

# Comox Valley Naturalists Society

November, 2011

## President's Report November 2011

CVNS is now well into yet another autumn season of speakers, bird counts, botany and birding meetings etc. This will be our 47<sup>th</sup> year as a Nature Society. All too soon, someone will have to design a swan shaped cake (hint) for our 50<sup>th</sup>!

Two major projects are winding up right now. The New Horizons for Senior's project has produced a great "Nature Viewing Guide to the Comox Valley" (check it out if you haven't already on our website), as well as a related brochure. Well done Krista.

The Wetlands Restoration Project is also ending soon for this year. The work was very capably performed by Ernie Sellentin for most of this year. Frank Hovenden will be preparing the summary report.

We have recently been involved with two shared projects, the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup (with Project Watershed), and a Celebration of the Comox Valley Garry Oaks (with Comox Valley Conservation Strategy). It is good when the various local green groups can work together - after all there is only **one** environment.

On a personal note, this will be my last President's Column, I shall not be running for the position effective our AGM in February. I have served in this, and the VP position for about 4 ½ years, and other priorities beckon. Sharon will probably try to 'squeeze' one more column from me for February, however I shall take my goodbye now.

May I wish all the Birders new exotic sightings, the Botanists some neat weird plants, and all the rest of you, pleasant green dreams, many trees, much moss and mist.

Take care,

*Dave. Lacelle*



*Photo Dave Lacelle*

Haida Gwaii: The long view up the west coast of Graham Island, taken from north of Tian Point looking north. Also shows most Westerly point (on Ocean) in Canada.



**Northern Shoveler**

*Photo Charles Brandt*

Female Northern Shoveler. Note the orange legs and broad, orange-ish spoon-shaped bill. This dabbling duck is a filter-feeder which is facilitated by transverse ridges inside the edges of the upper and lower bill which act as a sieve and tran the food particles.

You can find us on our web site: [www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca](http://www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca)

Comox Valley Naturalists Society, Box 3222 Courtenay, B.C.

V9N 5N4

**COMOX VALLEY NATURALISTS SOCIETY****BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

(note prefix 250 needed to dial local numbers)

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**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Birding	Art Martell	334-2979
Botany	Karin Franzen	334-7737
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	Norma Morton	339-7336
Wetland Restoration	Frank Hovenden	338-9962
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Speakers	Loys Maingon	331-0143
"Card Lady"	Jennifer Harrison	339-4754
Web administrator	Dave Ingram	

Website: [www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca](http://www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca)**Trip Lists Please dress for the weather, car pooling is encouraged and costs shared.**[www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca](http://www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca)**Suggestions for trips welcomed:** [franew@shaw.ca](mailto:franew@shaw.ca)**MEMBERSHIP****Single \$30, Family \$40 (Life \$300)****Junior 12-18 \$10, Student 18-22 \$15**

Mail cheques to Sue Martell, 251-3399 Crown Isle Dr., Courtenay, BC, V9N 9X7.

**Receipts** at meeting or send SASE**Membership due January 1st.**

If not paid by February 28th, names are struck off the CVNS and BC Nature lists.

New members joining after September will have their membership extended to the following calendar year: January to December.

**Change of address, phone number or e-mail:**

Please advise Sue Martell, 250-334-2979

**NEWSLETTER:**Deadline Feb. newsletter: **Feb. 1, 2012**

Newsletters are published: February, May and October. The newsletter is e-mailed to members.

Available at monthly meetings.

(\$5.00 per year if mailed).

Articles are welcomed: natural history, trips, unusual sightings, etc.

**MEETINGS:****Regular monthly meetings** are held 3rd Sunday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in the Florence Filberg Centre, 411 Anderton Avenue, Courtenay.**June meeting:** potluck at member's house**No meeting July, August and December****Bird meetings** are held the first Thursday of the month 7:00 pm at the Filberg Soroptimist Lounge. For info: Art Martell 250-334-2979**Botany Meetings****Botany meetings** are scheduled on the first Monday of every month and held at a member's home, 12:30 p.m. Bring your lunch.

For info: Jackie Gray 250-331-0313 and Karin Franzen 250-334-7737

## Waves and Swell

by Chris Pielou

Fall, and then winter, are coming, and with them, stronger winds. That means the sea will be much more interesting to watch, especially big waves.

Waves are caused by the wind and they travel with the wind, but at a much slower speed. The water itself moves downwind too, but at a speed less than 3 one-thousandth's of the wind's speed; this almost imperceptible movement is called *Stoke's drift*. The contrast between the wind's speed and the waves' speed is easy to overlook unless you think about it. What is actually happening is this: the shape of the water surface --- a series of waves -- is simply a moving pattern, not a material object. The water itself *is* material and moves differently. The water molecules in a wave are actually rotating in vertical circles under the "hump" of the wave, and it's this circular movement of the water that the wind energizes: it forces the water upward into high, sometimes peaked, humps. To emphasize that a wave's "speed" is altogether different from the speed of a moving object, it is called *wave celerity*. It can be thought of as the speed at which the wave shape moves through the water, or more briefly, as the speed of the wave *relative* to the water.

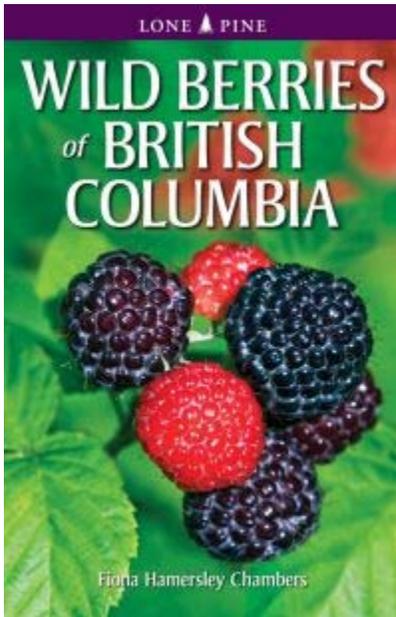
A "confused sea" (as it's called) of huge waves raised by a gale doesn't last forever. As the strength of the wind decreases, the waves die down and the small ones flatten out. The rest are still moving forward, however, and if the storm that caused them was far from land, they still have a long way to go before breaking on a beach somewhere. The changes these waves undergo while they are "coasting" landward are remarkable. What was a well developed, confused sea slowly changes into a smooth, regular *swell* provided it has distance enough in which to do so.

The course of events is interesting to watch. What happens can be seen from a cliff overlooking a beach as the waves from a distant storm approach the shore. The jumble of waves that the storm raised begins to sort itself out. It grows clear that the waves come in regular order: each has a shorter wavelength (crest-to-crest) and moves slower, than the wave immediately ahead of it (or conversely, each has a longer wave length and moves faster than the wave immediately behind it). As a result of this sorting effect, the very long waves lead the pack, and of these, only the higher ones survive because they take longer to die down. The gentle slopes of the swell may acquire a fine-grained choppiness from local breezes without losing their large scale pattern.

A long swell can travel tremendous distances across the ocean -- it's reported that the swell from a storm in the Antarctic reached Yakutat, Alaska, a distance of over 10,000 km. Probably some big swells never subside naturally because the oceans aren't big enough for them. Such swells can only meet their end by breaking on a beach.



Sharon Niscak photo



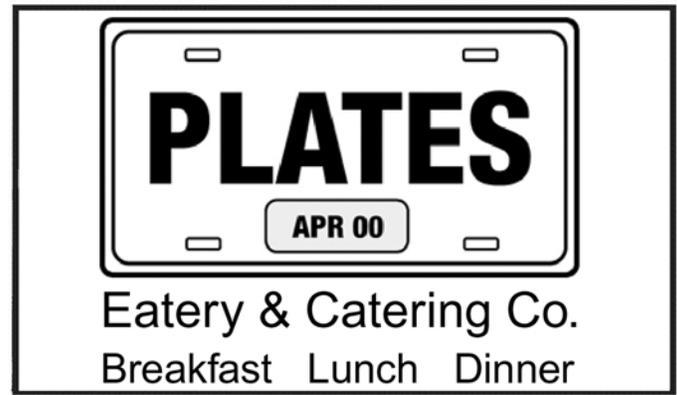
## Wild Berries

Lone Pine Publishing's book *Wild Berries of British Columbia* features the more common wild berries in our Province. In this guide the author Fiona Hamersley Chambers provides detailed descriptions of over a hundred berries or berry-like fruits. A quick pictorial guide is included in the introduction aptly named "Plants at a Glance". The map of British Columbia places emphasis the mountain ranges while providing cities for quick orientation.

Gathering hints, ecologically friendly gathering tips, and precautionary notes are emphasized in the introduction preparing the reader for the detailed monographs which also include ethno-botanical uses and Indigenous Peoples management practices. This book is pebbled with recipes and hints for gathering.

Both line drawings and abundant photographs augment the botanical description and assist in identification. One of my favorite winter fruits is the first featured. Pacific Crab Apple always tastes delicious to my palate after being touched by frost. Green boxes highlighting important information on specific plants are most useful. For example, cautionary notes such as "the bark of seeds of crab apple contain cyanide compounds which are toxic" directs the reader's attention to pertinent information.

*Wild Berries of British Columbia* is highly recommended as a guide for children, youth, parents and teachers. This guide is a convenient size and compact. The list price is \$21.95 and should be available at your favorite book stands.



## "Sharing Our Natural History": Comox Valley Nature Viewing Guide

By the time you read this, the CVNS project: '*Sharing Our Natural History*': creating a contemporary Nature Viewing Guide to the Comox Valley will be substantially complete. The contemporary nature guide has a summary component in the form of a brochure to be distributed around the community; and a more detailed on-line component in the form of expanded information available through the CVNS website.

Please pick up a copy of the brochure, featuring 16 key nature viewing sites of the Valley, at a CVNS meeting or from the Visitors Centre; and visit the CVNS website [www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/nature-viewing-guide](http://www.comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/nature-viewing-guide) to see more detailed information on those & other sites, including photo galleries and checklists. More nature viewing sites are continuing to be added to the website as an ongoing enterprise.

Members are requested to continue to assist with the project in two ways:

- 'adopting' a nature viewing site & providing information to the Coordinator as needed to keep the website up-to-date;
- learning how to update the Wordpress website pages, and/or the Google documents which form the basis for the website (training session will be organized)

Please contact Project Coordinator, Krista Kaptein, [kapteink@shaw.ca](mailto:kapteink@shaw.ca) 250-338-9962 for more information. This project was developed with funding from the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Initiative.

*By Krista Kaptein*

## Help Wanted

Assistance is needed for several CVNS tasks by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

### Ad manager for CVNS newsletter

Tasks: (once a year: January)  
 Email current advertisers in Jan. as to whether they will continue as an advertiser for the year (\$25 for 3 newsletters)  
 Solicit any further suitable advertisers as desired  
 Request print-ready, digital business-card-size version of their ad  
 Email ads to the newsletter editor  
 Email newsletters when complete to the advertisers (February, May & October)

### Proofreader for CVNS newsletter

Tasks: (three times a year: Feb, May & Oct.)  
 Receive draft pages of newsletter from the editor and proofread for errors  
 Email corrections back to editor  
 Format newsletter into pdf format & email to printer (Comox Valley Computers in Courtenay)  
 On occasion pick up newsletter from printer (copies are charged on CVNS account – no payment involved)  
 Give newsletter to editor or bring to general meetings.

### CVNS Brochure manager

Tasks: (ongoing, as needed - requires either colour home printer or trips to photocopy centre)

- Update CVNS brochure (Word document) as required e.g. changes to Contact Persons, etc.
- Print colour copies of CVNS brochure & membership form insert (costs reimbursed by CVNS)
- Distribute and/or deliver as required, for general meetings, display events, Visitor Centre & other locations

To take on any of these please contact Krista Kaptein [kapteink@shaw.ca](mailto:kapteink@shaw.ca) ASAP as I will be stepping down from these tasks as of Jan. 2012.

## "Card Lady"

Please note that Jennifer Harrison is our CV Naturalist card person to contact if you are aware of members that need our kind thoughts and well wishes.  
 Thank you Jennifer, we appreciate these reminders of caring.

## Christmas Bird Counts

*so mark your calendars!!*

Remember to sign up for two or three or more, the opportunity comes only once a year. Many of our members take part in all four counts held in our area. The count dates and contact information follow:

- **Deep Bay CBC** – Wednesday Dec 14<sup>th</sup> – Bill Stewart - [bmstewart@shaw.ca](mailto:bmstewart@shaw.ca) or call 250-338-1855
- **Comox CBC** – Sunday Dec 18<sup>th</sup> – Carol Muirhead - [carolalain@shaw.ca](mailto:carolalain@shaw.ca) or call 250-331-0511.
- **Little River-Powell River Ferry CBC** - Thursday Dec 29<sup>th</sup> – Art Martell – [amartell@shaw.ca](mailto:amartell@shaw.ca) or call 250-334-2979 - Meet at the Little River ferry terminal around 09:50h on the morning of the count. All are welcome
- **Campbell River CBC** – Monday Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> - Luisa Richardson - [Lu\\_rich@shaw.ca](mailto:Lu_rich@shaw.ca) or call 250-923-9918.

Good Birding,

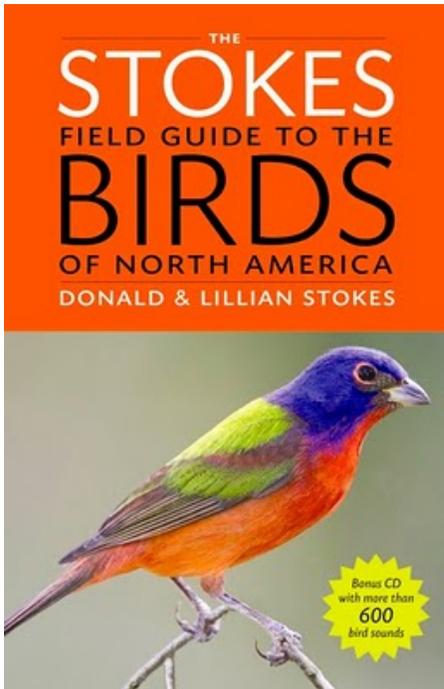
*Art Martell  
 Chair, CVNS Birders Group*



**Bufflehead, Oyster Bay, November 3, 2011**

*Charles Brandt*

Buffleheads are small diving ducks commonly seen in our bays, estuaries and along our coasts in the fall and winter months in small groups. The female is grayish in colour with a white cheek patch.



The new Stokes Field Guide is illustrated with 3,400 wonderful photographs illustrating 854 species from North America. This is the first guide to include all of the subspecies with their range, scientific names and identification.

The opening book cover folds inward revealing a quick fingertip alphabetical index. This feature also serves as a temporary bookmark while checking bird identification in the field. The back fold in flap cover illustrates the basic parts of a bird and has a key to abbreviations. An added bonus is the Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs CD that includes a downloadable booklet with audio track songs and call descriptions plus 150 photographs. The CD and the Guide are perfect for expanding bird knowledge on our blustery winter days.

The organization of the book shows years of research into convenience plus extensive knowledge of birds and bird guides. The pages are colour coded and the double pages have clear photographs of adult summer and winter plumage, clear colour photographs of the birds in flight and a range map and identification tips boxes. With almost 800 pages birder's will be sure to find valuable information in one compact box.

In the future a large sized version "coffee table" size would be appreciated by many who would enjoy a larger font size in the text. However, this new field guide is compact and will fit in your birding packs. The listed price in Canada is \$27.99 making it affordable as a gift or as addition to your birding library.

## Enbridge Proposal Risks for Coastal Ocean Ecosystems Presentation

As global energy demands increase, the US Department of Energy reports that atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> outstrip all IPCC predictions, and the Keystone Pipeline debate rages in Washington, few subjects should be of more economic and environmental concern to British Columbians than the Enbridge Northern Gateway Proposal to ship Athabasca Tar Sands' crude from Kitimat to the US for refining and ultimately to Asia.

The Comox Valley Naturalists Society will host Katie Terhune, Energy Campaigner for Living Oceans Society (<http://www.livingoceans.org>) at the 7:00 p.m. November meeting. Ms. Terhune will present a one-hour lecture *Oil and Water: Navigate the Facts* outlining the risks posed by the Enbridge proposal.

Living Oceans Society is a marine conservation organization based in the fishing village of Sointula, on the Central Coast of BC. Katie holds of Bachelor of Science from the University of Victoria. Her past experience revolves around habitat restoration and conservation in riparian, estuarine and coastal environments. With Living Oceans, her task is to aid in the battle against Big Oil in the effort to protect B.C.'s coast from oil spills.

*Loys Maingon*



## Upcoming CVNS Presentations

**December:** The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (held in The Comox Valley since 1919)

**January:** Helen Robinson, "Comox Bluff Flora"

**February:** Richard Mackie, "The Life and Times of Melda Buchanan."



## “Plants of Coastal British Columbia”

In early August when the sun had returned to Comox Valley and pushed its flora into bloom, I was invited by Comox Valley Paddlers to join in a trip to discover the flowers of Tree Island. The visit was delightful. However, the wind picked up and made for a fairly fast return at high tide. Soon our kayak beached on the shore of my neighbour’s garden, knocking into a rock and tipping over. Everything in the kayak was floating in the water. And the precious book “*Flora of Coastal British Columbia*” by Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon washed upon the ground. Having previously cleaned a number of pieces that had broken apart, I dried and restored the pages with somewhat success. However the pages of this flora book were now held together by rubber rings!

Having used the flora for 15 years raised a question. Should I buy a new book? A walk to the Regional Library quickly revealed that actually there is no flora guide to replace the book by Pojar and MacKinnon. The last edition, i.e. 2004, does not show much of a change in presentation, and reveals the persistence of high quality photos of all species described. For someone who grew up with books which allowed for identification of flora only by words and question marks, the present edition covering plants includes hundreds of photos. The Pojar flora is a most remarkable guide. So, why not expect a new copy as a Christmas present?

Fred Constabel

2855 Wentworth Rd. Email: artknappcourtenay@shaw.ca  
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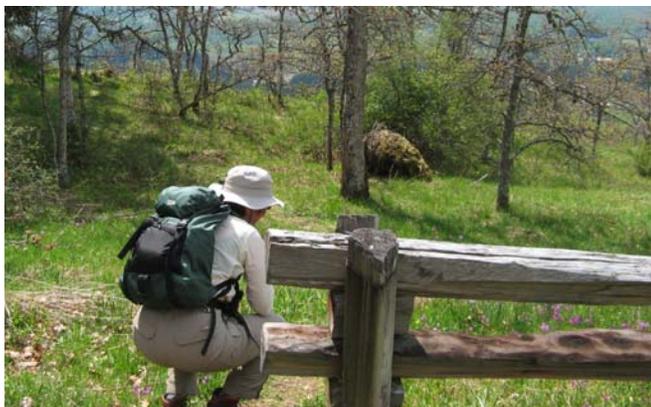


**Paint Brush at Harwood meadows.** The meadows in spring are a botanical delight  
*S Niscak*



**Arbutus in bloom at Harwood**  
*S Niscak*

## Krista Kaptein Awarded FBCN Club Service Award for 2011



*Krista, an avid photographer takes a moment to focus on the splendor of Cowichan flora.*

**K**rista has worked diligently for the Comox Valley Naturalists Society over the last twelve years. She has served as Recording Secretary, Vice-President, President (2 years) and Past President (3 years). She was in charge of organizing field trips for several years and also led many trips herself. Over the years, Krista has worked very hard to encourage members to join the CVNS board.

Krista is passionate about protecting the environment in and around the Courtenay River Estuary. As a keen birder and trumpeter swan counter, she wished to raise awareness on the sensitivity and importance of the estuary as a crucial staging area for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. In 2008 she was the coordinator of a two-day symposium on restoring the estuary titled "Heart of the Watershed". This Estuary Symposium was initiated by Don Castleden, chair of Project Watershed. The event's objectives were to increase awareness and appreciation of the estuary, and to educate and inspire participants to take action. This resulted in the formation of an Estuary Working Group consisting of individuals from government and environmental groups as well as independent professionals. Krista's vision of uniting key players promises a brighter future for the health of the estuary's ecosystem.

Krista played a major role in organizing the BC Nature AGM which the Comox Valley Naturalists Society hosted in 2006. Krista is heavily involved in the summer operation of the Strathcona Park Wilderness Centre at Paradise Meadows. She arranges speakers and recruits volunteers to lead walks and give

out information to visitors at the centre. Krista can often be seen around town on her bicycle and is an active worker for the Comox Valley Cycling Coalition. She writes a monthly newspaper article on cycling issues, and volunteers at bicycle rodeos educating children to ride safely.

Never one to stand still, her latest project is titled "Sharing Our Natural History". This project will update the CVNS's nature viewing book and will have an on-line guide and a summary brochure of nature viewing sites in the Comox Valley. Krista put together the successful proposal for a grant from the federal government program "New Horizons for Seniors". She has recruited many club members to visit sites, gather data and help produce the website and brochure.

Over the years of her time on the board and involvement in other club projects, Krista has become one of the most respected and well-liked club members. Her enthusiasm, willingness to volunteer for various projects, attention to detail and hard work on behalf of the club and other organizations are much appreciated.

*Jackie Gray, FBCN representative for the Comox Valley Naturalists Society.*



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