



# ***oystercatcher***

## **NEWSLETTER**

SUMMER 2008

### **PRESIDENT'S POINT OF VIEW**

In our partnership with Island Pathways we are getting a lot closer to seeing the construction of the pathway along Lower Ganges Road. Spencer Excavating has won the contract and will likely have begun work as you read this. The aim is to have the pathway completed by the end of May despite the wet spring we have experienced. We are already working on phase 2 of the pathway, which will run along Atkins and Blain roads. Where it will all end is only a matter of financing.

Thank you to the few who chose to give me their comments about our monthly social events. We have discussed the socials at our Board meetings and for the immediate future we will continue with the present monthly format, but will open up attendance to the general public. We had 27 people attend the April social and 30 in May. We will continue to monitor the situation before proposing any major changes.

A big public thank you to George Wachmann for organizing the wine tasting day in the Cowichan Valley at the end of June. It should be a great way to transition between the Strawberry Festival and the start of summer.

Our outdoor activities are almost half over for this year. Two big events remain – the spring trip to Naramata (THANK YOU to the initiative and dedicated work of Fred Powell, one of our former presidents) and our Strawberry Festival (Frauke Prystawick and the Ramblers are in charge this year). Summer of course does not mean that we do nothing – there is always the opportunity for individuals to meet at ArtSpring on Tuesdays at 10:00 am to find out where the activity of the day will take place.

The fall promises to be busier than ever. We are going to trial some Sunday events to allow the non-retired members of the community to be active in our Club. And we will try to schedule a separate nature event each month. We are also considering a New Years Day event. As usual you will see more of this in the Driftwood in the fall. Until then, have an active summer!

*Zeke Blazecka*

### **MAY BIRDING OUTING**

The 20<sup>th</sup> of May was bird watching day for the walking group. Bob Weeden led a group of seven to Ruckle Park. Gil Schultz took another six walkers along Walker Hook to Fernwood and around St. Mary's Lake and Jean Brouard took his seven to Reginald Hill and the Indian reserve. It was a beautiful sunny day and birds were in abundance—a regular birder's paradise.

Between the nineteen of us we saw 53 different species.

All three groups saw double-crested cormorants, bald eagles, glaucous-winged gulls, rufous hummingbirds, spotted towhees, song sparrows and dark-eyed juncos; obviously the most abundant.

Bob, with his excellent ear for bird calls, showed his group a wonderful selection of small hedge-dwelling birds such as finches, chickadees, bushtits, warblers, kinglets, sparrows, peewees, vireos and a Pacific slope flycatcher. Jean's group, in the deep south, had the good fortune to see nesting black oystercatchers, a black-throated gray warbler—seen and identified by Patricia Flanagan, and a bunch of cormorants. They also got seduced into a little botanizing by the presence of calypso orchids. Gil's group, meanwhile, cheated by eating their lunch in the

sunshine on his patio and watching the feeders to inflate their count. Besides that, though, they saw a plethora of great blue herons at Walker's Hook, a pigeon guillemot off the Fernwood pier, an osprey at St. Mary's Lake and a brown creeper (very difficult bird to see).

N.B. Bob's group, not to be out done, also saw a brown creeper.

*Fran Schultz*



Osprey

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## EDITOR'S PAGE

Since I resigned from my position in the Executive Committee, I am somewhat out of the loop of what is going on behind the scene. So I renamed the title of this column. Its contents will be of a more personal perspective. I gladly leave Club matters to Zeke and Kees.

This Oystercatcher turned out be a “birder” issue; not intentional though, it just happened. From the sunroom, our most favourite place in our house, we look out over an area covered with shrubs and bushes. Birds love this place, especially when we fill up the bird feeders regularly. Besides the more common birds such as finches, towhees, and sparrows, we see California quails, several kinds of warblers picking insects off the shrubs, and lately a pair of cowbirds, a pair of gold finches, a red crossbill and a pair of black-headed grosbeaks.

On March 16, the first hummingbird made his *act de presence* at this busy place. He should have stayed south a bit longer because of the wintery weather we experienced. Below are some of a series of over 30 pictures I made on March 28 after a snow squall. This little guy was easy to capture on camera while he sat there facing our window while keeping an eye on the feeder. I think the cold was bothering him because he did not seem to be quite himself. A few days later, I found one hummer dead among the shivering daffodils. Had the cold snap been too much for him? Who knows...

For the March social event our Club teamed up with the Conservancy. We invited BC's ultimate bird expert, Wayne Campbell, to Salt Spring who gave a Friday night presentation on everything you want to know about birds and took thirty eager birders on a Saturday fieldtrip. But there was a preamble to this event. In October I received an email from our son saying that one of his colleagues' father, an ornithologist in Victoria, regularly gives talks to naturalists groups. Would the Trail & Nature Club be interested in one of his presentations? Sure, why not. So I contacted Wayne and he proposed to give a talk and a fieldtrip in March. By my knowledge, the Club had never had an offer including a fieldtrip, so I looked for and found help. Deborah Miller, who is in charge of the Conservancy's programs, took care of most of the organization during our absence in February. In the end, I had to let go of the whole project because I was ill during the whole month of March: I never got to go to the talk, let alone the fieldtrip. So I like to take this opportunity to thank Deborah as well as her husband Dave Denning for all their efforts on our behalf.

In June, we are looking forward to the Strawberry festival, which will be held again in Ruckle Park, and preceded by short walks, rambles and hikes. Free of charge parking will be available. And for June 24, George Wachmann has organized a winery tour at the Godfrey Brownell Vineyards near Duncan. You will find details on page 6 of this issue.

Nieke Visser

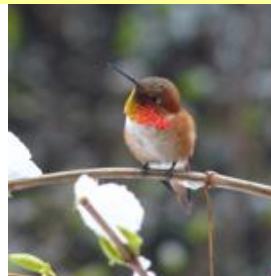
## WEST COAST WINTER WOES OF A HUMMINGBIRD.



Hello, my name is Hummer and I just arrived from California.



Can anybody tell me why it has been snowing here? My feet are freezing, man!



Are you sure this is this Salt Spring Island? Did I miss a tum and ended up in Alaska?



No, that's not possible. I am not that absentminded.



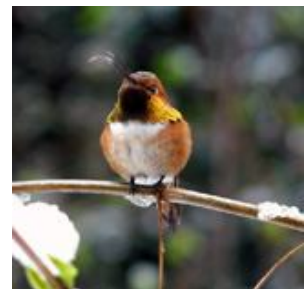
I haven't seen any of my buddies yet. What's keeping them?



I am yearning for good chase around the salmonberries. Come one, guys, don't be chicken!



No response, eh! Fine, be that way! Then I will have the feeder all to myself. And the girls that come this way too!



Yummy! That stuff in the feeder is beak-licking good! I think I stay here anyway, snow or no snow!



## GENERAL INFORMATION

**The Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club** features Tuesday outings September through June at three levels of ability. The monthly schedule of outings and events is published in the Driftwood on the last Wednesday of the month and on our website at [www.saltspringtnc.ca](http://www.saltspringtnc.ca). On the fourth Thursday in October, November and February through May, the Club meets at 7:30 pm at the lower hall of the United Church. The Club is affiliated with BC Nature and Nature Canada.



**Ramblers** enjoy walking without pressure with frequent “time-outs” to take pictures, to examine plants, flowers, rocks, fossils, and from time to time sample local restaurants. Members of any level of fitness are welcome. Ramblers start at 10:00 am and usually end by 1:30 pm.

**Walkers** move at a more relaxed pace.

They usually try to avoid long steep climbs and will stop to catch their breath along the way. Outings generally cover 8 km or less and end by 2:00 pm.



**Hikers** like long, adventurous and occasionally quite strenuous hikes, and like to gain a bit of altitude. They need strong boots and a good but not excessive level of fitness. Hikes usually start at about 10:00 am and end between 2:30 to 3:30 pm.

**Nature excursions** are normally organized every third Tuesday of the month except December led by an expert naturalist and are open to all levels.



**Membership:** Annual dues are \$20 per person. All members must sign a waiver annually. Send completed membership and waiver forms with your cheque to the Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 203, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2V9, or drop them off at the Cobbler's box, attention Barry Spence.

**Taxi fare:** Members are encouraged to carpool during outings and reimburse the driver as follows: On-island trips: North of Duke Road: \$2 per passenger; South of Duke Road: \$3 per passenger; Ruckle Park and non-paved roads: \$4 per passenger.



Off Island trips: \$0.30 per km per vehicle plus ferry costs.

Spring/Fall trips: No club policy.

**Moving? Change of email address?** Please let your Membership Director know a.s.a.p. Email: [sspence@telus.net](mailto:sspence@telus.net); telephone: 537-2332.

**Your comments or contributions are welcome.**

Please email them to Nieke Visser:

[niekevisser@shaw.ca](mailto:niekevisser@shaw.ca) or leave them in the cobbler's box.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I like to echo our President's comments in the last Oystercatcher about the social events. Attendance is often less than 25 people out of a total membership of 256. Certainly, those that attend do enjoy the presentations, but the amount of time, effort and money that goes into these Thursday evenings is not always proportional to the attendance. On a positive note, the last two socials were much better attended. In March we co-sponsored with the Conservancy a talk on birds in British Columbia presented by Wayne Campbell. I counted at least 50 Club members, although many of those are also Conservancy members. In April Nieke's show of excellent slides on Nature Reserves in the Netherlands had a better attendance as well, notwithstanding the competition of the Stanley Cup that evening. We are now advertizing in “What's on...” in the Driftwood and opened the talks to the general public. Non-members are requested to give a small donation. As for the May social, we hope you did not miss Barbara Appleby, who talked about hiking in England (Lake District and the Cumbrian Way) and Scotland (Isle of Arran).

Later in the fall we will have Ashley Hilliard (Nature in Cuba) and Andrea Rankin and Margaret Spencer (Antarctica). We hope that the attendance improvement will keep up, but we also encourage you to talk to or email Zeke or myself if you have thoughts on or ideas for the socials.

We have received many great ideas for a fall trip, such as the Bugaboos, Lillooet, Manning, Sooke and more. However, to date we have no takers yet for the organization of such a trip. The last few years the organization has fallen on the shoulders of only a few members, but they cannot continue to do so. With our large membership we need more people willing to do this and the Club has some resources and assistance for those who come forward.

In the event there will be no fall trip I encourage you to attend the Fall Conference of BC Nature in Sorrento, October 2 to 5. There will be some excellent walking/nature trips and talks. Look for details [www.bcnature.ca](http://www.bcnature.ca).

*Kees Visser*



Lichen covered branches—Koksilah River Valley

## NATURE CONSERVATION THE DUTCH WAY—TWO SUCCESS STORIES

In June 2007, I travelled to my home country (the Netherlands), and learned through my naturalist family a lot about the Dutch efforts to restore habitat and to reintroduce species that had almost disappeared from the Dutch landscape. I took lots of pictures, brought all this information home. In addition, I consulted a few Dutch websites.

### Stork: Oostvaarder plassen



Of particular interest were two programs of habitat restoration and reintroduction of the stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) as well as the spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*). These efforts successfully resulted in increased numbers of both species. Storks, as you may know, are migratory birds. Up to the middle of the 20th century, there were two migrating populations in the Netherlands. One took the western route to the Sahel via Gibraltar and the other one took the eastern route to southern Africa via the Bosphorus (Turkey). The Sahel population of storks got under pressure due to the continuous drought that occurred there in the 1950's and 1960's, while both populations also suffered habitat loss because of the extensive use of pesticides (DDT in all likelihood) used against the grasshopper plagues in that region. At their northern breeding areas storks build their nests on artificial structures, usually poles erected by farmers with an old wagon wheel on top, but I have also seen them using old chimneys. They feed on little fish, frogs, and other creepers and crawlers in shallow pools and ditches in "peat-bog-turned-grassland" areas. However, the stork had all but disappeared from the scene in the Netherlands due to sprawling urbanization, intensified agricultural practices including wetland drainage, and increased use of herbicides and pesticides. In 1969, when the count of storks was at an all time low, a reintroduction effort got under way in the form of a controlled breeding program. Twenty eight storks were imported from eastern Europe. They were kept captive and were fed. These birds had no intention to migrate, in all likelihood because food as presented to them. Their offspring was eventually placed in different areas, supervision was relaxed, and they had to find their own food. When these birds started to show signs of migration, they were not stopped. They now migrate only via the western route. Their numbers have since increased to the point that they recently have been taken off the endangered species list.

The same story can be told of the spoonbill. This migratory bird winters in West Africa in areas where rice is cultivated, and breeds in the marshlands of western Europe. The Dutch spoonbill population is the most northerly. It needs a habitat of shallow water to feed, and reed or other low-growing riparian vegetation to nest. For feeding it uses its a long spoon like bill at the end of which are sensitive nerve endings. Equipped with such an apparatus, it can feel its prey (stickleback fish) under water. Spoonbills returned to the Netherlands following the accidental creation of an extensive marshland (Oostvaarderplassen) in one of the newly created polders (low lying land reclaimed from a body usually fresh water) in the 1960's. Adding some extra stickleback fish to the water and making sure he was left as undisturbed as possible in a this overpopulated country did the trick. And so their numbers increased dramatically over the past 30 or so years and the spoonbill too was recently taken off the list of endangered species.

### Spoonbill : Oostvaarder plassen



Nieke Visser

## CALENDAR

### May 29-June 1

#### BC Nature Annual Conference and General Meeting

Hosted by the South Okanagan Naturalists' Club at the Penticton Lakeside Resort

Theme: **A Century of Change Celebrating Penticton's Centennial**

Details in the BC Naturalist or at <http://bcnature.ca>.

### June 2-5

#### Spring trip to Naramata.

For more information, call Fred Powell at 537-4739

### June 17

#### Strawberry festival

Where: at Ruckle Park's picnic area.

Organized by: the Ramblers.

Time: Noon

Short hikes, walks and rambles will be organized prior to this event.

### June 24

#### Winery Tour

Where: **Godfrey Brownell Vineyards**

Organized by: George Wachmann  
Time: 8:30 at Portlock Park to catch the 9:00 am ferry.

Short hikes, walks and rambles will be organized prior to this event.  
See details on page 6.

### September 9

Blackberry festival at Ruckle Park to start off the new hiking season (tentatively)

### October 2-5

#### BC Nature Fall Meeting

In Sorento, organized by the North Sushwap Naturalists.  
More info at [www.bcnature.ca](http://www.bcnature.ca)

### October 23

#### Ashley Hilliard presents

#### Birding in Cuba.

Place: United Church

Time: 7:30 pm

### November 27

Andrea Rankin and Margaret Spenser present slides on their trip to Antarctica

Place: United Church

Time 7:30 pm.



# Salt Spring Geology - part 6

## ROCKS of SALT SPRING ISLAND

My final contribution will be on rocks, my favourite subject and main area of interest. In previous issues I have discussed bits of *stratigraphy* (unconformities, nomenclature, time), *tectonics* (faults and folds), *physical geography* (landscape, glaciology and climate) and I touched very briefly on *palaeontology* (worm and shrimp burrows). *Petrology*, the knowledge of rocks, is one of the remaining geological components.

The northern part of Salt Spring Island, roughly from Mt Maxwell and Cusheon Creek north, we find only sedimentary rocks on the surface, deposited by the sea (marine), rivers (fluvial) or by gravity. Most people who live there have seen outcrops on cliffs and around their house, consisting of silty sandstone, shale and conglomerates. These rocks belong, stratigraphically, to the Upper Cretaceous Nanaimo Group. Sandstone and shale have essentially the same composition, but shale is finer grained. They consist of the minerals quartz, feldspar, mica, and rock fragments; clay minerals are present in the pores between these minerals, making them virtually impermeable. Any well water on the northern part of the island is present in fractures, so the total volume of drinking water is very limited if it is not replenished in the rainy winters.

The middle part of the island, between the Fulford Valley and Mt. Maxwell/Cusheon Creek, consists of intrusive igneous rocks (derived from deep hot “liquid” magma), in particular granodiorite and porphyry granites. The term *intrusive* means that, when they were hot and liquid, these rocks have intruded in other overlying rocks without reaching the surface. The overlying rocks have been eroded since the time of intrusion (which is the Lower Devonian). These rocks are also slightly metamorphic, which means that mineralogically they are somewhat altered due to temperature and pressure changes since emplacement. On a few places, for example near Meyer Road, you can still see some of the previous overlying rock, into which the intrusives penetrated: a sericite schist, which is a higher metamorphic shale with a lot of small mica crystals. These intrusive rocks consist of clear quartz, feldspar, mica, a few amphiboles and almost no clay, and are excellent clean water reservoirs.



**Feral sheep on Mt. Tuam, blissfully unaware that they are standing on top of metamorphic intrusive rocks, of Carboniferous age.**

*Photo Lynn Thompson*

Finally, most of the southern part of the island including Ruckle Park consists of a mixture of mainly Lower Devonian extrusive and some intrusive and metamorphic sedimentary rocks. Extrusive rocks, as the name implies did come to the surface, indeed sometimes with explosive force and we can find examples of acidic lavas and volcanic ash (including bombs). In Ruckle Park are a few nice examples. The copper, and other metals which were mined in the early 1900's are present as sulphides in this group of rocks.

An exception is Mt Tuam, which consists of a Carboniferous metamorphic sedimentary and intrusive assemblage.

I am aware that this is a lot of information on one page; if you like to know more please ask me or you may want to read a book called “The geology of Southern Vancouver Island” by Chris Yorath, which is not Salt Spring specifically, but will answer many questions you might have.

*Kees Visser, P. Geol.*

## DUNCAN WINERY TOUR

On Tuesday, June 24, we will go to **Godfrey Brownell Vineyards**, 4911 Marshall Road, 7 km west of Duncan. Ramblers, walkers and hikers meet at 8:30 am at Portlock Park and car-pool to meet the 9 am Vesuvius ferry to Crofton. Instruction will be handed out at this point.

Walkers and hikers will join Mary Hof for an easy 2-3 hour hike along the Cowichan River footpath from Glenora. Ramblers will follow the trails on the property, along the salmon stream, and tour the vineyard and winery.

Meeting place for everyone will be the corner of Allenby and Indian Rd. (at the white bridge). Going south on the Trans Canada Hwy, turn right at the second traffic light after the bridge (Allenby Rd.). Follow this road till the end where you will see the white bridge. Mary will be there waiting for everyone at approximately 9:50 A.M. The ramblers will go directly to the winery. Following the excursion with Mary Hof, walkers and hikers will also visit the vineyard.

David Godfrey will have a buffet available with the following choices:

- A) seafood: local crab and likely halibut given the season, but perhaps salmon if that is available
- B) grilled chicken & roasted peppers
- C) garden salads
- D) local cheeses
- E) local bread
- F) coffee or tea

Cost \$24 per person plus taxes.

Wine tasting --three whites and two reds -- no charge.

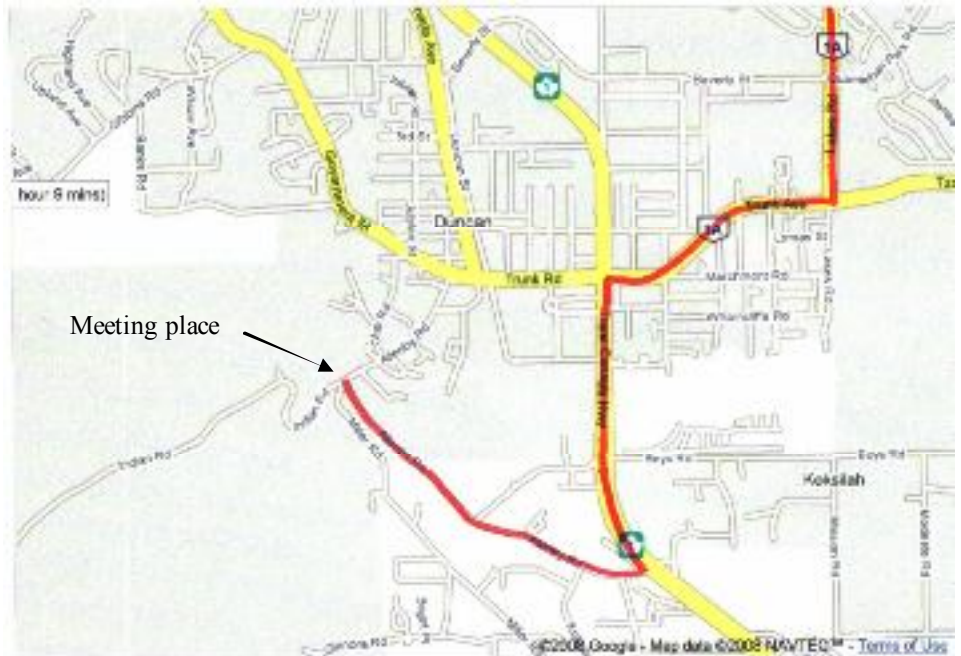
Wine by the glass, by the cafe or by the bottle.

Alternately, you can bring your lunch and have it in the

picnic area in the flower filled patio.

Please advise George Wachmann at 537-5276 or [wachmann@telus.net](mailto:wachmann@telus.net) no later than **June 19<sup>th</sup>** if you intend to come and will want to try the buffet, so that sufficient supplies are on hand.

*George Wachmann*



<b>HONORARY MEMBERS</b>	Paul and Beth Ranney Owen Benwell and George Hignell Bob Ball Loes Holland Tony Pederson Jean King Joan Lott Eleanor Lloyd Jean Holmes
<b>PAST TRAIL BLAZERS</b>	Simon Rook Lynn Thompson Bill Harrington John Myers Ian Fraser Bob and Betty Ball Dick and Chris Pattinson Betty Kirk Brian Radford Charles Kahn Jim Barber Alan and Rita Robertson

<b>2008 Executive</b>	<b>Trails Coordinators</b>
<b>President</b> Zeke Blazecka 653-4782 zekegiz@saltspring.com	Mark Ritchie 537-8953 mar k023@telus.net
<b>Vice- President</b> Kees Visser 537-5443 cnvisser@shaw.ca	<b>Nature Coordinator</b> John Flannagan 653-2344 jpfannagan@saltspring.com
<b>Secretary</b> John Heddle 537-2672 jheddle@yor ku.ca	<b>BC Nature Director</b> Brian Radford 653-9370 bmwrad@island.net
<b>Treasurer</b> Judy Nurse 537-2293 murrayjudy nurse@hotmail.com	<b>Membership Secretary</b> Barry Spence 537-2332 sspence@telus.net
<b>Past President</b> Ron Hall 538-0046 woodlandchalet@saltspring.com	<b>2008 Members at Large</b>
<b>Ramblers Coordinators</b> Frauke Prystawick 537-9338 frau keprystawik@hotmail.com	<b>Archivist</b> Joanne Cartwright 537-2439 jcartwright@saltspring.com
<b>Walkers Coordinator</b> Dulcy Wilson 537-9653 dulcywilson@gmail.com	<b>Photo Journal</b> Arleen Sadler 653-9235 arleensadler@telus.net
<b>Hikers Coordinator</b> Lise Fraser 537-4953 lisef@telus.net	<b>Oyster catcher</b> Nieke Visser 537-5443 niekevisser@shaw.ca
	<b>Website</b> Gloria Murphy 538-1986 gamurphy@tel us.net

## GREETINGS FROM YOUR TRAIL COORDINATOR



**Christie Falls and the old mine trail**

*Photo Lynn Thompson*

Having been too busy with work and other commitments to have time this spring to scour the trails for clearing duties, I am putting the call out to our members to let me know if there are any trails that you might know about that need any clearing.

You can e-mail me at [mark023@telus.net](mailto:mark023@telus.net) so that I may compile a list of trails and organize volunteers to help me keep our trail network in tiptop shape! I thank you in advance and look forward to your recommendations.

*Mark Ritchie*

## WANTED: PHOTOS FROM YOUR HIKES, WALKS, OR RAMBLES

I am looking for pictures from our 2007 Christmas social until now and until the next Christmas social. If you have already sent me photos please re-send them as my hard drive crashed a couple of weeks ago and I lost all of the photos I had accumulated. Thanks to those of you who already have. Yes, I have yours Charles. We especially need photos from the Walkers and Ramblers. I can scan them and return them to you if they are hard copies. Don't forget to take photos on the Naramata trip! Send to [arleensadler@telus.net](mailto:arleensadler@telus.net). Many thanks!

*Arleen Sadler*

## BOOK REVIEWS

Title: **Coastal hikes, a guide to West Coast hiking in British Columbia and Washington State.**

Author: Philip Stone

2007; Wild Isle Publications, 1st edition.

ISBN: 978-0-9680766-7-5, paperback

Price: \$27.95 (full price); \$17.52 (Chapters on-line)

If you are into coastal backpacking, this book is for you! It features some well-known trails such as the West Coast Trail, Juan de Fuca, and Cape Scott, but also less explored treks such as the Nootka Trail, the Wild Side Trail on Flores Island, the Hesquiat Peninsula and more. The guide features clear maps, access description (essential for the more remote trails), trail-head accommodation, route description, permits, fees, which topographical maps to use, and advance logistics helpful with planning your trek. Many pictures highlight the book.

**Young cones on a Douglas fir, Andreas Vogt**

*Nature Reserve. Photo Nieke Visser*



Title: **Day hiking the Olympic Peninsula**

Author: Craig Romano.

2007; The Mountaineers Books, 1st edition

ISBN: 978-1-59485-047-9 paperback.

Price: \$21.50 (full price); \$16.34 (Chapters on-line)

A day hike guide with the option of extending your trip, illustrated with clear maps, and pictures. Each hike is rated for difficulty, elevation gain or loss, and distance (albeit in feet and miles) with description how to get there and optional extension of the trip.