



Langley Field Naturalists



To encourage nature appreciation, conservation and education

Box 56052 Valley Centre Post Office, Langley, BC, V3A 8B3

www.langleyfieldnaturalists.org

e-mail: langleyfieldnaturalists@shaw.ca

Newsletter

March 2013

RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL



Red-flanked Bluetail Photo: John Gordon

A small bird that should be wintering in the foothills of the Himalayas is instead hopping around the playground area of Queen's Park in New Westminster. The juvenile Red-flanked Bluetail -- about the size of a Junco and the latest Asian bird to make an unexpected appearance -- is a first for Canada and is attracting international interest.

On Sunday afternoon, January 13th, a probable Red-flanked Bluetail was reported in New Westminster's Queen's Park. By Monday, January 14th, the bird's identity had been confirmed, alerting the naturalist community to this rare opportunity. The only potential dampener on people's plans was that it was snowing that day.

The area where the Bluetail was foraging consisted of some tall conifers with little to no underbrush. The only understory cover came from the low hanging leaves of the younger conifers, tree stumps, and the occasional leafless bush. There was also a playground and a number of picnic tables. Luckily for the humans, this made moving around quite easy, and the bird certainly made everyone work for their views. It was moving around low down underneath or at the bottoms of the

conifer trees; however, it wouldn't sit still for more than a few seconds at most before moving around the base of a tree or to an entirely different tree. Viewing the bird basically consisted of a few seconds watching through binoculars before it would fly off, then moving five to ten metres before repeating. Occasionally the birders would lose track of the bird and would have to spread out looking for it. It also didn't seem to associate with any of the Juncos and Sparrows also hanging around.

Many birders, including John Gordon, arrived in spite of poor weather and driving conditions, but the snow and low light levels underneath the trees made getting photos a bit difficult, not to mention the shy skittish nature of the bird! However, always persistent, John Gordon returned the following day and was able to take some great pictures of this rare visitor - to say nothing of managing to get himself on Global TV and his pictures in the Vancouver Sun! Thank you, John, for sharing with us these pictures and the story! (From John's Blog <http://thecanadianwarbler.blogspot.ca>)



Red-flanked Bluetail

Photo: John Gordon

LANGLEY FIELD NATURALISTS 2011-2012 DIRECTORS

- President: Bob Puls
604-856-7534 ~ bob@puls.ca
- Past President: Jude Grass
604-538-8774 ~ judegrass@shaw.ca
- Secretary: Joan Taylor
604-888-7261 - jtaylo33@shaw.ca
- Treasurer: Ian Taylor
604-888-7261- ist0909@shaw.ca
- Conservation: Bruce Hutchison
604-882-2020 - wbulangley@shawbiz.ca
- Membership: Lesley Goodbrand
604-530-2714 -lgoodbrand@shaw.ca
- Education: Anthea Farr
604-576-7731~anthea.bombus@gmail.com
- Programmes: Jude Grass
604-538-8774 ~ judegrass@shaw.ca
- Field Trips: Anne Gosse
604-888-1787 ~ corkie1@shaw.ca
- Newsletter: Sheila Puls
604-856-7534 ~ sheila@puls.ca
- Publicity: Sylvia Anderson
604-534-8419 ~ ssanders36@hotmail.com
- FBCN Director: Kathy Masse
604-513-8927 ~ wmasse@telus.net
- Webmaster: Lisa Dreves/John Gordon

REPRESENTATIVES & CONVENORS

- Historian & Librarian: Toots Tucker
604-532-6398 ~ llyod@telus.net
- Refreshments: Cecily Isler
604-514-9697 ~ pcangus@telus.net
- Forslund-Watson Jenny & Ben Auxier
604-999-5047~ jennyauxier@hotmail.com
- Parks & Recreation: Lisa Dreves
604-532-0081 - lisabob2@yahoo.com
- Campbell Valley Park Association:
Jude Grass
604-538-8774 ~ judegrass@shaw.ca
- Young Naturalists Club:
Anthea Farr
604-576-7731~ YNCNicomekl@gmail.com

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month from September to June, starting at 7.15 pm at the Langley Community Music School, 4899 207 St. Langley

Executive meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month Sept - June at Executive members' homes.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Spring can't be far away, the hazel nut trees have catkins, the snowdrops and crocus are in flower and it rarely stops raining. Our sheep flock has almost finished lambing and the lambs are bouncing around in the field.

The Great Backyard Bird Count took place last weekend with results coming in from all over the world. I hope at least some of our members managed to submit data. The Anna's Hummingbird was a new entry for me this year and there was so much rain that the Mallard flock had a great time cleaning up the grain spilt from my feeders into the puddle underneath them.

Well your president has run out of chit chat, so let's get on with the newsletter.

Bob

GOLDEN EAGLE



Golden Eagle

Photo: John Gordon

On Tuesday February 19, 2013, we spent a few hours searching on Sumas Prairie for a sighting of a Golden Eagle. Suddenly, after seeing many immature Bald Eagles, we located our quarry - next problem, we couldn't get a shot unless we stood in the middle of a very busy No.5 road. From our position we could only see the bird's rear end. How could we get a better shot; could we get permission to enter a nearby field? I knocked on the farmer's door but no one was home. Not wanting to trespass and following good birding etiquette, we thought we would have to settle for partially obstructed rear end views.. not the best! As karma would have it, a farmer came out from an adjacent house and asked us what we were doing. Explaining our problem, he took us into the field. Five minutes later, with no branches obscuring our views, we both had our shots; the image above is my favourite from a series of seven.

John Gordon

RARE BIRD SIGHTING

John Gordon submitted the following picture, which was also submitted to eBird for confirmation of species.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Photo: John Gordon

The following is the response from the editor of eBird:

*It is unquestionably a Female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**. This is a very rare bird in the Vancouver area - fewer than 10 previous records, and only one of those was in the winter.*

Female Rose-breasted and Black-headed Grosbeaks are quite similar and hard to tell apart. However, the Rose-breasted is more heavily streaked on the underparts, and this bird is quite clearly a Rose-breasted.

Black-headed Grosbeaks are common around here in the summer, and I'm sure you've seen them around your place in the summertime, but they have never been recorded here in the winter. Both Black-headed and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are strongly migratory species which normally winter in Mexico and farther south.

Thank you so much for using eBird and for reporting this bird. The photos have sorted out the mystery of which species it was.

All the best,

Wayne C. Weber
Delta, BC
contopus@telus.net
Regional editor for eBird

For more of John's wonderful bird pictures, see his Blog at

<http://thecanadianwarbler.blogspot.ca>



Skagit Bird Blitz May 10-12, 2013

The \$50 birding fee includes the following:

- * Two nights camping at Ross Lake Group Campsite noon Friday to Sunday.
- * Guest speakers and barbecue, with salads, buns, and drinks provided (bring your own protein!).
- * Birding Kit - including park map, bird checklist, tally sheet, nesting record, and pencil.
- * Educational displays and materials.

Manning Park Bird Blitz June 14-16, 2013

Full Weekend Birder - \$50
Day Birder, Saturday BBQ & Guest Speaker - \$40
Young Birder - \$0 (under 18 with adult)
Fee covers Friday & Saturday camping, barbecue (bring own protein), guest speaker, learning and field data materials and company of friendly, like-minded birders!

To register for either of these Bird Blitz weekends please contact

Hope Mountain Centre at 604-869-1274
info@hopemountain.org

or

Register on-line at
www.hopemountain.org

OWLING IN CAMPBELL VALLEY PARK
February 8, 2013

What a Hoot! and two Owls to boot! - In Shakespeare's Macbeth, witches chanted "Lizard's legs and Howlets wing, a charm of powerful trouble". In medieval times, owls were malevolent or magical birds, but now-a-days most of us birders fall under their captivating spells. Twelve naturalists had gathered quietly in the inky darkness to venture out for an evening's owl prowl. The moon and stars outlined the trees above the park's Daisy Meadow, providing just enough light for us to carefully watch the skies for the silent flyers. The weather was dry and clear; - a good omen for Owling!



Northern Saw-whet Owl
 Photo: Bob Puls

of the long Fort to Fort riverside trail - from 208th Street into Fort Langley.

Our day was cold, foggy, and dry with lots of people enjoying the park trails - and curious as to what we were doing with clipboards and pens. We enjoyed a great day of bird-watching and counting - with lots of Chickadees, lots of Golden-crowned Sparrows, great sightings of Golden-crowned Kinglets and Spotted Towhees which gave my team a total of 32 species. Sheila Puls made some much appreciated hot coffee, hot chocolate and muffins for the teams as they straggled back in. Our kisses to Sheila and thanks! The final count numbers are 40 species and 2199 birds. We send our thanks to Phil Henderson for his great organizing skills again!

Anne Gosse

After plaintively calling for several minutes, our hooting was answered by a beautiful Barred Owl who had noiselessly arrived ten feet above us. Ursula was first to notice him overhead on a branch and then we were all held spell-bound at seeing this beautiful and secretive bird. What a delight to hear his answering calls.

Earlier we had "called in" the Saw-whet Owl along the park's dark trails. He had answered us once or twice, but we could not see him in the black shadows in amongst the dense branches and firs. However he was there somewhere making it a two owl night! Our thanks to Al and Jude for another wonderful encounter with "things that go hoot in the night". We all came away awed and thankful for another thrilling encounter!

Anne Gosse

SOME WINTER FUNGI

Our local winter woods may seem to be lacking in colour - basically shades of brown and green. However, if you look for them, there are colourful winter fungi to be discovered.

One of my favourites is the Turkey Tail (Trametes) a species of polypore. Look for bands of colour like pinks, oranges, and cream. Some may appear green due to an alga (algae?) growing on the surface. Other bracket fungi to watch for include the artist's fungus (Ganoderma), Tinder Conk (Fomes) and red-belted polypore (Fomitopsis).

There are a number of crusts, or crust-like fungi, which can be striking pinks or oranges.

One of the most colourful of the winter fungi is 'lemon drops' (Bisporella) which consists of bright yellow discs on decaying wood. Stereums (like 'false turkey tail') form small brackets, often in great profusion, on rotting woody debris. They can be beautiful pink, mauve, and cream colours - a wonderful discovery on a dull winter day.

A few mushrooms may crop up like winter (late) oyster (*Panellus*) and various 'fairy helmets' (*Mycena, spp.*).

A fine place to look for winter fungi (and more) is Campbell Valley Regional Park.

Al Grass

DERBY REACH & BRAE ISLAND BIRD COUNT
February 2, 2013

We arrived early at St George's Church in Fort Langley for the DRBIPA (Derby Reach/Brae Island Partners Association) Bird Count on February 2, 2013. Trying to cover most areas of the three North Langley Fraser River parks, several teams started along different pathways. One team travelled into the Derby Bog, another team counted on Brae Island, another did the circular Houston Trail - with two teams starting at opposite ends



Stereum sp. digesting an alder branch
 Photo: Al Grass

**OWLS TO THE LEFT,
OWLS TO THE RIGHT!
Boundary Bay Regional Trail
January 26, 2013**



Short-eared Owl

Photo: Bob Puls

We were joined by twelve hardy naturalists on our stroll along the dyke trail in Boundary Bay Regional Trail from the foot of 72nd Street with Al Grass.

Having been hoodwinked by the warmer weather a day earlier, some of us were not dressed as warmly as we should have been. Nevertheless, on our search we saw wonderful aerial displays of Northern Harriers gliding over the foreshore and fields. Only one Short-eared Owl rose up to flutter delicately about and we also counted many small birds in the brambles along the edges, such as White-crowned Sparrows, American Robins, and Purple Finches.

There were about 20 Snowy Owls on the ocean's edge with about 19 Bald Eagles in the trees, fields and foreshore. In all, only 17 species were recorded but it was very windy and many birds were probably concealed low to keep warm.

On seeing the Snowy Owls, Gerda commented that "All along we had been searching for the 'wild things' in the wild fields and foreshore but they were found on piles of pallets and on greenhouse roofs - so perhaps the 'wild things' were not as wild as we suspected".

Thanks, Al, for another great adventure. However we will have to "tweak" the weather next time.

Anne Gosse

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, LANGLEY
December 30, 2012**

Beginning early on a cold damp foggy morning, the large circle that encompasses the White Rock, Surrey and Langley Christmas Bird Count areas was thoroughly scrutinized by numerous bird-counting teams. However, by noon, sunshine emerged and so did the birds!

The spirit of competition is high and each team works hard from first light to dusk trying to identify and count as many birds as possible. The Langley teams enjoyed a fabulous day of counting all over our area - with teams reporting lots of Dark-eyed Juncos as well as soaring noisy waves of Pine Siskins and Canada Geese flocking overhead every so often. One team found three owls; another recorded an Anna's Hummingbird (which are moving into our area) plus many raptors gliding over our farmers fields.

All the count statistics are sent to British Columbia Field Ornithologists and Audubon Society and our Langley area total for the 2012 Christmas Bird Count is 6,557 birds counted with 68 different species identified.

Anne Gosse

*To see some bird pictures of our count go to:
<http://www.johngordonsphotography.com/>*

**PITT MEADOWS CBC,
December 15th 2012**

Several hardy naturalists joined Ken Stublely from the Alouette Naturalist Club for the Pitt Meadows Christmas Bird Count to record a part of the circle that crosses the Fraser River into North Langley. The count group included Langley Field Naturalists, White Rock & Surrey Naturalists and Ken from the Alouette Club. Meeting at Denny's Restaurant, we divided into three teams - Derby Reach area, Tynehead Park area and Barnston Island area. Unfortunately our day was wet and cold, 3°C, varying with snow and rain showers. We were out at first light, only returning as daylight started to fade to tally our results. The most exciting sightings each team reported were of a Northern Shrike sitting over the pond on the Fort-to-Fort Trail in Derby Reach area; the Barnston Island team were lucky to see 15 Red-tailed Hawks soaring overhead and the Tynehead team were very excited to find three Pine Grosbeaks, feeding on Hawthorn berries, plus a Rough-legged Hawk. A total of 48 different species and nearly 3000 birds were counted throughout the day.

Anne Gosse

**WEST DYKE TRAIL,
TERRA NOVA, RICHMOND
Saturday, February 23, 2013**



Birding on the Dyke

Photo: Anne Gosse

There is something about plenty of fresh air, sunshine, walking and observing nature that lightens your inner soul and makes your spirits just soar!!

Twenty three naturalists met our leader Gareth on the West Dyke trail for a day of bird-watching. A brisk wind was blowing when we arrived and a cluster of Great Blue Herons could be seen on the ocean foreshore against a background of snow-covered mountains. Three Bald Eagles and five Common Ravens provided a wonderful aerial chasing display over our heads.

Most of the common waterfowl were seen that day: Mallards, Hooded Mergansers, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead and American Wigeon, plus a few more. Gareth did an excellent job of explaining all our feathered findings, and making sure everyone got a look through the spotting scopes.

By the time we moved into the sheltered wooded section of the dyke, the sun had become quite warm and we started observing many of the smaller birds such as Song Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Bewick's Wren, Red-winged Blackbirds, Purple Finches and an Anna's Hummingbird.

We also saw Red-tailed Hawks and Cooper's Hawks plus a Peregrine Falcon making our total species count of 35. Our day concluded with two Red-breasted Mergansers, three Trumpeter Swans and a fantastic photo opportunity of about one hundred Snow Geese on the park's green thoroughfare!! Our thanks to Gareth who led us on a terrific outing!

Anne Gosse



The Abbotsford-Mission
Nature Club
invites you to the:

**BC NATURE 2013 AGM – MAY 2-5, 2013
AT THE RAMADA INN, ABBOTSFORD**

**“ALONG THE FRASER
– ADAPTING TO CHANGE”**

Speakers' topics:

"Flooding History of the Fraser"
"Ecology of Sumas Mountain"
"Ecologically Sustainable Agriculture"
"Factors Affecting Fraser Valley Swans"
"Wildlife in the Lower Mainland"
"Amphibians"
"Butterflies"
"Great Blue Herons"

Keynote: Dr. Marvin Rosenau
"Changes along the Fraser River and
Current Conservation Initiatives"

Fieldtrips:

Pepin Brook & Wetlands
Silverdale Wetlands – Salmon Restoration
Sumas Mountain – Ecology
Matsqui Prairie – Changing Landscape
Mount Lehman Sustainable Agriculture
Douglas Taylor Park – Matsqui First Nation
Hogan Family Nature Park – Artist
Experience
Fraser River Safari – Mission
Spring at Cheam Lake Wetlands
Fish Trap Creek in urban Abbotsford
Burrowing Owl Conservation Society
Breeding Facility, Port Kells

Watch for complete details
and registration information
in the winter issue of BC Nature

MOUNTAIN VIEW CROWN LANDS 2102 ANNUAL REPORT

WEATHER:

2012 delivered another very wet Spring and early Summer, followed by the longest dry spell on record. This eventually gave way to the usual wet, warm November and December.

IMPROVEMENTS:

Glenn Ryder has been busy during the year improving the trails along the west side of the Mountain View property, beside the railway tracks, and the west trail through the forest. Glenn then continued the trail that Roy Yates and Bob had initiated into the south west corner of the site, where the railways join. Glenn has improved this trail dramatically and continued it to join the south boundary trail in the south west corner, thus creating a nice loop trail. Hopefully we will be able to get LEPS (Lisa) to walk this trail in 2013 with the GPS and add it to the map.

Recently Glenn constructed a bridge across the Davidson creek tributary that we have to cross at the north west corner of the site. In December, B.C. Hydro cut all the trees/shrubs that were growing under the power lines beside which the trail runs. This improves the view, but removes a lot of wildlife cover from beside the railway tracks.

Bob purchased a second trail camera for use on the site. Bob also converted his moth trap from 120V to 12V and replaced the compact fluorescent bulb with UV LED's and relocated it to the north west corner of the site. Two salamander boards have been located at strategic sites.

The Clements' property has been sold to Paul & Lisa with their three young children. They are very environmentally aware and eventually will build a new house and workshop on their property. Meanwhile we have reactivated our trail that runs to the north of their property so that we can still access the site from 240th street.

SURVEY:

The totals of species found on the site are shown in the attached table; presently sitting at 1427. New species are still being found



Glenn's Bridge Photo: Bob Puls

but not at the same rate as in the previous two years.

New fungi seem to appear each year, with previous species no longer seen; they seem to produce fruiting bodies on a cyclic schedule governed by time or weather. We now have over 300 species identified.

The moth trap was extremely successful at the Clements' site, but has not been nearly as productive with the new light and siting. Insects continue to be the most challenging species to identify. I had meant to concentrate on beetles this year, but that never seemed to 'get off the ground'. The salamander boards have not produced any results yet, but they are really designed for the spring when salamanders travel to spawning sites.

The most exciting addition to the inventory was the cougar which followed Glenn for a short way along the trail in the summer. Glenn thinks the cougar is still around and this is borne out by the disappearance of the deer herd. We used to get deer photos every time I checked the cameras, but since the cougar sighting I have captured virtually none.

There was a strong run of Coho salmon in the fall, once the rains had filled the creek. We estimated at least 40 pairs (with several jacks) spawned on the site, with several Bald Eagles feeding on the carcasses. Several mature Red-legged frogs were seen during the year and many spawned in the seasonal ponds on the site; hopefully the tadpoles matured prior to the ponds drying in the summer.

In November, David Jordan and Dave Clements, with grad student Brad, of TWU, were escorted around the west trails to do some core sampling of the larger trees. We wondered whether some of the larger trees were fairly ancient, but initial results indicate that the bigger trees had wide growth rings,



David Jordon & Brad core sampling a Western Red Cedar

Photo: Bob Puls

indicating rapid growth under ideal conditions. Estimated ages (with formal results pending) were around 80 - 100 years, which coincides with the time of the great fire which, it now seems, wiped out all of the forest as well as the mill and houses around 1917.

Bob Puls

MOUNTAIN VIEW CROWN LANDS 2102 ANNUAL REPORT

Un-Identified species: 262
Total species: 1429

Mountain View Crown Land Species 2009-2012	
Flora	2009-2012
Trees - conifers	5
Trees - deciduous	9
Small Trees & Shrubs	40
Forbs	104
Ferns & Horsetails	9
Grasses, sedges & rushes	21
Clubmosses	1
Mosses	37
Lichens	48
Liverworts	11
Algae	1
Fungi: white-spored gilled	109
Fungi: brown-spored gilled	25
Fungi: dark-spored gilled	13
Fungi: pink-spored gilled	3
Fungi: bolete	4
Fungi: polypore & toothed	37
Fungi: jelly type	14
Fungi: coral & club	11
Morels and False Morels	2
Fungi: cup	17
Fungi: crust & slime	44
Fungi: bird's nest	2
Fungi: other types	37
Bacteria	1



*The one-of-a-kind moth trap
Constructed by & photo: Bob Puls*

Fauna	
Mammals	27
Birds	84
Reptiles	1
Amphibians	6
Fish	3
Gastropods (Slugs & snails)	10
Terrestrial Invertebrates	
Thysanura (Bristletails)	1
Derm aptera: Earwigs	1
Thysanoptera (Thrips)	1
Lepidoptera (Butterflies & moths)	187
Hymenoptera (Bees, wasps, ants)	36
Coleoptera (Beetles)	46
Orthoptera: (Grasshoppers & Katydid)	4
Embioptera: (Web spinners)	1
Diptera (Two-winged flies)	37
Neuroptera (Lacewings)	3
Hemiptera (Sucking bugs)	17
Odonata (Dragonflies & damselflies)	
Plecoptera (Stone flies & Earwigs)	
Ephemeroptera (Mayflies)	
Collumbola (Springtails)	3
Homoptera (Leafhoppers)	7
Arachnidae (Spiders & mites)	19
Polydesmidae (Millipedes & centipedes)	7
Entognatha (Japygids)	1
Crustaceans	2
Oligochaeta (Earthworms)	1
Misc. Invertebrates	5
Aquatic Invertebrates	
Coleoptera: (Beetles)	5
Diptera: (Two-winged Flies)	13
Araneae: (Spiders & Mites)	1
Crustaceans: Malacostraca	4
Gastropods - (Snails)	3
Plecoptera: (Stoneflies)	4
Odonata: (Dragonflies & Damselflies)	9
Ephemeroptera: (Mayflies)	4
Trichoptera: (Caddisflies)	8
Hirudinae (Leeches)	1

Unidentified species - photographs	2012
Flies	87
Tilapidæ	29
Beetles	35
Bugs	17
Moths & caterpillars	36
Spiders	28
Fungi	30
Total unidentified species	262

Salamanders in Crisis!

An Overview of why Salamander Conservation is Needed

Matt Ellerbeck - Salamander Conservationist



Small-mouthed Salamander (Ambystoma texnum)

Photo: Matt Ellerbeck

Although they are rarely given much thought, and often overlooked when they are, salamanders are in a terrible crisis. Around half of the world's salamander species are listed as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These species are all facing a high risk of extinction. A further 62 species have been designated as near-threatened with populations rapidly dwindling. This means they are quickly getting closer to threatened status and to the brink of extinction. Sadly for some salamanders it is already too late, as both the Yunnan Lake Newt (*Cynops wolterstorffi*) and Ainsworth's Salamander (*Plethodon ainsworthi*) have already gone extinct.

Salamanders have been on the earth for over 160 million years, and the terrible state that they now find themselves in is due to the detrimental acts of humans. Even those species that are not experiencing population declines deserve attention and conservation to ensure that they remain healthy and stable.

One of the biggest issues affecting salamanders is the loss of their natural habitat. Many areas that were once suitable for salamanders to live in have now been destroyed for developmental construction and agriculture. Habitats of all kinds are being lost at an alarming rate. Wetlands are drained, forests are logged and cut down, and waterfronts are developed. Salamanders are literally losing their homes and they are losing them rapidly. The expansion of urban areas threatens the suitable habitats that still remain. Where natural habitats do still exist, they are often fragmented or degraded. Fragmentation occurs when healthy areas of habitat are isolated from one another. These fragmented areas are known as habitat islands. Salamander populations are affected since gene flow between the populations is prevented. This increases the occurrence of inbreeding, which results in a decrease in genetic variability and the birthing of weaker individuals. Fragmented populations where inbreeding occurs often end in a genetic bottleneck. This is an

evolutionary event where a significant percentage of the population or species is killed or otherwise prevented from reproducing. Habitat fragmentation is also harmful because it often eliminates crucial requirements in the area which are critical to the survival of salamander populations. Such areas include spaces that can be utilized for thermoregulation, prey capture, breeding, and over-wintering. Without such habitat requirements, populations dwindle.

Breeding sites, often in the forms of vernal pools, are particularly important. The loss of such areas in the form of habitat destruction can negatively affect the entire population and its reproductive output. According to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), there is some evidence that certain salamander species have individuals that return to the pond in which they were born once they reach maturity. Therefore, destruction of a breeding pond may result in loss of the entire population returning to that site. Habitat complexity is also important as it offers shelter to salamanders from both predators and human persecution.

Degradation occurs when the natural habitat has been altered and degraded to such a degree that it is unlikely that any remaining salamanders species would be able to survive. Developments and agriculture near fragmented habitats put salamanders at serious risk. As amphibians, salamanders have extremely absorbent skins. Industrial contaminants, the introduction of sedimentation into waterways, sewage run off, pesticides, oils, and other chemicals and toxic substances from developmental construction sites and human settlements can all be absorbed by salamanders. This can quickly lead to deaths. They can also cause widespread horrific deformities to occur. A study conducted at Purdue University found that out of 2,000 adult and juvenile salamanders, 8 percent had visible deformities.

According to Save The Frogs, Atrazine (perhaps the most commonly used herbicide on the planet, with some 33 million kg being used annually in the US alone) can reduce survivorship in salamanders. Many products are sold with the claim that they are eco-friendly. However, these should be viewed with caution. For example, according to N.C Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Roundup and many other surfactant-loaded glyphosate formulations are not labeled for aquatic use. When these formulations are applied to upland sites according to label instructions, the risk to surfactant-sensitive species is considered low. While this may be the case for fish, it does not necessarily apply to amphibians. Salamanders that breed in water also routinely use non-aquatic areas and could easily be exposed to glyphosate formulations that

contain harmful surfactants through direct application and not just incidental drift.

Habitat destruction and degradation can also affect the availability of prey items, causing unnatural declines in appropriate food sources. Habitats are often isolated and cut off from one another by the roads and highways that now run through them. Countless numbers of salamanders are killed on roads and highways every year when they are hit by vehicles. Salamanders that are migrating to breeding and egg-laying sites often must cross over roads to reach such areas. Here many of the mature members of the breeding population are killed. Removing members of the breeding populations greatly limits reproductive output; this makes it incredibly hard for salamander numbers to rebound.

Roads present an additional problem because they represent a form of habitat loss. The roads that run through natural areas also fragment the existing populations, drastically making them smaller in size. This limits the gene flow and genetic diversity between the isolated populations on either side and greatly increases the chances of extirpation. When salamanders attempt to cross roads to travel between the populations, or to critical breeding/birthing sites, it greatly increases their chances of being hit and killed by vehicles.

The Wetlands Ecology and Management (2005) population projections for spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*) life tables imply that an annual risk of road mortality for adults of greater than 10% can lead to local population extirpation. Unfortunately, it is estimated that mortality rates can often be as high as 50 to 100%, which means populations are at extreme risk of extirpation and extinction due to road mortality. Wyman (1991) reported average mortality rates of 50.3 to 100% for hundreds of salamanders attempting to cross a paved rural road in New York State, USA. Given that this figure pertains to a rural area from over a decade ago, it is fair to assume that even higher mortality rates occur as there has been an increase in cars and roads over the years. Reducing road mortality is paramount to preserving salamander species.

Being hit and killed by vehicles is not the only threat that roads create for salamanders. Chemical run-off from vehicles contaminates roadside ditches and pools. These sites are often utilized by salamanders for breeding and birthing. According to Steven P. Brady (2012) survival in roadside pools averaged just 56%, as compared to 87% in woodland pools. Thus, an average of 36% fewer individual embryos survived to hatching in roadside versus woodland pools.

Salamanders are also threatened when they are harvested from the wild. Salamanders are taken for

the pet trade, for food markets (mudpuppies), and for use as fishing bait.

There is much about salamanders that scientists do not know. Aspects of the biology, ecology, and lifestyles of many species is a mystery. This undoubtedly means human interference is negatively affecting salamanders in ways in which we don't even know. The intricate relation between all species and the vital roles they play within eco-systems is also being altered. Such alterations can have serious consequences to not just salamanders, but many other animals as well (including humans).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS REPORT:

Matt Ellerbeck is an Ontario naturalist. As a passionate and enthusiastic conservationist, Matt's endeavors have earned him several accolades. These include being presented with a special honorarium from the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority to recognize his dedication to conservation, a Green Globe Award nomination from the Commerce and Engineering Environmental Conference, and being named a Visionary by Within Kingston Magazine. He has aptly been described as "so full of enthusiasm, he looks like he will burst at any moment" by the South Frontenac Natural Environmental Committee, and as a 'true conservationist' by the educational coordinator of the Little Cat Creek Conservation Area. The Nature's Explorers Camp has hailed him as both a Habitat Hero and a Conservation Champion. Matt also often appears in the media to help get his messages out to the masses. He has appeared on TV, Radio Shows, and in many newspapers and publications across North America. He has also been featured on radio and in publications in the UK, Ireland, India, New Zealand, and Australia.

Matt contacted LFN and asked that we publicize the plight of the salamanders, and we are pleased to print his report in this newsletter.

To find out more and how you can help please see: www.savethesalamanders.com



Long-toed Salamander

Photo: Bob Puls

PROGRAMMES

Check our website for updates!

Meetings are held commencing at 7.15 pm at the Langley Community Music School, 4899 207th Street, Langley. Unless otherwise indicated, they consist of a brief monthly business meeting, followed by the feature presentation (approximately one hour), followed by refreshments.

Thursday March 21, 2013

COSMETIC PESTICIDES

Christina Beck

Health Promotion Coordinator

Canadian Cancer Society, Fraser Valley Region

Cosmetic pesticide use (or non-essential pesticide use) refers to pesticides used to enhance the appearances of private lawns and gardens, as well as parks and playgrounds. The Canadian Cancer Society will be speaking about cosmetic pesticide use as a public health issue, particularly for children, and why the Society is advocating for legislation.

Followed by:

SOME COMMON BUTTERFLIES OF LANGLEY....

Al Grass

Thursday April 18, 2013

INVASIVE SPECIES: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Tasha Murray

Invasive Species Society of Metro Vancouver

Invasive plants are out-competing native plants, disrupting wildlife habitat and impacting our home gardens and parks. There are also invasive species that are having environmental, economic, and health and safety impacts in our region, such as snakehead fish and European fire ant that have garnered recent attention. Learn why invasive species are so harmful, how to recognize our worst local invaders and what is being done in the region to manage them.

Tasha Murray has been involved in environmental education and stewardship in the Pacific Northwest for over twelve years and has worked extensively to manage invasive plants. She holds a B.Sc. from Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops and an M.S.T. from Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A. Tasha is the Education & Administration Manager for the Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver (ISCMV), a non-profit organization that works with individuals, organizations and government to better manage invasive species throughout the region.

Thursday May 16, 2013

MIRACLE OF MIGRATION

Derek Matthews

Vancouver Avian Research Centre

Vancouver Avian Research Centre conducts year

round bird monitoring and banding and provides public outreach to raise awareness of environmental issues, particularly as they relate to breeding and migratory birds. Derek's presentation will be an introduction to VARC's bird monitoring and banding programs which has lots of great information and some amazing close up photography of the birds banded at Colony Farm Regional Park.

Derek Matthews was born in Hertfordshire, north of London, England, and developed a very early interest in birds, joining a local bird ringing group as a young teenager. A passionate ornithologist, avian researcher and conservationist; Derek is the Chair of the Vancouver Avian Research Centre, and a Master bird bander (A Master Bander is an individual licensed by Environment Canada to capture and band wild birds) He also leads field trips and bird tours and hosts Bird Monitoring and Banding and Bird Identification Workshops. He has traveled extensively birding throughout the world.

Thursday June 20, 2013

LANGLEY FIELD NATURALISTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday July 27, 2013

LANGLEY FIELD NATURALIST'S SUMMER SOCIAL

AT THE GRASS SHACK



INVOKING VENUS, Feathers and Fashion Juxtaposes Courtship and Attraction in Birds and Humans

From February 7 through May 5, 2013,
the Beaty Biodiversity Museum presents
an exhibition of photo-based images
by Catherine Stewart
and accessories from the clothing collections
of Claus Jahnke and Ivan Sayers.

Beaty Biodiversity Museum
2212 Main Mall
Vancouver B.C. V6T 1Z4
www.beatymuseum.ubc.ca

FIELD TRIPS

Unless otherwise noted, meet at Douglas Park Recreation Centre on Douglas Crescent between 204 and 206 Street at 9:00 am for car pooling. If you prefer to meet at the walk site, please phone so we can watch for you. **Please phone in advance so that the co-ordinator does not go needlessly to the meeting site - if the co-ordinator has not heard from any participants by the evening before the outing, then he/she will not go to the meeting site. Bring water, a lunch, binoculars, field guides and appropriate clothing for the weather. For more information, to make comments, suggest walks or to let us know you are coming, please phone Anne Gosse, 604-888-1787.**

Saturday 13 April 2013, 9:00 am

LITTLE CAMPBELL HATCHERY

Leader: Roy Thomson

Join the Langley Field Naturalists on a tour of the Little Campbell Hatchery grounds with Roy Thomson. This is the first "all volunteer hatchery" in British Columbia. The facility was built in 1983 and continues to be maintained by members of the Semiahmoo Fish and Game Club. It is located on the banks of the Little Campbell River on a 30 acre site acquired by the SFGC in 1979. This wooded site has several trails along its spawning channels and river with lots of different birds visiting and nesting. Some nesting hummingbirds and owls are known to inhabit the area plus many more species. *Meet at the Semiahmoo Fish & Game Club upper hall parking lot (1284 - 184th Street, South Surrey) at 9:00 am.* Please phone 604-888-1787 for info.

Saturday 20 April, 2013 8:00 am till 12:00 noon

SURREY BEND REGIONAL PARK

Leader: Ivan Kaderabek

Join naturalist Ivan Kaderabek as we explore Surrey Bend Regional Park with Langley Field Naturalists and Birds on the Bay and Beyond. This is a unique wild park site on the banks of the mighty Fraser River in the northeast corner of the City of Surrey. It has both marsh area and grassy meadows, plus woods which are the home of many raptors and other bird species. The site is unique in many ways, including its position as one of the few remaining large, un-dyked sections of the lower Fraser River, and the unique ecological effects this creates. *Meet at Douglas Crescent at 7:30 am or at Barnston Island ferry parking lot foot of 104th Ave. at 8:00 am.* Phone for info 604-888-1787.

Friday to Sunday 10-12 May, 2013

Skagit Bird Blitz - (see page 3 for poster)

Saturday 11 May, 2013

IONA BEACH REGIONAL PARK AND LAGOONS

Leader: Josh Inman

Join the Langley Field Naturalists and Birds on the Bay and Beyond with expert birder Josh Inman to explore this amazingly rich and varied bird life area. We will welcome back the Yellow-headed Blackbirds & Purple Martins who return to nest each spring in the ponds and Fraser River. One year's bird count

was 61 species! *Meet 8:00 am Douglas Cres to carpool or 9:00 am at Iona Beach Park by the washrooms.* Phone 604-532-0455 for info or to let us know you are coming.

Saturday 18 May, 2013

CAMPBELL VALLEY REGIONAL PARK

Leader: Viveka Ohman

Yellow Warbler Wander with expert birder Viveka Ohman. Join Langley Field Naturalists along with Birds on the Bay plus White Rock & Surrey Naturalist, for our summer "Yellow Theme" as we look for Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks plus many more summer visitors. Bring lunch and please be prepared to walk for a good distance around the park. *Meet at the Langley meeting spot at 8:30 - or at Campbell Valley 8th Ave parking lot - east of 200th Street at 9:00 am.* Ph: 856-7534 or 888-1787.

Saturday 25 May, 2013

GLEN VALLEY BIRD COUNT- 6am to noon, details t.b.a.

Friday to Sunday 14-16 June, 2013

MANNING PARK BIRD BLITZ (see page 3 for poster)

Friday 7 June, 2013

REIFEL BIRD SANCTUARY - DELTA

Leader: Al Grass

The Sandhill Crane and many other bird babies are usually out in June. There is a small admission fee. Bring Lunch, snacks and refreshments. *Meet at Douglas Crescent 8:00 am or Reifel Bird Sanctuary parking lot at 9:00am.*

Friday 21 June, 2013

SKAGIT VALLEY PROVINCIAL PARK

Leaders: Al & Jude Grass

Birds and wildflowers should be at their best including the beautiful pink Rhododendron. This is a full day trip, so please bring lunch, snacks, water, (sunscreen and bug repellent) and a variety of clothing and footwear for the weather. *Meet at the junction of the Hope Flood Road & Silver Skagit Road at 8:45 am. The Hope Flood Road exit is # 168 from Highway #1 heading east.* **Note: please make sure you have enough gas as it is 130 km round trip to Ross Lake and back to the highway.** For info contact 604 538 8774.

Friday 19 July, 2013

GOLD CREEK FALLS @

GOLDEN EARS PROVINCIAL PARK

Leader: Al Grass

Join us for a nature walk along scenic Gold Creek - birds, wildflowers, and maybe mountain goats! If time permits we'll drop in on the Spirea Nature Trail. Please bring lunch, snacks, water, (sunscreen and bug repellent) and a variety of clothing and footwear for the weather. *Meet in Langley Douglas Cres at 8:00 am or at the Park Gate parking lot at 9:00 am.* For info contact 604 538 8774