



# The VICTORIA NATURALIST



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VICTORIA NATURAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY

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

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**RARE BIRD ALERT - 382-5562**

**Phone bird sightings to 382-9652**

COVER PHOTO: *Common Nighthawk*  
*Cordova Spit - Summer 1983*  
Photo: *Mark Nyhof*

**THE RED-EYED VIREO ON  
THE SAANICH PENINSULA**

by K. Taylor

The Red-eyed Vireo is a common summer resident in deciduous woodlands on the north sector of the south-east coastal lowlands, the main centre of abundance being in the Courtenay-Campbell River area and Cortez Island. Populations decrease south of these areas, with only scattered individuals breeding south of Nanaimo each year; these populations have increased slightly every year since the early 1970's. On the Saanich Peninsula the first nest was found on June 21, 1978 at the University of Victoria, where one singing male has been present each year until the present.

The most reliable area for Red-eyed Vireos is Lochside Park (Lochside Drive at Cordova Bay Road). It has produced up to three singing males every year since 1979. The author watched a pair fly to the same area high in the canopy where nestling calls could be heard as the adults arrived; juveniles have also been seen here. Two other reliable areas for Red-eyed Vireos that have produced at least one singing male almost every year recently are Blenkinsop Lake and Witty's Lagoon. Juveniles have been seen at both of these areas.

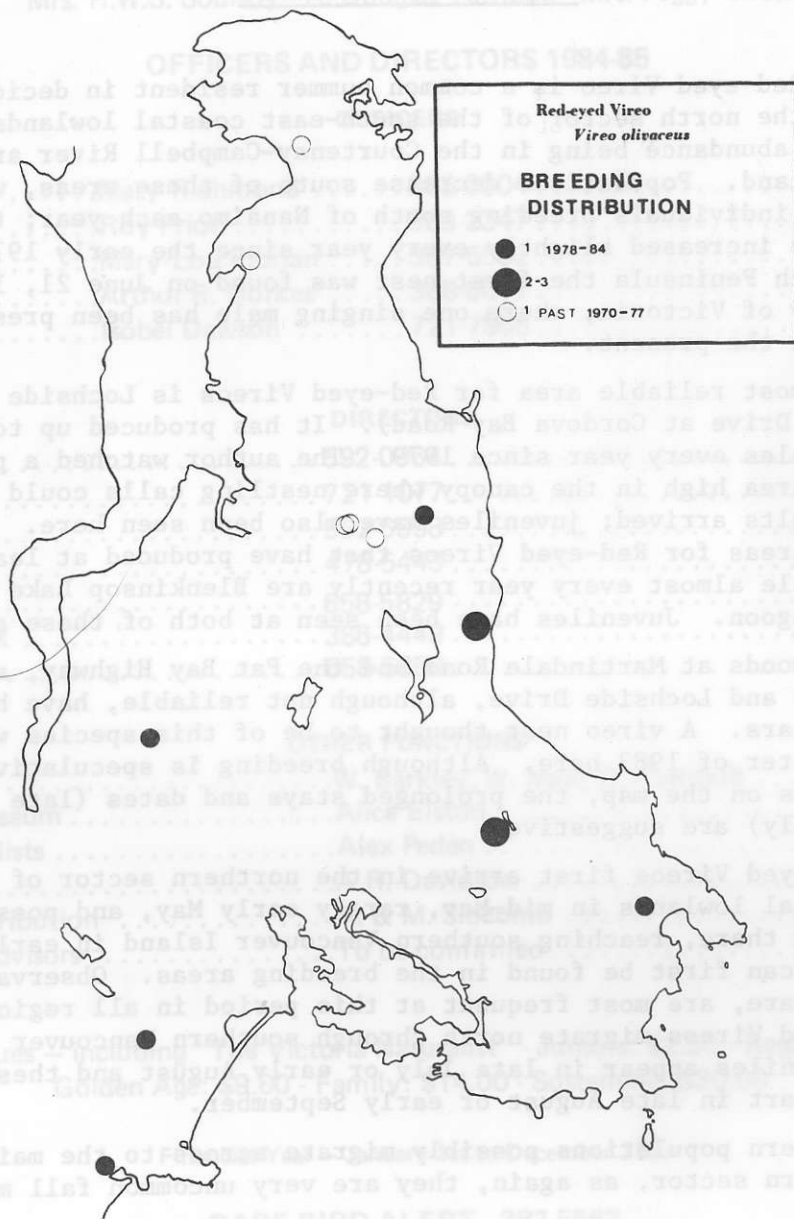
The woods at Martindale Road and the Pat Bay Highway, and at Martindale and Lochside Drive, although not reliable, have had birds in some years. A vireo nest thought to be of this species was seen in the winter of 1983 here. Although breeding is speculative in other areas on the map, the prolonged stays and dates (late June through July) are suggestive.

Red-eyed Vireos first arrive in the northern sector of the south-east coastal lowlands in mid-May, rarely early May, and possibly move south from there, reaching southern Vancouver Island in early June, when they can first be found in the breeding areas. Observations, although rare, are most frequent at this period in all regions. Rarely do Red-eyed Vireos migrate north through southern Vancouver Island in May. Juveniles appear in late July or early August and these and the adults depart in late August or early September.

Northern populations possibly migrate across to the mainland in the northern sector, as again, they are very uncommon fall migrants

on Southern Vancouver Island.

Red-eyed Vireos are accidental on the west coast. Ray Williams has an interesting record of one at Tugwell Lake in late June.



### THE HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER ON SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND

by K. Taylor

After the discovery of the nesting colony of Hammond's Flycatchers at Spectacle Lake in 1971 I became very interested in the distribution of this species on Vancouver Island, especially southern Vancouver Island.

A survey began that year and continued in 1973-74 and again 1981-84. The method was to begin at dawn, drive as far as possible until ten a.m., stopping every quarter of a mile. I also counted birds heard between stops. The survey was done only in the first two weeks of June.

The Hammond's Flycatcher is a common summer resident on the summit and north-east slope of the Malahat, in an area from Spectacle Lake to Sooke Lake and Shawnigan Lake, 400 feet west along the Koksilah River canyon to an elevation of 3,000 feet. On reaching the Weeks Lake - Jordan Meadows Plateau at 3,000 - 3,500 feet the Hammond's Flycatcher cannot be found, possibly because of habitat destruction (recently logged) or because of the wrong habitat (out of the drier maritime belt). I believe the latter, as islands of prime forest in this area produce no birds.

On the Sooke Hills slope in prime habitat the bird is rare or locally unknown.

On the Saanich Peninsula it is rare at Mount Douglas, Observatory Hill, along Munns Road, and on tops of hills in the Metchosin area, Broadmead and Humpback Reservoir. On the edge of the north slope of the Malahat, at Holt Creek canyon, the bird is again absent.

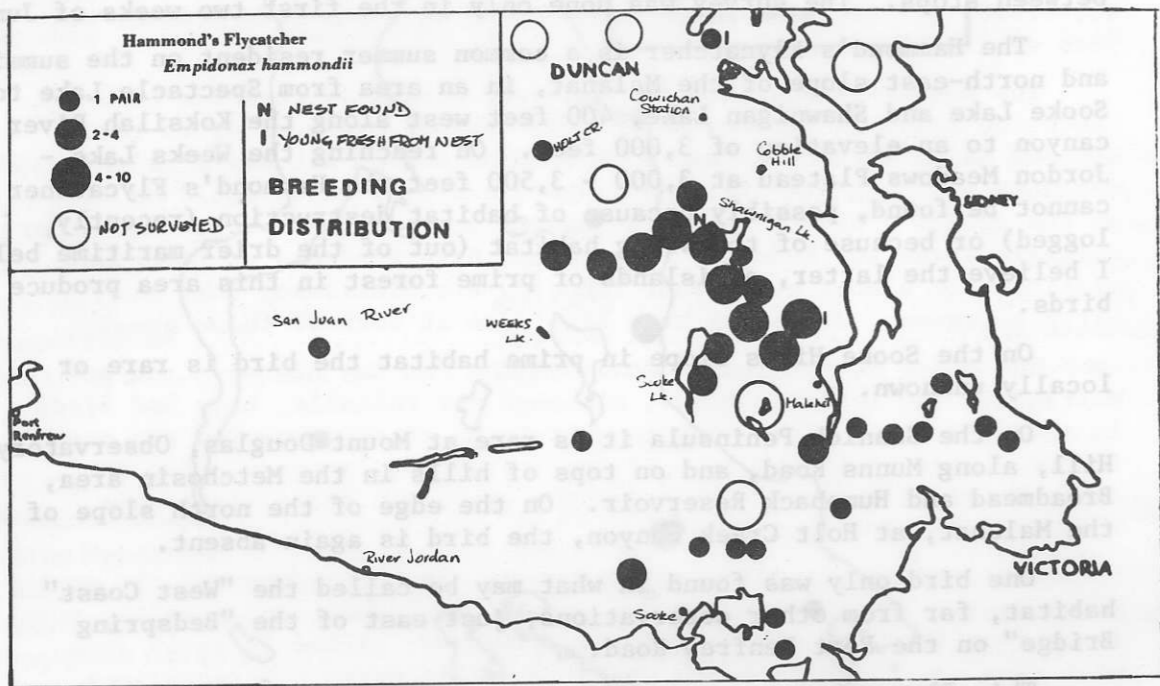
One bird only was found in what may be called the "West Coast" habitat, far from other observations, just east of the "Bedspring Bridge" on the Port Renfrew Road.

This Flycatcher is seen and heard on territory from late April through June. Males become silent sometime in early July and are hard to find until fall migration.

One nest was seen being built in early June near the north-west corner of Shawnigan Lake. It was near completion about 25-30 feet up a second-growth fir, near the trunk. Several young just out of the nest have been seen on numerous occasions at Spectacle Lake.

Conclusions:

An uncommon summer resident and locally common summer resident in the drier maritime belt, preferring open edges and dry open forests of Douglas Fir, either mature or second-growth in the mountains from 400 feet to 3,000 feet. An uncommon migrant and rare summer resident at lower elevations. Spring migration is in late April or early May, and it departs in late September. Absent from west coast forests. I believe the Saanich Peninsula birds to be a recent range expansion.



A SEARCH FOR  
KIRTLAND'S VILLAINOUS (?) WARBLER

by Ed Coffin

*As published in the Illinois Audubon Bulletin of December 1969, except for some modifications by the author.*

Sooner or later a new bird-watcher needs new birds to watch. He is not yet content to watch old ones, so he must either change his location drastically (West Coast? - Texas? - Florida?) or think of a habitat closer at hand where the chances are good for a "locally common" species.

How about St. Louis for a European Tree Sparrow? No, the search must be sneaked into the family vacation trip - gently enough to avoid protests from the non-birders - and the family wants a week of camping in Upper Michigan! Can this be bent to include a quick try for Kirtland's Warblers in north central Lower Michigan? Possibly, but what good is a day or two unless I know which jack-pines are being favored by the warblers this year? As Pettingill suggests in "A Guide To Bird Finding," one should check with the Michigan Department of Conservation at Lansing.

Too late! It is now late June; the loud, constant song is indispensable as a lead, and singing lasts from mid-May only until the first week of July. ("Very few indeed have seen a Kirtland's Warbler after the season of song is over." - Griscom's "Warblers of America.") No time for further planning!

Hence a sudden departure. Friday, June 27th, trying to convince the startled family that now is the time for vacation and that one logically travels from Northern Illinois to Northern Michigan by first heading south to Chicago. Tentative destination: Grayling, Michigan, west center in the Kirtland's Warbler range described in Peterson's bird guide, and key location for Kirtland's Warblers in Pettingill's "Guide To Bird Finding." Moreover the camp-ground directory shows a naturalist-equipped state park near by with the appropriate name of Hartwick Pines. Presumably the naturalist could advise just where to look.

Tent set up at Hartwick Pines. Okay so far! Now to find the park naturalist! The park office thinks he may not be on duty until Saturday, but check the nature center and the picnic concession. Meanwhile,

here's a leaflet describing the controlled growing of jack-pines at the Michigan Conservation Department's Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas.

At the picnic concession a by-stander, on learning why we wish a naturalist, proceeds to open our ears: "Kirtland's Warblers? Well, I hope you take them all home with you. Whole flocks of them race the tree growers for the trees at Kalkaska, then eat the year's growth of buds while the growers try to pull a plastic bag over the top of each tree."

Dumfounded, I ask, "Why, then, does the government attempt to increase their numbers as an endangered species?"

"Just an example of what the conservationists can accomplish at the expense of the tree grower!"

"What does this Kirtland's Warbler look like anyway?" I ask innocently.

"Oh, about the size of a robin - it's a pretty bird."

I retreat - with confused visions of giant warblers and plastic-coated jack-pines.

Friday evening, excursions around the Hartwick Pines area produce no further information and no naturalist. However, a Saturday morning visit to Grayling's City Hall nets a detailed map of Crawford County pinpointing a Kirtland's Warbler area (unfortunately in a "restricted" artillery range zone) and advice on obtaining a permit to visit one of the state's Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas.

Since a trip to one of the Management Areas appears unavoidable, I prolong the desertion of my family, drive 30 miles east to Mio, pick up the permit and a reprint of "The Bird Worth A Forest Fire" - Audubon, November-December, 1964, at the Department of Conservation office, and proceed immediately to the Mack Lake Management Area, nine miles southeast of Mio. This promising advance grinds to a screeching halt as an hour's exploration of likely-looking jack-pine thickets turns up nothing but redwings and a mourning dove. Returning to pacify my stranded campers, I find that the artillery range, 10 miles east of Hartwick Pines, is apparently not in use, hence open to visitors, but I hear no birdsong while passing through the edge of it.

Later Saturday, the park naturalist visits each campsite to extend an invitation to the evening nature program. I pose my question. "Too late in the season!" he says. "You'll never find them now." Kirtland's Warblers have been quite active, he reports, in the general area of the artillery range, but the Crawford County map is misleading

in showing only one small location. Probably some Kirtland's Warblers were seen there when the map was first sketched, but by now the habitat may no longer be suitable.

So much for that! Enough time having been squandered on this wild goose chase (dare I say "wild warbler chase"?), we must depart for the Upper Peninsula Sunday morning.

Sunday morning I awake earlier than the others to the usual recital by crows, blue jays, and chipping sparrows, and decide to steal away for one last brief look. For want of a more promising destination, I head back to the small circle allotted to Kirtland's Warblers by the Crawford County drafting department. At the north-western boundary (intersection of Grayling-Jones Lake Road and Stephan Bridge Road), I risk a primitive truck trail heading southeast toward the center of the circle.

As if by special arrangement with Crawford County, no sooner have I crossed the circled boundary than several penetrating low-pitched bird songs strike my ear. The loudest can be represented "wup che che che che wi wi," which is close enough to Peterson's "tup tup tup che che che wi wi" to be fair Kirtland's Warbler evidence. Abandoning the car dead center in the narrow truck trail, I plunge through the brush in the direction of the song, and after a few fleeting glimpses get a fair view of the singer when he alights on a bare branch. He is grey above and yellow below and has the prescribed black mask and black side streaks. I look for the tail wag, but he seems to be using it only to force out the notes of his song.

As I try to get into position to check for black back stripes, he takes off. A continued struggle through the thin but troublesome undergrowth, with interference from some breed of welt-raising mosquito, produces no second good sighting. However several birds are audible all the while, each with his own interpretation of the "tup che che wi wi" melody.

Indirect confirmation of the sighting comes in the form of an encounter at this spot with Bill Dyer, nature photographer, and Lawrence Walkinshaw, authority on Sandhill Cranes. They apparently have been studying the warblers for several days, working from a forest service camp-ground at Kyle Lake, about a mile away. Bill has been waiting patiently for clear weather in hopes of taking a color photo of a male Kirtland's against a blue sky background, to replace Les Line's excellent but lost photo (Audubon November-December, 1964).

This, then is a taste of success. Now back to the vacation schedule.

But how about the unanswered accusation? What trees have been damaged and by whom? In the first place, obsessed as I was with jack-pines, it didn't occur to me that Kalkaska is in orchard country and that the trees in question may be fruit trees. And the culprit? This remained a complete mystery until a month later, when I chanced to read in Louise de Kiriline Lawrence's "The Lovely and The Wild" that "the Evening Grosbeak's partiality for the tender new buds of trees has been held against it" - (and has been) "exposed to the attention of certain forestry officials." The size of a robin? Close enough. A pretty bird? Undoubtedly! (I remembered I HAD seen a pair of Evening Grosbeaks at Hartwick Pines that Saturday.) But in due fairness to the Evening Grosbeaks, Lawrence believes that the resulting damage is greatly overrated, mainly because tree buds are such a small part of this uncommon grosbeak's diet.

#### EDUCATING THE YOUNG

by Katherine Sherman

The Salmon Arm Greyhound Bus Depot is situated a little to the west of the town at a spot where the Trans-Canada Highway comes very close to the Shuswap Lake, leaving just enough space for the C.P.R. track.

At 8 a.m. last August 7 I happened to be waiting at the depot when I heard a piercing but familiar call. When I looked up from the black-topped parking lot, there in the top of a dead, broken off cottonwood was the unmistakable nest of an osprey - not a very old nest as there was no great accumulation of sticks. Perched on the edge of the nest were two young, while a parent bird I'll call the mother, sat on a branch of the same tree which curved conveniently so that she was above the nest but about 10' away.

The mother bird called "Yewk, yewk" in her most confident way whereupon the young promptly replied in their best imitation. Then the mother again, then the young, and each time it seemed as though the mother was a little more emphatic and young tried a little harder. A noisy speeder passing along the track did not disturb them. How long this continued I shall never know as my bus arrived, but I can vouch for at least ten minutes.

I could only conclude that the young were being given a lesson in how to call osprey-style, but perhaps some more knowledgeable birder can come up with a more scientific explanation. At any rate there can't be any place much more convenient for watching ospreys!

#### BIRDING KEEPS YOU YOUNG!

by Katherine Sherman

Last July 23 the Tuesday Birders celebrated the ninetieth birthday of Mrs. Lavender Monckton, who joined the Group soon after its inception 25 years ago. Lavender is a keen and knowledgeable birder, who, rain or shine, hardly ever misses the Tuesday bird walks.

Even more remarkable is Mr. A.R. Davidson, one of the Society's Honorary Life Members, the keeper of the library, and for many years the Editor of the Victoria Naturalist. It was "Davey", as he is affectionately known, who founded the Tuesday Birders about the year 1953, and who continued as their leader until the age of 92. Since retiring, "Davey", now 95, has continued to go birding and not just on Tuesdays! Every day shortly before noon you will find him with the picnic basket packed, ready to go off for a couple of hours birding with his good wife, Eleanore!

#### NOTICES

##### National Geographic Field Guides

Copies of "National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America" are available at a cost of \$16.00. Phone Roy Prior, 383-2347 or Lyndis Davis, 721-1077.

##### Billets Needed September 29, 30

Billets are needed for members of Up-Island Clubs who will be attending a regional meeting in the afternoon and want to stay over to go birding on Sunday morning. PLEASE, if you can provide a bed, call Lyndis Davis, 721-1077 or Mary Richmond, 385-0504.

##### Publication Available

Drs. Juan R. Guzman and M. Timothy Myres have recently published an article in the Canadian Journal of Zoology (Volume 61, pages 2064 to 2077) entitled "The occurrence of shearwaters (*Puffinus* spp.) off the west coast of Canada". This article, based largely on field studies by Dr. Guzman between 1975 and 1978, reviews the abundance, distribution, and migration patterns of the 6 species of shearwaters found off the B.C. coast. It will be a valuable reference for anyone interested

in offshore birding along the B.C. coast. Dr. Myres has kindly offered to send a copy of this article to any VNHS member who would like one. If you are interested, you may request a copy by writing Dr. Myres at the following address:

Dr. M.T. Myres, Department of Biology, University of Calgary,  
Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4

#### Nature Canada Bookshop Catalogues

You can get onto their mailing list to receive these catalogues each time they are published by sending your name to the CNF, #203, 75 Albert St., Ottawa, K1P 6G1 OR VNHS will have catalogues available at monthly meetings. You are supporting a 'worthy cause' if you use CNF Christmas cards and calendars, etc. this year.

#### New Publication from FBCN

"From Sidewalk to Seashore". A nature guide for children. It is mainly targeted to the lower mainland but there is plenty of good information in it. \$6.50. Call a member of the executive if you want a copy.

#### New Victoria Area Bird Check Lists

25¢ each, may be obtained from any Director (\$20.00 for 100). New B.C. Bird Check Lists are also out now - available at the Provincial Museum.

#### Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association

On October 18, 1984, the Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Association will hold their General Meeting at 8 p.m. at the Newcombe Auditorium. Bob Lang will show slides on "Wild Flowers of Greece".

### 1984 BIRD OBSERVATIONS

#### JUNE

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
1	Common Barn-Owl	1	4233 Blenkinsop Rd.	Nancy Lovett
4	Red-breasted Sapsucker	2	Butler Main Logging Road	Keith Taylor
6	Gray Jay	2	" "	" "
3	Ruffed Grouse	2	" "	" "
1	Red-eyed Vireo	4	Blenkinsop Lake	Ron Satterfield
1	Mourning Dove	4	John Dean Park	Bruce Whittington

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
9	Black Swifts	6	Mount Douglas	Keith Taylor
1	Western Kingbird	8	Mount Tolmie	" "
1	Barred Owl	10	5890 W. Saanich Rd.	H.A. Ford
1	Wilson's Phalarope	11	Hastings Flats	Tim Zurowski
1	Northern Pygmy-Owl	17	Lone Tree Hill	Harold Hosford
1	Whimbrel	23	Discovery Island	Mike Shepard
1	Ring-billed Gull	30	Esquimalt Lagoon	Vic & Peggy Goodwill

#### JULY

1	Northern Mockingbird	1	Beacon Hill Park	G.C. Seidel & F. Bender
1	Dunlin	3	Clover Point	Ron Satterfield
2	Semipalmated Sandpiper	5	Cadboro Bay	Keith Taylor
1	Marbled Godwit	7	Chatham Islands	Charles Harper
4	"Black" Brant	7	Chain Islets	" "
1	Baird's Sandpiper	12	Cadboro Bay	Ron Satterfield
2	Ancient Murrelet	15	Clover Point	Ron Satterfield
50	Common Nighthawks	15	Belmont Park	O. Carruthers
9	Tufted Puffins	21	Pedder Bay/ Race Rocks	Fritz Karger et al
5	Wandering Tattler	21	Race Rocks	" "
3	Red-necked Phalarope	23	Trial Islands	Fred Stoba
4	Caspian Tern	23	" "	" "
5	Purple Martin	25	Esquimalt Lagoon	Wayne Neily
180	Brandt's Cormorant	28	Chain Islet	M. Shepard
1	Green-backed Heron	29	near Victoria Airport	Barbara Begg

#### PROGRAMME - SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 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. 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 always be avoided.

On V.N.H.S. field trips, participants usually pool vehicles to cut down on parking problems and to reduce costs. A considerable fuel bill can be run up on a trip - vehicles usually consume 5-10¢/km. The Board suggests that participants share the fuel costs with the driver.

- SAT. SEPT. 8 Birding trip - Cordova Spit. Leader: Bruce Whittington. Meet Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m.
- TUE. SEPT. 11 General Meeting, 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium, B.C. Provincial Museum.  
Programme: "Highlights of some of B.C.'s Ecological Reserves" by John Pinder-Moss of Lands Disposition and Reserves Section, Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing.
- SAT. SEPT. 15 Tour of Pacific Forest Products Forestry Centre - "Tree improvement, silviculture research and the tree nursery." Meet Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m. or Forestry Centre, 8067 East Saanich Road, at 9:30 a.m. Leader: Mary Lou Florian
- SAT. SEPT. 22 Birding at Race Rocks. Leader: Fritz Karger, 478-5443. Weather permitting, using boat rentals from Pedder Bay Marina. Meet at Pedder Bay Marina at 9:00 a.m.
- WED. SEPT. 26 7:30 p.m. Birders' Night. Cafeteria of Arbutus Junior Secondary School, 2306 Edgelow St. (Note change of location. Edgelow Street is off Gordon Head, just north of MacKenzie.)
- SUN. SEPT. 30 Birding field trip. Meet Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m. Leader and destination to be announced on the day of the trip.
- SAT. OCT. 6 No leader birding trip on M.V. Coho. Departure time: 9:30 a.m. from Black Ball Ferry Terminal. Leaves Port Angeles at 2:00 p.m. for return journey. N.B. About 2 hours wait in Port Angeles.
- TUE. OCT. 9 General Meeting, 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium, B.C. Provincial Museum.  
Programme: "Unique wildlife in British Columbia" by Wayne Campbell, Associate Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, B.C. Provincial Museum.
- SAT. OCT. 13 Salmon Spawning Field Trip. Joint trip with Juniors. Leader: Dr. Alex Peden, Curator of Aquatic Zoology, B.C. Provincial Museum. Details to be announced on Rare Bird Alert, Oct. 9-12.

SUN. OCT. 14

No leader birding field trip on the B.C. Ferry around the Gulf Islands. Details and time to be announced.

SAT. OCT. 20

Fossil Hunting - Southern Vancouver Island. Leader: Rick Kool, Education Officer, B.C. Provincial Museum. Details on Rare Bird Alert, Oct. 15-19.

SAT. OCT. 20,  
8 p.m. and  
SUN. OCT. 21,  
2 p.m.

Wildlife film series. Kent Durden showing Animal Antics. Please note: Sunday afternoon showing replaces a Friday evening showing.

SUN. OCT. 21

Birding at Cowichan Bay. Leader: Ron Satterfield. Meet Mayfair Lanes at 8:30 a.m. or Robert Service Memorial, Cowichan Bay, 9:30 a.m.

WED. OCT. 24

7:30 p.m. Birders' night. Cafeteria of Arbutus Junior Secondary School, Edgelow St.

SAT. OCT. 27

Mushroom Identification. Goldstream Park with Dr. Al Funk, Research Scientist in Mycology, Pacific Forest Research Centre. Meet Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m. or Goldstream Park picnic parking area at 9:30 a.m.

#### JUNIOR PROGRAMME

*Dr. Alex Peden, Curator of Aquatic Zoology at the B.C. Provincial Museum has offered to be the new leader for the 1984-85 Junior Programme.*

SAT. SEPT. 8

9:30 a.m. First meeting will be held at Francis King Park - Foresters' Cabin. Details of programme will be outlined at the meeting.

SAT. OCT. 13

Salmon Spawning Field Trip. Joint trip with Seniors to observe salmon spawning. Leader: Dr. Alex Peden. Details to be announced on Rare Bird Alert, Oct. 9-12.