

Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



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In This Issue:

Spring Planting – Become a Saanich Naturescape Hero! | [Pulling Together Volunteer Profile](#) | Bridging Traditions: Native Plant Sale | [Tackling Invasive Plants](#) | Managing Invasive Holly in Cedar Hill Park | [Help Protect our Drinking Water Supply!](#) | Spring at Haliburton Farm: Community Tours | [Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Initiative](#) | Saanich Parks Community Events | [What is the Rocky Point Bird Observatory Up To?](#) | Events | [Savour Saanich: Local Farms and Food](#)



Spring Planting

Become a Saanich Naturescape Hero!

By Renée Cenerini, Environmental Education Coordinator, District of Saanich Parks

Do the longer, sunnier days have you thinking about spring planting? It's the time of year when many of us start wanting to add some colour to our yards and get our hands in the dirt! You might get tempted to grab some of the colourful plants for sale this time of year, but did you know that some plants are potentially invasive?

Invasive plants are a major threat to our health, environment, and the special biological diversity of Saanich and Southern Vancouver Island. While some invasive species look pretty, they may establish quickly and spread beyond your yard, taking over areas that have sensitive ecosystems and rare plants. While you might be familiar with high-profile examples such as Scotch Broom, English Ivy, and Himalayan Blackberry, you might not know that others such as Butterfly Bush, Common Periwinkle, and even Foxglove can cause problems.

[Grow Me Instead - Invasive Species Council of British Columbia \(bcinvasives.ca\)](https://bcinvasives.ca) is a great resource to help identify some of BC's most "unwanted" garden plants and suggest several native plant alternatives that will look great, likely require less ongoing maintenance, and help native wildlife. For example, instead of that Butterfly Bush, you could grow:

- Fragrant and showy **Lewis's Mock Orange** (bcinvasives.ca/play-your-part/plantwise/grow-me-instead/lewiss-mock-orange/)
- Hummingbird-friendly and beautiful **Red-flowering Currant** (bcinvasives.ca/play-your-part/plantwise/grow-me-instead/red-flowering-currant/).



Lewis's Mock Orange

Gardening with native species is also an important part of Naturescaping in Saanich. By planting native species, you are helping to create wildlife habitat and provide wildlife food while supporting biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change! This makes you a Naturescaping hero and part of the District of Saanich's commitment to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; calling on everyone to revive damaged ecosystems and address biodiversity loss.

Want to learn more about Saanich's Naturescape program? Check out the Saanich website at www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/natural-environment/naturescape-program.html.

Happy planting!

Pulling Together Volunteer Profile Audrey Barnes

By Audrey Barnes (*Pulling Together* Volunteer) and Katie Turner
(Park Stewardship Coordinator, District of Saanich Parks)

Audrey has been a *Pulling Together* restoration assistant volunteer since 2009 and recently signed up as a Lead Steward volunteer for Whitehead Park. Audrey and other wonderful volunteers meet every Monday to restore a natural area adjacent to Todd Creek. Over many years, this committed volunteer group, with the support of Saanich Parks staff, have converted a monoculture of invasive Himalayan Blackberry into a biodiverse riparian habitat. Stop by and check it out!



What do you enjoy most about volunteering with Saanich Parks?

I love the feeling of giving back to my community while meeting up and working outdoors with a group of friends and learning so much about the environment, restoration, and native and nonnative plants thanks to Saanich Volunteer *Pulling Together* learning days.

Tell us about one of your most memorable experiences volunteering?

Ours is a true wilderness park on a lake. We have encountered voles, jet black mink, a turtle laying eggs, and every bird and duck imaginable. A couple of weeks ago, we even tried to rescue a beaver that had sadly been hit by a car.

Tell us a bit about yourself?

I grew up on a fox and mink ranch in the prairies and, when my Grandfather was no longer able to work on his farm in Saanich, we bought it and continued to raise our family there along with a barnyard full of animals. When I retired we sold the old farm that had been in the family for 80 years and moved, not far from our old place, but with no animals or gardens to tend. After leading such a busy life outdoors I was lost. Having chatted with a lovely lady that was a Saanich Volunteer, I decided to join in the fun and have been volunteering in the parks weekly ever since.



For more information about how you can volunteer with Audrey and the *Pulling Together* Volunteer Program: [Volunteer for Pulling Together | District of Saanich](#)

Join a work party: [Events Calendar | District of Saanich](#)



Chocolate Lily



Oregon Stonecrop



Red-flowering Currant



Tall Fringecup

Bridging Traditions: Vancouver Island's Native Plant Sale

By Randi Church, Ethical Space Knowledge Facilitator, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Weaving Indigenous Wisdom with Modern Sustainability

A treasured annual event is upon us: the Native Plant Sale hosted by Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, now in its 28th year. This event serves as a bridge between Indigenous knowledge and contemporary ecological practices.

Embracing modernity, the sale offered online pre-orders (through March 31), ensuring accessibility to all. Popular species like Red-flowering Currants and Chocolate Lilies fly off the racks, but the sale celebrates a diverse array of native plants, from delicate Tall Fringecups to rugged Oregon Stonecrop.

Beyond aesthetics, planting native species offers numerous benefits. These plants are resilient, requiring less water and maintenance, while also providing vital food and shelter for local wildlife. By choosing native plants, gardeners can contribute to the health and sustainability of their local landscape.

The event culminates in plant pick-up days for pre-orders, April 13 - 15, and a final in-person sale on April 20 and 21, where community bonds are strengthened through knowledge sharing and shared experiences. Together, attendees honour the past, cultivate the present, and sow the seeds of a more sustainable future.

Memberships offer exclusive benefits, such as discounts on the sale and workshops, and signify a commitment to restoring natural areas and honouring Indigenous heritage. Through additional workshops and tours offered by the Nature Sanctuary, attendees grow their understanding of native flora and fauna, and deepen their connection to the land.

As we continue to navigate our legacy choices and the complexity of colonization, the Native Plant Sale stands as a beacon of unity and resilience. It embodies the spirit of Two-Eyed Seeing, offering a holistic approach to environmental stewardship that honours both Indigenous wisdom and Western practice.

For more information, see the following:

Swan Lake Native Plant Sale: www.swanlake.bc.ca/nativeplantsale/

Native Plant Workshops: www.swanlake.bc.ca/nativeplantworkshops/

Tours: swanlake.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/swanlake/publicaccess/eventCalendarBig.jsp

Tackling Invasive Plants - Get Involved!

By Renée Cenerini, Environmental Education Coordinator,
District of Saanich Parks

As the days get longer and warmer, the vigorous growth of plant life that we depend on is a blessing but the rampant growth of introduced, invasive plants can feel overwhelming. Preventing the spread of invasive plants to maintain and enhance healthy landscapes, habitats, and communities doesn't need to be complicated. A great first step is learning a few key species and what to do if you see them.

There are many good resources available to help identify and deal with invasive plants in our region. Some of the invasive plants identified as priority for identification are listed on the Saanich website ([Invasive Plants | District of Saanich](#)). This includes Japanese Knotweed, Shiny Geranium, Poison Hemlock, and more. [The Invasive Plants Booklet 2017 \(saanich.ca\)](#) also provides information about several targeted species including: why they are a problem, how to recognize them, when and how to remove them, and recommended disposal. If something is growing in your yard that you cannot identify from these resources, digital tools such as iNaturalist can be of assistance, as can information found on the [Invasive Species Council of British Columbia \(bcinvasives.ca\)](#) website.

For hands-on learning, volunteering with the *Pulling Together* program is a great option. Volunteers work together to tackle many key invasive species growing in Saanich parks, learning and sharing knowledge about these challenging species. There are more than 45 different *Pulling Together* groups operating across Saanich, so finding a group to join has never been easier! Check out the calendar of events on the Saanich website ([Saanich Parks Pulling Together Volunteer Events | District of Saanich](#)) to find one that works for you.

The threats posed by invasive species are numerous, including negative health, economic, and ecological impacts. They also limit access to traditional foods and medicines by Indigenous peoples. Removing invasive species is of vital importance in mitigating these impacts and, with many people taking small actions in addressing invasives, we can make a big difference!



Before and after ivy removal in Haro Woods



Left: Shiny Geranium; Right: Ivy carpet at Bruce Hutchison Park

Managing Invasive Holly in Cedar Hill Park

By Peter Haddon, Friends of Cedar Hill Park

Cedar Hill Park is 54-hectare area that includes the Recreation Center and golf course. It has beautiful natural areas of native Garry Oak ecosystem, rocky outcrops, wetlands and a tributary of Bowker Creek. The Garry Oak woodland is one of the most endangered of Canada's ecosystems, with only three percent remaining in a natural state. Saanich staff and the Friends of Cedar Hill Park and *Pulling Together* volunteers work every week to remove invasive species such as Himalayan Blackberry, English Ivy, Scotch Broom, Daphne Laurel, and English Holly to restore the native Oak woodland and other associated ecosystems.

Holly was introduced to Greater Victoria for Christmas decorations and sold commercially. It is very invasive due to its ability to grow in shade or sun. The seeds are spread by birds, and the tree suckers through the branches and root system. It crowds out native species and monopolizes groundwater.

In the park there are many hundreds of English Holly trees, from small saplings to mature trees with trunks more than 25 centimetres in diameter. The most intensive holly growth is in the oak forest on the northeast side of the park, where holly grows on the oak's root systems. We have worked for about six years to steadily remove holly, knowing it will take many years of effort before Cedar Hill Park is 'holly free.'

Holly is very difficult to eradicate. Simply cutting the tree down will result in vigorous sprouting from any remaining underground roots. Volunteers have had success removing holly by first cutting the lower branches to avoid suckering. To kill the tree, we remove at least 6 inches of the bark from around the tree trunk close to the ground. This technique is called 'girdling' (see photos below). A 50 cm bow saw is a simple, effective tool to cut away the bark. Girdling is usually repeated over two seasons before the tree dies. Saplings of about one inch can be cut down with loppers and the remaining trunk split to the ground. If the stumps re-sprout, the new growth is removed with loppers. Once the area is clear, it is restored with native plants supplied by Saanich Parks.

We are making steady progress. Many thanks to volunteers, park stewards, and Saanich Parks staff.



Examples of two tree girdling techniques using a bow saw



Help Protect our Drinking Water Supply!

By Danielle Buckle (she/her)
Water Conservation Assistant, CRD Parks & Environmental Services

The residents of the Capital Region have done such a good job adhering to the Regional Water Conservation Bylaw watering schedule that automatic irrigation systems are all starting at the same times, creating issues for the water supply infrastructure.

In recent years the CRD's water distribution system has experienced challenges due to high, sudden demands for water because irrigation systems across the region all start at the same times. Particularly at 4:00 am, 5:00 am, and 6:00 am on residential watering days, water demand can double with immediate increases that fall on the hour. High and sudden demands for water impact the system's ability to maintain adequate flow and pressure and to maintain our high-quality water standards.

To help alleviate this issue, CRD has added an overnight allowable watering time to the Water Conservation Bylaw No. 4099 for **timed/automatic irrigation systems only**.

This overnight allowable watering time is from 12:01 am to 4 am on established watering days.

- **Odd addresses:** Thursday and Sunday, 12:01 am–4 am for timed/automatic irrigation systems only. 4 am–10 am or 7 pm–10 pm for any watering method.
- **Even addresses:** Wednesday and Saturday, 12:01 am–4 am for timed/automatic irrigation systems only. 4 am–10 am or 7 pm–10 pm for any watering method.

This overnight allowable watering time gives room for residents with automatic/timed irrigation systems to randomize when they start watering and can also keep water flowing through the system throughout the early morning.



How can you help?

- Do you have a timed/automatic irrigation system? Switch to the overnight allowable watering time for timed irrigation systems.
 - » Having trouble switching your timer? Check out your system's manufacturer website for how-to's!
 - » Still having trouble? Send us an email at waterwise@crd.bc.ca and we can help you out.
- Randomize the time that your irrigation system starts to off the top of the hour.
- Practice waterwise habits for lawns and gardens! Learn more at crd.bc.ca/water.
- If you can, water flowers, veggies, trees, and shrubs on non-lawn watering days.
- Don't have a yard? You can still help! Refrain from using large amounts of water before 10 am, like starting your dishwasher or washing machine. Save it for the evening or during the day.

Looking more information about conserving water outside and inside the home? Learn more waterwise tips at crd.bc.ca/water.

Spring at Haliburton Farm

Community Tours - Explore the Changing Seasons at Haliburton Farm



By Rebecca Nielsen, Haliburton Urban Biodiversity Project
haliburtonfarm.org

Spring is here and Haliburton Farm is waking up; a buzz of activity as the sun warms the earth. Pollinators are busy, frogs are singing, and the farmers are seeding for the growing season ahead!

Haliburton Community Organic Farm is nestled just off the Patricia Bay Hwy on the Cordova Bay ridge. It is seven acres of land zoned as Agricultural Land Reserve that supports land stewardship education, research, integrating urban farmland access for emerging farmers in an agro-ecological setting, and restoring and conserving an area of urban biodiversity.

Our Haliburton Urban Biodiversity Demonstration Site includes a wetland, a young Garry Oak meadow, and a mature second-growth coastal Douglas-fir forest with walking trails throughout. Tours include discussion about the biodiversity supported at this site, and how it supports organic farming. We discuss scientific sampling used at the site and invasive species management.

Spring is a lovely time to visit, with Pacific Chorus Frogs chirping, ducks swimming in the ponds, and blossoms emerging throughout. As spring progresses you may hear pollinators buzzing through the meadow, birds singing in the hedgerows, and maybe even spot a salamander! Spring is a perfect time to enjoy some fresh air at Haliburton Farm and learn how to support biodiversity and native ecology in your own yard and garden.

Individuals and families are invited to join us for farm and biodiversity tours the third Saturday of the month. Stop at the Haliburton Farmstand or Satinflower Nurseries for plants or farm-grown produce. See our upcoming tour information in the events section of Our Backyard or: haliburtonfarm.org/farm-tours



Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Initiative Information Session

By Taryn Fournie (she/her), Sustainability Planner, District of Saanich



Are you a Saanich resident? Join the Neighbour to Neighbour Resilience Initiative (N2N) pilot and make a positive impact in your community. Supported by the District of Saanich, this initiative empowers residents to address emergency preparedness, climate action, and nature-care on a neighbourhood scale. Neighbourhood groups can access a \$500 community grant to fund projects that enhance well-being and resilience.

Interested and want to learn more? Register today for the N2N Initiative and Grants Information Session, where you can discover how your neighbourhood group can develop a project idea and receive grant funding to make it happen. Hosted by the Saanich Emergency Program, Sustainability, and Parks Division, this free event is taking place on April 30, 2024.

You can also learn more and apply by visiting saanich.ca/n2n

Saanich Parks Community Events

In the upcoming year, Parks staff will offer even more ways to engage with our community about our urban forest and biodiversity through community events. These events, outlined below, offer the opportunity for rich dialogue, learning, and sharing with our community.



Earth Day Festival

Saturday, April 20, 11 am to 3 pm
770 Vernon Ave, behind Municipal Hall

The Saanich Earth Day Festival is all about everyday sustainability. Come to the event to learn about small changes you can make in your life that will have a big impact on our climate.



City Nature Challenge

April 26-29
Multiple locations across Greater Victoria

Parks staff will be offering training on using the iNaturalist app and education about citizen science for this North America-wide initiative.



Parks Pulling Together Tour

Saturday, April 27, 9 am to 12 noon
Cedar Hill, Camrose, and Peacock Hill Parks

Parks Pulling Together volunteers will feature their ongoing restoration projects and staff will be available to answer questions about volunteer opportunities within Saanich Parks. Visit one, two or all three participating parks.



World Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 11

In partnership with Naturehood Canada, this event will feature many activities and events across Greater Victoria. Check in on the [Saanich events page](#) closer to the date for more details.



Braefoot Park Biodiversity Day

Wednesday, May 22

Parks staff will facilitate activities and displays relating to fostering biodiversity within Saanich. Check in on the [Saanich events page](#) closer to the date for more details.

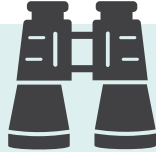


What is the Rocky Point Bird Observatory Up To?

By Gaylia Lassner, Rocky Point Bird Observatory



There are a few different ways to learn more about birds coming up in May, hosted by the Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Learn how you can make a difference for birds by attending these events!



2024 VICTORIA BIRD WEEK

May 5 - 12, 2024

Victoria Bird Week takes place as spring bird migration is ramping up and the weather is warming, and it is a great way for people of all ages and backgrounds to learn more about Rocky Point Bird Observatory and bird conservation. The week will include guided bird walks, online and in-person presentations, and many chances to learn more about the birds in our community.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

Saturday, May 11, 2024

Victoria Bird Week includes World Migratory Bird Day, an international event with the aim to engage local communities to celebrate and conserve migratory bird species.

The World Migratory Bird Day campaign in 2024 will focus on the importance of insects for migratory birds, and highlight concerns related to decreasing populations of insects.

Insects are essential sources of energy for many migratory bird species, not only during the breeding seasons but also during their extensive journeys and greatly affect the timing, duration, and overall success of bird migrations.

Along their migration routes, birds actively seek out insects in fields, forests, wetlands, and various habitats during stopovers. The timing of bird migration often coincides with peak insect abundance at stopover locations, supplying nourishment for birds to replenish their energy reserves before continuing their journey. The loss and disturbance of insect populations at breeding sites and along avian migration routes threaten bird survival and well-being.



White-crowned Sparrow



Male Hooded Merganser

For a complete list of activities, visit:

[Events Calendar - Rocky Point Bird Observatory \(rpbo.org\)](https://rpbo.org)



EVENTS



Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community/parks/events-in-park/trails-treks.html>

Any questions please call Alison 250-475-5408 or email alison.chamberlain@saanich.ca

Easy Walks (FREE)

Mondays | 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm

One-hour, easy-paced social walks on pavement and groomed trails through parks and interesting neighbourhoods. Where possible routes avoid steep hills. Most walks start near bus stops. Please wear supportive shoes.

Apr. 15 | Copley/Brydon Parks

Meet by tennis courts, Copley Park West, on Parkridge St.

Apr. 22 | Strawberry Vale/Panama Flats

Meet by Rosedale Park parking lot, Santa Anita Ave.

Apr. 29 | Tillicum/Swan Creek

Meet at foot of steps up to Silver City Cinema, Tillicum Mall

May 6 | Montague Park/Arbutus Area

Meet at Montague Park, on Hazelton Place, off Lexington Ave.

May 13 | Gorge/Lower Waterway

Meet in Gorge Park parking lot on Gorge Rd. West, opposite Orillia St. (This is not beside the Canoe/Kayak Club)

May 27 | Rithet's Bog

Meet by kiosk at the corner of Dalewood Lane and Chatterton Way

Jun. 3 | Braefoot Park/Feltham Trail

Meet by lacrosse box, Braefoot Park parking lot, Mackenzie Ave.

Jun. 10 - UVic Chip Trail/Finnerty Gardens

Meet by tennis courts at Henderson Rec Centre parking lot

Jun. 17 | McMinn/Broadmead

Meet by entrance to McMinn Park, on Maplegrove St.

Jun. 24 - Swan Lake Area

Meet at end of Nelthorpe St., off Mackenzie Ave.

Walk & Talk (FREE)

Tuesdays and Thursdays | 9:30 am to 11 am

Leader: Dianne on Tuesdays | John on Thursdays

Enjoy beautiful scenery, friendly chat, and gentle exercise as we walk through Saanich parks and trails. Walks follow mainly chip or gravel trails but may have some steep sections. Sorry, dogs not permitted.

Apr. 23 | Glanford Park to Hyacinth Park

Meet Glanford Park parking lot, 620 Kenneth Rd, off Glanford Ave.

Apr. 25 | Cedar Hill to Peacock Hill

Meet at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Rd.

Apr. 30 | Hampton Park to Swan Creek Trails

Meet at Hampton Park, 225 Hampton Rd., off Burnside Rd. West

May 2 | Colquitz to Hyacinth Park

Meet at Colquitz Creek Park sign near Silver City, 3130 Tillicum Rd.

May 7 | Playfair Park to Rutledge Park

Meet Playfair Park parking lot, 198 Rock St., off Quadra St.

May 9 | Gorge Waterway

Meet at Gorge Waterway Park, 355 Gorge Rd. West

May 14 | Hampton Park to Gorge Park

Meet at Hampton Park parking lot, 225 Hampton Rd.

May 16 | Cedar Hill Golf Course/Kingsberry Pond

Meet at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Rd.

May 21 | Braefoot Park to Blenkinsop Lake

Meet at Braefoot Park parking lot, 1359 McKenzie Ave.

May 23 | Hyacinth Park and Colquitz Trail

Meet at parking lot, 800 Marigold Rd., by tennis courts

May 28 | Beaver Lake to Saanich Commonwealth Place

Meet at Beaver Lake Park parking lot (Nature House)

May 30 | Lambrick Park to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon head Recreation Centre, 4100 Lambrick Way

Jun. 4 | Rithet's Bog Park to Outerbridge Park

Meet at the east end of Dalewood Lane, off Chatterton Way

Jun. 6 | Viaduct Flats to Horticulture Ctr of Pacific

Meet at Viaduct Flats parking lot, at Interurban and Viaduct Ave

Jun. 11 | PKOLS (Mt Doug Park) to Majestic Park

Meet at the park parking lot washroom, at Ash and Cordova Bay

Jun. 13 | Layritz, Copley & Quick's Bottom Parks

Meet at Layritz Park parking lot at the end of Layritz Ave.

Sunday Hikes (FREE)

Sundays | 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Discover the beauty Saanich Parks on our Sunday Hikes, open to walkers of all ages. Please wear sturdy footwear and bring drinking water. Routes may include steep, rough trails.

May 5 | Broadmead to Doris Page Park

Meet on Lochside Trail beside Lochside Elementary School

Jun. 9 | Bowker Creek/Saanich Panhandle

Meet in the northeast corner of Hillside Centre parking lot

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

www.swanlake.bc.ca 250-479-0211

Guided Bird Walks (Drop-In)

Every Sunday | 9:00 am to 10:30 am

Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and dress for the weather. Meet in the large parking lot for this informal walk around the lake area. Donations are appreciated.

Victoria Natural History Society

Visit www.naturevictoria.ca for more programs

Saturday Morning Birding (most Saturdays)

Check the Calendar to find out the week's location and time (http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518). All experience levels welcome. Non-members can participate up to three times.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory

Visit <https://rpbo.org> for more programs

Outerbridge Park Sunday Bird Walks

Second Sunday of each month | 9:00 am

On the 2nd Sunday of each month, starting at 9:00 am, RPBO volunteers host guided [bird walks](#) through [Outerbridge Park](#) (Victoria). Everyone is welcome! For a list of birds you might encounter while visiting the park, see our brochure [Birds of Outerbridge Park](#) or the [Outerbridge Park eBird CheckList](#).

Haliburton Urban Biodiversity Project

Visit <https://haliburtonfarm.org> for more programs

Community Tours | The Changing Seasons at Haliburton Farm (Pre-register)

Apr 20, May 18, Jun 15 | 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Individuals and families are invited to join us for farm and biodiversity tours the third Saturday of the month. Stop at the Haliburton Farmstand or Satinflower Nurseries for plants or farm grown produce.



Connect to local farms and food with **Savour Saanich**

The Savour Saanich Brochure is your guide to fresh local farms, food producers and regional farm markets. You can find farms offering fresh produce, ethically raised meats, flowers, seedlings, honey, beverages, food box programs and more!

[View the updated brochure at saanich.ca/savoursaanich](https://saanich.ca/savoursaanich)

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Keep up to date on local community-based ecological restoration projects and environmental issues. Subscriptions to this quarterly newsletter are free and available in electronic or paper version. To subscribe, please send your contact information to the editor or visit saanich.ca/ourbackyard.

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