

Oystercatcher

Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club Newsletter Winter 2017



Pectoral sandpipers at the Annual General Meeting of BC Nature. Photo by Claire Christensen. See what happened in the article in this issue.

Index

President's Point of View Calendar of Events Crown Land Protection

A Bird	Migration	Showcase

- 4
- B.C. Nature's Fall General Meeting and Conference 1
- 2 My Return to Gros Morne N.P. 6
 - Salt Spring Island Tour des Isles Walk 11

President's Point of View Sue Lehmann

What a change in weather! We went from beautiful sunny days with brilliant fall colours to winter. including a cold blast of snow, in a few short days. Now we're into our usual rainy season. Sadly, this often means that Tuesday outings are cancelled. However, I hope you are able to get outside during breaks in the weather and enjoy some natural light.

The Christmas Luncheon is coming up quickly. Reserve December 12 for a get together with friends and a taco buffet. We hope that everyone will be able to attend.

In January, it is our AGM, at which time we'll elect a new Executive. I'd like to encourage as many as possible to take a turn at being on the Executive. Our organization is involved in many different activities, and being on the Exec is the best way to learn about the club. Terms are one year, so all positions are open to interested members. The club needs your participation to remain active and exciting! If interested, send a note to Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club, PO Box 203, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2V9 or click on the Board of Directors email address below.

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) For information on the Board of Directors and weekly outings, please see our website: www.saltspringtnc.ca or email us at: info.sstnc@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

December 8-10 2017 Art Opening and Exhibit

Art Spring's Art Enrichment Program, Exploring Nature's Beauty through the Art Work of Robert Bateman. Students age 6 to 12 have been studying Robert Bateman's sketching and painting styles, his focus on nature and use of models for their own paintings and sculptures. Please join us in celebrating the youth of ArtSpring Dec. 8 – 10, 2017 for an exciting gallery exhibit held in the Bateman Gallery located at ArtSpring. OPENING with Robert Bateman in attendance is December 8th 1:30 to 3:30. Students will also be present.

Tuesday December 12, 2017

Get together for a friendly Club gathering at All Saints by-the-Sea Anglican Church in Ganges (110 Park Drive at Lower Ganges Road) 11-1:30. Tickets are available from SS Soapworks (next to the Library) until Dec. 8th for only \$20. Catering is by El Loco Taco offering a Do-It-Yourself Taco Bar or you can put your lunch on a plate if you prefer. Cash bar (beer & wine).

Sunday, December 17th Christmas Bird Count

Each year just over a hundred Salt Springers tramp the byways and shorelines of our Island to count birds. Every year we have fun, every year we meet new friends. Email Tim Marchant if you are interested in helping with the count and have not contacted a local coordinator.

Thursday February 1, 2018

7-9pm at the SSI Library. Speaker Janie Wray from the Orca/Cetacean Research Lab in the Great Bear Rainforest in Hartley Bay/whale Channel Area will talk on monitoring whales in their migrations by sound and tail/fluke markings.

Thursday February 22, 2018

7-9pm at the SSI Library, SSI resident Charles Kahn will speak on his recent adventures and explorations in BC and elsewhere.

Thursday March 22, 2018

7-9pm at the SSI Library, Liz Bicknell - Current President of the Outdoor Club of Victoria(OCV), "Club Hiking Trip to Ireland in 2017"

Thursday April 19,, 2018

7-9pm at the SSI Library. Mary Hoff from Cowichan Bay will speak on "Hiking in Guatamala" and a video on her climbing the Golden Hinde in Strathcona Park.

We are looking for some more suggestions for speakers. If you have any ideas, please contact Sharon at 250-653-0086.

Crown Land Protection Sue Lehmann

An amendment to the Coastal Douglas-fir Land Use Objectives Regulation Order may be of interest to STNC members. The BC government is proposing to place extra environmental protection on Crown lands on Salt Spring, Vancouver Island, Gabriola, and Galiano.

We've all hiked in these areas. The Crown Land trails on Mount Bruce connect with the trails in the Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve. The trails in the Ford Lake Crown land connect with trails in Bryant Hill Park and Andreas Vogt Nature Reserve. Hikers on Mount Tuam enjoy views across the Garry Oak meadows and through a second growth arbutus forest.

The website includes a detailed map and supporting documents of the proposed parcels, including the proposed areas on Salt Spring Island (Schedules 9 to 11). The Q&A includes some new restrictions on activities in the protected areas (www.for.gov.bc.ca/TASB/SLRP/southisland/CDFAmendment.html).

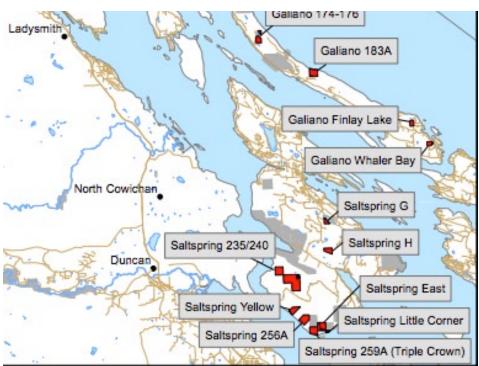
The proposed changes seem to have been devised without local government or current user group consultation. We all want land protected from development, but public access is also important. Well-designed trails with signage permits the public to experience the lands in an environmentally sensitive manner. Otherwise, users will create their own trail network; they are not going to stop using the land.

It is unclear in the materials provided what the impact of the proposed changes will be on projects to manage trails on these Crown Lands through partnerships by government and local groups, including the Salt Spring Trail & Nature Club.

One of the projects the SSTNC has initiated is to expand the network of signed trails from BC Parks to Crown Land. In recent years, the club has been improv-

ing and signing the trails within BC Parks. This project is almost complete and we're looking to expand the network into Crown Lands. The first area proposed for signage is Mount Tuam. These trails would link to another trail project, a partnership with the KUNZANG DECHEN OSEL LING (the Buddhist Monastery). Through signage, hikers will be led to established trails rather than finding their own routes across the Garry Oak meadows.

Partnering with government is a complex process, requiring approvals at many levels. It can take years to obtain all approvals on signage design and trail routes, including moving trails to protect sensitive areas. The new legislation may complicate the process further.



Extraction from map of lands affected by Coastal Douglas-fir Land Use Objectives Regulation Order.

The Club is considering submitting comments and requesting clarification that public access and partnerships to manage these public lands will continue under the changed legislation. If there are points you would like made, please send an email to the SSTNC email address info.sstnc@gmail.com

If you would like to provide your personal comments, you can send an email to CDFOrderAmendment2017@gov.bc.ca . Written comments can be sent to:

FrontCounter BC,

Suite 142, 2080 Labieux Road,

Nanaimo, BC V9T 6J9,

The deadline for comments is January 15, 2018

A Bird Migration Showcase

Heather Neville

Several years ago, John and I had the pleasure of spending a couple of weeks recording bird song on Pelee Island, Ontario, located on the edge of Lake Erie, about 4 degrees latitude further south than Salt Spring. Pelee Island is slightly smaller than us and known for its excellent wines. The small population has a very active naturalist group and a Bird Banding Station and online Newsletter (http://pibo.ca/en/).

The idea of creating a bird banding station on Salt Spring Island may be something our birders should think about. We had an excellent presentation by Daniel Dannecke from the Rocky Point Bird Observatory in Victoria recently The Pont Pelee group might also be able to help us learn about banding stations.

The following eastern Migration summary for Oct 15-31st 2017 [published with permission] was extracted from their newsletter. Note the Ruby-crowned Kinglets migrate through here in spring and fall.

"MIGRATION SUMMARY OCTOBER 15TH-31ST 2017. (Sachiko Schott).

The second fortnight of October began with a morning of north winds, during which PIBO banded 121 birds. Most of them were the ubiquitous Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Golden-crowned Kinglets, but Hermit Thrushes and Myrtle Warblers also continued to be common. By the following day the wind had shifted to the southwest and the morning was quiet: only fifteen birds of five species were banded. October



Double rainbow at Fish Point, Pelee Island. Photo by P. Kramer

18th was distinguished by strong south winds and even fewer species of birds, though large flocks of American Robins began to appear on census and in the netting area. Subsequent days were also quiet, with a few small groups of kinglets captured here and there each morning. Large flocks of blackbird species, including Red-winged Blackbirds, European Starlings,

and Common Grackles, were seen frequently flying high overhead. Woodpecker species were also a constant in the netting area, with Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-shafted Flickers, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers all being seen on most days.

Sharp-shinned Hawks were active in the netting area on October 19th. A plucked kinglet carcass was discovered in one of the mist nets, where it had probably been dropped by a hawk who subsequently bounced out of the net. A second Sharp-shinned Hawk was not so lucky – it hit the mist net while carrying a Hermit Thrush, could not get out, and was banded at the station. The Hermit Thrush it had captured was still alive when it was found and was released unbanded (it had already experienced enough excitement for one morning!). Later, another Sharp-shinned Hawk flew past the banding station very low, and appeared to be carrying its latest meal with it. Overall, the hawks appeared to be having more luck capturing birds than PIBO – only three songbirds were banded that morning!

As the end of October generally marks the end of songbird migration, it did not come as a surprise that fewer species of birds were being observed. The daily total of birds seen on census and in the netting area was generally around 20 to 35 species, a decrease from the forty to fifty species seen in the first half of the month. Nevertheless, the season still held a few surprises. The morning of October 26th began quietly, but by 10:30 a.m. bird activity had reached a crescendo at the banding station. Golden-crowned Kinglets, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-throated Sparrows were captured in abundance, with 161 birds of 18 species banded in total. The total number of species seen that morning reached 64 (as opposed to 34 the day before). It was also the day when we observed the highest diversity of sparrow species. As seed-eaters, sparrows are some of the last birds to migrate, and October 26th was the first day when Field Sparrows and Fox Sparrows were seen by PIBO this fall. Nine sparrow species were observed in total, including Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Slate-coloured Junco. Eleven Song Sparrows were banded, which is one of the highest numbers of this species that PIBO has ever banded in a single day. A Marsh Wren was also captured, and was the first one seen or heard this fall.

The temperature dropped noticeably on October 28th and from then on high winds, grey skies, and the occasional rain squall made it feel considerably more like fall. 78 birds were banded on October 29th, 56 of which were Golden-crowned Kinglets. Three already-banded kinglets were recaptured, all of whom had been banded on October 26th and had evidently decided to stay on the island for a few days. The last few days in October were uneventful, and the nets were frequently closed early due to rain and strong winds. No birds at all were captured on October 31st – a quiet end to the month."

BC Nature's Fall General Meeting and Conference *Kathleen Maser*

With 6 other Salt Spring residents, I attended BC Nature's Fall General meeting and Conference in Vernon, entitled 'Lakes, Grasslands and Forests' and hosted by the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club. On the Thursday preceding the opening of the Conference, President Alan Burger met with the directors from about 40 clubs. He led us through the agenda of the next day's General meeting. There was some pretty serious stuff mixed in with just the right amount of light hearted humour and laughter. It felt good to be there.



Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park hike. Photo by Claire Christensen

Growing up in Kelowna in the sixties, then a sweet little town of 20 000, did not prepare me for the beauty and allure of Vernon today, a town that was our rival to us teens back then. This is a city and region that is experiencing unprecedented growth and development, and is walking that tightrope between huge population growth and maintaining respect for its beautiful natural surroundings. The exquisite, soft roll-

ing hillsides, sparsely treed, present breathtaking vistas in all directions. Taking advantage of some of a great variety of walks offered, we enjoyed the marvelous Ponderosa pines and the striking yellow blooms of the rabbitbush, which amazingly chooses to flower in the fall!

We had exciting early morning birding on the commonage, the shores of Okanagan Lake and in the fields near Swan Lake. Here the early dawn light triggered the northern harriers to lift up and fly closely hugging the contours of the land in search of voles and other small mammals. We watched these intent listeners with awe. Known for their exceptional hearing, they circled the grassland, wheeling and dropping suddenly upon their prey. Flocks of geese and other water fowl were flying in and out to the lake while the focus of the experienced birders with scopes, was to hone in on pectoral sandpipers, feeding near the water's edge. Not much luck there but eventually as we meandered homewards to the parking lot the said sandpipers suddenly popped up right in front of us! Much hushed excitement as the photographers scrambled to unearth their cameras. Great shots, as you can see!

Other birding groups were seeing flocks of horned larks alighting for a short break on their migration south. At Birdie Lake, a small wetland



Horned lark. Photo by Claude Rioux

at Predator Ridge golf course, we spotted a Virginia rail flitting in and out of the rushes. Wow!

The Kalamalka Forestry Centre was a fascinating tour. Dr. Greg O'Neill informed us that the changes

in forests due to climate change have been dramatic. The pine beetle for one, and of course this past summers deadly fires, automatically come to mind. On the tour he addressed questions such as: How are climate change impacts estimated? How certain are these predictions? What does genetics have to do with these changes? Where should we get tree seed for planting in future climates? Can diversifying our forests protect them against climate change?

Another important speaker was Ken Mather. He addressed the impact of ranching on our grasslands. Less than 10% of historic grasslands globally remain in their natural state. Depending upon this habitat the north Okanagan region has suffered many ecological losses already – including the burrowing owl, sharp-tailed grouse, and white-tailed jackrabbit, all of which are now locally extinct. Using an historical approach he discussed the impacts of over-gazing starting in the 1870's and then moved forward to today's efforts of proper range management, stewardship of the grasslands and the future of this delicate ecosystem.

BC Nature Grants

On the Saturday of the conference we were addressed by Brian Spring-inotic, the CEO of BC Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF). This foundation invites grant applications from anyone who has a good idea that benefits fish, wildlife and habitat in British Columbia. This is an organization funded by conservation surcharges – from angling, hunting, trapping and guide outfitting licenses. In the past they have provided \$7 M in grants. As a result, there is a lot of money available.

There are different types of grants:

1) Habitat Acquisition Grants for purchasing land.

- 2) PCAF, Public Conservation Assistance Fund grants provide small grants to organizations and individuals who have a conservation project in mind but need financial help to make it happen. These are on-theground conservation work, with a particular focus on hands-on, community-based, and public awareness initiatives.
- 3) Go grants, of \$500 \$1000 for K-12 school projects.

Details of all these grants, and how to procure them, including deadlines for submission is on the HCTF website. Their toll free phone number is: 1 800 387-9853

BC Nature's President, Alan Burger, wants all BC members of Nature Clubs to be aware of the PCAF grants in particular. These are not difficult to apply for, and once obtained there is not a lot of reporting required.



Cosens Bay – Kalamalka Lake Provincial Park . Photo by Claire Christensen.

Of local interest, Alan Burger recently sat down with Parks Canada to negotiate the acquisition of Owl Island. They now have the backing of the Hon. Catherine McKenna in Ottawa thanks to a push by Elizabeth May and the CEO of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, John Lounds, all with the urging of our own, Peter McAllister.

The spring AGM, for BC Nature will be held in Vancouver at UBC in May, 2018. Considerable thought is being given to reducing the costs of both the conference and the foot print of attendees. Accommodation will be in one of the residences and many events and outings will be on site, or, if further afield will involve car pooling.

I heartily recommend attending this conference! Following the final evening's banquet the parting discussion promised new discoveries. 'We're heading north.' 'We're taking Highway 5A!' 'How's the Douglas

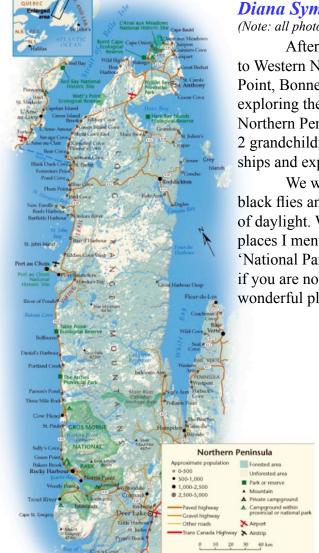
Ranch road?' 'I'm stopping at the Reifel refuge.' And so we fanned out, many of us on the off-roads, in search of new natural wonders.

My Return to Gros Morne N.P. Diana Symons

(Note: all photos are taken by the expedition members.)

After 38 years, my daughter and I made a one week trip back to Western Newfoundland where we had lived in the Village of Woody Point, Bonne Bay, for 2 1/2 years. We had spent many happy days exploring the surrounding Gros Morne National Park and the Great Northern Peninsula while I worked as the Public Health nurse. We took 2 grandchildren with us and had a wonderful time renewing old friendships and exploring our favourite trails and hikes.

We were early enough in the season to miss the onslaught of black flies and visitors - most of the time - and we enjoyed long hours of daylight. We packed umbrellas but never unpacked them! All the places I mention are beautifully illustrated on the Internet. Just look up 'National Parks Canada, Newfoundland' and give yourself a virtual tour if you are not fortunate enough to get there yourself. It is a unique and wonderful place to visit.





Looking across Bonne Bay to Norris Point with Gros Morne in the background. Most things were the same, even better, as there is more prosperity.



Store front along Woody Point waterfront. The villagers take pride in restoring old buildings and extending warm hospitality to tourists.



Our favourite hike was to the Green Gardens. The 4.5 km trail starts off across barren land then passes through some woods.



The trail finally emerges on some beautiful meadows where I was delighted to find wild blue iris in bloom. We had our picnic lunch far below the cliffs on the beaches where the Park has recently built a series of wooden steps.



The valley located between Woody Point and Trout River is locally know as The Gulch and is barren of trees and shrubs. This is because the earth's mantle has been pushed up through the earth's crust by tectonic activity and does not contain the minerals necessary to support vegetation. The valley is surrounded by high hills with flat tops called The Table Lands and there are Park interpreters who give a fascinating talk about the geology of the area.



The pitcher plant, Newfoundland's provincial flower, can grow here because it traps and dissolves insects in its cup-like leaves to provide nutrition.



As our visit coincided with the very last day of the lobster fishery on June 29, we were advised that we could enjoy a lobster dinner at the Sea Side restaurant in Trout River. So we drove through The Gulch and arrived at another small village located on the beach where there is a lovely long board walk along the bay.



The next day was 18 degrees but foggy as we drove 'down' the coast to St. Anthony. We stopped at The Arches, the amazing rock sculptures carved by the sea. The beach has wonderful, multicoloured stones. It was well worth a stop to break the long drive and stretch our legs.



Besides a wonderful dinner at a table with ocean views we strolled along the main road where Mr. Crocker's chickens ran free range and Mrs. Barnes sold her hand knit socks strung out along a line.

On Canada Day we joined the locals in their celebration by enjoying cake and pop to the tunes of an energetic band. I am not sure if the present generation still sing Ode to Newfoundland or know much about the controversy when Joey Smallwood manoeuvred the Newfoundlanders to join Canada in 1949.

On July 2 it was time to head 'down north' along the coast of the Great Northern Peninsula. It has been referred to as 'down north' because in the days of the merchant sailing ships coming from the south it was downwind with the prevailing south winds.



As soon as we rounded the tip of the peninsula and headed to St. Anthony, the sky cleared and we were in gloriously warm, 22 degrees sunshine. We rushed to our cabin at St. Anthony's Bight then just made it to the 5:15 boat tour to see humpback whales and icebergs. We saw both. I was on the top deck and although the sea was calm there was a great swell that came in from the Atlantic and I had to hang on for dear life as the horizon swung high overhead then plummeted down out of sight. Letting go to take a picture wasn't much of an option but Heidi got some good iceberg shots.



The well-advertised attraction on the West Coast is Western Brook Pond. Originally an inlet, it was cut off from the sea and is now a remarkable, long, freshwater fjord with high cliffs on either side. It is approached by a 3 km board walk over the bogs and there is now a cabin where you can buy hot drinks and snacks and a ticket to board a cruiser which will take you down the 'pond'. It was late afternoon when we got there, the place was practically deserted and we could see heavy clouds and rain shrouding the cliffs so we turned back and took our time enjoying the boardwalk and bog all to ourselves. There are excellent photos and videos of this area if you wish to see what we didn't. Incidentally, the areas of inland water all along the west coast which we would call lakes are called ponds because the first people from the U. K. who landed there were from a part of England which only had ponds, no lakes.

It is roughly 365 km from Gros Morne to the top of the peninsula so we spent the first night at Cow Head and booked into our cabin at Shallow Bay. We thoroughly enjoyed the motel's dinner theatre of a quite humorous enactment of the true story of the S.S. Effie which was purposely beached during a terrific storm. The ship was lost but all hands were saved.



July 4 started with 8 degree fine rain but it didn't matter because it was an indoor morning for a tour of a museum and Sir Wilfred Grenfell's mansion. We were allowed to roam around and look at everything in the house which had been left as it was in his day - except the heating system. I found St. Anthony very changed from when I was there 40 years ago. A great modern hospital and large residences and conveniences now serve Labrador and Western Newfoundland.

With the hours quickly passing, we drove to L'Anse aux Meadows, the National Historic site and UNESCO World Heritage site since 1978. This is where the Norsemen first settled and one can view the unexcavated mounds that led to the discovery. Now the Government has recreated a mock-up village with sod houses and guides dressed as Norsemen. Another recreated village, Norstead (shown here), was made by the local people. It has sod houses, tiny vegetable gardens and volunteers in costume making flat bread over indoor pit fires or doing a strange type of knitting with one needle.



We reluctantly headed south at 4:15 in bright sun and 18 degrees. We took time to explore a tiny cove called 'Dark Tickle' where we discovered a trail up a hill that led to a magnificent view of the surrounding bays and icebergs.

We drove down the coast in brilliant sunshine and could clearly see the coast of Labrador in the distance with fish boats trolling the straits for Capelin. Now and then there would be a tiny settlement with a few scattered houses. Our B. and B. 'Entente Cordiale' is in an isolated area near Portland and if you phone ahead you can book dinner. This was wonderful when we arrived at 7:40 p.m. very hungry and a little late. This didn't seem to be a problem as we were served a delicious dinner of Turbot, local vegetables, and wine in an elegant dining room with a window table overlooking the beach and cove. We had the place to ourselves!





After dinner we took a long sunset walk along the sandy beach. A large seal had beached itself several days before. Some local fishermen had put it back in the water but it crawled out again. It didn't seem to be sick and finally it was deemed that it had over-fed on the capelin that had just started running and it needed a time out. Sure enough, the next morning it toddled off and swam away.



A word about the Entente Cordiale B. and B. This historic house, filled with antiques from the Maritimes, is named after the historic document signed between England and France in 1904. Among other agreements it resolved the tension between the two countries allowing the French to continue fishing along the 'French shore' of Newfoundland on a footing of equality with British subjects but could no longer build fishing establishments on land.



On our final day July 5 we left in sunshine and the temperature actually got up to 25 degrees. We stopped at Broom Point where the Parks Branch has retained the original large fish store and a tiny cabin where 2 families fished from April to mid October, 1941 to 1975 then sold it to the Government. Being the only visitors at that moment, the interpreter gave us a detailed account of the fishing industry that started with lobster then followed with herring, capelin, salmon, and cod. The families worked 18 hour days under very harsh conditions.

We had our final picnic lunch on the beach at the site of what once was Stanleyville. We looked across the bay to Kill Devil Mountain which has a typical 'table top'. From there it was a short drive to Deer Lake from where our flight home left the next morning.

Salt Spring Island Tour des Isles Walk

Karen Munro

Editor's Note. Not all the blank spaces are a result of reader disinterest. The following article was sent to me shortly after the Tour des Isles event last June. As it was too late for the June edition, I had every intention of inserting it in September. However, I misfiled it and you can guess what happened. I include it now both for general interest and because the Tour des Isles event is becoming more popular each year and the club is now taking a more active interest. If you want to find

out more about it, check out their web site http://southerngulfis-

lands.com/

The first ever Salt Spring Island Tour des Isles walk on Sunday, 25 June, 2017, was a great success!

Kathleen and Rob stepped in to lead the walk at the last minute. We had five visitors in total: three from Galiano, one from Ontario visiting Galiano and one from the UK visiting Salt Spring. We had a very pleasant walk in Ruckle park. Kathleen was an excellent tour guide, explaining the history of the park and also finding flora and fauna for us to view. Rob pointed out a Barred Owl near Merganser Lake which was a first for some of the group.

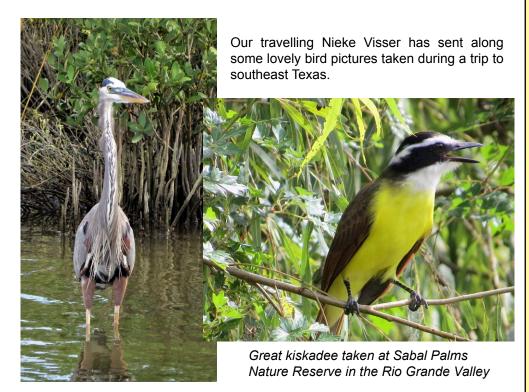
The visitors loved the cool of the forest on such a hot day and enjoyed the wonderful views of the other islands from the various viewpoints along the way. They remarked that it was good to see them from a different perspective.



Kathleen talking to some of the group during a break.

As the visitors were keen to see it, we dropped into Kizmit on the way home and then drove them the

long way back up through the Fulford Valley to show them some more of the island. A good time was had by all. Hopefully we can do it again next year! Thanks Kathleen and Rob!



This tricoloured heron photo was taken on South Padre island, Texas.

HONOUR ROLLS

HONORARY MEMBERS
Bob Ball
Tony Pederson

TRAIL BLAZERS Bob & Betty Ball Owen Benwell Zeke Blazecka Nancy Braithewaite Ian Fraser Ashle Hilliard 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



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