A Match Made in Hummingbird Heaven

Don Enright, Public Programs Manager

One of my favourite rituals of spring here in Stanley Park is to seek out the very first flowers of the salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*). This native cousin of the raspberry is unmistakable in spring, with its large, downward-facing pink blooms on arching, shrubby stems. But I’m not just out looking for the flowers. My real quarry is a little harder to spot. Once I’ve found a good patch of blooms, I settle in and listen for quick, low humming sound whizzing by my ears. There! A rufous hummingbird, hovering for salmonberry nectar. The long, dark winter is over.

The rufous hummingbird spends its winter months in Mexico, making its way northward as spring approaches. That’s an awfully long haul for such a tiny bird. In fact, if you measure in body lengths, the rufous hummingbird has the longest migration in the bird world. Which begs the question, why bother? Why give up a Mexican holiday for the perils of a long, difficult voyage northward? Well, it takes a lot of resources to raise a brood of young, and in the tropics, there just isn’t enough productive territory to go around. Here in Stanley Park, however, there are flowers and insects aplenty, once spring arrives. A migratory lifestyle allows the best of both worlds.

Having two homes, though, comes at a cost. And to survive a long and dangerous migration, timing is everything. One doesn’t want to arrive too early; lack of blooming flowers (not to mention freezing spring temperatures) can be fatal. On the other hand, the more hesitant continued on page 2...
types may find all the good territories snapped up by the time they arrive. So there is strong pressure on the birds to time their arrival with the earliest of the nectar flowers in bloom. Around here, those are the salmonberries. Red-flowering currants (Ribes sanguineum) are another early-season staple.

Nowadays, mind you, a walk around the West End reveals dozens of exotic flowers that bloom before the salmonberries. Are the hummingbirds arriving earlier to take advantage of them? Well, not the rufous, at any rate. That niche seems to have been filled by the Anna’s hummingbird, originally a bird of the south-western US that has established itself here in BC over the last fifty years. The Anna’s don’t migrate at all, relying completely on garden flowers and nectar feeders to fuel them through the long winter.

Call them old-fashioned, but the rufous hummingbirds still keep to their traditional calendar, honed by trial and error over the millennia. And that schedule doesn’t let them tarry here in Stanley Park, either. Once mating season is over (for the males, that’s mid-June), it’s time to take off to greener pastures. Or rather, pastures filled with the reds, yellows, and violets of wildflowers in bloom. Our Stanley Park hummers head eastward, to take advantage of the later-blooming alpine meadows of the Rockies. The females follow the males as soon as their two chicks are independent, and by August, very few remain here.

Much of what we know of hummingbird migration comes from banding studies. (How do you band a hummingbird, you ask? Very, very carefully.) Bands recovered in places like Montana indicate that our Vancouver birds head south on the eastern side of the great divide, making for a giant circuit, sort of a great annual tour of the wildflowers of western North America.

Those same banding studies (and bird surveys such as those done by our citizen scientists here in Stanley Park) indicate that this magnificent little bird is currently in decline. British Columbia may be losing its rufous hummingbirds at a rate of 2-3% annually, though more data are needed. Reasons for the decline are sadly unclear.

What can you do to help the rufous hummingbird? Well, a hummingbird feeder can be an immensely entertaining and educational fixture in your garden. Many conservationists support their use, particularly for the rufous hummingbird who appears to need all the help it can get at the moment.

What wildlife needs most of all, though, is habitat, and here in greater Vancouver, wild spaces can be hard to come by. Which is why the salmonberries of Stanley Park can be such a rewarding thing to see in springtime, for humans and hummingbirds alike.

...continued from cover.

**The Living Laboratory**

- New beetle found in park

**Mike Mackintosh,**

*Urban Wildlife Specialist,*

*Vancouver Park Board*

In this age of science and discovery you might think that there are no new plants or animals to discover. Not so...

Meet Stanley, (or more formally Oxypo-da stanleyi), a tiny member of the rove beetle family, no longer than your little fingernail. ‘He’ – thus far represented by 26 individuals of both sexes – is a new species currently known only within Stanley Park.

While occasional discoveries of the larger, more charismatic birds and mammals receive widespread attention, many smaller plants and insects continue quietly to be regularly discovered globally by field scientists. New insect species are found every year, not just in far off exotic locations but right here, in Stanley Park. Insects are the most successful forms of life on this planet. The Insect Class is enormous, with over 800,000 known species, but perhaps millions more yet to be identified.

In the aftermath of intense winter storms of 2006, scientific studies were undertaken to monitor the effects of insects on the park forest. Would there be insect infestations to accompany the increased volume of dead trees in the forest? University of BC scientist Dr John Mclean and his team set up insect traps throughout the park to look for clues. The work has revealed a few more secrets of the forest, especially tracking the presence and numbers of insects that can change the tree composition in major ways. While no major insect outbreaks have thus been detected, over the 2007 season, 35 species of beetles and an astounding 190 species of moths were tagged.

Apart from the exciting discovery of *O. stanleyi*, this study has also revealed three beetle species previously identified from as far as eastern North America, Europe and Africa but only now for the first time in coastal British Columbia.

And what about the possible unknown species yet to be discovered? Dr. Mclean is convinced that there are plenty more where *O. stanleyi* came from. The real limit to their discovery is that there are not enough taxonomists to identify them.
A Gathering of Gurus - New Forest Management Plan Under Peer Review

Robyn Worcester
Conservation Programs Manager

Severe windstorms in the winter of 2006-07 instigated the creation of the Vancouver Park Board’s Restoration Plan. Written with the collaboration of environmental professionals and academics, the Plan guided management decisions and operational activities until a milestone completion of the clean-up efforts in December 2008. One of the Plan’s legacies is an updated forest management plan.

The new Stanley Park Forest Management Plan incorporates additional insights and information that came as a result of the Restoration activities. The body text provides an overview of the plan while many appendices provide specific operational procedures, prescriptions, and other details.

On February 6, at the invitation of the Park Board, SPES hosted a Peer Review of the draft document. Nearly 20 advisors from ecology, forestry, and related fields participated to provide feedback for the Park Board’s new plan.

Bill Stephen, the plan’s editor, gave an introduction to the group to provide context and an overview of the Restoration activities. Participants then focused in small mixed-discipline groups, each with a facilitator to manage and record the lively discussions. Additional recommendations were provided via email by others who were unable to attend in person.

SPES compiled the input into a summary report that was provided to the Park Board. Public input is being gathered by the Park Board through two open houses in late February as well as online. http://vancouver.ca/parks/stanley/restoration/feedback.htm

SPES sincerely thanks all of those who so willingly gave time to participate in the process. We also appreciate the Park Board for encouraging our involvement in long-term management planning for the Park.

A Tail of Bushy Proportions

Phil Dubrulle
Co-existing with Coyotes Coordinator

At the turn of the New Year, SPES’s Co-existing with Coyotes (CWC) hotline was hot with reports that a coyote (Canis latrans) in Stanley Park was displaying a ‘no-fear’ attitude towards people. I observed it first hand one snowy morning from the SPES Pavilion offices. But by the time I rushed outside to where the coyote had been, it had vanished.

When it comes to tracking wildlife, seeing is not always believing. My experience as an amateur nature photographer and my foray into the world of birding has taught me to use my ears to augment sight. A noisy bunch of crows directly west of the SPES offices were very clearly sounding off as they do when a threatening animal such as a bald eagle or perhaps a coyote disturbs them. I ran up the stone path to a clearing below the tree canopy and saw the raucous crows dive-bombing the healthy looking coyote. I tracked it for an hour and was encouraged to see it displaying natural urban coyote behaviours.

Less than two weeks after this encounter, the coyote attacked a small off-leash dog in Stanley Park. This unfortunate pet attack serves as a good example as to why everyone, not just pet owners, should take 7 important action steps as we aim to co-exist with such urban wildlife. It is important to note that by harassing a coyote you are indirectly protecting it. If a coyote is not deterred and persists to attack pets it may result in the coyote being destroyed by Conservation Officers.

Keep your dog(s) leashed in Stanley Park and in on-leash areas around the community.

Raise your arms straight up and over your head and shout in as deep and loud a voice as possible ‘GO AWAY COYOTE!’ This scares the coyote away and also tells others in the area to be aware.

Pick up small dogs upon seeing a coyote.

Throw something in the coyote’s direction to aid in the disassociation with people. It will not be aggressive in return unless it feels trapped or cornered.

Inform others you come across that you saw a coyote and suggest how they take action should they see it.

Report the sighting on the SPES CWC hotline: 604 681 9453 OR coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca

Never leave pet food outside that will condition wild animals to human habitation.

Want to read the article in its entirety as well as view recent videos of the Stanley Park coyote? Visit our website at www.stanleyparkecology.ca and click onto Co-existing with Coyotes.
Your Guide to SPES...

Spring 2009 nature programs

New! The Young Naturalists’ Club of Stanley Park

This monthly event is a chance for children (with their parents) to enjoy two hours of nature exploration. Activities include hiking, games, wildlife observation, outdoor art, and more, presented by the Stanley Park Ecology Society and the Young Naturalists’ Club of BC. Call (604) 985-3057 to sign up.

We meet from 10 am to 12 noon, the first Saturday of every month, at the Lost Lagoon Nature House.

Email ync@stanleyparkecology.ca for details.

Overnight Family Adventures in Stanley Park

Join us for themed evening adventures in the forests of Stanley Park followed by a fun-filled sleepover program at the Vancouver Aquarium where the adventure is continued.

Call 604-659-3504 for more information or 604-659-3552 to register.

Cost: Non-members $120.00 / $96.00 Members.

Saturday, July 11, 6:30 pm:
Paws, Jaws and Claws!
Saturday, July 25, 6:30 pm: CSI-A Fishy Murder Mystery

For more information, visit www.stanleyparkecology.ca or call (604) 718-6522

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. Mar.1</td>
<td><strong>Workshop: Building Better Bird Boxes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Join us for a hands-on workshop where you will learn how to construct effective and attractive bird boxes, why they offer hope to declining bird populations, and how to maintain them. Meet at the SPES headquarters, upstairs in the Dining Pavilion. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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<td>Sat. Mar.7</td>
<td><strong>Young Naturalists’ Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. Mar.15</td>
<td><strong>Workshop: The Geology of Stanley Park Part 1.</strong>&lt;br&gt;SPES invites you to join geologist David Cook for insights into the geological history of Stanley Park and the Burrard Inlet. This is the first session of a 2-part workshop. Presentation - SPES offices, Stanley Park Dining Pavilion. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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<td>Sun. Mar.22</td>
<td><strong>Discovery Walk: The Forest and its Secret Stories</strong>&lt;br&gt;SPES challenges you to join naturalist Terry Taylor for a secretive exploration of the shady understory of Stanley Park’s forests. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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<td>Sat. Mar.28</td>
<td><strong>The Ivy Project Environmental Arts Workshop (see sidebar)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. Apr.5</td>
<td><strong>Discovery Walk: The Geology of Stanley Park Part 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;SPES invites you to join geologist David Cook for a guided walk exploring the geological history of Stanley Park and the Burrard Inlet. This is the second session of a 2-part workshop. Meet at Third Beach concession stand. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. Apr.12</td>
<td><strong>Discovery Walk: The Environmental Art of Stanley Park</strong>&lt;br&gt;SPES invites you to join us for a unique art tour, as we visit and discuss some of the environmental art pieces of Stanley Park. Admission by donation. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House.</td>
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<td>Sat. Apr.4</td>
<td><strong>The Young Naturalists’ Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. Apr.19</td>
<td><strong>Discovery Walk: A World of Rainforests</strong>&lt;br&gt;Walk with biologist David Cook under the great green cover of Stanley Park’s trees, and discover how our forest compares with the amazing temperate and tropical rainforests of the world. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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<td>Sun. Apr.12</td>
<td><strong>Discovery Walk: Egg Hunt!</strong>&lt;br&gt;We’ll celebrate the day by “hunting” for eggs of all kinds, from insects to geese, to see how they fit into the life cycles of Stanley Park’s animals. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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For additional information, visit www.stanleyparkecology.ca or call (604) 718-6522.
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<tr>
<td>Sat. April 25</td>
<td>The Ivy Project Environmental Arts Workshop (See sidebar)</td>
<td>SPES invites you to join Vancouver artist Sharon Kallis as she explores the artistic and ecological applications of English Ivy and other invasive materials of Stanley Park – can they be used for good? Everyone is welcome to weave, learn and make as little or as much as they want – a great community opportunity! Workshops run from 10am to 12 noon, and 1pm to 4pm. Drop in anytime! March 28-Meet at the parking lot near the intersection of Park Drive and Pipeline Rd. April 25-Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House May 30-Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House June 27-Meet at the parking lot near the intersection of Park Drive and Pipeline Rd.</td>
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<td>Sat. May 2</td>
<td>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun. May 3, 1-2:30 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: The Coyote Zone</td>
<td>Discover how coyotes use our parks and neighbourhoods in this 1.5-hour guided walk. We'll learn about coyote natural history, how residential neighbourhoods attract coyotes, and what to do in a coyote encounter. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House.</td>
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<td>Sun. May 10, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: Wonderful Wetlands</td>
<td>Walk the paths of Beaver Lake with biologist David Cook and discover how wetlands, with their abundant plants and animals, are vital parts of a living ecosystem. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children. Meet at the Stanley Park Dining Pavilion.</td>
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<td>Sun. May 17, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: Unstoppable Insects</td>
<td>Insects have been here for millions of years. Why are they so successful? Join naturalist Andrew Scott to examine Stanley Park's insects, their distant past, and their possible future. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House.</td>
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<td>Sun. May 24, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: The Great Blue Herons of Stanley Park</td>
<td>In recent years, great blue herons have nested in unprecedented numbers in Stanley Park. On this herony tour, naturalist and heron monitor Robyn Worcester will guide you through the life cycle of these remarkable birds. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House.</td>
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<td>Sat. May 30</td>
<td>The Ivy Project Environmental Arts Workshop (see sidebar)</td>
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<td>Sun. May 31, 9-11 am</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: The Birds of Stanley Park</td>
<td>Please see March 29 for details. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House</td>
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<td>Sat. June 6,</td>
<td>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</td>
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<td>Sun. June 7, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: Freedom of Mobility- Women, Sports and Recreation in Stanley Park, 1870-1920</td>
<td>Historical interpreter Jolene Cumming shares stories of &quot;Bicycle Face&quot;, the canoe craze, Brockton Point Athletic Grounds and much more. Meet at the Stanley Park Dining Pavilion. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children.</td>
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<td>Sun. June 14, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: Summer Sun-flowers</td>
<td>Join naturalist Terry Taylor as we look at the wonders of photosynthesis, flowers, and seeds to see the remarkable ways that plants take advantage of the warm summer months to grow and reproduce. $10.00 adults, $5.00 members and children. Meet at the Lost Lagoon Nature House.</td>
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<td>Sun. June 21, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Discovery Walk: The Great Blue Herons of Stanley Park</td>
<td>Please see May 24 for details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. June 27</td>
<td>The Ivy Project Environmental Arts Workshop (See sidebar)</td>
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**Lost Lagoon Nature House**

**Park Drive and Pipeline Rd.**
The Ivy Project: An Ecological Art Intervention

Greg Ferguson
Stewardship Programs Coordinator

Now in its second phase, the Stanley Park Environmental Art Project will see four new semi-permanent artworks installed in Stanley Park by the summer of 2009. The art works will have a special relationship to the park, as they will be designed to work in harmony with the surrounding environment and habitat. Made of organic materials, the work, by its very nature, will be temporary and gradually subside back into the Earth.

Associated artworks include the Ivy Project. SPES is collaborating with Vancouver artist Sharon Kallis to design and incorporate sculptures woven from dead English ivy (Hedera helix) into site-specific locations within Stanley Park. These sculptures will mimic natural habitat features, such as coarse woody debris, nests, and snags, working to enhance areas of ivy removal and other habitats. Anti-erosion bio-netting works will also be used at sites prone to erosion. Sculptures will be monitored to assess the potential re-growth of ivy and use by plants and animals.

This project provides a mutual benefit to SPES’s ongoing habitat restoration efforts in Stanley Park by allowing removed invasive species to be integrated back into the natural environment through structures that restore and enhance biodiversity. Accomplishing this through art and the involvement of local community members creates opportunities for individuals to re-envision our relationship with nature and our connection to its long-term health.

On the last Saturday of each month, through November 2009, community members can create art works from ivy removed during our regular Ivy Busters events. For more information please see the page 5 – The Ivy Project.

Inspiring Tomorrow’s Environmentalists

Mia Torr
School Programs Manager

Imagine carefully peeking under a seaweed-covered rock and laughing with delight as shore crabs scuttle out sideways to greet you. Imagine the sensation of feeling tiny as you look all the way up the trunk of a huge Douglas-fir tree for the first time. Imagine the pleasure of really letting your hands get dirty in the soil, discovering the name of a new plant, or finding new ways you can make a difference to our ecosystems.

At the Stanley Park Ecology Society, our school programs have given the gift of these magical experiences to many thousands of students – it’s our specialty. When children connect deeply with nature, they are more likely to become environmental stewards in the future. Our challenge is now – how do we reach children who cannot make it to Stanley Park? How can we empower teachers to create these experiences for their students? Finally, we’ve found a path to do just that – to extend the gift of nature learning to students across the province with the launch of our newly revised teacher resource CD-ROM, Urban Stewards.

First piloted as a 240-page textbook in 2003, the revised Urban Stewards CD-ROM includes in-depth lesson plans on topics including ecosystems, water, soil, BC animals, climate change, biodiversity, plants, sustainability and natural resources. Each lesson matches the provincial science curriculum, and the lesson layouts have been revised for ease of teacher use. Clear, relevant, ready-to-use student handouts and reference pages complete the resource CD to make the perfect all-in-one resource.

We are proud that from its humble beginnings, Urban Stewards will soon empower teachers across the province to take their students outdoors, regardless of lack of knowledge, budget constraints or a perfect outdoor teaching environment. Urban Stewards is available exclusively from the Stanley Park Ecology Society at a cost of $20 and makes an excellent resource for elementary teachers in grades 4 to 7. Give one to your favourite teacher today! Call 604-257-6907.
Koren Johnstone
Volunteer Coordinator

This small nocturnal owl has conspicuous ear tufts, yellow eyes and mottled grey-brown plumage resembling the pattern of furrowed tree bark. More often heard than seen, its most common call is a series of low whistles that speed up like a dropped ball bouncing to a stop. Its hooting is most frequent from February to April.

True to its name, it is resident in western North America from Alaska to Mexico. In BC one subspecies inhabits coastal BC (excluding the Queen Charlotte Islands) and the other is in the southern interior. Western screech-owls (Megascops kennicottii) roost mainly in natural or woodpecker cavities in large trees in woodlands, but can also frequent suburban areas where large trees are present, especially near riparian areas. They mate for life and reuse the same nest site for years. They will also adapt to nest boxes, especially in residential areas where potential nest trees are scarce. They usually start nesting in April, laying 4 to 5 eggs and raising young from mid-May to early June.

Cool Facts:
• When threatened, the western screech-owl stretches out its mottled body and pulls in its feathers to camouflage as a branch.
• As for other owls, its true ear openings are slightly offset and located on either side of the head. This allows the bird to use triangulation to locate sounds of potential prey at night.
• As a predator, it is adept at controlling local rodent populations. It has been known to occasionally capture prey much larger than itself, including rabbits and mallards.

How Is It Doing?
The coastal subspecies is ‘Blue Listed’, which means, because of declining numbers, it is of special concern in BC. It is particularly vulnerable to habitat loss due to urban development. Some forestry practices may negatively impact this species if older trees large enough for roosting and nesting are not safe-guarded. It can also fall prey to predators like raccoons, skunks, squirrels, crows, hawks and larger owls, such as the barred owl, whose populations have significantly increased in some areas.

How You Can Help
• If you own land with suitable screech-owl habitat, you can help this species by minimizing disturbance around known nesting sites, retaining large live or dead trees, protecting riparian habitats, planting native trees along watercourses and constructing nesting boxes.
• If you find a dead or injured screech-owl in Stanley Park, please contact SPES Conservation Programs Manager, Robyn at 604-681-9453
• You can join SPES in researching local species by volunteering in conservation programs. Contact SPES Volunteer Coordinator, Koren (vols@stanleyparkecology.ca; phone 604-681-7099).

Winter Wildlife Sightings

Robyn Worcester
Conservation Programs Manager

In November, Anna’s hummingbirds (Calypte anna) were seen at several locations in the Park, including right outside our Pavilion office windows. A short time later a spotted sandpiper was seen on the foreshore and more recently a Wilson’s snipe (Gallinago delicata) was seen for the second winter in a row at the biofiltration marsh, Lost Lagoon.

A northern goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) was observed in early February near Ceperly Meadow. This bird of prey is not commonly seen in the Park; however, a very similar bird spent several weeks at Jericho Park last winter around the same time. There are two subspecies of goshawks in BC; the laingi subspecies breeds elsewhere in BC east of the Coast Range. It is not known which subspecies lives on the mainland coast.

This winter has been an interesting time for wildlife in the Park. Perhaps due to the heavy winter snowfall, many of the regular birdwatchers were treated to the rare sight of Virginia rails (Rallus limicola) coming out of hiding. These usually reclusive birds began boldly feeding on or near wetland trails and did not seem to care about having people around. Up to five rails were seen at one time in the biofiltration pond at Lost Lagoon, and several more were regularly seen at Beaver Lake.
SPES thanks all who have already signed up for this year’s Adopt-a-Nest program. This program allows SPES to continue monitoring the great blue heron colony in Stanley Park and provides members of the public with a closer look into the lives of individual heron families.

Our youngest Adopt-a-Nest participant is Olivia Reeve. Olivia used her birthday money to adopt a heron nest and we are so pleased to have had the chance to meet her in person.

What a great role model for her peers! For info on how you, too, can Adopt a Nest, call 604-681-9453.

Canada Helps! Donating to the Stanley Park Ecology Society has never been easier, thanks to CanadaHelps! This online donation portal is accessible through our website, www.stanleyparkecology.ca. Simply click the “Donate Now” icon on our homepage. CanadaHelps provides secure service for monthly or one-time gifts. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over $30.

SPES Membership Supports:
- School and Public Programs helping more than 30,000 children and adults to discover nature each year through hands-on stewardship adventures
- The Lost Lagoon Nature House, Vancouver’s only ecological interpretive centre, welcoming over 15,000 visitors each year
- Wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation in Stanley Park

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SPES Members Enjoy:
- Discounts on Discovery Walks, Hikes, Family Programs and Events
- Seasonal activities calendar and our quarterly newsletter
- Voting privileges to help SPES enact ecological stewardship in Stanley Park
- Special perks & promotions from community partners
- Free preview nights on Christmas Bright Nights and the Halloween Ghost Train

To keep Mother Earth happy, please recycle this newsletter when finished. Thank you for reading!