

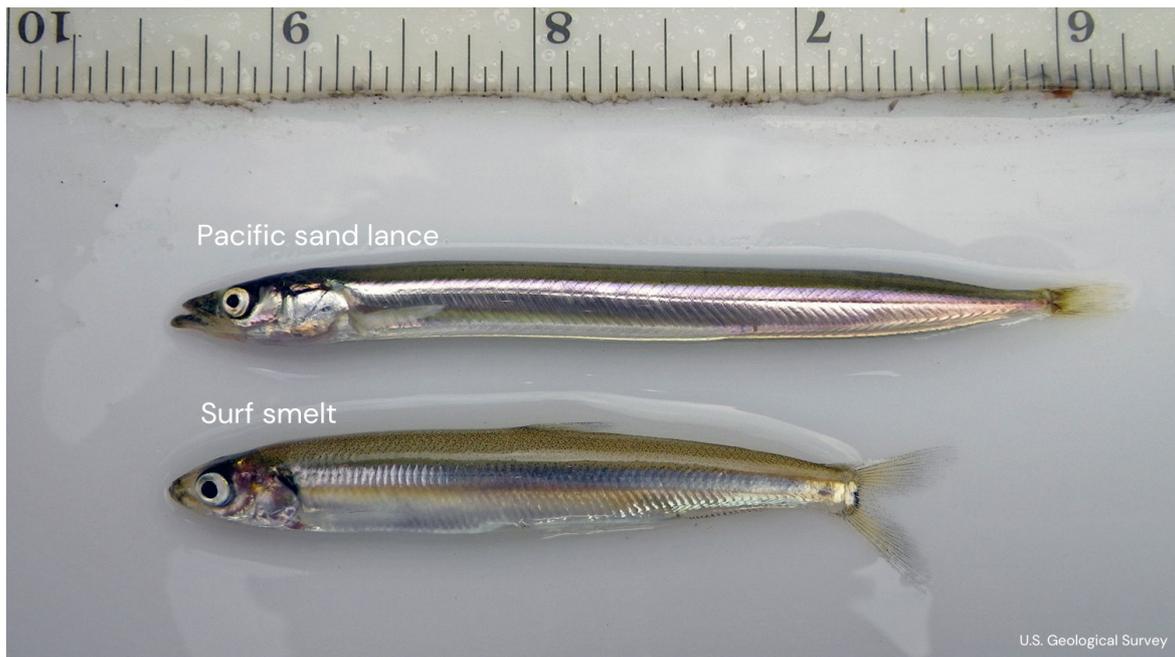


Hey there!

You're receiving this email because at some point you've lended a helping hand to our forage fish monitoring program. Whether you're an active part of it now, or have moved on from the program, we want to sincerely thank you for your participation; this program would not be what it is today without our fantastic community scientists and partners.

Welcome to the first 2026 edition of **The Schooler**—your bimonthly PSS newsletter for all things forage fish. Here, we'll provide key updates on survey results, program updates, and relevant news and events in the community.

Spawning has been in full swing over the past month, so let's dive in!

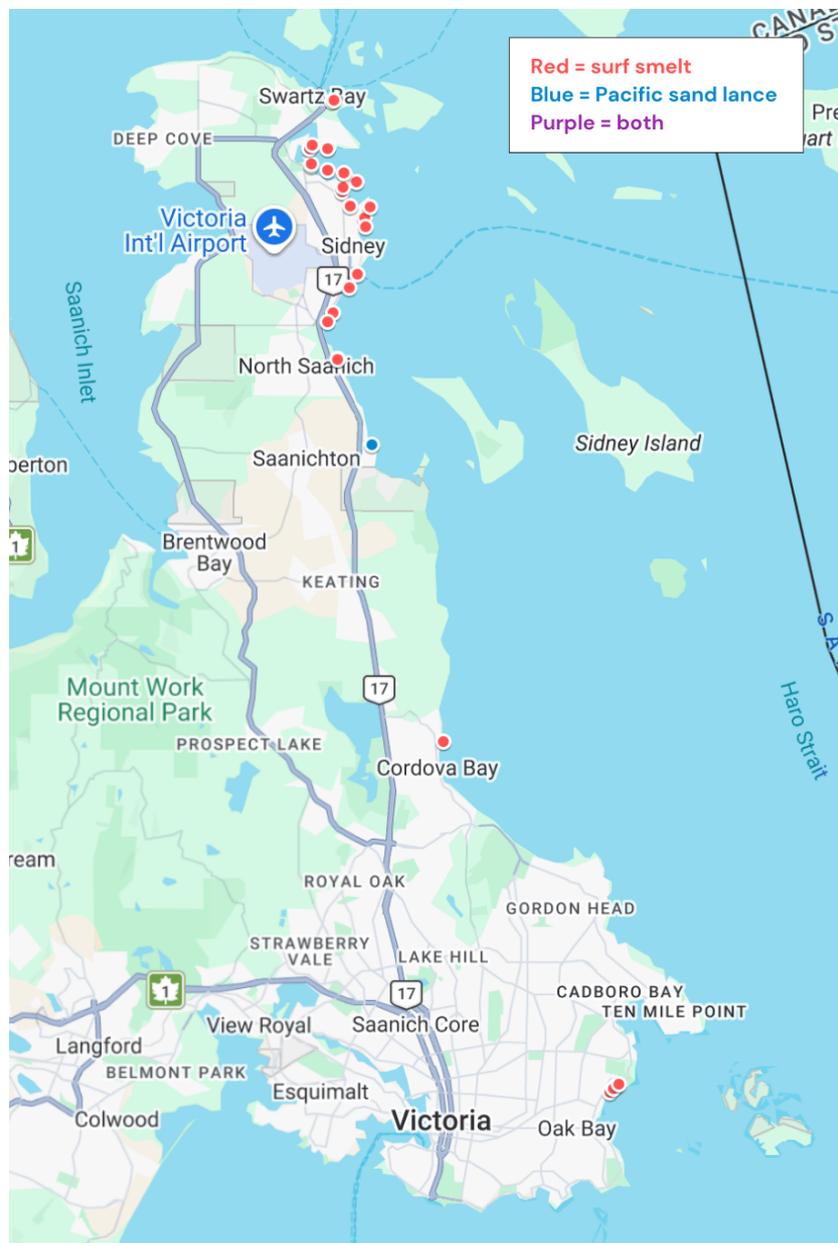


Surveys completed since the last edition in December 2025:



Location	Date	Surf smelt	Pacific sand lance
Medicine Beach: Site 1	Jan 3, 2026	0	0
Medicine Beach: Site 2	Jan 3, 2026	0	0
Cy Hampson Beach: Site 1	Jan 7, 2026	2	0
Lillian Hoffar Park Beach: Site 3	Jan 8, 2026	12	0
Cormorant Point Beach (Balmacarra Park): Site 2	Jan 8, 2026	0	0
Parker Beach: Site 2	Jan 8, 2026	0	0
Breakwater Beach: Site 2	Jan 10, 2026	28	0
Arthur Drive Beach: Site 2	Jan 10, 2026	0	5
Rothesay Beach: Site 1	Jan 11, 2026	1	0
Roberts Bay Beach: Site 2	Jan 13, 2026	557	0
Tulista Park Beach: Site 1	Jan 14, 2026	10	0
Tryon Beach: Site 2	Jan 16, 2026	805	0
Seaspan Beach: Site 1	Jan 21, 2026	20	0
Resthaven Island Beach: Site 1	Jan 23, 2026	7	0
Cordova Bay Beach: Site 1 (Agate Park)	Jan 24, 2026	71	0
Roberts Bay Beach: Site 3	Jan 25, 2026	31	0
Holland Point Park: Site 2	Jan 25, 2026	0	0
Big Rock Beach: Site 1	Jan 25, 2026	602	0
Tulista Park Beach: Site 5	Jan 26, 2026	8	0
Sidney North Saanich Yacht Club Beach: Site 2	Jan 27, 2026	865	0
Sidney North Saanich Yacht Club Beach: Site 3	Jan 27, 2026	133	0
Albert Head Lagoon Beach: Site 1	Jan 27, 2026	0	0
Cordova Bay Beach: Site 1 (Agate Park)	Jan 27, 2026	7	0
Goddard Beach: Site 1	Jan 28, 2026	171	0
Cattle Point: Site 1	Jan 28, 2026	0	0
Willows Beach: Site 5	Jan 28, 2026	5	0
Esquimalt Lagoon Beach: Site 5	Jan 29, 2026	0	0
Willows Beach: Site 3	Jan 29, 2026	9	0
Willows Beach: Site 6	Jan 29, 2026	5	0
Willows Beach: Site 7	Jan 29, 2026	4	0

Amherst Beach: Site 1	Jan 30, 2026	24	0
McMicken Beach: Site 1	Feb 2, 2026	0	0
Boat Ramp (Tulista): Site 2	Feb 4, 2026	1	0
Breakwater Beach: Site 1	Feb 5, 2026	3,268	0
Island View Beach: Site 3	Feb 7, 2026	1	0
Briarwood Beach: Site 1	Feb 8, 2026	0	0
Seaspan Beach: Site 2	Feb 9, 2026	7	0
Albert Head Lagoon Beach: Site 1	Feb 10, 2026	0	0
Lillian Hoffar Park Beach: Site 2	Feb 11, 2026	3	0
Tulista Park Beach: Site 4	Feb 12, 2026	7	0
Esquimalt Lagoon Beach: Site 5	Feb 12, 2026	0	0
Maple Beach: Site 1	Feb 13, 2026	0	0
Roberts Bay Beach: Site 5	Feb 14, 2026	8	0
Ker Island North Beach: Site 1	Feb 15, 2026	0	0
Ker Island North Beach: Site 2	Feb 15, 2026	0	0
Tulista Park Beach: Site 1	Feb 16, 2026	43	0
Tryon Beach: Site 3	Feb 17, 2026	1,549	0
Cy Hampson Beach: Site 2	Feb 20, 2026	6	0
Songhees Point: Site 1	Feb 20, 2026	0	0
Amherst Beach: Site 5	Feb 25, 2026	222	0



That's a total of 50 surveys, 34 positive for eggs. Nearly 300 volunteer hours went into these results—a huge heartfelt thank you to each and every community scientist who contributed their time, hard work, and expertise.

Highlights:

- Multiple record egg "catches" in Sidney:
 - 557 at Roberts Bay
 - 20 at Seaspan Beach
 - 602 at Big Rock Beach
 - 171 at Goddard Beach
 - 3,268 at Breakwater Beach
 - 222 at Amherst Beach
- Second year of eggs at Willows Beach

Don't see one of your submitted surveys? If it was towards the end of the month, it likely didn't make the cutoff for the issue and will be included in the next. If not, please



The Beach Bulletin is a living space for program updates and announcements, volunteer features, and any other tidbits.

This issue's beach bites:

Van Isle Marina Fire: In the early morning of Feb. 1st, a significant fire at Van Isle Marina in Sidney destroyed three 70-foot yachts, which subsequently sank at their berths. Fire crews from Sidney and North Saanich responded, extinguishing the fire with no injuries reported while environmental response teams were deployed to contain fuel and begin cleanup operations.

Environment and Climate Change Canada immediately conducted a preliminary assessment of the adjacent shorelines, identifying oil sheen and debris on Tryon Beach. Following consultation with Peninsula Streams, First Nations representatives, and other local stakeholders, treatments were conducted including sediment agitation and pebble and vegetation washing to promote the release of trapped product. A formal assessment was then conducted across Tsehum Harbour to systematically survey for any further fuel and debris impacts, during which only a small shoreline segment just east of Tryon Beach was identified as needing treatment.

Unfortunately, the 3,268 surf smelt eggs from Breakwater Beach on Feb. 5th were mostly dead, as well as the 1,549 surf smelt eggs from Tryon Beach on Feb. 17th. The samples have been preserved and options to test for hydrocarbons are being explored. While we can't say for sure that these results were directly caused by the fire, the close proximity of these beaches to the incident site and the fact that high levels of egg mortality are generally uncommon for this time of year, point to a likely cause.

Incidents like this underscore the vulnerability of intertidal spawning habitats and the increasing pressures they face. Protecting these sensitive habitats requires not only effective emergency response, but stronger prevention measures, improved infrastructure, and long-term stewardship to reduce the risk of future impacts in ecologically significant areas like Tsehum Harbour. Check out our news interview about the incident [here](#).

Nymph Point Park Restoration: On Feb. 9th, we kicked off our [restoration project at Nymph Point Park](#), in partnership with the District of North Saanich, Oak Bay Marine Group, Tseycum Nation, Project Watershed, and others. Located in Tsehum Harbour at the Sidney North Saanich Yacht Club, Nymph Point is an ecological gem—boasting high levels of surf smelt spawning, a heron rookery, and important habitat for a multitude of other coastal species.

Restoration work is focusing on backshore improvements such as invasive species removal, native plantings, the removal of a derelict vessel and creosote log boat ramp, eco-cultural erosion control and midden protection, and the installation of a formal stairway access to the beach.

On day two of the project, we witnessed something we've never seen before...live surf smelt spawning! Over the course of several hours, we watched a school of surf smelt swiftly approach the water's edge, deposit eggs and milt into the water and sediment, then retreat into deeper water. This process was repeated multiple times. Surf smelt spawning is an understudied and poorly documented process, so we were thrilled to witness it! Check out some of the footage we got [here](#). ☺

Team expansion: Our forage fish survey network continues to grow! In February, we trained and equipped folks from [Jordan River Watershed Awareness](#), who will work to capture first-time survey data on beaches between Port Renfrew and Sooke. We also welcomed aboard staff from [Eagle Wing Tours](#), who will be surveying beaches throughout Victoria Harbour and the Gorge Waterway, helping us to fill vital gaps in our sampling coverage.



Wanting to dive deeper? Wade into this issue's current events and news below:

The herring spawn is on!

Each spring, Pacific herring transform the shorelines of the BC coast with a milky turquoise glow and carpet nearshore vegetation with millions of eggs. The [annual herring spawn](#) represents a critical seasonal nutrient pulse, underpinning coastal food webs and sustaining countless species that rely on this brief but abundant resource. While spawning has largely been lost from the Victoria area, in recent years, a small, localized spawn has occurred along the Colwood Waterfront at Fort Rodd Hill and Esquimalt Lagoon. As we head

into the spawning window, we invite our community to keep watch for milky water or eggs on vegetation that may have washed ashore. If you observe signs of a spawn, please document and share your sightings with us or on iNaturalist (free to sign up)—community science plays a vital role in tracking these events and advocating for the protection of critical nearshore habitat.

Already have an iNaturalist account? [Follow us](#) to keep up with our observations!

Upcoming events

- **March 5-7th, 2026:** [HerringFest](#) on Hornby Island.
- **March 7th, 2026 / 1:00-4:30 PM:** Saanich Peninsula Environmental Coalition (SPEC) [Community Meeting](#).
- **March 28th, 2026 / 2:00-4:30 PM:** Friends of Shoal Harbour (FOSH) 12th Annual Bird Walk & Tea at Nymph Point Park. More info to come!

Thanks so much for tuning in! Catch you in the next issue in April.

Sincerely,

Chloe Kraemer

BEACH Program Coordinator



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&
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