

Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



Cover photo: Spotted Tussock Moth (*Lophocampa maculata*) caterpillars are a common sight in the late summer and fall, after feeding for weeks on leaves of poplars, willows, alder, maple, or oaks. They will overwinter as a pupa and adults fly May to July (see below). Watch out for the look-alike caterpillar of the Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*). It doesn't have the white hair tuft highlights.

Photo credit: Thomas Barbin



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In This Issue:

[Leaves, Leaves, Everywhere!](#) | [Saanich Parks Volunteer Profile](#) | [Bowker Creek Biodiversity Corridor](#) | [District of Saanich Knotweed Update](#) | [As the Seasons Change, So Do We](#) | [Join Us for a Pollinator Party](#) | [Falaise Community Road Mural](#) | [BC Lake Stewardship Society Annual Conference](#) | [Saanich Events](#)



Leaves, Leaves, Everywhere!

By Renée Cenerini, Environmental Education Coordinator with the District of Saanich

With fall upon us, a big question that comes up in many people's minds (other than "What's up with all the pumpkin spice?") is "What do I do with all these leaves?" The great news is that there are several environmentally friendly options, and it turns out that the best options are the least amount of work! Here are my top three:

- 1 Leave the leaves!** Leaf litter is nature's way of returning nutrients to the soil and providing shelter for a variety of animals that are part of our natural community. This includes frogs, toads, salamanders, spiders, slugs, worms, millipedes, centipedes, beetles, and many moths and butterflies who spend all or part of their lives in leaf litter. Their presence in your yard indicates a healthy soil habitat. By seeing a carpet of leaf litter in your yard as an animal haven, you can rest easy knowing your lack of raking is kindness. For more details and a fun activity visit: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/bring-science-home-leaf-litter-biodiversity/>
- 2 Add leaves to your garden beds.** This is a great way to add nutrients to your planting areas and still provide habitat for the critters mentioned above. If you prefer not to add whole leaves to your beds, consider mowing them first and then adding them to the beds. More information is available here: <https://thisismygarden.com/2022/10/use-leaves-to-power-your-garden>



- 3 Compost your leaves and create your own rich soil.** This can be done in your own backyard composting bin or by putting them into your Saanich green bin for regular pick up. Too much for your bin? Saanich does offer a fall leaf collection program. For more details see the Saanich website here: <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/utilities-garbage/garbage-organics-recycling/leaf-collection-program.html>

Remember that, like with any good relationship, the more you give to nature, the more you receive. By taking a partnership approach to leaves, you will reduce your workload and benefit your natural community!

Looking for more ways to encourage wildlife habitat and biodiversity in your yard? Be sure to check out the great information found in the Naturescaping in Saanich booklet. Download your copy here: <https://www.saanich.ca/assets/Community/Documents/Environment/naturescape/naturescaping-in-saanich-booklet-web.pdf>

Saanich Parks Volunteer Profile

Helen Marzolf

By Helen Marzolf (Pulling Together Lead Steward Volunteer) and Katie Turner (Park Stewardship Coordinator)

Helen Marzolf is one of the *Pulling Together* lead stewards at Mount Tolmie Park. Helen has been volunteering since 2018 and is committed to continuing the legacy of volunteers before her who have also worked hard to manage invasive species in this unique Garry Oak habitat.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering with Saanich Parks?

I am starstruck by all the seasons of the Garry Oak meadow—but the annual Camas bloom is stratospheric. Each walk or work party deepens my connection to momentous **SN**, **AḲE** (Mt. Tolmie), a rare urban refugium of Garry Oak meadow.

Tell us about one of your most memorable experiences volunteering?

Best? Seeing first Chocolate Lily (*Fritillaria affinis*) and witnessing a resurgence of White Fawn Lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*) after weed removal. Finding a community of dedicated and knowledgeable colleagues in Pulling Together. Worst? Homeowners dumping into the park and dig-outs of Camas during their bloom.

Tell us a bit about yourself?

Tim and I were lucky enough to find a home near **SN**, **AḲE** when we came to Victoria in 2004. Encountering Dave Lock drew us into the task of invasive species removal. We see volunteering as a way to recognize and respect the land that has provided for humans for more than 13,800 years. As uninvited guests on the lands of **W̱SÁNEĆ**, **Lək̓ʷəŋən** and **SENĆOŦEN** speaking people, it is the least we can do to contribute to the care of an ecosystem that, when you think about it, gives us everything, encompassing botany, biology, geology, histories, agriculture, spirit and song, past and future.

Helen and two other co- Lead Stewards leads work parties on Sunday mornings. For more information about the Pulling Together Volunteer program [Volunteer for Pulling Together | District of Saanich](#) or to join a work party [Events Calendar | District of Saanich](#)



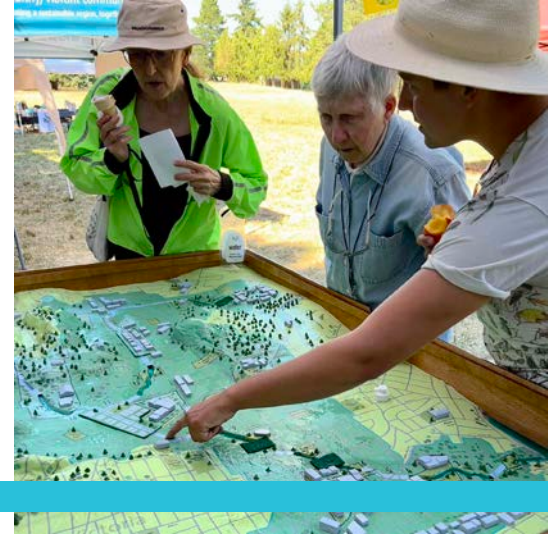
White Fawn Lilies



Garry Oak meadow



Photo credit: Rowens Cristancho



Bowker Creek Biodiversity Corridor

A Vision of Healing and Wholeness for the Bowker Creek Watershed

By the Friends of Bowker Creek Society
www.bowkercreek.org

On August 12, 2023, the community, led by the Friends of Bowker Creek Society, came together to celebrate Bowker Creek Biodiversity Day at Kings Community Nature Space.

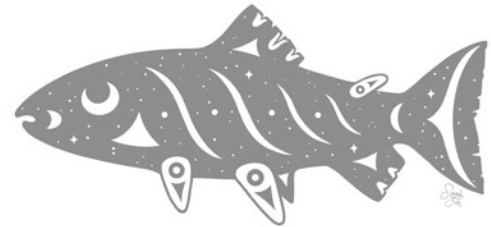
Besides celebrating the remarkable biodiversity that is already returning to the creek, the event launched the Bowker Creek Biodiversity Corridor (BCBC) initiative, which seeks to unite urban needs and densification with creek restoration and ecosystem health.

The BCBC advances key Saanich initiatives:

1. The *State of Biodiversity Report (2023)* recognizes that water sources, creeks, and adjacent riparian areas are the most biodiverse ecosystems and are crucial to supporting wildlife species;
2. The *State of the Urban Forest Report (2023)* notes how trees improve the quality of life (human and non-human): cleaning the air of pollutants, storing and sequestering carbon, diverting water from storm drains, stabilizing steep slopes, cooling streets and homes, and providing wildlife habitat;
3. The *2020 Climate Plan* urges the protection and management of natural assets as critical infrastructure, e.g. for flood management and heat mitigation, and aims to connect protected areas with natural corridors; and,
4. The long-standing *Green and Blue Spaces Report (2000)* identifies a Bowker Creek regional trail as part of a major greenway connecting Oak Bay, the City of Victoria, and Saanich.

We seek to restore the creek from an urban storm sewer to a salmon stream with five ecosystems: *freshwater*, the life zone of the stream itself; *hyporheic*, the life zone in the gravel under the stream and alongside it; *riparian*, the streambank zone of shrubs and grasses; *forest*, the zone of shade trees overall, and *marshy wetlands*. These ecosystems would support a corridor of urban forest, active transportation, climate change adaptation, and urban green space that provides natural beauty and recreation to surrounding neighbourhoods.

Bowker Creek



Biodiversity Corridor

We thank Sarah Jim, visual artist from Tseycum in WSÁNEĆ, for the use of her "Cosmic Salmon" image. Sarah states: "The salmon is a symbol of relationships. They feed the ecosystem and sacrifice themselves to the next generation. Salmon provide nutrients to the land and countless animals that rely on them for food and medicine. The celestial pattern within this salmon is a symbol of the interconnectedness of all things."

District of Saanich Knotweed Update

By Ann Klein, Environmental Technician, Saanich Parks

Saanich has been treating and monitoring invasive knotweeds since 2010 in both our parks and on private lands. Knotweed plants are one of the most aggressive and problematic invasive species that we have in Saanich and the province.

It typically takes at least 3 years of treatment and successive years of monitoring to eradicate knotweed from a location. Given the Province's best management practices for treatment and monitoring, it takes 14 years of monitoring after a site has been treated and found without any re-growth (with eight of these years being 'skipped' years) before an infestation is considered to be fully eradicated and 'historical'!

Dedication to this species is showing considerable success! There have been 300 known private property sites in Saanich since the program started in 2010. In 2023, staff visited **203 private properties and only 78 of these sites had growth and required treatment.** This represents a drop of 74% over time!

In addition to this, just 1 new site was recorded this year, with the number of new sites dropping considerably in recent years (2022: 10 new sites; 2021: 18 new sites; 2020: 27 new sites). Similar success has been reached with the knotweed on public sites as well. New sites are mainly reported to Saanich by landscapers and property owners.

Continued participation by property owners in the program, and continued dedication of staff and Saanich resources for treatment and public education is making a significant difference as we work towards our goal of eradicating knotweed in Saanich!



As the Seasons Change, So Do We

By Katie Turner, Park Stewardship Coordinator,
Saanich Parks

Most people I know love autumn. The changing colors of the leaves, the upcoming holidays, pumpkin spice, cooler weather... there is a lot that changes with the changing seasons. The same holds true for ecological work. The turn of the season marks a shift in *Pulling Together* volunteer activities yielding a host of new ecological restoration projects.

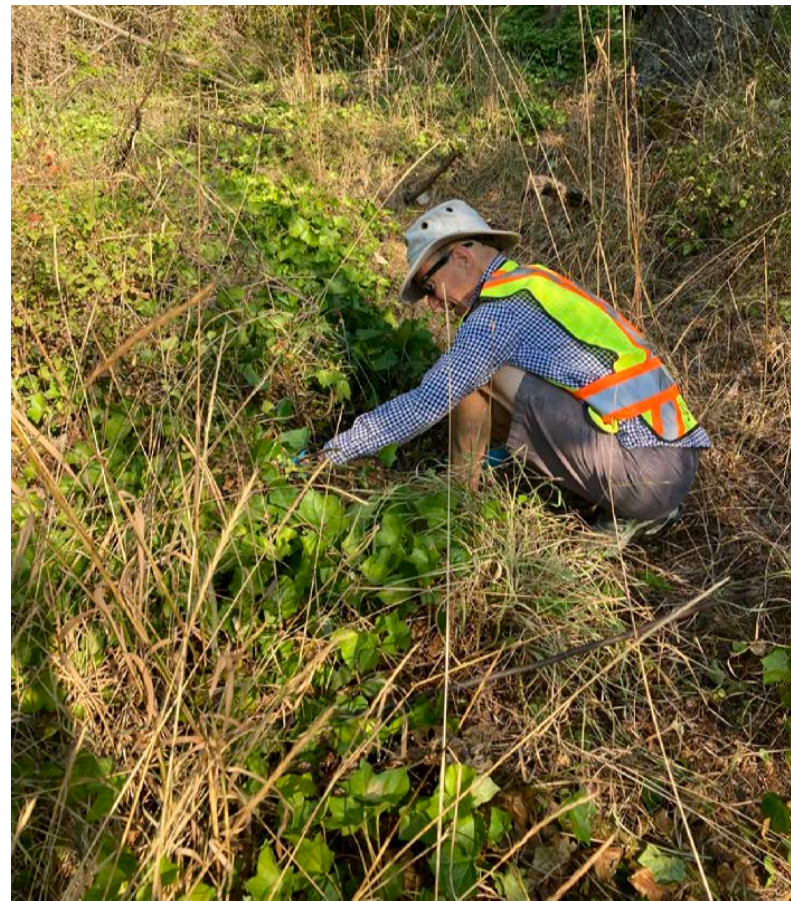


Invasive Species

Fall and winter present an ideal time to tackle many invasive species. Soil moisture limits disturbance that can occur from pulling weeds, there is less fragile emergent vegetation and birds generally are not nesting. In addition, most invasive species do not go to seed or fruit over autumn and winter, so we can remove them without the risk of spreading seed.

Planting

The cooler wetter weather is ideal for planting native species. The soil retains moisture more effectively, and reduced competition from invasive plants during this season gives newly planted natives a better chance to establish. Many native plant species in Saanich have evolved to thrive in the fall. The decrease in daylight triggers the release of hormones that stimulate root growth allowing plants to establish strong foundations before winter sets in.





Seeding

Dormant seeding is a technique common in restoration that involves laying seed in the autumn. This may seem counterintuitive, after all don't seeds need warmth, light, and moisture to grow? This is true, but this is also the reason to seed in the fall. The rain helps compress seeds into the soil allowing better moisture uptake. Seeds begin growing as soon as soils warm up, giving a full growing season to establish, and a competitive edge on seed released later in the spring.

Volunteering

Fall provides an excellent opportunity for community engagement in restoration projects. Cooler temperatures and reduced visitor traffic allow for focused restoration work without causing undue stress to the ecosystems. The collective effort of residents, schools, community groups and volunteers is a testament to the community's dedication to preserving their natural surroundings.

With all these different projects happening, don't be surprised if you see us scampering around like busy beavers. Just as the habitats we love change and shift in response to the season, you'll find us changing right along with them. We hope you get to enjoy the autumn season as much as we do and the great spectacle that is the dynamic shifting landscape of fall.



Join Us for a Pollinator Party in Our Rewilded Meadow!

By Sarafina Lewis-Henderson, Research & Education
Coordinator, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Our Pollinator Party program invites participants of all ages to celebrate and explore the world of pollinator identification, ecology, and biodiversity monitoring. The program's objective is to enhance our understanding of plant-pollinator interactions through community engagement, ultimately contributing to the conservation of a symbiotic relationship that is essential for human food security and the persistence of all wildlife.

The meadow where the Pollinator Party takes place was previously occupied by a house and overrun by exotic and invasive species. In 2017, the Nature Sanctuary embarked on a restoration project led by Jay Rastogi, the Site Director. Jay's initial consideration was determining the least represented ecosystem element on the site. At that time, it was identified as midsummer/late blooming pollinator plants that could thrive in full sun. To simplify maintenance efforts, Jay selected a limited number of species that possessed similar competitive advantages and avoided dominance. The chosen species included Goldenrod (*Solidago multiradiata*), Aster (*Aster subspicatus*), Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*), along with 17 other native plants.



Above: Bumble bee pollinating kwetlal, or Great Camas (*Camassia leichtlinii*)

Below: Solitary bee homes with cavities that can be cleaned readily to minimize the risk of disease and parasites



Left: Bumble bee pollinating Coast Penstemon (Cascade Penstemon)

Photos: Sarafina Lewis-Henderson



Photo: Sarafina Lewis-Henderson

Since its inception in 2022, the Pollinator Party has observed a total of 37 pollinator species, ranging from bumble bees, mining bees, leaf-cutter bees, flies, to pollinating birds such as hummingbirds. This year, we introduced two solitary bee homes to the meadow and have been monitoring the population growth through photo-point monitoring. When selecting a suitable dwelling for the bees, our priority was to ensure their safety. We acquired a structure with removable slots that can be thoroughly cleaned, thus minimizing the risk of parasites and other disease for the bees.

Pollinators support healthy ecosystems that clean the air, stabilize soils, and buffer the planet from climate change. Today, these relationships are at risk as pollinators and plants can respond differently to cues from a warming climate. Our community-led monitoring will help to support sensitive and threatened plant and animal species.

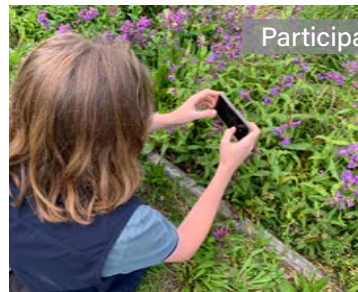


Photo: Cara Gibson



Photo: Sarafina Lewis-Henderson

Participants photographing pollinators

Do you want to learn more about pollinators? Join us for a Pollinator Party at the Nature Sanctuary! This hands-on program takes place **every other Wednesday from 10-11am in the rewilded meadow**. To secure your spot, please register online through our convenient booking calendar. For further information, reach out to us at programs@swanlake.bc.ca



Scan to
join our
community
programs!



Falaise Community Road Mural Repainted and Expanded

By Teale Phelps Bondaroff, Saanich Councillor
victoriaplacemaking.ca

Photo credit: John Cameron

On Sunday, August 20, volunteers from the Falaise Community Association, the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network, and the neighbourhood threw a repainting party for the road mural on Falaise Crescent in Saanich.

A team of more than 30 volunteers repainted and expanded the existing road mural. It was first installed last summer. The original design was done by local artist Desiree Shelley, who worked with neighbours to develop a design that reflected the identity of the street, and portrays a motif of yellow montane violets. The yellow montane violet was chosen because Falaise Park is one of the few places in the region where this rare flower has been found. It was identified by long-time resident and artist Tannis Warburton, who alerted the Ministry of Environment, and who is now honoured by a plaque in the park. This year, volunteers added purple camas flowers to the mural.



"The addition of stylized camas flowers to the mural reflects the camas meadow our volunteers have restored in Falaise Park," said Stuart Macpherson, President of the Falaise Community Association and lead organizer for the project. "An event like this really illustrates the community spirit in the Falaise neighbourhood."

"This road mural is a fantastic example of the power of placemaking – they beautify streets, build community, and improve road safety," said Saanich Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff, who is a volunteer with the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network and helped organize the project prior to being elected as a Saanich Councillor. "Studies have found that road murals encourage drivers to slow down, thereby improving road safety."

The project is a first for Saanich, and has been installed as a pilot. The project was led by the Falaise Community Association with support from the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network.





2023 BC Lake Stewardship Society Annual Conference



By Winona Pugh, Lori James-Derry, and Carmel Thomson
Friends of Tod Creek Watershed

One of the most important purposes of any topic related to BC lakes and the environment in general is creating awareness. This year the BC Lake Stewardship Society's annual conference focused on climate change, introduced species, and eutrophication (an excess of nutrients that causes increased plant and algae growth).

Lake and Watershed Stewards doing conservation, protection, and restoration work gathered from all across BC at Power to Be facilities on Prospect Lake in the District of Saanich. The sold-out conference offered an opportunity to exchange lake information and to network with scientists, government representatives, and environmental specialists.

A highlight of the Conference was the Aquatic Plant Survey demonstration conducted by Friends of Tod Creek Watershed members Winona Pugh & Lori James-Derry.

Every September for the last ten years, the FTCW has completed a rigorous Aquatic Plant Survey in Prospect Lake to identify both native and introduced plants, and to monitor the diversity and growth patterns throughout the lake. Multiple sites are sampled at three depths. Samples of plants are taken, data is collected and documented, and site locations noted. The demonstration was very hands-on and promoted good observation skills, stimulated thought, and, perhaps most importantly, was the basis for a thorough discussion.

The conference concluded with a field trip to Elk Lake and Langford Lake to understand the purposes and function of the Oxygenator systems installed in both lakes to reduce blue green algae blooms (cyanobacteria) and improve water quality.



"Lake stewardship is the careful and responsible management of lakes and the practice of protecting and restoring them to ensure they are healthy into the future. The BCLSS works collaboratively with scientists, environmental professionals, and volunteers, First Nations, stewardship groups, lakeshore residents, the general public, and government agencies to keep our lakes healthy."

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 at 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.

Sept. 25 | Glanford Area

Meet in Glanford Park parking lot, on Kenneth Street

Oct. 2 | No Walk (Holiday)

Oct. 9 | No Walk (Holiday)

Oct. 16 | Cedar Hill/Bowker Creek

Meet at main entrance to Cedar Hill Rec Centre, on Cedar Hill Rd

Oct. 23 | Cadboro Bay/Finnerty Cove

Meet/park on Maynard Street by Maynard Park playground

Oct. 30 | Marigold/South Valley Parks

Meet/park by trailhead for South Valley Park, on Hatfield Rd

Nov. 6 | Layritz Park/Colquitz Creek

Meet in Layritz Park parking lot, on Layritz Avenue, off Glyn Rd

Nov. 13 | No Walk (Holiday)

Nov. 20 | Braefoot to PKOLS (Mt. Douglas) Park

Meet in Braefoot Centre Park parking lot, off Mackenzie Avenue

Nov. 27 | Saanich Commonwealth Place/Beaver Lake

Meet at main entrance to Saanich Commonwealth Place, Elk Lake Drive

Dec. 4 | McMinn/Outerbridge Parks

Meet at McMinn Park, Maplegrove Street

Dec. 11 | Saanich Core

Meet/park by entrance to Rutledge Park on Scotia Street

Walk & Talk 55+ (FREE) Tuesdays & Thursdays | 9:30 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.

Sept. 26 | Claremont Park to Sea Ridge Park

Meet at Claremont-Goddard Park, 764 Haliburton Road

Sept. 28 | Lambrick Park to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon Head Recreation Centre, 4100 Lambrick Way

Oct. 3 | Hampton Park to Swan Creek Trail

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

Oct. 5 | Layritz to Copley to Quick's Bottom Parks

Meet at Layritz Park parking lot off Glyn Road

Oct. 10 | Copley West Park to Hyacinth Park

Meet at Copley Park West, 598 Parkridge St, off Vanalman Ave

Oct. 12 | Lochside Trail to Beckwith Park

Meet on Lochside Trail in parking lot by Don Mann Excavating, off Lochside Drive

Oct. 17 | Cuthbert Holmes Park to Craigflower Park

Meet at Silver City in Tillicum Mall parking lot

Oct. 19 | PKOLS (Mount Douglas Park) to Glendenning

Meet at washrooms in parking lot off Cordova Bay Rd at Ash Rd

Oct. 24 | Cedar Hill Park to Rutledge Park

Meet at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, main doors

Oct. 26 | Prospect Lake Centennial Trail

Meet at Whitehead Park at Prospect Lake & Goward Rd

Oct. 31 | Claremont Park to Royal Oak Burial Park

Meet at Claremont-Goddard Park, 764 Haliburton Road

Nov. 2 | Rithet's Bog to Brydon Park

Meet at kiosk on Dalewood, off Chatterton Way

Nov. 7 | Portage Inlet

Meet at Helmcken Centennial Park; 130 Helmcken Road

Nov. 9 | Sayward Hill

Meet at Lochside Park, off Cordova Bay Rd, past Mattick's Farm

Nov. 14 | Lambrick Park to Haro Woods Park

Meet near main entrance to Gordon Head Recreation Centre

Nov. 16 | Swan Lake

Meet at end of Nelthrope, off McKenzie Avenue

Nov. 21 | Gorge Waterway

Meet at Gorge Park; 200 Gorge Rd West, opposite Orilla Street

Nov. 23 | Tod Inlet

Meet at Tod Inlet access, on Wallace Drive, 1 km south of Benvenuto Avenue

Nov. 28 | Braefoot Park to King's Pond

Meet at Braefoot Park parking lot; 1359 McKenzie Avenue

Nov. 30 | Swan Lake, Reynolds Park, Playfair Park

Meet at end of Nelthrope, off McKenzie Avenue

Dec. 5 | Beckwith Park to Rainbow Park

Meet by washroom building in Beckwith Park off Beckwith Ave

Dec. 7 | UVic Alumni Chip Trail

Meet at Henderson Recreation Centre, 2291 Cedar Hill X Rd

Dec. 12 | Glanford Park to Mount View Park

Meet at Glanford Park, 600 Kenneth Street, off Glanford Avenue

Dec. 14 | Interurban Rail Trail

Meet at Whitehead Park, at Prospect Lake & Goward Rd parking lot

Sunday Walks (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.

Oct. 15 | Cadboro Bay to Ten Mile Point

Meet by washroom block, Cadboro Gyro Park

Nov. 12 | Elk/Beaver Lake

Meet by Nature Centre at main beach, off Beaver Lake Road

Dec. 10 | Playfair to Beckwith

Meet at Playfair Park parking lot off Rock and Quadra Streets

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

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

Guided Bird Walks (Drop-In) Sundays | 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.

Natural History Night (every 2nd Tuesday)

Vic. Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary | Tue. Oct. 10, 7:30 pm

Botany Night (every 3rd Tuesday)

TBA | Tue. Sept. 19, 7:30 pm

TBA | Tue. Oct. 17, 7:30 pm

Birder's Night (every 4th Wednesday)

Birds and Climate Change | Wed. Sept. 27, 7:30 pm

Birding the deserts of Arabia | Wed. Oct. 25, 7:30 pm

Marine Night (last Monday of the month)

Diving Deep with ROPOS | Mon. Sept. 25, 7:30 pm

Marine Oil Spills in BC | Mon. Oct. 30, 7:30 pm



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Cover photo: A fall morning in rural Saanich