

The VICTORIA NATURALIST

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> VOL. 38, NO. 2 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1981

SEINING AT MILL BAY

by Phyll Cochrane

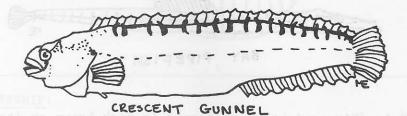
It was a beautiful sunny morning with a low tide, when Grant Hughes has Donny Stetchuk anchor one end of the seining net at hip-wader depth. Then in the zodiac, Grant made a wide arc and dragged the net back to shore farther along the beach. Fourteen pairs of strong arms pulled the catch to shore. What a sparkling, shimmering, slithering mass of sea creatures with many bits of vegetation!

The net had been dragged over eel grass and seaweed. Eel grass (Zostera) has pale green leaves 3-10 mm. wide, which may be a metre or more in length. The tangled mat formed by its spreading rhizomes and abundant roots provides shelter for a variety of organisms. The emerald green bits of Ulva or sea lettuce is food for many sea creatures.

Grant separated a single specimen of each species into a plastic pail and the others were put into another pail and returned to the sea as soon as possible.

Fifteen species of fish were collected together with shrimps, crabs and small jellyfish. The following were the most interesting creatures.

Crescent gunnel (Pholis laeta), an eel-like fish, is named for the many crescent-shaped markings along the dorsal (top) fin against a body ground colour of yellowish green. The scientific name, a combination of Latin and Greek, means "one who lies joyfully in wait".



COVER: BABY RACOON by Mark Nyhof

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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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

Saddleback gunnel (Pholis ornata) is recognized by the series of "U" or "V" shaped black markings along the base of the dorsal fin. Penpoint gunnel (Apodichthys flavidus) or blenny is noted for the large pen-nob-shaped anal spine.

Silver-spotted sculpin (Blepsias cirrhosus) is named for the chrome silver spot just back of the pectoral fins. Buffalo sculpin (Enophrys bison) feeds on sea lettuce. Staghorn sculpin (Leptocottus armatus) is named for the antler-like spine on the operculum (gill cover). Tidepool sculpin (Oligocottus maculosus) colour is variable from red-brown, red or green on the dorsal surface.

Shiner seaperch (Cymatogaster aggregata) has scales and is always shining through; the colour may range from bright silver to almost black for males during the breeding season. Pile seaperch (Rhacochilus vacca) distinguishing feature is the high sail-like back half of the dorsal fin. Striped seaperch (Embiotoca lateralis) is probably the most strikingly coloured fish of this region, with bright copper ground and electric blue horizontal stripes. The head has several series of blue spots and stripes.

Bay pipefish (Syngrathus griseolineatus) looks like a bit of stick or grass. This provides effective concealment from enemies so speed is not necessary. Food is sucked into the mouth through a long tubular beak. This is a relative of the seahorse. In an elaborate ritual in which the male periodically assumes a rigid vertical S-position, the female transfers her eggs to the male's abdominal brood pouch where they develop until hatching. The young remain in the pouch until 3/4 inch in length.



BAY PIPEFISH

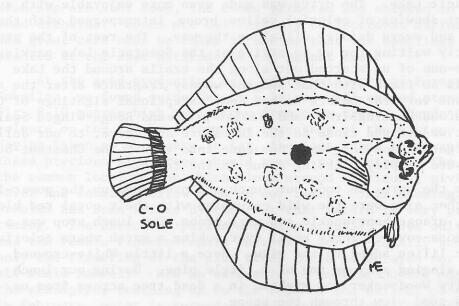
C-O Sole (Pleuronichthys coenosus) is dark brown on its upper surface and bears a distinct black spot in the middle. It gets its common name from the "C" and "O" markings on the tail.

Kelp crab (Pugetta sp) is a master of camouflage. It is the colour of the seaweed where it makes its home. The young cling to eel grass. Dungeness crab (Cancer magister), our specimen, had lost its pincers. The surface of the carapace is light red-brown in colour and covered with very fine bumps. Small jellyfish or medusa (Gonionemus vertens) diameter is about 1.5 cm. and height slightly less. On this female specimen, the crinkled ribbon-like gonads on the four radical canals were coloured on opaque orange-red. Water is taken through a central opening on the concave side for expansion of the body wall. Then contraction propells the jellyfish through the water.

REFERENCES:

Hart, J.L.: Pacific Fishes of Canada.

Kozloff, Eugene N.: Seashore Life of Puget Sound, the Strait of Georgia, and the San Juan Archipelago. Illustrations styled after D.R. Harriott.



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).

SPECTACLE LAKE

by Mary Anderson

We were very fortunate to have such a beautiful day for our birding trip to Spectacle Lake, Saturday, June 20th. A group of us met at Mayfair Lanes with Alf Porcher as our leader.

On the way up the Malahat we took time to go down Hall's Boat House road to have an exceptionally good view of the Osprey perched on the edge of the nest on top of the old snag. On closer viewing, we were able to see a young immature in the nest which has been reported on good authority to be about two weeks old. While we were here, a Swainson's Thrush was heard in the trees. After spending some time here we drove on to Spectacle Lake. The drive was made even more enjoyable with such a magnificent showing of colorful yellow broom, interspersed with the blue lupins and oxeye daisies all along the way. The rest of the group were patiently waiting for us to arrive at the Spectacle Lake parking lot. Twenty-one of us started out along the trails around the Lake through woods so fresh with that pungent woodsy fragrance after the rain. We hadn't gone very far before we had some exceptional sightings of Cedar Waxwings, Rufous Hummingbirds, and Violet-green and Rough-winged Swallows. At one point we stopped close to the lakeshore and there, to our delight, a Hooded Merganser and her young one came into view. The Chestnut-backed Chickadees were happily flitting about in the trees.

Back at the cars, we took our lunch and proceeded up the power-line road. On either side were the wild columbine with their coral red blooms, blue lupins, orange honeysuckle and more broom. Our lunch stop was a delightful moss-covered rocky knoll overlooking a marsh where colorful yellow water lilies added to the view. Here a little White-crowned Sparrow was singing away on top of a little pine. During our lunch break, a Hairy Woodpecker was sighted in a dead tree across from us and we had a good view through the scope.

On the way back, we stopped at the home of friends of Alf Porcher, Henry and Christine Szmuniewski, who live on the Shawnigan Lake road. In their garden were feeders attracting so many birds, among them the Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers and a family of Rufous Hummingbirds. The Steller's Jay was busily making himself heard up in the cedar trees. We thanked this most hospitable couple for their kindness in inviting us to come into their garden to view the birds.

All in all, a most enjoyable outing with a total of 40 birds and our thanks to Alf Porcher. The twelve members who braved the heat of August 9 were well rewarded. Mark Atherton, our leader, had enlisted Mike Crown, co-ordinator of the coastal seed orchards, to help explain things right from the beginning. Such was their enthusiasm that, for the time being, we all became concerned foresters!

The whole idea of a forest seed orchard is to produce the best possible stock for reforesting our logged-off hillsides; the industry needs tall, straight trees with the minimum of taper. First of all, the foresters go out scouting for "plus" trees, that is trees having all the desired characteristics. Having found one, the cone-bearing branches are shot down, the cones gathered and shipped to one of the seed orchards. Cones are deliberately collected at different altitudes, and great care must be taken in seeing that the seedlings raised are planted at the same altitude as the parent tree.

At the seed production area of the Ministry of Forests' Nursery at Koksilah, we found ourselves in a large, well-spaced stand of Douglas Fir, 8-10 metres high, all grown from plus trees. Bands of different colours on the trunks inform the foresters of the history of each tree. Having taken so much care so far, the last thing they want is that these precious plus trees should become pollinated in the spring by the common local pollen which blows around in clouds, giving us hay fever and forming yellow scum on our lakes. This seemingly insuperable problem has been solved by the fact that nature is very precise in her timing. The period of pollen shedding actually lasts only a few days, and the female flowers remain receptive for an equally short period. If only the flowering of the plus trees could be delayed for about ten days, all would be well! Now we were able to understand the purpose of all the standpipes reaching up to the tops of the tallest of the trees. Early in February, water is turned on and the tree tops treated to a continuous cool spray. When all the danger of the undesired pollination is past, the spray is turned off and the flowers allowed to develop normally. To ensure that the maximum number of female flowers gets fertilized, "booster" pollination is carried out by a specially devised "pollen wand", which is hoisted aloft to give each flowering branch a careful dusting. Naturally no ordinary pollen, this! At \$500 a litre, it was previously collected from plus trees, carefully extracted and refrigerated.

From the seed production orchard we moved on to the nursery, consisting of a number of enormous plastic greenhouses where literally millions of young trees are being raised, each in its own sterilized styrofoam cup, with temperature, humidity and moisture all scientifically

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by Katherine Sherman

controlled. However, sometime next spring this intensive care will rudely cease, when the containers will be tipped out, the seedlings bagged, and shipped for planting to some distant rugged mountainside.

Our tour ended with a visit to the pollen extraction plant, and demonstrations of the various types of heavy equipment, including the giant "tree spade" and the "Chipmunk", a huge tractor with a hydraulic lift for gathering cones, etc.

Lunch was eaten in the shade at the Cowichan Valley Demonstration Forest set high above Cowichan Lake Road, and with a magnificent view of forested hillsides in various stages of management. Here Mark Atherton explained the aims and practices of management, and also the many problems. We were shown a distant stand of alder which might be "rehabilitated" by a more profitable type of tree. We compared a forest area which had been thinned with one that had not. We also noted many trees marked with red paint, the sign that they had been infected with root rot, and were doomed to die.

It was a privilege to be taken on a tour by these two foresters, and we are grateful to them for giving up a Saturday. Much as we all appreciate the need for forests of tall, straight, well-spaced trees, as naturalists we can be doubly grateful for our magnificent wilderness parks where the trees are apt to be over-mature, twisted, many-branched and of endless variety!

THE ELSIE KING TRAIL

The Elsie King Trail is a unique, beautifully crafted cedar boardwalk designed to enable handicapped people to enjoy the serenity of Francis Park, and is named in honour of Mrs. Freeman King, a long-time supporter of the Park. The first portion extends for 810 feet, and when completed will form an 1800-foot loop gentle enough for people who might otherwise be unable to explore the Park.

Also included in the design are access ramps, 2" wooden curbs along the trail edge, park benches, wayside rest spots and washrooms for the handicapped.

For more information, please contact the Capital Regional District Parks, 490 Atkins Ave., Phone 478-3344.

by J.E.V. Goodwill

On 13 July 1981, Jenny Hards of Vancouver phoned the Victoria Rare Bird Alert to advise that she and May Narod had seen a Curlew Sandpiper (Calidris ferruginea) in summer plumage at Kye Bay, northeast of Comox, on the evening of 11 July.

On 14 July 1981, shortly after 10 a.m., I found a Curlew Sandpiper in full summer plumage with two Western Sandpipers on the tidal flat in the east end of Metchosin Lagoon and wondered if it could be the Kye Bay bird. In this plumage, the bird is unmistakable with the rich chestnut colouration and black down-curved bill. I was able to study it for about four minutes before it took flight and disappeared westward.

This bird was given the Rare Bird Alert treatment by tape and by personal phone calls to as many local birders as could be reached in hope of obtaining confirmation of the sighting. We need not have worried for the bird lingered until 24 July. It was seen by nearly every Victoria birder, many from Vancouver, and several from Washington State. We know of birders from Nevada and New Mexico who happened to be at Victoria at the right time to add it to their life lists. Two birders even flew in from Ontario on purpose to add it to their Canadian lists.

This sandpiper seemed to show a preference for the edges of the channel in the easterly part of the Lagoon but ranged widely over the mixed sand and mud flats in the broad area of the Lagoon. On a few mornings, it was on the Parry Bay tidal flats off Witty Beach until such time as human disturbance became too great when it would retreat to the Lagoon. On the evenings of 14 to 17 July, at high tide, it was found among Least and Western Sandpipers in a small shallow pool in the saltmarsh back of Witty Beach near the entrance to the Falls Trail.

Most field guides show the Curlew Sandpiper with a conspicuous white eyering, white around the base of the bill, and a solid terminal tail band. At close range in certain lights, our bird showed a very faint hint of white, like an eyebrow, over the left eye, and a very faint ring around the right eye. Two birders reported seeing some white on the chin. In flight, the tail and rump showed mostly white with a mottling of gray in the tail, definitely not a terminal band. On its arrival day, this bird showed only one or two small buffy marks in the rich russet underparts. On my last sighting on 24 July, the rusty red underparts had lost their brilliance and were intruded throughout with patches of white and buffy colouration. On the morning of 25 July, there was a very noticeable drop in the number of shorebirds frequenting the Lagoon, and no Curlew Sandpiper, much to the disappointment of several Vancouver birders who had delayed one day too long. Previous confirmed British Columbia records are one collected at Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands, on 31 July 1936 (Godfrey, 1966) (Roberson, 1980), and one at the Iona Island sewage ponds, Richmond, on 30-31 July 1977 (Macdonald, 1978) (Roberson, 1980). It is of interest, in view of the change that took place in the plumage of the bird while at Metchosin Lagoon, to read Macdonald's statement: "I was close enough to see individual reddish feathers scattered over the neck, breast, belly and undertail coverts and I assumed the bird was an adult coming out of breeding plumage".

In addition, there is an unconfirmed sight record of one seen on 3 December 1971, with a Sanderling and two Black Turnstones, around 10:00 a.m., on the Coburg Peninsula shore of Esquimalt Lagoon by Tom R. Briggs. This bird disappeared before would-be confirmers arrived on the scene. In his notes, Tom entered "dove coloured" as the underparts of his bird reminded him of the underparts of the Mourning Dove. If a hasty judgement were made from the field guides, this sighting would be rejected as at that date the bird should be in winter plumage. However, Macdonald (1978) cites Fred T.H. Smith of Melbourne, Australia to the effect that wintering Curlew Sandpipers often show "heavy remnants of breeding plumage when the arrive in Australia approximately the third week of August each year", and that the "immatures arrive in numbers about five to six weeks later and show a light pinkish-rufous tint on breast". Further to this, Roberson (1980) says: "Juvenile Curlew Sandpiper typically has a peach or buff-washed breast and shows a strong supercilium". Tom saw the Metchosin Lagoon bird on 15 July 1981 and was firmly convinced that his earlier observation had been a correctly identified immature.

REFERENCES:

- Godfrey, W.E., 1966. The Birds of Canada. National Museum of Canada, Bulletin No. 203, Biological Series No.73, p. 155.
- Macdonald, Bruce A., 1978. Curlew Sandpiper at Iona Island. Discovery, N.S. Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 89.

Roberson, Don, 1980. Rare Birds of the West Coast of North America, Woodcock Publications, Pacific Grove, California, p. 174.

SAN JUAN RIDGE

by Kay Goodall

Sunday, June 7 was the date we joined the Cowichan Valley Naturalists at Mason's Store, Shawnigan Lake for a trip to the San Juan Ridge Ecological Reserve. Our leader, Bart Vogelzang, of the Cowichan group, bubbling with enthusiasm, found he had more cars and people than expected and it took some effort to get us all on the right roads.

We started off on the Port Renfrew road, our first stop, to see the rhododendrons growing in a reserved area of this logging wilderness. To get to the reserve required fording a stream, but as there was more water than easily crossed, the majority turned back thinking to try another approach by road. Some of us were already over the stream and carried on. Our bonus was a fawn curled up asleep in its bush bed. Some of the rhododendrons were out, but the majority were just opening, enough to give a bright splash of reddish pink against the green trees. Close by, poking through the moss, was a lovely clump of Coral Root.

Rejoining the group, we found they had been enjoying the Gray Jays. Continuing down a less-used section of the road we wound our way around pot-holes and fallen trees. Those of us not driving enjoyed the massive display of ferns. The Lady Fern was magnificent and the dainty "Maiden Hair" the contrast. In more open sections we saw False Solomon Seal, Goats Beard, and clumps of Cornus with an occasional bright spot of Indian Paintbrush.

Our next stop was the gate to enter the 4-mile road to the Ridge. On the way up we found a few patches of snow still clinging to the mountains. The flat portions were covered with huckleberry bushes (blue ones I was told). Arriving at our destination we found the reserve very clearly marked as the hillside had recently been logged to that point.

Here we found reason for our trip - the white Avalanche Lilies they were certainly abundant even along the roadsides. Bart told us this was the only place on Vancouver Island where these lilies were to be found and their blooming period lasted about six weeks. They frequently have more than one flower per stem and ten have been recorded, though the most we saw was six.

Some members climbed to the Ridge top and told of the profusion of buds yet to come out at the higher levels. This sub-alpine area proved very interesting and we found an abundance of Marsh Marigolds, the lovely little Mauve Butterwort, the Queens Cup and the twisted stalk, and to add to the enjoyable surroundings, a Varied Thrush serenaded us with its whistle.

As always, a delightful day must end and we heartily thanked Bart and the Cowichan Valley group for sharing this day.

SAN JUAN RIDGE

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VANCOUVER ISLAND MARMOT PRINT

20" X 26"

bod bod all a bod all By Michael Dumas

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VANCOUVER ISLAND MARMOT PRINTS AVAILABLE

In early 1980, the Canada Post Office commissioned Michael Dumas to portray a Vancouver Island Marmot for a Canadian 17¢ postage stamp which was issued on April 6th, 1981. As a result of this commission, and a deep personal interest in Canada's endangered species, Michael also produced a 20 by 26 inch painting of the Marmot. This painting now hangs in the Kleinburg Gallery in Ontario as part of the McMichael Collection.

This painting has been produced in a limited edition of 500 numbered and personally signed prints. The Vancouver Island Marmot Preservation Committee has been given permission to sell these prints at \$125.00 each, with the profits from these sales going towards the work of the Committee.

Persons interested in purchasing a copy of this exceptional print should contact Bill Merilees in Nanaimo at: 1655 Sherwood Drive, Nanaimo, B.C., V9T 1H2 or phone 758-1801.

An artist's proof of this print was raffled at the Federation's A.G.M. in Parksville. Jack and Eileen Husted of Vancouver were the lucky winners.

COWICHAN BAY - AUGUST 15TH

by Lyndis Davis

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Rob Mackenzie-Grieve was the leader when 25 of us met to "bird" the Cowichan Bay area. We started off walking down the Doman's lumber vard road (where the blackberries were delicious!) seeing several species of tree and shrub birds, herons, teal, Canada Geese, a Bald Eagle and an Osprey. At the lumber yard, we saw a large flock of Common Mergansers on the channels draining the flats, also swans and Mallards.

We parked next at the white church about a mile down the road and went along the trail into the valley. Phillip Adds, a relative of the Mackenzie-Grieves visiting from England, spotted our most spectacular find of the day - a Great Horned Owl. Everyone had a good look at him before he took off - not wanting to be photographed. There was very little else there, and lunch was calling, so we went onto the park at Quamichan Lake where it was very pleasant to eat in the shade.

A brief stop was made at the settling ponds to bring the total for the day to 50. Some of us ended the day with a most refreshing swim at Charlie's cottage on Shawnigan Lake.

Many thanks, Rob (and Charlie), for a good day.

EDITOR'S NOTES

by Marjorie E. Elston

This is my first issue as editor; please bear with me!

Could all trip leaders please ask someone at the outset to write a brief article about the outing. In order to save space and keep costs down, reports may be edited. I want to be able to print all submissions.

The magazine welcomes all material, particularly with a Vancouver Island or B.C. background. I will gratefully accept all comments and ideas regarding the "Naturalist" and I hope you will enjoy reading this issue as much as I did compiling it.

Thank you.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS AUGUST

No.	Species	Date	Area	Observer
1	Western Kingbird	1	Victoria Golf Course	R. Satterfield
1	Pine Grosbeak	10	Albert Head Lightstation	N.&T. Gardner
1	Franklin's Gull	12	Victoria Golf Course	R. Satterfield
1	Green Heron	12	Beaver Lake	Simon Henson
1	Red Knot	14	Christie Point	Ralph Fryer
1	Red Phalarope	23	Weir Beach	J. & B. Holt
7	Purple Martin	25	Blenkinsop Lake	Tuesday Group
1	Short-eared Owl	26	Victoria Golf Course	J.B. Tatum
1	Arctic Tern	29	Ogden Point	R. Satterfield

SEPTEMBER

	Goshawk	3	Glen Meadows Golf Course	Jack Todd
_	Townsend's Solitaire	6	Lohbrunner Road	L.G. Roberts
	Solitary Sandpiper	7	Martindale 'L' Reservoir	A. Porcher
_	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	10	Esquimalt Lagoon	P.R. Williams
the state of the s	Lewis Woodpecker	12	Penrhyn Street	R. Mackenzie- Grieve
2	Sandhill Crane	21	Oak Bay	E. Lansdowne
3	Western Bluebird	21	Witty Lagoon Park	E. Goodman & Y. Blades
	Yellow-headed Blackbird	27	Welch Road	R. Williams & Vi Peters

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.

Any problems with the "Alert" tape, please call 478-9715 immediately.

JUNIORS

PROGRAMME

Salmon spawning at Goldstream Park - 10:00 A.M. -12:30 P.M. with Gail Mitchell and the Naturalists at Goldstream.

Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:30 A.M. or at the Nature House at 10:00 A.M. Bring lunch and wear rubber boots.

Birding at Esquimalt Lagoon, 10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. We will look for birds in the Lagoon and in the open sea.

Meet at Mayfair at 9:30 A.M. or at the bridge at the east end of the Lagoon at 10:00 A.M. Bring binoculars if possible and lunch.

DECEMBER 5

NOVEMBER 7

NOVEMBER 21

Hike up MT. WORK - 10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. Meet at Mayfair at 9:30 A.M. or at the Mt. Work parking lot at the far end of Durrance Lake at 10:00 A.M. Bring lunch and wear stout shoes for a longer hike than usual.

Also bring a Christmas present for the birds, such as pine cones covered with suet, peanut butter and sunflower seeds.

PROGRAM

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

TUES. NOV. 10

General Meeting - Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m. Speaker: Jessie Woollett.

Topic: Life in Our Coastal Tidal Pools.

SAT. NOV. 14

THURS. NOV. 19

Tour of Agriculture Experimental Station Research Lab. Leader: Mr. Lawrence Theaker.

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

Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association Meeting, Newcombe Auditorium, Provincial Museum, 8:00 p.m.

Al Funk, micologist, and Jessie Woollett will co-operate in a mushroom slide show.

FRI. NOV. 20 & SAT. NOV. 21 National Film Board presents Roger Tory Peterson in "Portrait of a Bird Watcher" and "Bears and Man".

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

SAT. NOV. 21

Birding on the Saanich Peninsula.

Leader: Mike Shepard, 658-6850.

Meet Mayfair Lanes 9:00 a.m.

TUES. NOV. 24

Birders Night, 7:30 p.m. Location to be announced on Bird Alert. All who wish to participate in Christmas Count, try to attend or call Mike Shepard at 658-5850.

MARDORS

DECEMBER

NOVEMBER/OECEMBER

SAT. DEC. 5

Geology of Victoria's Waterfront. Leader: Dr. Robert A. Brown, 385-2693.

Meet Cattle Point, 9:00 a.m., move from there to McMicking Point and then to Holland Point.

TUES. DEC. 8

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

Speaker: Mary Lou Florian.

Topic: The Totems & The Forest - 100 Years of Change.

SAT. DEC. 12

Pre-count Scouting Trips.

SAT. DEC. 19

Annual Christmas Bird Count.

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.

FINAL DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE MAGAZINE FOR THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE IS NOVEMBER 25, 1981.

* FOR AUDUBON NIGHTS AND V.N.H.S. MEETINGS, parking is free behind the Museum in the Museum Parking Lot.