am serious when I say enjoyed it. The first was 25 years as an electronics technician working on air traffic control systems. I've been involved with clubs and non-profits for most of my life, and my electronics career was followed by many years of hiking and trails development. A hiking pastime led to employment as the executive director of Hike Ontario and then the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Association. When we moved to B.C. I worked as the provincial coordinator for the Trans Canada Trail for more than two years.

Next up was nine years managing a production plant for the North Okanagan Valley Gleaners, a charity that collects food and medical items for humanitarian aid worldwide. I retired from that in 2021 and began my final career as an unpaid volunteer for many organizations.

At the 2023 BC Nature AGM conference in Langley, I agreed to fill the role of vice-president, the same year that Nancy Flood stepped up to president. Over the next three years, Nancy and I worked very closely — and I think very well — together. That time helped me prepare for this day.

I am looking forward to serving as your president. We have amazing people who make BC Nature a strong organization with an exciting future. I look forward to getting to know many of you and supporting you in any way that I and BC Nature can. Put [president@bcnature.ca](mailto:president@bcnature.ca) in your contacts list. ✂

|                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                             |
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# Conservation Committee Updates

## Updates from the Conservation Chair

*Submitted by Jennifer Dowd*

### In this Edition:

- **Update from the Conservation Chair – Jennifer Dowd**
- **Update from Conservation Committee Member – Ben van Drimmelen**
- **Cougars, Wolves and Bears - Jacqueline Sherk**



**Update from the Conservation Chair – Jennifer Dowd**

**Coming soon to the BC Nature YouTube channel** – <https://bit.ly/49EzshD>

Featuring a new video series, **The Conservation Lens**, which explores current conservation issues through an educational and accessible lens. Members and supporters are encouraged to subscribe; it's free to stay informed and engaged. The first video is targeted to be posted in summer 2026.

**Advisory Consultation List:** On January 14, a call was sent to all BC Nature clubs/organizations to help build an advisory consultation list of members with expertise relevant to conservation issues. To date, 26 people have joined the list. Members interested in participating can email [conservationchair@bcnature.ca](mailto:conservationchair@bcnature.ca), and a short information template will be provided.

**BC Nature Webinar Series** – Coming soon! The Conservation Committee along with BC Nature Project experts are developing a webinar series on various topics. First webinar is targeted to be hosted in fall 2026.

**BC Nature YouTube Shorts** – coming soon! I am working with the Municipal Protected Areas Projects Team to develop a series of YouTube Shorts on MPAPs. The first video is targeted to be posted in summer 2026.

**Limited Edition Coastal Themed Merchandise Coming Soon!** - We are working on creating some new apparel so stay tuned as it will be launching Summer 2026.

**2026 Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council Wildlife Dialogues** is now available online at <https://bit.ly/49EzshD>.

**Advocacy Correspondence** - Backgrounders and correspondence sent to politicians can be found on <https://bit.ly/4nYM7lc>

**BC Wings & Wires Incident Tracker** is a new conservation reporting app created by Jennifer Dowd to help address a B.C. conservation data gap around bird injuries and fatalities associated with power infrastructure. A first project of this kind for Jennifer, the Phase 1 pilot program is launching from May–September 2026, and members of the public



are encouraged to submit reports if they encounter a dead or injured bird near power lines, poles, wires, or related infrastructure. The goal is to help identify potential collision and electrocution hotspots and support future discussions with BC Hydro around mitigation opportunities. Outreach will also be taking place with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organizations across British Columbia. Learn more at [www.bcwingsandwires.ca](http://www.bcwingsandwires.ca)

**Dog Poop Waste Survey and Results:** We will be posting results shortly along with a Scoop the Poop Toolkit to help address issues in your community.

**Request for Participation - Everyday Conservation Toolkit.** BC Nature is looking for a small group of member clubs interested in participating in a pilot project to help co-develop an Everyday Conservation Toolkit. The goal of this toolkit is to support member clubs in navigating local conservation issues, while also helping clarify when and how to engage BC Nature on broader provincial conservation matters.

This pilot will be collaborative and practical, grounded in real-world club experiences, and informed by insights gathered through past survey reporting. Participating clubs will help shape the toolkit direction, content, and usability, so



*Lesser Yellowlegs*  
Photo: A. Burger

it reflects the realities and needs of clubs across the province.

We're looking for clubs that may be interested in:

1. Providing feedback and ideas
2. Sharing experiences with local conservation challenges
3. Reviewing draft materials
4. Helping test practical tools and approaches

Participation can be small or large, depending on your club's capacity; there is absolutely no expectation for significant time commitments.

If your club is interested in participating or learning more, please reach out to Jennifer Dowd – Conservation Chair at [conservationchair@bcnature.ca](mailto:conservationchair@bcnature.ca). We'd love to collaborate with you as this initiative develops.

#### **Updates from Conservation Committee Member - Ben van Drimmelen**

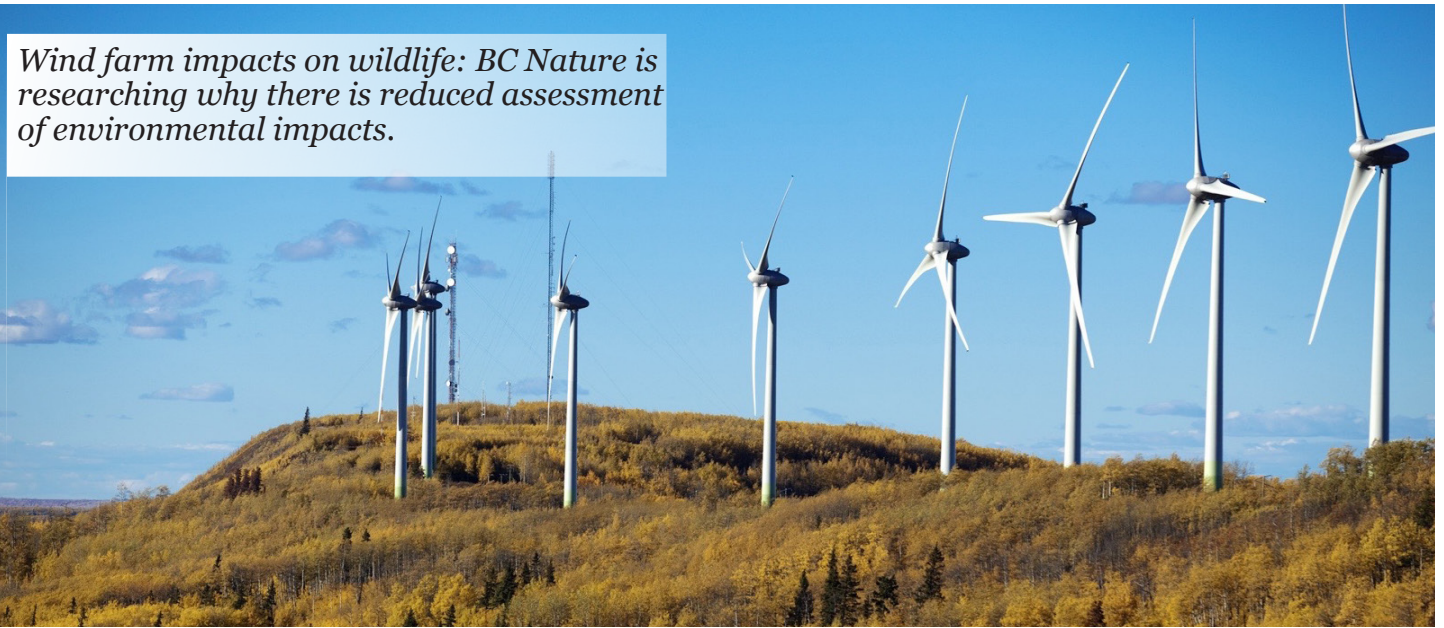
1. Re-engaged (from February 2025) on wind farm impacts on wildlife, researching reduced assessment of environmental impacts;
2. Signed a petition to uphold the north coast tanker ban;
3. Oriented a replacement to represent BC Nature on the Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Coalition <https://bit.ly/3S2bgQ2>;
4. Updated report on requirements to protect Orca and Humpback Whales from ships and boats in the Salish Sea;
5. Suggested that the essential (for shorebirds) mudflats around Roberts Bank Terminal and the BC Ferries terminal may have been actually created by those developments disrupting inshore tidal currents – meaning that expansion of the Roberts Bank terminal might not be all negative for shorebirds;



*Murmurations at Roberts Bank*  
Photo: N. Tan



*Wind farm impacts on wildlife: BC Nature is researching why there is reduced assessment of environmental impacts.*



6. Researched natural attributes of a potential quarry in the Okanagan.

**Cougars, Wolves, and Bears** – Jacqueline Sherk

**Cougars** - According to provincial Cougar information and Cougar biology and management reporting, Cougar populations in B.C. are generally considered stable, with numbers often estimated to be approximately 5,000–7,000. The province's 2025-to-current Cougar predator statistics provide current conflict and Conservation Officer Service response data, rather than serving as a direct population estimate. There is also strong evidence that Cougar populations are expanding northward. Although estimates are difficult due to the solitary, secretive, and mostly nocturnal habits of Cougars, evidence has been determined via sightings, conflict reports, trail cameras, radio collaring, and the expansion of prey. Being the obligate carnivores that they are,

cougars are extremely 'prey-dependent' and as their primary prey of White-tailed and Mule Deer expands northward, so follows the predator.

Cougar distribution in B.C. was historically in the southern part of the province due to its mild winters (lower snow depths) and abundant deer. Deep snow limits a Cougar's hunting efficiency because prey are less accessible. Additionally, snowy landscapes tend to favour lynx and wolves, so it has become clear to researchers that climate change is playing a role – previously marginal habitat has become more accessible to both prey and predators. Young male Cougars are known to be among the most mobile mammals on the continent – dispersals can exceed 1,000 kilometres, and this ability allows Cougars to quickly colonize suitable habitat as soon as their prey become available.



*Short-eared Owl  
Aptly named for its small ear  
tufts. Species of concern in B.C.*

*Photo: L. Scott*



*The biggest threats to the Grey Wolf in B.C. are human-caused mortality, primarily driven by government predator culling programs, and habitat fragmentation from industrial activities*



Photo: J & K Hollingsworth

**Wolves** - As reported previously, we learned last winter that 15 Grey Wolves from the B.C. interior had been captured and sent to Colorado in an agreement with that state to assist in re-establishing an extirpated Grey Wolf population. Wolves were originally eradicated due to settler conflicts via bounties, trapping, poisoning, den-raiding, and government sponsored predator control programs. In the winter of 2025, Oregon state supplied an additional 10 Grey Wolves to Colorado's program, making a total of 25 wolves released last year. However, the mortality rate of the relocated wolves has increased and although B.C. had planned to send an additional 15 wolves this winter after news that an eleventh had been found dead, the U.S. federal government intervened by blocking any more Canadian-sourced wolves for Colorado, with future sourcing expected to come from U.S. states only.

Reports differ, and numbers become confusing, but according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, it appears that 12 of the 25 introduced wolves are now dead, including up to seven that were supplied by B.C. The deaths reportedly stem from a variety of causes including legal and illegal shootings (Colorado Parks and Wildlife have shot some of the wolves due to livestock predation), injury, illness, one died during the collaring process, vehicle collisions, one died caught in a coyote trap, and another is believed to have been predated by a Cougar, and there are other causes that are under investigation.

Wolves have long been a persecuted species, yet they

are animals that choose mates and live in family groups as we do. Throughout evolution, predators and prey have had their important relationships, and since the Yellowstone experiment of the last century, we now understand that nature seeks a balance. In the context of compassionate wildlife conservation, many of us are deeply concerned about how wolves are being treated by government predator-control programs from the ten-year ongoing wolf cull in B.C. that has destroyed thousands of wolf lives, and now the stress of being captured and removed from their pack and delivered to a different reality that they, like us, would be unprepared to experience. Half of the B.C. Grey Wolves that were captured and delivered to Colorado in 2025 are dead in the first year.

**Bears** - Despite having one of Canada's largest bear populations, British Columbia has just three wildlife rehabilitation facilities permitted to rehabilitate orphaned bear cubs: Northern Lights Wildlife Society in Smithers, Critter Care Wildlife Society in Langley, and North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre in Errington, on Vancouver Island. While Black Bears account for most rescues and all three facilities can accommodate Black Bear cubs, Northern Lights Wildlife Society in Smithers is the only facility authorized to rehabilitate, and release orphaned Grizzly Bear cubs.

Cubs that are found alone and suspected of being orphaned are often monitored for up to 48 hours before a decision on capture is made, as the mother may still be nearby. Under current provincial policy,

*Continued page 13*



*Scientists and wildlife organizations estimate there are between 14,000 and 16,000 Grizzly Bears in B.C. This estimate has remained stable in recent years and represents approximately a quarter of the entire North American Grizzly Bear population.*



Photo: A Burger

cubs eligible for rehabilitation must generally be animals born in the current year. Yearling bears are considered capable of independent survival; they are not normally admitted to rehabilitation facilities. Nevertheless, yearlings are often encountered in poor condition during winter months, wandering and undernourished after failing to den successfully. In such cases, they may either be left in the wild or, believed to be suffering compromised health or poor survival prospects, euthanized by the Conservation Officer Service.

B.C.'s popular 'Bear Smart Community Program' appears to be experiencing difficulties in management. For 15 years, the program has been a respected model for reducing human-bear conflicts. Before the implementation of the Bear Smart program, high numbers of Black Bears were systematically killed by the Conservation Officer Service in answer to complaints of 'problem bears' roaming residential neighbourhoods. After the Bear Smart model was developed and implemented, the focus shifted from blaming bears to instead managing human behaviours that create conflicts with bears. Researchers who developed the program were able to demonstrate that simply removing bear attractants such as food waste and unpicked fruit would significantly reduce the number of so-called 'problem bears', and thereby also improve the public's perception of safety. Yet, despite the program's history of success, government appears to be abandoning the program, the effect of which is a lack of provincial leadership, standards, auditing,

and support for communities involved in gaining and maintaining certification. Amidst this news, we learned that the province is considering expanding Black Bear hunting despite concerns from bear advocates that lethal control alone does not address the underlying causes of conflict. ✕

## BE A GUARDIAN OF CANADIAN WILDLIFE



### The Wilderness Committee Needs You

Become a supporter and join thousands in creating a wild Canada. Check us out at:

**[WildernessCommittee.org/support](https://WildernessCommittee.org/support)**

Include us in your will.

To learn more: [plan@wildernesscommittee.org](mailto:plan@wildernesscommittee.org)



**WILDERNESS**  
COMMITTEE

People-powered wilderness  
preservation for a wild future



# 2025 Bert Brink Scholarship: A Year Later

## The Journey Across the World: From Taiwan to Canada, led by birds

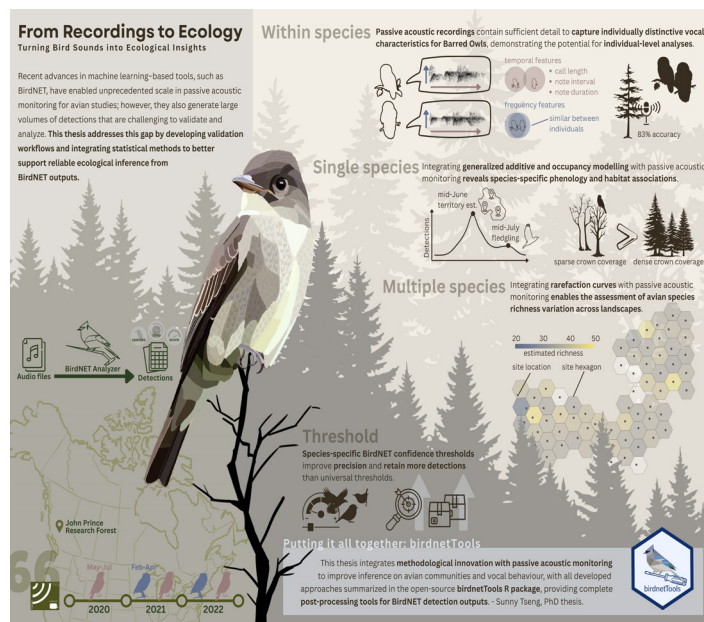
Submitted by Sunny Tseng, PhD

I first stepped onto North American soil in the autumn of 2017. Originally from Taiwan, I came to Canada on my own at the age of 23, specifically to British Columbia, to pursue my graduate studies. At that time, I didn't know it was a journey that would lead me so deeply into the world of birds.

I have always been passionate about statistics—a fascination born from double-majoring in Physics and Forestry at National Taiwan University. Soon after arriving in Canada, I was amazed by the vast landscapes and splendid biodiversity, especially how accessible nature is. Eager to connect, I began immersing myself in the local birding community: learning the art of bird banding at the Iona Island Bird Banding Station, preparing avian specimens at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum, and volunteering with local organizations like Nature Vancouver and the Cascade Bird Box Team. Most importantly, I stepped into the cutting-edge realm of avian research: passive acoustic monitoring.

During my PhD studies at the University of Northern British Columbia, my research came to life in the John Prince Research Forest near Fort St. James—a landscape that supports vital research on mammals such as bears, Moose, and mesocarnivores. I deployed Autonomous Recording Units to monitor the forest's soundscape, using the open-source machine learning model BirdNET to identify species from thousands of hours of audio. By blending data science with ecology, I have been able to investigate environmental questions across multiple scales—from identifying individual Barred Owls by their unique vocal signatures to monitoring community-level avian responses to forest management.

Now, having completed my PhD, I have begun a new chapter. I am working as an infographic designer (sample top right), helping research teams visualize their scientific findings about wildlife, and as an independent ecologist leading research projects that span the globe. I am currently collaborating with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to develop the BirdNet Tools R package, a tool designed to empower ecologists everywhere to process avian acoustic data within the free open-source software, the R environment. My work also takes me to Lithuania, where, supported by National Geographic and Wildlife Acoustics, I am monitoring the complex interactions of bird communities within Great Cormorant colonies.



Looking back at the last nine years, B.C. has nurtured my growth from a newly arrived immigrant to a scientist specializing in avian acoustics. My work has been recognized through multiple awards and scholarships, including NSERC, National Geographic, conference/university awards, and has been published in many scientific articles. These achievements were made possible not only through hard work but through the support of a truly welcoming community. Receiving the BC Nature scholarship in 2025 was an immense honour that represents a full-circle moment for me. It not only supported my academic journey but validated the deep connection I feel to this province's natural heritage. I hope to contribute the kindness, support, and connections I have gained here back to this land—the place I am proud to call my second home.

To learn more about Sunny, check out her website: [sunnytseng.ca](http://sunnytseng.ca) ✨



Working on my avian acoustics



# When the Ponds Fall Silent The Fate of Frogs in a Drying World

Submitted by Betty Davison

On warm late-spring nights, wetlands pulse with life. Frogs call from the shallows, their voices carrying across fields and forests, signalling the start of a new generation. Beneath the water's surface, clusters of eggs swell and divide, beginning a remarkable transformation. But when ponds dry too soon, that transformation stops — and an entire year of life is lost.

Frogs depend completely on moisture to reproduce. Their eggs have no shells and must remain submerged. Tadpoles, breathing through gills, live entirely in water until they grow legs and lungs. Only then can they emerge onto land. This process takes time, and time depends on water.

Few species illustrate this urgency more vividly than the Great Basin Spadefoot (*Spea intermontana*), found in British Columbia's dry interior grasslands. This small, secretive amphibian spends most of its life underground, waiting for rain, in a state of dormancy, called aestivation. When spring storms fill shallow basins and temporary ponds, spadefoots emerge in a sudden burst of activity. They breed quickly, sometimes within days, laying eggs in water that may only last weeks.

Their tadpoles grow at astonishing speed — among the fastest of any amphibian in North America. This rapid



Photo: A. Burger

*Great Basin Spadefoot tadpole*

development is an adaptation to uncertainty. But even this biological acceleration has limits. If the pond evaporates too early, the tadpoles perish. They cannot leave the water without developed lungs and limbs.

When this happens repeatedly, the consequences extend beyond a single season. Adult frogs may live for years, returning faithfully to their natal ponds. Yet without successful breeding, there are no young to replace them. Slowly, the population ages and declines. Eventually, the pond — once alive with movement — becomes silent.

The loss is ecological as well as emotional. Tadpoles help control algae and cycle nutrients. Adult frogs consume insects, stabilizing food webs. They also serve as prey for birds, snakes, and mammals. Frogs are both predator and prey, a vital link in wetland ecosystems. Their disappearance signals broader ecological stress.

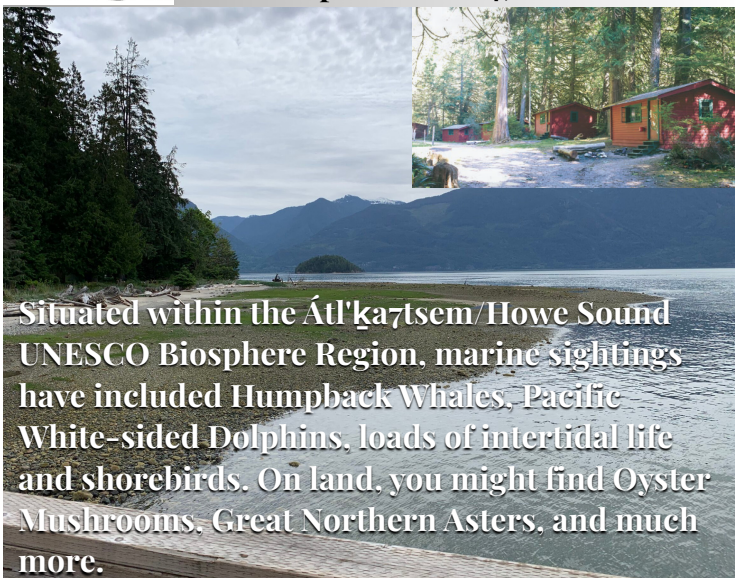
Climate change is accelerating this pattern. Hotter temperatures increase evaporation. Snowpacks melt earlier (assuming that there is a healthy snowpack). Rainfall becomes less predictable. Temporary wetlands — already fragile — disappear sooner than they once did. For species like the Great Basin Spadefoot, whose survival depends on these fleeting waters, the margin for error is shrinking.

Yet small wetlands remain powerful refuges. Even shallow depressions that hold water briefly can sustain amphibian life, if protected. Conserving grasslands, limiting soil disturbance, and preserving natural water flow all help maintain these essential breeding sites.

The spring chorus of frogs is more than a seasonal sound. It is evidence that water, land, and time remain in balance. When ponds dry too soon, the silence that follows tells a deeper story — one of interruption, vulnerability, and the quiet disappearance of lives that never had the chance to begin. ❀



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**September 8–14, 2026**



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**Registration and Information**

<https://naturevancouver.ca/2026-summer-camp-at-camp-potlatch/>  
(Deadline June 29, 2026)



# Lane, the Long-billed Curlew of Prince George

Submitted by John McNeill, Prince George Naturalists Club

In the middle of April 2026, the Prince George Naturalists Club held their annual Long-billed Curlew field trip, led by Angelina Joiner and Sandra Kinsey. In total, 20 bird lovers drove out to the Walrath Road fields near Shelley [53°59'53.52"N 122°37'24.77"W] on what was a bright and calm morning.

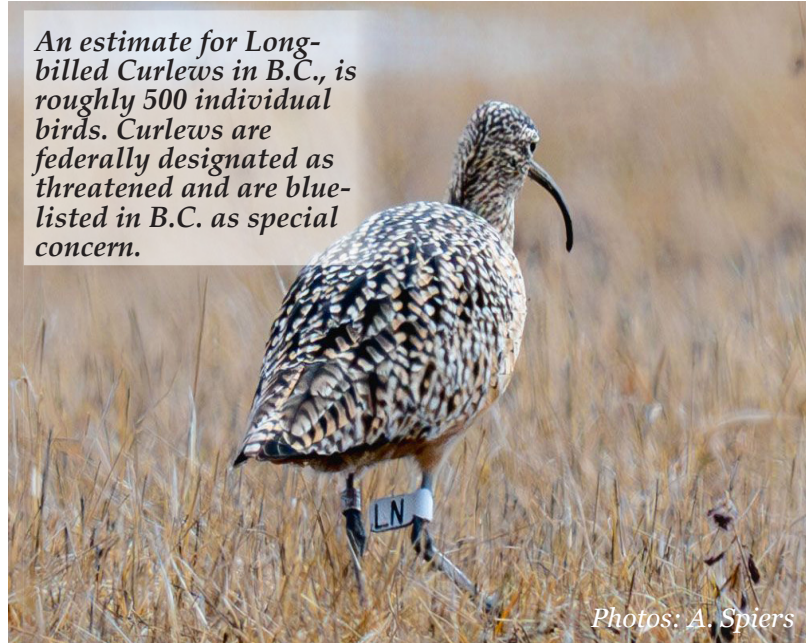
I have only been living in Prince George since 2022, having emigrated from the UK, but already this yearly trip is one I keenly anticipate, and for many, the arrival of the Long-billed Curlews (*Numenius americanus*) in early April is a sure sign that the snow and cold weather may finally be passing.

We had the privilege of seeing or hearing 39 bird species on our morning trip, walking approximately two km SE along Walrath Road's fields to the oxbow marsh at the south end of the road. Along with Trumpeter Swan, Green-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Ruffed Grouse, Sandhill Crane, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, Merlin, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, kinglet, three species of swallows, and many other birds, we were fortunate to see 13 Long-billed curlews foraging in the fields or flying overhead, with the highlight being a tagged male. The ID flag on the right leg, clearly showing 'LN', was seen by club member Kalum Srochenski. Local birder Anne Spiers captured a great photograph of this banded curlew a few days earlier, in the same location, shared here with Anne's permission.

The history told by this ID flag starts in May 2019, when a Birds Canada team led by David Bradley and Graham Sorenson spent a breeding season in the Prince George area to document the recently expanded range of these curlews, a result of changing land use and an increase in agricultural and cultivated land upon which the curlews breed and nest. In total, 10 curlews were banded with seven of those having satellite tracking devices fitted; showing over the years since that these birds spend the majority of their non-breeding life in central California and into Mexico. What a treat to see in Northern B.C.!

Of the banded birds, the ID flag 'LN' is a male bird the Birds Canada team named Lane for his habit of always hanging out on the road, accordingly to Bradley. I understand Lane

*An estimate for Long-billed Curlews in B.C., is roughly 500 individual birds. Curlews are federally designated as threatened and are blue-listed in B.C. as special concern.*



*Lane in April, 2026, at Walrath Road fields*

was at least two years old when banded in 2019 in the Wright Creek area [54°08'16.76"N 122°46'32.19"W], making him at least nine in Anne's photo. With an estimated lifespan of curlew being 8-10 years, it is great to see Lane. In fact, he has been conspicuous over the years. A quick *eBird* search in the Prince George area sees Lane pop up in 2021 (Cathy Antionazzi, Wright Creek area), 2022 (Anne Spiers, Wright Creek area), 2023 (Jan Bosman, Walrath Road fields), 2025 (Jeff Dyck, Wright Creek area), and again in 2026 (Jack Bowling, Wright Creek area).

Martha Griesbach is a resident of the Wright Creek area and has been observing Lane for many years. Martha was kind enough to share with me that every year Lane returns to the same field on Kazakoff Rd. There he waits for his mate, who showed up this year in the second week of May. Hopefully chicks will soon follow.

As for the curlews expanding range, *eBird* also shows us that Prince George and west to Smithers is still where many of the northernmost observations are being made, but checklists have also been submitted sighting Long-billed Curlews as far north as Pritchard Creek on the Stikine River [57°43'26.61"N 131°30'50.11"W] in May of 2019.

They are a welcome sight anywhere, and despite their expanding presence in northern B.C., the Long-billed Curlew is a threatened species due to a long-term decline in the quality of their habitat. I hope we see Lane again next year, or Graham (seen 2026 by Walter Thorne, Wright Creek area), or Ivan, or Alyssa, or any of those banded curlews. Should you find yourself up north in April/May, keep a look out, and just maybe you will see Lane, the Long-billed Curlew of Prince George. ✨



# KBA Update

## Endemics of British Columbia

Submitted by Liam Ragan

For the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) program, we're looking to designate the most important places for wildlife on earth. Often that means looking at areas critical to a species at different stages of their lifecycle: seasonal feeding grounds for Orca, migratory stopover points for birds, caribou wintering grounds, etc. A less-discussed face of the program looks instead at areas where all of an organism's population occurs throughout its entire lifecycle. "Endemism" is when an organism occurs only in a singular defined geographic location. One famous example is the Banff Springs Snail, found only in their titular springs in an area smaller than a standard hockey rink. A report by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and NatureServe Canada recently identified more than 300 organisms thought to be endemic to Canada; and BC has more than any other province. Here are just a few.

### Vancouver Island Marmot - Critically Endangered

A large, brown, white-snouted marmot, this species was as low as 30 individuals in the early 2000s. After massive conservation effort, that number now sits at more than 400, spread out between the Nanaimo Lakes KBA and proposed Strathcona KBA. To learn more check out the Marmot Recovery Foundation at [marmots.org](http://marmots.org).

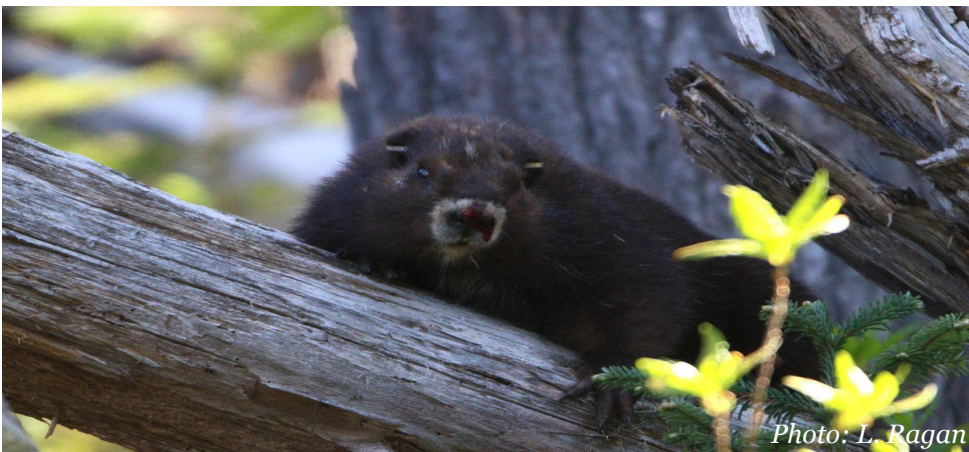
### Hotwater Physa – Endangered

Found exclusively in the Liard River Hot Springs, these small snails number approximately 10,000 and can be found in the margins of two pools and an outlet stream. The site is within the Liard River Hotsprings Provincial Park and has been designated a KBA. The site also contains a unique, thermally adapted population of Lake Chub.

### Haida Saw-whet Owl – Threatened

Though just a subspecies (for now), the Haida Saw-whet Owl, *Aegolius acadicus brooksi* stands in for the 20 taxon endemic or nearly endemic to Haida Gwaii, ranging from plants to mammal subspecies to beetles to stickleback. This Saw-whet is distinct from its mainland cousins for a number of reasons; they are much darker, their vocalizations differ, and most notably they specialize on foraging in tidepools.

If you want to learn more about B.C.'s endemic species, go to [kbacanada.org](http://kbacanada.org) and peruse some of the KBAs that have been designated specifically to highlight them. Additionally, the 2020 *Ours to Save* report (<https://bit.ly/4x1Bm5V>) does a brilliant job highlighting what we know and what we don't.



Vancouver Island Marmot (*Marmota vancouverensis*)



Photo: L. Ragan

Haida Saw-whet Owl  
(*Aegolius acadicus brooksi*)



Photo: L. Ragan

Island Snow Scorpionfly  
(*Boreus insulanus*)

Lastly, the *iNaturalist* list of B.C. endemics <https://bit.ly/4o4C66j> by contributor/user "cgbc", is a growing community resource which helps expand our knowledge of endemics, from Kamloops Rainbow Trout to Okanagan Hammertail to Island Snow Scorpionfly and beyond. If any of those names sound unfamiliar to you then good luck on your research, and I look forward to seeing you in the field! ✨



# Burrowing Owls Get a Boost From Ranchers!

*Submitted by Lauren Meads, Executive Director, Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC*

The launch of the new Burrowing Owl Alliance (BOA) marks a significant milestone for grassland conservation in Western Canada. For the ranching community, this platform is more than just a gallery of cute owls—it is a comprehensive toolkit designed to support producers in balancing profitable operations with the stewardship of a Canadian icon.

**A Partnership Built on the Range** - The BOA brings together regional experts in each of the four provinces under one digital roof. The core message to the ranching community is clear: Grazing cattle and Burrowing Owls belong together.

The website emphasizes that cattle play a crucial role in maintaining the short-grass habitat these owls need. By keeping the grass low, cattle provide owls with the clear line of sight necessary to spot predators and hunt for insects and small mammals.

## **Key Resources for the Rancher**

- Grassland Conservation “Best Management Practices”—the new site provides a “Landowner Manual” and “Landowner Card” specifically for those managing active pastures.

## **Key takeaways for producers include:**

- **The Power of Burrows:** Owls rely on other “ecosystem engineers” such as badgers, ground squirrels, and foxes to provide them with burrows. The Alliance encourages maintaining these other burrowing mammal populations.
- **Timing Matters** - Simple adjustments, such as delaying haying in specific areas until young owls have fledged, can make a massive difference in survival rates.

- **Targeted Pest Control** - Guidance on avoiding the use of insecticides and poisons ensures that the owls’ food source (insects and small rodents) remains available and safe.
- **Regional Incentive Program** Perhaps the most valuable feature for producers is the Incentives for Landowners page. The Alliance has centralized information on funding and support programs across the four western provinces. Your local contact can help you with what incentives might best fit your needs. Some of the incentives that can fund conservation are Ducks Unlimited, Multi-Species Conservation Strategy for Species at Risk program, On-farm Climate Action Fund, The Prairie Watersheds Climate Program, Farmland Advantage program, and so much more!

## **Wildlife-Friendly Fencing**

The website offers specific guidance on fencing. Traditional barbed wire can pose a risk to low-flying owls and other grassland birds. The Alliance provides resources on how to implement fencing that secures livestock while minimizing the impact on local wildlife—often with regional funding to help cover the costs. This program can replace fencing with wildlife-friendly fencing or even changing to virtual fencing.

**The “Eyes on the Ground” Initiative** - Ranchers are the most consistent presence on the grasslands, and the Alliance recognizes them as the frontlines of grassland conservation. The new website features an easy-to-use “Have you seen an owl?” reporting tool.



*Photo: Courtesy of Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Centre*

Reporting sightings doesn’t lead to land-use restrictions; instead, it opens the door to voluntary support. One family of Burrowing Owls can eat up to 8,000 insects and 1,700 small mammals in a single breeding season—making them an excellent (and free) form of pest control for any ranch.

**Why It Matters** - Grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. By visiting [burrowingowlalliance.ca](http://burrowingowlalliance.ca), ranching communities can find the tools they need to ensure their land remains productive for their cattle and a home for the Burrowing Owl for generations to come.

Visit the site today to download the Landowner Manual, find out which incentive programs apply to your region, report sightings or contact your local expert on Burrowing Owl recovery. ✂



# Sort of How Val Did it

Submitted by Julian Gullo

In the summer of 1961, a young wildlife biologist, Valerius “Val” Geist, built a small cabin beside a nameless creek flowing into what he came to call Gladys Lake, in the remote Cassiar Mountains of northwestern B.C. From this isolated outpost, the 23-year-old Geist studied the Stone’s Sheep inhabiting the surrounding mountain slopes. Over a year and a half, he compiled extensive observations on sheep behaviour that later formed part of his doctoral dissertation and ultimately contributed to his influential book, *Mountain Sheep*.

The tools available to Geist were simple: notebooks, binoculars, and perhaps some film equipment. His methods were equally straightforward, relying largely on visual observations, behavioural descriptions, and hand-calculated statistics. What distinguished his work, however, was his imagination. Geist became well-known for his ability to interpret and synthesize what he observed in the field. Much of his work could be described as “qualitative” science, built not only on data collection but also on perception and reflection. Without a free-ranging imagination, it is difficult to imagine how he could have transformed those observations into such a compelling and enduring account of mountain sheep ecology.

Today, this kind of deeply immersive “greenfield” ecological research has become increasingly rare. Foundational works like *Mountain Sheep* are uncommon, and despite the protection now afforded to the Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve and the surrounding Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park, relatively few intensive field studies have been carried out there since Geist’s time. Those that have occurred arguably lack the same depth of focus and personal commitment that characterized his work.

Part of the reason is practical. Remote fieldwork is expensive, time-consuming, and logistically difficult. Growing fiscal restraint and increasingly busy professional schedules make extended field seasons difficult to justify. Yet this shift also reflects a broader transformation within ecology itself. Labour-intensive field studies are increasingly replaced by technology-driven approaches that provide reliable data at far lower cost and effort. Trail cameras, GPS collars, drones, satellite sensors, and other “set-it-and-forget-it” devices now offer ecologists efficient ways to study wildlife systems. Combined with increasingly sophisticated computer modelling programs, these technologies can generate enormous quantities of data and have become the default tools for answering



Here, marshy flats separate Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve (right) from the Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park (left). Created in late 1975, both grant protection to large expanses of wilderness that contain significant populations of wildlife such as Mountain Goat, Stone’s Sheep, Caribou, Wolverine, and Grizzly Bears.

ecological questions. As a result, field-based science can appear both economically impractical and scientifically unnecessary.

I reflected often on these issues while conducting my own Stone’s Sheep research in the Gladys Lake Ecological Reserve and Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park. Each time I turned to Geist’s work, I was struck by how different our approaches were. My entire master’s thesis focused on a single question Geist had merely speculated about: what do Stone’s Sheep do during hunting season? Geist approached this question through personal observation and anecdote. My own study relied on technologies unavailable in his time. GPS collars relayed sheep locations hourly; satellites measured vegetation productivity across landscapes impossible to traverse on foot, and digital topographic maps produced detailed three-dimensional models of sheep habitat. Much of my research therefore depended on representations of the landscape generated through technological “sense organs,” rather than direct sensory experience.

Despite the remarkable scale and precision of these datasets, I often felt they lacked the nuance and richness that comes from physically inhabiting a landscape. Fortunately, I was able to visit Gladys Lake and the Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park several times during my studies. GPS collars still need to be fitted, and trail cameras must be placed by hand. During those visits, I gained a deeper appreciation for the scale, complexity, and harshness of the landscape, as well as the resilience of the animals that inhabit it.

Many of my previous life experiences shaped my understanding of the work. Summers spent tree planting, conducting technical fieldwork, travelling



Continued from page 19

through western Canada's backcountry, and more recently pursuing hunting, all provided context for my research and helped prepare me for conversations about sheep and sheep hunting with colleagues, locals, and friends. In many ways, the last decade of my life has been its own form of "fieldwork," helping bridge the distance between myself and the remote study area in the Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park. Those experiences allowed me to imagine and better understand a place and species that were often physically out of reach. I suspect many professional ecologists and biologists face similar challenges. Tight deadlines, budget constraints, and geographic distance can all limit opportunities to develop intimate familiarity with study sites and subjects. This is particularly true for professionals who move rapidly between diverse projects, where becoming deeply immersed in detail can be viewed as impractical or inefficient. As I consider the next steps in my own career, I remain cautiously optimistic about finding a balance between field- and office-based research. Most people drawn to ecology and biology enter these disciplines because of a love for nature itself.

The growing problem of "office creep" or "field estrangement" in ecology does not have a



*A young Stone's Sheep ram being sampled and prepared for collaring, shortly after being captured by a net-gun deployed from a helicopter. Blindfolds are used to keep animals calm while blood, hair, and DNA samples are collected for health assessments. Prior to being released, a GPS-collar (upper right) will be fixed to this ram, giving the research team frequent updates on its location, movement, and even the temperature of its environment for the next three years.*

simple solution. Yet at minimum, addressing it requires awareness and an ongoing desire to reconnect with the real landscapes and organisms we study. There is still a balance to be found between technological efficiency and direct experience, and there remains great joy in the practice of ecological science. ✨

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# Back to Basics

## Gall Insects - Manipulators of the Plant World

Submitted by Terry Taylor

**G**all insects and the structures they produce are well worth the interest of the curious naturalist.

Galls are swellings on plants. They are produced by organisms that live inside plants, and modify those plants to serve the parasite, not the host. The most conspicuous galls are made by insects, but mites, fungi, and bacteria can also make galls. It is not straightforward to discover who the actual maker is. The gall is composed of cells made by the plant. The insect produces chemicals that change the way those cells grow, so the plant builds a structure that nurtures the insect.

Most gall insect species depend upon a single plant species for their survival. Relationships of this nature are relevant to maintaining biodiversity. The extinction of one organism results in the extinction of all the other organisms that depend upon it. If you know the shapes of the galls and the plants on which they grow, you can have an enjoyable walk searching for them. The galls are produced so that they provide a protected home and a food supply for the larvae of the insect that laid its eggs within the plant. Some galls grow on leaves, and others on stems or flowers. The shape of the gall is usually so distinctive that it is possible to know exactly what species of insect is involved, by knowing the plant species and the shape of the gall. Most gall makers are minute wasps or flies.

If you live on the coast, probably the best galls to look for are those on Thimbleberry bushes. They are distinctive elongated swellings on the stems. Early in the season they are green, but later become brown, like mature stems. They are woody like the rest of the stem, which makes it difficult for predators to attack the larvae inside. Look closely at an old gall and you are likely to see very small round holes. These are where the mature gall wasps have left the gall to mate and make future galls. But the galls do not protect against all predators. You are likely to find some galls that have large holes produced by birds that have eaten some of the larvae. The complexity of the gall habitat is even greater than is readily apparent. Research has shown that there are several parasitoid small insects that live only on the larvae of *Diastrophus kincaidi*, the Thimbleberry Gall Wasp.

The photograph accompanying this article is an image of a gall with which you may be familiar but not happy, if you are a gardener. It is the Mossy Rose Gall made by a tiny wasp within the flower buds. The fuzzy green stuff is modified calyx (the green bracts at the flower base).

Lodgepole Pines and Shore Pines often have round swellings on the branches. These are galls produced by a rust fungus. In the spring, they release orange powder, which is



Photo: T. Taylor

*Mossy Rose Gall*

composed of millions of spores that can spread to other pine trees. On the leaves of Red Maple and Bitter Cherry trees, you may see tiny red pimples. These are galls made by mites. Each pimple contains one mite. Native oak trees are hosts for many different gall insects. Our cultivated oaks, however, lack these galls because the insects responsible do not occur here.

Galls may not be as exciting as a new bird or flower, but they do produce the opportunity to find some new aspects of nature close to home.



Join Elora Adamson from MycoMap BC and Liam Ragan from BC Nature to discuss fungal biodiversity in BC and learn how you can help fill in gaps in our understanding.

BC Nature invites you to a webinar on  
July 2, 2026 - 7:00 pm



Zoom Registration: <https://bit.ly/4dWYWI5>



Agarikon (scientifically known as  
*fomitopsis officinalis* or *Laricifomes officinalis*)



# BC Naturalists' Foundation Update

Submitted by Walter Thorne

The Foundation has done it again. For the 2026 season, we have been able to fund a record payout in Club Support Grants. In total, nearly \$43,000 has been awarded to 17 of our 65+ clubs. Many of the grants provided the full \$3,000 maximum. We are proud to say that our investment funds and newly acquired bequests are all helping to fund fascinating nature projects and club work. The funds, overseen by Odlum Brown and the Vancouver Foundation, are healthy despite doling out record club grants. Just think about what we could do with more.

In this, our 36<sup>th</sup> season as an investment associate for BC Nature, we have funded several research projects, including insect research surveys with Arrowsmith Naturalist in the Parksville area and monitoring by the Nicola Naturalist Society of the dry land Great Basin Spadefoot, (a toad-like amphibian) in the Nicola Valley. Another of our 2026 club research projects is commencing at Dawson Creek with the help of researchers from the Timberline Trail and Nature Club. They are studying and tracking the elusive and secretive Connecticut Warbler. This species is one of the eastern or central continental warblers, a largish, 15-gram olive-green warbler of mixed forests and shrubs, that mostly occurs in the extreme northeast of our province. The foundation has also funded Garry Oak restoration work with the Comox Naturalists and a kid's introduction to the role of bees on farms. This program is provided by the Native Bee Society of BC, now in its second season as a BC Nature club.

All of this year's grant projects are worthwhile and help to enhance our environment and are "keeping nature worth knowing". ❀

## BC Naturalist's Foundation/BC Nature Club support Grant Awards in 2026

|                                       |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| West Kootenay Naturalists Association | Naturalist's backpacks for libraries                                                  |
| WildResearch Society 1                | Learn your frogs and birds! Training resources for BCMMP volunteers                   |
| WildResearch Society 2                | Iona Island Bird Observatory banding hut roof replacement                             |
| Friends of Semiahmoo Bay              | European Green Crab Trapping Project in Boundary Bay                                  |
| Kitimat Naturalists                   | Big Tree Quest                                                                        |
| Native Bee Society of BC              | Buzzing on Farms – A kid's introduction to the role of native bees on farms           |
| Nature Chilliwack                     | Calendar for public outreach and education, collaboration, and club membership drive. |
| Nicola Naturalists Society            | Monitoring of Great Basin Spadefoots                                                  |
| North Okanagan Naturalists            | Motus Tracking Station                                                                |
| Prince George Naturalists             | Reptile/Amphibian brochure development and printing                                   |
| Rocky Point Bird Observatory          | Building volunteer skills and abilities for migration and monitoring projects         |
| South Okanagan Naturalists            | South Okanagan Hummingbird Monitoring Project                                         |
| Timberline Trail and Nature Club      | Connecticut Warbler migration ecology using the Motus Tracking                        |
| Arrowsmith Naturalists                | Terrestrial, aquatic, and nocturnal insect surveys                                    |
| Comox Naturalists                     | Garry Oak restoration work                                                            |
| Delta Naturalists                     | Community outreach displays                                                           |
| Friends of Holland Creek              | Web upgrades                                                                          |





# Invasive European Green Crab in Boundary Bay Continues to Expand

Submitted by Margaret Cuthbert

The Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society (FoSBS) is now entering its seventh year of trapping and monitoring the invasive European Green Crab, *Carcinus maenas*, in Boundary Bay.

At the request of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in 2019, FoSBS focused its efforts on trapping and eradicating this highly invasive species, which has spread northward along the Pacific coast from California to Alaska. Populations are now well established on the west coast of Vancouver Island, with increasing detections in Boundary Bay and the Fraser River Estuary.

The concern surrounding the European Green Crab is significant. This alien species preys upon native clams, oysters, and shore crabs, while its burrowing behaviour damages eelgrass meadows by uprooting rhizomes. These eelgrass habitats are ecologically critical to the Fraser River Delta ecosystem.

The species spreads easily through global shipping. Eggs and larvae can be transported in ship bilges and dispersed with ocean currents. Reproduction rates are also alarming, with a single female capable of spawning up to 200,000 eggs twice in one season.

FoSBS continues to work closely with partners, including A Rocha Canada and members of the Semiahmoo First Nation “Guardians of the Salish Sea” initiative.

A Rocha has been responsible for trapping in the Little Campbell River estuary on Semiahmoo First Nation lands. No European Green Crabs were detected there until 2023, where trapping revealed 23 males and 13 females. In response, A Rocha expanded its European Green Crab monitoring efforts in 2024 through six “blanket trapping” sessions supported by DFO. Up to 50 traps were deployed across three estuary sites between April and September, resulting in the capture of 10 male European Green Crabs. Trapping efforts increased substantially in 2025, with 274 traps deployed and 146 European Green Crabs captured.

The FoSBS also continued trapping at Centennial Beach in Boundary Bay Regional Park and at several locations around Blackie Spit in Surrey. One monitoring site at Elgin Heritage Park was relocated after repeated low catch rates and difficult access. The replacement site at Pebble Point Channel yielded only one European Green Crab and was subsequently moved to the Mitigation Channel adjacent to Blackie Spit, where capture rates also remained low. Suspecting additional European Green Crab



*One ovigerous female was documented at the Blackie Spit Training Channel on May 1, 2025*

activity in tidal marsh channels around Blackie Spit, FoSBS requested that DFO conduct a larger “blanket trapping” operation. This concern was reinforced when a local elementary school teacher participating in a marine interpretive field trip discovered European Green Crabs beneath Wickson Pier at Blackie Spit Park. Photos sent to Aquatic Invasive Species staff in Nanaimo confirmed the species’ presence there.

As a result, DFO conducted an intensive blanket trapping operation at Blackie Spit from August 18–22, 2025. Over four days, traps were deployed at seven locations, including salt marsh channels, the Blackie Spit training site, beneath Wickson Pier, and Sullivan Point. After two days with no captures, two locations were discontinued. Trapping continued at the remaining sites, ultimately capturing 53 European Green Crab.

FoSBS itself deployed 455 traps in 2025, capturing 111 European Green Crab during the season. The Tsawwassen First Nation also joined the monitoring effort, capturing 12 European Green Crabs at two locations north of the Tsawwassen ferry jetty.

Between 2021 and 2024, detections of European Green Crab in Boundary Bay remained relatively low, ranging from 8 to 39 individuals annually. Most detections were concentrated around Blackie Spit and Centennial Beach, although increased trapping in the Little Campbell River Estuary produced higher counts in 2023.

In contrast, 2025 marked a significant increase in

*Continued page 24* 23



detections, with 320 European Green Crabs recorded throughout Boundary Bay. The increase reflected both expanded trapping effort and higher captures at Blackie Spit and the Little Campbell River Estuary. New detections at Tsawwassen First Nation sites also contributed to the regional total.

Results from the 2025 season indicate that European Green Crab is now well established and continuing to expand within Boundary Bay. The DFO-led blanket trapping operation improved understanding of distribution patterns at Blackie Spit and led to the reclassification of FoSBS trapping sites to “rapid response” status, emphasizing the need for flexible, site-specific monitoring strategies.

Current findings suggest the population is dynamic and likely supported by repeated larval introductions rather than isolated local colonies. Continued trapping and monitoring remain essential to identify hotspots, track distribution changes, and guide future management priorities.

FoSBS plans to continue working with DFO and partner organizations to maintain targeted trapping at priority locations, refine methods, improve data collection, and minimize bycatch impacts. Community science remains a vital component of the project, supporting ecosystem health, local stewardship, and long-term monitoring throughout Boundary Bay.

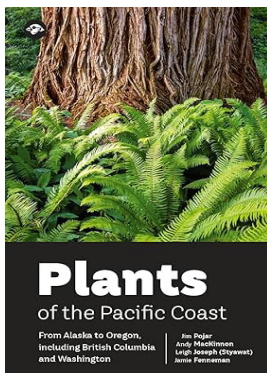
In 2026, Blackie Spit site leaders began trapping

earlier than usual, conducting sessions in March and capturing one juvenile European Green Crab. Five sites are now monitored in the Blackie Spit area, and FoSBS is actively recruiting additional volunteer site leaders.

FoSBS acknowledges the support of project funders and collaborators, including the Stewards of the Little Campbell River Society, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, BC Nature, the BC Naturalists' Foundation, A Rocha Brooksedale Environmental Centre, the Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen First Nations, and the Invasive Species Council of BC. Special thanks are extended to project coordinator Diane Watson and to the many volunteers whose dedication makes the trapping program possible.

FoSBS remains committed to staying on the front lines in the effort to reduce the impacts of this highly destructive invasive species.✂

**Addendum:** As of May 7, FoSBS has conducted a methods training April 13<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> after receiving a citizen report who caught nine green crab, six male and three berried females, in a rock pile in Semiahmoo Bay, FoSBS has launched a ‘handpicking’ effort with an amended licence to search rock piles in Semiahmoo Bay, the Wickson pier area, and the pump house area of Centennial Beach. Every berried female captured means 200,000 less EGC to grow and destroy.



## Book Review

*Plants of the Pacific Coast: From Alaska to Oregon, including British Columbia and Washington*

Authors: Jim Pojar, Andy MacKinnon, Jamie Fenneman, and Leigh Joseph (Styawat)  
Lone Pine Publishing

ISBN: 9781772130089

528 pages;

Available in paperback;

\$29.95

Book reviewed by Hunter Jarratt

**P***lants of the Pacific Coast* is a unique and encompassing resource for the public to engage and familiarize themselves with the vascular plants of northwest North America. Replacing *Plants of British Columbia: Including Washington, Oregon & Alaska*, this book reflects updated understandings of botanical knowledge and the sociocultural environment. Indigenous knowledge has been shared in a way that feels respectful and celebrated, such as with the switching of tense, when describing plants that were utilized, to plants that are utilized.

Conversely, this book considers the current situation in the environmental world. For instance, the switch of tense when describing the physical environment, indicating that it was a cool, temperate, moist-to-wet, maritime climate, outlining that this has now changed. These adjustments are subtle but necessary, providing a higher degree of accuracy. As someone who understands and advocates for protecting the natural

resources found in this part of the world, I found the section that outlined industrial forest management as a leader in negatively modifying the region's natural habitats, written in such a straight-forward and unapologetic way, particularly gratifying to read, especially when followed by a plethora of Indigenous ecological knowledge.

This book feels inviting, and the content is easy to read and comprehend, notably with the up-to-date taxonomic keys, maps, and descriptions, positioning itself as an indispensable resource applicable to a wide range of user groups in northwest North America.”✂

*Hunter Jarratt is an ecological restoration consultant and advocate based on Vancouver Island. He is best known for his educational Instagram and TikTok channels, Invasive Species Guy, where he teaches the public how to identify, remove, and manage invasive flora.*



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Photos: Mike Ashbee

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# Help Map Fungal Diversity in B.C. - Webinar July 2

Submitted by Elora Adamson

**H**ave you ever paused in the woods to look at a mushroom and wondered what it was? Maybe you brought along a field guide and flipped through the pages hoping to find a match. Or perhaps you pulled out your phone and tried one of the popular mushroom identification apps. Unless you happened to be looking at something common and distinctive, chances are you left the woods no more certain than when you arrived.

You're in good company. Even B.C.'s best mycologists often struggle to put names to fungi they encounter. That's largely because so many of our province's mushrooms—its macrofungi—simply haven't been named or described yet. Only about a third of the mushroom species found in B.C. are known to science. Compare that to our vascular plants, nearly all of which have been found, named, and described. Professional mycologists in the Pacific Northwest are working hard to change this, but there are far too few of them to do the job alone. To make real progress in a reasonable time, they need help from amateurs, the people we often call citizen scientists. A recent and exciting citizen science initiative, MycoMap, aims to provide exactly that kind of help. MycoMap projects invite amateur naturalists to go outside, record a mushroom on a crowdsourced platform like *iNaturalist* or *Mushroom Observer*, and bring the specimen home to dry. The dried collection is then sent in for DNA sequencing. When the results come back, experienced amateurs analyze the sequences and match them against known mushroom species, posting the results to the crowdsourced record for everyone to see and comment on.

The MycoMap BC project launched in September 2025 with an ambitious goal: 10,000 samples in its first 12 months. The naturalist community blew past that target in just two and a half months. MycoMap BC quickly became the fastest-



*Thaxterogaster americanoporphyropus*, a new species for British Columbia- photographed and collected by Luke Mikler

growing project of its kind, drawing attention across North America and beyond. Together, participants are building a robust fungal biodiversity dataset for British Columbia—one that will help us better understand our mushrooms, assist taxonomists in sorting out unnamed species, and support fungal conservation by tracking how fungi respond to environmental change.

MycoMap BC is running full tilt, and anyone can join year-round. No special expertise is required. In October 2025, for example, a grade seven class went out and collected 30 mushrooms, at least three of which turned out to be first records for B.C. So far, with only about a quarter of all collected specimens sequenced, more than 10% have proven to be first *iNaturalist* records for the province. More than 1% have what we call a “novel genetic barcode”—they are no match with anything previously sequenced, and many of these may turn out to be new species entirely. While collecting anywhere in B.C. is valuable, we especially encourage people in the province's interior and north to get involved, since those regions remain far less sampled than the Lower Mainland and southern Vancouver Island.

Want to learn more? Follow us at @mycomapbc on Instagram or Facebook and check out [Mycomapbc.org](https://mycomapbc.org) where you'll find our protocol to participate and much more!

Please join us for a webinar on **July 2, 2026** where we'll provide more context, answer any questions, and walk through everything you need to know to get started. Here is the zoom link for registration: <https://bit.ly/4dWYWI5> Or visit [bcnature.org](https://bcnature.org) and use the link on the home page to register. Hope to see you there! ✨



This observation of *Xeromphalina brunneola* was the first record for the Pacific Northwest as a whole! Photographed and collected by Clarice Perkins



# Garden Revolution

Submitted by Ann Tiplady

"Insects are the oxygen that drives ecosystems"  
Professor Doug Tallamy

Here is a suggestion, a recommendation, an antidote to the dismay you might feel when thinking about values, choices, and consequences of our activities in the world. Some decisions are difficult, expensive, or require everyone to participate, so we may feel like tiny drops in the bucket of progress. But we can make a difference, a big difference, in a very short time by gardening with native plants. Every increment of the native plants component in a garden helps, and the greater the proportion of native plants, the greater the help.

Now, there is rewilding, which is about restoring landscapes to a natural, wild-type form and function. And then there is gardening with native plants. I cannot rewild my yard. My urge to garden is too strong. I want to sculpt my garden, place large things here, and small things there, creating spaces that elicit feelings as you look in or walk through. Even when I was farming, working in landscape-scale settings, I felt like I was gardening, using fences and livestock to create a living sculpture.

But the garden is not really working until it is full of insects. Just last week, I visited a large, formal garden with friends. I was disappointed by the lifeless quality of this garden; there are so few insects there. How do you describe a garden with almost no insects?

Can you call it "dead" even though it is full of colourful flowers? It feels so to me and apparently also to my guests; as we wended our way around long paths, admiring these flowers and the artful colour combinations, a friend questioned the seemingly low numbers of insects. I agreed with him, lightening the observation with "well, it has been cold..."

To my sensibility these traditional-looking gardens, be they large landscape gardens or small beds alongside buildings, are functionally dead when they support few insects. It is like visiting a children's playground, with climbing structures and slides and swings, but all is quiet because there are no children to play there.

But, when we plant native plants that evolved here with whole suites of insects, a garden comes alive. And particularly when keystone native plants - those that support the greatest numbers of insect species - are used, the change is revolutionary.

If your goal is to create something new and eye catching, you might plant Woolly Sunflowers (*Eriophyllum lanatum*). They make knee-high masses of bright yellow for weeks in late spring. I swear that even on cloudy days they glow. They are alive with activity; a wide variety of pollinators use the long-lasting flowers, attracting predators who lurk within, ready to pounce. Some bees, males I suspect, patrol back and forth, back and forth, looking for females maybe, or for rivals to body slam, driving them away.

Continued page 28

BCnature Summer 2026

## AVOCET TOURS



UPCOMING TRIPS in 2026/2027

•Southern BC  
Coast in Fall

•Saskatchewan  
~ Cranes &  
Geese

•Alberta ~  
Rockies &  
Prairies

•Sri Lanka



Western Black-eared Wheatear © Chris Charlesworth

**Southern BC Coast in Fall** ~Sept 1 to 5, 2026. Price: **\$3150 CAD**, from Vancouver, BC. Leader: Chris Charlesworth. Explore BC's Lower Mainland & southern Vancouver Is, excellent for shorebirds, sea-birds, & fall migrants. Surfbird, Black Oystercatcher, Heermann's Gull, Rhinoceros Auklet, Marbled Murrelet, & more.

**Saskatchewan in Fall** ~ Sept 30 to Oct 5, 2026. Price: **\$3000 CAD** from Saskatoon, SK. Leader: Chris Charlesworth. On this short, action-packed tour, expect to see thousands of migrating geese, including Snow, Ross's, Gr. White-fronted and Cackling. Huge flocks of Sandhill Cranes await, and we aim to find one of Canada's rarest birds, Whooping Crane. Boreal forest birds like Spruce Grouse and Boreal Chickadee are possible, along with an array of mammals.

**Alberta. Rocky Mtns & Prairies** ~ June 21 to 28, 2027. Price: **\$3700 CAD**, from Calgary, AB. Leader: Chris Charlesworth. Great trip for birds & mammals alike. In the Rockies, we'll look for Elk, bears, Moose & more. Foothill birds include Great Gray Owl, Cape May Warbler, Le Conte's Sparrow. On the prairie, we'll search for Chestnut-collared & Thick-billed longspurs, Sprague's Pipit, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Loggerhead Shrike, Ferruginous Hawk & Burrowing Owl.

**Sri Lanka, Island of Endemics** ~ Feb 1 to 15, 2027. Price: **\$9950 CAD**, from Colombo. Leaders: Steve Ogle & local guides. Join Steve Ogle and search for Sri Lanka's 33 endemic species of birds, which include the Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Sri Lanka Blue Magpie, and Sri Lanka Whistling-Thrush, to name a few. In addition to birds, we hope to see Leopard, Sloth Bear and Asian Elephant! Whale watching may yield the world's largest mammal, the Blue Whale.

**\*\*All prices in Canadian dollars and are subject to 5% GST. Prices based on double occupancy\*\***



Atlantic Puffin © Chris Charlesworth

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Continued from page 27

Or if your goal is a leafy green ground cover, maybe to replace ivy or Vinca (Periwinkle), Native Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria* sp.) could be perfect. You can see why earlier gardeners, even recently, thought ivy and Vinca were good choices; they grow aggressively, crowding out weeds, making a carpet of dark green. But they belong to other ecosystems, where they evolved, and they fit. They do not fit into the ecosystems here; they do not support insects. They make playgrounds with no children.

Some of those missing “children” are the birds that would eat the caterpillars, if the plants supported them. Native species support many caterpillar species. It is caterpillars that birds like wrens and chickadees need to successfully raise babies. When we replace these functionally dead plants with the right native plants, caterpillars come back, and the birds that eat caterpillars do too.



Photo: A. Tiplady

*Woolly Sunflowers in bloom*

The Oak Bay Garden Club has just begun a project to remove Vinca from garden beds around Monterey Centre, planting instead native strawberries and Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*). As we have begun the work of removing vinca, we’ve been struck by how few creatures we find in the soil, and in the above ground stems and leaves. As the strawberries and Kinnikinnick become established, that will change. Insect life will rebound, and birds will as well. ✕



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**We're funding 77 fish & wildlife projects in watersheds impacted by BC Hydro dams.**

**We approved \$12 million for compensation projects in 2026—2027.**

**fwcp.ca**

Photo: Blaire Smith

We're a partnership between BC Hydro, First Nations, the Province of B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and public interest holders to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife in watersheds impacted by BC Hydro dams.



# Featured Key Biodiversity Areas:

## Europa Peatlands

**Featured species:** Mountain Crab-eye, *Acroscyphus sphaerophoroides*

This site is within xà'isla wáwís, the traditional, unceded territory of the Haisla Nation.

*Submitted by Ian Adams, BC KBA Coordinator*

Lichen is a bit different. Not content to follow the typical rules of biology, they are not a single species, but a mutualism between two, and occasionally more, species. They are one of the world's best examples of coexistence. More accurately called a "lichenized fungus," lichens are a happy marriage between a fungus and photosynthesizing agents, or photobiont, usually algae but sometimes cyanobacteria. The fungus provides the base on which they both grow; the photobiont harvests light to feed both. If only we could all get along so well.

Many lichens also have wildly disjunct global distributions, showing up in isolated locations on different continents. How this happens remains a mystery but speaks to the ability of their spores to disperse widely on wind, moisture and perhaps wide-ranging animal vectors.

Mountain Crab-eye (*Acroscyphus sphaerophoroides*) is an example of such a widely dispersed lichen. First described in the Himalayas, it is now also known from Japan, South Africa, and Argentina. In North America, it is found in wet (but not too wet) coastal forests of Alaska, Washington, and here in B.C. It is now known from 13 occurrences in Canada, all in coastal B.C. forests.

Even as a lichen it is unique, being the only species in the genus *Acroscyphus*. The crab-eye name comes from its distinctive stalk-like growths that have black apothecia (cup-like fruiting bodies that support the



*Aerial view of Europa Peatlands Key Biodiversity Area, on a bench at the north end of Europa Lake (not in picture), above Gardiner Canal*

lichen's spores) at the end, resembling a crab's eye.

The species is red-listed by the BC Conservation Data Centre and ranked nationally as N2 (imperiled) by NatureServe. COSEWIC and the federal Species at Risk Act consider it a species of Special Concern. There are currently four Key Biodiversity Areas in British Columbia that feature Mountain Crab-eye: Williams Creek Ecological Reserve (southeast of Terrace, B.C.), Williams Creek (additional occurrence southeast of Terrace on Crown land), Europa Lake Conservancy (located at Europa Creek), and Ksi X'anmaas Conservancy (near Lachballach Lake)

Europa Peatlands in the Europa Lake Conservancy is one of the more remote, inaccessible Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) in B.C. This is fitting as Mountain Crab-eye is one of the most inaccessible species! This is not a species that your average naturalist happens across on a Sunday afternoon club hike.

Mountain crab-eye grows almost exclusively on the very top of large dead or spike-top trees, suggesting the lichen's spores are dispersed by birds, likely catching a ride on their feet when the bird lands on a dead-top tree with the lichen. As such, an up-close inspection is usually impossible unless the spike has fallen to the ground.

Ironically, Mountain Crab-eye was first discovered at Europa by Patrick Williston on a large boulder. This remains the only known location in Canada where the lichen is not growing at the top of a large tree. The damp conditions of peatland fens are critical to the lichen as they gather virtually all of their water needs from the humid air.

Europa Peatlands is a series of wetland complexes, small lakes, and tarns interspersed with open forests of mostly Mountain Hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) and Yellow Cedar (*Callitropsis nootkatensis*). It



*Mountain Crab-eye Lichen detail showing black apothecia on the crab-eye like stalks*



sits on a bench in a wildly remote and ruggedly beautiful location. The KBA straddles the north end of Europa Lake Conservancy which is centred on the 10 kilometre-long Europa Lake, some 600 metres above the Gardiner Canal, south of Kitimat. The peatlands lie just northwest of the lake above a spectacular waterfall that plunges to another small lake before a final drop into the ocean inlet.

As a Key Biodiversity Area, Europa Peatlands now has national recognition as a site of high conservation

## Leave a Trace

Submitted by Charles Fortin

### Day 2 - Aug 16, 2025, 5:24 pm

I hear massive waves crashing on reefs all around me as the irregular swell shoves my kayak side to side. The fog is dense. Visibility is limited to 50 metres. One paddle stroke at a time, I maintain a safe distance from Cam's kayak. My back hatch is taking in water, getting heavier by the minute. We need to find a safe place to land as soon as possible.

"Four more kilometres to go, buddy!" Cam, my expedition partner, shouts over the roaring waves.

Sheltered by a small eddy, a group of four Sea Otters watch us drift past them, puzzled. This is a rough start to our 15-day expedition on the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

### Day 4 - Aug 18, 2025, 6:58 pm

The sound of the raindrops on the tarp blends softly with the jet noise of our camping stove. I am watching over the rehydrating chili as Cam is tidying up camp for the night. The rough weather has stranded us to this beach for the last two days.

"Charlie, look up!"

Standing right in front of us is a young Sea Wolf, apparently intrigued by our gourmet dinner. Its tail is tightly lodged between its back legs. I quickly reach for my camera while Cam carefully makes his way back to the tarp. We hold our breaths in silence, as the juvenile parades around our camp for a moment. We watch it stroll away on the long beach and vanish into the tree line.

We can barely hold our excitement: one of our main objectives for this expedition is to document the presence of endemic coastal species, in collaboration with BC Nature. Our main contact, Liam Ragan, named the species worth watching for. The Sea Wolves topped that list.

### Day 9 - Aug 23, 2025, 7:36 am

We are paddling in silence as the sun rises above the distant mountain range. The ocean is calm, with barely any wind: perfect conditions for rounding this

importance, highlighting the value of not just rare species such as Mountain Crab-eye Lichen, but the contribution of peatland ecosystems to our natural world and rich biodiversity.

More information on Canada's Key Biodiversity Area program is available at <https://kbacanada.org/>

More information on Europa Peatlands KBA is found at <https://kbacanada.org/site/?SiteCode=BC336> ✂

All Photo Credits: P. Bartemucci, J. Pojar and P. Williston



Young Sea Wolf, West Coast of Vancouver Island

exposed peninsula. The only sound is our regular paddle strokes, until the loud barks of a haul-out of roughly 200 sea lions reach us from the rocks ahead.

Today's route brings us to a Key Biodiversity Area where Liam hopes we can confirm the presence of a rare plant unseen for more than a decade, the Estuarine Paintbrush. The reality of field work catches up to us: no easy landing in sight. We will have to look for the plant elsewhere.

The good weather is working against us. Larger animals prefer hiding in the shade during the hot hours of the day and limit their movement to dawn and dusk. We extend our wolf-watch hours but find only fresh tracks. Maybe tomorrow.

### Day 14 - Aug 28, 2025, 7:04 am

It is a particularly calm morning, with a thick layer of fog holding everything still. It is the last full day of the expedition. We have not seen any Sea Wolves since the juvenile ten days ago. We decided to head out to a long, narrow beach lined with fresh tracks. At low tide, the smell of rotting algae is particularly potent. We keep exploring anyway.

In a split second, the fog lifts, revealing an adult male Sea Wolf strolling along the beach past us. A golden ray of sunshine breaks through the clouds and lights

Continued page 31



**Sea Otters on Vancouver Island are a major marine conservation success story. Extirpated in Canada by the early 1900s, 89 Alaskan Sea Otters were reintroduced to Checleset Bay on the Island's west coast between 1969 and 1972. Today the provincial population is estimated to be approximately 4,000.**



Photo: C. Fortin

*A curious Sea Otter*

tent footprints. The first slide is up on the screen, with the expedition title in all caps. The BC Nature logo, bottom right. The short-film file is open on my laptop, ready to hit play. I take a deep breath.

Cam pokes his head through the curtain door. "Showtime, buddy!"

The Sea Wolves are still patrolling the shorelines. Your own adventures can support that work. Check BC Nature's KBA map: if your route crosses one, reach out to Liam Ragan before you go. Your observations from the field help protect more of this coast. Get out there and Leave a Trace. ✂

## John Neville Bird Hide Dedication

*Submitted by - Margriet Ruurs*

Over the past year, members of our trail maintenance and construction team built a beautiful bird hide at a pond along the Cupples Trail (North End) on Salt Spring Island. Recently, the bird hide was dedicated to the memory of local bird expert John Neville, who passed away in April 2025. Materials for the hide were covered by a grant from BC Nature and the BC Naturalists' Foundation Club Support Grant.

John and his wife Heather have called Salt Spring home since 1998. Inspired by bird song, John authored two books and numerous articles as well as producing many DVDs and online postings of bird song. John was an active member of both Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club and Nature Salt Spring. He served as President of BC Nature from 2010 to 2014. After his presidency, John served as both Past President and Regional Coordinator for Vancouver Island and spent many years on the BC Naturalists' Foundation Board. He was known for his fascinating talks and presentations on owls or birding. Check out his recordings here: <https://www.nevillerecording.com/> and be sure to check out the new bird hide if you are ever on Salt Spring Island! It was officially dedicated by members of the design and building team along with wife Heather Neville, daughters, and grandchildren. ✂



up the animal as it turns towards us, quietly acknowledging our presence before resuming its daily patrol. The moment might have lasted 60 seconds. I notice my hands shaking on the camera.

**Victoria, B.C. - April 9, 2026, 6:26 pm**

I am in the back of Robinson's Outdoor Store. I can hear the crowd outside. Friends gather at the improvised bar where local drinks raise funds for BC Nature. Pinned on the board to my left is the poster announcing the next two weeks of presentations.

I tune out the noise, taking a last moment to review the game plan. The prints line the walls. The windows are blocked with



# Sharing Wondrous Nature Moments Across Generations

Submitted by Katelyn Bissat, NatureKids BC

For many naturalists, a deep-seated connection to nature starts with a simple action, whether you are walking the shoreline, tending to a bird feeder, or planting your first tree. These are all subtle reminders of how the small things passed on across generations continue to help us understand and respect the natural world today.

At NatureKids BC, we believe that these moments deserve to be cultivated as early as possible in a young child's life. At the heart of our organization are the countless instances where a curious somebody fell in love with Nature, an instance meant to be shared with the generations before them. For this reason, we've dedicated ourselves to providing guided outings called Explorer Days which support children in developing curiosity, confidence, and a sense of belonging in nature. In the summer months especially, longer days and warmer weather offer ideal conditions for outdoor exploration.

For grandparents and extended family members, these outings can be particularly meaningful. Sharing time outdoors does not require extensive planning or specialized knowledge. It benefits from patience, attentiveness, and a willingness to follow a child's sense of wonder. Noticing seasonal changes, identifying familiar and new species, or simply spending time outside observing nature can leave lasting impressions.

Knowledge that's gained over years of appreciating and stewarding nature becomes a true gem when it's passed down. When you have an impact on the people who will carry this passion into the future, you do a service not only to them but to all of British Columbia, ensuring its ecosystems are loved and cared for in a way that encourages reciprocity and interconnectedness.



*Kamloops NatureKids Club learning about biocontrol methods to manage invasive plants at Shumway Lake (Photo: NatureKidsBC Staff)*

Consider inviting a young person in your life to go outside with you this summer or take part in a NatureKids BC Explorer Day with us. All upcoming events can be found at <https://naturekidsbc.ca/>.

Support the wonder of nature, become an individual member today, sponsor a club or Explorer Day. Reach out to Katelyn at [development@naturekidsbc.ca](mailto:development@naturekidsbc.ca). ✨



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# Letters to the Editor

The question you posed in your recent editorial mushroom article, 'What is ethical' is a good one. In a broader sense, we naturalists must continually ask this question, and yes, as you say, "it's about what we choose to leave behind."

Each morning upon awakening, I/we must ask so many questions, like: How much heat is needed to keep the body warm? How much to use the electric stove, blender, radio, TV, DVD player, even the electric car?

Personally, on behalf of Nature, I've been writing Nature articles. And for many years my wife and I have been presenting photographic Nature shows to various organizations, as far away as Williams Lake, B.C. and Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the U.S.

Always enthusiastically received, the latest (our new Bald Eagle show) was given a few days ago to Nature Cowichan in Duncan, we must ask how much of our precious natural resources are being exchanged for these programs? These include the use of transportation, camera, computer, projector, speakers, etc. Are our presentations educational, entertaining, and inspiring enough to justify such use of Nature?

## Natural Justice Salvaging Sunken Boats

*Submitted by Ben van Drimmelen*

**A**bandoned and wrecked boats pollute the marine and fore-shore environment up and down the B.C. coast. Taxpayers have borne many of the removal and disposal costs associated with problem vessels. The time taken for salvage and removal is frustrating to naturalists and shoreline communities. Delays come about not only because salvage and removal operations are expensive; they can be risky to implement.

A fellow had two sailboats moored on the south coast in 2016. While he was away sailing on one of his vessels, his other boat broke loose from its mooring buoy and ran aground to be submerged near shore.

A bylaw officer with the local government checked a survey of vessels completed a year



previously; there was no listed owner for the vessel. The vessel also had no identification number on the outside, such as a hull number. As no owner could be found, the bylaw officer followed procedures to get permission to remove the vessel – she sent an email to Transport Canada's "receiver of wreck". Within days, the receiver of wreck gave the go-ahead, so a tug and barge company was hired to remove the sunken sailboat from the water. The boat and its contents were destroyed, placed in bins, and shipped away for disposal.

Two weeks later, the boat owner returned. Outraged, he called the RCMP to report theft and destruction of his personal property. He subsequently sued the local government for "conversion" - intentionally taking his vessel in a

There is no absolute answer to these questions - it's moment-to-moment decision-making all along the way. Although so much can be left behind in daily living, even sitting quietly in my bedroom all day and eating only essential foods, may not satisfy my imagination as to a good life.

In the end, of course, all forms are impermanent. We can't take anything too seriously. So, we all carry on, hopefully asking those challenging ethical questions, trusting that the "Angels of our better natures" will be the guiding light.

*Dave Manning – Nature Salt Spring*

I've just started reading the Spring *BCnature* issue.

Thank you for all your hard work on it. I hope you will print a correction in the next issue. The Editorial contains a serious error. A 100-mile diet is not the most effective way of eating in support of a healthy environment. What matters far more is what one eats, not where it is grown. Reducing consumption of animal products, especially beef, is the most effective way to reduce one's environmental footprint, including GHG emissions, with respect to eating.

*J. Welton, Nature Victoria*

manner so serious that it justified compensation for its full value, which he claimed was almost \$100,000. The basic legal rule of compensation for conversion is not to use market value, but rather the value to the owner. If the owner could demonstrate that the sailboat had greater actual value, that actual value should be compensated for. There was evidence that the sailboat had no realistic market value at the time, but the owner said it had considerable sentimental value and valuable content. (However, courts do not normally compensate for sentimental value.)

In this case, the court noted that the sailboat's contents would have had no value once the boat had sunk – which was the situation before the local government's salvage operation began. Also, the owner had been a bit shady in court in the past, claiming some years previously that a relative owned the boat. The court pointed

*Continued page 34*



out that the owner could not come to the courts and make contradictory statements about vessel ownership as it suited him. Given those dodgy bits, the judge decided that \$5,000 would be compensation enough in the circumstances. The boat owner was angry enough at the low amount to appeal against the judge's decision to the Court of

Appeal (the province's highest court). Three justices found that the judge had carefully considered the issues but rejected the boat owner's version of events. The original judge had to assess damages with no reliable evidence of the claimed loss, so he made his best estimate.✂

## BC Nature 2026 Awards

Each year at BC Nature's Annual General Meeting and Conference, we celebrate the dedication, passion, and achievements of outstanding naturalists from across British Columbia. In 2026, ten exceptional individuals were recognized for their contributions to conservation, natural history, citizen science, education, and stewardship. In this edition, we are pleased to feature four of this year's award recipients. The remaining six honourees will be profiled in our fall issue.

Please join us in congratulating and thanking these remarkable individuals for their commitment to Knowing Nature and Keeping it Worth Knowing.

### Dr. Susan J. Hannon - Ian McTaggart-Cowan Outstanding Naturalist Award

Dr. Susan J. Hannon, Professor Emerita of Ecology at the University of Alberta and long-time Salt Spring Island resident, has dedicated more than 50 years to ecological research, conservation, and public engagement with nature. An internationally respected scientist, she has authored or co-authored more than 100 scientific publications and mentored graduate students whose work continues to influence conservation practice across Canada. Her research began with studies of Sooty Grouse near Courtenay, B.C., followed by a 13-year study of Willow Ptarmigan in northwestern B.C. She later focused on the impacts of forest fragmentation on boreal birds, working to improve forestry

practices for conservation.

Since retiring in 2009, Dr. Hannon has continued her conservation leadership through extensive volunteer work. She has served with the Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club, The Nature Trust of BC, Birds Canada, and the Islands Trust Conservancy. Her longest commitment has been with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy, where she served as board member, President, Stewardship Committee lead, and coordinator of the "Bring Back the Bluebirds" nest box program.

Among her most significant achievements was helping secure the protection of approximately 160 hectares of endangered Garry Oak ecosystem on Salt Spring



Nancy Flood (L) presenting to Dr. Susan J. Hannon (R)

Island in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Through scientific leadership, stewardship, and community outreach, Dr. Hannon has made an exceptional contribution to the protection of B.C.'s natural heritage.✂



Nancy Flood (L) presenting to Harold Sellers (R)

### Harold Sellers, North Okanagan Naturalists BC Nature Club Service Award

Harold Sellers has been an exceptionally active and influential volunteer with the North Okanagan Naturalists Club (NONC) since joining in 2009. Through his leadership, enthusiasm, and commitment to conservation, Harold has had a profound impact on the club's growth, visibility, and stewardship initiatives. |

Over the past 15 years, Harold

has served in numerous board roles and has been the driving force behind many of the club's most successful projects. Beyond NONC, he has also contributed to BC Nature, the BC Bluebird Society, the Ribbons of Green Trails Society, and the North Okanagan Gleaners.

Harold has played a leading role in stewardship and restoration efforts at Swan Lake Nature



Reserve and initiated the club's Saturday morning nature walks, which have become a cornerstone of public outreach and environmental education. He also launched the club's Facebook page, helping expand its reach

## **Jim Boulter, Comox Valley Naturalists BC Nature Regional Award**

Jim Boulter became involved with the Comox Valley Naturalists Society (CVN) shortly after moving to the Comox Valley in 2014; inspired by a public walk through what is now Vanier Nature Park and concerned by the condition of the Garry oak ecosystem, he and his wife, Annette, quickly became active members.

Jim played a major role in organizing the 2016 BC Nature AGM hosted by CVN and became President of CVN that same year. As President, Jim strengthened member engagement through informative newsletters, weekly environmental updates, and special field trips, including visits to Mitlenatch Island. He also helped organize the successful 2018 Urban Forest and Sustainable Cities Conference in Courtenay. Known for his collaborative leadership, Jim supported CVN interest

to more than 4,400 followers, and continues to edit the club's monthly Newspacket and weekly e-bulletins.

Known for his energy, action-oriented leadership, and ability

groups through both hands-on stewardship and administrative expertise.

Jim was deeply involved in conservation projects, including native plant rescue efforts associated with the Northern Condensory Bridge and Comox Valley Airport expansion. Former Wetlands Restoration Director Murray Little praised Jim's leadership and willingness to work alongside volunteers in difficult conditions to salvage native species such as Fawn Lily.

In 2019, Jim led efforts to develop restoration plans for the Vanier Nature Park Garry Oak ecosystem. This work resulted in extensive ecological studies and collaboration with experts across Vancouver Island. The City of Courtenay approved the five-year restoration project in 2023, with

to inspire others, Harold consistently works to recruit new members, strengthen community partnerships, and promote broader recognition of nature conservation throughout British Columbia. ✂



*Jim hard at work on a restoration project*

restoration beginning in 2024. Although Jim stepped down as CVN President in 2020 for health reasons, he remains an active and valued member of the Education and Outreach team. ✂



*Karen hard at work on Tree of the Year program*

## **Karen Cummins, Comox Valley Naturalists Society BC Nature Club Service Award**

Since joining the Comox Valley Naturalists Society (CVN) in 2016, Karen Cummins has become an exceptional leader, mentor, and advocate for conservation in the Comox Valley. Her volunteer contributions span habitat restoration, public education, invasive species management, and community engagement.

Karen has played a central role in numerous conservation initiatives, including coordinating wetland restoration projects at Little River and administering invasive plant removal programs in partnership with the Comox Valley Regional District. She co-leads the

Vanier Nature Park Garry Oak Restoration Project, facilitates club botany walks, and organized CVN's popular Tree of the Year program for five years. Beyond CVN, she contributes to stream sampling with Beaufort Watershed Stewards, supports native plant initiatives with MARS Wildlife Rescue, and manages a therapeutic courtyard garden at Glacier View Lodge, a complex care facility in Comox.

Karen's greatest strength is her ability to inspire and empower others. Through outreach events, public information booths, and hands-on work parties, she



Continued from page 35

has encouraged countless community members to become involved in stewardship and conservation. Her mentorship helped launch additional public education programs within CVN and inspired local residents to organize restoration efforts such as the Rotary Park ivy pull initiative. Combining diplomacy,

organizational skills, scientific knowledge, and good humour, Karen brings people together and helps them discover how they can contribute. As longtime restoration leader Frank Hovenden noted, “Karen is a first-class leader and has my total respect and admiration.” ✨

## Douglas Lake Field Trip

Submitted by Diane Mckelvey

Reprinted from the Kamloops Naturalists Spring 2026 Edition

About 30 people from the Kamloops Naturalist Club, the Nicola Naturalists Society, along with others from farther afield, gathered at Douglas Lake Ranch on the morning of April 18 for a celebration of Sandhill Cranes and the grasslands. Our hosts were Loretta Holmes and Opal Charters from the Upper Nicola Band (kwU StemtimA/?), BC Nature, and Douglas Lake Ranch.

The day began with an amazing opportunity to observe about 7,500 Sandhill cranes. We found the cranes standing in a marsh just east of Douglas Lake. About fifteen minutes after we arrived, the cranes took flight, and shortly after came to rest in a mowed field a couple of kilometres down the road. This gave us another opportunity to take photos and view the feeding cranes through the spotting scopes brought by several observers. After an hour or so, the air temperature had risen appreciably, and the cranes lifted off and—vocalizing loudly—went in search of thermals that would help them fly the 100 kilometres or so to reach their next overnight stop. We heard later that several thousand other cranes rested overnight at various other locations on Douglas Lake Ranch.

Our next stop was the installation ceremony for a sign celebrating the designation of the Douglas Lake Plateau as a Key Biodiversity Area. This designation has taken years to accomplish, and is thanks to the partnership with BC Nature, the Upper Nicola Band, and Douglas Lake Ranch, and is a testament to the hard work of Liam Ragan, Gary Hunt, Rich Doucette, Alan Burger, the late Rick Howie and many others. The sign recognizes and celebrates the grasslands of Douglas Lake and surrounding area, which provide a home (or migration stop-over

site) for rare and threatened species such as Burrowing Owls, Lewis’s Woodpeckers, and American Badgers, as well as a significant proportion of North America’s Sandhill Crane population. This Key Biodiversity Area is more than 34,000 ha, extending almost as far north as Kamloops.

Following a ceremonial welcome from Upper Nicola Band members, a permanent sign was unveiled, recognizing the importance of these grasslands in providing habitat for threatened wildlife species. The sign is located beside the road that follows the northwest side of Douglas Lake, next to the old “Empire of Grass” sign. Following the unveiling, we adjourned to the church on the Douglas Lake Ranch and enjoyed a lunch provided by BC Nature.

It was a beautiful sunny spring day, and we were able to observe not only cranes but also many other bird species, as well as a lone coyote who wove his way (peacefully) through the field of cranes. A Key Biodiversity Area indeed! ✨



Photo: D. Brodie

Sandhill Cranes by the 1000's



Photo: L. Ragan

Signage installation at Douglas Lake Plateau KBA



# 2025 Rene Savenye Scholarship: A Year Later

## Rachel Foster

Submitted by Rachel Foster



Olivia Kwan (left) and Rachel Foster identifying grass species during a survey at the site (Field 19W, Alaksen NWA)

Originally from northern England, I moved to Canada in 2016 and embarked on the challenging but rewarding path toward becoming a biologist. I have recently completed the Ecological Restoration BSc program at the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

I became heavily involved with birds over the last six years, working on contracts with non-profit organizations, the federal government, and environmental consultancies. The work was varied, and I was able to experience many settings throughout B.C. and Yukon. My first field job was mapping and monitoring woodpecker nests in burns throughout Yukon. That was my first experience of camping in the remote bush, encountering aggressive mosquitoes, and regularly running into moose and bears.

Other work experiences included becoming a Bander-in-Charge for WildResearch, locating nests on pipelines in northern B.C., working with species-at-risk in the Southern interior, and radio-tagging and bleeding sparrow species for research studying genetic patterns. Throughout years of fieldwork, I became interested in understanding how habitat structure influences the different bird communities. I am particularly interested in overwintering bird ecology, which is underrepresented in conservation planning, even though winter survival strongly influences long-term population trends.

Observing how birds rely on urban and coastal refuges during winter inspired me to design my Applied Research Project (ARP) for the final year of Ecological Restoration to address this gap. Rather than being assigned a research topic, I independently approached Environment Canada to develop the ARP on one of their leased agricultural fields in Alaksen National Wildlife Area. The ARP investigated how habitat

*Continued page 38*

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*Continued from page 37*

restoration can improve overwintering bird habitat within a former agricultural field by transforming the field into a wet meadow with diverse native vegetation and shallow wetland features.

After conducting point count surveys from October to March, my teammates, Olivia and Eva, and I found that the three most common species in the field were Marsh Wren, Northern Harrier, and Song Sparrow. To enhance species richness and abundance, we designed a mosaic of riparian trees and shrubs, wet meadow, and open areas using native, hardy vegetation. We selected species based on their ability to withstand drought and ephemerally wetted areas: Red Alder, Black Hawthorn, Pacific Crabapple, Salmonberry, Nootka Rose, Red-osier Dogwood, Three-square Bulrush, and Common Rush. Using this mix of berry-producing trees, herbaceous plants, and thicket-forming shrubs ensured the field could support a variety of songbirds, wading birds, and waterfowl

## A Birdathon50 in Northern BC

*Submitted by Angelina Joiner, Prince George Naturalists*

**O**n May 23, 2026, Team ECDOplasm took part in Birds Canada's Birdathon50, celebrating 50 years of such events. The Birdathon is something I take part in every year. It requires a very long, but fun day trying to observe the most bird species possible in a 24-hour period. The Birdathon is a great way to raise money for bird conservation with Birds Canada.

We birded for 19.5 hours and drove about 630 kilometres all over the Prince George and Vanderhoof area. The weather was not great. It was rainy and cold most of the day; it was occasionally sunny, but still SUPER windy. When we finished, it was only 3°C! The high temperature for the day was a balmy 13°C.

I started outside my urban Prince George apartment building at 4:40 a.m. to cross off some city dwellers like House Sparrow and House Finch before we even got on the road. This all was helpful, so we did not have to drive all over looking for them in the middle of the day. We then headed out toward the airport to see what kinds of raptors we could find. We stopped to gather our third team member and get some needed feeder birds too. After that, we stopped at Tabor Marsh to grab Virginia Rail. We then headed toward Purden Lake Provincial Park and Purden Ski Village to the only mountain elevation we got to in the day. Our "normal" Chickadee species in Prince George is the Black-capped Chickadee, so it is always a must to head to Purden for Chestnut-backed Chickadee. After going up and down the mountain, we cut across the valley via the Bowron Forest Service Road. We missed a lot of species we would have normally found on the route,

throughout the coastal winters.

My contract with Environment Canada was not renewed due to mass budget cuts, so the Rene Savenye scholarship was incredibly helpful during my last year of school. By lessening my financial strain, it has enabled me to focus on the ARP during an intense and demanding final semester. Scholarships like these motivate me to continue working with birds despite the multiple pressures on the conservation and research sector.

After graduating, I secured a short contract counting Western Sandpipers in the Fraser River Estuary during peak migration, and this summer I look forward to nest searching and conducting point count surveys in northern B.C.

Thank you to BC Naturalists' Foundation and BC Nature for the 2025 Rene Savenye Scholarship. ✨



*Photo: A. Joiner*

*Female Mountain Bluebird near the nestbox*

almost certainly due to the weather.

The whitecaps on Eaglet Lake made it almost certain we would not have many sightings. A silver lining to the terrible weather though, was that we got to see Black Swifts which would normally be hunting a lot higher up in the sky. We made our way back to the city, hitting most of the hot spots along the way. We got a few more necessary urban species like Rock Pigeon, and we stopped along the Nechako River to observe a sand bar and added Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, and California Gull to our bird species count.

In the afternoon, we headed toward Vanderhoof, making another small detour for a family of Mountain Bluebirds occupying a nest box that we heard about. The weather in Vanderhoof looked better, but the wind was really blowing now. We set out for Nulki



Lake to observe whatever nature had in store and found the lake whipped into full-fledged waves by the wind. We could have gone surfing! There were a few brave Common Loons out on the lake and some Herring Gulls flying around, but not a lot else. We were lucky to spot some Yellow-headed Blackbirds in a field near a pond in the area. I had never seen so many males together before. It was quite a sight. After a lot of driving, we headed back to Prince George with a few owl stops along the way. We ended around midnight with 99 species observed. That may seem a bit low compared to some Okanagan Birdathons, but it was pretty good for this area and the weather we had to work with.

In addition to the 99 bird species, we also encountered quite a lot of wildlife. We saw elk, moose, three Black Bears, Snowshoe Hare, beaver, a weasel with a prey in its mouth, a coyote, and many deer. Hello, Canadian Safari!

Overall, it was a really fun Birdathon and most importantly, we made our fundraising goal! We are looking forward to the Birdathon next year. (Hopefully, it's a little less damp!)✂



Photo: A. Joiner  
*Male Yellow-headed Blackbirds foraging*

## Naturalist Mentor - Phil Henderson

*Submitted by Lisa Dreves and Gareth Pugh*

Phil's environmental practice keeps him very busy all over B.C. but every year he takes time out to lead walks for the Langley Field Naturalists, Derby Reach Brae Island Park Association, Friends of Semiahmoo Bay, and other naturalist groups in the Lower Mainland. His 'Birds and Bryophytes' walk shares his vast knowledge of mosses, lichens and liverworts with the group, making learning the different names and identification tricks fun through humorous stories as folks work to check off what they see on Phil's supplied checklist. He also leads walks in Derby Bog (restricted area of Derby Reach Regional Park). Last year, due to high demand from people wishing to glimpse this rare habitat, he took the time to lead two walks!

Every year since 2011, Phil has organized a spring bird count in and around Derby Reach Regional Park and Fort Langley. This count attracts many birders that Phil has met over years of birding, but the main

purpose of Phil's count is to introduce new birders to the delight of birding. Phil carefully pairs budding new birders with caring experienced birders and sends them off into the woods to learn the tricks of identifying birds by sight and call. Many new birders have been inspired by Phil's count. Considering recent studies on the mental health benefits of birding and birding with friends, we think that Phil has done a world of good to countless individuals.

Phil has also participated with the NatureKidsBC Explorer Days, leading them on birding and bog explorations.

Phil is also a treasure when it comes to technical reports. He is always willing to look over reports to ensure they are well written and backed by sound science. This is certainly an asset when a naturalist group requesting action from different levels of government is hoping to be taken seriously. ✂

**The Naturalist Mentor** program encourages members of our communities to be involved in sharing their knowledge and recognizes and acknowledges those who do.

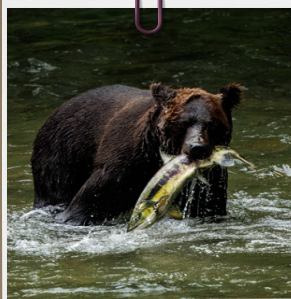
We encourage BC Nature Clubs to nominate a mentoring leader in their club and/or community to be acknowledged for their volunteer work sharing nature and traditional knowledge with others of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

A Naturalist Mentor shares their knowledge and skills in many different ways, through field trip discovery, talks at community events and classrooms, as advisors to community leaders, teachers, and students.

A Naturalist Mentor, while sharing their knowledge and skills, leads others to understand, respect, and care for nature. To nominate a mentor today, contact Walter Thorne: [info@bcnature.ca](mailto:info@bcnature.ca) ✂



## 2026 Photo Contest BC Nature and Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation



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Contest Categories

Botany & Landscapes

Birds

Wildlife (excluding birds)

Conservation Lands & Wildlife Management Areas\*

Youth

*\*Watch for a map of eligible Conservation Lands and Wildlife Management Areas on the BC Nature website.*

So charge those batteries, clear those memory cards, and start capturing the natural wonders of British Columbia. We can't wait to see the province through your lens!

Your next great nature photograph could be a winner.