



linking people to nature on Lasqueti
and surrounding islands
Issue #5, Spring 2015

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Newts and Pacific Chorus Frogs

The warming spring sends amphibians an inner call – time to mate! Both the Pacific Chorus frogs and Rough-skinned Newts head to water to breed each spring on Lasqueti and surrounding islands.

Ponds are throbbing with the sounds of Pacific Chorus frogs, commonly called tree frogs, as the males cast their sperm, which the females pick up and incubate. These five-centimeter frogs lay multiple eggs in sacs on plants and sticks in the water. Chorus frogs come in many colours from grey or tan to bright green, with a conspicuous dark “mask” or stripe extending from the nostrils through the eye down the body. Shortly after their raucous sounds stop, I watch as mergansers and mallards, and occasionally a heron, land in our pond to take advantage of an egg dinner in waiting.



article and photo by Sheila Harrington

Pulled by an inner call, rough-skinned newts are also on the move. Every spring this small 6-7 inch salamandridae makes its way to Pete’s lake to spawn.

Unlike any other salamander, it flashes its bright orange under colours when threatened. The male rough-skinned newt develops a fin around the tail and the rough skin becomes smooth during mating season. “Like all native salamander species, newts have internal fertilization whereby the male releases a sperm packet that the female picks up with her cloaca. Unlike most amphibians, newts lay single eggs attached to the stems of vegetation.” (BC Frogwatch) The newt’s eggs hatch 3-4 weeks later, and metamorphose into adults one to two years later.

Except for cars crushing them on their path, newts don’t have many predators because they are poisonous. Only the Common Garter Snake can withstand its poison. Rough skinned newts are yellow-listed in BC. Please slow down and watch for newts as you pass the lake.

Because the time when frogs begin to call can depend on the weather, scientists think that keeping track of this information may help us learn more about climate change.

**The
rough-skinned newt takes an
annual life-threatening trip across Main
road to breed.**



photo by Kim Cabrera, www.bear-tracker.com

Osland Nature Reserve

by Gordon Scott



fawn lilies at Osland Nature Reserve, photo Sheila H.

Draped across an isolated glen in the middle of Lasqueti, the Johnny Osland Nature Reserve rises gently from lush valley bottom wetland to the arid summit of Earl's Peak. Coastal Douglas-fir forests carpet the hillsides surrounding a 5-acre restored wetland. Old knurled and fire-scarred Douglas-fir trees nod above cedar and hemlock understory. In natural sheep-free zones along cliff faces, assemblies of Fawn lilies and Indian paintbrush flourish.

Sailor and world traveler John Osland purchased the 162-acre tract in 1948 and lived lightly on the property until his death in 2010. Purportedly furious over the wanton destruction of then current logging practices, John vowed to halt commercial logging on his newly acquired property. John collected dead and down trees for his firewood, rode a bicycle, and like many Lasquetians, grew much of his own food. With help from neighbours John arranged to leave his property to the Islands Trust Fund upon his death to insure the forest would never be cut. In 2012 the property formally was anointed the Johnny Osland Nature Preserve.

In February 2015 The Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy (LINC) and the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust (NALT) signed a conservation covenant with the Islands Trust Fund that vests LINC and NALT with specific responsibilities and authority over the management of the Osland Nature Reserve. The conservation covenant requires the Islands Trust Fund to maintain the property in a natural state, prohibits the erection of buildings and logging, yet allows for the removal of exotic and invasive species. With LINC, NALT and the Islands Trust Fund working together, we will ensure that Johnny Osland's last wishes will be honoured.

Spring Birds by Sheila Ray

I sometimes hear people say the robins are back early this year. But the fact is that robins don't ever really leave. In some colder parts of Canada they may migrate south, but robins are found in every province during the winter. On Lasqueti we can see them all winter in large flocks, sometimes hundreds of birds, gathering wherever there is food, such as around arbutus berries or crabapples.

Come spring these large flocks split up and the birds start acting like the garden robins we remember from summer, pulling up worms and getting under the strawberry netting. We might think that they have returned, but what we are really seeing is a change in their behavior from large non-territorial nomadic foraging flocks to pairs aggressively defending breeding territory where they will raise their chicks. This behavioral change is common among birds.

Another bird that might confuse us is the hummingbird. It is common to see them in the winter. These are Anna's hummingbirds. They will stay here all winter wherever there is food, usually near a feeder, but also near winter flowering shrubs.

Any day now we will be inundated by those aggressive little Rufous hummingbirds that have been in Mexico all winter. They will begin moving north up the Pacific Coast from Mexico to their breeding territories, some going as far as Alaska. After they have raised their young, sometimes as early as July, they start their southern migration heading up into the Rocky Mountains where they feed on the wildflowers as they follow the mountain chain south.

Join us for our 2015 Annual General Meeting followed by a hike to the Johnny Osland Reserve

**Saturday, April 19th, 2015, 11:00 am
The Lasqueti Community Hall**

Current LINC Directors:

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