



# The VICTORIA NATURALIST

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Mailing Address- P.O. Box No. 5220, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4

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COVER: by Bertha McHaffie-Gow

BARN SWALLOWS

APRIL 1984

A FAMILY OF BARN SWALLOWS

Bertha McHaffie-Gow

Early in July I visited my old home farm on which my oldest brother and sister-in-law reside, in Manitoba. In one corner of the white aluminium awning over the kitchen window was a Barn Swallow's nest with six young almost ready to leave home. From daybreak to dark the two parents kept up a constant feeding routine, while inside brother and sister-in-law kept up a constant fun battle, brother wanting to get rid of the dirty things (they did soil the walk below); but Mary won out with the argument of the inestimable amount of flies and mosquitoes they must rid the yard of, plus the easy entertainment they provided from the kitchen window. I remarked that I had heard that the young returned to the nest for a few nights, right after leaving, but how were six going to fit in? I said, "Maybe if there was a wire put up in the opposite corner they would use it." Immediately, it seemed, I looked out to see a red plastic-coated piece of clothes-line wire being put in place. Then one day, returning from the lake, we found the nest empty. But baby was on the window-sill and could not fly. I got steps and returned it to the nest. There the parents fed it for two more days. The first night I looked out, three young and one parent were on the wire. Then the night before leaving to return to Victoria, I happened to pass the window and in the dark saw a row of little shapes. My heart skipped a beat: it appeared there were six.

Getting my camera and focusing more by distance than by what I could see, I first took two black and white photos by flash, followed by color negative and slides. In the color pictures they are all awake, but they were not disturbed and did not fly. I thought; I wonder where the parents are; and I went looking. They were under the awning over the living room window - in their own bird bedroom, so to speak.

It was dark and you can't imagine how happy I was when my pictures gave evidence that the baby I had returned to the nest did survive.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 26, 5700 Kingsway, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2E6  
 SPRINGTIME SPECIAL - WILD GARDENS AROUND VICTORIA

Kaye Suttill

We all know our glorious cultivated gardens round about Victoria, but very special, too, are the indigenous plant communities, the wild gardens in the Victoria area, within an hour's drive.

The wild garden we have observed most over the last fifteen years is the rocky coast of East Sooke Park, where the earliest bloomer is Western Saxifrage, *S. Occidentalis* var. *rufidula*, showing up on the cliffs some years the end of January, usually in February through March. This year we photographed the first *Mimulus*, *alsinoides*, the little monkey flower, at the end of March, ahead of the Big Monkey Flower, *M. guttatus*, which appeared early April. We always look forward to seeing *Delphinium Menziesii* come April, dwarfed and prostrate on the exposed cliffs, alongside Mouse-eared Chickweed, and in certain places in the rocks the same Tufted Saxifrage which lives in the northernmost land on earth. This end of March 1984 was special by lots of tiny Red Maids, *Calandrinia ciliata*, in the short grass of Beechy Cove. Death Camas seems to be the species greatest in number, but on and on everywhere Broom and Arbutus are the showiest flora April-May. As the coast dries out Woolly Sunflowers cling to the cliffs and lots of *Sedum Divergens* carries on into June, when the rocks are carpeted with their gold and the pink blur of Nodding Onion, *Alium cernuum*. Nootka Roses are June coasters, too, along with sprays of *Heuchera micrantha* in searock cracks. *Brodiaea coronaria* mauve stars epitomize spring's end on the dried-out sea level rocks, just as *Clarkia amoena* (Farewell to Spring) does on the highest rocks, while gumweed takes over for the summer.

Mt. Douglas is special as a wild Garden with 360 degree views, close to home. Especially ever since Davie, Albert R. Davidson, used to take us there on Tuesday Birding to see the earliest flora, we regularly go up Mt. Doug from the Blenkinsop side where the Spring mostly is, to check the Satin Flowers (out 23 February this year, same day as we noted the first *Erythronium Oregonum* out in the forested north base). But first bloom this year was Spring Gold atop Mt. Doug 14 February, spotted while Tuesday Birding. March is for the full flowering of the Satin Flowers and multiplying of Easter Lilies and Spring Gold and Western Buttercups and beginning of the Tall Saxifrage season and Shooting Stars. April, I think, holds the most species and the highest flora count, the Month Most Special on Mt. Doug with all the Camas and Sea Blush and Blue-eyed Mary and *Mimulus alsinoides* cascading down rocks.

Broom gold and Arbutus lace and bright Shooting Stars special April, too, while Gary Oak leaves uncurl and atop Mt. Doug Red Maids again fairy microflora the short grass. By the end of April it's drying out and Early Camas gives way to the Tall. Woolly Sunflowers and spindly *Delphiniums* signal spring on the wane as April turns into May. But Tall Camas and brilliant Hooker's Onion and Golden Broom still make Mt. Douglas a paradise. Even in June Broom gold lingers and then Ocean Spray, *Holodiscus* discolour, bushes carry on White Magic into July.

Farther away than Mt. Douglas yet nearer than East Sooke is Jocelyn Hill, my very favourite place just to be there. Jocelyn, across from the Malahat, rises steeply from Finlayson Arm to over 1,000 feet. It's mainly an Arbutus-Douglas Fir community. Along the lower cliffside rocks you find an occasional Luina *Hypoleuca* with its leaves green above, silver-haired beneath and creamy-buff flower clusters, along with Broom and innumerable Shooting Stars, everywhere, the *Hendersonii*. The open exposed area on Jocelyn's southwest face just below the summit, a mix of springwet turf and rock outcrops becoming cliff to the west, is a rock garden reminding of the exposed rockeries in the High Country, for being subject to gale force winds the flora hugs the ground, Mouse-eared Chickweed and Camas with short short stems. Here, too, we have observed Vernal Sandwort, *Arenaria rubella*, which we usually find on alpine slopes. Both the Small and the Large Flowering *Mimulus* grace the redbrown velvet moss, like flower waterfalls in seepage areas. Along the outer edge of the summit ridge Jocelyn has a band of tangling Manzanita with Douglas Fir the summit core, where *Erythroniums* and *Calypsos* hide in the forest floor. Little openings in the ridge woods are mini-meadows of Sea Blush and Early Camas hugging the earth. The real floral specialness of Jocelyn, though, is its Gold Stars, *Crocidium multi-caule*, in one area. For this reason Jocelyn Hill should be an ecological reserve. Where else on southern Vancouver Island is there such a profusion of them? Surely this area urgently needs protection from development because it is unique. For now Jocelyn is in limbo though it is a Most Special Wild Garden.

These are only some of the joys of some of our Wild Gardens, like all Victoria ones very showy in April-May into June.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT  
ANNUAL MEETING - VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

*Mary Richmond*

It is my privilege to submit, on behalf of the Board of Directors, this report for the year ending December 31, 1983.

The reports from the committee chairmen have been received and filed, and I will summarize them briefly. If you have questions or comments, or if they have comments, please feel free to make them.

The Treasurer's report is available for scrutiny.

The membership committee has been chaired by Mr. Ed Coffin. Our membership as at December 31, 1983 is virtually unchanged from April 1983 - for a total of 442 memberships of which 133 are family memberships, this committee assumes responsibility for the distribution of our magazine, and the cost of postage continues to be a problem. We appreciate very much the work of those who hand deliver the magazine and keep mailing costs as low as possible. We are still attempting to secure a more favorable postage rate.

You have all experienced directly the result of the work of the programme committee chaired by Alice Elston who has been assisted by Harry Davidson. We appreciate the excellent programmes they have provided for our regular meetings and for the field trips. I express our thanks to them and to Ray and Nancy Addison for their work with the juniors.

The conservation committee chaired by Wilf Medd has had as its major concerns the following: The cutting of trees and removal of wood from Mount Douglas Park, and the general condition of the Park; the logging of Mears and Nimpkish Islands; the preservation of Rithets Bog; the development of a Trail System for Victoria. Letters expressing our concerns have been sent to the appropriate bodies. At Quicks Bottom and Kings Pond a sign has been erected indicating the places as Nature Sanctuaries. These signs were suggested and in part paid for by our society.

Mr. Giff Calvert has been chairman of Parks Committee and represented our society at several parks groups - including Colquitz Linear Park, Thomas Francis and Freeman King Parks, and the Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. Mr. Calvert has maintained an excellent and mutually helpful relationship between these groups and our Board.

The Audubon Wildlife series has once again had a successful year - thanks largely to the work of Anne Adamson and her committee members who usher, sell tickets, host receptions, and participate in all those other chores.

Scholarship Committee has been chaired by Douglas Turnbull. The Victoria Natural History Scholarship was awarded to Linda Kathleen Pickering and the Samuel Simcoe Bursaries were awarded to Kevin Devito and Douglas Cameron. Each of these 3 bursaries are \$1400.00. The Freeman F. King Scholarship of \$700.00 was won by Carolyn Louise Masson. The Clifford Carl Memorial Bursary of \$600.00 was won by Reginal Dale Goertzen.

Federation of B.C. Naturalists. Our representatives to the Federation have been M.L. Florian, Douglas Turnbull and Winston Mair and Bill Barclary. One concern of our club and the B.C. Federation has been the method of selection of the B.C. director to the Canadian Federation. Largely due to the efforts of our representatives to the B.C. Federation, a resolution will go to the C.N.F. to amend the by-laws to provide for the election of Provincial Directors by the Provinces.

Publication Committee has been chaired by Mike Shepard. Roy Prior has served as editor of our magazine. A current major project of our V.N.H.S. is the publication of an enlarged and updated Naturalists Guide to Victoria. Jim Weston is serving as editor in chief and has held several meetings with the Board. We anticipate a book of approximately 128 pages to be available by this summer - hopefully in time for the July meeting in Vancouver of the Canadian Nature Federation. The cost (retail) is expected to be in the region of \$8.00.

I do want to extend to all these chairmen (or chairpersons) my very sincere thanks - and your thanks - for the very large amount of work which they have done on our behalf over the past year - and in some cases - over the past many years. While it is hard and perhaps unfair, to single out any one for particular mention - I will do just that. First of all, Anne Adamson, who has looked after the Audubon programmes for the past 10 years and who gave us fair warning that this would be her last year. Thank you Anne.

I would like also to again thank Ray and Nancy Addison for work with the Juniors.

Several chairmen are resigning from the Board this year: Alice Elston, who served as secretary and as chairman of our programme committee, and Harry Davidson, the other half of that Committee; Giff Calvert, our Parks Representative; and Doug Turnbull, our past president, chairman of our scholarship committee, representative to F.B.C.N., etc. I must say a very special word to Doug, whose wise counsel and genuine concern for our society has made the Presidency much more enjoyable and much less hazardous.

#### NOTES

##### ASIAN BIRD FOUND IN CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles: A small, sparrow-like bird from Asia was found spending the winter along the California Coast, the latest in a series of birds found on the wrong side of the globe this winter.

"Basically this bird is on the wrong side of the ocean," said Ron Levalle, a Eureka ornithologist. "The idea of it appearing here has gotten us all excited. I even quit watching the 49er (pro football) game to go look for it."

The sighting of the rustic bunting just north of Eureka, 90 miles south of the Oregon border, was the first ever made in the lower 48 states, according to ornithologists. Normally the bunting breeds in Siberia and migrates to China and Japan during the winter.

Last week another Asian bird species, the slaty backed gull, was reported for the first time along the Mississippi River near St. Louis.

"We're not sure what's causing all this, but there's been more first sightings this winter than anyone can remember," said Richard Erickson, a biologist who took part in identifying the rustic bunting early this week.

So far this winter, he said, two other Asian birds rarely seen in the Western Hemisphere, the brambling and the Siberian accentor, have been seen along the West Coast.

The rustic bunting is a smallish, brown-feathered bird with broad stripes across its cheeks and white tail feathers.

. . . from a Los Angeles newspaper

#### BIRD ALERT

*Roy Prior*

I am publishing below an exchange of letters which took place recently between the birders and the Goodwills. It is very pleasant to know that Peggy and Vic will still be looking after our Bird Alert, and I am speaking for the Board of Directors and for many others when I add my thanks to those expressed in the first of these letters.

22 February 1984

Dear Vic and Peggy Goodwill:

We of Birders' Night would like to express our heartfelt thanks for all the many hours of work and years of devotion that you both gave to Victoria's Bird Hotline. Your efforts have made it one of the best Hotlines in North America. Words come with difficulty, but we deeply appreciate all you have done.

*(signed by 28 birders)*

#501 - 1204 Fairfield Road  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3B2  
13 March 1984

Dear Birders:

We wish to express our most sincere appreciation of the recognition that you have afforded us as operators of the Rare Bird Alert. We were deeply touched by the "plaque" prepared by the 'Birders of Birders Night'.

It is a fact that the Rare Bird Alert can only be as good as the information supplied and so we, in turn, must thank you for your contributions toward its success.

Your expression of appreciation encourages us to carry on trying to help you find those 'lififers' which are bound to turn up in the days ahead.

"Birdiferously" yours,  
*Peggy and Vic*



## NOTICES

American Birds:

The January 1984 issue of this magazine was borrowed at Birders' Night on February 22nd. Will the borrower please return it to Lyndis Davis.

Short Introductory Field Trips:

The society is planning to run short orientation trips at various locations in late spring, aimed at non-members of the society. We need members who would be willing to help organize and run these. Volunteers should contact Roy Prior or Fritz Karger.

Contribution to travel costs on field trips:

Passengers on field trips usually wish to make a contribution to the driver's costs, but find difficulty and embarrassment because it is so hard to calculate how much to offer and when to do it. The board of directors of the V.N.H.S. has therefore decided to try the experiment of suggesting, for each field trip, the amount that a passenger should contribute to the driver's costs at the end of each trip. The suggested amount will be shown in the programme.

Vancouver Rare Bird Alert:

The new telephone number is 876-9690.

1984 BIRD OBSERVATIONSFEBRUARY

<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Area Seen</u>	<u>Observer</u>
1	Western Screech-Owl	1	4150 Glendenning Rd.	Mark Nyhof
1	Yellow-billed Loon	3	Patricia Bay	Bob Hay
1	Blue Grouse	4	near Humpback Res.	Ray Williams
1	Violet-green Swallow	5	Quick's Bottom	Hank Vander Pol & Gerry Anderson
2	King Eider	6	Fulford Harbour	Dave Fraser
7	Tree Swallow	11	Quick's Bottom	J.&R. Satterfield
1	Rusty Blackbird	12	Metchosin Road	Keith Taylor
2	Western Bluebird	12	Metchosin Road	Keith Taylor
1	Common Yellowthroat	19	Coburg Peninsula	Keith Taylor
2	Turkey Vulture	22	Glenlyon School	Dr. Doug Ross
1	Harris' Sparrow	23	4718 W. Saanich Rd.	M.&G. Crowther

1984 BIRD OBSERVATIONSMARCH

<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Area Seen</u>	<u>Observer</u>
1	Swamp Sparrow	4	Jacklin Road	Keith Taylor
1	Rufous Hummingbird	9	2551 Florence Lake Road	G. & T. Briggs
1	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	10	Quick's Bottom	Keith Taylor
3	Cinnamon Teal	12	Somenos Flats	Vic Goodwill
2	California Gull	13	Clover Point	M. & V. Goodwill
1	Common Barn-Owl	13	Victoria Int. Airport	Bob Hay
1	Barred Owl	13	1525 Fell St.	Dr. Bob Houston
1	Leach's Storm-Petrel	17	M.V. "Coho"	Keith Taylor
1	Townsend's Solitaire	17	1764 Orcas Park Terrace	B. & J. Holt
24	Snow Goose	25	Pauls Terrace	P.H. Carpenter
1	Osprey	29	Upper Thetis Lake	Mark Nyhof
1	Orange-crowned Warbler	30	2551 Florence Lake Road	G. & T. Briggs

PROGRAMME -- MAY & JUNE 1984

*Please meet at the location specified for each trip - if no location given, field trips will meet at Mayfair Lanes, corner of Oak and Roderick at the specified time. No cars can be left at Mayfair Lanes. Always take a lunch and dress according to the weather. If you have any problems please contact Alice Elston (592-1400) or Harry Davidson (479-1286). Always phone the Rare Bird Alert (382-5562) the week before a trip that you anticipate taking in order to obtain full particulars or details of the changes that may have been made. Changes cannot be avoided.*

**SUNDAY, MAY 6** Join Fritz Karger on a birding and botany trip on Triangle Mountain. Meet Fritz at 9 a.m. at the corner of Fulton and Bexhill Rds. on Triangle Mtn. Suggested travel cost contribution \$3.00.

**TUESDAY, MAY 8** Our General Meeting will be held at 8 p.m. at the Newcombe Auditorium. Dennis and Kaye Suttill will be presenting a very interesting programme entitled "Odyssey of Yukon Flora".

- SATURDAY, MAY 12 Katherine Sherman will lead a group through Uplands Park to study the botany. Please meet Katherine at Cattle Point at 9:30 a.m.
- SATURDAY, MAY 19 Birding trip to be arranged. Phone Rare Bird Alert for details.
- SUNDAY, MAY 27 See if you can find the winter birds at your feeders in the highlands. Ed Coffin will lead a trip to Tugwell Lake. Meet Ed at Mayfair Lanes at 7:30 a.m.  
*Suggested travel cost contribution \$10.00.*
- SATURDAY, JUNE 2 Try to identify the bird voices in Francis Park. Please meet Ron Satterfield at the Nature House in Francis Park at 8 a.m.
- SATURDAY, JUNE 9 Find the heritage trees in Victoria. Virginia Bartkow will lead us. Please meet Virginia at Mayfair Lanes at 8:30 a.m.  
*Suggested travel cost contribution \$2.00.*
- SATURDAY, JUNE 16 Birding at Spectacle Lake. Leader to be announced. Please meet at the Spectacle Lake Parking Lot at 8:30 a.m.  
*Suggested travel cost contribution \$4.00.*
- SATURDAY, JUNE 23 Take a tour of the Renfrew Bog with Dr. Adolf Ceska. Please meet Dr. Ceska at the parking lot on the eastern side of the bridge at Jordan River at 9:00 a.m.  
*Suggested travel cost contribution \$10.00.*
- SATURDAY, JUNE 30 Study the intertidal zone with leader Yousof Ebrahim. Time and meeting place will be announced on the Rare Bird Alert.

#### JUNIOR PROGRAMME

This is the final news brief for the 1983-1984 Junior Naturalist year. It has been a busy year with a variety of activities and we feel that Juniors and parents alike have learned a lot about our environment this past year.

Ray and I would like to say thank you to all the special speakers we have had this past year and also thank you to the parents who have helped. We really appreciate all your help, and the children learned a lot from the different talks, films, workshops and walks. They love that 'hands-on' experience when talking about birds or mammals, for example, so a special thank you to the Museum for lending us their skins. We are wrapping up our year as Junior Naturalist leaders and do hope that the programme will continue again next year.

There are still events scheduled for the remainder of this year. Let's see you all out for the following activities:

- SATURDAY, MAY 12 Reptiles CANCELLED
- SUNDAY, MAY 13 Mother's Day. There will not be a formal programme that day, but take your mother and maybe your grandmother for a walk through Thetis Lake Park to see the spring flowers. Remember you are in a park so look - don't pick.
- SUNDAY, MAY 27 1:00 p.m. Final programme for the season. There will be a beach campfire and picnic. You will learn how to light and look after a campfire. We'll call our list of members for place.

*Keep working on those nature diaries and bring them along to show other members.*

Nancy and Ray Addison  
477-4947