

Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



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CAMAS RESCUE in Falaise Park

By Katie Turner (Park Stewardship Coordinator) and
Stuart Macpherson (Lead Steward Volunteer)

In line with the United Nations *Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*, Saanich Parks *Pulling Together* Volunteers are engaged in diverse projects aimed at restoring degraded habitats so that native species can flourish. This story is a snapshot of a community stewardship project aimed at restoring camas and other wildflowers in a Garry Oak meadow.

If you walk through Falaise Park, you may notice trees and areas of grass between rocky outcrops. Beautiful native grasses are characteristic of the Garry Oak ecosystems that we call home. But, like other Garry Oak habitats in our urban landscape, native plant communities have been invaded by weedy plants like Scotch Broom and invasive pasture grasses.

Stuart Macpherson and a group of *Pulling Together* volunteers were inspired by Playfair Park and its iconic camas meadow, that long-time volunteer Colleen O'Brien has devoted thousands of hours to restore. Their goal was to try and rescue camas and other native plants from being suppressed by invasive grasses, in particular Orchard Grass.

Here's the step-by-step process they used. You can also try this if you have invasive grasses in a Garry Oak area on your property.

Volunteers are not just pulling together but learning together as well. Our special thanks for the incredible care they give to neighborhood parks. If you live on a little patch of Garry Oak habitat, you can also manage invasive species to limit their spread. The Pulling Together volunteer program is a wonderful way to help out and learn about the importance of environmental stewardship.

The 'Pulling Together' volunteer program has volunteers engaged in hands-on ecological restoration work in more than 40 parks in all areas of Saanich. We welcome people of all ages and abilities. To learn more about what we do and how to help care for your parks visit: Volunteer for Pulling Together (<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community/parks/natural-areas/volunteer-for-pulling-together.html>)



Unpulled Orchard Grass: We started removing Orchard Grass in October, 2021 using hori hori knives (a type of weeding knife) and small mattocks.



Spreading Mulch: About a month later, in November 2021, we spread the mulch, but it could be spread right after grass was removed. We spread well decomposed (from the year before) autumn leaves of oak and maple. The mulch was spread thickly at least 4" deep, to help suppress germination of weeds and annual grasses.



Camas Regrowth: Spring maintenance weeding is required to weed out any germinating grasses that grow back.



Blooming Camas: Camas Fool's Onion quite happily grow through the mulch in the spring. The camas grew in very thickly.

Saanich Parks

Volunteer Program



By Katie Turner (Park Stewardship Coordinator) and Brydie McMullan (Park Ambassador)

Brydie McMullan is a Park Ambassador Volunteer in Mount Douglas Park

Park Ambassadors are volunteers who walk in the park on a regular basis with the purpose of greeting park visitors, offering information and answering questions and helping visitors understand their role in helping to protect the park. Thank you volunteers for your ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship in Saanich Parks.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering with Saanich Parks?

Joining our community members outdoors in all types of weather, staying active, and welcoming visitors to the Saanich area! I especially love developing a deeper sense of place by revisiting the same areas throughout the changing of the seasons.

Tell us about one of your most memorable experiences volunteering?

I was chatting with a hiker about birds when a huge Pileated Woodpecker swooped down and started working on a tree right beside us. It alternated between pounding at the tree trunk and looking at us with curiosity. So magical!



Brydie enjoying the summit view



Pileated Woodpecker looking for a meal of insects

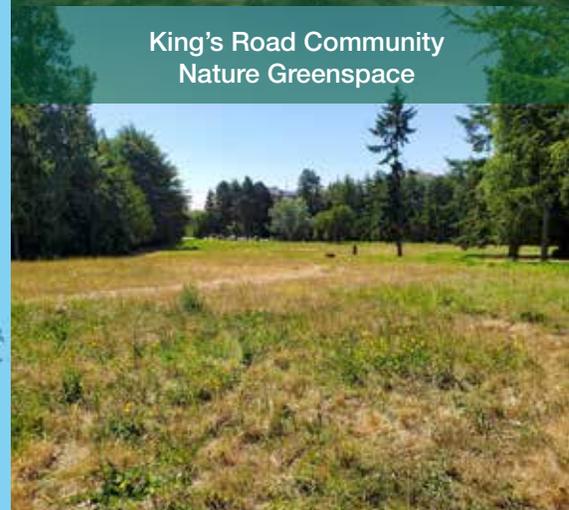
Tell us a bit about yourself?

I moved back to Victoria in June 2020 after living abroad for twenty years. I grew up on the island and always planned on moving back, but the pandemic brought me home a little earlier than planned. I was away for school, but then became an international teacher working in South Korea, Kuwait, Cambodia, Indonesia and, most recently, Nepal. I am now loving being close to my island friends and family. I enjoy exploring the outdoors, playing recreational sports and being a tourist in my own town. Our island is stunning and there is so much to see and do!

Recent Additions to Saanich's Great Parks System



Jenkin's Pond



King's Road Community Nature Greenspace

By Becky Goodall, Saanich Park Planner Designer

The Parks Division has acquired almost four hectares (9.9 acres) of parkland in the last three years. Several include, or are next to, bodies of water: King's Road Community Nature Greenspace (2.23 ha / 5.5 acres), Jenkin's Pond Park (.19 ha / .47 acre), and two parcels totalling .33 ha / .8 acre at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary.

The King's Road property contains one of the few stretches of Bowker Creek that has not been enclosed underground in culverts. Parks staff and the community will be involved in making plans to improve the creek's ecological health by reducing the steepness of its banks, restoring its riparian areas, and adding native plants over the coming years.

Riparian areas and vegetated land near water bodies like Swan Lake and Jenkin's Pond are very important habitat for a variety of small animals, including birds. The vegetation adjacent to creeks, rivers, ponds, and lakes also provides cover, and help form corridors that allow wildlife to travel through populated areas and access the resources they need to survive in the city.

Treed land away from water is valuable nesting, resting, and feeding habitat for wildlife. A 0.16 ha (0.39 acre) piece of Garry Oak woodland on Tracksell Avenue is now protected by its inclusion in Cedar Hill Park, and approximately 0.37 ha (0.9 acre) of second-growth forest at 731 Burnside Road property will ultimately be donated by its owner, Edward (Ted) Wilson, for preservation in perpetuity.

Regional Parks also got a boost when the Capital Regional District (CRD) purchased the 20 ha (49.4 acres) property known as the Mountain Road Forest in partnership with Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) and a donation by the landowner.

A number of tools made these acquisitions possible including: outright purchase, private land donations, land trusts (HAT), and community fundraising. Saanich's ability to purchase land with high ecological value was increased in 2021 when Council approved a Parkland Acquisition Fund – which allows the District to accept donations specifically for future parkland acquisitions.



By Lora Morandin
and Kristen Miskelly

MeadowMakers:

Community Transforming Lawn To Native Plant Meadows

There's a new program in town, the MeadowMakers, helping people convert spaces such as yards and boulevards into native plant meadows. The course, a partnership between Satinflower Nurseries and Pollinator Partnership Canada, offered through the City of Victoria, started in April this year and will run through October.

Through a series of interactive webinars and field trips, members are learning about native plants, pollinators, and urban habitats. Participants receive practical information such as how to prepare and plant sites, what plants to use and where, how to control invasives, how to propagate native plants, and how to maintain their sites in the long term.

For the first field trip, we were given a tour of the Fort Rodd Hill Garry Oak Learning Meadow by Aimee Pelletier, Parks Canada. She discussed the history of the site, the Indigenous partnerships and collaborations involved in the restoration and ongoing use of the meadow, and site preparation and maintenance. What a fantastic day, meeting in person, enjoying a bit of sun, seeing the wonderful meadow and native plants, and observing the vast diversity of pollinators making homes in the meadow.

The impact has been amazing already! Many of the 97 MeadowMakers have started converting traditional lawn areas or 'scrubby', weedy areas into biodiverse meadows by preparing the land and considering plant selection. Most of the areas will be planted in the fall and we're looking forward to seeing the transformations.

Extra perks of being a MeadowMaker include a membership card, a meadow habitat sign, and discounts for plants and consultation services at Satinflower Nurseries. An online classroom platform allows participants to interact with the instructors and other members, and access all of the material. As an added

bonus this year, Pollinator Partnership was able to provide plant grants of up to \$500 for native plants to about 20 MeadowMakers through an application process.

We are so thankful that we live on this land and that there is a strong community of people wanting to be better stewards of the land. Thank you, MeadowMakers, you are making a real difference!

If you're interested in getting on the waitlist for the 2023 MeadowMakers Program, visit [Satinflower Nurseries \(https://satinflower.ca/pages/meadowmakers\)](https://satinflower.ca/pages/meadowmakers).



Saanich Environmental Award Winners

By Carolyn Richman,
Environmental Education Coordinator

The annual Environmental Awards are an initiative of the Saanich Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee. Since 2000, we've recognized more than 175 people and organizations contributing to protection of the natural environment in Saanich.

Visit the web for more awards information and to sign up for email notifications: saanich.ca/enviroawards

Individual Environmental Achievement

Sharon Stangeland



Sharon received the individual environmental achievement award for her stewardship, restoration and community leadership in South Valley Park. Sharon is the dedicated Lead Steward Volunteer in South Valley Park for Saanich's *Pulling Together* Program, working on invasive species removal and ecological restoration

while engaging the community with her volunteer events in this park. For more than 10 years, Sharon has been a weekly steward of this park and has hosted large community groups such as Scouts, Girl Guides, faith groups and individual volunteers in removing invasives and native planting in the wetland. When she's not leading stewardship activities at South Valley Park, Sharon contributes time to other nearby parks such as Knockan Hill and Marigold Park.

currently includes active owl nesting in boxes mounted by the community. Members of this group lobbied three levels of government, canvassed door to door, engaged with more than 1000 local businesses for donations and support, identified grants, hosted community events and went above and beyond in raising awareness of the environmental importance of this remnant green space. Through his group's dedication, community and partnership funds were secured and Saanich Council completed the protection of this treasured green space.

Youth

Matthias Spalteholz

Matthias Spalteholz received the youth award for his exemplary youth leadership for environmental stewardship and climate action. Matthias has been working on environmental initiatives since elementary school and is now a passionate student in Claremont



Secondary's Institute for Global Solutions. He has worked on many important areas including sustainable energy, environmental stewardship, policy change, and youth activism. Among his initiatives, he has engaged with Saanich and politicians on sustainable transportation and put together a petition for a charging network for EVs across Canada which was presented in the House of Commons by MP Elizabeth May. He founded the team at Royal Oak Middle School that developed a One Planet action plan for the school and in the Pursuit of Excellence Program at Claremont, he has started a project on EV charging stations at Claremont Secondary. He has also engaged in natural area stewardship such as restoration and shoreline clean up. One of his Claremont teachers describes Matthias this way: "not only does he have multiple ideas about how to help the environment and his local community, but does the work and puts together teams that take real action and have made real change in Saanich."

Volunteer Organization

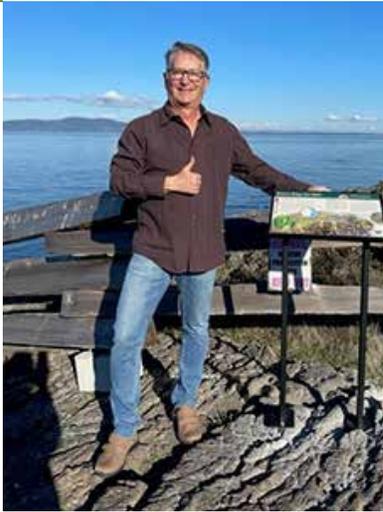
Kings Community Nature Space Fundraising Group



The Kings Community Nature Space Fundraising Group was recognized with the volunteer organization award for all their work in partnership for the protection of the Kings Community Nature Space. More than three decades of work by this group resulted in the successful protection of this urban green space near the Royal Jubilee Hospital. This area has potential for restoration activities and

Biodiversity Conservation

Barry Andruschak



Barry Andruschak was recognized with the Biodiversity Conservation award for his protection and stewardship of species-at-risk on private lands. Barry originally applied for an environmental development permit to build a house on his vacant lot as the property included a federally listed species at risk. When the Environmental Development Permit Area was rescinded,

he continued to protect the plant species, Bearded Owl Clover, hired a biologist to inventory and study the plant population and make recommendations for conservation. He minimized impacts by careful site development, placement of a smaller house than could have been built and on-going maintenance of the habitat. Barry took a personal interest in these small plants, and worked with Saanich to construct a fence around the plant population on private and public lands to create one enclosure. He also assisted in the development of an interpretive sign that provides information about the species at risk for visitors that use the beach access. In addition, Barry maintained and replaced native tree habitat during his development.

Sustainability

Jim Church



Jim Church received the Sustainability award, recognizing his leadership and support for electric vehicle transitions in Saanich strata buildings. Jim originally worked with his strata to overcome challenges and help retrofit his entire strata complex to become “EV ready” and install electrical infrastructure. This type of comprehensive upgrade was unheard of a couple of years ago, and the

process that Jim led his strata through has helped pave the way for others in the region to do the same. As transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Saanich, we need 36% of residents to be driving electric by 2030 - but lack of access to at-home charging poses a major barrier for strata residents. Jim became a champion for this process and has been helping other stratas overcome the barriers to be EV

ready as well as working with Saanich to highlight these case studies. Jim’s story was picked up by the media in the CRD and Metro Vancouver and he has now been contacted by more than 120 stratas (which he updated at the awards ceremony to over 150). Jim continues to offer his support and inspiration for others.

Long Term Achievement

Heather Coey

Heather Coey was recognized with the Long-Term Environmental Achievement award for her leadership in youth engagement in environmental stewardship and sustainability. Heather has been a remarkable and inspiring environmental educator who has gone above and beyond in her work with students at Reynolds Secondary, where



she has led a rich range of eco-leadership initiatives. Heather is entering her 33rd and final year of teaching in Saanich and this award honours her work and legacy in engaging youth in environmental and sustainability action. Through her work at Reynolds Secondary School, their sustainability curriculum won the BC Green Games for 10 years running. The school has been an active participant in One Planet Saanich where Heather facilitated the students to engage with the broader community on sustainability priorities. Heather has also led countless creative and inspirational environmental stewardship and sustainability related initiatives at Reynolds that have engaged students as leaders and with many community partners. Heather leaves a rich legacy for her remarkable dedication, passion and her role in facilitating young leaders with the skills and passion to lead us towards the kind of future we need.



Summertime at Swan Lake: Drop-In Community Programs

By Madi Haller, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary
Community Educator

As we meander into summer, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is thrilled to be initiating our community orientated drop-in programs! These programs are designed to evolve alongside interests and insights brought by the community. They aim to foster a space for knowledge exchange, as well as a place to practice mindfulness, observation, and questioning of the movements and intricacies of the natural world around us. Wednesdays are drop-in days at Swan Lake, offering three different programs for adults, or children accompanied by a guardian.

Have you ever seen a bee tongue? **Pollinator Party** is a dreamy program in which we discuss and observe pollinators as they... pollinate! We focus on the association between pollinators and their host plants, offering space for participants to ask questions, learn how to contribute to community science using iNaturalist and to sketch, identify, and observe pollinators. We hope to accentuate the magnificence of pollinator diversity and contribute data to our local ecological community!

Wellness Wednesdays is a mindfulness program which encourages a calm, quiet, and thoughtful space for participants to step away from the bustle of daily life. Programs have varied topics such as Sounds of Swan Lake, Gratitude, or The Tiny Things. These sessions can include art, short walks, silent observation, sound maps, journal reflections, and more! In a world focused on high productivity we take an hour to... do less!

Wetland Waterkeepers creates a space for participants to learn about biological and chemical parameters in water-quality testing. The program varies and can include chemical sampling, net dipping, identifying or sketching invertebrates and learning about sampling protocols. This program encourages participants to regard our wetland ecosystems as we dive into the incredible lives of freshwater invertebrates!

All programs are by-donation and can be registered for on our website: **Community Programs – Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary** (<https://www.swanlake.bc.ca/community-programs/>).

Join us!



One Planet Challenge

Celebrates the Sustainability Ideas of Greater Victoria Students

By Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Planner, Planning Department



As part of the One Planet Student Challenge, 86 middle and secondary students across the region submitted videos and illustrations about how to bring 'One Planet Living' into our lives. One Planet Living is a vision of how we can live happily and equitably within Earth's resources. Featured videos and illustrations are available at One Planet BC, and below are a few highlights from some of the winning submissions.

Ava Bate designed an illustration focused on four key One Planet Living habits she has brought into her life. "With the help of my family, I have added these four habits into my life as simple green habits that many people can practice in their life: conserve energy, grow your own food, bike and walk, and trade, thrift, or rework clothing."

Ben Hindley created a video focused on how people can protect the land and benefit the bees. "Instead of getting a fence, plant a few trees – that way bees can collect pollen," said Ben. And whenever you take down a tree, you can plant flowers or a bigger or smaller tree. In these two ways, you are not only benefiting the bees and their future but also yourself."

India Furtado and Nancy Liu created a video that included interviews of community members to see how they were contributing to a greener future. Their video also explored the link between healthy micro-organism-rich soil and levels of natural dopamine, which gives the feeling of happiness.

Matthias Spalteholz produced a videologue highlighting a beach cleanup he organized to remove abandoned docks that had washed up on a local beach. He contacted the local government, beach cleanup organizations, neighbours, and landfills to determine how the docks could be disposed of. Sixteen volunteers came together to dispose of 800 kilograms of old tires and reused about 450 kilograms of lumber!

This challenge was hosted by **OneEarth** (<https://www.oneearthweb.org/>) as part of the **One Planet Saanich** (<https://oneplanetbc.com/one-planet-saanich/>) initiative, in collaboration with the District of Saanich. Funding has been provided by the District of Saanich, Vancity Credit Union and the City of Victoria.

Congratulations to our winners and thank you to all the students who participated!

STUMPS

With Purpose

By Rick Hatch, Saanich Parks Natural Areas
Photo credits: Dorothy Chambers and Angela Wyatt



Sean Wong, a biologist working with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, was a key figure in helping protect the Colquitz River during the McKenzie overpass project. His restoration design and supervision helped restore and enhance the riparian area along the Colquitz using a restoration method called, "Rough and Loose", developed by Dave Polster. A 500 metre stretch along the North/east side of the Colquitz, ranging from 10-30 metres wide, was restored using the Rough and Loose method. The mounds of dirt, rolling topography, mixed with large stumps and other woody debris, help filter rain water and create diverse sites for revegetation and wonderful habitat for many creatures including dozens of birds. Saanich Parks works closely with

Dave Clough, Peninsula Streams Society and the Public Works Creeks and Waterways crew to restore 100 plus metres of Colquitz River annually and part of the instream restoration includes enhanced fish habitat using stumps and logs. Riparian restoration by the Parks Urban Forestry and Natural Areas crews, always includes large woody debris (LWD), logs, stumps, and standing dead trees; these features imitate what nature does in a healthy forest and adds so much habitat diversity and nutrients onto the forest floor. These photos were taken by Dorothy Chambers and Angela Wyatt along the Colquitz in Cuthbert Holmes Park and the District of Saanich thanks them greatly for their dedication and support.

Can you name each bird?





Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

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

Any questions please call Jason at 250-475-5427 or email at jason.jones@saanich.ca

Walking Round the Park *NEW* (FREE, registration required)

Join us for a social stroll and set your own pace and distance. The chosen parks have wide, level walkways with paved or well-groomed gravel surfaces and multiple benches. Bring your walking sticks, poles, rolling walker or other mobility aids.

Jul 18 | Tolmie Park

Meet in main parking lot on Leslie Drive, off Saanich Road.

Jul 25 | McMinn Park

Meet near main parking area off Maplegrove Street.

Aug 1 | BC Day

Aug 8 | Majestic Park

Meet by entrance to playground, main parking lot on Majestic Dr.

Aug 15 | Rutledge Park

Meet at park entrance on corner of Scotia and Rutledge Streets.

Aug 22 | Lambrick Park

Meet by entrance to gravel parking area near Lacrosse Box off Feltham Road.

Aug 29 | Brydon Park

Meet at park entrance off Vanguard Place. On street parking.

Easy Walks (FREE, registration is required)

Mondays | 9:00 am to 10:00 am

One-hour, easy-paced social strolls on pavement and groomed trails through parks and interesting neighbourhoods. Routes avoid steep hills and busy trails where possible. Most walks start near bus stops. Wear supportive shoes. No dogs please.

Jul 18 - Tillicum to Swan Creek

Meet at trailhead near stairway to Silver City Cinema, Tillicum Mall.

Jul 25 | Lambrick to San Juan Sports Fields

Meet near main entrance to Gordon Head Rec Centre, off Feltham.

Aug 1 | Holiday

Aug 8 | Gorge: Lower Waterway

Meet in Gorge Park parking lot, near the allotments, Gorge Road W.

Aug 15 | Rithets Bog

Meet at trailhead sign, corner of Dalewood Lane & Chatterton Way.

Aug 22 | Horner Park/UVic

Meet in main parking lot for Horner Park on Palo Alto Street.

Aug 29 | Interurban/Viaduct Flats

Meet in Viaduct Flats parking lot on Interurban, opposite Viaduct Rd.

Gentle Walk & Talk 55+ (FREE, no registration required)

Tuesdays and Thursdays | 9:30 am to 11:00 am

Enjoy fresh air, beautiful scenery, friendly chat and gentle exercise. Walks follow mainly chip or gravel trails but may have some steep sections. Sorry, dogs not permitted.

Jul 19 - Hyacinth Park to Marigold Park

Meet at Hyacinth Park parking lot (by tennis courts); 800 Marigold Rd

Jul 21 | Swan Lake, Reynolds, Playfair Parks

Meet at end of Nelthrope, off McKenzie

Jul 26 | Cuthbert Holmes Park to Craigflower Park

Meet at Silver City in Tillicum Mall parking lot

Jul 28 | Prospect Lake Centennial Trail

Meet at Whitehead Park at intersection of Prospect Lake and Goward Rd

Aug 2 | Rithet's Bog Park to Outerbridge Park

Meet at end of Dalewood Road, off Chatterton Way

Aug 4 | Lower Trails of Mount Douglas

Meet in main parking lot at Ash & Cordova Bay Rd

Aug 9 | Layritz Park to Brydon Park

Meet at Layritz Park Parking lot; off Glyn Road

Aug 11 | Lambrick Park to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon head Rec Centre , 4100 Lambrick Way

Aug 16 | Colquitz & Swan Lake Trails

Meet at Hyacinth Park parking lot (by tennis courts); 800 Marigold Rd

Aug 18 | Hyacinth Park and Colquitz Trail

Meet at parking lot off Marigold Rd by tennis courts

Aug 23 | Beaver Lake

Meet at Beaver Lake parking lot at Nature House; Off Elk Lake Drive

Aug 25 | Calvert Park to Logan Park

Meet at far West end of Viaduct Ave, off Interurban

Aug 30 | Cadboro Gyro Park to Haro Woods

Meet at Cadboro Gyro Park parking lot washroom; end of Sinclair Rd

Sep 1 | Knockan Hill Park

Meet at Strawberry Vale Community Hall off Burnside Rd

Sunday Hikes: All ages (FREE, registration is required)

Sundays | 9:00 am to 10:00 am

Discover the beauty and variety of Saanich parks. Please wear sturdy footwear as walk routes sometimes include steep, rough trails. Bring drinking water.

Jul 24 | Goward/Prospect Lake area trails

Meet at Prospect Lake Elementary School, Prospect Lake Rd.

Aug 21 | Cuthbert Holmes to Portage Inlet

Meet by trailhead near stairs to Silver City Cinema, Tillicum Mall

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

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

Nature House (Drop-In)

Visit website for hours

Come in and explore the touch table, visit the bee hive, or read a book. This learning hub will engage your senses as you connect with the fascinating ecosystems of Swan Lake (wheelchair accessible). Admission is by donation. The grounds and parking lot are open from dawn to dusk daily.

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.

The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC)

<http://conservancy.bc.ca/get-involved/passport-to-nature/>

Passport to Nature Program (Events)

Designed to connect the public with nature – includes in-person and virtual events all year. Coming up this summer and fall, participants can learn about native plants, sustainable soil, visiting TLC properties and covenants, and wreath making at Abkhazi Garden.



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Front cover photo: Belted Kingfisher (Photo credit: Angela Wyatt)
Back cover photo: Great Blue Heron (Photo credit: Dorothy Chambers)