

ECOSYSTEMS & BIODIVERSITY

Greater Victoria is high in biodiversity, as shown by the great variety of plants, animals and ecosystems that are found throughout the region. Biodiversity can be observed close to home, in backyard gardens, grassy parks, and street trees. Biodiversity is even higher in our region's natural ecosystems, including:

- Coastal Douglas-fir forests
- Garry Oak meadows
- Wetlands
- Streams, rivers and riparian areas
- Rocky, pebble and sandy shorelines
- Eelgrass meadows and kelp forests

Did you know?

- Vancouver Island is a biodiversity hotspot and is thought to have provided refuge to plants and animals during the last glaciation.
- Victoria sits in the Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic zone – an area affected by factors like temperature, rainfall, moisture balance and altitude – which covers only 0.3% of the province but is home to the highest number of species and ecosystems at risk in BC.
- Some species like the Vancouver Island Water Shrew (found near Sooke) are endemic to Vancouver Island, meaning they are not found anywhere else.

As you visit different sites in the NatureHood, watch and listen for the incredible biodiversity that surrounds you.

Top NatureHood Attractions (see reverse)

- Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary
- Important Bird and Biodiversity Area
- Learning Centre
- Multi-Use Trail
- Multi-Use Trail (Proposed)
- Park
- Watercourse
- Waterbody
- Wetland

Land Classification (Habitat Acquisition Trust 2011, CRD 2020)

Unclassified	Tree Cover
Lake, Pond	Impervious Surface
Riparian Area	Agricultural Field
Grass, Bare Ground	



more about nature. Enjoy a journey to learn, love and discover working to better understand and protect nature. If you are curious to learn more, take photos of your discoveries and use Naturalist and eBird to confirm your sightings. You will create data for scientists to use in their research, and in return, you will receive feedback about these plants and animals. While you explore, this map will help put names to some of the life that you see. Look for the Naturalist app on the App Store and Google Play.



- A CLOSE LOOK AT THE NATUREHOOD**
1. Go birdwatching (see map for prime locations)
 2. Paint, draw, sketch wildflowers in spring
 3. Explore diverse intertidal life in summer
 4. View spawning salmon in the fall
 5. Volunteer with a local stewardship group
 6. Look for plants and animals on the species list, and check off the ones you find.
- This map is a guide to help connect you with amazing places and nearby nature. Here are some fun ideas to get you started on your journey!



NATURE IN THE CITY MAP
One Map, One NatureHood,
A Guide to Many Adventures
First Edition 2021



Greater Victoria NatureHood

LOCALS IN THE NATUREHOOD

	<p>ARBUTUS <i>Arbutus menziesii</i> / ROSEHEC A broadleaf evergreen tree, up to 30 m tall, usually with a crooked or leaning trunk that divides into several twisting upright branches and an irregularly rounded crown. The tree drops its leaves in the summer instead of the fall. The tree's reddish bark peels off, revealing the smooth, new green bark underneath.</p>		<p>LORQUIN'S ADMIRAL <i>Limenitis lorquini</i> / QUELAXEN This butterfly can easily be recognized by the orange tips on the upper part of its wings. There is a white band across both wings, above and below. Females are considerably larger than males.</p>
	<p>AMERICAN WIGEON <i>Mareca americana</i> / SEBENE Also known as Baldpate, the American Wigeon is a species of dabbling duck found in North America. Formerly assigned to <i>Anas</i>, this species is classified with the other wigeons in the dabbling duck genus <i>Mareca</i>. It is the New World counterpart of the Eurasian wigeon.</p>		<p>ORCA <i>Orcinus orca</i> / KEL-LOLEMECEN The Orca is the largest member of the oceanic dolphin family. This toothed whale has a diverse diet, although individual populations often specialize in particular types of prey. Some feed exclusively on fish, while others hunt marine mammals such as seals and other species of dolphin.</p>
	<p>BALD EAGLE <i>Haliaeetus leucophalus</i> / CELENSIA The adult Bald Eagle is a striking dark brownish-black bird. It gets its white head and tail at approximately four years of age. The Bald Eagle is not bald. They got the name from an old English word 'bald' meaning white (white-headed). They can grow to about 1 m tall and have a wingspread of over 2 m.</p>		<p>GREAT BLUE HERON <i>Ardea herodias</i> / SNEKE This large wading bird is common near the shores of open water and in wetlands over most of Greater Victoria. Despite their impressive size, Great Blue Herons (on the cover) weigh only 2 to 3 kg thanks in part to their hollow bones, a feature shared by all birds.</p>
	<p>BANANA SLUG <i>Ariolimax columbianus</i> / PENANE KIJOTEN Banana Slugs are one of the largest slugs in the world! They can grow up to 26 cm long. Banana Slugs can also have 27,000 teeth on a long tooth-covered "tongue". They come in a range of colours, from yellow to brown to black and many are mottled with black spots. Banana slugs like a moist, cool environment and are native to the BC temperate coastal rainforest.</p>		<p>HARBOUR SEAL <i>Phoca vitulina</i> / ASW Harbour Seals are found along the coast in coastal waters, estuaries and river systems. Look for them basking in the sun on the rocks along the shore. They range in colour from brownish to black with a speckled pattern.</p>
	<p>BELTED KINGFISHER <i>Megasceryle alcyon</i> / TCELE The Belted Kingfisher is a pigeon-sized bird. It is blue-gray above, white below, with a bushy crest and dagger-like bill. The male has a blue-gray breast band. The female is similar, but also has a chestnut belly band.</p>		<p>PACIFIC CHORUS FROG <i>Pseudacris regilla</i> / WEKEK This small frog is usually about 5 cm long in full growth. They can be green, bronze, grey, and all colours in between. Pacific Chorus Frogs can be heard calling throughout the year, especially during rainstorms, and the spring mating choruses are impossible to miss. It's very difficult to spot these little fellows, though, since they will cease calling if they feel threatened.</p>
	<p>EELGRASS <i>Zostera marina</i> / CELEM Sometimes known as the 'salmon highway', Eelgrass is important to the survival of salmon. A native seagrass, it rivals some of the world's richest rainforests. It provides food and protection important to fish and shellfish species.</p>		<p>PACIFIC WREN <i>Troglodytes pacificus</i> / DEDEM These birds are very vocal, so listen for their rapid series of tumbling and trilling notes in forest environments. When you hear their sweet song, patiently look in the understorey for mouse-like movements along decaying logs and in upturned roots. Early mornings during the breeding season are the best times to find them perched in the open, shaking as they sing.</p>
	<p>BUMBLEBEE <i>Bombus</i> / SEMSEMIYE The native bumblebee has a robust black body that is extensively covered with black, yellow, and sometimes orange hairs on all body segments. Its colonies nest underground and unlike honey bees, they prefer to be out pollinating in cool, cloudy weather.</p>		<p>DOUGLAS-FIR <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> / JSA There are two varieties of Douglas-fir: they are Coastal and Interior. The Coastal variety that grows in the NatureHood can reach heights of 80 m.</p>
	<p>COMMON CAMAS <i>Camassia quamash</i> / KLOEL Common Camas (on the cover) and Great Camas have light to deep blue flowers and bloom in the spring. Both are perennial herbs that grow from an edible bulb. They were once an important cultural item for the Salish in the area who shaped the landscape to "farm" it. They are not to be confused with the Death Camas, which has a creamy white flower, but underground, the bulbs can be difficult to identify and toxic if consumed.</p>		<p>RED SQUIRREL <i>Sciurus harrisi</i> / CEPSIOTEN This small tree squirrel prefers coniferous forests. They spend most of their day in the tree canopy and will chirp loudly when you get close, which makes it easier to find them by listening than by sight. Their colour will change during the winter season to a greyish brown hue without a black side stripe.</p>
	<p>FAWN LILY <i>Erythronium revolutum</i> Fawn Lily plants grow to over 30 cm tall, and have pairs of long, thick, white-spotted leaves growing from the base. The flowers are pink and sometimes almost look fluorescent. The leaves show up in springtime and the flowers open in early summer.</p>		<p>RIVER OTTER <i>Lontra canadensis</i> / CTEMES River Otters have short coarse fur and lengthy, streamlined bodies. They have short powerful legs with fully webbed toes and a long tail to help them swim efficiently underwater while searching for fish, their main source of food.</p>
	<p>GARRY OAK <i>Quercus garryana</i> / QENILC An iconic tree with thick, grooved, scaly, greyish-black bark and a round spreading crown. Garry Oak trees (on the cover) can grow out of rock and be super stunted, adapting to its environment, or grow up to 20 m tall, and the Garry Oak habitat supports many species at risk.</p>		<p>SALMON <i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i> / SCAANNEW Salmon are large fish, in various colours from silver and grey with dark spots or fins. Chinook, can weigh up to 36 kg. There are 6 species of Pacific Salmon (<i>Oncorhynchus</i> spp.): Chinook, Chum, Coho, Pink, Sockeye, and Steelhead.</p>
	<p>HERMIT CRAB <i>Pagurus</i> Hermit Crabs tend to live in 'secondhand' or previously owned and discarded shells. For this reason, it is important to leave empty shells where you find them.</p>		<p>SALMONBERRY <i>Rubus spectabilis</i> / ELILE Salmonberry grows in groups and reaches up to 4 m tall. Look for the butterfly-shaped basal leaves, and the pink flowers that bloom in spring. Its salmon-red coloured berries ripen in summer. The thorny stems of the plant are covered in papery brown bark.</p>
	<p>HOODED MERGANSER <i>Mergus americanus</i> / YOKA This small duck has a slender pointed bill. The male has a white, fan-shaped, black-bordered crest, a blackish body with dull rusty flanks, and a white breast with two black stripes down the side. The female is dull grey-brown, with a warmer brown head and crest. Both sexes show a white wing patch in flight.</p>		<p>WESTERN PURPLE MARTIN <i>Progne subis arboricola</i> / QSECEM This iridescent dark blue/purple bird occurs exclusively west of the Rocky Mountains from southwest BC to southern California. They have been designated as a species at risk in BC as they are recovering from a severe population decline in the mid-late 1900s, (on the cover)</p>
	<p>JUNE PLUM <i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i> / TEXEN This shrub is also known as osoberry. It is native to the Pacific coast and mountain ranges of North America. It is among the first plants to bear fruit and it flowers in early spring.</p>		<p>WESTERN TERRESTRIAL GARTER SNAKE <i>Thamnophis elegans elegans</i> / SOLKE Also known as the "wandering" Garter Snake, this species is a frequent visitor to many back-s throughout its range. Garter Snakes are rarely found far from water, either fresh or marine. During the summer, these snakes prefer open areas like meadows and estuaries.</p>
	<p>LICORICE FERN <i>Polypodium glycyrrhiza</i> / TESIP This summer deciduous fern is also known as sweet root. Licorice Ferns often grow on rocky outcroppings, logs, and even on trees like the Bigleaf Maple. The rhizomes (horizontal, underground stems) were traditionally chewed or steeped to make a medicinal tea to treat colds and sore throats.</p>		<p>WOOD DUCK <i>Aix sponsa</i> / MOEKE This species of perching duck breeds most widely in the wooded valleys and floodplains of southern British Columbia. It is one of the most colorful North American waterfowl.</p>

NatureHood recognizes that language is critical for connecting the **W̱SÁNEĆ** and **lək̓ʷáŋas** speaking peoples to their culture, spirituality, identity and land.

SC̓NTCEN lək̓ʷáŋas

WATERWAYS AND WATERSHEDS

We all live in a watershed, whether natural, urban or rural. A watershed is an area of land that drains precipitation and groundwater to a common point, such as a creek, wetland, lake or ocean. Healthy watersheds feature ample trees and abundant vegetation that help to slow, clean, and store water by allowing it to absorb into the landscape. Watersheds can be different sizes and scales, and small watersheds can be part of larger watersheds. Each watershed plays an important role in maintaining our water cycle while providing important habitat to local plants and animals. Do your part and learn how you can clean, protect and enhance the watersheds in your NatureHood.

RIPARIAN ZONES

Riparian zones are important transition areas that connect the water with the land, and support a wide diversity of plant and animal life. Riparian zones may be found surrounding lakes, estuaries, streams and rivers. These critical buffer zones improve water quality, retain water during storm events, prevent erosion, and provide important habitat for fish and other species.



WATERSHEDS OF GREATER VICTORIA



GREATER VICTORIA NATUREHOOD

ABOUT NATUREHOOD

Nature Canada's NatureHood Program is about connecting children and families to nature right where they live. It is a call to expose a new generation of nature lovers, naturalists and citizen scientists to nature all around them. To learn more about NatureHood visit www.naturehood.com or contact us at info@gvnaturehood.com.

CONNECTING GREATER VICTORIA'S NATUREHOODS

The Greater Victoria NatureHood is a partnership of grass-roots naturalist organizations, not-for-profits and local governments, all sharing a strong commitment to protect nature in the Greater Victoria Region. It promotes nature awareness through education, stewardship activities and events, and wildlife observation, in our public green spaces.

GREATER VICTORIA NATUREHOOD

Being in nature promotes awareness of our natural world and increases mental and physical health, as well as overall wellbeing. The Greater Victoria NatureHood aims to inspire children – and adults – to appreciate nature and take action to protect local species and natural places.

RESILIENT NATUREHOOD

A NatureHood is any place where you connect with nature's wonders – from observing a bee pollinate a flower in a planter box, to watching wild birds at a backyard feeder or local park, to witnessing the trees change with the passing of the seasons in your local forest. Look around and you will find nature everywhere throughout the Greater Victoria NatureHood.

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Connect with nature by taking time to simply go outdoors and explore the natural world around you. This can be as simple as going to your backyard or to a local park. You do not have to go far to explore nature. Make your city nature-friendly by working with your community to restore city parks, ravines, open spaces and other natural places for birds and native wildlife.

LEARN ABOUT AND RESPECT THE LOCAL PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL WILDLIFE LAWS

The federal Migratory Birds Convention Act protects birds, their nests, and their eggs from harm or capture in Canada. Other provincial wildlife laws protect other species in the same way. Purchasing, keeping or trading a threatened species of wildlife from other countries is also illegal without a permit.

LEAVE NO TRACE

When you visit the Greater Victoria NatureHood, be sure to dispose of your waste appropriately.

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

To help preserve the past and present for the future, examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic artifacts and structures. Leave any rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them and avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.

RESPECT WILDLIFE

Feeding wildlife can lead to health impacts, alter natural behaviours, and increase exposure to predators and other dangers. Do not follow or approach wildlife but instead, observe from a distance. Avoid wildlife during sensitive times such as mating, nesting, raising their young. Pets may not be permitted at the places that you visit, please visit location websites prior to heading out with your family.

BE MINDFUL OF OTHERS

Be courteous. One of the most important components of outdoor ethics is to be courteous to others, and follow local regulations. Many people visit the NatureHood specifically to listen to nature, so please maintain quiet and keep your ears open.

GET OUT INTO THE NATUREHOOD

By using this map, you can connect with nature at nearby urban protected areas, like Esquimalt Lagoon Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary and, Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, to name but just a few. We hope that your experience will inspire you to care for and protect our natural environment.

BECOME A NATUREHOOD STEWARD

Build community while connecting with nature. Protect the NatureHood by joining one of the many stewardship groups in Greater Victoria who volunteer in natural areas. Opportunities include:

- Removing invasive species
- Planting native plants and trees
- Improving stream quality
- Monitoring birds and wildlife
- Collecting litter, and more.

To find an opportunity that suits your interests, visit www.gvnaturehood.com

ABOUT THE COVER ART

There are so many wonderful natural places to explore in the Greater Victoria NatureHood, which made it hard to choose just one to showcase on the cover. Artist Kristi Bridgeman came up with a fictional work that captures special elements from many of Victoria's natural spaces, including the iconic Garry Oak habitat, which supports many species at risk. With less than 5% of the original Garry Oak habitat remaining in British Columbia, it was important to include this ecosystem as well as a variety of native flora and fauna including the Purple Martin, Bumblebee and camas flowers.

Nootka Rose



Important Bird Areas (IBAs)

In our NatureHood there are three Important Bird & Biodiversity areas: Sidney Channel and Mandarte Island located next to Shoal Harbour MBS, and Chain Islets - Grand Chain Island located next to Victoria Harbour MBS. There are 84 IBAs in British Columbia. These IBAs are of exceptional international significance for the conservation of birds and biodiversity and are part of a global network first established in 1985. In Canada, IBAs are a joint initiative of Nature Canada and Birds Canada.



Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary

(Est. April 10, 1931, 144 ha)
 Located in Sidney and North Saanich, 30 km north of Victoria along the eastern side of the Saanich Peninsula, it features shallow bays, tidal flats, small islands and sheltered waters. The shoreline alternates between rocky outcrops and beaches of sand, gravel and silt. It is often lined with Douglas-fir (e.g., Beaufort Grove, Roberts Bay), Mermaid Creek empties in Roberts Bay, a bay with several viewpoints.

Home to a busy small craft harbour, Tsehum Harbour (or Shoal Harbour) has fishing vessels, a marine services industry, several marinas and the headquarters of Gulf Island National Park Reserve. It is lined with residential neighbourhoods interspersed with parks and beach access points (e.g., Nymph Park, Lillian Hoffer Park, Resthaven Park) where eBird reports ~110 bird species. The Tsehum Lagoon can be seen from the Lochside Regional Trail and Marina Way. The sanctuary is rich in marine life with a range of bird species along the shore and in the nearby waters, especially over the winter months.

Roberts Bay is the site of an extensive 23-year study of wintering Buffleheads. These observations led to the yearly celebration of "All Buffleheads Day", when this small, punctual sea duck returns for the winter in successive waves starting in mid-October.



Gulls

There are 12 species of gulls known to regularly visit the NatureHood. Pictured here is the Glaucous-winged Gull; it is the only gull known to breed locally. Gulls are scavengers and are sometimes called the 'vultures of the coast' because they scrounge the coastline and will eat almost anything that washes up on the beach and shoreline.



Photo: Alan Simon

TOP MUST-SEE ATTRACTIONS IN THE GREATER VICTORIA NATUREHOOD



Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary

(Est. Oct. 27, 1923, 1840 ha)
 The oldest Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Pacific Canada stretches over 30 km west and east of Victoria Harbour. It is surrounded by five municipalities (Victoria, Oak Bay, Saanich, Esquimalt and View Royal), numerous urban parks and historic sites. It is also home to the Port of Victoria and its seaplane terminal, several marinas, paddling clubs, a shipyard and other industries. The Galloping Goose Regional Trail (Trans Canada Trail) stretches along some of its shores.

It features 30 eBird hotspots including viewpoints like Cattle Point, Bowker Creek estuary, McNeill Bay, Clover Point, Ogden Point breakwater, West Bay Walkway, Selkirk Trestle, Esquimalt Gorge Park and Cuthbert Holmes Park. It is associated with three Ecological Reserves of British Columbia (Trial Islands, Oak Bay Islands, Ten Mile Point) and a designated Important Bird Area, the Chain Islets-Great Chain Island.

It is home to Garry Oak associated ecosystems, maritime meadows, kelp forests, beds of eelgrass and clams, surfgrass, tidal flats and marshes, six small estuaries and two salmon-bearing streams. Not to mention 270 species of birds, 30 species of mammals and 95+ species at risk including Marbled Murrelet, Bigg's and Southern Resident Killer Whales, Olympia Oyster, Victoria's Owl-clover, Golden Paintbrush and Macoun's Meadowfoam.



Esquimalt Lagoon Migratory Bird Sanctuary

(Est. Dec. 12, 1931, 134 ha)
 Located next to Esquimalt Harbour and 5 km west of Victoria Harbour, it is surrounded by the municipality of Colwood, Royal Roads University and a large bay named Royal Roads, an historic navy anchorage site. The university's backyard offers a great viewpoint and a colony of Western Purple Martins. Prior to European contact, the intertidal clam beds at the entrance to the lagoon were extensively harvested by ancestors of the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations. The lagoon features both rich and shallow feeding grounds and a sheltered place for birds to winter and rest during migration.

The sanctuary is a favourite destination for birders and nature lovers and supports a wide range of sea-birds, waterbirds and shorebirds, particularly from October to May. Up to 230 bird species have been reported near the bridge accessing the Coburg Peninsula and some of Greater Victoria's biggest trees (e.g., Grand Fir) and one of its most intact forests occurs next to the lagoon and the University.

Marbled Murrelet Rhinoceros Auklet Black Oystercatcher



Photo: Bob McLean

Photo: Bob McLean

Photo: Bob McLean



Government House

Located on the traditional territory of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, Government House is the office and official residence of the Lieutenant Governor and the ceremonial home of all British Columbians. The Government House gardens are open to the public and are lovingly maintained by hundreds of volunteers who raise funds and ensure the future of this remnant Garry Oak landscape.

In 2017, the Lieutenant Governor at the time, the Honourable Judith Guichon, designated the grounds of Government House as an official NatureHood site within Greater Victoria, with the goal to inspire Victoria residents to enjoy the outdoors and connect with the natural environment that is around them every day.

Black Brant

Found during spring migration, using their small bill, Brants feed on eelgrass and marine algae along the shore. Once a popular Christmas meal, their declining numbers, along with the decline of other birds, led to the establishment of NatureHood's Migratory Bird Sanctuaries.

Harlequin Duck



Photo: Bob McLean



Rithet's Bog conservation area is home to several rare plant species. Its wetland provides habitat to a wide variety of birds. During the summer months you will see Cedar Waxwings, Violet-green Swallows and Tree Swallows and during the winter, Mallards, American Coots, and Great Blue Herons. The 2.8 km trail is fairly flat and can be walked in about 1 hour.



Saxe Point Park is a popular destination for SCUBA diving, dog walking, and weddings. Forested trails and beach accesses are set among mature Douglas-fir and Grand-fir with many trails leading to beach coves, gardens, and a picnic area. The open grassy area boasts amazing views of the majestic Olympic Mountains and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.



Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is an accessible urban green space with two distinct ecosystems: a rare Garry Oak meadow atop Christmas Hill and a low wetland around Swan Lake. The sanctuary is vital for protecting threatened species and the Colquitz River watershed. Visitors can enjoy a floating boardwalk where ducks and River Otters swim among yellow pond lilies. Keep observers might spot endangered Western Painted Turtles basking in the sun!



Walbran Park provides viewpoints from which to enjoy magnificent views of ocean, mountain, and the surrounding urban and waterfront landscape, as well as opportunity to learn about the historical and conservation significance of the area. A short trail is just steps to a historical monument. Some minor trails are not accessible by wheeled apparatuses.



Anderson Hill has panoramic views of the Trial Islands, Juan de Fuca Strait and the Olympic Mountains to the south. The park features rock outcrops, Garry Oak ecosystems, native flora and fauna and non-native shrubs and plants.



Beacon Hill Park / miqan is a crowning jewel in Victoria's park system. There are natural areas, manicured flower beds, footpaths and many sports and play features for the whole family to enjoy.



Bowker Creek estuary and "Bowker Reef" are located at the south end of Willows Beach. Bowker Creek is the region's most urban creek, traveling from its headwaters through underground pipes, and emerging in parks and greenspaces in both Saanich and Oak Bay. At its river mouth, the availability of freshwater for drinking and bathing regularly attracts several common and rare birds, making this a favourite regional birdwatching site.



Cattle Point is renowned for its starry skies and several rare plants that flourish in the Uplands Park. Located in Oak Bay and running along the coastline, this beautiful natural area is an excellent location for birdwatching. It also offers a beautiful viewpoint where you might see Orcas, Grey Whales, and California Sea Lions.



Coles Bay Regional Park offers a gentle swimming beach and forest trails suitable for the whole family. This park is the perfect place for a short stroll, or family picnic, and attracts bird enthusiasts and beach explorers.



Colquitz River Trail runs along the Colquitz River, through Cuthbert Holmes Park and Panama Flats. The river is an urban fish habitat with Coho and Chum Salmon commonly seen during their spawning season in the fall. Take a walk and see all the stream restoration work that has occurred.



Esquimalt Gorge Park offers many significant trees throughout the rolling landscape including some Umbrella Pines that are over 100 years old. Visit the Japanese garden, nature house, or the children's playground. There is even a sandy beach that provides access for swimmers and a launch site for paddlers. The fresh water of Gorge Creek that meanders through the park enters the salty waters of the Gorge, creating a nutrient-rich habitat for birds and fish in the estuary.



Cuthbert Holmes Park is a large urban natural area. It is known to have the largest urban salmon run in the Victoria area. Wetland restoration has occurred, resulting in returning wildlife not seen in the park for decades. Come and enjoy a relatively flat 2 km loop trail.



Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park / XEOL, XELEK often has a variety of waterfowl that visit these calm waters. Some of the waterfowl you may find are Mergansers, Buffleheads or Canada Geese. The Cottonwood, Pacific Crabapple and Red Alders provide habitat for cavity nesting birds. The park has a variety of recreational opportunities available for all levels, from amateurs to Olympians.



Island View Beach Regional Park offers an expansive sandy beach and panoramic seascape views of Haro Strait, James Island and Mount Baker. Rare dunes, shrubs and wetland ecosystems of this seashore park are home to many resident and migratory bird species, making it a premier bird-watching area. Watch for Marbled Murrelets and Surf Scoters riding the waves and Northern Harriers or Short-eared Owls to be cruising the fields.



Kitty Islet is where you can enjoy the peaceful views of Trial Islands, McNeill Bay and the Olympic Mountains from the permanent Adiron-dack chairs perched on the rocky bluffs. It is an ideal location for fishing and watching the birds and Sea Lions.



Harling Point is a small site of natural and cultural significance in Oak Bay, composed of an urban park and private property. Harling Point is located next to a national historic site, a Chinese Cemetery established in 1903. On a clear day, enjoy great views of the Juan de Fuca Strait and the Olympic Mountains across the strait from a viewpoint near beautiful Gonzales Bay.



Mount Douglas Park / P'kols offers a spectacular 360-degree view of the area around Victoria. This marine shore to hilltop park is popular, hosting a network of trails along its forested slopes and down to the beach. At the beach it is common to see a wide range of waterfowl, Harbour Seals and sometimes even Orca.



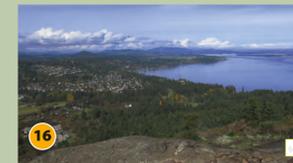
Mount Work Regional Park is the dominant hill on the horizon from many vantage points in Saanich, Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula. This popular recreation spot features three freshwater lakes and a variety of easy and challenging trails where visitors can hike through forest to the summit. Durrance Lake, on the park's north side, is wheelchair-accessible and features a public swimming beach, boat launch and a hiking loop.



The Matson Lands Conservation Area contains more than one hundred Garry Oaks, the only native oak tree in western Canada. This gnarly-shaped tree has unique adaptations allowing it to live in the rainshadow of the Vancouver Island, Coastal, and Olympic mountains.



Mill Hill Regional Park is a little-known oasis, exemplifying the exquisite beauty and ecological wealth of our region. The slopes of Mill Hill protect important remnants of Garry Oak ecosystems, a Douglas-fir forest and a cedar wetland bordering Millstream Creek. In the spring, wildflowers such as camas and White Fawn Lily blanket the hillside.



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Mount Douglas Park / P'kols offers a spectacular 360-degree view of the area around Victoria. This marine shore to hilltop park is popular, hosting a network of trails along its forested slopes and down to the beach. At the beach it is common to see a wide range of waterfowl, Harbour Seals and sometimes even Orca.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge with respect the territory of the SENCOTEN and Lekwungen speaking peoples on whose traditional lands and waterways we live, work and play and whose deep relationship to place continues to this day. Greater Victoria NatureHood looks forward to building a future map that includes more First Nations knowledge, language and history to provide a more complete illustration of our region's natural heritage.



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Capital Regional District, District of Saanich Concept Field Guide for Plants and Animals & Our Backyard Magazine, Township of Esquimalt, District of Oak Bay.

CREDITS

This map was made possible by a generous grant from Nature Canada to NatureHood Greater Victoria. Additional thanks go to the many individuals and organizations that provided guidance and resources to help make the map, including District of Saanich, Capital Regional District, Lime Design and Hemlock Printers.

