

Galiano Naturalists

Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2005

Present were: Jerry Azevedo, Keith Erickson, Pam Frier, Mike Hoebel, Libby McClelland, Brian Mitchell.

Finding a group of usurpers in our regular meeting room, the six of us retired to a cubby in the dark bowels of the school, where we brushed aside pots of paint and enigmatic drawings, pulled out tiny little stools to sit on, and, feeling somehow like dwarfs in some off-kilter fairy tale, got straight to business...

1. "Species of the Month" project: Though Karen could not attend the meeting, she later reported that her article on the sharp-tailed snake will be ready for the May issue, and Jerry will append the month's Natural Mysteries. For our one-year anniversary article in June, Pam suggested something a little different. It seems that two years ago Bob Harmer photographed some tracks left by aliens on Matthews Beach. Normally this sort of statement wouldn't have provoked any interest at a Naturalists meeting. Trumpeter swans, painted turtles, oystercatchers, aliens, sure, whatever. But Pam went on to say that Bob might be willing to write an article on them for next month's 'Active Page' article. (Presumably he will get the story vetted by his alien masters.) It shows the extent of our ennui, after a year's worth of cranking out "Our Little Corner" articles, that we enthusiastically jumped at the offer of an article about aliens.
2. "Galiano's Natural Areas Brochure" project: How can we tell when we've been working on a project for too long? With Keith's first Illustrator draft of the brochure laid out for comment on the little dwarf table, Libby suggested, "Maybe we could show the parks in purple." That comment was emblematic of the discussion. Well along in the project, with text and photographs laid out, we were just now starting to think about what "natural area" means and what we were trying to show. And everyone had a different opinion. Was a natural area one of the eight sites we've chosen to present in the brochure. Was it the area of the island defined as "natural" by the habitat mapping project (a project that gave birth to our Naturalists group last year) and marked in green on the brochure's map that we've been looking at for the last four months? Was it the publicly accessible parts of those green areas? No one actually said "back to the drawing board", but one was left with the impression that we need to put some more thought into our basic premises for this brochure before we get too involved in typefaces and bleeds. As is our custom when faced with a gnarly problem, we moved on to another one. Two people who contributed photographs to the brochure have asked to have credit, and we discussed how to do that as unobtrusively as possible. Keith will try a few examples. And we grouped our photos into those we have and like as is, those we have and would like if only we could fix them a bit, those we have but would prefer something better, and those we still need to find somewhere. And then having exceeded the patience of even the most calm of us, we moved on to the next agenda item.
3. "Sunday Drawers" project: Like a jilted bride left at the altar, Libby continues to wait for her group of drawers to show up on Sunday mornings. Oh, we all have excuses, don't we, and the weather's been so, well, unpredictable. Still, it hardly seems fair, to leave the woman standing there, flowers in hand, a hopeful smile on her face but a sinking feeling in her heart. So, let's do it this way: If you want to attend the drawing session on Sunday, give Libby a call at 3783. She's more than happy to host the drawing sessions, but if no one calls, she might just venture off to do other things.
4. "Western bluebird stewards" project: Mike reported that though there's been no sign of bluebirds, or in fact birds of any sort, nesting in our boxes, the boxes themselves continue to reproduce at an

alarming rate. We installed only six boxes, yet now we've found at least 18 on the mountain. Mike will ask Bob Harmer for his opinion on what's happening.

5. "Hummingbird banding" project: As an official station in the Hummingbird Monitoring Network...stop right there. Does anyone else, hearing this, imagine sort of an Underground Railroad for runaway hummingbirds, a place where an exhausted bird on the run north from oppression, cold and hungry, can find a welcome bit of food and a warm flannel blanket and a safe house to rest for a time before continuing on their journey to freedom? No? Well, fine. ...we've had two banding sessions so far, and we'll be banding next Monday, the 18th, and every second Monday thereafter for several months. We're also running a little extracurricular banding on the side, a covert outreach program to bring in street birds that are reluctant to come near an official HMN station and give them the opportunity to get a band too, no questions asked. If any of this appeals to your compassionate instincts, contact Mike at 2003 to sign up to help.
6. Bird walks: Mike brought in a flyer listing his Saturday bird walks, and he's posted copies at the Market and the Conservancy. The list of walks has been emailed to Naturalists and friends and relatives of Naturalists, printed in the Active Page, posted on our Website, and written on little paper strips included in fortune cookies at several of Vancouver's better Chinese restaurants, but if you're the last person west of the Rockies and north of the Oregon border not to have a schedule of walks, call Mike to find out where to meet next Saturday. And that should have been the end of the discussion, but Brian jumped in, "Speaking of birds..." He asked Mike what kind of bird has a long orange bill and flaps and soars high in the sky. We all suspected a riddle, but Mike, who hears this sort of thing all the time and so is more immune to it than the rest of us, probed for more details. A big bird? Wings something like a cormorant? Dark in silhouette. That long orange beak. Pam thought it was a goose. Brian seemed offended, so we moved on.
7. Earth Day: Some of us were slumbering or fidgeting on our tiny stools and looking at the hail out the window, so when Mike said, "A presence", we thought he said, "Some presents", and heads snapped alert. He had no presents, which was a disappointment. "A presence," he repeated. And so started a lively debate about whether a card table with a few photocopies and a tattered mock-up of an unfinished brochure would be better than no presence at all for the Naturalists at the Earth Day event. In the end, Mike's argument for a presence carried the day, if only because he volunteered to do all the work, the other five of us claiming to be booked solid already and three-quarters of our Naturalists group not even at the meeting. So we'll have a presence, but no presents, at Earth Day. And one might hope that some of us will bring to the hall on Earth Day some stuff, some twigs or bones or plants or rocks or whatever, to make our card table a bit more inviting.
8. Next meeting time and place: MONDAY, May 9th at 1 PM at the Activity Center.

Then someone pointed out the window and shouted, "Look! A soaring goose." And when Brian and Mike ran to look, the rest of us snuck out the back door.

Corrections and comments to:

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