

Roberts Bay Residents

November 28, 2025 Newsletter: How Many Buffleheads? 10393 Allbay at Sidney Council, Cats in the Sanctuary, etc.

Dear neighbours and friends,

December is almost here! We wish all of you a very warm, cozy, happy holiday season with loved ones. 🌲 🎄 🌲

This newsletter contains information about:

- **How Many Buffleheads?**
- **10393 Allbay Beach Excavation at Town Council Dec 1**
- **Cats in the Sanctuary**
- **Goldeneyes here!**
- **Halloween Fireworks**
- **Drift Log Research**

How Many Buffleheads?

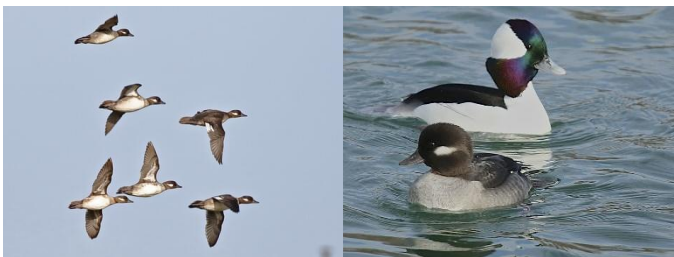
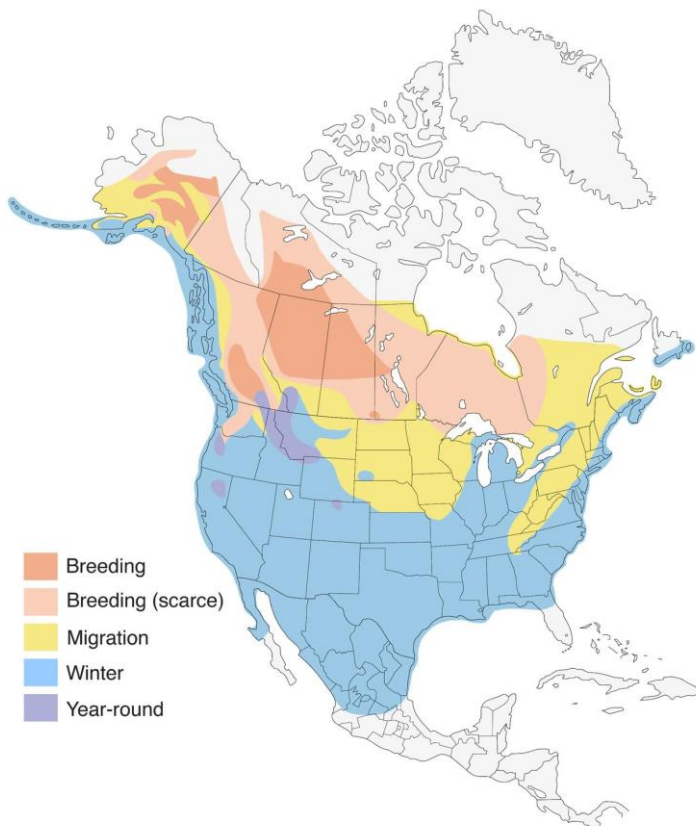


Photo Credit: [All About Birds](#)

Buffleheads arrive in Roberts Bay gradually, first just a few individuals, almost always on All Buffleheads Day, October 15. For the rest of October, large waves of ducks fly in, depending on the weather

in their northern summer range and the night winds through the mountains. Biologist and Bufflehead researcher Kerry Finley has studied them, and especially the timing of their migration, for almost 30 years. On November 4, 2025, he wrote "As forecast, peak numbers were reached today. A count of over 600 was obtained before one fine citizen suddenly blocked my view to put some garbage in the receptacle. Then a group of kayakers appeared which caused the Buffleheads to become steady and alert, perfect conditions for a photo-count. I obtained 666 on the second scan, with 260 drakes (39 %). This is a record high and a culmination of two rapid waves compressed, reflecting the passage of two deep lows and the onset of the rains ..." The map (below) of the Bufflehead migration and summer and winter home range is from [Cornell Lab All About Birds](#))



Kerry continues, "Evidently the Buffleheads, in this unprecedented late mass movement, have anticipated freeze-up and the arrival of another massive low pressure system now breaking over Vancouver

Island... Finally, it should be evident that Roberts Bay in Shoal Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (1931) is a critical staging habitat in spring and autumn, and an essential overwintering habitat. These 666 individuals represent a vast summer breeding range."

10393 Allbay Road beach excavation at Town Council Dec 1

You may recall the Town's October 6th Facebook post reporting that staff were taking enforcement action in response to significant changes to the foreshore of a private property on Allbay road without the required municipal permit. They were also reviewing foreshore



alterations of a private property on Rothesay Avenue to determine whether that work exceeded the scope of a development permit issued by the Town.

"Both sites are within Environmentally Sensitive Areas identified in Sidney's Official Community Plan. In marine coastal areas, the Official Community Plan (OCP) guidelines encourage environmental preservation between the natural boundary setback and intertidal

zone. Where erosion control is necessary, the OCP recommends gentle shoreline protection measures, such as natural plantings. On the property on Allbay Road, the alterations created a potential safety hazard for beach users and on-site workers. The Town ensured temporary risk-reduction measures were implemented."

The [agenda package](#) for Monday's Regular Town Council meeting contains a staff report, "10393 Allbay Road Project Status" and 4 emails to Council from the public.

[Click here for the staff report](#)

[Click here for the emails](#)

Click here for [information about attending Council meetings in person or online and communicating with Council](#)

Note: 'For issues related to the Roberts Bay Residents mission and vision, our newsletter policy is to provide information and communicate how readers can express their views. When individuals express opinions, it should be clear that they are speaking for themselves.

Cats in the Bird Sanctuary

Most of us are well aware of the harm caused by off-leash dogs chasing birds, in the bird sanctuary. It is easy to forget that cats can also present a threat, especially to shorebirds, but when a neighbour recently noticed a cat near a couple of plovers feeding on the beach, she asked us to remind everyone. The Bird Sanctuary Regulations are clear that owners of cats as well as dogs should not let them run at large in the sanctuary.



Goldeneyes in the Bay

Four Goldeneyes were seen Wednesday November 19 swimming in Roberts Bay! Hockey players here? No, the handsome [Common Goldeneye ducks](#) for whom the Vancouver women's professional hockey team is named. We don't often see Goldeneyes in Roberts Bay but at about 3:30pm November 26th, 2 pairs were swimming quite close to shore on the north side. They were keeping a bit of distance from the plentiful wigeons and buffleheads, but in the same area.

Photo credit Goldeneye drake Dorian Anderson on eBird.



Goldeneyes, like Buffleheads, are diving ducks but spend less time underwater than Buffleheads. Their range is circumpolar and their life cycle and migration are similar to those of the Bufflehead, nesting in tree cavities (although Goldeneyes accept specially constructed nest boxes) in the northern Interior. The chicks are ready to jump out of the nest within a day or two of hatching, long before they can fly. [Find more information here.](#)

Roberts Bay is home to hundreds of Buffleheads and hundreds of American Wigeons this winter, plus other less plentiful species like Hooded and Common Mergansers and handsome Harlequins. Thanks to Friends of Shoal Harbour (FOSH) you can revisit our [October 31 newsletter which featured an article "Winter Birds in the Sanctuary Now", with photos, by clicking here.](#)

Halloween Fireworks

[The October 31 issue](#) also contains a history of fireworks in the bird sanctuary since 2021. This year, Halloween 2025 was a very peaceful night in Roberts Bay. We believe this is due to sustained work by the Sidney Fire Department over the past 4 years with past support of volunteers from Friends of Shoal Harbour and Roberts Bay Residents doing public education with our pamphlet and posters. Volunteers from Reay Creek Residents also did public education in that neighbourhood. A thank-you letter to Fire Chief Brett Mikkelsen is attached.

Drift Logs Research



Drift logs and plovers at Clover Point in Victoria, BC. Credit: Tom Reimchen

In case you missed it, here is a link to a [recently published study by researchers at UVic](#) which found that drift logs, which have increased since the 19th century in association with logging on the coast, are destroying intertidal ecosystems and may have contributed to the decline in shorebird numbers.

Sorry to end this newsletter on a sad note.

We wish you the happiest of holidays in December and will be back in touch in January. 🌲 🎅 🌲

Roberts Bay Residents

Jocelyn Gifford, Communications

We welcome your feedback and suggestions. Just reply to this newsletter or write to robertsbayres@gmail.com.

You are receiving this email because you signed up at some point. To **unsubscribe**, simply reply to this email or write to robertsbayres@gmail.com and let us know.

Our Mission: We are a small group of friends who live on or near Roberts Bay and work together to preserve the ecology of Roberts Bay for future generations by creating ecological understanding among

neighbours through newsletters, relationships and volunteer projects.

*“ Our **vision** is to build a future in which our community lives in harmony with the living wonders of Roberts Bay and where the natural beauty and functionality of the ecosystems of the bay are preserved and enhanced to ensure that this very special place remains a safe refuge for wildlife and a source of inspiration for its present and future residents and visitors.”*