

Meeting Minutes  
February 12, 2007

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Present were: Jerry Azevedo, Cheryl Bastedo, Louise Decario, Pam Freir, Jocelyn Gifford, Mike Hoebel, Libby McClelland, Brian Mitchell, Jeff Salton.

The rumour had spread – unusual on this island – that cake would be served at the meeting, but this turned out to be a ruse to boost attendance. When the trick was discovered, there were grumblings, not all of them from the stomachs, but before the accusations got out of hand, the acting chair called the meeting to order, and the disgruntled Naturalists got straight to business...

1. 'Active Page' article: For the March article, Mike contributed some text on the natural history of rats, and Jeff talked about killing them. Libby was working on an illustration, but she was cautioned not to make them appear lovable. She said she simply couldn't draw a dead rat. This didn't present a problem; we would turn her picture upside down. Everyone seemed satisfied with that expedient solution.

Still on the subject of rats, Libby asked if anyone had seen a fuzzy-tailed rat on the island. There was a moment of silence, and then someone said, "Yes, but on Galiano we call them squirrels." Libby realized at that point that she'd somehow come to the wrong meeting and dropped the subject.



To avoid getting involved in precisely this type of discussion, Megan timed her vacation so that she'd be off the island for this meeting, but before leaving she submitted some material that will make a fine article for April. And Brian roused himself from his winter torpor to provide some Natural Mysteries, which he had browbeaten from his grandchildren.

2. Hummingbird Banding: Is there any more sure sign of spring than the replacement of "Christmas Bird Count" with "Hummingbird Banding" on the Naturalists' agenda? Mike noted that the banding season for us this year will begin on March 26 and run every two weeks thereafter until early July. Banding starts one half hour before sunrise, which on March 26 is a civilized 7:30 AM; in June, he warned potential banders, banding starts at a head-numbing 5:30 AM. Those June banding sessions separate the true Naturalists from the squirrel feeders.
3. Spring Bird Walks: As reliably as the swallows return to Capistrano, Mike has scheduled spring bird walks for every Saturday in April and May. The walks start typically at 8:30. He'll be working up a schedule of locations, which will be posted soon. Someone had heard about a blind birder on Salt Spring (where the topography must be gentler or the guard rails higher, for him to have survived this long), and it was suggested that the Naturalists could learn to better identify bird calls if we could get this fellow to come over and lead the blindfolded Naturalists on one of the walks. Mike offered to follow up. Jerry will look into insurance and check with the RCMP to see if such things are allowed in this province.

4. “Bluebird” (House Wren) Monitoring: Some day the Western Bluebird will return to Galiano. We know it in our hearts. And when it does, Mike will be there, sitting on the western slope of Mount Galiano, where the Naturalists have 18 nestboxes just waiting. In the meantime, he and whoever else wants to get some exercise on the Mountain, will be checking out the happy House Wren couples who take advantage of our largesse and make their homes in those boxes, neither the first nor the last residential use of a forest lot on Galiano.
5. Gull Identification Workshop: Some Naturalists have been clamoring for a gull identification workshop for years. (What’s the big deal, some wonder. If it’s a whitish bird that’s stealing some kid’s sandwich on the Tsawwassen quay, it’s a gull; if it’s a blackish bird, it’s a crow.) Jeff noted that there are plenty of gulls over near Gossip – which seems from Jeff’s descriptions to be some sort of Isle of the Blessed with golden fruit hanging from the boughs – and to silence the disbelievers he offered to take the Naturalists there in his skiff. The only condition, if we understand him correctly, is that we have to eat a bowl of Lynnette’s stew, which has some sort of magical properties. Ignoring all that, the Naturalists jumped at the chance to chase gulls in a motorboat. It was decided to combine this trip with the next regular Naturalists meeting on March 12. We’d meet at 10 at Whaler Bay Dock, with our deck chairs and life jackets and pies and sandwiches and cake (the elusive cake, a cruel twist of the knife to mention cake again at this meeting, with tempers already hot), and we’d go identify some gulls (what’s the big deal) and stop at Gossip for some soup. The return to Galiano was not discussed. We’d leave a trail of bread crumbs, but the gulls would eat them.
6. Spring Wingding™ : We were going to have a bird festival in April, on Easter Sunday, but somehow this has morphed into a spring nature festival, complete with nettle soup, mounted birds, launch of the new Bird Checklist, spring mushrooms, slide shows, drawing workshop, art show, and birdhouse/bathhouse building workshop. It’s almost as if the Naturalists, natural procrastinators, have chosen this one outlandish event to tie up all sorts of loose ends and fulfill obligations in a try for the resurrection of their souls. At least, the talk was good. The sign-up sheet has since gone out to the Naturalists, yet few have replied with commitments to actually do the work. Yet the Naturalists always manage to put on a good festival, despite the brinkmanship, and as the Easter weekend looms, surely we’ll all roll back the stone of our shilly-shallying and pull this all together.
7. Naturalists Calendar: Mike has created a page on the website for tracking the progress of the year in nature. The Naturalists are encouraged to report natural events – the first bat of the season, the first of the spring mushrooms, the return of the snow birds – for posting on our website.
8. Next meeting time and place: Monday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM, Whaler Bay Dock. [NOTE CHANGE IN TIME AND VENUE FOR THIS MONTH ONLY]

A rumour circulated in the room that there was cake at Louise’s house, and the Naturalists, all elbows now, rushed from the room. There were a couple of fender benders getting out of the parking lot, but since the constable was on vacation, no one was stopped for speeding, and there was little violence.

Corrections and comments to:

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