

The  
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NATURALIST**



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Those members who do not receive their magazine in reasonable time,  
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by anything other than slow postal delivery, she is in the best  
position to straighten it out in the least time.

*Thanks - Jean D. McInnis, Membership*

*A Happy New Year to all the members of the Victoria Natural  
History Society. May the year 1981 be exciting, meaningful  
and fascinating in the realm of Natural History. Thanks for  
your wonderful help and contributions to our magazine.*

MARJORIE KETCHAM - Editor  
MARJORIE ELSTON - Asst. Editor

*Do come and let us meet you. Be at our next General Meeting, on  
Tuesday, January 13th at 8:00 p.m. and come join us on our next  
field trips and programs. You'll find them exciting, interesting  
and friendly.*

VOLUME 37, NO. 4

JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 1981

BUSHTIT

*(Psaltriparus Minimus)*

Abundant in large flocks in scrub habitats, open woodlands  
and residential shrubbery. Told by its nondescript plumage, lack of  
wing-bars, very long tail, and a very short bill. Call is high,  
thin fussy notes.

From the family Paridae, they are small, slim, long-tailed,  
relatives of the chickadees, which they resemble in habits, but can  
be distinguished from the chickadee by its lack of a bib and by its  
stubby bill and perching habit.

Photographed by Bertha McHaffie-Gow from her kitchen window,  
where they feed year round. She feeds them on suet. They come in  
flocks in the winter months to feed, and take off in March and  
April to nest.

COVER

BUSHTIT

by Bertha McHaffie-Gow

A QUIET DAY*by Harold Hosford*

If we'd paid any attention to the weatherman, we'd have all stayed home; despite his most ominous predictions, the sun shone, and the day was perfect. But, as is so often the case, good weather doesn't mean good birding.

Such was the case for 30 members of the Society who chose Sunday, August 24 to drop into the Marshall-Stevenson Wildlife Area west of Qualicum Beach for a few hours with the birds.

The Marshall-Stevenson Wildlife Area is a comparatively new child in the family of the Canadian Wildlife Service. As manager of the area, Neil Dawe is entrusted with its development. Neil sees the day when the Marshall-Stevenson Wildlife Area will be able to cater more to the needs of the naturalist public but, for the time being, his emphasis is on making the place better for birds.

Late August is not the best time of year to test the extent of Neil's success with his endeavours. It's a quiet time of year at the best and, on a fine day such as when we were there, it was quieter than usual.

After a briefing by Neil, we took a short walk through a fine stand of second-growth timber that has many local entrepreneurs watering at the mouth. But, as Neil says, they haven't a hope. As for birds, they were there -- but keeping very quiet. We did manage to turn up a Winter Wren, and soft sounds coming from high turned out to be two Brown Creepers. Once a Steller's Jay screamed just to remind us that these usually noisy birds can sometimes do pretty fair imitations of quiet birds.

In a patch of open ground between the woods and the parking lot, several goldfinches kept our attention. Most were brownish young of the year but a male -- still in nuptial black and gold -- was seen.

Lunch between two ponds gave us a chance to check out one of those difficult little flycatchers that are the bane of birdwatchers. This one may have been a Western Wood Pewee. When we weren't working over the pewee, there were Barn Swallows to look at, just in case one happened to be a Cliff Swallow. No such luck!

After lunch it was the beach where the find of the day -- two black Oystercatchers -- were seen heading south along the beach. They didn't stop but, in passing, they became new entries for the list at Marshall-Stevenson.

The tide was well out but in the choppy waters of the Straits of Georgia we found Harlequins and Common Mergansers. Overhead, Bonaparte's, Mew, Glaucous-winged, California, and Ring-billed gulls kept us guessing. A quartet of Sanderlings dropped in briefly before finding other places to go and a Bald Eagle made a brief appearance to complete the picture.

On the way home, some of the group dropped in to Buttertub Slough at Nanaimo to add a few more species for the day. Among these were Green Heron, Mallard, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebe, Coot, and Ring-necked Pheasant.

In all, 58 species fell to our glasses -- not bad for a "quiet" day. But, if what Neil Dawe says is true, a lot of us will be back -- in mid-March -- when the herring are running. According to Neil, the place is anything but quiet then.

USING OUR EYES*By Merle Harvey*

Twenty-eight members plus two visitors from Calgary turned out for the botany outing at John Dean Park on September 27. Leon Pavlick, our leader, warned us there were few flowers in bloom at this time of year, but we were to try and identify leaves and seed capsules. Our aim was to see how near 100 species we could get.

So an enthusiastic gang kept finding things, and on the whole knew most of the answers, but a keen naturalist keeps learning new facts and Leon Pavlick kept us busy. He made us guess at odd-looking seedheads, and look in long grass for tiny plants, and scramble up and down a steep path to look at a "new" fern (*Polystichum montanum*) and we finished up a lot wiser than we started.

Our list? Well, nothing near 100, but with trees, shrubs, vines, ferns, seedheads, leaves, berries, we totalled 79; grasses extra.

A few birds, fungi, and mosses added to our enjoyment, and we finished the outing by having lunch at Gulf View, at the Experimental Station, at tables under tall, old trees. A very pleasant and interesting day.



## ALGAE AT WHIFFEN SPIT

by Alex Peden

It was a warm, but overcast morning on July 12 when about eight members of the Victoria Natural History Society met at Whiffin Spit. Most Marine Biology trips of the Society are usually led by myself, but on this occasion, I quickly found myself outside of my usual expertise as we devoted a morning to the study of seaweeds. Debra Murie, a student who has worked with Dr. Alan Austin of the University of Victoria, provided us with expert identifications of the huge variety of local algae. She is currently researching accounts in the Provincial Archives on the history of fur seals off British Columbia, but her enthusiasm and interest also encouraged us to look closer at the seaweeds of our coast.

Seaweeds have restricted distributions along our local beaches and a beach stroller can get a glimpse of the great number of species by studying the jetsam stranded by a falling tide. Here I first became familiar with the "feather-boa" kelp, a long-stalked algae with side frills much like a feather.

A more thorough study reveals that seaweeds living in the mid-tide area are quite different to those found at the level of lowest tide, since the various species have different tolerances to drying as the tide recedes. Most of us are familiar with the rock-weed Fucus in the higher tide zone with little bladder-like bubbles that can be popped as we squeeze them. Most of the larger kelps were found much lower down. Amongst the large leafy brown algae (e.g. Alaria) were a variety of delicate red and brown algae of which I think the most fascinating was Iridaea, a red algae which is a drab reddish brown out of the water, but when submerged, a bright iridescent sheen is produced.

The classification of seaweeds is more complex than can be described here; however, the eel grasses are the only true vascular plants with proper roots to be seen in our salt waters. On the wave-swept rocky shore of Whiffin Spit, Phyllospadix is the only one to be found, in contrast to Zostera found on protected mud flats in Sooke Harbour.

Nearly all the seaweeds are algae, much simpler plants, often with a swollen base (a "holdfast") to cling to rocks and various branching leafy blades. The algae are classified by their colour of pigment and Debra showed us 3 types of green algae, 9 types of brown algae and 19 types of red algae. The red algae proved to be the most diverse in form, some being hair-like, others in broader leafy sheets and even others encrusting rocks and reminding us of coral-like growths.

Debra made out a list of the algae we saw with notes on their identification and it seems best to reproduce her list right here rather than me being presumptuous and describing them myself. However, she cautions us that the sizes quoted below are the sizes we saw and not the largest size to which each species might grow. We also must use their scientific names because there are not enough common names available.

### GREENS

Spongomorpha - bright green rope-like mats 6" in length.

Ulva - "sea lettuce" - bright green sheets.

Codium fragile - dark moss green, simply forked, soft suede-like texture.

### BROWNS

Fucus - "rock weed" - olive green, dichotomously branched, bladders.

Desmarestia - light brown/tan limp whisk, 18" in length (main axis).

Leathesia - yellow-tan convoluted sac, firm, looks like brain, on Rhodomela.

Egregia menziesii - "feather-boa" kelp.

Alaria - long, brown slender frond with little blades at base (sporophylls).

Costaria costata - gigantic brown broad sheets with five midribs, full of holes from grazing, etc., many crinkles in the sheet.

Cymathere triplicata - large thick brown blades with thick folds running longitudinally on blade - a lot in drift cast.

Hedophyllum sessile - "sea cabbage" - large brown furled blades directly attached to hold fast (no stipe).

Soranthera - little tan "balloons" with dark spots on surface (sori) epiphytic on Odonthalia.

### REDS

Bangia - dried out dark blackish-red hair-like filaments draped over rocks.

Porphyra - "nori" - grayish purple thin sheets.

Hildenbrandia - thin brick-red encrusting algae - on rocks.

Petrocelis - "tar" - thick blackish, encrusting on rocks - feels like rubber.

Gigartina - dark purplish black blades with a lot of pips (papillae) on blades.

Odonthalis floccosa - dark blackish branches feathery spray, rough texture - spike-like appearance in branching, heaped on rocks.

Halosaccion glandiforme - hollow elongate sacs (like sausages), olive-brown, occur in dense groupings.

Polysiphonia - reddish-black, 3" in length, very fine filamentous branched mats.

Iridaea cordata - iridescent - thick purple sheets.

Microcladia - soft to touch, reddish-brown, flattened branching, 3" in length, forming dense clusters like Odonthalis.

Constantinea - brownish-red, thick, cup-shaped with stipe through centre.

Rhodymenia - rosy-red firm blades, 6" long, dichotomously split with an irregular outline.

Hymenena - rosy-red, frilly, crispy blades, 3" long.

Rhodomela larix - main axis 6" long with little clusters of branches coming directly off the main axis, with epiphytic Leathesia.

Prionitis - dark blackish-purple wiry branching - covered with bryozoan colonies.

Bossiella - articulated (jointed) erect branching - bright pink - hard because of  $\text{CaCO}_3$  - growing up from rocks.

Lithothamnion - encrusting bright pink layer, hard due to  $\text{CaCO}_3$ , growing over surface of rock.

Melobesia - little bright pink patches on the surfaces of the Phyllospadix blades.

Smithora naiadum - small reddish-brown sheets on the edges of the Phyllospadix blades.

#### NON-ALGAE

SEAGRASS: Phyllospadix - 1/4" wide, bright "grass-green" long blades, with epiphytic Melobesia and Smithora.

Some naturalists were curious about the edibility and uses of sea weeds and to these common questions, Debra notes:

"Edibility": There is only one toxic genus on our coast. This is Desmarestia, which produces acids. All other algae have the potential to be eaten depending on personal tastes. Example: Laurencia has a pepper-like taste; most are sort of rubbery.

"Uses of Seaweeds": Several red algae, especially Gelidium, are used in the production of agar. Agar is used for a culture base when working with bacteria, as well as for packing fish and meats.

The red seaweeds also produce carrageenan, which is used in forming gels and thickening products such as ice-cream, pie-fillings, toothpastes, and puddings. The Maritimes have a carrageenan industry based on the production of Chondrus crispus (Irish Moss).

The large brown seaweeds produce alginic acid (algin) which is extracted and used in food products, as well as rubber and paper products, adhesives, and cosmetics.

#### JUNIORS AT GOLDSTREAM

by John Paul Fowler

On Saturday, 8 November, the Junior Naturalists went to Goldstream Park to see the salmon spawning. There were roughly ten children, four parents and hundreds of salmon. We watched the salmon for a while and then we walked to the nature house. We were surprised to see water coming from the waterfall, under the highway, through the tunnel and under the bridge.

At the nature house, a lady naturalist showed us some slides on the life cycle of the salmon. Then we went for a walk beside the river. It was high tide and we saw some fish starting up the river. We looked at a couple of dead fish and saw some seagulls. Also, we saw a Blue Heron.

Next we went along the river near the picnic tables and watched a dead salmon being dissected by a park naturalist. We saw all of the parts of the salmon. We learned that this particular salmon had died of a heart attack. Then we went to the picnic area and ate lunch.

We learned a lot about salmon and we thank Mrs. Wainwright, Gail Mitchell and the park naturalists for their help.

\* John Paul is a 10-year old Junior Member.



NEWCOMBE NEWS

The Newcombe Auditorium presents a special lecture series by the B.C. Provincial Museum Division of Ethnology.

Thursday Evenings at 8:00 P.M.

Early Indian Village Architecture

January 8 - Dan Savard in a slide/talk. Early architecture and its development. Southern and northern styles with emphasis on Haida.

January 15 - John Veillette.

January 22 - 3 slide/lectures on later 19th Century white style buildings, which include elements of Victorian architecture.

The series will emphasize churches, but houses and community buildings will be included. The range will encompass Queen Anne style mansions, sod-roofed cabins, clapboard churches, and gothic churches.

Friday and Saturday Evenings at 8:00 P.M.

Vancouver Film-makers' Showcase

January 16 and 17

January 30 and 31

The films of talented, young Canadian film-makers are featured in this unique series. Details of programs and admission are in the Newcombe monthly calendar available at the B.C. Provincial Museum daily.

BOTANY NIGHT, NEW FOR 1981

*by Mary-Lou Florian*

Starting in February '81, a monthly "Botany Night" is planned for members. This is intended as an informal forum to present and exchange ideas, information, experiences regarding local plant-life, and to become involved. The leader for the first four sessions (Feb.-May) is Leon Pavlick who invites the involvement of those interested in spring wildflowers on southern Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands, (and Olympic Peninsula?). Some

points for exchange are what kinds of spring wildflowers, their flowering times, how to know them, where to see them, etc. For the first session, Feb. 5th, bring along one or two slides of spring wildflowers.

Newcomers might find that this will serve as an introductory workshop to the local flora. Meeting place: Swan Lake Nature Centre, at 8:00 P.M.

BIRDERS' GUEST NIGHT AT CRYSTAL GARDENS

A special evening for birders and guests will be held Tuesday, February 24 at 7:30 p.m. at the Crystal Gardens, 713 Douglas (on the mezzanine floor) with Don Adams, well-known curator of birds who will identify and speak on the different species of tropical birds in the gardens and will discuss the purpose, aims, methods of handling and future plans for birds in the Crystal Gardens.

Following his lecture, Mr. Adams will conduct a tour of the bird life in the Gardens, as many of the birds will be nesting at that time. There will be no charge for admission. Special refreshments will be served following the meeting at tables under the umbrellas on the mezzanine. For further information, call Marjorie Ketcham at 384-1463.

P.S. - *Did you know also that the Crystal Gardens have free admission to Senior Citizens until May?*

FEDERATION OF B.C. NATURALISTS  
VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION AUTUMN MEETING

*by Doug Turnbull*

The meeting, originally planned for Campbell River September 27, was held in Nanaimo October 18th.

There was an update report on the Vancouver Island Marmot Study and Inventory Project. The meeting was informed that a captive breeding program had been instituted with one pair of marmots at the Penticton Game Farm. A sum of \$3500.00 will be required to defray the cost of the enclosure of which the clubs of the Vancouver Island Region will be asked to provide \$500.00.

Plans for the benefit lecture tour by Andy Russell in early November were discussed and hand-bills and press releases were provided to clubs for the meetings in their areas.

An update report was given on the Ecological Reserves Volunteer Warden System. The VNHS was represented by Doug Turnbull and Wilf Medd.

## OBSERVATION OF RUTTING BEHAVIOUR OF DEER

by R.H. Mann

On the afternoon of Saturday the 22nd November, a small but enthusiastic group met at Fort Rodd Hill Park, under the expert leadership of Dr. Alton Harestad of the Provincial Museum, with the objective of observing the rutting behaviour of the group of Columbia Blacktail Deer resident in the Park.

It was a fine clear evening and while we had a good view of some dozen does and semi-mature fawns, together with one mature male, we did not succeed in seeing any significant rutting action. Either the does were not in an amorous mood or the bucks, several of which could be seen lurking or browsing in the timber, were not responsive.

Perhaps, if we had had extremely good night vision, we might have observed more action, but by five p.m. it was too dark and rather chilly to carry our investigations further. Our young and affable leader, however, made up, in interesting information, for our lack of visual evidence by describing the characteristics and behaviour of the black-tail deer of Vancouver Island and the coastal regions of B.C.

Distinct from the 'blacktail' or mule deer of the Interior or mountains, though they occasionally interbreed, the Columbia Blacktail - 'Odocoileus hemionus columbianus' is a comparatively smaller animal. Its colour in winter is greyish brown with white underparts and a patch of white under the neck; the upper surface of the tail is brown and black for two thirds of its length.

Dr. Harestad explained graphically the actual rutting habits of these deer, how the males or 'bucks' determine by scent whether the does are in oestrus. The routine demonstration of dominance between the males was by the locking of antlers and more or less symbolic pushing and shoving matches which are carried out according to rule and seldom result in all-out fights or serious injury.

Another interesting feature which Dr. Harestad demonstrated was the alarm signals and sounds emitted by the does in response to the peculiar whistling noise of the fawns when in danger. The imitation of those sounds is a useful device for those wishing to observe deer which may otherwise be invisible in areas which they frequent. The bulls also have their throaty notes of challenge and response.

A distinguishing feature of the immature deer and fawns is the relatively high forehead as depicted in popular drawings and cartoons of baby deer which children and others find entrancing.

While the blacktail is primarily both a grazing and a browsing animal, it seems to thrive best where plenty of good grass is available as in the Park. The size of the male's antlers is largely determined by the available food supply rather than by the age of the animal. Their object seems to be mostly decorative and, in contests for dominance, to attract the favours of the females. Unlike those of the elk or wapiti they are seldom, if ever, used as defences against predators.

The chief enemies of these deer appear to be wolves, black bears and, of course, indiscriminating hunting as well as industrial developments and logging, etc., which disturbs or eliminates their traditional feeding grounds, or food supplies.

Those of us who heard and listened so attentively to Dr. Harestad were deeply appreciative and, although somewhat chilly by five p.m., departed with warm feelings towards our leader and greatly enlightened in regard to the graceful Columbia blacktail deer.

## INVENTORY OF WETLAND PLANTS - HELP WANTED

by Mary-Lou Florian

Wetland sites are vital areas to many forms of life. They are very vulnerable ecosystems and easily disturbed. It is important to record the plants that live in these areas now and determine if they are endangered. The inventory of wetland plants will also aid in monitoring their survival in the future.

It is the wish of the conservation committee of the VNHS to undertake an inventory of the wetland plants of Quicks Bottom. Mrs. Mary-Lou Florian will co-ordinate the project. All members interested in participating in the project contact the co-ordinator and if it is possible, come to the Botany Evening Jan. 15, 1981, Provincial Museum Classroom 112 to hear Dr. Chris Brayshaw speak on "The Adaptions of Aquatic Plants". A short discussion about the organizational aspects of the inventory project will follow the program.

Wetland plants are often an overlooked group of plants. They are unique in their adaption to wet sites and also beautiful. Your participation in this project will give you an opportunity to learn more about this unique group of plants.



QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS - JULY 1980*by Dale Geils*

A visit to the Queen Charlotte Islands is an experience to be treasured. From our base in Queen Charlotte City, we found we were able to visit most accessible points of interest on Graham Island without too much travelling each day.

The first of the many Bald Eagles which we were to see on this trip was sighted at Skidegate Mission, a short drive from our motel. There he was, an immature eagle, perched atop a totem pole in front of the Band Council Lodge. He was completely unperturbed by all the activity below as we tried different angles from which to obtain the best shot of him and the beautifully carved totem on which he had alighted.

Sadly, of all the totems that had lined this beach in days gone by, one only remains; standing in a small enclosure for protection. Located nearby, Queen Charlotte Islands Regional Museum has totems and artifacts on display, as well as many old photographs depicting the history of this region, and is well worth a visit for any visitor interested in Haida culture. This fine museum is an example of a cedar construction which has been allowed to weather naturally, and blends in well with the land and seascape.

Further North is Tlell Beach in Naikoon Provincial Park. Here amongst the sand dunes were several plant species including: Sea Rocket, Sea Plantain, Beach Knotwood, Sandbur, Western Tansy and Beach Silver-Top in bloom. On the beach itself few shells were seen, mainly clam and cockle; however, some unusual seaweed aroused our interest, the leaves of which were round, nasturtium shaped, and parts were pure white.

A walk along a woodland trail by the Yakoun River near Port Clements to see the famous Golden Spruce was worthwhile. This majestic specimen is more than three hundred years old and stands over 150 feet high. The golden color of its needles shows a striking contrast to the green of the surrounding trees. Many attempts have been made at reproduction, but always, the seedlings revert to the natural green color. Although there are other examples of Golden Spruce growing on the Islands, this one is the best known.

Rennell Sound is an isolated area almost twenty-eight miles west of Queen Charlotte City and is worth the drive over rough, gravel, winding roads with a steep incline (twenty-eight percent) at the end! Make sure your vehicle is in good condition and that you have enough gas for the return trip as there is none available at Rennell Sound. As this is

a private logging road, Sundays or after 6:00 p.m. weekdays is the only time to travel without permission from the logging companies. The small Sitka Deer are a common sight in the Queen Charlottes and we were not disappointed on this day as three or four were seen; as well as numerous Bald Eagles, Ravens and even a Black Bear which ambled across the road ahead.

Many interesting stories of life in a remote logging camp were told to us by one of the residents of Shields Bay, which lies at the head of Rennell Sound. The sudden storms on this side of the Islands can be violent and long-lasting sometimes, and any resident of this area has to be fairly self-sufficient and with a love for the outdoors in order to be able to contend with the seclusion. Nearby, Gregory Beach has patches of pebbles where small, flat, perfectly rounded rocks can be found, the result of waves pounding interminably on shore. Many shells were found here. These were olive, abalone, clam and jingle shells which were used by the Indians for adornment. The lower valve was threaded through to make necklaces. Several varieties of seaweed were evident and it was here that one of our group made a horn out of Bull Kelp, blowing a simple tune from this primitive instrument by means of holes cut into the stem - somewhat like an alpenhorn. The driftwood here had a satiny, smooth, sunbleached sheen that comes only with long exposure to the elements. There were so many desirable pieces of every imaginable shape, that it was difficult to resist taking loads of it back.

Up the road a short distance we were shown a cave. The Stalactites had all been destroyed by some unthinking person, but were forming again from the roof. An interesting-looking interior but unwise to explore further without more time and proper equipment.

Our last day was spent at the North End of Graham Island. On the way we stopped for a while at Pure Lake Park where the lonely call of the loons echoed across the Lake. Many species of marsh wild plants were identified including: Labrador Tea, Bog Cranberry, Swamp Laurel, Bunch Berry and more. This too is a desolate spot, but lovely in its unspoiled wilderness state.

Masset, the largest town in the Queen Charlottes, is situated on the shores of Massett Sound. Beyond is the Indian Village of Haida, where after receiving permission from the Band Council, we were able to visit with one of the well-known argillite carvers and see him at work. It was fascinating to watch as he carved skillfully into a block of black slate. This slate which is used, is found only on Slatechuk Mountain, and this carver packs his own supplies down from the mountain himself.



There were many beautiful argillite pieces on display such as jewelry, bowls, dishes and totems of every size; all with the lovely black, glossy finish which we associate with argillite. This finish is achieved with the help of fine steel wool and black polish. A course in Haida design and argillite carving is being conducted this summer at this Haida village and much interest is shown by the young people of the area.

The north-east corner of Graham Island is approached by a long straight road with dense forest on either side, the branches often meeting overhead, forming a natural archway for miles. The trees are tall and slender and hung with moss and lichen, forming strange and weird shapes and designs. The beaches here are spectacular and reach for miles out to Rose Point, an ecological reserve. Tow Hill can be climbed for a view of Alaska in the far distance. The unusual rock formations at the base of Tow Hill result in unusually deep, clear tidal pools teeming with marine life. Our visit here was too short, as there was so much of interest to explore. However, on the way home, a stop was made at St. Mary's Spring for a drink of that pure, clear water.

If the legend holds true, many of us will return to the Queen Charlotte Islands before too long and be able to further satisfy our interest and curiosity in this beautiful and unique part of British Columbia.

#### EAGLES - 1979 to 1980

It was in June 1979 we noticed two eagles carrying quite large sticks and disappearing into the trees above the gully. This was too late in the year for nest building; perhaps they were repairing their nest. We often wondered where the nest could be and if it had been used. They finally left the neighbourhood early in August, reappearing on October 2nd accompanied by an immature bird. In the meantime, the nest had been discovered in a tree above the road and we had been walking under it whenever we went for the mail. They remained in our neighbourhood feeding near the nest tree off and on, and actually on the tree on December 30, 1979. Though we kept a close watch, it was not until February 2, 1980 that an adult was seen on top of the nest. This nest was on the top of a very high Douglas fir surrounded by many other equally high trees which made observation difficult.

It was not until May 11th we were quite sure they had young. However, on May 18th we were rewarded by seeing through the telescope a young eaglet in its grey down reaching for food from the parent bird. Our next question was, were there two eaglets? Daily observation by several people firmly established the fact that a second eaglet was seen; this was on June 13th. By this time the first eaglet was fully feathered, dark brown to black in colour, while the second eaglet seemed more immature.

The activity around the nest increased almost daily, the parents carrying a variety of food: ducks, gulls, fish and even a snake. By now, the young birds were moving around the nest. By July 8th, the larger eaglet was often seen on the edge of the nest flexing its wings. On July 13th both were still on the nest, but the next day one bird was in the branches well above the nest. On July 16th, we had the thrill of seeing the second eaglet suddenly leave the nest. It flew through the trees and then back to the nest branch, calling. This was at 2:00 p.m., then off it flew again. However at 8:00 p.m. and for the next two days, it was seen feeding or resting at the nest. On July 21st, the four birds were seen together. From then until mid-August, they were active in our vicinity then disappeared, we presume for the salmon spawning grounds.

Incubation time: 34-35 days. First in white down; at two-and-a-half weeks, grey down; at five weeks, fully feathered.

This area is twenty miles north of Victoria in the Saanich Peninsula, and is a mixture of heavy forest, small farms, and many residences along the waterfront.

*by Gwen Taylor.*

#### THE WITTY LAGOON PARK

*by G. H. Mitchell*

Readers of The Victoria Naturalist are, I am sure, interested in the Witty Lagoon Park in Metchosin. So a few notes on the background of this area might be useful.

The location had always been a centre for our native Indians. For instance, the Hay Stack Islets lying off the beach are a burial site and Indian Reserve. The marker on one of them denotes the start of the measured nautical mile.

Except for early landings by Spaniards such as at the earthworks just east of Taylor Road in Metchosin, the first impact on the land hereabouts was in 1850 when Governor Douglas on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company bought the whole Metchosin area from the KA-KY-AAKEN Indians for 43 pounds paying in blankets. Only 26 members of that tribe were alive at the time.

In 1851, Capt. Cooper, sea trader, bought 385 acres including the Metchosin Lagoon from the HBC for \$1952.00. He installed Thomas E. Blinkhorn as his farm manager and brought Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands to clear the land and build the house and barn. On Blinkhorn's death, the farm was sold to William E. Pears in 1857.

In 1863, John Witty came to Victoria from the San Juan Islands during the Pig War, as he preferred to live under the British Flag. Here he met Hans Helgesen, a Metchosin farmer, who drove him out in his waggon to look at the Pears farm. John Witty bought it. Since then, members of the Witty family have farmed here and still own a small acreage adjacent to present park near the waterfall.

In 1952, I started farming on Witty Beach Road on land which was at one time part of the Witty property.

Sensing the impact of increasing population pressure, many people were interested in acquiring more park land, especially the Metchosin Lagoon and Beach. Many Metchosin residents disagreed, contending that the Witty family would always allow them access and that property rights should not be interfered with.

In 1960, an unsuccessful effort was made to have the Provincial Parks Branch acquire the Lagoon. The Metchosin coast continued to be at the mercy of unplanned development.

In 1966, I got myself elected as Metchosin representative to the Capital Regional Board formed two years previously. I had two main objectives: to tackle the garbage and sewage problem in Greater Victoria and to bring the Metchosin Lagoon into the public domain. I got nowhere with the first objective, but got good support from other members of the Board on the Park project.

So in 1966, the Capital Regional Board purchased six acres on the Spit from the B.C. Land Development Company for \$12877.10 and in 1967, negotiations with the Witty family having failed, expropriated 45 acres for \$135074.65. Between then and 1973, other parcels of land were

purchased, including 15 acres at Tower Point (named after an old water tower marked on charts as a navigation aid). The Park now comprises 127 acres, costing a total of \$780,741.84, which is a heap of blankets!

Before leaving the Regional Board, I moved that the newly acquired Park at Metchosin Lagoon be named "The Witty Lagoon Park" to memorialize the Witty family. This motion was accepted.

ANNUAL DINNER - TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1981

*by Jean Rimmington  
Dinner Convener*

SPEAKER: Harold Hosford  
SUBJECT: "The Wonderful World of the Warblers"  
PLACE: Faculty Centre, University of Victoria  
Finnerty and McKenzie - Parking Lot 3  
TIME: No-Host Bar - 6:30 p.m.  
Dinner - 7:30 p.m.  
TICKETS: \$10.00 per person

Tickets will be available at the General Meeting on Tuesday, January 13 or they may be obtained from:

Mrs. Lyndis Davis  
3555 Redwood Ave.  
Victoria, B.C., V8P 4Z8  
Phone: 592-1341

or

Miss Margaret Jeal  
329 - 1900 Mayfair Drive  
Victoria, B.C., V8P 1P9  
Phone: 598-2260

If you wish to have tickets mailed to you, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your cheque, which should be sent to one of the above, but made payable to: "Victoria Natural History Society".

Ticket sales close February 3rd.



ONE DAY IN PATAGONIA

by T.C. Brayshaw

The closer we got to the glacier, scrambling down the short trail through the beechwoods, the more impressed we became. This fissured stream of ice, the Perito Moreno Glacier, pouring down from the distant crest of the Cordillera, thrust its tongue, several kilometres wide, clear across the southern arm of Lago Argentino; pushing up the shore before us to face veteran beech trees with splintering cliffs of ice. Periodically, the audible crackling of the ice climaxed in a roar as another mass broke loose to tumble into the lake and add a new squadron to the fleet of icebergs already sailing the lake -- sunlit white against dark blue.

As a flower-watcher, I was intrigued with the half-recognized, unfamiliar species of familiar genera; as well as with some that were totally new to me. The brightest contributors to the beechwood scene, especially in the open rocky glades, were the Calafate (Berberis buxifolia), a shrub, covered with small yellow flowers, that gave its name to the little town where we were temporarily based, and the Ciruelillo (Embothrium coccineum), a tall shrub whose spikes of crimson flowers are pollinated by humming birds, and whose relatives, like those of the Antarctic beech, are found in Australasia.

The bird-watchers of our party were finding their prizes too -- Austral Parakeets, Upland Geese, and Black-necked Swans. But for all of us, the climax of the day, appropriately reserved till the last, was the Condors.

There were nine of them: nine Andean Condors, their collars white against the sky, wheeling round and round on wings that adjusted but never flapped, as they rode an invisible thermal that carried them gradually higher at the same time as it drifted the way they would want to go -- southward on their spring migration.

Our party of seven North American naturalists, on a trip through Patagonia arranged by Holbrook Travel\*, with our Argentinian guide, happily boarded our bus to return to Calafate in the sunset. Our day was complete.

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\* Address of the tour company available from author.

ANDY RUSSELL PRESENTS "GRIZZLY COUNTRY"

by Doug Turnbull

On Monday evening November 3rd and Tuesday afternoon November 4th, a benefit program was presented in the Newcombe Auditorium by the Vancouver Island Marmot Preservation Committee featuring Andy Russell, well-known photographer and conservationist, and his film "Grizzly Country". This excellent film was enjoyed by relatively small audiences in Victoria.

The V.N.H.S. wishes to thank those members who assisted in selling and taking tickets, ushering and other jobs necessary for these performances.

AUTUMN GENERAL MEETING OF THE F.B.C.N.

The F.B.C.N. held its Autumn General Meeting on October 26, 1980 at the Evans Lake Environmental Centre just north of Squamish, following the workshop held there October 25 and 26. The V.N.H.S. was represented by Bill Barkley and Doug Turnbull.

The main subject for discussion was the new constitution and bylaws of the Society. After considerable discussion and some amendments, a draft constitution and bylaws were approved for submission to the Registrar of Societies.

The various clubs and regions represented reported on their activities. The most notable report came from the White Rock and Surrey Naturalists who had entered the White Rock Sand Castle contest and won a prize of \$500.00. This prize was donated to the F.B.C.N.

ROBIN STAMINA - or ROBIN TRIVIA?

One of my greatest joys is to be outdoors with enough time to be able to just sit and watch. Sometimes I observe nothing in particular, sometimes I have witnessed a fascinating event, and sometimes, like the event reported here, a piece of remarkable trivia.

Last spring while working setting up cement forms in Castlegar, a nest building Robin caught my attention. Being a little frustrated with the work at hand, this Robin provided just the excuse needed to indulge in my more pleasurable pastime. Putting my frustrations aside, I sat down and began a fifteen-minute vigil of Robin watching.

Who has not witnessed a Robin nest building?? Practically no one I'll bet, but none the less I was about to "waste" a quarter hour on a bird I already knew was building a nest beneath the eave of our house. All day I had had glimpses of bulky loads of material disappearing in that direction. Why watch? I guess the alternative was much less attractive.

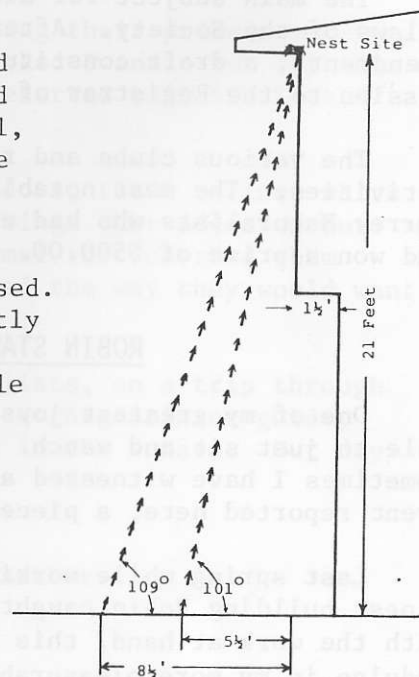
The male Robin I had my eye on was directly below his nest site, tugging and pulling at just about every straw and stalk available in an effort to make up his next load. In a minute or less, beak crammed, he casually hopped up onto a small nearby rock, sprang directly into the air and made a 'B' line straight to his chosen site.

I was taken aback. I had expected a much more devious route, possibly five feet up to the garage roof, perhaps another six feet up into the Hazel Bush, then a spiral up the adjoining Larch, terminating in a near level flight to the nest. No, not this bird!! Puzzled and amazed, I carefully noted the 'jumping off' spot and waited. In a moment, the Robin returned, repeated the whole performance, then without even flinching, took off on a nearly perpendicular trajectory a full three feet closer to the building than his first effort. No spiralling, nothing oblique, just straight up with gusto!

Greatly impressed, I immediately measured the appropriate distances, went to my desk and drafted, then calculated the angles. Flight #1, twenty-one feet at  $109^\circ$ , Flight #2, twenty-one feet at  $101^\circ$ , a scant 11 degrees off the perpendicular.

To say the very least, I was very impressed. This bird obviously had the 'urge', so I quietly concluded that when a Robin has the urge, straight up is just about possible. Remarkable trivia!?!?

*William Merilees*



## BIRD OBSERVATIONS

### OCTOBER

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
1	Franklin's Gull	1	McMicking Point	R. Satterfield
1	Black Duck	7	Dallas Road Pond	M & V. Goodwill
1	Western Bluebird	10	10664 Madrona Dr.	Mrs. J.L. Hinton
1	Lapland Longspur	11	Island View Beach	J. B. Tatum
1	Black-headed Gull	17	McMicking Point	R. Satterfield
1	White-throated Sparrow	20	Penrhyn Street	M. & R. Mackenzie-Grieve

### NOVEMBER

2	Pine Grosbeak	1	Coburg Peninsula	M. & A. Elston
15	Snow Geese	2	Patricia Bay	Scott Slocombe
1	Cattle Egret	4	Madrona Drive	Mrs. W.K. Dobson
600	Red Phalarope	4	Constance Bank	Jim Wilson
1	Barred Owl	5	McMillan Rd., Sooke	Ruth Rogers
1	Redhead	8	Saltspring Island	Bob Hay
1	Snowy Owl	15	Victoria Golf Crse.	Dr. G.F. Houston
1	Gyr Falcon	15	Island View Beach	F. L. Beebe
1	Goshawk	18	2333 Beach Drive	Mrs. C.M. Goy
2	Trumpeter Swans	22	Martindale Flats	A. MacLeod & R. Assaly
1	Glaucous Gull	27	Martindale Flats	M. & V. Goodwill
1	Black-billed Magpie	29	Santa Clara Ave.	Mrs. B. Hughes

BIRD ALERT - 478-8534

*It would be helpful if, when you see anything unusual or of interest, you phone 478-9715 right away, so others may see it too. This is what the "Alert" is for.*



## PROGRAM - JAN./FEB. 1981

- TUES. JAN. 13 General Meeting, Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m.  
Speaker: Mike Shepard.  
Topic: The Queen Charlottes.
- THURS. JAN. 15 Botany Evening, Classroom 112, Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m. Speaker: Dr. Chris Brayshaw. Topic: Adaptation of Aquatic Plants.  
A short discussion on inventory of wetland plants will follow the program.
- FRI. JAN. 23 &  
SAT. JAN. 24 Audubon Film, Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m.  
"Song of the Northern Prairie".  
Speaker: Allen King.
- SAT. JAN. 24 Birding Trip, Elk Lake.  
Leader: Mike Shepard.  
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.
- TUES. JAN. 27 Birders Night. Boardroom, Provincial Museum, 7:30 p.m. Bring a few slides. Bird identification and results of Christmas Count.
- THURS. FEB. 5 Botany Night, Swan Lake Nature Centre, 8:00 p.m.  
Leader: Leon Pavlick. Roundtable discussion of upcoming season of early spring wildflowers and where to see them. Bring a few slides.
- SUN. FEB. 8 Underwater Sealife. Breakwater - Ogden Point. Diver - Phil Lambert. Meet 10:00 a.m., parking area at Breakwater.
- TUES. FEB. 10 DINNER at Faculty Centre, University of Victoria. Cocktails: 6:30 p.m., Dinner: 7:30 p.m.  
Speaker: Harold Hosford.  
Tickets: \$10.00.  
See article in magazine for details.
- SUN. FEB. 15 Mosses & Liverworts - Goldstream Park.  
Leader: Judy Godfrey.  
Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or main parking area in Goldstream Park, 9:30 a.m.

- THURS. FEB. 19 Tour of Institute of Ocean Science. Time: 10:00 a.m. Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:15 a.m. or at Institute 9:45 a.m. Phone Mary-Lou Florian at 387-5661 for reservation.  
Tour limited to 20 people.
- FRI. FEB. 20 &  
SAT. FEB. 21 Audubon Film, Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m.  
"Adventures of a Wildlife Photographer".  
Speaker: Robert Davison.
- SUN. FEB. 22 Birding Trip, Esquimalt Lagoon.  
Leader and time to be announced.
- TUES. FEB. 24 Birders Night. Meet at Crystal Gardens, 713 Douglas. No charge for admission. Don Adams, Curator of Birds will give a talk and tour of Gardens.  
Phone Marjorie Ketcham for more information, 384-1463.
- SAT. FEB. 28 Identification of Trees in Winter. Beaver Lake.  
Leader: Dr. Chris Brayshaw.  
Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or Beaver Lake Parking Lot 9:30 a.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR CHANGES, PLEASE CALL BIRD ALERT - 478-8534.

Mayfair Lanes is at the corner of Oak and Roderick, by Bowling Alley.

Always take a lunch; and if wet, gumboots or strong shoes.



JUNIOR NATURALIST PROGRAMME  
FOR JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 1981

Please Note: The January Programmes are one week apart because of the Christmas holidays.

- JANUARY 17 Hike at East Sooke Park from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Hike along beach trail to petroglyphs and Radar Hill. Bring lunch. Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:30 a.m. or Aylard Farm parking lot at East Sooke Park at 10:15 a.m.
- JANUARY 24 Pacific Undersea Gardens, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon. Meet at Gardens off Belleville Street at 10:00 a.m. for guided tour. The Society will pay the children's entrance fee. For adults, the cost is \$3.25. No lunch.
- FEBRUARY 7 Hike around Matheson Lake 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Bring lunch and be sure to wear waterproof boots. Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:30 a.m. or at Matheson Lake off Rocky Point Rd. at 10:00 a.m.
- FEBRUARY 21 Snowshoeing at Mt. Seymour, North Vancouver. Family outing to snowshoe with naturalist from the Park. Transportation to be arranged among parents. Catch 7:00 a.m. ferry and meet in forward lounge where maps of the route will be given out. Bring lunch or buy it at the cafeteria there. Wear suitable warm clothing and boots with low or no heels. Return to Victoria at own convenience. Cost for snowshoes is \$1.50.
- \* THIS IS YOUR ONLY NOTICE FOR THIS TRIP. To book, please phone Margaret Wainwright at 592-1310 or Marilyn Hewgill at 477-3283. DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 18.

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