

WORKING WITH NATURE

TAKING NATURE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN PLANNING YOUR PROJECTS: A SEASONAL GUIDE

WINTER (DEC-FEB)

- Birds are not nesting – best time for clearing property
- Birds are feasting on insects wintering over in rotting logs and leaves – leave some winter-felled trees and branches if possible
- Good time to put up nest boxes for returning songbirds such as tree and violet-green swallows
 - Time to provide fresh water sources where natural sources have frozen
- Avoid disturbing wet or boggy areas – Pacific chorus frogs begin mating late winter
- Best time to board up and exclude river otters, raccoons, and other “denners” from undesired locations such as attics and crawlspaces
- Best time to walk property to determine size of wet and boggy areas

SPRING (MARCH-MAY)

- River otter and raccoon kits giving birth now – do not try to seal off entrances to denning areas unless the mother has removed all kits
- Mallards and bald eagles nesting – take special precautions around wetland areas and eagle nest trees
 - Barn and cliff swallows return
- Douglas squirrels born in tree cavities now through June – be careful when removing trees
 - Songbirds nesting now through summer. Mowing or clearing of vegetation (grass, trees, and shrubs) during breeding season may remove potential nest sites, directly destroy nests, expose nests to predators, and decrease food sources such as insects. (Birds nest everywhere from directly on the ground to the tops of trees, but generally within 5 metres of the ground.)
 - Kingfishers excavating burrows in mud banks – another reason to avoid retaining/armouring walls on shorelines
 - Wood ducks nesting in hollow tree cavities
- Songbirds building nests – leave dog hair, dryer lint out on bushes for nest building



SUMMER (JUNE-AUGUST)

- Native fruit-bearing plants abound. Leave berry-producing shrubs until they are spent before clearing (usually late in September)
- Harbor seal pups are born – don't disturb if alone on a beach; the mother will return for it
 - Goldfinches and cedar waxwings nesting
 - Garter snakes bearing young – watch for them in the grass when mowing lawns
 - Fledgling songbirds on the ground – keep your cats indoors!

FALL (SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER)

- Most migratory bird species have moved on – best time to clean out nest boxes to prepare for next spring
- Good time to plant shrubs/trees – wildlife-friendly native choices include elderberry, huckleberry, salal, serviceberry, salmonberry, and red flowering currant
- Winter residents begin arriving from the north – rough-legged hawks, merlins, northern harriers, peregrine falcons, and snowy owls
- Best time to seal up unwanted roosting sites for bats – bats migrate out of the area



If you moved here because it is beautiful then something within your heart obviously recognized the raw native talent of this place. Honour your good taste and leave a legacy by doing nothing to improve on it.

Briony Penn, Saltspring Island