

A Hundred Years of Natural History

The Vancouver Natural History Society, 1918–2018



Susan Fisher and Daphne Solecki

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Daphne Solecki, Susan Fisher, Bev Ramey,
Cynthia Crampton, Marian Coope

Book design: Laura Fauth

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by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 660-297

Back cover: 2018 Camp at McGillivray Pass. Photos by
Jorma Neuvonen (top) and Nigel Peck (bottom).

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To the countless volunteers who have served and continue to serve our society and nature in so many ways.

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Acknowledgements

The Vancouver Natural History Society has been fortunate in having many chroniclers; natural history seems to beget history. Consequently, in preparing this overview of the club's first hundred years, we had many rich sources to turn to. Indispensable was *The Vancouver Natural History Society, 1918–1993*, written by Jim Peacock to recognize the club's seventy-fifth anniversary. The subsequent history, *Nature Vancouver: A Portrait: 1994–2010*, edited by Marian Coope, provided the story of more recent years. *Selected Excerpts from the Vancouver Natural History Society "Bulletin" (1943 to 1971)*, compiled by Bill Merilees in 2005, was an invaluable source of information about field trips and nature observations over the years. The two Indexes to *Discovery* (1972–1993 and 1994–2010) enabled quick checks on several topics. Kitty Castle's article in the spring 2008 issue of *Discovery*, "VNHS Summer Camps from the Beginning to the Present," was very useful. So too was historical geographer David Brownstein's work on John Davidson.

We also consulted the Vancouver Natural History Society fonds and the John Davidson fonds at the City of Vancouver Archives, and the John Davidson fonds in Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia library. We are grateful to the archivists who assisted us with our queries. The Historical Photographs section of the Vancouver Public Library assisted us with photos from the Philip Timms collection.

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Preface

The structure of this history perhaps requires some explanation. After many experiments with a more conventional chronological approach, we finally settled on organizing the material around the club's objectives. This seemed the best way to recognize the continuity and diversity of VNHS activities. When the society was founded in 1918, it adopted the following statement of aims:

1. To cultivate and disseminate knowledge of every branch of natural science
2. To encourage nature study and Arbor Day exercises in schools
3. To arouse interest in the value of our native trees
4. To encourage the protection of useful plants and animals liable to extinction
5. To endeavour to secure for Vancouver an adequate natural history museum to illustrate the flora, fauna, geology and anthropology of BC

Over time, the club's focus evolved, and the present Nature Vancouver objectives are somewhat different:

1. To promote the enjoyment of nature
2. To foster public interest and education in the appreciation and study of nature
3. To encourage the wise use and conservation of natural resources
4. To work for the complete protection of species and ecosystems
5. To promote access to and maintenance of natural areas in the vicinity of Vancouver

We use the 2018 objectives as the titles for the sections; however, we refer throughout to aspects of the 1918 objectives that led into the current objectives. We hope that we have remained



Young eagle taking flight. Photo by Rosemary Taylor.

true to the essence of both variations of the objectives.

And finally, a note on the name of our society, founded in 1918 as the Vancouver Natural History Society, and sometimes referred to as VNHS, or even VanNHS (to distinguish it from the Victoria Natural History Society). The Vancouver Natural History Society remains our legal name, but the shorter form of Nature Vancouver was adopted at the 2006 AGM as our “trade” or operating name and is now the most commonly used name for our society.

The Past of Natural History



VNHS campers at Garibaldi 1928. Photo by Philip Timms. VPL 18641

In early photos, the members of the Vancouver Natural History Society look quaint, dressed in their tweeds, middies, and bloomers. How, one wonders, did they manage to hike in the summer heat with all that scratchy wool and those ungainly backpacks and alpenstocks? And how did women go on field trips in stockings and heels? These superficial details of dress should not, however, blind us to the fact that we share much with the people who joined the society a hundred years ago. Whatever the oddities of their wardrobe and equipment, those early members of the VNHS were animated by the same values—conservation, education, and fellowship—that draw people to Nature Vancouver today.

Of course, the milieu in which those early members pursued their interest in natural history was very different from our own. To begin with, Vancouver was a much smaller place. Its southern boundary was 16th Avenue, and its western limit was Alma Street. Many society members, including the first president, John Davidson, didn't even live in the city; their homes were in Point Grey or South Vancouver, still separate municipalities.



**VNHS group at Caulfeild, circa 1920. Photo by John Davidson.
City of Vancouver Archives CVA 660-359**

The combined population of the three municipalities was about 160,000, of whom 75% were of British origin; fully half of the area's residents had been born in Canada.

In 1918, on the evening of May 8, when people gathered to form the VNHS, they probably came by streetcar, for few people owned cars. There were only about 700 registered cars in the city (and motorists still drove on the left). But despite the small number of vehicles and the poor state of the region's roads, sites of natural interest in the region were accessible. Caulfeild (or Skunk Cove as it was known before Francis Caulfeild started selling properties there) was served six times a day by the Pacific Great Eastern railway. The West Vancouver ferry also offered special excursion boats to Caulfeild. The Fraser River at Musqueam, a favourite botany field trip for John Davidson, was just a short walk from the streetcar station at Dunbar and Wilson (now 41st Avenue). Jericho, Stanley Park, and Burnaby Lake were all accessible by streetcar. And the train known as the "Sockeye Express" ran to Steveston every hour, reaching speeds of 90km/h on the flats of Lulu Island.

Vancouver landscapes



Bert Brink, who perhaps did more than any other individual to save BC's wild areas, joined the VNHS in 1930 and remained a member until his death in 2007. He was president of VNHS from 1950–1952 and led or co-led eleven summer camps. He was made honorary president of the club in 1989. Bert, who had grown up in Vancouver—he attended Bayview Elementary School and Kitsilano Secondary School—remembered the wilder Vancouver of his childhood.

My own memories of the Vancouver landscapes (including those of the Lower Mainland) go back to the closing years of World War I when I started grade school.

Much of what is now Vancouver (and the Greater Vancouver Regional District) had been logged, so big stumps were everywhere, slash had been burned deliberately or from wild fires (with little attempt at control). The landscape was fire-scarred and on the whole—ugly.

The Arbor Day Society was formed well before 1914, (but in 1918 amalgamated quite amicably with the BC Mountaineering Club, to become the Vancouver Natural History Society). Thus from its inception the VNHS had an emphasis on the beautification of Vancouver's landscape, using trees. School children (like me) were engaged in street tree planting. I should add that the trees deemed suitable for planting were largely trees the residents were familiar with in the countries from which they came—elms and oaks etc., from eastern Canada, linden and beeches and oaks from Britain, etc.

—Bert Brink, personal correspondence

The day that the VNHS was founded happened to be the 1,374th day of the Great War. (Throughout the war, the *Vancouver Sun* kept track of the war's duration in a daily note on the editorial page.) The people who gathered that evening to found the VNHS were united not only by their interest in nature, but also by their common fate as citizens of a country at war. Returned soldiers—blinded or maimed—were a common sight on the streets of Vancouver. There were frequent “tag days” when representatives of some patriotic cause—the Red Cross or the Blue Cross or the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society—stood on street corners asking for donations. Women and girls were still knitting for the soldiers. The paper’s headline that day was “Only Desultory Fighting along Battle Front.” No one knew when it all might end.

But Vancouverites had more immediate concerns. The city was just beginning to recover from one of its periodic bouts of real



Willow tree on Dunbar Street. Photo by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 660-324

estate fever. Vancouver had grown rapidly in the first decade of the 20th century, the population quadrupling between 1901 and 1911. Civic boosters envisioned new development everywhere: a 1912 map of the region shows a planned subdivision in what is now Pacific Spirit Park. But then an economic slump stopped the speculators in their tracks.

Land sales collapsed, and many developers went out of business. When war broke out in 1914, the city was still in the grip of depression, and over the next four years, the population actually declined.

In 1918 much of the region remained undeveloped, despite the earlier efforts of the real estate promoters. A few adventurous souls had built houses in the wilds of the west side or on the North Shore, but they were surrounded by trees and logging debris. Kitsilano, Jericho, and West Vancouver were still vacation destinations where city-dwellers rented “camps” for the summer. In Shaughnessy and Kerrisdale, scattered mansions and middle-class homes appeared on bare, logged-over land. The urban forest that is now so distinctive a feature of the west side of Vancouver would come about only later, due in part to John Davidson’s work with the Arbor Day Society.

Photographs, newspapers, and histories reveal much about how Vancouver and its people have changed over the past hundred years. But such records are largely silent about nature. In the 1930s, when Major Matthews, Vancouver’s indefatigable first archivist, began interviewing the city’s “pioneer” residents, they still remembered the streams and wetlands of the city. In the first decades of the twentieth century, there were at least eighteen streams in Vancouver with salmon or trout. One resident remembered “hundreds and hundreds and hundreds” of salmon spawning in the creeks of Spanish Banks in 1915. As late as the 1920s, which is when city garbage began to be used to fill in the creeks, salmon migrated up from Jericho south to 6th Avenue. Farther east, China Creek, draining out of Trout Lake and running west to False Creek, supported large salmon runs.

Photos of old Vancouver tend to feature people and buildings; one wonders what else is there. Perhaps hiding behind a tree

Professor John Davidson, 1878–1970

John Davidson arrived in Vancouver in the spring of 1911 from his home in Scotland. Davidson, who brought to Canada the knowledge he had gained working in the botany department at the University of Aberdeen, was soon appointed British Columbia's first Provincial Botanist. One of his first initiatives was to establish a group of volunteer collectors around the province. By the end of the summer of 1912, over five thousand fresh and dried specimens had arrived at his office. Davidson initially established a provincial botanical garden on the grounds of Essondale Hospital in Coquitlam. In 1916 Davidson began moving thousands of plants from there to the newly constructed UBC Botanical Garden, located on a five-acre site at the UBC Point Grey campus. Davidson oversaw the expansion of the gardens and herbarium until he retired as a faculty member from UBC in 1948.

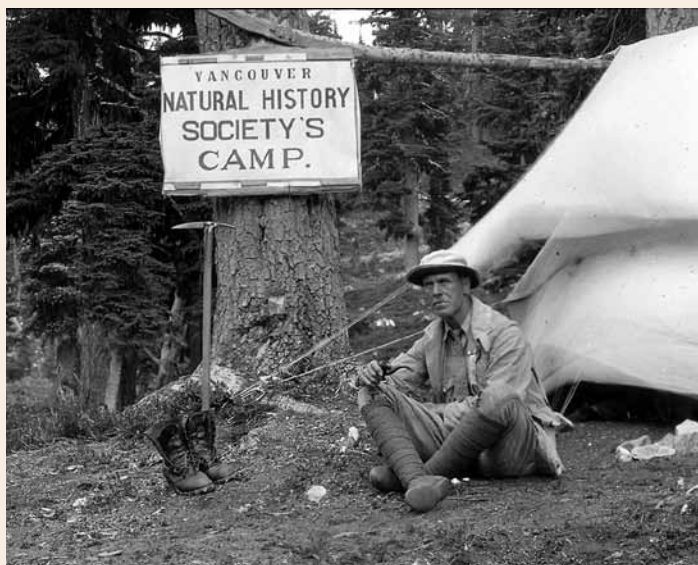
In 1912, with the aid of local mountaineers, Davidson made the first of many exploratory trips he would take into the mountain region that later became Garibaldi Provincial Park. Davidson's surveys of the area's unique landscapes and flora, shaped by volcanic and glacial action, helped to convince the BC Legislature that provincial park status was needed for this area.

Despite his lack of a formal university degree, Davidson was hired in 1917 as a teacher in the UBC Botany Department. His dedication and enthusiasm launched thousands of students on their own paths to a degree in biology. "Botany John" was a gifted speaker whose evening classes for the public, illustrated with lantern slides and blackboard sketches, inspired many Vancouver residents to develop their knowledge of the province's flora and to embrace Davidson's promotion of the annual Arbor Day celebrations. These devotees saw it as their civic duty to plant boulevards of trees and native plants as beautification projects for the city.

By early 1918 Davidson's passion for promoting citizen stewardship led to the formation of the Vancouver Natural

History Society (VNHS), of which he was president for the next 19 years. Botany John's passion for nature and study influenced many to join VNHS, and it became an organization where likeminded people could learn from each other.

—Paul Geddes



John Davidson. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 67221

or just out of the frame, there are birds, deer, amphibians, or flowers—non-human organisms that were once more varied and abundant in the city. The invasives that now dominate most “natural” areas in the region—blackberry, holly, and ivy—had not yet taken hold. Migratory patterns had not been disturbed in other parts of the Americas, so one can only imagine the numbers of birds that appeared in the spring. The Short-Tailed Weasel, the Western Spotted Skunk, and the Snowshoe Hare could still be found in Point Grey.

Naturalists tend to focus on the present and the future, but the past matters too. Yorke Edwards, the biologist who

pioneered park interpretation in British Columbia, pointed out why the history of natural history matters:

...the natural history of important and well-known places is nearly always lost. Everyone sees it and knows it in his own time, but so often the dying of a generation is the vanishing of what was known. Our cultural memory is fragile and easily lost, especially the memories containing those lives in the landscape other than human lives. Most people are most interested in people, but those interested in forests and marshes, in geese and trout, are fewer. The historic record rarely contains what most dismiss as only scenery and mere wild animals that will always be there—or so it is believed.

Inevitably, we suffer from what UBC fisheries scientist Daniel Pauly has called “shifting baseline syndrome.” We accept as normal a sadly depleted and diminished natural world; our measures of ecosystem health reflect not the rich and diverse wildness of a pre-industrial world but the debased standard of recent decades. If we could return to 1918 and go on an early VNHS field trip, we would likely be astonished by the number and variety of wild things still living in the city. Over the past century, biodiversity has been sacrificed in the pursuit of economic expansion and population growth. In celebrating the history of the VNHS, we honour not only the people who did so much for the club and for conservation causes but also the “cultural memory” of what nature once was like in Vancouver.

Indigenous Connections

Conspicuously absent from early VNHS records are mentions of BC's indigenous people. Surely they would have been an invaluable source of information about natural history. Why did VNHS members not consult indigenous people and learn from them?

The answer or answers to this question lie buried in the common assumption of the early 20th century that indigenous people were disappearing and that their knowledge had no value for the modern world. But it would be wrong to think that this is the whole story, for in fact some early naturalists did realize the importance of aboriginal knowledge.

In 1914, John Davidson went on a plant-gathering expedition with James Teit of Spences Bridge. Teit was a most unusual person: a rancher and storekeeper and hunting guide,



John Davidson on the left, James Teit on the right at their camp at the head of Botanie Valley. Note the vasculum and plant press. Photo by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 660-121

he knew several indigenous languages and is now credited with having done much of the essential fieldwork for anthropologist Franz Boas. The thousands of photographs Teit took constitute an invaluable record of indigenous culture. Born in the Shetland Isles, Teit became a friend of indigenous people: his first wife was indigenous, and Teit served on the executive committee of the Allied Indian Tribes of B.C. At home in both white and indigenous society, Teit was the ideal guide for Davidson's explorations of the Interior. His first contact with Davidson was as one of his field collectors. In 1912, he began sending specimens to Davidson; Teit identified the specimens by both their "white" and "Indian" names and supplied information on how local indigenous people used the plants. It was Teit who introduced Davidson to Botanie Valley. In his 1914 report as Provincial Botanist, Davidson described indigenous activities in the valley:



**Indians at Shuchemelch (*Davidson's title for this image*).
Photo by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA
660-112**

...the upper part of Botanie Valley produced a rich supply of many of those species of plants used by Indians as food...in former times hundreds of Indians gathered there annually from the adjacent districts to dig roots and collect supplies for future use.

At the time of our visit many Indians were met, and much interesting information was obtained regarding the uses of several of the plants which abound in the mountains and valleys.

...The information obtained from the Indians was supplemented by Mr. Teit's knowledge of the uses to which many of the plants are put by the Indians, and visits to old camping-grounds showed to what an extent these nomadic peoples depend upon the native flora to supply their needs. The remains of root-pits, earth-ovens, sweat-houses, etc. were pointed out and their uses explained. In 1915 Davidson again engaged Teit as his guide for a botany expedition to the Interior. The third annual report Davidson



Lewisia between Spences Bridge and Ashcroft (Teit in photo). Photo by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 660-500

submitted as Provincial Botanist described what he had learned from Teit's contacts among indigenous people:

Early in May information was received to the effect that large numbers of Indians had gone to the bitter-root grounds, and that bitter-root (*Lewisia rediviva*) was very abundant this season.

Travelled by rig and two horses along the old Yale-Cariboo road to the bitter-root grounds at "100 Mile Flats," known to Indians as Schuchem-eleh, which means "root-digging house."

The bitter-root region covers several square miles of open undulating country. The plants are present in millions; at one point twenty-two plants were counted on one square foot of ground. Over large areas one finds an average of twelve plants per square foot.

.... Bitter-root—known also as "Spatlum"—is collected in large quantities by Indians, who travel many miles on horseback to the bitter-root grounds. This work is done by the women, and during our outward journey we met several root-digging parties returning.

The plant is collected for food, being dug up by the aid of wooden or iron root-diggers. The roots vary from 3 to 5 inches long and are usually bifurcated; the cortical tissue separates readily and is stripped off from the crown to the tip, displaying a beautifully clean flesh-coloured root.

.... From an examination of several Indian camping places it was seen that the women evidently collect a supply of roots and return to camp to strip them. One can picture half a dozen Indian women, squatted before the camp-fire at the close of a day's digging, busy peeling the roots preparatory to packing them. The small heaps of skins left at most of the camps indicated that each party returned with many hundreds—perhaps thousands—of roots.

Our main camp was in the centre of the bitter-root region near an Indian's house, and before returning to Spences Bridge the camp cook prepared some roots

in true Indian fashion for my benefit. Specimens were sampled raw, but were not quite so palatable as when cooked. When boiled they form a pinkish starchy jelly which tastes slightly bitter, like quinine. I should think that after one acquired a taste for them they would be a good appetizer; they are said to be very nutritious.

Authors' note:

The preceding introductory pages have provided a glimpse into life a century ago. The remainder of this history is organized into four parts following the themes of the club's objectives. Because there is considerable overlap between objectives 3 and 4—to encourage the wise use and conservation of natural resources *and* to work for the complete protection of species and ecosystems—they have been combined in a single section.



Camp in Botanie Valley, 1929. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 18597

Objective 1: To promote the enjoyment of nature

The prospect of enjoyment might not have been the primary reason VNHS members signed up for field trips or camps, but it undoubtedly counted for a great deal. And, to judge from the report by Leslie Rogers on the 2018 summer camp in *Discovery* 46, the pleasure of being outdoors with good companions remains a central value for Nature Vancouver members.

Field trips

On May 11, just three days after the society's formation, VNHS offered its first field trip. Led by John Davidson, a group of twenty women and fourteen men travelled by bus to Burnaby and Deer Lakes. At the site, Davidson pointed out the relationship between the geology of the area and its plant life, thus promoting the holistic study of ecosystems, an approach that has remained central to Nature Vancouver's activities.

Summer camps

On June 28 of 1918, twenty-two members set out for the club's first summer camp. It was considered noteworthy enough to be written up in the *Vancouver Sun*: "Savary Island was chosen as the camping ground, partly because of its great beauty and partly because on it there are so many distinct and widely different habitats with their own peculiar plant associations, e.g. sandy shore, rocky bluffs, sandy bluffs, sheltered woodlands, and open meadows."

For the very few of us now living who knew some of the early camps and campers, recollections of early years are pleasurable. They are recollections of good fellowship, happy events, adversities met and overcome, and of the discovery of natural features (and their interrelationships) in out-of-doors BC.

—Bert Brink, "Camping with the VNHS" 1987

The campers would hike various distances during the day, then work on the specimens they had collected; in the evening they gathered for dinner and sat around the campfire. This set the pattern for all future camps—learning, hard work, and camaraderie.

After the Savary Island camp, the VNHS began ranging further afield. For several summers in the 1920s, the group travelled to Botanie Valley, just north of the Thompson River. In 1927, camp was held in the Black Tusk meadows in order to celebrate the fact that Garibaldi had just been declared a provincial park—the result of a decade-long campaign by the BC Mountaineering Club, VNHS, and other outdoor groups. In the early days, VNHS campers reached their destination by boat, train, and foot; supplies were brought in by packhorses.

In addition to hiking, botanizing, butterfly collecting, and photography, camps always included social elements. In the early days, when John Davidson (a committed Baptist) was still in charge, Sunday was a day of rest. There were prayers and hymns, but no hike: campers were expected to pass the Sabbath in reading, sketching, or organizing specimens. On other days of the week, lighter amusements were on offer. Campers created their own lyrics for well-known tunes, and skits and tableaux were a regular feature of camp entertainments.



Packhorses at Garibaldi Camp, perhaps 1927. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 18642



A skit in camp. Photo by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 660-354



"Twinflowers" in a skit at the Larch Valley camp in 1962. Photo by Bert Brink.

Camping with the VNHS

No doubt the early campers possessed the full range of human strengths and weaknesses; nonetheless they were in a sense “the salt of the earth.” In a time when ecology was a word scarcely known, they were, in a collective sense, excellent naturalists—natural history for them stood for a unity of science, art, technology, and moral choice. Of course many had their special interests...but they did, on average, appreciate the interrelationship and the unity of the natural world....VNHS camps were not just recreational; they were in many, many ways educational.

....Within the VNHS membership there was an interesting egalitarianism which certainly did not characterize the larger regional community. It was very much in evidence in camp. Amateur and professional, the poor and the rich, rubbed shoulders—cut wood, washed dishes, and put up tents; trip leadership was just as often taken by good amateurs as by professionals....poets and philosophers, tailors and postmen, lawyers and geologists, gardeners and clergy, housewife and farmer were supporters of the VNHS.

—Bert Brink, “Camping with the VNHS” 1987



Doing dishes at camp. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 18881

Club Sections

Botany

At first, the chief interest of VNHS members was botany, probably due to “Botany John” Davidson’s skill as a teacher. In the early days, naturalists did not merely identify plants; they collected them. The club report on the 1918 Savary Island camp noted that “on returning to the camp in the evening the members would work over and press their specimens...with a view to either beginning or increasing their private herbaria.” But by the mid-1920s, collecting plants, except for research purposes, was falling into disfavour. Photography section leader Philip Timms encouraged members to take pictures of flowers, not pick them.

While club interests have diversified over the years, botany, especially the study of wildflowers, remains central to many field trips and camp hikes. Dr Kay Beamish of the UBC Botany department was a prominent figure at many camps during



Philip Timms and his improvised darkroom at summer camp (probably at Garibaldi). Note the sign on the left. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 19314



Nature Vancouver members at Brohm Lake, 2016. Photo by Teresa Gagné.



Botanical specimen display, Kluane Camp, 1974. Photo by Bert Brink.

A Hike on Grouse Plateau 1947

On July 20th nine hardy souls made the climb to Grouse plateau and beyond. Perfect weather with fleecy white clouds and cool breezes was our reward. The flowers were a month in advance of last year so we saw some we had missed previously and found others in seed. The Grouse road was a mass of copperbush and rhododendron. Mountain spirea, heathers, marsh-marigold, mountain ash, twisted stalk, arnica and saxifrages brightened the way as we went over to Goat Ridge and back by Dam Mountain. A grouse with young was found above the ski village and Mr. Beebe pointed out Vaux's swifts, juncos and some unidentified thrushes.

the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, leading botany walks and organizing a table at camp dedicated to plant identification and specimen pressing.

The Botany Section of VNHS gave rise to the Vancouver Mycological Society. In the 1970s, VNHS members keen on fungi joined with others, including some from UBC and SFU, to stage some very popular local mushroom shows. This group then met formally in 1978 and “spawned” the Vancouver Mycological Society.

Photography

When separate club sections were first established in 1926, photography merited a section of its own. It was led by Philip Timms, a printer and photographer, now remembered for his postcard images of early Vancouver. Timms, a self-educated man in the Victorian mold—he was a musician and kept a personal “university” in his basement—documented many VNHS activities. At camps, he set up a darkroom and experimented with “night” shots. He also gave instruction to members in photography, which was still a relatively complex process.

As photography evolved from glass plates to film to digital images, the VNHS continued to offer courses and expert advice

A Mycology Field Trip 1949

On Saturday, October 29th, we had a pleasant and instructive afternoon. Meeting at the covered picnic tables at Lumberman's Arch, 34 of our members came prepared with bags and baskets for the collection of mushrooms. Our leader, Mr. F. Waugh, divided the party into three groups with instructions to go in diverse ways. After about an hour the three groups returned and laid out the "spoils" on the tables. Mr. Waugh sorted them and talked about the different kinds. There was such a variety that it is impossible to list them all. Moreover, your secretary is extremely ignorant on the subject and is afraid of making mistakes. ...

*While Mr. Waugh was discoursing on mushrooms Mrs. Waugh was cooking a delicious pan full of *Armillaria mellea* (honey mushrooms) which she served to us on crackers with cups of tea. This was a practical demonstration of the value of knowing your mushrooms.*



Honey mushrooms. Photo by Rosemary Taylor.



Philip Timms and his improvised darkroom at one of the Garibaldi camps. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 67222

to support members' interest in photographing the natural world. In 1980, the club began a photography competition to honour members' work. Colour photos by members appear on the covers of *Discovery*, the club journal.

Marine Biology

Many summer camps were in locations with access to the foreshore (including the first camp at Savary Island), and field trips to locations such as Brockton Point and Third Beach and Caulfeild afforded members a chance to expand their knowledge of marine biology. But VNHS did not have an official Marine Biology section until 2001.

Geology

A separate Geology section was formed in 1944, and has been led over the years by a succession of professional geologists, skillful and generous in sharing their knowledge with interested amateurs.



**Marine biology group at Stanley Park 1928. Photo by Philip Timms.
Vancouver Public Library 18886**



**A 1932 geology field trip in Stanley Park. Photo by Philip Timms.
Vancouver Public Library 6820**

A Geology Field Trip 1947

On June 7th about thirty geology enthusiasts gathered at the foot of Prospect Point while Mr. Plommer explained the rock formation of that region. The dark-coloured ledges seen there are composed of igneous rock that is comparatively young, about 19 million years old, and much stronger than the surrounding sedimentary rock that belongs to the Burrard formation, age 30 million years.

....As we walked along we saw occasional boulders that had been strewn over the land by glaciers in a very recent period, about one million years ago. The pleasing contours of the whole park area and the interesting southern shoreline results from gentle folds in the Burrard formation. This results in different parts of the formation being exposed to wave action, the more resistant rocks forming projections, the shales being eroded to form small bays at Second and Third Beaches.

Birding

An Ornithology section was established in 1926, but birding did not become popular until the 1950s, when members began to have access to affordable binoculars and practical field guides. Birding quickly took off: in the 1958–59 season, the section led 18 field trips with an average attendance of 27.

In 1977 the birding section started its own newsletter, the *Wandering Tattler*; for most of the past forty-one years, it has been edited by Jude Grass. In 1979, member John Toochn set up the Rare Bird Alert, a telephone hotline with recorded information about unusual sightings in the region. It has now been superseded by website postings and specialized sites such as E-Bird.

Since 1954, the VNHS has participated in the annual continent-wide census known as the Christmas Bird Count. The club organizes counts for the Vancouver area and for Ladner; the latter count has been organized by Jude Grass annually since 1978; Adrian Grant-Duff has organized the Vancouver count for the past fifteen years. The club has published several

A Bird Walk on Iona Island, 1955

Mr. William Hughes arranged a trip for March 27th to Iona Island that 30 adults and several children enjoyed. The boat left the wharf at the foot of Blenheim Street at 9:00 a.m. and, despite the weatherman's prediction of showers, the day was perfect for the outing.

Possibly the highlight of the trip was a really good view of a snow bunting. ... The birds identified were: robin, house finch, Oregon towhee, song sparrow, long-billed marsh wren, horned lark, crow, bittern, red-winged blackbird, black-capped chickadee, violet-green swallow, killdeer, Oregon junco, great blue heron, red-backed sandpiper, double-crested cormorant, western, horned and eared grebes, coot, greater and lesser scaup, bufflehead, American and red-breasted mergansers, snow goose, black-bellied plover, short-billed and glaucous-winged gulls, mallard, old squaw, canvasback, American goldeneye, snow bunting, American scoter, ruddy duck, baldpate wigeon, and pintail.



**A field trip to Iona, July 1932. Photo by Philip Timms.
Vancouver Public Library 18639**



Birding at Monica Meadows, West Kootenays 2006. Photo by Nigel Peck.

checklists of Vancouver birds; the most recent update appeared this year. Members also conduct regular surveys at sites throughout the Lower Mainland, collecting essential data on the health of local and migratory bird populations. Regular surveys have been conducted at Sea Island Conservation Area, Terra Nova Natural Area, Everett Crowley Park, Fraserview Golf Course, University Golf Course, McLeery Golf Course, UBC Farm, and UBC Botanical Garden.

Nature Tours

In 1990, the VNHS decided to organize a bus tour to the Columbia Gorge, an initiative led by Bill Merilees, assisted by Kelly Sekhon and Audrey Viken. An official club tour was a novelty that required careful planning, but the trip was successful and even netted a small surplus. Over the next twelve years, there were fifty-four tours, ranging from day trips on Vancouver Island to multi-day tours in more distant locations such as Haida Gwaii and the Grand Canyon. Over the years,

about \$114,000 net profit was generated by the tours; 60% of this went to the VNHS Special Projects Fund and Endowment Fund, and the remaining 40% was divided between the Nature Trust of BC and the World Wildlife Fund.



Bill Merilees, Audrey Viken, and Kelly Sekhon, Nature Tour Committee members, 1990. Photographer unknown.

Objective 2: To foster public interest and education in the appreciation and study of nature

From the outset, John Davidson saw education as a primary function of the new society he had helped to found:

If we encourage our boys and girls to make a hobby of some branch of Nature Study, we do much to ensure the moral and physical health of our young men and women of the future; through the study of the works of nature we study the works of God, and acquire a fuller knowledge of the laws which govern the lives of all His creatures; the man without a hobby is a menace to the community. It is our desire to have all sections of the community represented in our membership, but we wish in particular that teachers should benefit by our lectures and excursions....

Davidson was well equipped to lead the society in carrying out this mandate. He was, above all, an inspired and inspiring teacher. The botany classes he offered (first for members of the BC Mountaineering Club and then for the new VNHS) were so popular that they attracted students from all over the Lower Mainland; one reportedly travelled twenty miles to each class, doing much of the distance on foot. And through his public lectures on botany under the aegis of the Vancouver School Board, he reached many different audiences, including school principals and teachers and representatives of many trades and professions.

Arbor Day

In Vancouver, Arbor Day no longer has the importance it once did, but at the time that the VNHS was formed, the Arbor Day Association was a vital part of the growing city and had a large part in the creation of Vancouver's street tree program—what we now call our Urban Forest.

The Natural History Section of the British Columbia Mountaineering Club and the University Women's Club played

a crucial role in advancing the street trees legislation in 1916–17 through their collaborative efforts under the leadership of Davidson and the Arbor Day Association. Thus it was a citizens' association, with a marked interest in nature and sustainability that gave essential momentum to further boulevard legislation.

The Vancouver Natural History Society's membership grew steadily and so did its passion for trees and boulevards. In his presidential address of 1921, Professor Davidson proudly asserted that the Society had slightly more than two hundred members and "had become one of the strongest and most active Natural History Societies in Canada...the strongest west of Ottawa."

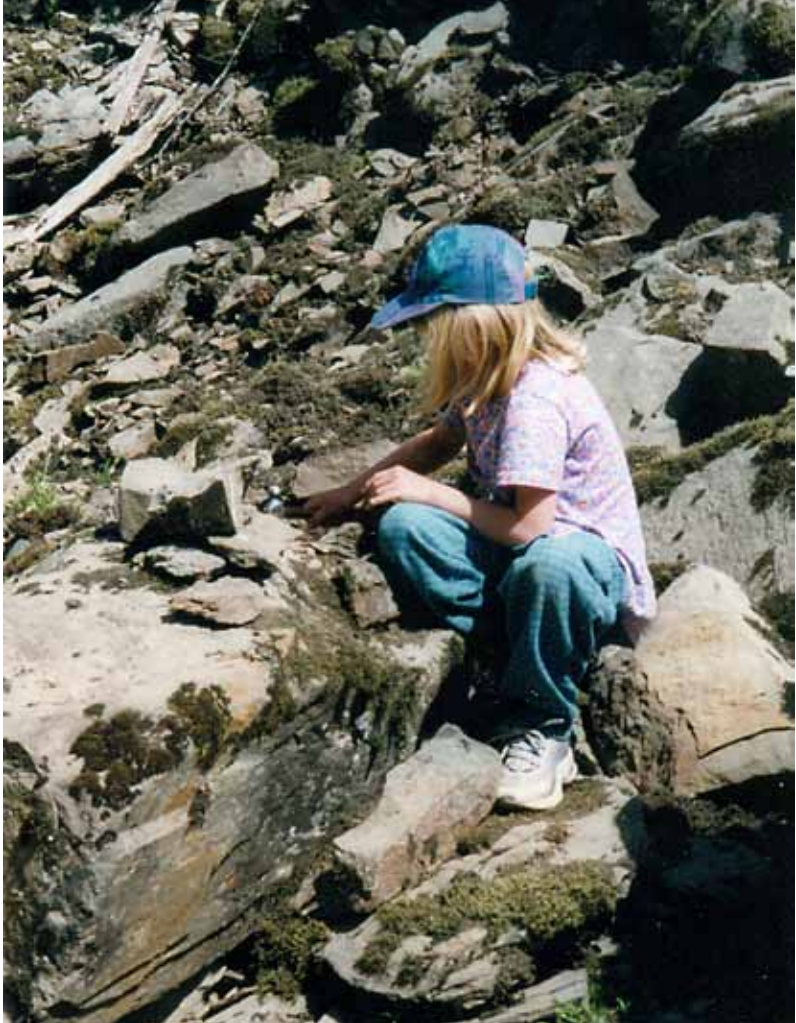
John Davidson also supported Arbor Day as a day set aside each fall for the public planting of trees. He saw this as a way to combat the public apathy toward the wholesale cutting of young trees in order to reach the larger and more valuable trees. He also urged its members to arrange meetings in schools and church-halls from various districts to promote urban trees: "Do something! It will be good for you, it will be good for our society, it will be good for Vancouver."

Nature Study for Children

... it has been amply proved and is now accepted by the highest educational authorities that Nature Study, properly taught and correlated with other school subjects, turns out brighter children with a greater measure of originality than the old system of cramming and burdening the memory with bookwork. Anything we do to make the education of our children more of a pleasure and less of a grind will tend to improve the attitude of our young men and young women towards educational pursuits and help to produce the best type of citizens capable of thinking for themselves and employing their talents for the good of the community.—John Davidson, 1919

In the first decades of the twentieth century, nature study was part of the official BC curriculum. Many teachers joined the VNHS and signed up for Davidson's botany classes so that

they would be better prepared to teach it. At first, the federal government supported Nature Study through its rural education initiatives, but as Canada became more urbanized, funding for agricultural education dwindled. Gradually, nature study evolved into a general science curriculum, and local natural history was neglected. This was a change that VNHS members wanted to counteract. Bert Brink, in his 1951 report as VNHS



Fossil Hunting. Photo by Daphne Solecki.

president, noted that naturalists would have to pick up what the school system had abandoned: “The importance of our group as an educational body cannot be too greatly emphasized, for natural history education seems to be largely neglected in the formal work of our schools today.”

In the 1940s, the club began a junior section led by Allen Wootton, a commercial artist and son of the first superintendent of Vancouver Parks. The juniors went on birding, botany, and geology field trips. By the 1960s, there were 70 members of the Young Naturalists: they volunteered in trail building and marsh clearing at the new Reifel Waterfowl Refuge. The Federation of BC Naturalists (now BC Nature) sponsored Junior Naturalist camps, organized by Dick Stace-Smith, a plant scientist and long-time VNHS member. But these early efforts faded.

Then in 2000, a group of VNHS members headed by Rob Butler and Daphne Solecki created the Young Naturalists’ Club of BC (now called NatureKids BC) for children aged 5 to 12 years, modeled on the youth program of the Royal Society for



Nature Kids exploring on Mt. Seymour. Photo by Daphne Solecki.

the Protection of Birds in the UK. NatureKids now has over 25 family clubs throughout BC which offer regular Explorer Days (field trips) along with opportunities for participation in stewardship and citizen science projects. It also publishes *Nature WILD*, BC's only nature magazine for young readers.

In 1957, Allen Wootton had an idea that would take more than thirty years to realize: "I would like to see the Society sponsor, before we lose all our natural areas.... a children's nature centre.... [where] nature activities for children could be directed and youth leaders be trained in nature work." In 1990, the VNHS was finally able to open the Stanley Park Nature Centre on Lost Lagoon in the former boat house. Once the Nature Centre was up and running, the VNHS turned over the day-to-day management to the Stanley Park Ecology Society.

The Stanley Park Ecology Society has successfully operated the Nature Centre and programs in Stanley Park for twenty-five years. They maintain a very active program: last year, more than 15 000 people visited the Stanley Park Nature house, and the Stanley Park Ecology Society supports nearly 700 volunteers.



Stanley Park Nature House. Photo by Greg Hart.

Public Education

Davidson was an ardent believer in civic improvement, and he was determined that the VNHS should not be just a social club: “A Natural History Society should not confine its activities to benefitting its members; it should render service to the community by helping to advance its educational institutions.” He was deliberate and energetic in connecting the VNHS to other civic institutions. For example, he invited the first two presidents of UBC—Leonard Klinck and Frank Wesbrook—to serve as honorary VNHS presidents.

The club actively supported the Vancouver Institute, originally established in 1916 to serve as a liaison between “town and gown” by providing lectures of general interest. All lectures were free to the public. Initially presented at the Assembly hall at the old Fairview campus, the Institute later moved to the UBC campus in Point Grey. Lecture organizers tried to find a location closer to the downtown as transportation at that time presented some problems: “At that time Tenth Avenue was paved with rotten planks from Alma Road for some two blocks east. Chancellor Boulevard connected with a dirt trail through the woods to Eighth Avenue at Blanca Street, and although the Tenth Avenue Boulevard from Blanca to the University was paved, cars were scarce and bus service none too good.”

The Vancouver Institute, which still sponsors lectures on Saturday evenings in the fall and winter, brought together various Vancouver cultural groups. As one of the member groups of the Institute, VNHS was required to provide at least one lecture on natural history each year, which it did for many years. John Davidson himself lectured on a fascinating mix of topics:

1917 — “The Conservation of Waste Products” and “A Survey of Our Native Flora”

1920 — “Fuel as a Determining Factor in the Future History of Western Canada”

1921 — “The Morality of Plants”

1922 — “Science, Theology and Christianity”

1930 — “Gleanings from My Trip to the International, and Horticultural Congresses”

A Natural History Museum and other Civic Institutions

At the very first general meeting of the VNHS in 1918, Davidson called for the creation of a natural history museum, which he thought as important to the quality of civic life as an art gallery or concert hall. But it would be decades before Vancouver had such an institution. In the 1940s, UBC professor Ian McTaggart Cowan, then president of VNHS, persuaded the university to set aside land for the museum, but the war interfered, and the project died. In 2001, UBC faculty revived the idea of a public museum to house the university's natural history collections. With the help of a donation from former VNHS Geology Section head Ross Beaty and his wife, Trisha Beaty, the Beaty Biodiversity Museum was built, opening in 2010. It is an interdisciplinary research centre on biodiversity, including six collections (Cowan Tetrapod, Marine Invertebrate, Herbarium, Spencer Entomological, Fish and Fossils) with over 2 million specimens. It also serves as a public natural history museum



As part of its commitment to public education, VNHS displayed botanical specimens, photography, and taxidermy at the PNE. These photos were taken sometime in the 1930s. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 67210

with outreach, family programs, school programs for all levels, and public talks. Most of its research specimens are stored within areas accessible to the public. The individual drawers are locked, but samples are on display so that visitors can grasp the extent of the museum's holdings. Information is provided on the work of the curators and staff. Nature Vancouver has participated in several cooperative programs with the Beaty Museum, and the club and museum share information about their programs.



Taxidermy in the VNHS exhibit at the PNE. Photo by Philip Timms. Vancouver Public Library 18903

Another public initiative of VNHS was its sponsorship of the Audubon screen tours. In the 1950s, before National Geographic and David Attenborough brought high-quality nature film to mass audiences, the club arranged for Vancouver to be included in the Audubon screen tours; these nature films, co-sponsored by the School Board, drew large audiences.

VNHS representatives sat on the board of the new Aquarium when it opened in 1956. It was Canada's first public aquarium, and it was the first in North America to benefit from educational interpreters, perhaps an indirect legacy of Davidson's passion for nature education.

A VNHS member also sat on the board of the City Museum when it opened in 1960 (it became the Centennial Museum in 1967). For many years the VNHS held its monthly programs,



Poster for Wild Things exhibition.

open to the public, in the amphitheatre of the City Museum. Due to a change in museum management requirements, the VNHS was unable to continue to meet there, and now meets in church halls at two locations.

In 2018, on the 100th anniversary of Nature Vancouver, it has been a pleasure to work collaboratively with the Museum of Vancouver to co-produce an exhibition entitled “Wild Things—The Power of Nature in Our Lives.” This exhibition is on display for several months; members of Nature Vancouver are providing outreach on weekends on specific natural history topics. This exhibition includes a timeline of Nature Vancouver’s 100 years, plus two short videos featuring members.

The VNHS was concerned with the protection of cultural as well as natural heritage: in the 1950s, the club urged City Council to preserve the Marpole Midden and create a museum on the site. But a pub and parking lot were built instead. In the 1990s, the Musqueam people bought the pub site. In 2018 the adjacent parking lot (which was owned by the city) was returned to the Musqueam people.

Publications

In 1943, the club began publishing the *Bulletin*, a newsletter with information about field trips, camps, and local conservation issues. In 1970, it was superseded by *Discovery*, a quarterly journal. At first a simple black-and-white publication, from 1991, due to the generosity of Don and Barbara Atkins, the covers for *Discovery* have been printed in colour, showcasing photographs by VNHS members.



For nearly twenty years, Nature Vancouver has also published a quarterly newsletter, the *Vancouver Naturalist*, with program and field trip information. In addition to its periodicals, Nature

Vancouver has published books, pamphlets and checklists, including *The Birder's Guide to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland*, *Parks and Nature Places Around Vancouver*, *Explore the Rocky Shore at Stanley Park*, and *Nature West Coast: A study of plants, insects, birds, mammals and marine life as seen in Lighthouse Park*. (For a complete list of VNHS publications, see Appendix C.)

Website and Weekly Emails



The Nature Vancouver website.

Development of a VNHS website began in 1998; it became available in 2000. The site was updated in 2007, 2009, and 2018. A calendar at the site now provides details of upcoming programs and field trips; the site includes a blog for photos and for posts on recent trips and events. Members can now subscribe to receive weekly emails with reminders and up-to-date information on talks, walks, hikes, and occasional notices of events provided by other naturalist groups.

Present-Day Nature Education

Nature Vancouver continues public nature education through:

- Evening public presentations, weekly, 9 months of year
- Walks and more strenuous hikes focussed on natural history (156 offered in 2017)
- Monthly bird surveys in six locations
- Week-long wilderness camps
- Photography contest



Elk Mountain. Photo by Bill Kinkaid.



Ravens eat anything, including your lunch. Photo by Rosemary Taylor.



Cerise Creek, Pemberton. Photo by Bill Kinkaid.

Objective 3: To encourage the wise use and conservation of natural resources *and*

Objective 4: To work for the complete protection of species and ecosystems

When the VNHS was founded in 1918, its objectives emphasized education and benefits to society. Over time the objectives shifted to reflect a more explicit concern with protecting natural spaces and species. Nonetheless, conservation was of great importance from the beginning.

Bounty hunting

One of the first conservation issues that VNHS took on was bounty hunting. In 1922, the VNHS partnered with the natural history societies of Victoria and Duncan on Vancouver Island to launch a campaign against the provincial government's policy of exterminating what the government considered to be "noxious predators."

The government paid bounties on wolves, cougars, coyotes, and foxes; also on the "noxious predator" list were birds of prey such as eagles, owls, hawks, falcons, crows, magpies, and mergansers. The system was effective: in just one year, bounties were paid on two thousand Great Horned Owls and 70 Golden Eagles.

Naturalists urged the government to require bounty hunters to submit the whole animal, not just the head. Then it would be possible to examine the contents of the stomach to see just how much damage to other species was in fact occurring. The government agreed that this was a fair proposal, and the number of animals killed for bounty was slowly reduced. But it was not until 1958 that the government finally agreed to a one-year trial of a law that put all predatory birds on the protected list.

Logging and Watersheds

In the 1920s, the VNHS became increasingly concerned with logging practices throughout the province and the damage caused to watersheds. At the October 1924 annual meeting, Davidson delivered one of his most important messages to the club, the Vancouver region, and the province as a whole.

“THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL” or “WAKE UP VANCOUVER!”

Davidson began by describing Vancouver’s fortunate location protected by mountains and its abundant water supply:

We cannot over-estimate the value of a reliable source of cold, fresh water, furnished by slowly melting snows, percolating through the sand, gravelly soil and cool shady forests to the water intakes.....When the citizens of Vancouver realize *the necessity of the trees on the mountain slopes for the maintenance of this supply*, they will not tolerate any interference with the timber or any part of the watershed....



Davidson outlined threats to the Capilano watershed and described legitimate logging practices and urged the VNHS “to educate the greater community as to the importance of conserving Plant Life, that conservation is a profitable investment and that it is really dangerous to neglect it, or close our eyes to the wanton waste of our resources.” He ended by exhorting VNHS members to broadcast the necessity for conservation so that:

we may not be weighed in the balances and found wanting:

WANTING: A forest supply

WANTING: A water supply

WANTING: The basic requirement for the future success and prosperity of British Columbia and Vancouver in particular.

Davidson’s message resonated far and wide. Excerpts from his address appeared in the local newspapers; a thousand copies

were printed for distribution to mayors, aldermen, and MLAs. The Ministry of Education distributed it to all the province's technical instructors. Although BC's chief forester was displeased by "The Handwriting on the Wall," it nonetheless did its job: by 1933, logging in the Capilano watershed had ended and Vancouver's water supply was safe. However, the debate about logging on the North Shore continued until the late 1990s, when the Seymour watershed was finally closed to logging. Davidson's conservationist zeal became part of the organizational DNA of the club.

Provincial Parks

Over the past century, the VNHS has worked to protect areas beyond the Vancouver region. As Bert Brink noted in "The Beginnings of Wisdom," the address he gave at the time of the club's fiftieth anniversary:

Most of the sites chosen for VNHS camps have in the 50 years of our existence become Provincial Parks. To an



**Bert Brink (left) and Dick Stace-Smith (right) in the Shulaps, 1969.
Photo by Bob Harris.**

extent hardly realized by the public and by our government, our Society and our sister societies have brought into prominence some of the most interesting and loveliest areas of the Province.

In addition to summer camps, VHNS organized exploratory backpacking trips to several wilderness locations that would eventually become parks, with leaders such as Bob Harris, Norman Purssell, and Dorothy Pollitt.

By increasing public awareness through summer camps and exploratory backpacking trips, the VNHS helped to establish many BC parks (*dates indicate when park was created*):

Garibaldi (1927)

Cathedral Park (1968)

Cape Scott (1973)

Cypress (1975)

Kalamalka Lake (1975)

Ts'il?os (1994)

Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park (1995)

Big Creek (1995)

Lac du Bois (1996)

Wells Grey (1939) expansion (Trophy Mountains, 1996)

Manning Park (1941) expansion (historic trail area, 1987 and 1999)

Snowy (2001)

Marble Canyon (1956 and Pavilion Lake 2001)

South Chilcotin Mountains (2001)

Endangered Species and Ecosystems

Throughout its first hundred years, the VNHS has consistently pressed for conservation of natural spaces and species and for the protection of natural resources. In the early days of the province, natural resources were plundered without thought to the future, but, as John Davidson warned, this devastation could not continue without ruining those resources for future generations. In 1955, when the BC government established a royal commission to examine forestry practices, the VNHS submitted a lengthy and thoughtful document. The following

excerpt from the club's submission to the Royal Commission on the BC Forest Act demonstrates the club's far-ranging concern for the province's natural resources:

Owing to the tremendous industrial expansion and steadily increasing population in B.C., the alienation of land is proceeding at a highly accelerated rate. The most desirable areas are the lower lying sections and, as B.C. has not too much of such land, these will be virtually unavailable for park use. Contained within these areas are many specialized habitats of plants and animal life, some small sections of which should be preserved for all time.

Virgin grassland is almost non-existent and virgin timber stands may soon be gone also. A proposed garbage dump may soon cover the ancient feeding grounds of the Arctic snow geese. Access to the sea and lake beaches is becoming less and less easy as waterfrontage is taken up.

In the 1970s, the VNHS produced posters to increase public awareness of Species at Risk. The first two, titled "Look, Listen, Enjoy," showed photos of endangered plants and endangered wildlife. Next came a series of three posters focussed on sensitive habitats at risk: Wetlands, Alpine, and Grasslands.

Nature Vancouver continues to provide support for provincial conservation issues. For example, the club is involved in efforts to promote and protect the outstanding natural habitat of Pink Mountain, near Ft. St. John.

Creating a Provincial Organization

Recognizing that naturalists—and nature—needed a unified, provincial voice, in 1963, the VNHS, through the leadership of Dr. Dick Stace-Smith, and in cooperation with naturalist clubs from Victoria, the Okanagan, and Cowichan, formed the BC Nature Council. It was registered as a society in 1969 as the Federation of BC Naturalists and now operates as BC Nature. BC Nature comprises 53 clubs from around the province representing 6000 members, dedicated to the organization's mission: "Know nature and keep it worth knowing." Nature

Vancouver members continue to volunteer in key positions with BC Nature, including its Executive, and Education and Conservation Committees.

In May 2018 Nature Vancouver hosted the provincial conference and AGM for BC Nature at UBC Forest Sciences Centre, and welcomed about 130 conference participants. It was fitting for Nature Vancouver to host naturalists from around the province in its centennial year. Close to 50 Nature Vancouver members contributed extensively, volunteering as organizers, field trip leaders, speakers, and drivers.

Land for Nature

In the early 1990s Nature Vancouver was a participant in the successful BC Nature provincial program “Land for Nature.” Members of all Lower Mainland clubs (and subsequently in other areas of the province) identified and recommended sites for protection by municipal and provincial authorities. This identification of sites also led to the Fraser Lowlands study by the provincial government in the late 1990s, which resulted in the protection of some Wildlife Management Areas. Efforts continue to protect additional sites identified in the Fraser Lowlands study.

Objective 5: To promote access to, and maintenance of, natural areas in the vicinity of Vancouver

Good conservation practices and the education of the Public, especially politicians, with regards to good conservation, must always be a prime aim of our Society.

—1962–3 VNHS Annual Report

The VNHS has had many successes in protecting and restoring natural areas in the Metro Vancouver area. Some of these successful campaigns were initiated by VNHS; some were initiated by other groups and supported by our club. None could have been successful without wide support from a number of groups and from the public at large. Listed below are areas the protection of which was due in large part to VNHS involvement.

Vancouver

AREA: Jericho Beach Park

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Beach, freshwater ponds and upland area with mixed grass, shrubs and deciduous/evergreen woodland. *Designated for housing development and the extension of Point Grey Road through to Marine Drive.* The city obtained the land in 1973; landscaping and removal of military installation continued through the 1980s; Jericho is now one of the largest parks in the Vancouver Parks system.

AREA: Pacific Spirit Regional Park

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Rich mixed deciduous and evergreen forest rising from the foreshore of the Point Grey Peninsula. *Slated for university and housing development. Protected 1988.* VNHS past-president Dan Overmyer was Co-chairman of the Endowment Lands Regional Park Committee 1987–1990, when the Park was established by the BC Provincial government. Now a jewel in the Metro Vancouver Regional Park system.

AREA: Camosun Bog

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: 2,000 year old peat bog within Pacific Spirit Regional Park, now being restored and maintained as a bog. *Was drying up due to water supply having been cut off by residential development and being overgrown by hemlock.* Restoration work by the “Crazy Boggers.”

AREA: Everett Crowley Park

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Originally a coniferous forest of hemlock and cedar trees, with a salmon-bearing creek running through a natural ravine. *The Kerr Road Dump was established here.* After the dump closed, the area was rehabilitated as a park.

AREA: Fraser River Park (foot of Angus Drive)

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Promoted for park status by Nature Vancouver through the Fraser River Coalition.



Jericho Park ivy removal. Photo by Daphne Solecki.

AREA: UBC Farm

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: The farm has been part of UBC since 1915. *In 2007 it was designated a “future housing reserve.”* Nature Vancouver began monthly bird surveys and worked with several other groups to secure protection in 2008 for the entire 24 hectares of the Farm.

AREA: Sanctuary at Hastings Park

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Wetland area near the foreshore of Burrard Inlet. *Expansion of PNE and other commercial interests.* While only 4 acres of the original wetland were eventually protected, it is a much-needed oasis in the east side of the city that attracts many species of birds, especially in migration.

North Vancouver

AREA: Maplewood Mud Flats

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: The last remaining area of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh on the North Shore. *Shopping mall and marina development proposed by the Port of Vancouver.* It is now administered by the Wild Bird Trust.

Richmond

AREA: Terra Nova

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: A wetland located on the middle arm of the Fraser. *Under threat of housing development.* Now preserved as a natural area.

AREA: Iona Beach Regional Park

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Located near the Iona Island sewage lagoons, the marsh *was destroyed when the sewage pipe was extended.* Successful rehabilitation of the marsh attracted the Yellow-headed Blackbirds that had been displaced by construction of the 3rd runway at YVR.

AREA: Sea Island Conservation Area

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Between the YVR airport and the North Arm of the Fraser River.

Surrey

AREA: Surrey Bend

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Located downstream from Barnston Island, one of the few remaining large, non-diked areas on the lower Fraser River. *Threatened by expansion of railway yards.* Now part of the Metro Vancouver Regional Park system.

Delta

AREA: Burns Bog

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Burns Bog is the largest raised peat bog and the largest undeveloped urban land mass on the West Coast of the Americas. Burns Bog was originally 10,000–12,000 acres before development. Currently, only 3,500 hectares remain of the bog. *Starting in 1907 the bog was mined for peat and railway*



Black Bear. Photo by Rosemary Taylor.

lines criss-crossed it. Other destructive plans followed such as a deep-sea port, industrial development, housing, re-location of the PNE and a racetrack. Eventually, due to public pressure, the bog was preserved and is managed today by Metro Vancouver Regional Parks as Burns Bog Ecological Conservancy Area.

AREA: Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust

DESCRIPTION/THREAT: Delta farm land, probably the richest in Canada, is also an important part of the Pacific Flyway. *Threatened by purchase of 4,000 acres as back up land to the Roberts Bank port and by uncontrolled development.* The trust was formed to cooperatively manage the land for both agriculture and wildlife.

Wildlife Management Areas

Nature Vancouver worked together with various organizations and as part of the Fraser River Coalition to establish provincial Wildlife Management Areas in wetlands throughout the Fraser River Estuary and Lower Fraser River, including these now protected areas:

- Pitt-Addington Marsh (1987)
- South Arm Marshes (1991)
- Coquitlam River (1994)
- Boundary Bay (1995)
- Sturgeon Bank (1998)
- Serpentine (2009); had been managed for wildlife for previous three decades
- Bert Brink, near Sumas Mountain (2009)
- Roberts Bank (2011); but protection does not include area proposed for expansion
- Lhá:lt/Harrison-Chehalis (2016)

Regional Parks

Nature Vancouver has supported the Metro Vancouver (GVRD) Regional Parks system for the past half century by identifying key natural areas for protection; increasing public awareness about these areas through walks, talks, articles,



Katharine Steig leading hike on Hollyburn Mountain trail, Cypress Provincial Park. Photo by Rosemary Taylor.

photographs, plant lists and bird lists; attending public meetings; serving on advisory committees; writing letters and meeting with politicians in support of park creation. The VNHS made significant contributions to the establishment of several regional parks, including Boundary Bay, Minnekhada, Pacific Spirit, Burns Bog, Iona Beach, Tynehead, Surrey Bend, Codd Wetlands, and Campbell Valley.

VNHS members continue to support Metro Parks: they serve on Park Associations, offer public walks and talks; carry out bird surveys, maintain nest boxes, and act as caretakers for designated Important Bird Areas.

Supporting Other Nature Organizations

Nature Vancouver has founded several organizations that work to protect specific natural areas, including:

- Save Our Beaches Society (1960s)
- Camosun Bog Restoration Group (1990)
- Jericho Stewardship Group (2004)
- Friends of Cypress (1990)

Nature Vancouver also supports organizations active in Lighthouse Park, Hastings Park, Maplewood Conservation Area, and Terra Nova. Nature Vancouver also continues to work for improved protection of the Fraser River Estuary Important Bird Area.

Current Concern: Roberts Bank

In the 1960s, a plan for a deep-sea port in Boundary Bay galvanized naturalists' opposition, for it threatened to destroy one of the most important resting areas for birds on the Pacific Flyway. Despite opposition, the Roberts Bank Superport (Deltaport) was constructed in 1970. The port was expanded in 1983–84, and in June 1997 a second terminal was opened. In the years since, the number of migrating shorebirds touching down in this area has dropped by half.

Now the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority wants to build a new three-berth marine container terminal at Roberts Bank. In March 2018, Environment and Climate Change Canada officials declared that the proposed terminal would cause irreversible harm to migratory populations of Western sandpiper. It is hoped that this strongly negative response from Environment Canada will doom the Port Authority's expansion plans at Roberts Bank, but the review panel has not yet made its final decision. The VNHS is working with other groups to oppose the port expansion, which is the most urgent conservation concern in the Lower Mainland at this time.



Shorebirds at Roberts Bank. Photo by Jason Puddifoot.

The Next Hundred Years

Making predictions may be a fool's game, but there are two sure bets for our collective future: global temperatures will rise, and the human population will grow. Neither of these changes will be good for nature. Habitat for native plants, birds, fish, and amphibians will be lost, either through changing climatic conditions or deliberate conversion of land to human purposes. Metro Vancouver's official 2040 strategy assumes that our region will grow by a million people in the next two decades. Not even the most optimistic technocrat could argue that such growth will be good for biodiversity, especially given the simultaneous impact climate change will have on temperature, rainfall, food sources, and other components of habitat.

So what role should Nature Vancouver play in the coming decades? First, the club should continue to do what it has always done: love nature and study it, and share that knowledge and enthusiasm with others. We can do this through our established activities such as field trips and evening programs, but perhaps it is time to be more assertive in spreading the word about the value and joy of studying nature. Above all, we need to nurture a new generation of naturalists who, as future members of Nature Vancouver, will be conscientious advocates for the natural world.

Enjoyment, good fellowship, education, and conservation of local wild places will of course remain important goals of our organization, but if we are to honour the ideals of our founders, we must do more. John Davidson, whose 1924 broadside about logging on the North Shore was entitled "The Handwriting on the Wall, or Wake up! Vancouver," would surely want us to "wake up" now and do everything we can to protect the living things and the wild places that we love.



Office of the Mayor
CITY OF VANCOUVER
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Proclamation

"NATURE VANCOUVER DAY"

- WHEREAS The Vancouver Natural History Society (operating as Nature Vancouver) and its members are celebrating the 100th anniversary of its incorporation under the BC Societies Act;
- AND WHEREAS The services provided to the City of Vancouver and its citizens over the past century have been exemplary;
- AND WHEREAS The City of Vancouver recognizes Nature Vancouver's dedication to environmental stewardship, education and initiatives that foster protection of our ecosystems and the appreciation of the study of nature
- AND WHEREAS For the past 100 years the Vancouver Natural History Society and its members have conducted an extensive program of community service, such as field trips, public speakers, summer camps, research, recording nature observations and promoting parks and greenspaces;
- AND WHEREAS The City of Vancouver appreciates the Society's continued efforts to preserve and promote our natural heritage for future generations;
- NOW, THEREFORE, I, Gregor Robertson, Mayor of the City of Vancouver, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM Thursday, October 25, 2018 as

* NATURE VANCOUVER DAY *

in the City of Vancouver.

Gregor Robertson
MAYOR



Appendix A

Presidents

John Davidson	1918–1937
Charles F. Connor	1937–1941
Ian McTaggart Cowan	1941–1943
A.H. Bain	1943–1950
Vernon C. (Bert) Brink	1950–1952
Stewart S. Bradley	1952–1954
Foote Waugh	1954–1955
Allen Reed Wootton	1955–1957
John James Plommer	1957–1958
Frank Sanford	1958–1960
Richard (Dick) Stace-Smith	1960–1962
John E. Armstrong	1962–1964
Newton Frank Pullen	1964–1965
Katherine (Kay) Beamish	1965–1967
Kathleen Smith	1967–1969
Arnold Greenius	1969–1971
Philip (Phil) J. Croft	1971–1972
Norman (Norm) Purssell	1972–1974
Charles S. Ney	1974
John Pinder-Moss	1974–1976
Noreen Fairweather	1976–1978
Jude Grass	1978–1980
Robert M. Dundas	1980–1982
Kevin Bell	1982–1984
Sid Cannings	1984–1986
Doug Kragh	1986–1988
William (Bill) Merilees	1988–1990

Daphne Solecki	1990–1992
Val Schaefer	1992–1994
Zsa Zsa Stiasny	1994–1995
Linda Kingston	1995–1997
Jeremy Gordon	1997–1999
Jeremy McCall	1999–2002
Kelly Sekhon	2002–2004
Adrian Grant-Duff	2004–2007
Cynthia Crampton	2007–2010
Margaret Coutts	2010–2011
Daniel (Dan) Overmyer	2011–2013
Daphne Hamilton-Nagorsen	2013–2016
William (Bill) Kinkaid	2016–2018
Nigel Peck	2018–



Doing dishes at camp, 1925. Photo by John Davidson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 660-356

Appendix B

Summer camps

1918	Savary Island	John Davidson
1919	Departure Bay	John Davidson
1920	Savary Island	John Davidson
1921	Cameron Lake.....	John Davidson
1922	Botanie Valley	John Davidson
1923	Botanie Valley	John Davidson
1924	Savary Island.....	John Davidson
1925	Botanie Valley	John Davidson
1926	Cameron Lake.....	John Davidson
1927	Garibaldi Park.....	John Davidson
1928	Garibaldi Park.....	John Davidson
1929	Botanie Valley	John Davidson
1930	No Record	
1931	Tenquille Lake.....	John Davidson, J.J. Plommer
1932	Garibaldi Park.....	John Davidson
1933	No Record	
1934	No Record	
1935	Botanie Valley	John Davidson
1936	Lucky Four Range.....	J.J. Plommer
1937	Garibaldi Park.....	H. Selwood
1938	Liumchen Plateau.....	J.J. Plommer
1938	Seymour Mountain.....	J.J. Plommer
1939	Forbidden Plateau, Vancouver Island.....	J.J. Plommer, A.H. Bain

1940	Skagit Valley.....	John Davidson
1941	Garibaldi Park.....	John Davidson, Bert Brink
1942	Pavilion Lake, Marble Canyon	A.H. Bain
1943	No Record	
1944	Pavilion Lake, Marble Canyon	A.H. Bain
1945	No Record	
1946	Manning Park	J.J. Plommer
1947	No Record	
1948	Tenquille Meadows	No record
1949	Akasik-Nikaia, west of Lytton.....	Bert Brink, others
1950	Pavilion Lake.....	Bert Brink
1951	Cathedral Lakes	Bert Brink
1952	Denman Island	Stewart Bradley
1953	Glacier National Park.....	Stewart Bradley
1954	Nine Mile Creek.....	Stewart Bradley
1955	Black Tusk Meadows	Bert Brink
1956	Grouse Nest, Sooke	Stewart Bradley
1957	Noaxe Lake, Lillooet.....	Bert Brink
1958	Cosens Bay, Kalamalka Lake	Bert Brink
1959	Manning Park	Bert Brink
1960	Tenquille Lake, Pemberton	Stewart Bradley
1961	Oliver-Fairview.....	Bert Brink
1962	Larch Valley, Lake Louise.....	Bert Brink
1963	Crown Lakes.....	Richard Stace-Smith
1964	Cathedral Lakes	Norm Purssell
1965	Tyaughton	Arnold Greenius
1966	Kokanee Park	Roy Edgell

1967	Tulameen.....	Roy Edgell, R. Wheeler
1968	Black Tusk Meadows	Roy Edgell, W. Smith
1969	Elizabeth Mine, Shulaps	Bert Brink, R. Harris
1970	Amethyst Lakes, Jasper National Park	Robert Harris
1971	Nemaia Valley, Chilcotin	W. Hughes
1972	Jackson Basin, Slocan	John Pinder-Moss
1972	Cape Scott	Norm Purssell
1973	Queen Charlotte Islands	Charles Ney
1974	Jesmond, Clinton area	A. Uydens
1974	Cape Scott	C. Bawden
1974	Kluane Park.....	D. Godfrey
1974	Cathedral Lakes	Theda Mackie
1975	Telkwa, Bulkley Valley	Rosamund Pojar
1975	Warner Pass, Bridge River	J. Philip
1975	Cortez Island, Camp 1.....	Peg Briault
1975	Cortez Island, Camp 2.....	W. Paterson
1975	Nitinat Lake canoe trip	Dorothy Pollit
1976	Meadow Mountain	Roy Edgell
1976	Tweedsmuir Park expeditionary	J. Philip
1977	Tyaughton Creek.....	J. Philip
1977	Broken Islands canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt
1977	Stein Valley expeditionary	D. and M. Macaree
1977	Murtle Lake canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1978	Blowdown Creek, Upper Stein.....	J. Philip
1978	Lizzie Creek expeditionary	Norm Purssell

1979	Helm Lake, Garibaldi Park.....	J. Philip
1979	Elton Lake, Stein Basin.....	Norm Purssell
1980	Cinnabar Basin.....	J. Philip, Roy Edgell
1980	Talchako Lodge, Bella Coola	Robert Harris
1981	Trophy Mountain, Wells Gray.....	J. Philip
1982	Paradise Valley, Cascades	J. Philip
1983	Clachnacudainn, Arrowhead, Revelstoke	W. Paterson
1984	Chilco Lake	W. Paterson
1985	Cancelled due to forest fires	
1986	Castle Mountain, Banff	W. Paterson
1987	Silver Cup Ridge, north of Nakusp...	W. Paterson
1988	Spruce Lake.....	W. Paterson
1989	Cinnabar Basin, South Chilcotin	Dan Phelps
1989	Denman/Hornby canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1989	Broken Islands canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt
1989	Nootka Island canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1989	Megin River canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1990	Manning Park	Al Payne
1990	Meares Island canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt
1990	Denman/Hornby canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1990	Broken Islands canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt
1990	Nitinat Lake canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt
1990	Savary Island canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt
1990	Village Bay Lakes canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1991	Waterton National Park	Dan Phelps
1991	Denman/Hornby canoe trip.....	Dorothy Pollitt
1991	Broken Islands canoe trip	Dorothy Pollitt

- 1991 Redonda Islands canoe trip Dorothy Pollitt
- 1992 Wells Gray Recreation Area Dan Phelps
- 1993 Snowshoe Plateau,
south of Barkerville Dan Phelps
- 1994 Cinnabar Basin, South Chilcotin Adonna Rudolph
- 1995 Monica Meadows,
Selkirk Mountains Lorne Payne
- 1996 McGillivray Pass Lorne Payne
- 1997 Joe Lake & Snowy Mountain,
Keremeos..... Lorne Payne
- 1998 Crooks Meadow,
Kootenay National Park..... Lorne Payne
- 1999 Manning Park Lorne Payne
- 2000 Mt Assiniboine Provincial Park,
Camp 1 Al Tone
- 2000 Mt Assiniboine Provincial Park,
Camp 2 Lorne Payne
- 2001 Cinnabar Basin, South Chilcotin,
Camp 1 Gordon Squire
- 2001 Cinnabar Basin, South Chilcotin,
Camp 2 Lorne Payne
- 2002 Oyster River, Vancouver Island,
Camp 1 Lorne Payne
- 2002 Oyster River, Vancouver Island,
Camp 2 Gordon Squire
- 2003 Ghost Peak, near Revelstoke Lorne Payne
- 2004 McGillivray Pass, near Gold Bridge.. David Foreman
- 2005 Big Bar Ranch, South Cariboo..... Elly Brok
- 2006 Monica Meadows,
Selkirk Mountains Hugh Hamilton
- 2007 Blowdown Lake Hugh Hamilton

2008	Smithers Driftwood Lodge, Camp 1	Hugh Hamilton
2008	Smithers Driftwood Lodge, Camp 2	David Foreman
2009	Cinnabar Basin, South Chilcotin, Camp 1	Hugh Hamilton
2009	Cinnabar Basin, South Chilcotin, Camp 2	Cancelled
2010	Meadow Mountain, Camp 1	Ian McAskill
2010	Meadow Mountain, Camp 2	Don Griffiths
2011	Waterton Lakes National Park	Nigel Peck
2011	Waterton Lakes National Park	Don Griffiths
2012	Butler lake, Niut Range, Chilcotin, Camp 1	Nigel Peck
2012	Butler lake, Niut Range, Chilcotin, Camp 2	Peg Neilon
2013	Blowdown Lake, Camp 1	Peg Neilon
2013	Blowdown Lake, Camp 2	Don Griffiths
2014	Manning Provincial Park, Camp 1 ...	Nigel Peck
2014	Manning Provincial Park, Camp 2 ...	Don Griffiths
2015	Mount Renshaw near McBride, Camp 1	Don Griffiths
2015	Mount Renshaw near McBride, Camp 2	Art Winckers, Cathy Walker
2016	No camp held	
2017	Smithers, Camp 1	Peg Neilon
2017	Smithers, Camp 2	Art Winckers
2018	McGillivray Pass, Camp 1	Nigel Peck
2018	McGillivray Pass, Camp 2	Peg Neilon

Appendix C

Publications

Vancouver Birds in 1971. R.W. Campbell, M.G. Shepard and W.C. Weber. 1972.

Vancouver Birds in 1972. R.W. Campbell, M.G. Shepard, M.G. Macdonald, and W.C. Weber. 1973.

Nature West Coast: A Study of plants, insects, birds, mammals and marine life as seen in Lighthouse Park. Ed. Kathleen Smith, Nancy Anderson, and Katherine Beamish. 1973; revised 1988.

The Living Natural History of Vancouver. 1986.

The Natural History of Stanley Park. Val Schaefer and Angela Chen. 1988.

The Vancouver Natural History Society, 1918 – 1993. Jim Peacock. 1993.

A Bird Watching Guide to the Vancouver Area, British Columbia. Ed. Val Schaefer. 1993.

Discovery Index, Volumes 1 to 22, 1972–1993. Ed. Roland Wahlgren and Melanie Marchand. 1994.

The Birds of Burrard Inlet. Ed. Val Schaefer. 1995.

Nature in Vancouver: A Guide to the best places to find birds, animals, insects, marine life, plants and flowers in and around Vancouver. Ed. Bill Merilees and Val Schaefer. 1996.

Vancouver Birds in 1995. Kyle Elliott and Wayne Gardner. 1997.

Selected Excerpts from Vancouver Natural History Society “Bulletin” 1943 – 1971. Compiled by Bill Merilees, 2005.

Wilderness on the Doorstep: Discovering Nature in Stanley Park. Ed. Alison Parkinson. 2006.

Parks and Nature Places Around Vancouver. Ed. Alison Parkinson. 2009.

Explore the Rocky Shore at Stanley Park. Sheila Byers. 2009 (also in laminated brochure format, 2006).

Nature Vancouver — A Portrait: 1994 – 2010. Ed. Marian Coope. 2012.

Discovery Index 2: Volumes 23 to 39 – 1994 to 2010. Ed. Marian Coope. 2013.

The Birder's Guide to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Ed. Colin Clasen. 2016.

Seasonal Checklist: Birds of Greater Vancouver, BC, Rev. 2018. Wayne Weber, Brian Self, Ilya Povalyaev, and Larry Cowan. 2018.



A VNHS group en route to camp in the 1930s. Photographer unknown. UBC Botanical Garden Library and Archives.

A Note on Sources

The Past of Natural History

Information on Vancouver in 1918 comes from the following sources:

Hayes, Derek. *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley*. Douglas and McIntyre: Vancouver, 2006.

Proctor, Sharon, ed. “Vancouver’s Old Streams.” Vancouver: Vancouver Public Aquarium Association, 1978.

Roy, Patricia. *Vancouver: An Illustrated History*. Toronto: Lorimer with the National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, 1980.

There is some confusion about the date when the VNHS was founded. Some sources give Wednesday, May 10, 1918. But in 1918, May 10 was a Friday. Given that the first field trip was offered on Saturday, May 11, which (according to Peacock) was three days after the society was founded, the correct date of the club’s founding must be Wednesday, May 8, 1918.

The statement by Yorke Edwards comes from the foreword to *Waterfowl on a Pacific Estuary* by Barry Leach (1982). Daniel Pauli’s article “Postscript: Anecdotes and the Shifting Baseline in Fisheries” appeared in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 10: 10, 1995. This concept has been subsequently discussed in many publications.

Bert Brink’s recollections of Vancouver when he was a child come from personal correspondence with Margaret Bear.

The information on James Teit is based on the entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*; see http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/teit_james_alexander_1884_15E.html

Davidson’s accounts of his trips into the Interior appear in his annual reports as Provincial Botanist. These have been digitized and are available (at the time of printing) at <http://botanyjohn>.

blogspot.com. Correspondence between Teit and Davidson is in the Davidson fonds at the City of Vancouver Archives.

Objective 1: To promote the enjoyment of nature

The field trip accounts come from the VNHS “Bulletin,” reprinted in Bill Merilees’s *Selected Excerpts from the Vancouver Natural History Society “Bulletin” (1943 to 1971)*. A manuscript copy of Bert Brink’s “Camping with the VNHS” (1987) is in the VNHS fonds in the City of Vancouver Archives.

Information on the history of the birding section comes from notes in the VNHS fonds in the City of Vancouver Archives.

Objective 2: To foster public interest and education in the appreciation and study of nature

John Davidson’s endorsement of nature study comes from the club’s annual report in 1918–19. The quotation from Bert Brink appeared in his 1951 report as club president. Both are in the VNHS fonds in the City of Vancouver Archives. Davidson’s comments on the civic role of a natural history society also come from his 1918–1919 report. Information on the Vancouver Institute lectures comes from the UBC archives: <https://archives.library.ubc.ca/lists/vancouver-institute-lectures>.

Objective 3: To encourage the wise use and conservation of natural resources and

Objective 4: To work for the complete protection of species and ecosystems

Information on bounty hunting comes from Peacock and from the notes of the Conservation Committee in the VNHS fonds.

The draft of the VNHS submission to the 1955 Royal Commission on the BC Forest Act is in the VNHS fonds.

“The Handwriting on the Wall” is in the VNHS fonds.

Bert Brink's "The Beginnings of Wisdom" is reproduced in *Selected Excerpts from the Vancouver Natural History Society "Bulletin"* (1943 to 1971).

Objective 5: To promote access to, and maintenance of, natural areas in the vicinity of Vancouver

For information on the review of port expansion plans, see Larry Pynn, "Environment Canada strikes potential death blow to port's \$2b container expansion at Roberts Bank" in the March 19, 2018 edition of the *Vancouver Sun*.



Dining fly at Trophy Mountain camp, 1981. Photo by Bert Brink.

