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## 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.

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Juniors - \$2.50      Golden Age Single - \$6.00      Regular - \$7.00  
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The financial year is May 1 to April 30. New members joining after January 1 and before March 1 - half-dues.

Rare Bird Alert  
383-0211

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### MILL HILL

By Merle Harvey

Our Botany Outing on April 2 under the leadership of Stephen Mitchell was very successful. Arriving at the Parking Lot off Atkins Road, we sniffed the fragrance of Balm of Gilead (*Populus trichocarpa*) and admired the yellow tassels of the Big-leaf Maple there. Then we started our climb to the top.

We found many spring flowers in bloom, including a sunny slope blue with the Early Camas (*C. quamash*) threaded with Chocolate Lilies (*Fritillaria lanceolata*) and Peacocks (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*) and a few Larkspurs (*Delphinium menziesii*) almost out.

In a sheltered corner *Dodecatheon pauciflora* was discovered: Stephen showing us the difference in *D. hendersonii*. There were lots of Early Saxafrage (*S. integrifolia*) and one specimen of Little Western Saxafrage (*S. occidentalis*). It was quite a thrill to find some minute flowers which turned out to be a white variety of Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia grandiflora*), and one plant in bloom of the Gilia (*G. microsteris gracilis*); a few Calypsos (*C. bulbosa*) and a Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*) and a few Trilliums (*T. ovatum*) gleamed among a sea of *Viola glabella*, and that brought my total to 36, not counting all the ferns I saw.

Thank you, Stephen, for a pleasant and profitable outing.

COVER:  
*TRILLIUM OVATUM*  
By Doreen Horne

## "THOU WITTY: THOU SWELL."

By *Harold Zender*

Perfect weather attended the March 18th ornithological field trip when Mary Winstone led a charmed "birdwalk" at Witty's Lagoon. As members assembled at the carpark there, Nature proclaimed common cause with the Society in the timely appearance of a Turkey Buzzard wheeling above us. Then, for a spell of blissful hours, with spirits buoyant as Buffleheads, some 30 naturalists shuffled and ambled, strolled, straggled and rambled - senses, guidebooks and binoculars eagerly readied.

From the park entrance we moved to the foot of a wooded gully where a shallow dam gathered a voluble brook into a quiet reserve. Fifty paces further on, at Sitting Lady Falls, an observation platform cradled the upper bank of the gorge. To our left an evanescent white strip floated step-wise down, breaking around a shard of rock and spilling into the calm lagoon. Foam drifted out toward the sunlit channel. In the shadowy green waters of the ravine, a solitary female Red-breasted Merganser was diving. To the aerial view from the platform, it offered up a faultless symmetry of fantail feathers and striped speculum.

By noon we had made our way to the beach, having sighted birds above, below, beyond, aloft and yonder and carefully examined several spring flowers which Therese Todd pointed out. From shaded pathways worn among the roots of conifers, we had looked out on a diversity of waterfowl in the lagoon; Pintail, Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser, Mallard and American Coot, to name a few. At the beach, shorebirds (except for a distant Black Oystercatcher) and Grebe were disappointingly absent, but a Bald Eagle perched on an off-shore cable marker and a dozen or so Harbour Seals kept us company during a relaxed and pleasant lunch.

As we returned along the lagoon, a Great Blue Heron had taken up his post on a mud flat and the head feathers of a pair of Goldeneye glowed with greenish iridescence.

The highlight of the outing for birdwatching occurred, perhaps, when we had an afternoon side trip to view Western Bluebirds. We walked from Metchosin Road opposite the park up Dupree Road and, as if by appointment, there they were, perching in the bare branches of a Garry Oak. As we walked down onto a beautiful meadow leading toward a placid pond, a Red-tailed Hawk was circling overhead, its captured prey dangling. Before turning homeward, the brilliant sunlight aided to identify a pair of Ringneck Ducks while we rested on a rocky rise overlooking the pond. This brought our count to 44 species seen.

Following the walk, I was amazed to learn from experienced birders that by usual standards we had seen neither many nor any uncommon varieties of birds ... yet in terms of sheer pleasure and harmony, I believe all would agree it was a most rare outing.

VICTORIA'S WILDLIFEby *A.R. Davidson*

While having lunch in the car on the east side of the Oak Bay Marina which faces the open sea, a river otter clambered up the rocks, passed in front of the car, and walked across the parking lot and over the strips of garden, where it disappeared among the cars ... the word "walked" is hardly appropriate. It humped along in a queer, lopsided and ungainly way as if walking on blacktop was something that it had not attempted before, and probably would not do again. It could easily have swung round the point, but no, it had to try a short-cut. We presume it was heading for the same place that had attracted all the rhinoceros auklets, murrelets, loons and grebes earlier where the fishermen clean their catches, and where scraps from the Killer Whale enclosure may be found. That's only a guess, but I do know that we have never seen anything like that before.



DAMP BUT DELIGHTFUL*By Merle Harvey*

The Botany Field Trip on 25 March turned out damp with some light showers, but it did not dampen the enthusiasm of 36 members who climbed up and down and over mossy rocks on the trails, following leader Therese Todd and chivalrously helped by the male members at awkward places!

Spring flowers were out on Seymour Hill in the usual places - Satinflowers standing tall on mossy rocks; Baby Mimulus tucked away under rock ledges; Easter lilies in drifts among the Salal; ferns and mosses loving the damp which kept them green; Camas leaves thick, though too early to be in flower.

One Fritillary and one Calypso were found almost out, and one Balsamroot in bud. A few Fringecups, Trilliums, and Broad-leaved Sandwort were in bloom. Otherwise, the usual wildflowers were fully out - Spring Gold, Peacocks, Sea Blush, Western Buttercup, Blue-eyed Mary, Toothwort, and Early Saxafrage.

Among the shrubs Oregon Grape scented the air, and the Salmonberry and False Box were in full bloom. Kinnikinnick was in bud, as was one bush of Buffalo-berry, though others nearby still had their leaves clasped together showing their rusty backs.

Thimbleberry, Ninebark and Gooseberry joined the Indian Plum in fresh greenery. A clump of Goldenbacked Fern was uncurling its lacy fronds under a rock.

Having seen all there was to see on Seymour Hill, many then climbed to the Clarke Lookout and enjoyed a view of mist-wreathed hills across the valley before descending for lunch sitting on rocks near the carpark.

After which, Therese led four of us round the Upper Lake, but we looked in vain for the osprey as we passed the nest on its high site.

Altogether a very satisfactory day, with many thanks to Therese Todd for making it so interesting.

EDITORIAL

There will be a July issue of the "Naturalist". DEADLINE for articles June 1. Next issue will be in September - deadline August 1. Thereafter there will be an issue bi-monthly.

JEAN McKINNIS (386-6272) took over from the Suttills as Membership Chairman and GRACE BARCLAY (479-0211) has replaced Gail Mitchell as Juniors Organiser. We wish both our new officers a cordial welcome, and hope that they will enjoy their labours, just as we hope that the retiring members will enjoy the rest from theirs! We owe Kaye, Dennis and Gail a great deal for their activities on our behalf.

As you will notice, there are now regular Marine Biology outings and lectures by Dr. Alex Peden to add to our varied list, and another day to the Olympics is being arranged for July 9, by Charlie Trotter.

The Annual General Meeting is NOT on the second Tuesday this month, but on the 5th Tuesday, MAY 30TH. At this meeting, it is intended to elect new members to the Board of Directors.

This is your SECOND reminder to renew your membership before April 30 (now past, but Jean McKinnis is taking in dues during May). We need a strong membership to combat pressure on our parks and wildlife. Cheques to: "The Victoria Natural History Society", P.O. Box 1747, Victoria, B.C., V8W 2Y1. Remember that dues have gone up - see inside front cover.

One of the co-leaders of our Ornithological Section, Mike Shepard, is a partner in a new enterprise. He and a friend have started up a nature-tour agency, Swiftsure Tours Ltd., and we wish them the greatest success in this new venture. If you are interested in what they offer, phone 388-4227.

There will be no speaker at the A.G.M. on 30 May, but a film or two may be shown, possibly "The Great White Bird".

## NEW MAGAZINES

The March issue of the "Sea Otter" has come out very strongly against the damage done in previous years to our environment by our Forest Industry. Items by Bristol Foster, Roderick Haig-Brown and others make sad reading, as does "Turning the Tsitika Valley into Cash".

One of our members, David Orton, is on a committee formed to seek an extension of the moratorium on logging in the Tsitika Valley; and your directors have written to the Minister of Forests and the Minister of the Environment about it. Only strong public opinion can prevent any further spoliation to forests and lakes, which are certainly two of B.C.'s most attractive assets.

Another new magazine has come out - "The Concerned Canadian", published in Victoria bi-monthly. This is intended for Canadians concerned with the future of their country, with respect to the evolution and virtue of human values and standards.

**THE SEA OTTER:** published monthly by Tsitika Publications Ltd. Mailing address: P.O. Box 1749, Victoria, B.C., V8W 2Y1, Phone (604) 383-1942). Editor and Publisher: Al Burke. \$5.00 per annum.

**THE CONCERNED CANADIAN:** Published by the Concerned Canadian Publishing House, 4660 Elk Lake Drive, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 5M1. \$15.00 for six issues.

The Research Station, Sidney, B.C., has put out a Handbook compiled by J.H. Crossley which makes very interesting reading. It is "An Evaluation and Record of Generally Recommended Trees and Shrubs", planted at the Station 1913-1973.

It gives the name of genus, family, species, cultivar, variety, as well as common names; hardiness, or susceptibility to frost, drought, or too much wet in the soil; height, dimensions and how slowly or quickly each specimen grows; the names of those that did not survive or were not worth growing and removed.

Habitat and geographic range for each species; length of growth period; flowers and berries; evergreen or deciduous; also 8 beautiful colour photographs of garden shrubs.

A very valuable booklet to have if one has trees and shrubs in the garden. Copies of this publication can be obtained from: Information Division, Canada Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa, K1A 0C7, or a copy may be borrowed from our librarian, A.R. Davidson.

## EXPLANATION NEEDED

*by Katherine Sherman*

One day during the cold spell before Christmas, my attention was attracted by a tapping sound which seemed to come from the basement. I went down to investigate, and there, on one of the window sills, was a robin pecking against the glass. He was not excited or panicky like a bird fighting his reflection. It was more as though he was asking to come in. I watched a few minutes and noticed he was also pecking at the windowsill itself.

I then saw him fly to a nearby cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster meyerii*), pull off one or two berries, and fly with them to the windowsill. Here he continued to peck at them.

Now robins love these berries and every time when we get snow or frost the shrub will be alive with at least half-a-dozen birds gulping down the berries. I thought my robin merely had an unusual method of feeding and forgot all about it.

A day or two later I was walking round the house and there, on the robin's windowsill, was a large pile of mashed-up berries - skins, seeds and pulp. It reminded me of a bird feeding tray on which someone had put out carefully prepared food. Two weeks later the pulp mess was still there, although no berries were left on the bush.

Until someone comes up with a good scientific explanation, I shall continue to flatter myself that it was a Christmas offering to the lady of the house!

RARE ORCHID PRESERVED

The North Okanagan Naturalists Club have a new stickpin depicting the Bog orchid *Liparis loeselii*. This plant is known to grow only in one area in the whole of Western Canada and that is in the North Okanagan. It was discovered in Mara Meadows by a member of N.O.N.C., John Shepherd, in 1965.

Joan Heriot writes in their Club magazine that ... " ... the plant is a European species extending from Britain and France through Southern Scandinavia, Germany, Austria and Northern Italy to Central and Southern Russia. In North America, it is "strictly" an Eastern species. When John found it, it had one authentic site in the West - Falcon Valley in Washington State. Its only known site in Western Canada is in Mara Meadows.

Mara Meadows is now an Ecological Reserve under the guardianship of the North Okanagan Naturalists Club. It was by our own efforts that the meadows were brought under this protection, but most unfortunately a drainage ditch had been blasted for about three quarters of a mile down the centre of the marsh in an attempt to drain it. This was at the very time that our brief recommending the preservation of the area was in preparation (late 1949). The importance of the area was already recognized and we were allowed to go in the following Spring to build a series of dams along the ditch to prevent the drainage and relood the meadow. Those dams now require yearly inspection, repair and often complete replacement, and our Club has been made responsible for this.

We can, therefore, wear our pin with pride since without our past and continuing efforts, the meadows would quickly dry out into blocks of raw peat moss, dried mud and marl, to be taken over by bushes and trees. *Liparis loeselii* would be no more. And not only *L. loeselii* but the whole delicately balanced community of numerous other orchids and marsh plants, some of which are also rare or becoming so: Sundews, Bladderwort, Water lobelia, Bog bean, Bog cranberry, and Swamp laurel to name a few."

Congratulations to the North Okanagan Naturalists; may their *Liparis Loeselii* continue to flourish.

WORLD'S OLDEST DRAGONFLY

*sent in by Jill Burbank*

The remains of a 300 million-year-old dragonfly with a wing of over eight inches, which is the oldest known flying creature ever found, have been discovered about 3,000 feet underground in Bolsover Colliery, in Derbyshire, England.

The discovery, announced yesterday by the Coal Board, was made by coal face worker Mr. Malcolm Spencer, who spotted a piece of coal in the shape of an insect's wing. It has been named "Erasipteron Bolsover" as a result.

Mr. Paul Whalley, head of the palaeo-entomology department of the Natural History Museum, who was sent the insect, said: "It is the most exciting find made recently. It is the largest insect ever known to have lived in Britain and the oldest flying creature anywhere in the world."

THE TREASURER'S AFRICAN DREAM

*By J.P. Hutchings*

*The tom-toms drum out through the African bush:  
What news of the world do they bring? ...  
Have the Jews come to terms with the Arabs at last?  
Has Moscow made friends with Peking?  
Has Rhodesia accepted Majority Rule?  
Are drug-traffic and crime on the wane?  
Has some simple M.P. praised the R.C.M.P.?  
Are the Trudeaus together again?  
Is the oil crisis over? Has Carter contrived  
A pact with the U.S.S.R.?  
Have they made strikes illegal? Has inflation been checked?  
Has the dollar recovered to par?  
No, far more momentous the tidings that come  
In the throbbing bush-telegraph's news:  
The Membership, back in the V.N.H.S.,  
Has accepted an increase in dues.*

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
6	Black Brant	May 4	Patricia Bay	Mark, Kit and John Hart
1	Violet-Green Swallow	9	Quick's Bottom	M&V Goodwill
2	Golden Eagle	12	Saanich Exp. Farm	R. Satterfield
1	Rufous Hummingbird	16	Towner Park	Gwen Taylor
1	" "	16	Florence Lake	Gwen Briggs
1	Dark-eyed Junco (slate-coloured)	16	Swan Lake	Lucy Parris & Merle Harvey
1	Ruffed Grouse	17	Scafe Hill	M&V Goodwill
4	Yellow-Rump Warbler	17	Prevost Hill	R. McK-Grieve
1	Turkey Vulture	18	Metchosin Lagoon	R. McK-Grieve
3	Blue Grouse	19	Tugwell Lake	M.K. & J. Hart
1	Wh. Cr. Sparrow	22	Ross Bay Cem.	Fen Lansdowne
7	Bonaparte's Gull	22	Clover Point	R. Satterfield
2	Wh. Fr. Geese	24	Metchosin Lagoon	R. Satterfield
1	W. Bluebird	24	Cualta Rd.	Jeff Gaskin
1	Hermit Thrush	25	Uplands Park	E. & A.R. Davidson
242	Black Brant	26	Sidney Spit	M.K. & J. Hart
1	Lincoln's Sparrow	27	Penrhyn Rd.	R. McK-Grieve
1	Orange Warbler	30	Uplands Park	E. & A.R. Davidson
1	Snow Goose	31	Panama Flats	George Sirk
1	Solitary Vireo	31	Munn Rd. nr. Francis Pk.	A.R. Davidson Merle Harvey
1	Osprey	31	Tseum Harbour	Leila Roberts
25	Eve. Grosbeaks	31	Ross Bay Cem.	R. Scott-Moncrieff
1	Barn Swallow	April 1	Quick's Bottom	R. Satterfield
1	Rough-wing Swallow	1	Quick's Bottom	R. Satterfield
1	Cliff Swallow	1	Quick's Bottom	R. Satterfield
1	Myrtle Warbler	1	Elk Lake	R. Satterfield
1	Townsend Solitaire	1	Mystic Lane	John Hitch
9	Rock Sandpipers	2	Cattle Point	E. & A.R. Davidson
1	Wild Turkey	2	Sidney Island	M.K. & J. Hart
2	Fox Sparrows	3	Wm. Head Rd.	Beryl Holt
1	Thayer's Gull	4	Clover Point	M. Goodwill
6	Sanderling	5	Clover Point	M. Goodwill
2	Savannah Sparrows	5	Martindale Rd.	M.K. & J. Hart
1	California Gull	5	Clover Point	M. Goodwill
1	Yel. Head Blackbird	8	Dorset/Beach	Ann Belither
5	Cinnamon Teal	8	Quick's Bottom	R. Satterfield
1	Herring Gull	8	Clover Point	M&V Goodwill
1	Screech Owl	10	Prevost Hill	R. McK-Grieve
pr	Yel. Rump Warblers	10	off Burnside Rd.	M&V Goodwill

"TINY JEWELS UNDER YOUR FEET"

In an article by Peter Karsaros in "Search" magazine, (November 1977) under this heading, the coloured photographs of these "jewels" caught my eye and I was amazed to find they were slime molds. They can be either slime fungus (myxomycetes) or fungus animals (mycetosa).

Having heard last year of the slime mold that "walked away" during one night, I have been on the lookout for these on my walks but, so far, found only one kind.

Perhaps when we are out on the forest trails, there will be a chance to catch sight of more of these molds, and with a good pocket magnifier be able to see these "jewels" as they really are, in coral red, turquoise blue, topaz yellow, emerald green and many more variations.

JUNIOR PROGRAM: MAY AND JUNE

- WED. MAY 10 Room 112. Museum. 4:00 p.m. Slide Show on a trip to Antarctica with Alison Nicholson.
- SAT. MAY 18 GOLDSTREAM: Hike and weiner roast! Meet Mayfair Lanes, 11:00 a.m. If attending, phone 477-9248 or 384-5568.
- WED. MAY 24 Room 112 Museum, 4:00 p.m. Mrs. J. Woollett. "The Life of a Swallowtail".
- SAT. MAY 27 EAST SOOKE PARK. Bring lunch. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 10:30 a.m.
- WED. JUNE 7 Room 112 Museum, 4:00 p.m. Talk on Pond Life. NOTE: This is the last Wed. for the summer.
- SAT. JUNE 10 POND LIFE: Meet at Swan Lake, 1:30 p.m. North on Douglas to Ralph Street; East to Swan Lake Road; South to 3873 Swan Lk. Rd.
- SAT. JUNE 24 FRANCIS PARK: Meet Mayfair Lanes, 1:30 p.m.

*WATCH the JULY issue for announcement of a Summer Outing. Anyone interested in a Weekend Camp in September? Phone Grace Barclay, 479-0211.*

SUMMER TRIPS - DETAILS

The summer program on the following pages gives the bare essentials of the Society's summer activities this year; what follows here are the details you will need to know to get in on some of the more ambitious outings:

MIRACLE BEACH (May 12, 13, 14) - a two-day camp-out for those with a camping bent; for those who prefer more substantial accommodation, several motels are available in the area:

Oyster River Resort	Miracle Beach Resort
R.R. #1, Campbell River	R.R. #1, Black Creek
V9W 3S4 (337-5170)	VOR 1C0 (337-5171)

The Breakers Resort	Saratoga Beach and
Saratoga Beach	Trailer Park
R.R. 1, Campbell River	R.R. #1, Campbell River
V9W 3S4 (337-5411)	V9W 3S4 (337-5511)

and many others. Queries to Alf Porcher (477-7777). Travel on own to Miracle Beach on Friday afternoon, on May 12. (3-1/2 hours drive)

BOTANICAL BEACH, PORT RENFREW: (June 24) - Meet Dr. Alex Peden at Government Wharf, Port Renfrew at 8:00 a.m. (3 hours drive from Victoria) Bring lunch. Note that the parking place is half-an-hour's walk to the beach. For those not prepared for such an early start, there are camping facilities available at Fairy Lake (B.C. Forest Products) and two motels are listed for Port Renfrew:

Renfrew Beach Motel	Elliott's Cabins
Port Renfrew	Port Renfrew
VOS 1K0 (647-5437)	VOS 1K0 (647-5405)

Queries to Alex Peden (652-3598).

HURRICANE RIDGE: (July 9) - The bus leaves Government Parking Lot (behind Executive House) at 5:00 a.m. Take identification of some kind for Customs. Reservations to Dorothy McCann (592-2693) before June 30, and tickets should be purchased before that date.

OUTLINE OF PROGRAM FOR MAY, JUNE, JULY

- THURS. MAY 11 TALK on "Aquatic Life on our Shores" by Dr. Alex Peden (652-3598). Room 112 in Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m. Slides, specimens, questions and answers.
- FRI., SAT., SUN. 12, 13, 14 MAY WEEKEND at Miracle Beach. Co-ordinator: Alf Porcher (477-7777). (See summer detail)
- MON. MAY 22 BEACH SEINING at Mill Bay. Leader: Dr. Alex Peden (652-3598). Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:30. Bring lunch.
- SUN. MAY 28 BIRDING-Francis Park. Leader: Doug Turnbull (592-6025). Meet Mayfair Lanes 8:30 A.M. or Nature House 9:00 a.m. Bring Lunch.
- TUES. MAY 30 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Newcombe Auditorium. 8:00 p.m. Films.
- SUN. JUNE 11 BIRDING at Spectacle Lake. Leader: Tim Murphy. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 7:30 a.m. or Spectacle Lake, 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch.
- SUN. JUNE 18 BOTANY, at East Sooke Park. Leader: Katherine Sherman. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m. or East Sooke Park, 10:00 a.m. Bring lunch. (598-3237)
- SAT. JUNE 24 TIDE POOL: Botanical Beach. Leader: Alex Peden (652-3598). Meet at head of Government Wharf, Port Renfrew, 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch.
- SAT. JULY 1 MANDARTE ISLAND, Sidney Spit. Leader: Tim Murphy (385-5357). Boat trip on the "Maryville". Cost - \$6.00. Leave Sidney Wharf, 9:00 a.m. Return about 4:00 p.m. Accommodation limited. Make reservations or cancellations with Tim. Bring lunch.
- SUN. JULY 9 HURRICANE RIDGE: Botany. Leader; Chas. A. Trotter (477-4365). Cost - \$15.00. Meet 5:00 a.m. at Government Parking Lot (behind Executive House). Bring lunch. (See summer details)