

Okanagan birding

Horsey



# The VICTORIA NATURALIST

PUBLISHED BY THE  
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
VICTORIA, B.C.

MAY 1976  
VOL. 32, NO. 9

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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(See also inside back cover)

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Annual Dues, including subscription to the Victoria Naturalist:  
Junior - \$2.50; Golden Age Single - \$4.00; Regular Single - \$5.00;  
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GEOLOGY FIELD TRIP TO EAST SOOKE PARK

by Kaye Suttill

On a perfect Saturday morning, April 3, 1976, Dr. Ken Northcote, with his young son Bruce, arrived at the Mayfair Lanes parking area, surprised to find not the five people he had conservatively anticipated but forty rock-happy members of the Victoria Natural History Society assembled for THE Geology Field Trip to East Sooke Park.

Our first stop was an outcrop at Becher Bay of the Metchosin Basalt, an undersea lava flow of 42 million years ago, the youngest rocks on Vancouver Island, fine-grained at this exposure, the lava cooling too quickly for crystals to grow. Hammers and rock chips made visible our leader's explanation of the origin and nature and happenings of this page of Earth's autobiography. And sedum growing on the rocks sent our thoughts wondering backwards in time through the 42 million years required to bring forth Today's life-of-these-rocks. Fact sheets and diagrams distributed by our leader explained all this Earth History and made the *meaning* of the *seeing* more easily understood.

Our second stop was along the East Sooke Road opposite the area birders know as Yellowthroat Marsh, which our leader explained is a fault zone, an extensive earth-fracture trough. The weathering of these rocks provides the plant habitat and, in turn, homes for the bird life here. But our stop was mainly to examine the exposure of gabbro, with its larger augite and feldspar crystals, caused by slower cooling of the molten rock coming up from a magma chamber, the core of the submarine volcano. East Sooke Peninsula consists entirely of this gabbro, with the coastline of East Sooke Park, at its outer edge, where basalt and gabbro meet.

Our final car stop was the Pike Road parking lot. From there we walked to the coast of Iron Mine Bay on the outer edge of the intrusive Sooke gabbro. The remainder of the field trip was highlighted by examining sea cut fracture zones, exposing the minerals, looking into a mine of the 1920's up on Iron Mine Hill, and a brief last look at the coast rock along Iron Mine Bay.

One of the most interesting things our leader told us was that people hunting for minerals look for fractures, especially visible fractures such as sea cuts, where the tremendous pressures during the gabbro crystallization caused shearing and splitting, allowing the still-molten material to fill in the cracks; these last-to-cool molten concentrations are the richest sources of copper and iron, and hence the sea-cuts mine sites.

Could anyone conjure a more glorious geology setting for lunch than the big sea-cut west of Iron Mine Bay, where red iron stains and yellow sulphides and greenish copper paint the rocks? This upstairs-downstairs rock sculpture, thrusting jaggedly into the sea, is outstanding geology even in the afterthought! AND a Golden Eagle (verified J.W.) overhead too! More birding-with-the-rocks after lunch when we had a close look at an eagle eyrie and, at the departure place, 12 to 15, depending on how you count, Turkey Vultures wheeling overhead.

I wonder how many pet rocks found new homes?

We returned to East Sooke Park next day, albeit a different part of the Park, but one with the same kinds of rocks we saw the previous day. Now we really see and understand; the sea bites aren't just gashes but today's evidence of the tremendous forces which make rock fractures, some of which you can follow inland into long valleys. And The Rock is solidified Earth Fire. Walking along the trail you rejoice to note glacial boulders and the Earth speaks more to you of her autobiography, for that is what Geology really is. And all of us all now find more easy reading of Earth more understanding for which we all would say with thanksgiving:

THANK YOU, DR. KEN NORTHCOTE, for the SPECIAL MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING EAST SOOKE PARK NOW HAS!

## BIRDING IN THE OKANAGAN

by Elsie G. Turnbull

June is a good month to bird in the Okanagan. Days are sunny and long. Shrubs and flowers are either full of bloom or burdened with ripening fruit. Grasshoppers and insects, butterflies, caterpillars and mosquitos hop, buzz, fly and crawl in plentiful profusion for hungry birds and their nestlings. And of course, the great human wave of tourists has not yet engulfed highways and beaches as it will later in summer.

The sun had gone by the time we settled in at Gallagher Lake Lodge but light on the hills called for a quick run out to the sagebrush flats at White Lake. The nasal call and boom of nighthawks, the wailing cry of a killdeer and far in the distance, the bark of a coyote fell on our ears and we thought we heard the agitated scream of a Long-billed Curlew. Time would prove us wrong, for in all the time of our stay, we saw none of the great brown birds nor flushed any from their nests, much to our disappointment. As darkness came down, three stubby broad-winged owls were startled by the car and darted out from a grove of trees.

Early morning brought goldfinches, orioles and robins flitting through Saskatoon bushes in front of our cabin while a Kingfisher and a flock of Red Crossbills swung over the limpid waters of Gallagher Lake. Riding thermal currents against the rocky bluffs and catching insects on the wing were White-throated Swifts and many Swallows.

Then off we went to Vaseux Lake. On the far side of a hay-field where Bobolinks enjoy a precarious nesting period, a rail line runs alongside Okanagan River. Thickets of willow, red osier dogwood, briar and elderberry and clumps of cottonwoods line the right-of-way, while on the roadbed, horsetails and poison ivy thrust upward between the ties. Our favourite walk was on this track where Yellow Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat flashed varying shades of gold color and among the trembling leaves of the poplars, flitted orange and black

Bullock's Orioles. Black-headed Grosbeaks and Kingbirds, both Eastern and Western, teetered on telephone or fence-wire and from out the tangle of bushes, a liquid warbling or gentle mewing revealed a catbird.

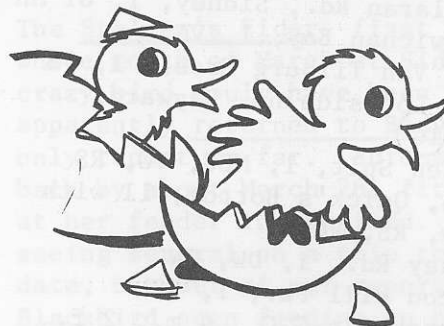
We crossed the river on a wooden trestle. A long-haired blonde boy was trying to spear carp with a bow and arrow. He told us he didn't eat them, only used them as fertilizer. Then on up the sandy hillside leading to McIntyre Bluff where we found Cedar Waxwings, Cassin's Purple Finch and the Western Wood Peewee. Mourning Doves and Meadowlarks fluttered over Syringa bushes and the shiny Oregon grape. Yellow and black swallowtail butterflies rested on a thicket of sweet clover while a turtle sunned himself on a log at the water's edge, not far from a Spotted Sandpiper bobbing in the sand.

Of course we had to drive up Fairview Canyon for on the narrow meadow at the summit, we had at other times found a Lazuli Bunting and a Calliope Hummingbird. This time we were half in luck -- the small turquoise-winged Bunting with a rosy wash on its breast was there, poised on a wire, but no hummer sucked nectar from flower heads or zoomed swiftly down in nuptial display.

Fairview in earlier years was the scene of mining activity and waste dumps and open pits line each side of the road. Now overgrown with shrubs and trees, they harbor Veerys, Towhees and Swainson's Thrushes. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, its nape and throat flaming red in the sunlight, popped in and out of a hole in a tall cottonwood feeding its young, while a Robin carolled from a lilac bush which must surely mark the home of a long gone miner.

The grassy open benchlands of the Okanagan provide habitat for flashy Black-billed Magpies, and those unloved birds, Brewer's Blackbirds, Crows, Ravens, and the Brown-headed Cowbird. There is even a resident colony of Canada Geese which nests in marshy land at Vaseux Lake, but strangely enough, we saw only a couple of the usually gregarious and common Lewis' Woodpecker. Neither did we see the White-headed Woodpecker -- a rare find in the Okanagan. On a former visit, we had been thrilled to catch a glimpse of this bird, all black except for white head and wing patches and a small red bar on the nape.

Pause should always be made at a pond near the top of Richter Pass close to alkaline Spotted Lake. Here in the reeds nest Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Redwings, dozens of Coots and many ducks. Green-winged Teal, a few Ruddys and Redheads were paddling about too. And a Pied-billed Grebe led her brood of young among the rushes while graceful, long-necked, sharp-winged Wilson's Phalaropes darted above the water.



## BIRD REPORTS

- RED-THROATED LOON - March 20, Esquimalt Harbor, 17, (FT)  
 GREAT BLUE HERON - March 21, Tsehum Harbour, 40, RS  
 CANADA GOOSE - March 21, Blenkinsop, 48, RS  
 WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - March 6, Martindale Rd., 1 imm., DW JW  
 - March 7, Ganges, 1 imm., RS  
 EUROPEAN WIGEON - March 7, Dallas Rd. Pond, 1 m., LH  
 STELLER'S EIDER - all March, Ft. of Rhothesay, Sidney,  
 1 f., DW JW.  
 TURKEY VULTURE - March 31, Tzouhalem, 1, VG.  
 SHARP-SHINNED HAWK - March 13, Wallace Dr., 1, DW JW  
 COOPER'S HAWK - March 14, Beacon Hill Pk., 1 ad., 1 imm., RS  
 SWAINSON'S HAWK - March 7, King Rd., Saltspring, 1 ad., RS  
 GOLDEN EAGLE - March 7, Fernwood Pt., 1 ad., RS  
 - March 9, Rithet's, 1 ad., RS  
 BALD EAGLE - March 7, Saltspring, 15 ad., 4 sub.ad.,  
 14 imm., RS  
 OSPREY - March 27, Beaver Lake, VG, RS  
 MERLIN - March 2, Lamont Rd., 1 m., VG  
 - March 16, Burnside, 1, RS  
 AMERICAN KESTREL - March 13, Mills X Rd., 1 m., VG, RS  
 - March 18, Pat Bay Hwy. nr. Amity,  
 1, DW, JW  
 - March 30, Lochside-Dom. Ex. Farm, 1,  
 DW, JW

- SPOTTED SANDPIPER - March 31, N. Cowichan Ponds, 1, VG  
 GLAUCOUS GULL - March 13 "Big Barn", 1, first winter, VG RS  
 HERRING GULL - March 11, Clover Pt., 1 ad., RS  
 BONAPARTE'S GULL - March 18, Clover Pt., 1, MEG, VG, RF  
 BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE - March 1, Clover Pt., 1 imm., RS  
 ANCIENT MURRELET - March 1, Clover Pt., 2, RS  
 RHINOCEROS AUKLET - March 1, Clover Pt., 6, RS  
 SCREECH OWL - March 7, Beaver Lake, 1, RW, MEG, VG  
 SHORT-EARED OWL - March 30, Galaran Rd., Sidney, 1, GT MH  
     - March 31, Cowichan Bay, 1, VG  
 RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD - March 26, Van Tilburg Cres., 1, VB  
     - March 30, Lochside nr. Sayward,  
     1, RCMG, (TG)  
 SAY'S PHOEBE - March 19, Whiffen Spit, 1, MEG, VG, RS  
 VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW - March 6, Quick's Bottom, 11 with  
     20 tree, RS, VG  
 HERMIT THRUSH - March 13, Kersey Rd., 1, DW, JW  
     - March 14, Beacon Hill Pk., 1, RS  
 WESTERN BLUEBIRD - March 1, Metchosin G.C., 4 m., 2 f.,  
     MEG, VG  
     - March 19, West Coast & Kemp L., 1 m.,  
     4 f., MEG, VG  
     - March 19, Milne's Landing, 2 m., 2 f.,  
     MEG VG  
     - March 20, Milne's Landing, 1 m., 1 f.,  
     RS, VG  
     - March 20, Whiffen Spit, 4 m., 2 f.,  
     RS, VG  
 NORTHERN SHRIKE - March 9, Rithet's, 1, RS  
     - March 13, Is. View Rd., 1 ad., VG, RS  
 HUTTON'S VIREO - March 27, Beaver Lake, 1, RS, VG  
 YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER - March 13, Esq. Lag., 6, VGu  
     - March 15, N. Cow. Pd., 1 m., VG  
 WESTERN MEADOWLARK - March 6, Cordova Spit, 1, VG, RS  
     - March 9, Rithet's, 1, RS  
 YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD - Mar. 3, Byng St., 1, VGu  
 EVENING GROSBEAK - March 30, UVic, 4, JF  
     - March 31, Ross Bay Cem., 30, LGR  
 RED CROSSBILL - March 7, Long Harbour, 8, RS  
 SAVANNAH SPARROW - March 17, Clover Pt., 1, RF

OBSERVERS in order of appearance:

(FT), field trip; RS, Ron Satterfield; DW, JW, Dorothy & Jack Williams; LH, Leah Halsall; VG, Vic Goodwill; MEG, Peggy Goodwill; RW, Rick West; GT, Gwen Taylor; MH, Marj. Harkness; VB, Virginia Bartkow; RCMG, Rob Mackenzie-Grieve; (TG), Tuesday Group; VGu, Vera Guernsey; JF, John Fitch; LGR, Leila Roberts; RF, Ralph Fryer.

The Steller's Eider, first seen Feb. 13, spent the whole month of March at Sidney (imagine that, this crazy bird could have been up in Alaska). Osprey apparently returned to Beaver Lake around March 27, the only report so far. Rufous Hummingbirds seemed to be back by about March 26, first seen by Virginia Bartkow at her feeder in Langford. Josanne Brehart reports seeing several on a trip to Fairy Lake at an earlier date, but out of our report area. The Yellow-headed Blackbird seen feeding on her lawn with Red-winged Blackbirds by Vera Guernsey was a male in the same plumage as the one seen in February on our lawn in Sidney, possibly the same bird. Grace Bell was treated to the sight of a large flock of Pine Siskins in trees around her apartment this month.

This will be my last effort on the "Bird Report". It's been lots of fun. Thanks for your co-operation and the best of luck to the next reporter. Please do not phone any more reports to me for the magazine.

FEDERATION REPORT

*By Mary Anderson*

The Annual Meeting of the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists, held at Kamloops on April 10, got off to an auspicious start the evening before, with a Wine-and-Cheese-Get-Acquainted-Party at which more than 100 naturalists "got acquainted" and sat-in on a talk and slide show by Bill Merilees of Castlegar.

President Norman Purssell presided at the business meetings the next day, where 22 delegates, representing 57 Associated and Affiliated Clubs, discussed the operations of the Federation. Organization was high on the Agenda with the President pointing out that, as always, a shortage of willing hands - but no shortage of things for them to do - hampered the Federation.

Conservation is still the most active area of interest in the Federation, with the Committee on Endangered Species -- formerly chaired by David Stirling but now under the leadership of Kay Smith, with help from Ros Pojar -- being particularly energetic. Plants have now found a place beside birds and mammals in the concerns of this Committee.

A suitable memorial to Elton Anderson is still under consideration. High on the list of suggestions is a proposal to name a new ecological preserve in the Chilcotin area in his honour.

The Elton A. Anderson Award Committee has proposed that an annual award for outstanding achievement within the Federation be established; the award to take the form of a book prize. Nominations of suitable candidates for this award should come from individual clubs within the Federation and should be in the hands of the Committee not later than January 31.

More than 20 Resolutions were considered and all but one of them was carried. They revealed concerns among the member clubs for such topics as the use of poisons for fish control, the return of abandoned highways to their natural state, more intensive regulation of all-terrain vehicles, the dumping of effluent into streams, the establishment of areas for the recreational use of snowmobiles, sea coast protection, the extension of the mandate of the Islands Trust and the continued prohibition of mining in Provincial Parks.

A resolution of the Thompson-Okanagan Regional Council urging that the use of the poison 10-80 be discontinued, was defeated.

## MARCH FIELD TRIP

by Jack Williams

On the first day of Spring, March 20, about 30 birders braved strong winds, rain squalls and cold temperatures to see what Esquimalt Lagoon had to offer in the way of avifauna. We started with a short look at the area near the bridge and found the usual assortment of Killdeer, Bufflehead, Mallard, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye, White-winged and Surf Scoters, lots of Coot and a flock of about 30 Pintail. Further along the shore we found a mixed flock of Black-bellied Plover, Dunlin, Black Turnstones and 2 Greater Yellow-legs. The weather soon took a turn for the worse so we took a turn for the better and drove back to Fort Rodd park where there was more shelter.

Here we found many birds on the edge of the woods. Common Flicker, Hairy and Downy Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Winter and Bewick's Wren, Varied Thrush, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Towhee and Junco. Approaching the water's edge at Esquimalt Harbour, we were thrilled to see a flock of at least 17 Red-throated Loons and several Old Squaw as well as a few Western Grebes and Harlequins. A few deer were spotted and one rabbit. A lone adult Bald Eagle soared overhead while on the bar a flock of about 50 Brant were resting.

The weather being poor we decided to stop for the day. Some, however, returned to Esquimalt Lagoon to lunch in their cars and after lunch someone suggested we drive the length of the Lagoon to see if we could add to our list. The Lagoon did not help us much, so we drove down the road towards the gravel pit. Here the woods were full of bird life. Dozens of Pine Siskins were feeding on branches that had fallen to the ground and we were excited to get such a wonderful look at this species, which is usually in the tree tops. They were almost within touching distance.

Wedge-tailed  
sculp  
merg-  
loon  
merg-  
Horned  
Columb.  
D.B.  
W. Pipit  
K. Finch  
P.W.  
new  
Thayers  
Robin  
stars  
Fox  
Raven  
Crow  
Ruckly

Winter wrens were bubbling over with song, a Bewick's scolded us and also started tuning up for Spring, while in the trees behind, a few Varied Thrushes whistled mournfully. We were looking for Yellow-rumped Warblers which had been seen a few days previously, and finally one did show up in beautifully bright plumage.

We thought we had started off our spring birding very well, despite the weather, with a count of 53 species in about 2 hours of searching.

*OR IF YOU LIKE IT BETTER IN VERSE*

*On the first day of springtime my true love came  
with me*

*Along with thirty birders from our Society,  
We cameth to Esquimalt where the rain it cameth  
down*

*So we all hastened to Fort Rodd before we all  
did drown,*

*Here the birdies were a-singing from every  
woodland tree*

*and verily, I say, forsooth, we had to bide a wee  
and listen to their happy song which rang right  
merrily,*

*What wondrous sights there were to see, what  
pretty songs to hear,*

*but the one that was the sweetest was, "Come on  
gang lunch time's here."*

*JACK (bring lunch) WILLIAMS*

INTRODUCTIONS

You'll be seeing some new names among your programme co-ordinators this year and since they've already been at work lining things up for the summer, here they are:

Botany - Ros Pojar (592-4786)

Ornithology - Mike Shepard

- Tim Murphy (385-5357)

And Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Suttill have taken over the onerous task of collecting memberships. You'll see their smiling faces at the door -- waiting to separate you from some of your hard-earned money.

Ros Pojar has asked that members willing to lead botany field trips should step forward and be recognized. Ros emphasized that you don't have to be a botanist to lead; there is always someone in the group who can fill-in the botanical gaps. Besides, trying to key-out some discoveries can lead to interesting and lively debates -- particularly if there isn't an expert in the wings waiting to detect an error.

As Ros sees it, the leader need simply be there as a kind of focus; there's not much "leading" involved.

If you've a mind to "lead", give Roz a call.

She's also interested in your ideas for field trips -- anything from half-day, full-day through overnights.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

ADULTS

Saturday, May 8 ✓

Botany - Honeymoon Bay Wildflower Reserve on Lake Cowichan. This trip may include a side trip to Skutz Falls on the Cowichan River and visit from the Duncan Naturalists Club. Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:30; bring lunch and boots. Leader: Ros Pojar (592-4786)

May 14 - 16

Miracle Beach - This two-day camp-out has been well publicized in the last two Naturalists. You can still get in on it. Meet 9:00 p.m. May 14, Miracle Beach Nature House. Leader: Steve Mitchell.

Tuesday, May 25

Annual General Meeting - 8:00 p.m., Newcombe Auditorium. A business meeting to be followed by a coffee session -- either one will be worth coming down for.

+ NOTE THE CHANGE: TUES. MAY 25TH

Saturday, June 5

Ornithology - Spectacle Lake  
 - Meet at Mayfair Lanes - 8:00 a.m.  
 Bring lunch.  
 - Leader: Jean Piuze (382-5526)

Saturday, June 19

Botany - East Sooke Park, Aldridge Point and Becher Bay area.  
 - Meet Mayfair Lanes - 9:00 a.m. Bring lunch and boots.  
 - Leader: Ros Pojar (592-4786)

Sunday, July 18

Ethnobotany - Goldstream Park A.M.  
 Mount Finlayson P.M.  
 The morning will be an easy walk; afternoon will involve some climbing. If you intend to take the afternoon climb, bring lunch. Either way, bring good footwear.  
 Leader: Nancy Turner

Saturday, July 31

Ornithology - Cowichan Bay and vicinity.  
 In search of the Green Heron and other mysteries.  
Meet at Robert Service Memorial, Cowichan Bay,  
9:00 a.m. Bring lunch.  
 Leader: Tim Murphy (385-5357)

#### JUNIORS AND INTERMEDIATES

Gail Mitchell asks Juniors and Intermediates to contact her (477-9248) from time to time during the summer for details of outings. Above all, remember the MAY 14-16 outing to Miracle Beach - it's not just for adults.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER!

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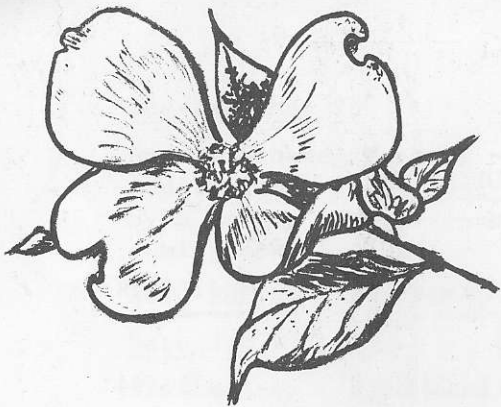
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