

Spring 2012 Newsletter



Lost Lagoon - A Birding Bonanza

Julie Sabau, Volunteer Coordinator & Nature House Interpreter

The seemingly untamed feel of Stanley Park is plain to see for visitors to the Nature House on Lost Lagoon. I spend many days there and see just what a fantastic place Lost Lagoon is to observe both resident and migratory birds. Spring is the time when lively violet-green swallows, tree swallows, red-winged black-birds and many forest edge birds grace us with their presence. It is fun watching wood ducks and swallows begin to gather nesting material, especially when that material goes right into one of the nest boxes provided by Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES).

Recent bird sightings on Lost Lagoon include a female long tailed duck, and a juvenile pied billed grebe that overwintered on this man-made lake. Often, as I'm setting up the spotting scope for visitors to use, I have found myself searching the dark waters for the brown, fluffy grebe. One rainy day we observed it ambitiously catch and eat an entire fish that seemed the same size as its own body.

Among the most exciting residents to watch are a pair of bald eagles which often hunt over Lost Lagoon. While most bald eagles eat fish, the Stanley Park eagles target birds – especially juvenile gulls. This is likely because birds are in such abundance. The eagles often catch their prey midair and then retire to one

of the floating logs to consume their meal. Each eagle waits patiently until its mate has eaten its fill. SPES's Nature House scope allows everyone to closely observe this natural spectacle. We enjoy hearing the gasps and words of amazement from visitors lucky enough to catch the hunt.

The abundance of migratory birds in Vancouver is also evident to anyone with a backyard feeder or anyone taking a stroll on the seawall. A bird count in January estimated there were more than 8,000 surf scoters in Burrard Inlet. This is equal to 1% of the whole world's population of this species. Rare birds banded within the boundaries of Metro Vancouver in 2011 include dusky flycatcher, northern shrike and eastern kingbird (1). Also of note are the snowy owls that overwintered in Boundary Bay this year. With such a seeming abundance, sometimes it's hard to understand that world migratory bird populations are in decline.

Urbanization is the biggest threat. The more land that humans change into urbanized areas, the more migratory bird habitat is lost, degraded or fragmented. For example, 87%

Sneak Peek

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Contact Us

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Lost Lagoon, cont'd

of the originally forested land in Vancouver has been developed. Urban parks, especially those as large as Stanley Park are becoming increasingly important feeding refuges, rest stops and overwintering areas for migratory birds. SPES recognizes the importance of working to protect and even enhance migratory bird habitat in Stanley Park and beyond. Collaborative data-collecting initiatives such as monitoring Important Bird Areas (IBA's) with Bird Studies Canada



and Nature Canada are significant ways SPES works to support birdlife in the park. There are nearly 600 designated IBA's throughout Canada and Stanley Park is part of the English Bay-Burrard Inlet IBA. This designation is one of the reasons SPES is committed to conducting monthly and seasonal bird counts. SPES also provides regular educational opportunities that facilitate and encourage Metro Vancouverites to get to know their feathered friends (see pages 4, 5).

British Columbia is home to 500 recognized bird species. Remarkably, the Lower Mainland supports 407 of these species, most of which are migratory. It is commendable that in 2011 Vancouver released a proclamation recognizing the United Nations World Migratory Bird Day. This day, which occurs in May of each year, is a global awareness-raising campaign highlighting the need for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats (www.worldmigratorybirdday.org). The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recre-

ation followed the city's proclamation with a motion to ensure that in future the park board will consider the support of bird habitat within all proposed initiatives.

Humans benefit from this as well: A recent study in Vancouver neighbourhoods found a direct relationship between socioeconomic status and bird population health (2). There are a couple of things you can do to help birds thrive in your environment. Providing a bird bath is the best thing as birds need copious amounts of clean fresh water to drink and bathe in. Providing feed (suet or seed) is also good although you will need to make sure you do not inadvertently attract cats or coyotes. See p. 3 for more on attracting birds without attracting furry predators.

(1) Vancouver Avian Research Centre, 2011 Year End Report.

(2) Melles, S. J., "Urban Bird Diversity as an Indicator of Human Social Diversity and Economic Inequality in Vancouver, British Columbia". Published in: Urban Habitats, 2005.

Have you ever wondered about feeding birds or wildlife in city parks?

Bylaws prohibit feeding of any wildlife in Vancouver parks. These laws exist for good reasons:

Hand feeding of wildlife, especially migratory birds, removes their healthy fear of large animals like people.

Hand feeding concentrates them in one area which can spread or escalate diseases.

Also, birds tend to be fed bread and other human food which has the effect of making them full without providing the protein and nutrients that seeds, invertebrates and plants provide.

So put that old bread in the compost and take a stroll over to the Stanley Park Nature House where you can observe first hand how good birds are at foraging for themselves.



Celebrate
World Migratory Bird Day
May 12

10-noon Free guided birding walks
at Stanley, Everett Crowley, Jericho,
Queen Elizabeth, and Hastings Parks

1 - 4 pm at Vancouver Public Library:
Open Bird House: resource
booths, build-a-bird-feeder crafts
2 pm special talk by Russell Cannings

www.vancouver.ca/parks/environment/
Follow us @VancouverBirds

Quiz Question 1: Name that bird
Signs of this bird are more commonly seen than the bird itself. Its most distinctive markings are large rectangles cut into the sides of mature trees. (Answer on Page 8)

Quiz Question 2: Name that bird
This small, noisy bird sings on average more than 36 notes per second! By weight, it delivers its song with 10 times more power than a crowing rooster. It has also recently undergone a name change. (Answer on Page 8)

Our Feathered Friends

Anita Georgy, School Programs Manager



Early spring will find Stanley Park Ecology Society educators delivering SPES's newest school program, *Our Feathered Friends* to eager elementary school students. This program teaches students about birds and includes how to make a nest box out of recycled materials for cavity nesters such as the red-breasted nuthatch, downy woodpecker or black-capped chickadee. It inspires students to continue learning beyond the classroom and to take action for the planet.

As part of the program introduction, we explain to students that birds are the only animals that have feathers and that all birds have feathers. During one program, a young student's hand shot high in the air to indicate she had a burning question. When called on, she very seriously asked, "Chickens have feathers; are they birds?" You could almost hear things falling into place when we assured her that yes, chickens are indeed birds.

While not many people spend time watching chickens, wild bird watching is a popular, free, healthy, outdoor hobby accessible for people of all ages and abilities. It is a powerful lens to examine the interconnectedness of all living things.

When people start to care about wild birds, they may also start to care about the insects many birds eat (and thus act to reduce their personal pesticide use), the living conditions of factory farmed birds (and start to choose free-range and organic meats and eggs) and the state of oil extraction and exploration in bird breeding grounds (perhaps getting involved in those politics). You too can help birds. Here are the top three things you can do:

1. Create and protect bird habitat – This could be as simple as installing a nest box and water bath in your backyard or planting native plants as a food source and habitat.
2. Install a hawk silhouette on your windows so birds avoid the glass and potentially fatal collisions.
3. Avoid disturbing birds by keeping pets under control and by teaching children not to chase birds. Birds need all of their energy to survive migrations and winter. They use valuable energy to fly away when disturbed.

The Our Feathered Friends program is available for classes of grades 3-7 students.

Contact SPES School Programs at 604-257-6907, or school@stanleyparkecolony.ca.

A Connection Between Coyotes and Backyard Birds

Dan Straker, Co-Existing With Coyotes Coordinator

If you use a bird feeder in your backyard, keep in mind that its proper maintenance and tidiness is very important - and not just for the birds. Spilled seed also attracts rodents and nothing attracts coyotes like rodents! It's their favourite meal. You can safeguard coyotes and your neighbours by picking up fallen yard fruit and keeping your garbage and compost well secured. Coyotes are majestic animals but attracting them to our backyards puts pets and even birds at risk. If you notice that neighbours are feeding wildlife, whether intentionally or not, let them know of the problems it could cause for people and wildlife. Call SPES to access educational brochures or to organize a Coyote Outreach program.

Birds aren't the only ones expecting new additions to the family in spring. Keep an eye out for coyote dens. They are rearing new pups from April – June. Den sites aren't easy to spot as coyotes will build them behind thick natural barriers such as thorny blackberry bushes, under tree stumps in golf courses, in parks and even under abandoned buildings. Pups emerge from the den 4 to 5 weeks after birth and the family will stop using the den after 8 to 10 weeks. During this time, coyotes may act more aggressively towards people if they feel that their pups are threatened.

If you see a coyote or coyote den, call or email SPES's Co-Existing with Coyotes hotline at 604-681-WILD and coyotes@stanleyparkecolony.ca.



photo credit: Peter Kerr

SPES Nature Programs



Nature Programs meet at the Stanley Park Nature House on Lost Lagoon

Open weekends
10am - 4pm



Pauline Johnson's Vancouver

Celebrate International Women's Day and learn what life was like for women 100 years ago. Photo exhibit at the Stanley Park Nature House. Sat, March 10th 12-3pm

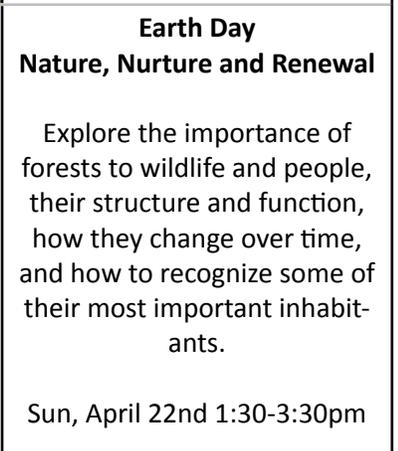
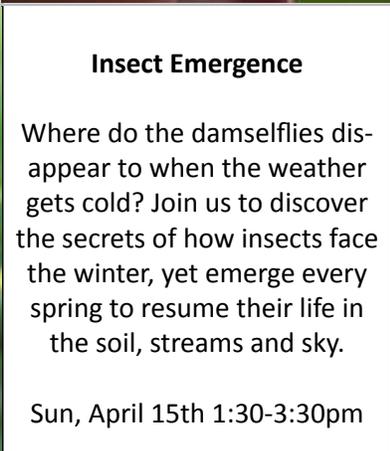
Please pre-register for all Nature Programs

programs@stanleyparkecolgy.ca

\$5 Members
Seniors & Children

\$10 Non-Members

<p>Nature Journal Family Workshop</p> <p>Create your very own Nature Journal to fill with fun memories of the incredible things you've found and to keep track of which plants and animals you've seen in the park. For all ages. \$11 per participant.</p> <p>Sun, March 18th 1:30-3:30pm</p>	<p>Stanley Park Young Naturalist Club: Birdy Buffet</p> <p>Discover the world of backyard birds as we learn how to create habitat and invite our feathered friends to the neighborhood with a birdy buffet. For kids 5-14 with a parent.</p> <p>Sat, March 3rd 10am-12noon</p>	<p>Water Rocks: Stanley Park, a product of ice and water</p> <p>Join geologist David Cook for an easy walk along the seawall to learn how millions of years of hydrology have shaped Stanley Park. *Note special meeting location behind the Third Beach concession stand.</p> <p>Sun, March 11th 1:00-3:30pm</p>
<p>Native Garden Open House</p> <p>Native plants are not only pleasing to the eye, they also provide habitat for local wildlife. Visit the garden stewards and learn what to plant in your garden to promote a happy healthier environment.</p> <p>Sun, April 1st 1:00-3:30pm</p>	<p>Birds of a Feather</p> <p>Noticing a little more song and dance from our feathered friends lately? Join naturalist Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour easy walking exploration to learn about bird identification and behaviour in Stanley Park.</p> <p>Sun, March 25th 9-11am</p>	<p>Stanley Park Young Naturalist Club: Space Invaders</p> <p>Weave your own traditionally inspired basket with innovative materials like ivy and blackberry while helping recover habitat from these introduced invaders. For kids 5-14 accompanied by a parent.</p> <p>Sat, March 31st 10am-12noon</p>
<p>Earth Day Nature, Nurture and Renewal</p> <p>Explore the importance of forests to wildlife and people, their structure and function, how they change over time, and how to recognize some of their most important inhabitants.</p> <p>Sun, April 22nd 1:30-3:30pm</p>	<p>Insect Emergence</p> <p>Where do the damselflies disappear to when the weather gets cold? Join us to discover the secrets of how insects face the winter, yet emerge every spring to resume their life in the soil, streams and sky.</p> <p>Sun, April 15th 1:30-3:30pm</p>	<p>Hungry Herons</p> <p>The great blue herons of Stanley Park are having babies again and with that comes a lot of responsibility. Learn how these majestic birds care for themselves and their vulnerable young in this urban environment.</p> <p>Sun, April 8th 1:30-3:30pm</p>



Birds of a Feather

Spring is in the air and so are our fancy feathered friends, showing off to win a discerning mate. Join us for a two-hour easy walking exploration to learn about bird identification and behaviour in Stanley Park.

Sun, April 29th 9:00-11:00am



Stanley Park Young Naturalist Club: Rotting Away

Ever wondered what it would be like to live in a tree stump or under the ground? Discover the incredible world of decomposers and their importance to our everyday lives. For kids 5-14 accompanied by a parent.

Sat, May 5th 10am-12noon



A Heron's Home

Who's causing all that ruckus up in the trees? Young herons are starting to make a lot of noise as they grow and mature. Discover how these juvenile herons learn to protect themselves and survive when they leave the nest.

Sun, May 6th 1:30-3:30pm

Mothers Day Birds, Bugs, and Blooms

Share the wonders of nature with Mom while you celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. Learn about birds and migration, and explore how plants and animals bring Stanley Park to life. Guided by naturalist Murray Lashmar.

Sun, May 13th 1:30-3:30pm

Wonderful Wetlands

Walk the paths around Lost Lagoon and Beaver Lake with biologist David Cook and discover how constructed and natural wetlands are of value as water purification systems, mechanisms of flood control, and reservoirs of biodiversity.

Sun, May 20th 1:30-3:30

Migratory Bird Day

May 12

Join any of six concurrent birdwatching walks in Vancouver!

see page 2

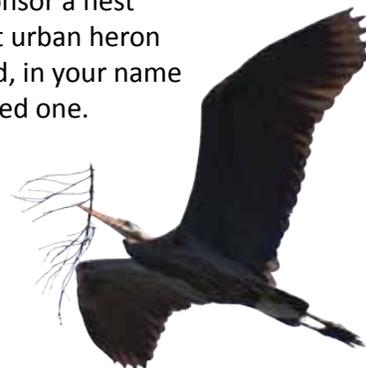


STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

A Great Blue Gift Idea

Adopt a Great Blue Heron Nest

Join the Stanley Park Ecology Society in our efforts to help protect these incredible birds. Sponsor a nest in one of the biggest urban heron colonies in the world, in your name or on behalf of a loved one.



Birds of a Feather

April showers bring not only May flowers but a bounty of baby birds. Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour easy walking exploration to learn about bird identification and behaviour in Stanley Park.

Sun, May 27th 9:00-11:00am

www.stanleyparkecolgy.ca

Email nests@stanleyparkecolgy.ca

Phone 604-681-9453



Birthday Parties

Educational, exciting and interactive birthday adventures for kids.

For more information programs@stanleyparkecolgy.ca 604-718-6522

Cool wildlife sightings

Robyn Worcester, Conservation Programs Manager



Photo credit: Allen Jensen

This marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) was photographed this winter close to the seawall in Stanley Park near Second Beach. Different than most birds in the Auk family, they nest directly on mossy platforms or deformities found on thick tree limbs. Only old trees provide these types of habitat, greatly limiting their choice of nesting sites. In the 1980's, Nature Vancouver reported that this species was "strongly suspected" to be breeding in the Park but now they are only seen occasionally during winter in the English Bay - Burrard Inlet Important Bird Area.

The Pacific herring (*Clupea pallasii*) is a keystone species in BC, forming the foundation of an incredible web of life in our coastal waters. Everything from salmon to porpoises to humpback whales depend on this fish for food. The herring spawn each year around mid-January through late April and the roe look like small, clear to whitish pearls. If you find them attached to wharf pilings or the undersides of boats, on seaweed or on rocks along the shore, please document the sighting and report it to north.shore.wetland.partners@gmail.com or 604-831-6145.



Photo credit: Courtney Kellock

This January marked the start of a second year of the long-term hummingbird banding project in Stanley Park. Volunteers gathered in the Dining Pavilion to watch Roy Teo and his assistant set the 'hall trap' over a feeder at the SPES office. The project is part of a greater Hummingbird Monitoring Network which is a science-based, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of hummingbird diversity and abundance throughout the Americas. Banding programs help in the management and conservation of birds by providing data on distribution and movement of species, relative numbers, annual production, seasonal habitat use and lifespan. Volunteers recorded data and took photos while Roy banded two adult male birds at the Pavilion and one more at the Rose Garden. The birds were all resident Anna's hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*) which have been overwintering in the park over the last several years.



Quiz Question 3: Who lives here?

These special nest boxes are built for one species in particular. This species was incredibly endangered and building these boxes has resulted in a remarkable comeback. In eastern North America this species has nested in them almost exclusively for more than 100 years.

Quiz Question 4: Name that bird

A large, dark bird found in evergreen forests of the west, it is an excellent mimic with a large vocal repertoire. It can imitate other birds, squirrels, cats, dogs, chickens, and even some mechanical objects! (Answer on Page 8)

Get Involved

Spring and Summer Volunteering Opportunities

Looking for a great place to volunteer with a fun group of people? Interested in learning new skills and helping with an important cause? Consider volunteering for SPES's Nest Box and Eco Rangers Programs.

Nest Box Program

In its fourth year, the Stanley Park Nest Box Program works to install, monitor and maintain nest boxes for blue orchard mason bees, tree and violet-green swallows and wood ducks. By volunteering, you'll help SPES enhance and document the breeding success and population status of target species. Your efforts will also contribute to educating the public about cavity nesting species and ways people can help conserve their habitat. Also learn about the ecology of target species and gain experience in ecological field data collection and reporting. This program suits volunteers who are self directed, attentive to detail, and excited about conserving cavity nesting birds. A commitment to monitor nest boxes once per week from mid April to early July is required. Email vols@stanleyparkecology.ca for more information.



photo credit: Mark White



Eco Rangers Program

In its eleventh season, the EcoRangers program offers volunteers, ages 15 and older, extensive training on Stanley Park's natural and cultural history, its visitor attractions and bylaws, as well as interpretive techniques. Roving in pairs throughout the summer, EcoRangers offer on-the spot interpretive services to the public, providing park visitors an opportunity to better enjoy the natural surrounding and history of the park, and having a lot of fun interacting with locals and visitors from around the world. Email vols@stanleyparkecology.ca for more information.

Quiz Question 5: Match the bird species to their correct silhouette (Answer on Page 8)

- Northern Harrier
- Bald Eagle
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey

A



B



C



D



...promotes awareness of and respect for the natural world by providing a leadership role in the stewardship of Stanley Park through collaborative initiatives in education, research and conservation.

SPES Members Enjoy:

- Discounts on Discovery Walks, Family Programs and Events
- Seasonal activities calendar and quarterly newsletter
- Special perks and promotions
- 20% Discount Vancouver Aquarium general admission
- Free preview nights for Christmas Bright Nights, Halloween Ghost Train and Theatre Under the Stars

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Donating to Stanley Park Ecology Society has never been easier, thanks to CanadaHelps which provides secure service for monthly or one-time gifts. Click the "Donate Now" icon on our website, www.stanleyparkecolgy.ca Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$30.

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All information will be kept confidential according to the Personal Information Protection Act.

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Cheques are payable to:
 Stanley Park Ecology Society
 PO Box 5167
 Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4B2 Canada

I Want to Become A Member

- Family (\$40) Individual (\$20)
 Junior <19 (\$15) Senior/Volunteer (\$15)

- This is a renewal membership
 Send newsletter by email
 or Send newsletter by post

My Gift Is Enclosed

- \$20 \$50 \$100 \$_____

I Want to Make A Monthly Donation

I authorize the following monthly credit card donation to the Stanley Park Ecology Society:

- \$10 \$15 \$25 \$_____

SPES is a registered charity #11916 6890 RR0001.
 Charitable Tax Receipts issued for donations of \$30 or more

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Keith Lord Sports Foundation Fund held at the Vancouver Foundation

Quiz Answers:
 Question 1: Pileated woodpecker
 Question 2: Pacific wren (formally known as Winter wren)
 Question 3: Purple martin
 Question 4: Steller's jay
 Question 5: Northern Harrier - B, Turkey Vulture - A, Bald Eagle - C, Osprey - D