



The VICTORIA NATURALIST

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

ISSN 0049-612X



OFFICE COPY

DO NOT REMOVE

OCTOBER 1977

VOL. 34, NO. 2

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1747, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y1

All correspondence, including membership applications and renewals, should be sent to this address.

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Albert R. Davidson, George E. Winkler, Miss M.C. Melburn, Miss E.K. Lemon,
Mrs. L.E. Chambers, E.E. Bridgen, Dr. Douglas B. Sparling, Mrs. H.W.S. Soulsby

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 1977-8

Immediate Past President	A. Douglas Turnbull	- 592-6025
President	Eric M. Counsell	- 386-3989
Vice-President	Roy D. Wainwright	- 592-1310
Secretary	Mrs. Jean Rimmington	- 592-6037
Treasurer	John P. Hutchings	- 477-1964
Directors:		
James Black	382-2405	Ben Reece 388-7067
Mrs. Merle Harvey	477-9634	Dr. Douglas A. Ross 598-3614
Mrs. Gail Mitchell	477-9248	Mrs. Kaye Suttill 477-4583
Tim F. Murphy	385-5357	

Audubon Films	Miss Anne Adamson	- 598-1623
Librarian	A.R. Davidson	- 598-3088
Magazine Distribution	Ken T. Seaborne	- 477-4378
Membership	Dennis and Kaye Suttill	- 477-4583
Programme Coordinator	Dr. Douglas A. Ross	- 598-3614
Section Leaders:		
Botany	Charles A. Trotter	- 477-4365
Entomology	Dr. Douglas A. Ross	- 598-3614
Juniors	Mrs. Gail Mitchell	- 477-9248
Marine Biology	Dr. Alex Peden	- 652-3598
Ornithology (Field Trips)	Tim F. Murphy	- 385-5357
(Bird Notes)	Mike Shepard	- 387-3544
University Liaison	Dr. Alan P. Austin	- 479-7889
Victoria Naturalist	Mrs. Merle Harvey, Editor	- 477-9634

Annual dues, including subscription to "The Victoria Naturalist":

Juniors - \$2.50 Golden Age Single - \$4.00 Regular Single - \$5.00

Family (Golden Age or Regular) - \$7.50 Sustaining - \$25.00

Junior Membership is restricted to those not under 8 years and not over 18 years.

The financial year is May 1 to April 30. New members joining after Jan. 1 — half-dues.

Rare Bird Alert 383-0211

THE VICTORIA NATURALIST

Published by

THE VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

VOL. 34, NO. 2

OCTOBER, 1977

ORNITHOLOGICAL OUTING

by Rita Dickson

Sunday, August 28th, started out as a very dull day, but thirteen Birders gathered at Witty's Lagoon, happy to have the enthusiastic Tim Murphy as their leader for the morning. Walking down the well-carpeted trail (wood-chips and sawdust) we reached the water's edge to discover three Spotted Sandpipers feeding. Pintails were out in the Lagoon, and from his log, a Blue Heron regarded us. Someone said "Mergansers" -- and sure enough, there they were -- Hooded Mergansers.

As we worked our way along the trail, kingfishers scolded, and dived over the water. A Winter Wren was heard in the shrubbery. Suddenly, one of our keen birders called "A Green Heron", so the 'scope was set up and we all had a chance to admire not just one, but two of them.

Along the edge of the water, Yellowlegs and Western Sandpipers were enjoying an early lunch, while overhead a flock of chickadees settled in the trees momentarily. Killdeer and Plover were sighted out in the Lagoon.

The foghorns continued to sound but no rain fell, and the morning was very pleasant, with no wind, and a mild temperature. A raven added his croak to the background sounds, and in the woods a Western Flycatcher showed himself briefly, also a Hutton's Vireo. Two Cedar Waxwings perched on top of a dead tree, while we had a good luck at them. A Downy Woodpecker was seen, and also a Black Swift.

Back to the water again, where we saw Short-billed Dowitchers and Black-bellied Plover, and a lone Wimbrel made an unusual appearance. Amongst the gulls were a California and some Common Terns.

The brightening sky attracted a Cooper's Hawk, and Barn Swallows swooped. A Goldfinch added to the colour, and Savannah Sparrows and a Song Sparrow went down on the list.

Besides the Downy, a Hairy Woodpecker was seen; also a Flicker, a Bandtail Pigeon, and two Turkey Vultures. The day was bright enough by noon for us to enjoy lunch out-of-doors on one of the benches, with a view of the Falls.

Returning by way of Esquimalt Lagoon, we were rewarded by seeing Black Turnstones, Horned Grebe, and a Common Loon. Then we heard a Stellers Jay, and saw a Coot, several Oystercatchers (one with a particularly brilliant red bill), Wigeon, (for the first time this Fall), and the Esquimalt Swans.

On the sea side of the road, there were Sanderlings and more Western Sandpipers. Canada Geese and Pelagic Cormorants brought our count to over fifty.

THE ANCESTORS OF THE BIRDS

by John L. Rimmington

To those of us who are faithful believers in Darwin's theory of the origin of species, the question of who were the ancestors of the birds presents a sharp problem.

Only recently has this become clear and many theories washed away. How could the old paleontologists and taxonomists have been so wrong?

The story begins about 200 million years ago when a small variety of reptile developed their scaly coverings into hairs and changed in the course of years into mammals, but though small and insignificant, they could keep themselves warm at all times.

Somewhat later, the reptile group split up again, and we got our everlasting crocodiles and lizards, but the next big splinter group came to dominate the world. These were the dinosaurs.

Now the big mistake of past scientists appears. They assumed that dinosaurs were big cold-blooded reptiles like the crocodiles, but this is obviously not true, as it can be proven that dinosaurs moved around like any of our wild animals and birds of today, which necessarily requires warm-bloodedness. Crocodiles, snakes and lizards could never keep going like that.

There were quite a variety of bat-like flying dinosaurs including the archeopteryx, but these were not true birds.

If anyone asked "Why do birds have feathers?", the answer would be "So they can fly." The truth is that an inconspicuous little tree-climbing dinosaur develops its scales into feathers TO KEEP WARM. Later the feathers were used to help gliding from tree to tree, and then they learned to flap the wings and fly. Of course, all this took millions of years.

While these shy little birds and mammals hid themselves unobtrusively, the dinosaurs took over the world by ground and air. Some specimens of bat-like gliding dinosaurs had a wingspan of 12 feet! The dinosaurs adapted themselves on land to fit every type of terrain, maintaining their dragon-like appearance.

Now we know why the birds are warm-blooded: they are descendants of the warm-blooded dinosaurs. We can even say that birds are our only living dinosaurs.

For some reason, to which no-one can give a definite answer, all the dinosaurs, flying pterosaurs, and their close relatives in the sea, were wiped out in one fell swoop about 70 million years ago.

This left a great void to be filled and the mammals took over in the air, and subdivided themselves into the many variant we have today.

COWICHAN BAY ON A HOT SUMMER'S DAY

by Rod Muirhead

Well, it was an emergency of sorts - Friday night yours truly had a phone call from Tim Murphy: "If you're going tomorrow, will you be Leader?"

We were going and I would. So, without the usual reconnaissance into the wilds of Lower Central Vancouver Island, we took off at the stated time hardly knowing the route and certainly not knowing what wild denizens we might meet on 6th August.

We, five carloads, made a wrong turn, resulting in a traumatic encounter with two feeding deer. We rested a few minutes after we finally found Cowichan Bay, but were called to attention for inspection by a kingsize Bald Eagle who alighted close by to look us over, or vice-versa. Finally we arrived at the Outstation rendezvous on time (!) and proceeded to miss the turn to the Assembly Wharf.

We did arrive in the end, in spite of a brief encounter with a rabbit (*silvilagus* sp.). We were entertained by Barn Swallows feeding their young, very convenient for the Shutter Bugs; later we had a wonderful camouflage exhibition by a couple of Savannah Sparrows, and a piece of pure exhibitionism by a Cedar Waxwing. Lunch at Art Mann Park, Quamichan Lake was early, welcome and very pleasant.

The Conditioning Ponds at Duncan gave us two good items, one a fleeting glimpse by some of a Little Green Heron, and for everyone, a perched Pigeon Hawk. We were not sure of its identity until it obliged with its typical flight. Another Cedar Waxwing poseur did his, or her, thing for the cameras.

These were some of the main attractions; incidentals brought the total species seen to 31, about the usual ratio of one bird per person. Not too bad for an "ad hoc" trip.

Nice to tell you all about it once again, but note how our Indo-European tongue requires a certain element of tri-lingualism.

P.S. - Bird List available at the usual fee!

PACIFIC FOREST RESEARCH CENTRE

On 9th September, twelve of us gathered at the Centre, and from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. were led 'round by Mel Hughes, technician, who gave us a very thorough look over the buildings. His stamina was better than ours, as he was quite prepared to go on until 3:00 p.m.! However, we could take in no more information, and our thoughts turned increasingly to lunch and a seat!

The Canadian Forestry Service is a Federal Government agency serving all regions of Canada, with major centres in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

Also, Forest Products Laboratories in Vancouver and Ottawa deal with problems stemming from the manufacture and use of forest products.

The main centre we visited at West Burnside Road was officially opened in February 1965. Staff consists of 176 men and women - 67 professional scientists, 78 highly-trained technicians and 31 operational and administrative personnel.

It comprises 38 laboratories, 60 offices, a service penthouse, and a full basement that contains 6 varied temperature cold rooms; also a library, computer centre, conference room, and a photographic studio. We went through all except the last.

When we were led outside, we went through two greenhouse units full of conifer seedlings, one lot under heating unit bulbs and the other being forced under sodium lights. The reason being to try and improve quality and production of seedlings by studies that affect tree genetics; seed germination and seedling survival; the influence of soil micro-organisms; and application of fertilizers to container-grown seedlings.

Development of more efficient research procedures includes single tree sampling methods which predict the effects of various treatments under different stand and ecological conditions.

Experiments are carried out to try and improve fire danger assessment and make a more efficient use of fire as a management tool.

Growing and field-testing of high quality seedlings in various types of containers has demonstrated the importance of new techniques to help achieve the provincial goal of 150 million seedlings per year by 1980.

We also had demonstrated to us how the water sprinkler system works, by a moving trolley which was inspired by a late member of staff.

Al Lacroix, maintenance engineer, showed us the three boiler units in the basement that produce 450 horsepower of high pressure steam, and 57 fan units that supply forced and filtered fresh air.

Laboratories are serviced with hot and cold water, propane gas, steam, compressed air, and a vacuum line. Tempered glass lines carry distilled water to each floor.

Insects are reared under special conditions so that scientists can find ways to stop timber losses. Magnification equipment is used to study destructive forest diseases.

All this we saw and had explained to us, and to finish up, we each planted a seed from a Douglas fir cone, in one of the containers, each seed in a separate 'pocket'. It was nice to think that our planting will produce trees for the next generation, unless they are attacked by insects, diseases, fire or rot - the last being the worst hazard, Mel Hughes remarked.

But perhaps by then the Centre scientists will have eliminated all these, and all trees will be magnificently healthy specimens.



EDITORIAL

Doug Ross has provided us with a good variety of Field Trips in October. Birds, fish, mushrooms, and trees should appeal to members with varying interests in Nature, and we hope to have a good turnout on these trips.

Another Heritage Trees Tour, Michael Gye leading, follows on the very popular one last year, and we are grateful for the privilege of being able to view the Royal Roads gardens before the general public are admitted at 1:00 p.m.

Dr. Fontaine's name was regrettably spelled without the "i" in the September issue, for which we apologise, and Mike Shepard is not a keeper of sheep! Please note the change in his phone number, which is 387-3544.

The Pelagic Trips are not arranged by the Society, but we put them in the "Naturalist" to show our interest in this branch of activities.

Anyone got any ideas for future Outings? Doug Ross would be interested to hear of them.

Articles about Nature in general are required for the November and future issues, and drawings, sketches, and photographs will be welcome.

We all know how crows will dunk a bit of dry bread in water, but have you heard of their habit of hiding any surplus food they find, under a leaf or a bunch of dead grass until they can carry it away?

Any more stories of bird habits?

Those who were on last year's Heritage Trees Tour will be glad to know that Wain Road woods are now a Park.

BIRD NOTES

By A.R. Davidson

Wednesday, June 29th was one of those perfect days specially created for birdwatchers. There was no wind, and not a ripple on the water. We were sitting on the beach at Loon Bay, just enjoying the sun, when we noticed six birds at the water's edge. They were Western Sandpipers, and obviously, to us, birds of the year.

We had watched their northern flight to the tundras up to the middle of May, and here they were, with no adults to guide them, on their way south ... astonishing!

Then we saw a killdeer flying at top speed, turning in all directions, and found he was being pursued by a small bird which appeared to be trying to follow the wild gyrations of the killdeer. Finally they settled on the beach in front of us, and the small bird turned out to be a Least Sandpiper, which just gave us time to identify him before he vanished.

We then walked to the seafront at the foot of Lansdowne, and the lady who lives there told us she had an injured bird, which turned out to be a nighthawk. Did you ever hold a nighthawk in your hand? The rich colouring, the large dark eyes, the streamlined wings! ... beautiful! A new experience for us.

It had been injured in the chest, but the wings seemed unhurt. It will be cared for, quite possibly fly again soon. Nighthawks have become rather rare birds in recent years in this area, so we do hope it survives.

SUMMER BIRD REPORT

- MAY 1 - Chestnut-Collared Longspur - Vic. Golf Course (1).
- MAY 2 - Black-headed Grosbeak - UVic Campus (1).
- MAY 5 - Whimbrel - Vic. Golf Course (1).
- MAY 16 - Purple Martin - E. of Thetis Lake Park (2).
- MAY 21 - Vaux's Swift - over Mt. Tolmie (3).
- MAY 23 - Northern Phalarope - At McMicking Point (1).

- MAY 24 - Wilson's Phalarope - Ascot Pond (a pair).
- MAY 24 - Ruddy Duck - Swan Lake (1 male).
- MAY 29 - Nighthawk - Over Colwood (3).

- JUNE 9 - Yellow-Headed Blackbird - Quick's Bottom (1 male).
- JUNE 13 - Tufted Puffin - McNeill Bay (2).
- JUNE 14 - Wood Duck - Elk/Beaver Lake (F with y).
- JUNE 27 - Caspian Tern - Esquimalt Lagoon (3).
- JUNE 27 - Eastern Kingbird - Saturna Island (1).

- JULY 6 - Black Brant - Whiffen Spit (1).
- JULY 8 - Franklin's Gull - Clover Point (1 adult).
- JULY 9 - Semi-Palmated Plover - Metchosin Lagoon (1).
- JULY 13 - Wandering Tattler - McMicking Point (1).
- JULY 15 - Red Knot - Loon Bay (1).
- JULY 17 - Cooper's Hawk - UVic Campus (family group).
- JULY 18 - Common Tern - S. of Victoria Golf Course (4).
- JULY 18 - Surfbird - Clover Point (37).
- JULY 19 - Black Turnstone - Clover Point (7).
- JULY 21 - Pectoral Sandpiper - McIntyre Road Reservoir (1).
- JULY 22 - Whimbrel - Island View Beach (1).
- JULY 23 - Green Heron - Blenkinsop Lake (2).
- JULY 29 - Ruddy Turnstone - Clover Point (1).

- AUG. 4 - Black-throated Grey Warbler - Prevost Hill (1).
- AUG. 5 - Great Horned Owl - Goldstream Park (1).
- AUG. 6 - Marbled Godwit - Cadboro Bay Beach (1).
- AUG. 7 - Baird's Sandpiper - Cadboro Bay Beach (1).
- AUG. 9 - Stilt Sandpiper - Martindale L. Reservoir (1).
- AUG. 9 - Solitary Sandpiper - Martindale L. Reservoir (1).
- AUG. 11 - Parasitic Jaeger - Cordova Spit (2).
- AUG. 14 - Lincoln's Sparrow - Ascot Pond (1).
- AUG. 18 - Vaux's Swift - Matheson Lake Park (3).
- AUG. 20 - Virginia Rail - Colquitz Creek (2).
- AUG. 22 - Bald Eagle - Metchosin Lagoon (1).
- AUG. 22 - Lesser Yellowlegs - Metchosin Lagoon (57).
- AUG. 24 - Red Knot - Clover Point (1).
- AUG. 27 - Great Egret - Over Victoria Golf Course (1).
- AUG. 27 - Mourning Dove - Martindale Road (2).
- AUG. 29 - Golden Plover - Victoria Golf Course (2).
- AUG. 30 - Fox Sparrow - Prevost Hill (3).
- AUG. 31 - Ringbill Gull - Esquimalt Lagoon (1).
- AUG. 31 - Black Swift - Metchosin (12).

Reports came from: Tom Briggs, Eric Counsell, A.R. Davidson, Vic & Peggy Goodwill, Harold Hosford, R. McKenzie-Grieve, B. and J.M. Meiklejohn, Alf Porcher, Leila G. Roberts, Ron Sattersfield, Enid K. Lemon, Vera Guernsey, Luke de Witt, J. B. Tatum, Wayne Campbell.

HORNBY ISLAND

by Merle Harvey

Being on the Island for three weeks in March/April this spring, I was struck by the richness of birdsong in the woods and the wildflowers that colored the cliffs, and the blossomed trees that lightened the forest.

The first weekend was so stormy that the Ferry stopped for a while, but the wild waves brought in some deep-sea birds. Scoters sheltered in great rafts with Buffleheads and Mew Gulls in Tribune Bay.

There were many loons, and on two occasions I heard one calling. Grebes, ducks and mergansers were in all the small inlets, and a killdeer became worried as we walked along the sand. A heron stalked the sea-weedy rocks and a kingfisher hovered and dived. A flock of dunlin and one of sanderling flew past, and once three Trumpeter Swans winged their way north.

The Blue grouse's "oomphing" finally led me to see him on a pine branch after stalking the sound for two weeks.

The summer birds began to arrive, and many wrens and Song Sparrows sang spiritedly. A Hermit Thrush and a Gold-crowned Sparrow were heard daily and a flock of Evening Grosbeaks once. A pair of Red Crossbills delighted me on two occasions, and eight Turkey Vultures circled overhead one day. A family of Bald Eagles seemed resident, and were seen daily on branches or rocks or even on the sandy beach.

And every day I was wakened by the call and drumming of the Pileated Woodpecker, and the sweet tinkling songs of siskins.

Blue-eyed Marys (*Collinsia grandiflora*) and Baby Mimulus (*M. alsinoides*) painted the cliffs, and I found many more flowers in bloom, including the Fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (*Ribes divaricatum*).

Altogether I identified 35 flowers in bloom, and 74 birds plus three more reported to me which I missed, and I am sure there were more among the songsters than I recognised.

Thanks to Mr. Helliwell's generosity, this Park is one habitat that will remain wild enough to attract many different species of birds, and allow wildflowers to grow in profusion, and give pleasure to those of us who like to wander in the wilderness.

A BRIEF FOR BOTANY

(Author Unknown)

There should be no monotony,
In studying your botany,
It helps to train and spur the brain ...
Unless you haven't gotany.

It teaches you, does botany,
To know the plants and spotany,
And learn just why they live and die,
In case you plant or potany.

You learn from reading botany,
Of woolly plants and cottony,
That grow on earth, and what they're worth,
And why some spots have notany.

You sketch the plants in botany,
You learn to chart and plotany,
Like corn or oats. You jot down notes ...
If you know how to jotany.

Your time, if you'll allotany,
Will teach you how and whatany
Old plant or tree can do or be,
And that's the use of botany.

Sent in by Jessie Woollett.

FIELD TRIPS

- SUN. OCT. 9 ORNITHOLOGY.
Beaver Lake. Leader: Tim Murphy.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.
- SAT. OCT. 15 SALMON SPAWNING. (Spring, Cohos, Chum)
Leader: Alex Peden.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.
(Qualicum River, 12:00 Noon)
- SUN. OCT. 16 HERITAGE TREES. (Gorge Kinsmen Park,
Royal Roads, Lagoon Road)
Leader: Michael Gye.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.
- SAT. OCT. 29 MUSHROOM HUNT.
Leader: Dr. Al Funk.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m. or
Goldstream Campsite (upper level
"Meeting Place")

JUNIORS

- SAT. OCT. 15 FRANCIS PARK. To help Naturalist, and
have a Fungi Hunt.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 1:30 p.m.
Driver: Griffith.
- SAT. OCT. 29 MATHESON LAKE. Hike.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 10:30 a.m.
Driver: Curran. BRING LUNCH.

SOCIETY MEETINGS are held the second Tuesday in each month, at 8:00 p.m. in Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, south entrance off Superior Street.

AUDUBON LECTURES are held same time, same place, on the following dates:

Friday and Saturday, October 14 and 15; Friday and Saturday, November 11 and 12; Friday and Saturday, January 13 and 14; Friday and Saturday, February 10 and 11; Friday and Saturday, March 10 and 11.