



David Denning photo

Oystercatcher

Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club
Newsletter
Winter 2014

Shot these harlequins (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) and black turnstones (*Arenaria melanocephala*) on the first fall Ganges Harbour survey by boat for Bird Studies Canada - Peter McCallister



Editor's note
I am getting some spectacular bird photos lately but where are the flower, mushroom, and insect photographers in the club. My thanks to Peter and Nieke.

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President's Point of View

Nieke Visser

In June, members attending Strawberry Festival's General Meeting adopted changes to the bylaws. In a nutshell, the bylaws became more "generic" creating the possibility for the club to adapt its policies to changing needs without going to the process and associated costs of changing the bylaws.

The second major June achievement was the signing of the BC Parks Partnership Agreement. Herb Otto, Nigel Denyar, Gary Quiring, Jean Gelwicks and Charles Kahn have done all the groundwork for this ten year agreement with BC Parks. I like to thank all of them and wish them all the best carrying out the plans under the agreement. Herb will keep you up to date and will from time to time ask for your help carrying out projects.

During the summer, the Shoreline Atlas Project went full steam ahead, spearheaded by David Denning, Leanna Boyer, and Peter McAllister and assisted by citizen scientists. David wrote an article about its progress in the summer issue of the Oystercatcher. This project continues throughout the winter, focusing on eelgrass, kelp, and forage fish.

The organizing committee in charge of the 2015 BC Nature Conference and AGM has been very active since January: this month the program was finalized and submitted for publication in the winter issue of BC Nature Magazine. A more comprehensive version is now on its way to be posted on our website. The committee is very excited to present this program. The conference spans four days, with pre-conference activi-

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For information on the Board of Directors and weekly outings, please see our website: www.saltspringtnc.ca

Calendar of Events

Tuesday, Dec 9, 2014

Christmas Lunch at Calvin's

Doors open at 11:30. Tickets \$30 for 3-course lunch. Available at Soapworks until Saturday Dec 6. The menu is spectacular with choices for appetizers, main course and deserts.

Sunday, Dec. 14, 2014

Annual Christmas Bird Count

For more info: Tim Marchant: timpasm@gmail.com

Tuesday, Jan 6, 2015

First activity of the new year.

Thursday, Jan 29, 2015

Annual General Meeting at the Lion's Hall.

Hall open at 11:30 am, lunch served at noon. Photo presentation by Lynn Thompson. Hiking Mt. Albert Edward in Strathcona Park.

May 8 - May 10, 2015

BC Nature's Annual General Meeting and Spring Conference to be held on Salt Spring Island. Event includes presentations, field trips and both pre and post conference excursions. Details on our web site.



Western Grebe, Sushwap Lake, Salmon Arm

Nieke Visser

ties including three workshops plus three, day-long excursions to Pender, Mayne, or Galiano Island. We kick off the Conference with a wine and cheese social evening in ArtSpring, followed by presentations. The Friday is marked for more talks in the morning and fieldtrips in the afternoon. In the evening, conference participants get together over a barbecue followed by a presentation by Ian McAllister who currently wanders western Canada and the US promoting his newest book. Saturday morning will be dedicated to BC Nature's AGM and the afternoon is set aside again for more field trips. People will gather in the evening for the banquet with more speakers and awards ceremonies. In addition, Sunday is dedicated to farewell field trips. We hope to welcome over 150 naturalists from other federated BC Naturalist clubs. Of course, you as SSTNC member are welcome to attend as well. Watch our club's website for more details.

Following the Blackberry Festival, the Executive Committee was notified that the present location is in the shade and too chilly for comfort. It was suggested to move the location next year to a spot in the sun on the campsite. We are working on it, and will let you know what we have accomplished by the time the next Blackberry Fest comes around.

In September, four of our members attended the BC Nature Fall Conference and General Meeting in Salmon Arm. A massive sockeye run

in the Adams River was predicted, but it did not happen at the time of the conference. Very disappointing for those who came all the way in the hope to watch this spectacle. After the meeting, Kees and I traveled to Alberta to visit our family; we were very fortunate to watch the run a week later on our way back home. On the positive side there was very good birding right in front of the hotel where the conference was held and I took full advantage of that.

Talking about birds, the end of October was earmarked to spend a day in Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary and Boundary Bay, co-sponsored by the Pender Island Field Naturalists. At one point, 5 club



Juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs, Shuswap Lake

Nieke Visser

Great Blue Heron, Shuswap Lake

Nieke Visser



members showed interest and Pender came up with seven birders, a good size group. However, at the last moment the Saltspring members all opted out for various reasons. I like to apologize to the Pender Naturalists for this rather awkward situation. Our club has about 25 people listed on the birding group, so one wonders why there is not more enthusiasm for an event like this. That particular day the weather was beautiful and there were plenty migratory birds, in particular thousands of lesser snow geese, arriving all the way from East Siberia.

Also in October, Geneviève Singleton, biologist and member of the Cowichan Valley Naturalist Society, presented an interesting evening on BC Coastal plants and their past and present uses. She was able to fill all seats of the library's Program Room. She brought some of the products she talked about for all to taste, such as nettle antipasto, nettle tea, and Oregon grape jelly.

In November, we enjoyed a presentation by John Neville on woodpeckers. This event was co-sponsored by the Conservancy and we moved to the Lion's Hall for that occasion.

We are nearing the end of the year and our Past President/treasurer, John Heddle, has been busy trying to find candidates for the executive committee. Two people have stepped forward, but we need to fill the positions of secretary, vice president, and hiking coordinator. It goes without much explanation that our club cannot function if these positions stay vacant. This year, we did not have a vice president, and the past president took on the treasurer's function as well. This situation is most undesirable. Doing double duty leads quickly to volunteer burnout. I therefore urge you to contemplate stepping forward and take on one of these vacant positions. In this issue of the Oystercatcher, you will find a short description of the duties.

This year the annual Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 14, 2014. The Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club has always sponsored this event and will do that again this year. Our island is divided up in zones with a coordinator for each zone and an island coordinator in the person of Tim Marchant. If you are new to this event and like to participate, please contact Tim at 250-537-5015 or email him at timpsm@gmail.com. Tim will direct you to the zone coordinator of your area. You will be provided with the necessary paperwork to record your counts. If you are new to this event and like to try it out, you will

Trailblazer Award, 2014

This year's Trailblazer Award has been awarded to Nancy Holcroft. The original nomination came from Betty Ball who wrote, in part:

"Nancy Holcroft for 28 years has been a strong, consistent hiker, walker, and rambler (only this year). In the past, she served as the Executive's secretary and was the Walker co-ordinator. She readily accepted responsibility for leading hiker and walker outings. Being in Nancy's company is always pleasant."

Nancy was never in the limelight but she was always there. Perennially cheerful and willing to help out in whatever context was called for, she has been a stalwart of the club and we hope she will one for years to come.

HONOUR ROLLS

HONORARY MEMBERS

Bob Ball
Loes Holland
Tony Pederson
Jean King
Jean Holmes

TRAIL BLAZERS

Janet Anderson
Bob & Betty Ball
Owen Benwell
Zeke Blazecka
Nancy Braithewaite
Ian Fraser
Bill Harrington
George Hignell
Nancy Holcroft
Charles Kahn
Ann King
Betty Kirk
Fred Powell
Dick Pattinson
Linda Quiring
Brian Radford
Marjie Radford
Beth Ranney
Alan & Rita Robertson
Simon Rook
Lynn Thompson

be partnered with an experienced birder. There are no costs, only the benefit of spending a day outside and the knowledge that you contribute valuable data to a century old citizen science.

To end on a merry note, our annual Christmas lunch will be at Calvin's on December 9, starting at 11:30 am with a pre-lunch social and followed by a three-course meal. There will be a short outing before lunch just to work up your appetite! Unfortunately, Kees and I cannot attend the Christmas Lunch, so I take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy 2015.

Happy trails!

Mt. Maxwell Signage

Herb Otto, Trails Coordinator

Our project to erect signage at Mt. Maxwell and Burgoyne Bay Provincial Parks is moving forward. The agreement with BC Parks is in place for a 10 year plan of cooperation to participate in projects in all the BC Parks properties on Salt Spring Island including Ruckle, Burgoyne Bay and Mt. Maxwell and Mt. Erskine Parks. The agreement sets out the terms of the cooperation as well as the provision of liability coverage for any Trail and Nature Club member engaged in volunteer work in the BC Parks.

Phase one signage for Mt. Maxwell will include the preparation of approximately 22 signs at the beginnings and intersections of all the existing trails which have been mapped by GPS by Charles Kahn and Nigel Denyer. We have prepared an outline of how the signs will be mounted and a concept of the sign design which has been reviewed and approved in principal by Joe Benning of BC Parks. The budget for this phase for the sign post materials, the graphic design of the signs and the printing of the signs will be approximately within the \$1,000 grant from BC Parks.

If all goes well, we will start putting up signs in the new year and to this end, we will need a few crews of volunteers to carry out the work. I look forward to seeing some of you there. If you would like to put yourself forward as a potential volunteer, please let me know by email at herbotto@shaw.ca.

Salt Spring Nature Reserves: Mt. Erskine and Manzanita Ridge

Ashley Hilliard

This is the second in an occasional column discussing the nature reserves that the Salt Spring Island Conservancy has acquired and established for the island's benefit over the last 20 years. These reserves are a tremendous achievement and a testament to the hard work of the Conservancy's volunteers and staff as well as the generosity of the landowners and many donors who contributed to each and every reserve.

Manzanita Ridge Nature Reserve and Mt. Erskine Provincial Park are located in the north part of

Volunteers needed

At the Annual General Meeting on January 29, a new executive committee will be installed. Of the 12 positions, 7 are incumbent. Candidates for the remaining 2 positions have been found, but there are still 3 positions that need nominees. Below are their job descriptions.

1. Secretary

Duties:

1. For each executive meeting:
 - setting and distributing the agenda together with the

President,

- taking notes at the meetings,
- writing and distributing the minutes.

2. There are on average 6 meetings a year.

3. Keeping files up to date. Occasionally taking care of correspondence.

Prerequisite: access to a computer and word processor.

Remuneration: joining a team of enthusiastic volunteers.

2. Hiking Coordinator

Duties: Prepare the monthly schedule for the hikers and send it to the Webmaster for posting on line. No need to be a hike leader.

Prerequisite: being a hiker.

Remuneration: getting to know a lot of hikers and having fun.

3. Vice President

Duties: From time to time take over duties of the President in his/her absence. Taking care of the logistics of hall rental and refreshments. This does not necessarily mean finding speakers. It also does NOT mean you will automatically become President when he/she steps down.

Prerequisite: Enthusiasm, some organizational skills an asset.

Remuneration: Getting to know the Club really well and contribute to its mandate.

the island, which does not have the large undeveloped tracts of land of the mountainous south. As one of the most popular hiking areas on Salt Spring this protected area will likely be familiar to most readers.

The map accompanying this article shows the location of the reserve and park. This map and a more detailed trail map are available on the Conservancy's website, under the tabs "What We Do" and then "Managing Nature Reserves". Here's a link: <http://saltspringconservancy.ca/wp/what-we-do/managing-nature-reserves/mt-erskine/>

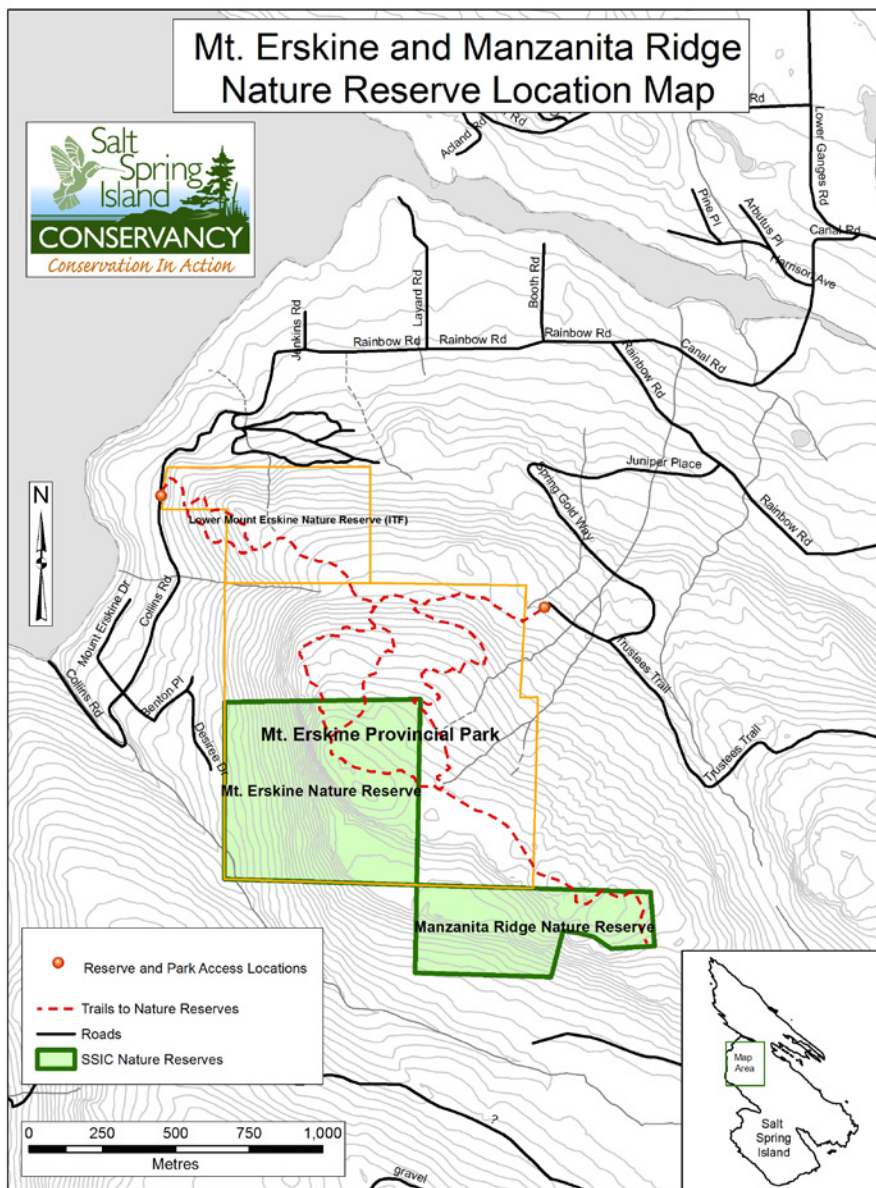
As you will note from the map, there are several contiguous areas that make up the entire "Mt. Erskine" protected area: the Lower Mt. Erskine Nature Reserve (22 hectares); Mt. Erskine Provincial Park (107 hectares); and Manzanita Ridge Nature Reserve (20 hectares). That's almost 160 hectares (400 acres) in total!

Access is provided from three main points. Collins Road leads to a fairly steep trail to the summit. The Trustee Trail operated by PARC leads from Trustee Way, off Juniper Place, into the trail system. It provides the highest access point and the gentlest climb. Manzanita Ridge Nature Reserve can be accessed by a trail from Mt. Erskine, or by a trail which starts at Toynbee Road in the Cranberry valley. The trailhead is on your right after a left hand bend in the road and is marked by a Conservancy trail sign. It is a fairly steep climb to the ridge.

The Mt. Erskine trails are described by Charles Kahn in his excellent guide, "Hiking the Gulf Islands of British Columbia", 3rd edition, at pages 235 -238. I am indebted to Charles for much of the information in this article. He was one of the key people involved in the acquisition of both Manzanita Ridge and the summit of Mt. Erskine by the Conservancy.

The history of how these areas came to be protected illustrates the different roles numerous parties played. It demonstrates that when it comes to land protection on Salt Spring, the process often starts with motivated owners who wish to protect their land for future generations. It also illustrates one of the key features the Conservancy looks at when considering land protection - the degree to which the land is connected to other protected areas so as to create as large a parcel of natural habitat as possible.

The Lower Mt. Erskine Nature Reserve is owned by the Islands Trust Fund. It is located on the uphill side of Collins Road on the north slope of Mt. Erskine. The Islands Trust Fund is off-shoot of our unique Islands Trust government and quietly operates throughout the trust area. It owns protected areas itself and holds



conservation covenants on private land. Information on its many valuable activities can be found at: <http://www.islandstrust-fund.bc.ca/>. The land itself was generously donated by islander Jack Fisher. It provides access from Collins Road to the trails on Mt.. Erskine.

Manzanita Ridge was added in 2003 through a publicly-funded acquisition by the Conservancy from long-time island resident, Martin Williams, who also made a generous contribution towards the purchase. The land boasts a fine stand of old Douglas-fir. As the contour lines on the map show, the reserve extends well onto the steep south-facing slope of Mt.. Erskine. The part normally accessed by hikers at the top of the ridge, under the hydro right-of-way, is just a small part of the reserve. The reserve protects



Hairy Manzanita bush on Manzanita ridge. Photo by Ashley Hilliard.

significant areas of arbutus and its diminutive relative, hairy manzanita. This plant's range extends well down to California, and is restricted to elevated rock outcrops here on Salt Spring. It is lovely in the spring. Here's link for more information: http://www.goert.ca/propagation_guidelines/shrubs/arctostaphylos_columbiana.

The final piece of the puzzle was added in 2006 when the Conservancy, through another public campaign, bought the 40 hectares at the very top of Mt. Erskine. Peter Lamb, the Conservancy's president at the time, played a vital role, supported by many others. The purchasers were the Conservancy with 60%, Nature Conservancy of Canada with 20% and the provincial government with 20%. The land was leased to BC Parks under a 99-year lease and BC Parks agreed to combine it with the adjacent Crown parcels to form Mt. Erskine Provincial Park. Quite a brilliant concept!

The property is of high ecological value. The following sensitive ecosystems have been mapped on the property: older forest, terrestrial-herbaceous, older 2nd growth forest. Additional sensitive ecosystems present on the property are sparsely vegetated ecosystems (inland cliffs and bluffs where vegetation is discontinuous,



View from Mount Erskine by Ashley Hilliard.

interspersed with exposed bedrock), wetlands, Maxwell creek, which runs through the southwest corner of the property and adjacent riparian areas. The property also contains significant areas of arbutus/hairy manzanita, a red-listed plant community.

All hikers will appreciate the spectacular Mt. Erskine peak with views north and west. Families in particular will enjoy discovering the "fairy doors" on the north access routes. Adventurous hikers will enjoy the full traverse between Collins and Toynbee Roads, perhaps continuing even further.

I would encourage sure-footed hikers to venture a bit down from the summit of Mt.. Erskine towards the south to experience some spectacular cliff areas. But do take

care, especially with children.

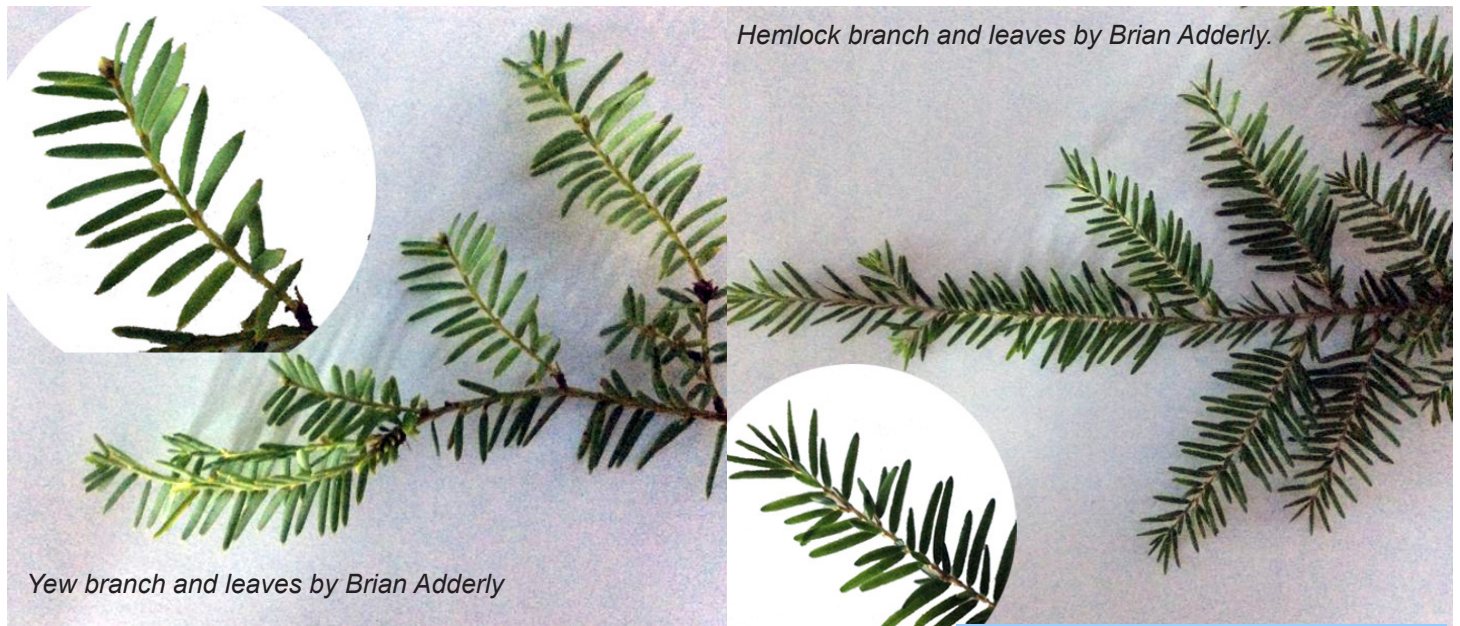
The Mount Erskine area is an excellent example of partnerships working to protect land on Salt Spring. It demonstrates how important it is for the island to have a local land Conservancy to help. I invite you to join the Conservancy, if you are not already a member. Happy hiking!

The Trees Around Us

Bryan Adderley

Western hemlock and western yew at a glance have similar looking leaves. These two trees have to be looked at closely to verify the specie. Both have short flat leaves, hemlock tends to have blunt ends, a dusty green back with two light lines of stoma; yew tends to be pointy with yellow green back and a single line of stoma. Hemlock tends to grow much larger, up to 60 m tall compared to 30 m for yew. Hemlocks are generally a nice looking tree, graceful branches, and a narrow crown with a droopy leader. We have eight yews visible near our home, five on our property. In my opinion they tend to be ugly with branches growing in all directions, some parallel to the trunk, however, they can be pruned and will fill out to be shrub like. My experience with hemlock indicates it resists being pruned by having the trimmed branch die, and if it is topped, the tree may die. Hemlock has small cones, while yew bears fruit, a bright red fleshy cup containing a single seed.

Western hemlock was used extensively as medicine by most native groups on the west coast. It was also used for bedding, clothing, spoons, roasting spits and many other things including eating of the inner bark (P&M). Yew however is poisonous, although the bark has been used to make taxol, a cancer treatment drug.



A Newfoundland Odyssey – Part 2

Charles Kahn

Last issue we began this article on Charles' trip to Newfoundland. We pick up the story just after their hikes around Harbour Grace.

Our next stop was Trinity where we spent five nights in the studio apartment of the highly acclaimed Artisan Inn. Trinity was wonderfully picturesque with many restored 19th-century buildings, open to the public and all with knowledgeable paid staff. It seemed amazing that these modest communities could manage to staff their heritage buildings as well as restore them.



The shoreline of most villages is lined with fishermen's sheds. As locals were eager to tell us, this is where the men keep the things their wives won't let them take home.

We made several side trips from Trinity. One took us around the Bonavista Peninsula where we made stops in Port Union, where we learned about how the Fishermen's Protective Union helped fishermen overcome the fish merchant's control of fish prices, which left the fishermen constantly in debt; Elliston, where we toured a terrific, recently open sealing museum (Home From the Sea) and viewed puffins up close; Bonavista, where we learned even more about the fishery at Ryan Premises National Historic Site; and Amherst Cove where we



Trinity from 140 m high Gunhill (Ryder's Hill). The houses here are built close together in the traditional Newfoundland way. Most of them have been restored and now belong to outsiders.



The Skerwink trail's steep cliff boasts colourful vegetation and great views.

had a designer pizza lunch at the Bonavista Social Club.

We walked the 5.3 km Skerwink Trail, rated one of the best 35 hikes in North America and Europe by Travel & Leisure magazine. The trail follows a cliff overlooking sea stacks, a sea arch, generally rugged shoreline and icebergs in season. We took the Rugged Beauty boat tour to see the outpost settlements that cannot be reached by road and that now have only a handful of vacation cottages. We followed up with a tour of the set for the TV production Random Passage, a movie set constructed



TV set for show Random Passage

with great historical accuracy to show what life was like for the early Irish immigrants to Newfoundland outposts.

We spent another Trinity day exploring Terra Nova National Park, which we found disappointing. We did one of the recommended trails and discovered some pretty wildflowers, but otherwise it was a low point. Ironically, the vaunted visitors' centre was closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the only days



Many houses had doors to nowhere like this uninhabited one. We were told that traditionally Newfies only built houses with back doors into their kitchens. However, the Canadian building code dictated both front and back doors but said nothing about stairs or decks, so law-abiding but wily Newfies added only the second door. These doors became known as mother-in-law doors. Is this yet another Newfie joke?

we were able to visit it. The high point of this day came at the end when we visited the picturesque town of Salvage and later a beautiful, immense, sandy beach at Sandy Cove.

We drove from Trinity to Twillingate on one of our few rainy days, passing through artist David Blackwood country and stopping to see Wesleyville, which figures in many of Blackwood's prints.

The town of Twillingate was a visual disappointment, although we did find a couple of very pretty walks there. When we arrived, there were icebergs everywhere. We made a valiant attempt to absorb local culture in Twillingate, one night at a deplorable dinner theatre and on the second night, the much more enjoyable Split Peas, a seven-women ensemble.

After two nights in Twillingate, we spent a much more enjoyable two



This fairly ugly building is the current attraction in Joe Batt's Arm on Fogo Island. It's had lots of publicity and is hugely expensive,



Western Brook Pond. One of the highlights of visiting Gros Morne is to walk the 3 km trail to a boat dock and then take a two-hour cruise on this freshwater fjord.

After delightful Fogo Island, our next highlight was distant Gros Morne National Park. To break up the trip, we spent a couple of nights in Coffee Cove near Springdale in an old cottage on the ocean. The area had the feel of cottage country.

In Gros Morne, we walked a different trail every day, took two beautiful boat trips and visited a very small, but very interesting aquarium/marine station in Norris Point.

We spent our last two days in St. Anthony and L'Anse aux Meadows, stopping on the way north to see the National Historic Site of Port au Choix, which traces the aboriginal past in the area. We spent less time than we'd planned on the site as it was too rainy to walk the trails. The main excitement of the day was meeting a magnificent young moose facing us in the middle of the highway. Fortunately, we saw it early enough to stop without panic, and it turned around and loped off the way it had come.



L'Anse aux Meadows. This 80 km² Unesco Heritage Site provides a wonderful tour, reconstructed sod huts based on similar ones discovered in Iceland and 2.4 km of shoreline trail. We found our guide, Clayton, whose face appears on the official park brochure and who grew up and worked in the area all his life, including working on the site with Norwegian archaeologist Anne Stine and her explorer husband Helge Ingstad, provided us with as much information on the social life of Newfoundland as about the settlement itself. That and the walk through the subarctic tundra landscape made the pilgrimage north in our last days worthwhile.

learned a great deal in the process.

The Newfoundland economy may not be rich, but somehow people are finding or creating jobs, especially in the tourism business in the summer. The smallest hamlets have tourist offices with paid, not volunteer

nights on Fogo Island in a B&B run by Nadine Decker, who is very actively involved in the union side of the fishery and provided us with an insightful fisher's view of the industry. Fogo Island has several beautiful shoreline trails and we enjoyed walking most of them.

After delight-



Coffee Cove



Green Gardens, Gros Morne

St. Anthony is an unattractive service centre for the surrounding area. Its main claim to fame is Sir Wilfred Grenfell and the properties and museums relating to his amazing life. Over two days, we spent time exploring the Grenfell Historic Properties and a lot more time at the beautiful site of L'Anse aux Meadows, a Norse settlement for a decade or two around 1000 years ago.

How do you sum up what made a place special for you? The landscapes, the springtime plant life, the seascapes, the quaint outport villages and the unique history of Newfoundland all contributed to our enjoyment. However, the special quality of Newfoundlanders is at the heart of any visit to the island. The easy-going, folksy people we met were open and friendly. We enjoyed our conversations and

staff. Every village has its trails, which are well advertised, and there is no shortage of picnic tables and park benches wherever you happen to be.

Newfoundland villages and towns often have no or little services, but nearby centres offer what is needed at competitive prices. Most tourist centres have at least one decent restaurant or café, which fellow tourists and accommodation people will direct you to. And it is wise to stick to these recommendations, as the quality drops quickly in other places. All in all, we would recommend a visit like ours with only one proviso: be sure to get a good run of weather as we did!

The Travelling Birder

Murray Coates

I have just recently returned home after an interesting and rewarding trip to Chile as my Habitat for Humanity build destination. I was able to do some birding in South America and ended up with 80 species including 55 “lifers”.

The route to Chile can be direct as there are flights right to Santiago from Canada. However, one of my objectives was to go to the Galapagos Islands so my route took me to Peru, Ecuador and then out to the islands. The first stage was a very interesting day-birding trip along the Peruvian coast with a Lima tour company. In some ways, it might be a better birding destination than the Galapagos although I didn’t see as many species.



Humboldt penguins on a mission. Photo by Murray Coates.



On the food lineup. Photo by Murray Coates



Twillingate sunset.

The tour guide took me from Lima to Paracas where we did an off shore cruise to the Ballestas Islands. This famous guano harvesting location is currently reported to house two million sea birds.

My sighting highlights were the Peruvian pelican, Inca tern, Peruvian booby, guanay, and the Humboldt penguin. The tour boats cannot stop on the islands, which hopefully means the birds aren’t disturbed. It is advisable to wear a hat on this tour although the guides claim that guano hits bring good luck.

Our next stop that morning was Paracas National Park where it apparently never rains. I went to several beach habitats where the various carcasses attracted lots of opportunistic Belchers gulls and turkey vultures.

The next day it was off to Ecuador to go to the Galapagos via Guayaquil. Thanks to Airbnb, I was able to find a room in a castle made of lava stone for about \$40 per night. The owners also run a tour company.

The main airport in the Galapagos is on South Seymour Island. From there, you take a bus to the ferry dock, and then a boat short ride to the north side of Santa Cruz Island. It is about 45 minutes by bus from there to Puerto Ayora, which is the largest settlement in the islands. On the way from the airport, we saw lava gulls, brown pelicans, and a few cattle egrets.

During the next three days, I cheerfully toured some

other islands including one long open sea voyage in an enclosed water taxi boat. There were a lot of big waves so this trip is described in some publications as the vomit cruise. It goes to Isabella Island where the bird highlight is the Galapagos penguin plus lots of iguanas. I also saw a lava heron plus a smooth-billed ani, white-cheeked pintail, and some flamingos.

The most spectacular tour was to North Seymour Island on a large yacht. Our first landing was on a nice beach near a nesting sea turtle site and the guide provided quite strict rules on where we could walk. There was a small lagoon behind the beach with flamingos and several black-necked stilts

The shoreline was also fascinating with lots of marine iguanas, and various shorebirds presumably visiting from the far north. I saw several yellow warblers feeding in the shore vegetation plus sanderlings and a semi-palmated plover.

Our next stop provided the highlight of the day, a guided walk through a nesting site for frigate birds and boobys. Wildlife in the Galapagos seems used to humans and people walking on trails near their nests do not alarm the birds.

Magnificent frigatebirds are appropriately named. I saw lots of them plus a few greater frigatebirds and a nesting swallow-tailed gull. Another highlight was the blue-footed booby that stood on a rock right beside the path posing for pictures.

We also were treated to a female frigatebird coming in to a nest and feeding a fledgling within 3 meters of where we were standing.

Outdoor pursuits in this location and along the coast of South America come with lots of warnings about sunburn. While the temperature in October is moderate at about 25°C., the sun is fierce. I was using 60 SPF and still had some sunburns.

After the Galapagos, it was off to Chile for the Habitat build. Organized birding was over but I was able to identify another 15 species, including Andean condors, coscoroba swan, and lots of chimango caracaras.

The Peru birding was organized with Haku Tours of Lima. In the Galapagos, the tour company was arranged through La Fortaleza de Haro. I am happy to be contacted if anyone has questions.



Up close and personal with a marine iguana (thanks to a telephoto lens). Photo by Murray Coates.



Male magnificent frigatebird in full display. Photo by Murray Coates.



Not a hard bird to identify. Photo by Murray Coates.



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