



David Denning photo

# Oystercatcher

Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club  
Newsletter  
Autumn 2019



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*This western tanager made himself at home around our bird feeder this summer but has departed now. Photo by Gary Adams.*

## President's Point of View

**Sue Lehmann**

As the days cool and leaves start falling, the Salt Spring Island Trail and Nature Club readies itself for another season of club activities. Tuesday outings begin September 10th with the Blackberry Festival in Ruckle Park. Car pool from ArtSpring at 10:00 a.m. or meet at the group camp parking lot at 10:20 a.m. for a short stroll along the shoreline. At noon, meet in the Group Campground with your lunch and a favourite blackberry goodie to share. Don't forget a bowl and a spoon.

As most of you know, our Tuesday outings are broken into three levels. "Hikes" are jointly coordinated by Susan Fussell and Jan McIntyre. "Walks" are shepherded by Betty Ann Kruger with help from Andrea Rankin and, recently, Brian Adderly has volunteered to organize the "Rambles". The hardest part of this activity is convincing those who are participating to take a turn at leading every so often. Everyone should have a couple of favourite routes in their repertoire when called upon to lead.

If you are looking for route ideas, you should really consider going through our website. Tucked into the upper corner of the Events page is a button that leads you to the [Calendar Archive](#). It is an excellent source of information on past trips that can serve to inspire you. While you are at it, check out the [Links and Maps](#) page where you will find links to descriptions and trail maps for the Salt Spring Conservancy properties and the CRD, SSI PARC and Provincial Parks on Salt Spring.

This newsletter is published by the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club, PO Box 203, Ganges PO, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2V9. Editor: Gary Adams ([gafrad@shaw.ca](mailto:gafrad@shaw.ca))  
For information on the Board of Directors and weekly outings, please see our website: [www.saltspringtnc.ca](http://www.saltspringtnc.ca)

## Calendar of Events

### **Tuesday September 10, 2019 Blackberry Festival**

The hiking season begins at Ruckle Park. Meet at noon in the Group Campground. Bring your lunch and a favourite blackberry goodie to share. Don't forget a bowl and a spoon. There will be a short walk in Ruckle Park before lunch.

### **Tuesday October 8, 2019 Trail Day**

Hikers and Walkers - It's time to finish the new KDOL Trail at the Buddhist Retreat. Bring tools that will work for grubbing out the trail (e.g. hoes, rakes). Meet at ArtSpring at 9:45 or Drummond Park at 10:00 am. You are going to LOVE this trail!

### **Sunday, September 22, 2019 The Bees Knees**

Family program run by the Salt Spring Conservancy at Blackburn Lake Nature Reserve, 265 Blackburn Road from 1-4pm as a drop in children's program on mason bees.

### **Sunday September 29, 2019 Animals of Blackburn Lake**

Family program run by the Salt Spring Conservancy at Blackburn Lake Nature Reserve, 265 Blackburn Road from 1-4pm as a drop in children's program.

Under the wonderful guidance of Sharon Sullivan, SSTNC puts together about a half dozen evening presentations. Some are co-sponsored with other groups. They are usually held on a Thursday evening at the Library but keep an eye on the Oystercatcher to see what is coming. If you know someone who would like to give a presentation on their adventures or a facet of natural history, please contact Sharon. She would appreciate your help.

The Oystercatcher is the club newsletter, edited by Gary Adams who solicits articles from members and turns them into an interesting and informative newsletter for members. After many years at the helm, Gary is "retiring". Unless someone else picks up the pen, this will be the final edition of the Oystercatcher.

Clubs cannot function without the efforts of those who work behind the scenes. The club is urgently seeking members this fall to fill the Membership Coordinator and Website Manager positions. Several other positions will become vacant at the January AGM, including the Treasurer and President. If you are interested in learning more about the positions, ask any Board member or send an e-mail to [info.sstnc@gmail.com](mailto:info.sstnc@gmail.com).

## **Fall Trail Report** *Gary Quiring*

It's been another busy year in the trails department at the SSTNC. In the spring, we established most of the Club's new KDOL trail on Mt. Tuam and we should get this finished on the October 8 trail date that is on the upcoming fall schedule.

The new trails on the South side of Burgoyne Bay completed last year are seeing a good amount of traffic with some good reviews and appreciation of this expanded multi use trail network. SSTNC had a proposal in with BC Parks to add some more trails to bypass the CRD liquid waste road that is out of bounds to hikers ( but has been in use for years)! As well we have proposed a connection to Burgoyne Bay park from Ashya Road through an existing but unused CRD linear Parc.

Sue Lehmann and I participated in the CRD Regional Park, Mill Farm interim Master Plan stakeholder meeting representing SSTNC. So far, the draft interim plan includes most of the trail network Salt Springer's have enjoyed for decades. A permanent connection to Burgoyne Bay Provincial Park has been proposed as well as other improvements for our

long-neglected park. More on this as the management plan is released.

Enjoy your late summer early fall hiking and I hope to see all of you out again on trail day Oct. 8.

## **A Memorable Day Boat Birding**

*Peter McAllister*

On a magnificent summer day a group of Salt Spring birders, including Diane Fay, Kathleen and Rob, and myself spent an amazing day at sea thanks to a massive bounty of schooling forage fish. As we threaded our way down through Moresby Passage to Sidney Passage next to Sidney Spit, we found ourselves surrounded by a feeding frenzy wherever bait "balls", most likely Pacific sand lance, were spotted. We had chalked up a count of 12,000 rhinoceros auklets in the same area on August 14th. This time, we only tallied about 1600 rhinos joining in on the frenzy with hundreds of glaucous-winged, mew, and California gulls plus the perennial summer



*Common murre. Photo by Peter McAllister.*

treat of the handsome blood red billed Herrman's gulls. They are on their annual summer vacation in the Salish Sea after nesting in the Sea of Cortes and the west side of Baja California. Pelagic and Brandt's cormorants, pigeon guillemots, marbled murrelets and common murrelets raced from one bait "ball" to the next trying to get their share of the catch.

Before heading around the south end of Sidney Island and then on past Mandarte Island where our biggest surprise awaited us, we docked under the purple martin nesting boxes at Sidney Spit and marched out to the expansive tidal flats to discover of all things a great egret, a very unusual post breeding summer visitor from down south. The fall migration of shore birds did not disappoint us. In a flock of "peeps," stopping by to fuel up on their way down from the Arctic to southern latitudes we counted least sandpipers, a few western sandpipers and mostly semipalmated sandpipers which, although the most common shorebird in migration in North America, are not abundant here. The ones that choose to come down from the Arctic along the Pacific Coast apparently veer inland to join the major concentration of "semis" that fly from the Arctic breeding grounds to the East Coast before heading as far as South America. We learned a flock of Baird's sandpipers had been recorded that morning but our telescope failed to pick them up.

Action packed birding really got going again at the Sallas Rocks between D'Arcy Island and Sidney Island where we started running into dozens of pairs of tiny marbled murrelets still sporting their rich brown summer plumage. We ended up with a high count of 58 pairs. Even in winter they are always paired up. This is also considered an unusually high count for post-breeding murrelets, at least in this area. Their status is listed as "threatened" because of the massive liquidation of our coastal, old growth forests where they nest on mossy limbs high up in the canopy.

All the way to Moresby Island on our way back to Ganges Harbour the sea bird feeding frenzy never let up. We were surrounded by an orgy of Common Murres in unforgettable numbers. In our excitement to join in on the action we raced about chasing swarm after swarm of gulls, the first to spot the bait "balls". We came up with a grand total of 920. For us a record count of these handsome auks. On the way

### **Saltspring Trail and Nature Club Help Wanted**

#### **Membership Director**

Duties of the Membership Director are:

- to maintain the membership register and (report changes to BC Nature)
- report changes to directors at executive meetings
- provide current lists/updates to executive members.
- print end of year (Aug 31) and end of calendar year member lists for archival purposes.
- to manage and maintain the email distribution lists (SSTNC, EXEC-SSTNC and other ad hoc Google Groups)

To apply, or for more information, contact:

Barry Spence 250 537-2332 or  
[sspence@telus.net](mailto:sspence@telus.net)

north we circled one of the Salish Seas most significant breeding colonies, Mandarte Island where thousands of nesting cormorants and gulls crowd on to the sheer white washed, sandstone cliff. Many pairs were still on duty at their nests tending fledglings. We declined to make a count. We would have been there all day and missed the most memorable finale to our birding trip, the common murre.

## Walking Above the Tree Line

*Charles Kahn (A Photo Essay)*



Our visit to Mistaya Lodge, above Golden, B.C., began with a Bell 407 helicopter. This machine takes seven passengers including the pilot. We were each allowed to bring 30 pounds of luggage.



Our route followed the Blaeberry River Valley to Mistaya Lodge.

Beautifully shaped rock faces, enhanced by the morning fog and clouds, that initially delayed our flight, lined the flight path.



## Hello Ramblers, Walkers and Hikers!

Fall is in the air, the hiking, walking and rambling season is about to begin, and it's time to renew your membership in the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club. Please complete and sign the 2019-2020 Membership Registration form

AND

2019-2020 Assumption of Risk form and return BOTH with your membership fee to the Membership Secretary before the due date, September 30.

Membership fees are \$30.00 per person, and cover the period September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020.

For members renewing a current (2018-2019) membership on or before the Due date, SEPTEMBER 30, 2019, fees are discounted to \$25.00.

Cheques are preferred. Your fees, accompanied by both completed forms, may be placed in the Membership envelope in the club box at the Visitor Information Centre in Ganges, or mailed to the Membership Secretary at the address printed on the Membership registration form.

Printed forms may be picked up from the blue envelope in the Club Box at the Visitor Information Centre, or you may download and print forms from the Club website, <http://www.saltspringtnc.ca>

Remember to complete and sign BOTH forms.

Happy Trails!

Barry Spence  
Membership Secretary  
Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club



The lodge looked down over a lake and faced the beautiful mountains beyond.

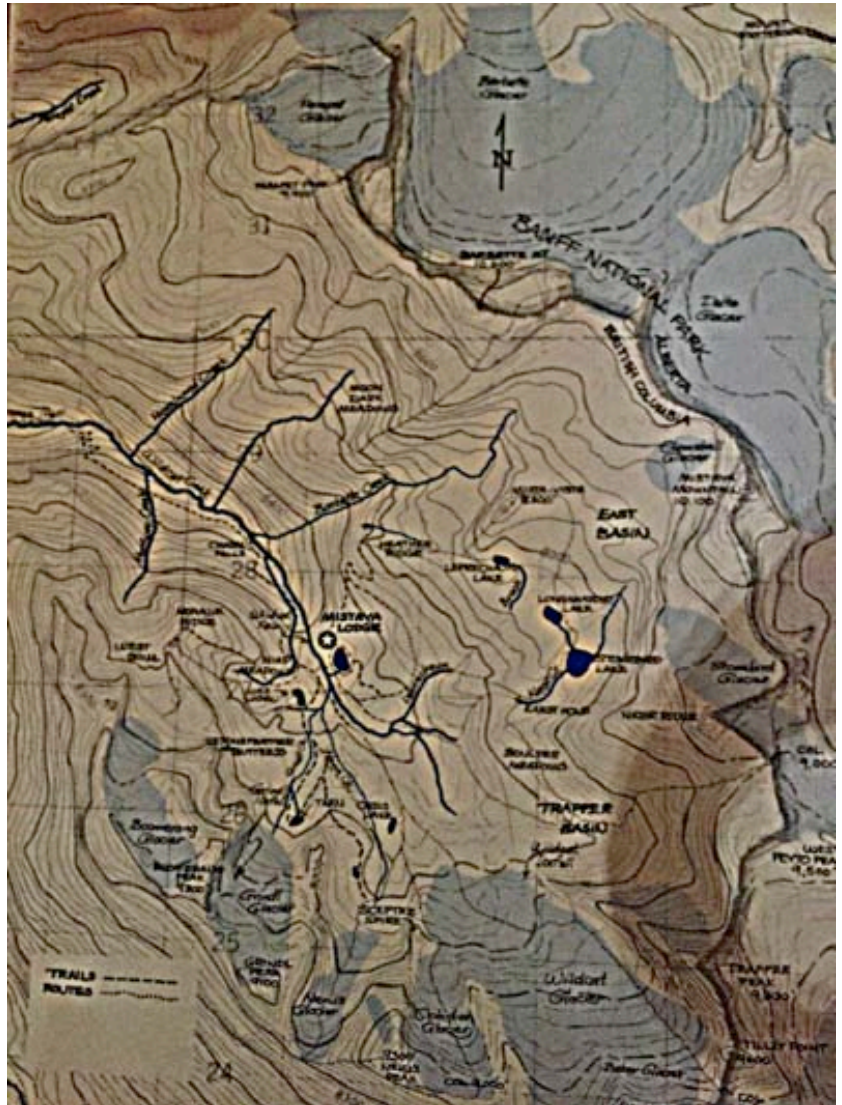
We left on our first walk around 14:30 as we'd arrived late because fog delayed the helicopter. This walk was to Mohawk Ridge, east of the lodge. First, we crossed a narrow suspension bridge over a creek. From there we climbed over rocky terrain to a ridge and then descended back down through gardens of wildflowers. The walk was about 5 km and we didn't return until around 18:30. The weather was overcast, dry, and sometimes sunny.



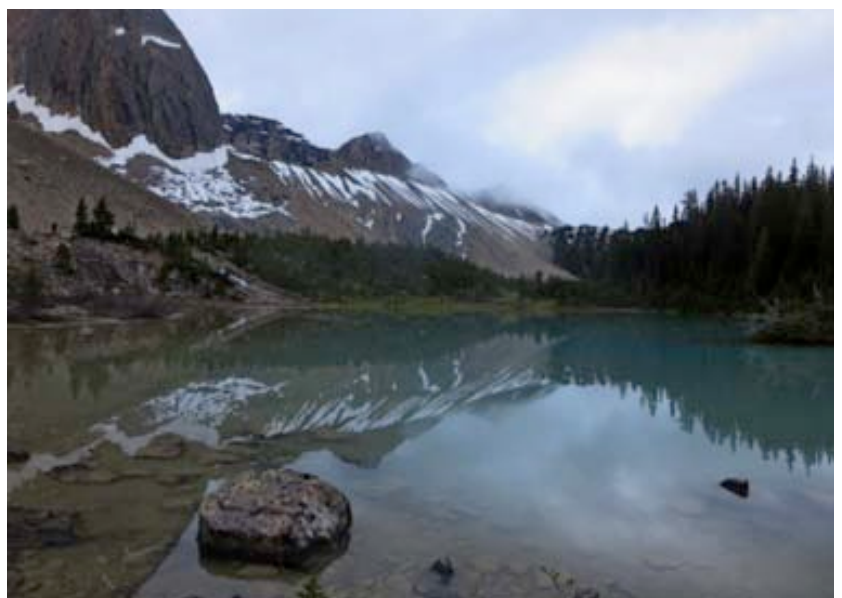
Joanne and Ethan were my companions on my three days of hiking at Mistaya. They were from Los Angeles and have done many hiking trips like this one.



The dominant flower was the glacier lily. These were interspersed with western anemones.



The hiking trails. The lodge is indicated by a star near the centre of the map.



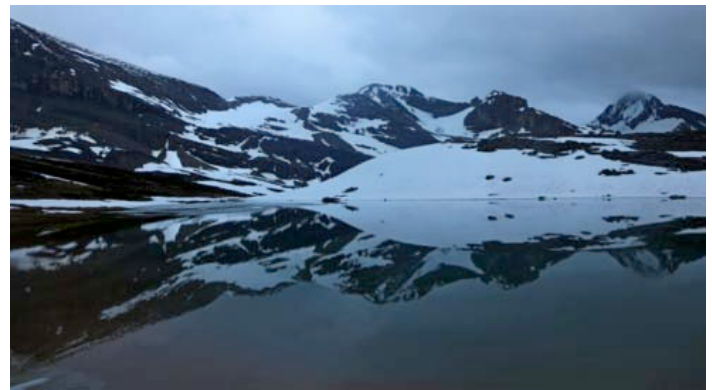
Wee Loch. The glacial lakes always reflect the surrounding mountains beautifully.



Our second day was somewhat miserable with one very heavy rainfall that left us fairly wet. Unfortunately, this was the day we chose to do the premier hike up to a karst hole and three lakes. Karst is a landscape formed by the dissolution of rocks like limestone.



Stonebird Lake (right) was the first of the three lakes. Longshadow Lake was the second lake.



Leprechaun Lake. It was hard to believe that both of these photos are of the same lake. Perhaps the magical changes in the lake's appearance help to explain how it got its name!



Rainy days sometimes have silver linings. This double rainbow appeared as the rain ended.



Helper Brendan and chef Val McLeod serve dinner in the lodge kitchen to Joanne and Ethan. Dinners were delicious.



Our third day took us to Heather Ridge and Moon Dark Meadows. This involved some hiking on rocky surfaces, crossing many streams, and walking on flower-carpeted meadows. Everything looked sharper and prettier on this warm, sunny day. Here we are descending to the creeks. The flat rocks were perfect places to stop for snacks and lunch.



Wildcat Falls from a distance. We later crossed boisterous Wildcat Creek.



Trail marker.



Flora and fauna.



Moss campion. Sandra said this flower had a distinctive smell, and this Japanese woman agreed.

# Spring Azures

*Mary Oliver*

In spring the blue azures bow down  
at the edges of shallow puddles  
to drink the black rain water.  
Then they rise and float away into the fields.

Sometimes the great bones of my life feel so heavy,  
and all the tricks my body knows -  
the opposable thumbs, the kneecaps,  
and the mind clicking and clicking

don't seem enough to carry me through this world  
and I think how I would like  
to have wings,  
blue ones -  
ribbons of flame.

How I would like to open them, and rise  
from the black rain water.

And then I think of Blake, in the dirt and sweat of London - a boy  
staring through the window, when God came  
fluttering up.

Of course, he screamed,  
seeing the bobbin of God's blue body  
leaning on the sill,  
and the thousand-faceted eyes.

Well, who knows?  
Who knows what hung, fluttering, at the window  
between him and the darkness.

Anyway, Blake the hosier's son stood up  
and turned away from the sooty sill and the dark city -  
turned away forever,  
from the factories, the personal strivings,

to a life of the imagination.



## Do We Need a Newsletter?

*Gary Adams*

Most of us remember a time when a society's newsletter was also its lifeblood. It kept us informed of business, upcoming events, important issues and was the product of the group's member expertise. That is pretty much passed us by with emails, messages, Twitter, Youtube, and internet sites with more expertise than we can possibly digest. So why bother with a newsletter at all?

As this club's newsletter editor for almost a decade, I can tell you that most executive members have seen, and continue to see it as a "nice to have". At its best, it is an informative record of the club's current interests and accomplishments. It is not a vital organ, more like a tonsil or appendix. No business is conducted through it and the Calendar of Events is more a long-term planner than a reminder of upcoming interests.

I can also tell you that the future of the club is likely in its web page. This facility is vastly under used and open to incredible new opportunities. The events calendar is already well used but who bothers to access back issues of the Newsletter or use its quite robust and helpful set of links. It could be the world's "go to" site for all things related to hiking on Saltspring Island. This activity is probably the Island's primary activity after the market on Saturdays.

Anyway, back to my story. It is my contention that the newsletter still retains a vital role. It is a role of accountability. As in most such organizations, the membership entrusts its executive to conduct its business and organize its activities. We have been blessed by a series of executive groups that have done good to great work on our behalf but the membership knows very little about it. At the annual general meeting, people rise to the surface to congratulate or complain about some specific expenditure but they have very little additional contact with the executive although the SSTNC plays a critical part in several activities of interest to the public at large. For instance, we have been instrumental in fund raising for conservation, conducting citizen science, and re-sourcing specific conservation or trail development projects.

As a newsletter editor, I have spent considerable effort attempting to ensure that executive members and project leaders report on their activities to let the members know what is happening, how their money is being spent, and what the current issues are. It is not an easy job because most officers consider their volunteer effort to do the work as the important part. Writing up something as well is not what they signed up for. However, I maintain that we all owe it to the membership to keep them informed of their club's activities.

If you look back through past issues of the Oystercatcher, you will see that previous editors have had their own interests to advocate and their own editorial styles but, to a greater or lesser degree, this need for accountability has been a constant. As my tenure comes to an end, there is a good chance that the newsletter will as well. I think that would be unfortunate.

There are other ways that we could keep the functions of the newsletter alive. The web page could be enhanced and charged with new duties but the club also has trouble filling the webmaster position. We could make a bylaw that each executive meeting be followed by a distribution of information arising from the meeting but try to recruit a secretary or president with the addition of that task. We could also just let it go. I grew up as an activist who wants to be knowledgeable in those things that affect me but I think I am in a shrinking minority on this. I do hope that someone will take up the challenge of keeping SSTNC members informed and involved in their organization.