

Nature Nanaimo 2019-2020 President's Report

The past year has been an eventful one for Nature Nanaimo and, by any measure, an unusual one. We began last fall with many wonderful *routine* monthly meetings and outings covering such topics as Birds of Vancouver Island, Killer whales and the Sharks of BC. We ended the calendar year with a wonderful holiday gathering and social. Who could have imagined how soon those type of events would come to an end?



The year 2020 turned every plan on its head. Our January meeting had to be canceled due to a dramatic snow storm. Thanks to Staffan Lindgren's fabulous presentation on pollinators, our February meeting went ahead after an unfortunate unexpected speaker cancelation. And that was just the beginning. The COVID pandemic arrived and all of our meetings and outings were put on hold beginning in mid-March. Our Board took the pandemic very seriously and has continued to heed Provincial health recommendations to safeguard our members.

We were still able to share our love of nature through photo postings and articles of note via the web, email and social media but we missed each other's personal company. Once things settled a little, we were able to start up outdoor events with small groups while maintaining safe protocols. Indeed, the ongoing pandemic has resulted in many people spending more quiet time outdoors away from crowds – so we have had a forced incentive to observe our immediate backyard up close and often! There has also been a run on the sale of bicycles and gardening equipment so that can't be a bad thing.

In small groups we enjoyed working to remove invasive species in Buttertubs, explored a number of intertidal Rambles, toured Gabriola Island and visited Paradise meadows in Strathcona Prov Park. We also had the pleasure of viewing the amazing – though faint, comet NEOWISE. Many of us were also witness to the stunning display of thousands of surf scoters that gathered for over a week near Neck Point last spring. He also had our first "photo contest" and plan to have additional and more varied opportunities in the coming year to encourage members to document and share their observations of nature.

The COVID pandemic also created a mandate to rethink how we meet so we have taken to "Zoom". We had our first such presentation in September on Ethnobotany, followed by fascinating talks in October on Humpback whales and orchids. We will be continuing to use this technology for meetings in the year ahead.

In addition to our meetings and outings, 2020 saw Nature Nanaimo become much more involved in the Buttertubs March Conservation Area. Nature Nanaimo has taken on the role formerly held by "Friends of Buttertubs" and will now act in their stead to promote educational and conservation initiatives within Buttertubs. These will include a wide range of actions such as: the ongoing removal of invasives; updating signage; using the Miner's cottage as a centre for educational/interpretative outreach; and continued liaising with other key Buttertubs partners including the Land Trust of BC and the City of Nanaimo. In taking on this new role, Nature Nanaimo has recently established a number of sub-committees.

On behalf of Nature Nanaimo, Staffan Lindgren created and set up a Harewood Plains project “Flowering plants of Harewood Plains, Nanaimo, BC” on iNaturalist. This provides a wonderful opportunity for our members to take on the role of “citizen scientists” and contribute to the documentation of species in an important local ecosystem – one that is also in need of protection. This project’s current tally is 348 observations representing 134 species! But there remains lots more to discover- for example, orchid expert Jasmine Janes has suggested there may be 16 species of orchid in the area and we only have 5 recorded in the project so far.

Nature Nanaimo also continues to play an active, and increasing, role within the larger community of naturalist clubs in our province. This is entirely thanks to the tireless efforts of our Executive Secretary Michael Stebbins who has acted as the club’s representative. Please read his executive secretary report!

As was anticipated to happen during a pandemic, our membership has declined a little from the same time last year but we continue to attract new members, receive “renewals”. Most importantly, we have continued to remain an active vibrant organization through this unusual time.

At the end of the membership year (September 1, 2019-August 31, 2020), there were:

- 156 members consisting of 99 *memberships* (47 family, 52 single)

Of the 156 members, 57 were new this past year. The remaining 99 members renewed their memberships from the previous year.

As of November 10, 2020, there are currently:

- 96 active members consisting of 61 active *memberships* (31 family, 30 individual). These include both new and renewed memberships since September 1, 2020

So while the year has certainly been tumultuous and unpredictable I feel our club has had a very successful year and making the most of these unusual times. As always, a significant challenge for any organization is to maintain and enhance member participation in ALL endeavours and roles. A volunteer organization is only as strong and successful as the commitment and energy of its members. This becomes ever more challenging during a pandemic when we have far fewer opportunities to meet face to face. I would therefore ask that all our members continue to enjoy everything Nature Nanaimo has to offer and consider participating at the Board level, with the Buttertubs initiative, or organizing and leading “Rambles” and other outings.

I wish all our members well going into the next, still unpredictable, year ahead. I hope you have ample opportunity to continue enjoying the natural beauty of our surroundings – if you have to be anywhere during a pandemic, Vancouver Island is certainly one of the better places to be.

Lastly, I big thank you to our entire Board of Directors for all your hard work, as well as to our guest speakers and everyone that helped make this past year so rewarding.

Doug Fraser, President

Nature Nanaimo