

# Galiano Naturalists

## Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2005

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Present were: Jerry Azevedo, Dick Chase (having overslept and missed the morning ferry to Vancouver), Karen Harris (having gone to the Fitness Center to work out but recognizing a car in the parking lot and deciding an hour with the Naturalists would be less painful than the lat pull-down machine), Mike Hoebel, Brian Mitchell (having promised to cut back on his non-boating activities but reluctant to begin any resolution on a Monday). Special guest lecturer: Dr. Dale Lyon.

After the meeting started, at 1 PM Galiano Daylight Time, Mike, Brian, and Jerry would get up every few minutes, comb their hair differently or put on a sweater or do something else to change their appearance, and then move to another chair to give the illusion that more people had showed up for the meeting, but the effort was exhausting, and when Karen and Dick showed up later, the Naturalists settled down and got straight to business...

1. "Species of the Month" project: Jerry confirmed that Bob Harmer's article on aliens was set for the June issue, prompting Mike, who'd assumed we were joking at last month's meeting, to mutter, "Has it come to this then?" Karen suggested that we might want to include a co-article about a "real" species to preserve our reputation, such as it is, while others claimed, perhaps cynically, that an article on aliens might be just the thing to boost our membership. Membership is not a problem, though. Twenty-five people have joined the Naturalists, plus three more during the summer. But of those, 15 have not yet contributed an article for the Active Page. So we're looking for one of those 15 to step up to the July article. A volunteer would be nice. But if everyone remains silent this week, we have this cousin, Vinnie, in Jersey, who knows a guy who knows some guys who specialize in persuasion. They will work alphabetically through the email list.
2. "Galiano's Natural Areas Brochure" project: Mike passed around the latest version of the brochure. Though we all realized it was exactly the same mock-up we saw last month, we all pretended this "new" version was another step closer to the final product. "That photo looks so much better there." "I like the this typeface better than the old one." Jerry reported that he saw Keith packing to leave town.
3. ~~"Western Bluebird stewards"~~ "House Wren stewards" project: We've had reports of bluebird sightings! Yes, Mike's son says that his backyard is full of bluebirds. Mike is arranging for his son, who lives in Portland, to box up a few and ship them to Galiano, where we'll slip them into an empty nestbox some night. Until then, Mike and Karen are noting House Wren activity at the boxes on Mt. Galiano. Several boxes had a few to many twigs, and a couple had the soft cup-like nest, one with a tiny egg. (While courting, the male House Wren starts several nests and takes his betrothed around to let her pick the one she likes best. Then he finishes the framing, and she completes the interior decorating.) All this talk of avian nuptials prompted an extemporaneous story from Brian. A siskin flew into one of his house's particularly lethal windows, he said, and it fell senseless to the deck. Another siskin – Brian claimed she was the mate – flew down and perched beside her comatose partner. One could almost see the tiny tears and the look of defiance as she stood guard. She remained by his side for a long time until, as an experiment, Brian approached threateningly (pretending to be a window), and she flew up to the safety of a nearby branch. Then the male roused himself and also flew off, leading one to speculate whether he might have been overplaying his injury to get a little sympathy, as men will often do. Brian's question to the table was, Given this tender display, might siskins be monogamous? We thought it best to move on to the next agenda item.

4. "Hummingbird banding" project: Mike reported the case of a banded hummingbird coming home to the wife with a bit of lipstick on his throat feathers. She threw him out, and now he's suing for parental visitation rights. Which may or may not have anything to do with a report from Cam Findlay last week that hummingbird numbers at the banding stations around our area are way down this year. On Galiano, we trapped only 10 birds at BK's last Tuesday (though we banded over 20 in less time at DF's unofficial banding station later in the week). Some people are wondering whether the cold wet weather in March took a heavy toll on the birds who'd been tempted north early by the warm February. But others are suggesting that the extraordinarily heavy arbutus bloom this year is giving the birds the opportunity to disperse in the woods rather than congregate around feeders. We'll have a better idea which theory might be right when we tally the numbers at traps later in the season, or when we get the list of couples from the Registry Agent Office.
5. Bird walks: Only three more opportunities this spring to join one of our bird walks: Bellhouse this Saturday, Cable/Pebble after that, and Mt. Galiano crowning the season on the 28<sup>th</sup>.
6. Report on the California Condor, by Dr. Dale Lyon: Arriving late and standing nervously at the threshold, ready to bolt at the first sign of disturbance, Professor Lyon regaled the group with a long and learned talk on condor biology and the condition of secondary roads in northern Arizona. He summarized the lecture with this observation: "Condors must be the laziest birds on earth. In all the time I sat watching them, I never saw them flap a wing." Before any of us could raise the question about who might be lazier, the condor or the birder who sits watching them, Dr. Lyon disappeared down the corridor.
7. New business: Environment Week. Mike reminded us that Environment Week is celebrated in June and wondered whether the Naturalists shouldn't do something. Given the low participation of our group at Earth Day (basically, Mike put up a poster display and led a bird walk), we didn't hold out much hope of mounting an event for Environment Week. Unless one or more of the other 20 in our group would like to volunteer.
8. New business: Partnership with the Re-directory. This was Brian's fabulous idea. Let's say the Re-directory gets a donation of lumber. Couldn't we hand people a board and a plan for building a birdhouse? Not a kit, exactly. We're not going to cut out the pieces and drill the holes. More like a concept, a vision. We'll call this initiative "A Plank and a Plan". Mike said he would find a simple plan that we could print out. Brian will find the planks.
9. Next meeting time and place: MONDAY, June 20<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM at the Activity Center.

Then through the open window we heard an organ strike up the bridal march and saw two swallows come flying out of a hole where a pipe goes through the eaves, so we all ran out to throw rice.

Corrections and comments to:

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