



The  
**VICTORIA  
NATURALIST**

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
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SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1981

**VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1747, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y1

**HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS**

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Swan Lake—Freeman King	Giff Calvert	479-4593

**Annual Dues** — including "The Victoria Naturalist" - Juniors: \$2.50 - Regular: \$9.00  
Golden Age: \$8.00 - Family: \$12.00 - Sustaining: \$25.00

**Financial Year** — May 1st to April 30th  
Members joining Jan. 1st to April 30th - half dues

**RARE BIRD ALERT - 478-8534**

A PHOTOGRAPH

by Mark Nyhof

For me, photographing a nesting Coopers Hawk was a memorable experience. Preparation started early, as the birds were just beginning to construct their nest, high up in a grand fir. The first step was to begin construction of a blind in an adjacent tree. When choosing a tree, I first make sure the tree is climbable. Secondly, I consider the lighting. Direct, unobstructed sunlight is ideal, so I try to position myself accordingly. Unfortunately, most nests don't satisfy these criteria, and this nest was no exception. The lighting was good but the tree I chose for my blind was quite difficult to climb since it didn't have any branches for the first 50 ft. As a result, I was forced to hammer spikes, 17 in all, into the tree at 2 ft. intervals. These acted as steps until I reached the upper branches. Putting the spikes in place was an arduous task, taking a total of four hours. The operation was made even more difficult since it was done during darkness so as not to disturb the birds. The blind was also constructed during darkness, built from sheets over a three-day period.

Once I was sure the eggs had hatched, I began my work. On the way up the tree to my blind, I was almost attacked several times by both adult hawks; however, once inside the blind the attacks stopped. Seated on a limb only 11 ft. from the nest, camera poking through the sheets, my first view was a nest containing four downy white young.

Once things settled down in the nest, I would begin my photography. At first, the sudden clicking of the camera shutter startled the birds. This problem was quickly solved by slowly increasing the volume of my radio until the clicking was muffled. A continuous noise such as the radio didn't seem to concern the birds at all, but several people who passed below my blind were noticeably disturbed by the faint sound of music and curious as to its source.

For the next few weeks I photographed the nest. As the hawks grew, feathers began to appear through the white down and their appetites were tremendous. During one session in the blind, no fewer than 13 birds, mostly young starling, were brought to the nest and fed to the young.

Soon the time came for the birds to leave the nest. One by one they ventured awkwardly to nearby limbs until finally all the birds had left the nest. At this point, my photography was over but I still continued to watch the family. The last time I saw them was near the end of August. I was sad to see them go but the whole experience will always stick clearly in my mind.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT  
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
1980-81

The 1980-81 year was another active and successful year for the Victoria Natural History Society. The highlight of the year was perhaps the continuing success of our Junior Naturalist program. Margaret Wainwright deserves much credit for the way she has guided the development of this program. There were nineteen programs in the past year with anywhere from 8 to 18 children in attendance. The other feature of this program which has made it a success is the participation of family groups. The children bring their parents to programs as drivers and the outings tend to become a family affair.

The program committee was very busy in the past year. The general meeting programs were excellent in content and quality. The many field programs provided sufficient variety to meet almost every naturalist's interests. The Audubon Film Series also had a successful year. The profits were lower this year because costs had increased over previous years. However, the films were both entertaining and educational.

The Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary has a program which is subsidized by our Society. In 1980-81, the Society contributed twenty-five hundred dollars to its operation. There has been increasing school and public use of this facility. A wheelchair trail was completed and put into service this year as well as extensions to the trail systems. The major activity of the Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Centre Society has been planning a new building to be erected on the site. The new nature centre will have provision to meet some of the accommodation needs of our Society. The Francis-Freeman King Park remains active and receives financial support for its naturalist programs.

This year the Conservation Development Fund allocated monies to Swan Lake and the Vancouver Island Marmot Project -- twenty-five hundred dollars to Swan Lake and two hundred dollars to the Marmot Project. Work had also begun on a project to establish Western Bluebirds in the local area.

The Conservation Committee has been very active in local conservation issues this year. Some issues which have taken up the time of members of this committee are King's Pond, Quick's Bottom, Rithet's Bog, Mount Douglas Park, and the Colquitz Waterway. It appears that in many of these issues, the officials have listened to the Society and our advice is being taken. Committee members are becoming well known in the local municipal and city halls.

The FBCN, our parent body, takes up considerable time for some members of the Board. The highlight of the year in FBCN circles was the approval of a new constitution. Doug Turnbull was elected Member-at-Large in Castlegar last year and was very active in getting the constitution written and approved. The regional component of the FBCN and this Society have had some disagreement over the past year. The problem between our Society and the regional FBCN groups relates to their numerous activities in conservation issues and their seeming preoccupation with the Vancouver Island Marmot Project. Our concerns in this area have been voiced but the issue is not resolved.

The Membership Committee reports that we have 424 memberships (approx. 600 individual members) on our rolls at present. We have had to increase our membership fees in an attempt to avoid a deficit in our General Account. This problem is going to receive further study in the coming year. The past year has seen an increased cost in providing the Victoria Naturalist and the doubling of the FBCN affiliation fees.

The Victoria Naturalist has been a very vital and attractive periodical in the past year. There will be a review of this activity in the coming year with a view to reducing costs but maintaining the quality established. The magazine distributors sent out 2913 copies at a cost of \$529.30. We also note with sadness that in the past year the previous editor and active Society member, Merle Harvey, passed away.

In closing, I would like to thank all those many people who contribute so much of their time and talent to making the Society a successful venture. There are so many people who help with the running of the Society that I won't begin listing any for fear of forgetting some. I offer the thanks of the Board to all these people.

*William D. Barkley,  
Acting President.*

JUNIORS PROGRAM:

The VNHS will be operating a Junior Program again this Fall, holding twice-monthly Saturday outings.

Please contact Margaret Wainwright (592-1310) or Marilyn Hewgill (477-3283) for more information.

TO THE MEMBERS*by Marjorie Ketcham*

I just want to say "Goodbye, I love you, and am surely going to miss you all", as I leave for California to live, but I'll always have many happy, special, and precious memories of the time I've spent and shared with one of the wonderful group of people that I have ever known, the Victoria Natural History Society. I will be returning to my former home, in Novato, Marin County, north of San Francisco, where I first met my darling Canadian husband, Ed Ketcham, who brought me to Victoria as a new landed immigrant just over 3 years ago. When I was suddenly left alone in my new country and home, you all filled the void, led especially by Dorothy McCann. Yes, I am going back to my Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and Novato Historical Society, etc., but will think so often of our special Tuesday Birding Group, of Davey my first leader, of our walks and our lunches together on the beaches, in a park or on a mountain top, always friendly and so wonderful.

I truly treasure what you all have taught me about birds. I will often think of the many splendid field trips I so enjoyed with such outstanding leaders, and also of our monthly general meetings, being greeted by Kay Sherman or one of her welcoming committee at the Newcombe Auditorium, and will always remember our fine officers and board members and of our splendid yearly dinner meetings. And I will love reminiscing about our trip up to Hurricane Ridge, Oregon, and to the Okanagan, which to me became highlights of my stay here in Victoria. Yes, our B.C. Natural History Conference at Parksville, and the trip to Nanoose Bay, and going with the naturalist into the Broken Islands on the "Lady Rose" out of Port Alberni, and of the unforgettable trip with Teresa Shepard to the Queen Charlotte Islands, and with Mike Shepard, whale-watching off Long Beach. Yes, those were glorious trips.

I also want to thank each and every one of you who wrote articles or typed or helped in any way for the Naturalist magazine while I was your editor. You were wonderful. And a special thanks to Marjorie Elston, our Associate Editor, for her diligence and help in getting the magazine out each issue for the past year. I wish her success and happiness as she becomes your new editor. She is capable, dependable, knowledgeable, and I'm sure will be super. Congratulations, Marjorie - I've loved working with you. I know you will all help her.

Again, thanks one and all for your friendliness, thoughtfulness, patience and understanding of a newly-landed immigrant to Canada from the U.S. who found a delightful new home among delightful people here in Victoria. I'll miss you, but hope to return often. Victoria will always be "my other home", and you "my other family".

If any of you ever come down to California, do come stay with me, for overnight, for a day or a week. I'd love having you - I have a large home and the welcome mat will always be out, and I'd be excited to see you again and to have my neighbours and friends meet my Canadian family.

I live on a beautiful lagoon, off Ignacio turnoff, called "Bel Marin Keys" and look right into a bird refuge. I'm just minutes from Muir Woods, the famous redwood state park, and from the Mendocino and Marin County coast, and the new west-coast, San Francisco recreation area. So much to see and do there. In Novato, just 35 miles north of San Francisco, over the Golden Gate Bridge in "marvelous Marin County", off San Pablo Bay or North San Francisco Bay off Highway 101, and near the famous coastal route, Highway 1 - my address is:

Marjorie Ketcham  
#1 Montego Key  
Novato, California 94947  
Phone: (415) 883-7133

Victoria and all of you in our Society have truly made my life and world more special and beautiful, just by being with you. God bless you, I love you, goodbye.

P.S. - Thanks for the beautiful party at Pam's.

GOPHER SNAKE PREDATION OF PYGMY NUTHATCH*by Alan MacLeod*

On July 25, 1981 Robin Assaly and myself were birding the edges of the pine forest above Vaseaux Lake sheep range, 4 to 5 kilometres by road from the entrance to Highway 97 at Vaseaux Lake. White-headed Woodpecker was our main target but we were not successful in finding one.

Skies were clear in mid-morning when our attention was drawn to one of a number of Ponderosa Pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) in an open stand where at least a dozen Pygmy Nuthatches (*Sitta pygmaea*) exhibited alarm behavior -- much scuttling about the branches of the pine and constant cheeping.

The cause of their alarm became evident as a Gopher Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*) appeared from the opposite side of the tree holding a nestling in its mouth. The snake took three or four minutes to completely swallow the nestling. During this process for a period of perhaps fifteen seconds, two small spoon-like "horns" -- curved, and wider at the ends than in the middle -- appeared to be erected behind the snake's eyes. As I had not seen a Gopher Snake before, I carefully noted the field marks and sketched the geometric pattern of the back and side patches.

After watching our snake return in the direction from which it appeared, we moved to see its head and upper body inside the entrance of a nest-hole. The entrance was about 4 cm. in diameter at a height of approximately 4 metres in the pine. The hole was one of several in the easterly side of the tree but the tree was green, well-branched and appeared healthy. This is perhaps unusual as authorities suggest Pygmy Nuthatch typically nests in dead trees.

The snake slowly withdrew from the nest-hole, pulling a second nestling. It appeared to be having some difficulty in extricating the bird from the nest when it seemed to spot us and released the nestling, leaving it with the back of its head lying at the edge of the nest-hole.

For some time the snake remained mostly still, as did the nestling. After several minutes, however, the nestling disappeared back into the nest-hole, then reappeared at the entrance looking much revived. After surveying the exit with much cheeping, the nestling left the hole and fluttered to the ground. Its wings were underdeveloped and the head and upper body were still downy. But the down of the head was the worse for wear as a result of the snake's depredations.

Meanwhile, the snake remained relatively still, and a single adult nuthatch continued to chastize it from a higher branch. The adult made no effort during all our observations to attend to the nestling. As I approached for a closer look, the Gopher Snake hissed loudly several times and retreated a foot or so higher up the tree, well out of reach. After close to an hour's total observation, we left the site in these circumstances without having determined the fate of either the damaged nestling or any siblings that may have remained in the nest-hole.

#### AUDUBON - OCTOBER 1981 TO MARCH 1982

<u>FRI. &amp; SAT.</u> <u>OCT. 2 &amp; 3</u>	"Kookaburra Country" by Fran Hall.
<u>FRI. &amp; SAT.</u> <u>OCT. 30 &amp; 31</u>	"Where The Sea Begins" by Janet Jahoda.
<u>FRI. &amp; SAT.</u> <u>NOV. 20 &amp; 21</u>	National Film Board presents "Bears & Man"; "Roger Tory Peterson - Portrait of a Birdwatcher".
<u>FRI. &amp; SAT.</u> <u>JAN. 15 &amp; 16</u>	"Land of the Short Grass Prairie" by Albert Karvonen.
<u>FRI. &amp; SAT.</u> <u>FEB. 12 &amp; 13</u>	"Barren Ground Summer" by Steve Maslowski.
<u>FRI. &amp; SAT.</u> <u>MAR. 12 &amp; 13</u>	"Inside Passage to Alaska" by Norm Wakeman.

All are at the Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, at 8:00 p.m.

SEASON TICKETS are available during September from:

- \* Gift Shop, Provincial Museum
- \* Borogrove Bookshop, 10 Centennial Square
- \* Dogwood Gift Shoppe, 2180 Oak Bay Ave.
- \* Bolen Books, Hillside Shopping Centre
- \* Woodward's Book Store, Mayfair Shopping Centre
- \* Read 'n Rite, James Bay Mall
- \* Cadboro Fayre, 3826 Cadboro Bay Rd.

Season Tickets: Adults - \$10.00  
Golden Age & Student - \$8.00  
Single Adult Admission: \$2.50  
Golden Age & Student: \$2.00

For information, please call: 598-1623 or 592-1400.

Seats NOT HELD for Season Ticket Holders after 7:45 p.m.

Audubon Wildlife Films are presented by the Victoria Natural History Society and the B.C. Provincial Museum.

#### SPEAKERS AT GENERAL MEETINGS

##### SEPT. 8

Mrs. Lillian Allen. Mrs. Allen was born and raised in Winnipeg, and has travelled extensively. She was Associate Professor, Housing and Design, School of Home Economics, University of Manitoba before her retirement. She has a great love for design in nature and has photographed this subject extensively.

##### OCT. 13

Mr. Rick Kool. Mr. Kool has a B.Sc. in Zoology from the University of New Hampshire and a M.Sc. in Zoology from UBC. He has taught at Ucluelet and New Westminster and has been working at the Provincial Museum for the past 3-1/2 years. In his spare time, he plays string bass, renovates an ancient house and says "low tides are very special".

##### TO THE MEMBERSHIP:

What are your suggestions for programs both for our General Meetings and Outings in the coming months? Please phone either Mary-Lou Florian (387-5552) or Charlie Trotter (477-4365).

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
STATEMENTS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL, 1981

1979-80	<u>GENERAL ACCOUNT</u>	1980-81	1979-80	<u>AUDUBON ACCOUNT</u>	1980-81
	<u>Income</u>			<u>Income</u>	
\$3,157	Membership dues and donations	\$3,250	\$7,366	Ticket sales and admissions	\$6,666
164	Publications	314			
1,360	Interest	1,544		<u>Expenditure</u>	
-	Other	77	2,804	National Audubon Society	3,451
<u>4,681</u>		<u>5,185</u>	931	Advertising	1,457
	<u>Expenditure</u>		1,459	Co-sponsorship expenses	405
2,514	Naturalist - production and mailing	3,165	469	Cost of meetings	716
426	Cost of meetings	355	243	Other	231
187	Postage and stationery	508			
572	Affiliation fees	1,171	1,460	EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	406
100	Accountancy and audit	100	687	Funds on hand at beginning of year	547
624	Miscellaneous	812		Increase in reserve for Audubon contracts	-
<u>4,423</u>		<u>6,111</u>	(600)	Transfer to Conservation project	-
			(1,000)		
258	EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	(926)	\$ 547	FUNDS ON HAND AT END OF YEAR	\$ 953
790	Funds on hand at beginning of year	1,048			
<u>\$1,048</u>		<u>\$ 122</u>			
				<u>CONSERVATION PROJECT</u>	
			\$ -	Funds on hand at beginning of year	\$3,000
			-	Donations	325
			2,000	Add transfer from Nehring account	6,000
			<u>1,000</u>	Add transfer from Audubon account	-
			3,000		9,325
			-	Deduct development expenses	889
			<u>\$3,000</u>	FUNDS ON HAND AT END OF YEAR	<u>\$8,436</u>

Notes:

- 1) Interest is recorded on a cash-received basis.
- 2) It is the financial policy of the Society that:
  - i) The Nehring and Scholarship accounts shall be retained as endowment funds.
  - ii) The surplus from the Audubon account shall be used for conservation or educational purposes.
  - iii) The General account shall be self-sustaining.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
BALANCE SHEET AT 30 APRIL, 1981

TOTAL 1980		TOTAL 1981	Nehring	General	Audubon	Scholar- ship
	<u>ASSETS</u>					
\$14,966	Cash in bank and on deposit	\$16,912	\$ 9,819	\$407	\$5,758	\$ 928
	Investments at cost (market value 1981:\$51,757; 1980:\$63,914)	81,582	68,355	291	-	12,936
<u>81,062</u>		<u>98,494</u>	<u>78,174</u>	<u>698</u>	<u>5,758</u>	<u>13,864</u>
\$96,028						
	<u>LIABILITIES</u>					
\$ 2,372	Accounts payable	\$ 505	\$ -	\$100	\$ 405	\$ -
840	Memberships paid in advance	476	-	476	-	-
	<u>RESERVE</u>					
3,400	Audubon contract 1981-82	3,400	-	-	3,400	-
3,000	Conservation project	8,436	7,436	-	1,000	-
86,416	FUNDS BALANCES	85,677	70,738	122	953	13,864
<u>\$96,028</u>		<u>\$98,494</u>	<u>\$78,174</u>	<u>\$698</u>	<u>\$5,758</u>	<u>\$13,864</u>

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR TO THE MEMBERS

I have examined the balance sheet of the Victoria Natural History Society as at April 30, 1981 and the statements of income and expenditure for the year ended on that date. My examination included a general review of the accounting procedures and such tests of accounting records and other supporting evidence as I considered necessary in the circumstances, except that in the case of all revenue it was not practicable to extend my examination beyond accounting for receipts as reported by the Society.

In my opinion, except for the effect of any adjustments that might have been required had I been able to carry out a verification of revenue (see preceding paragraph), the accompanying statements present fairly the results of the Victoria Natural History Society for the year ended 30 April, 1981.

Victoria  
May 16, 1981.

J. R. Levey  
Chartered Accountant.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
STATEMENTS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 APRIL, 1981

	1979-80	NEHRING ACCOUNT	1980-81	1979-80	SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNT	1980-81
		<u>Income</u>			<u>Income</u>	
\$ 5,681	Interest	\$ 7,661	\$ 1,160	Interest	\$ 1,210	
-	Donations	390				
5,681		8,051	1,100	<u>Expenditure</u>	1,100	
				Scholarships		
1,800	Maintenance - Francis Park	2,000	60	EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	110	
256	Juniors' Work	120	13,694	Funds on hand at beginning of year	13,754	
238	Bird alert system	260	\$13,754	FUNDS ON HAND AT END OF YEAR	\$13,864	
2,294		2,380				
3,387	EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	5,671				
69,680	Funds on hand at beginning of year	71,067				
(2,000)	Transfer to Conservation project	(6,000)				
\$71,067	FUNDS ON HAND AT END OF YEAR	\$70,738				



BIRD OBSERVATIONS

JUNE

No.	Species	Date	Area	Observer
3	Purple Martin	6	Purple Martin Pond	Dave Stirling
2	Great Horned Owl	6	Goodland Farm	Dave Stirling
6	Red Crossbill	9	Welch at Livesay	R. & M. Mackenzie- Grieve
1	Western Bluebird	15	Scafe Hill	Tom Briggs
2	Northern Oriole	24	West Saanich Rd.	Mrs. G.R. Crowther
1	Yellow-headed Blackbird	25	Cedar Hill Golf Course	P.G. Bond

JULY

No.	Species	Date	Area	Observer
1	Western Kingbird	2	Victoria Golf Course	R. Satterfield
1	Red-eyed Vireo	5	Lochside Park	J.B. Tatum
1	Curlew Sandpiper	14	Metchosin Lagoon	Vic Goodwill

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBERTUES. SEPT. 8

General Meeting: Newcombe Auditorium,  
Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mrs. Lillian Allen  
Topic: Delights of Seeing

SUN. SEPT. 20

Birders Trip: Whiffen Spit.  
Leader: Harry Davidson (479-1286).

Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m. or  
Whiffen Spit, 9:30 a.m.

SAT. SEPT. 26

Autumn Botany at Island View Beach.  
Leader: Leon Pavlick (387-3215).

Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m. or at  
the Beach at 9:30 a.m.

FRI. OCT. 2

Audubon Film, "Kookaburra Country",  
by Fran Hall.

SAT. OCT. 3

Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum,  
8:00 p.m.

SAT. OCT. 10

Salmon Spawning at Roberts Creek and Big  
Qualicum Hatcheries.

SUN. OCT. 11

Leader: Dr. Alex Peden (652-3598).

Meet Mayfair Lanes 8:30 a.m. or Roberts  
Creek, 1:00 p.m.

Note: Because the time of spawning is  
difficult to predict, check with the  
Bird Alert or Dr. Peden as the proposed  
date approaches.

TUES. OCT. 13

General Meeting: Newcombe Auditorium,  
Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m.

Speaker: Rick Kool.  
Topic: New Ideas in Indian Whaling.

SAT. OCT. 17

Mushroom Foray at Goldstream Campsite.  
Leader: Dr. A. Funk (388-3811).

Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or at the  
Campsite (above the highway) at 9:30 a.m.

SAT. OCT. 24

Birders Trip: Witty's Lagoon.  
Leader: Vera Guernsey (598-4968).

Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m. or the  
Lagoon Parking Lot at 9:30 a.m.

*Birder's Night information was unavailable at press time; please check  
with the Alert for time and place of meeting.*

*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.*

