

Course offers insight on marine birds

Registration currently underway for course at nature sanctuary

Todd Devlin
News staff

Every homework-weary student wants a bird course – Canadian university slang for an easy class.

However, a bird course being offered in Saanich is actually focused on marine birds and their behaviour.

The course, called Marine Birds: A Course for Naturalists and Enthusiasts, is being put on at the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. Registrations are now being accepted for the course – a series of five talks that

begin Feb. 12 and run through March 12.

“It’s not simply bird identification,” said instructor James Clowater, an ornithologist who specializes in the behavioural ecology of marine birds. “It’s more on the how and the why. Why do birds do certain things? And how have they evolved to behave that way?”

The class consists of a series of power point and video-illustrated talks that uncover secrets of how marine birds live and feed. There are also two shoreline field trips that will allow participants

to watch bird behaviour up close.

The class will come away with interesting and quirky information on marine birds, Clowater said. Take the Common Murre.

“People are amazed that this small bird can dive up to 180 meters in depth,” he said.

The course is held in the Swan Lake Nature House. Classes run from 7-9 p.m., on Feb. 12, 19, 26 and March 5, 12. The field trips are on March 1 and March 8 at 9 a.m.

The cost of the course is \$89. Call Swan Lake for details and to pre-register at 250-479-0211.

editor@saanichnews.com

“It’s more on the how and the why. Why do birds do certain things? And how have they evolved to behave that way?”

– James Clowater