

Birds of Winter



Top left: Common Mergansers with male munching a staghorn sculpin in China Cloud Bay
Below: a bevy of Barrow's Goldeneyes
Lower right: Northern Flickers guarding last arbutus berries
Bottom: a conclave of Black Oystercatchers
Right: Hooded Mergansers
 (Photos: S. Harrington, Merganser munching by Anna Smith)

Spring Birds Migrating

by Marti Wendt

Birds who have been here all winter are showing us that the season has turned. Mallards are swimming in pairs, Hooded Mergansers are showing off their fully raised crests, and diminutive Pacific Wrens are performing arias from under the salal. Hutton's Vireos are calling "SUeet" from the very tops of the tallest trees.

Part-timers are arriving, bursting with songs about territory and mating. Red-winged Blackbirds are already flashing their shoulder patches from the wetlands. In the first week of March you may see newly-arrived Turkey Vultures silently patrolling the skies. In the next week, Ospreys will call out their claim to part of the sky.



Fewer Bald Eagles are cruising around because they are sitting on eggs. Turkey Vultures soar in a dihedral, Ospreys have "crooked elbows," and Eagles fly on straight wings.

By the middle of March, the Orange-crowned Warblers are trilling in the oceanspray. Don't bother searching for the small hidden orange crown; it appears to be just a small, gray-green, insect gleaning bird. The Yellow-rumped Warblers start singing about the same time; they seem to especially like orchards.

Around the 20th of March, if you have a feeder out for the Anna's Hummingbirds, you will hear the rumpus when the male Rufous Hummingbirds arrive. If you don't have a feeder, look for the hummers in the first

salmonberry flowers. If it is too wintry for the salmonberries, both hummingbird species go to Red-breasted Sapsucker wells for sap and small insects. Violet-green Swallows will be flitting around the eaves before the end of the month. They seem to spend weeks checking out the real estate before they get down to nest construction.



The first warm days of April bring the Cassin's and Warbling Vireos. The Warbling Vireo has a long, complicated song, usually sung

from a taller-than-the-others deciduous tree. Next, the Purple Martins arrive at the nest boxes on the False Bay Dock. Before April ends, there will be Common Yellowthroats in the swamps, and the Downy Woodpeckers will be drumming.



Left: juvenile Violet-green Swallows
Right: Black-headed Grosbeak
Photos S. Harrington

May begins with the closely related Townsend's Warblers and Black-throated Gray Warblers singing in the conifer crowns. Just to keep us on our toes, they sometimes sing each other's songs! The stars of May are the Swainson's Thrushes, which arrive about May 10. They don't start their spectacular song immediately; they spend a few days warming up with a rattling call. Soon the Black-headed Grosbeaks sing from high in the deciduous trees. If you are lucky enough to see Western Tanagers, they also appear in mid-May. Late in the month MacGillivray's Warblers start singing from the underbrush. Around the same time, Willow Flycatchers, whose call sounds like "FITZbew," and Olive-sided Flycatchers call out, "Quick, FREE beer".

The last part-timers to arrive are the Common Night-hawks in early June. They call from very high, on the wing, to let us know there are enough mosquitoes to raise babies.

Salish View Trail Complete!



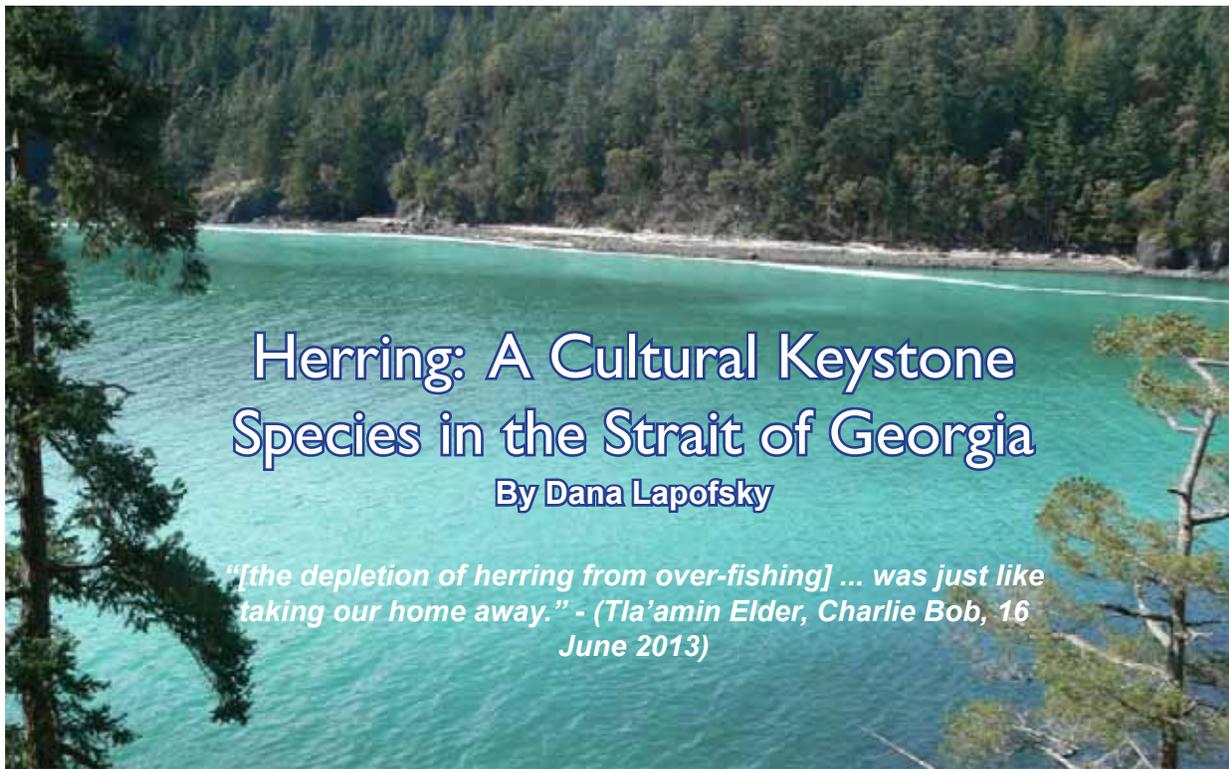
After two days of work the trail at Salish View is complete. We still have a few signs to put up, but with outdoor activities a favourite outlet in these times, we are pleased to announce that you can now go explore Salish View by taking the new ease-filled trail. Thanks to Duane West, Gordon Scott, Hilary Duinker, and Aigul Kukolj for the planning and design. Thanks to Darlene Olesko for the "trail" signs. And last but certainly not least, many thanks to these hard workers for their time and efforts putting in this wonderful trail: Hilary Duinker, James Schwartz, Gordon Scott, Yves Parizeau, Duane West, Tejomaja, Tracey Loverock, Heather Crawford, Kaia Bryce, and Shosanah Waxman.

The trail head is across Main Road from the small parking area in Squitty Bay Marine Park well before the boat ramp road. The trail is across the road and goes up and to the left of the newly restored and fenced pond. Please respect our neighbours and stay on this new trail. Many thanks to both BC Parks and the Islands Trust Conservancy for their agreements on this route. Many thanks again to all the donors and supporters of Salish View Nature Reserve!

Christmas Bird Counts

(cw = seen count week)

Species	2020	2019	2010	2003	Species	2020	2019	2010	2003
Wood Duck	2		1		Glaucous-winged Gull	47	20	6	293
American Wigeon	4	15	73	8	Mew Gull/Thayers		16	3	83
Mallard	46	49	33	77	Bonaparte's Gull	4			
Gadwall		2			California Gull			18	
Northern Pintail		3			gull sp.	163	252	226	179
Green-winged Teal	2				Herring Gull		30		
Ring-necked Duck	8	16	25	17	Great Horned Owl	2			
Harlequin Duck	8	21		2	Barred Owl	3	1		
Bufflehead	113	110	157	114	Rock Pigeon	9	7	4	
Surf Scoter	3	5	10		Anna's Hummingbird	12	32	1	
Long Tailed Duck				26	Belted Kingfisher	4	9	6	15
White winged scoter				3	Downy Woodpecker		2	2	1
Greater/Lesser Scaup			4		Hairy Woodpecker			6	1
Common Goldeneye	6	12	9	20	Red-breasted Sapsucker			5	16
Harlequin Duck	8	21		2	Merlin	1			
Barrow's Goldeneye	29	14	20	42	Hutton's Vireo			2	
Com./Bar. Goldeneye	21		40	10	Northern Flicker	4	20	56	24
Hooded Merganser	3	9	17	7	Pileated Woodpecker	2	4	29	8
Common Merganser	86	99	243	205	Northwestern Crow	58	42	130	166
merganser sp.	1		3		Common Raven	21	37	74	39
Red-breasted Merganser		12	14		Chnt.-backed Chickadee	5	46	85	123
Pacific Loon	1	1	3	159	Red-breasted Nuthatch	6	10	52	21
Common Loon	6	8	13		Brown Creeper	4	1	19	
Canada Goose	1	31	20		Pacific Wren	27	37	151	45
Trumpeter Swan		4	1	3	Bewicks Wren	2	2	2	
Horned Grebe	6	7	17	12	Gold-crowned Kinglet	42	46	40	160
Pie-billed Grebe			1		American Dipper			1	
Western Grebe	2		1	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet		10	3	2
Red-Necked Grebe		5		6	American Robin	27	2	116	233
Brandt's Cormorant	3	6		16	Hermit Thrush		2	1	
grebe sp.		13	13		Varied Thrush	11	14	109	97
Northern Fulmar				1	European Starling		15		7
Dbl-crested Cormorant	2	21	4	15	Cedar Waxwing			11	
cormorant sp./ Pelagic	1	31	69	20	Fox Sparrow	3	7	9	5
Great Blue Heron	3	2	8	17	Dark-eyed Junco	697	174	382	153
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	2		3	White-crowned Sparrow		3		
Cooper's Hawk		1			Golden-crowned Sparrow		11		2
Red Tailed Hawk				3	Song Sparrow	22	15	107	45
Bald Eagle	26	38	46	77	Spotted Towhee	45	75	121	83
Virginia Rail	2	1	4		sparrow sp.	2	7	1	
American Coot		1	8		Red-winged Blackbird		1		
Black Oystercatcher	27	17	32	25	Purple Finch	7	9	28	8
Black Turnstone	8	1	cw	26	Red Crossbill	25		20	
Surfbird			3		Pine Siskin	192	cw	12	64
Common Murre				22	Evening Grosbeak			5	
Marbled Murrelet		6	2	8					
Ancient Murrelet			cw	10					
Rhinoceros Auklet				10					
					Total Species Reported	46	55	60	69
					Individuals Counting	31	31	25	38



Herring: A Cultural Keystone Species in the Strait of Georgia

By Dana Lapofsky

"[the depletion of herring from over-fishing] ... was just like taking our home away." - (Tla'amin Elder, Charlie Bob, 16 June 2013)

Herring Spawn last seen in Boat Cove, Lasqueti Island 2012

Every year at this time, I have feelings at the periphery of my consciousness that are a mix of excitement and sadness all rolled together. They're brought on by the increased number of sea lions at French Creek and by the feel of the air and the longer days. They're brought on because I know that it's herring spawning time – a time that for millennia was marked by vibrancy for both humans and other beings up and down the coast.

Herring are for coastal First Nations what anthropologists call a “cultural keystone species”. These are species that are so central to Indigenous culture that removing them from people’s lives fundamentally changes the way they see themselves and the world around them. Thus, like an architectural keystone, they are foundational to a group’s culture and are woven into its cultural fabric.

In the case of herring specifically, there is lots of evidence of its status as a cultural keystone species for coastal First Nations and Native Americans from Alaska to Washington. This is especially evident in the Strait of Georgia where historical records, Indigenous place names, oral traditions, memories, and the archaeological record all speak to the deep time and consistent abundance and importance of herring. Remembering that Dept. of Fisheries records for herring only go back sporadically to the 1940’s, these other records provide a much more nuanced understanding of the cultural and ecological context of herring.

The archival records on the coast are replete with mention of herring abundance and its importance to coastal First Nations. Many of the earliest observations by the Spanish and British explorers talk about Indigenous Peoples harvesting and trading herring. For instance, this quote from the late 18 c. notes, “This [herring rake] fishery is so easy that in an hour they load one of their canoes” (Spanish voyage, 1792). The rake is a cleverly designed tool with tines at the end of a long pole. While standing in a canoe, the pole is used to sweep through a herring ball and the herring are then caught between the tines. In the past, the tines were made of wood and bone, but in the 20th century, metal nails were used.

The archival records indicate not only the abundance, but also the loss of herring early on – long before DFO started their records. For instance, this quote speaks of abundance beyond our current reckoning:

“In the Straits of Georgia, the schools in certain months of the year, usually the fall, may extend for many miles. Indeed in 1893 ... a small tug passed for 3 hours through a continuous mass of migrating herring in the month of June, while I myself [in the 1930’s] have seen in February dead herring thickly covering the surface of the sea near Nanaimo for a distance of over two miles.” (Carothers 1941)

However, things started to shift. In the 1880’s, there was a major fishery for herring oil and fertilizer, and

by 1900 fisheries biologists observed that herring were no longer in many larger bays. Indeed, by the mid-1930's, there was concern in BC and Alaska that overfishing had led to the decline and/or movement of local herring populations.

The long-term abundance of herring is also reflected throughout the coast in Indigenous place names. For instance, in the Salish Sea, there is Teeshoshum (Waters white with herring spawn) north of Powell River, and Ch'axa'y (Water Sizzling [with herring]) for what is now the Horseshoe Bay ferry terminal. Imagine that: waters sizzling with herring.

Of course, people have vivid memories of the importance and abundance of herring – both the fish itself and its roe. Herring were gathered with rakes and nets year round and at spawning season. Roe was gathered on hemlock or cedar boughs that had been placed in the ocean during spawn times. Strict rules about how to behave at the spawning ground, how much to collect, and how to treat herring as other beings ensured that herring were there for generations to come.

As Tla'amin Elder Dr. Elsie Paul says in her book

You know what you are not to do...All these things had a life, and now it's gonna give you a life. So you need to thank the Creator ...to thank what's there in front of you. It might be just in your thoughts or your gestures, or how you look at that" (Elsie Paul, 2014) <https://ravenspacepublishing.org/publications/as-i-remember-it/> (check out Elsie's book—it's amazing:)

I have had the privilege of interviewing knowledge holders from several Coast Salish communities and all talk about the cultural importance of herring. In fact, I believe that the abundance that these people were experiencing was a fraction of the abundance of herring prior to their lifetimes. These conversations none-the-less indicate the importance of herring up until the more recent crash in the 1980's from industrial overfishing. Here are some of the many quotes from people I have talked to:

"Herring were so abundant that they would constantly hit your fishing boots. (Jerry Galligos, 2009)"

"Yeah, the herrings ...right now I think you get them 6 to 7 inches. And the herring we used to get back were probably...10 to 12 inches and a little bit bigger." (Walter Paul, 2013)

They dry the herring on a rack and then ...you roast it on the fire. That's q^w ə s? ə m they called it. And there was a lot of herring racks ... my grandfather had herring racks, my great-grandfather had herring racks, my mom and dad, all the way down time you'd see in the back of the houses they have herring racks. But not anymore. (Phil George, 2013)

Of course, the archaeological record tells us lots about the past abundance and importance of herring. Fish traps abound in the Salish Sea, many in forms that were especially designed for herring.



Herring eggs, Lasqueti 2012
photo S. Harrington



2011 spawn at Lantzville, the likes of which we have not seen since... photo Dr. John W.(Jack) Ives *Note eggs on seal's head

By capturing herring in traps, other critters that rely on herring were also available to be hunted: seals, sea lions, salmon, and so on. So, traps created a kind of marine supermarket for the nearby residents. We have many such examples around Lasqueti.

Finally, the record of fish bones in archaeological sites tell us that herring were always around – and there were more of them than we can fathom. From 1000's of years ago, the archaeological sites in the Salish Sea are dominated by herring bones. In most sites, herring bones make up 60 – 100% of all archaeological fish bones. And this is true through time. On Lasqueti, the Long Bay site, dating to a few thousand years ago, tells the same story: there were lots of herring through time and they were central to people's lives.

I end with one final quote that is not from the Salish Sea but further north in Wuikinuxv territory on the central Coast. However, it well represents the long-standing cultural and ecological importance of herring..

“The Wikeno, and probably other tribes, have preserved an ancient custom in the practice observed by the person who in spring finds the first dead herring or oulachon on the beach. He holds it in his hand and addresses it, “Oh, grandchild, you have come!” Then he makes a smacking sound with his lips, and, still gazing at it, continues, ‘May you increase instead of decreasing, and so always!’” (Curtis 1915).

This spring, this is what I am carrying around in my head when I think of herring: “May you increase instead of decreasing, and so always!”



Juniper Witches Broom

Photo left: James Schwartz, Close up: Sophia Rosenberg

by James Schwartz

Juniper “witches broom” are stunted, densely packed massed foliage, forming ball-like growths on the tree’s branches. There are various reasons these brooms occur, such as from Phytoplasma (parasitic bacteria that need a host to reproduce and are transmitted by sucking insects); by fungi (gymnosporangium or cedar-apple rust, usually accompanied by orange “jellylike” growths); by dwarf mistletoe (a small parasitic plant); by infestation of mites; or by genetic mutation (from which dwarf cultivars have been propagated) These brooms were seen near the ecological reserve, and they are not known to be damaging to the trees.

Book Review

The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humbolt’s New World

by Andrea Wulf

Alexander von Humboldt (1769 – 1859) was an intrepid explorer and the most famous scientist of his age. Andrea Wulf reveals the forgotten life of Alexander von Humboldt. published 2015 by Knopf

by James Schwartz

As early as 1801 German/Prussian born Alexander Von Humbolt (naturalist, explorer, geographer) was using methods that synthesized the fields of history, art, poetry and politics to give his contemporaries a new understanding of nature as a complex interconnected global force.

Much of what we today take as self evident about our natural world and the destruction of it by humanity (even climate change) was commented on and predicted by his visionary concepts.

“The human species could turn even those distant stars barren and leave them ravaged, just as they are already doing with earth.”

Historian Andrea Wulf’s biography details Humbolt’s colourful life and insightful writing as he travels to many places around the world, measuring, recording and documenting volcanoes, forests, species and the sad state of indigenous peoples and slaves. She goes on to describe the inspiration and direct influence he had on such luminaries as Goethe, Wordsworth, Thomas Jefferson, Thoreau and John Muir. Although now largely forgotten throughout North America due to modern politics, Humbolt’s name has been given to many towns, rivers, mountains, plants and animals— even to an asteroid!

Alexander Von Humbolt’s “new” ideas changed ways in which the natural world was perceived, arguably setting into motion what we today call environmentalism. This book gives one a rich view into that process, through the man and the times in which he lived. *(This book is available at the library!)*

Mushrooms & Lichens found in the winter / spring on Lasqueti and their uses



Mutated Western Red Dye *Corrinarius smithii* which is a mushroom that produces a beautiful red dye. *Photo Anna Smith*



This lichen is Cabbage lung *Lobaria linita* and is known for its nitrogen fixing ability. It can also be used to create a warm brown fibre dye. *Photo Anna Smith*



Lobaria pulmonari is a large, bright green, leaf-like lichen. Referred to as lungwort, lung lichen, or lung moss because its lobe-like voluminous appearance resembles lung tissue, once used to treat tuberculosis, pneumonia, and other lung diseases. It is often found in undisturbed, old growth forests.

Photo T. Theiss



The next two images show an amazing biological partnership. These are actinorhizal nodules formed by alder root tissue and a symbiotic nitrogen fixing actinobacteria called Frankia. These nodules are what help alders successfully populate recently cleared areas and poor quality soils by converting atmospheric nitrogen into a form that plants can absorb. *Photos Anna Smith*



Turkey Tail *Trametes versicolor* meaning 'of several colours', reliably describes this mushroom found in different colors. Typically found on rotting stumps, branches and decaying wood, these polypore mushrooms can be found in quite an amazing array of colors and hues.

Photo S. Harrington

Seen In Passing



Sheep wool being harvested by ravens—for their nests? This one didn't seem to mind. G. Scott



Saw-whet Owl, recently seen on Lasqueti after an absence of 10 years. Photo S. Ayers



These footprints were found after a snow. The first is likely a River Otter. The second looks like the rascally Raccoon - found up a tree a few weeks earlier. *Photos S. Harrington*

We welcome your nature photos for "Seen in Passing" section.



Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy

Board of Directors: Gordon Scott, Wendy Schneible, Sheila Harrington, Hilary Duinker, Jordan Barton, Aigul Kukolj, Ken Lertzman, James Schwartz

Watch for our Annual General Meeting Announcement Soon.

All our past Newletters and Seen in Passings are at www.lasqueti.ca/linc

Contact us: linc@lasqueti.ca 250-333-8754 www.facebook.com/LINCBC

Membership (10-20\$ annually) Donations gratefully accepted to support our work: Charity BN #84848 5595

LINC, Lasqueti Island, BC V0R 2J0 Keep informed and join the conversation Editor: Sheila Harrington