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COVER: COHO SALMON FRY

Photo by Mark Nyhof

VICTORIA AND SOOKE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1984

Despite the overcast skies and cool weather, a record 124 observers recorded 135 species December 15th on the 26th Annual Victoria Christmas Bird Count. This was our third highest count total, only exceeded by the 139 species recorded in 1977 and 1983. In addition, the 88,658 individuals recorded was an alltime high.

Alltime highs were attained by 31 species and the American Coot was our only alltime low. Among the significant highs (with previous highs in parentheses) were Great Blue Heron 152 (93); Gadwall 62 (36); Eurasian Wigeon 21 (15); Peregrine Falcon 7 (5); Virginia Rail 14 (10); Anna's Hummingbird 24 (23); Marsh Wren 52 (35); and Northern Shrike 10 (7). Among the notable species tallied were Cattle Egret, Whimbrel, Cassin's Auklet, Townsend's Solitaire and Orange-crowned Warbler. No new species were added to our count this year and our alltime species total remains at 198.

The post-count gathering was held at St. Luke's Church Hall and was a great success, thanks to Barbara Irwin and her band of helpers.

The 2nd Annual Sooke Christmas Count on December 16th was a cold and windy affair. Despite a drop in participants we recorded 107 species which was one more species than we recorded in our initial year. Notable species recorded were Golden Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Northern Saw-whet Owl and Townsend's Warbler.

Victoria Count Areas

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Butchart Gardens-Northern Highlands | 13. University-Cadboro Bay |
| 2. Central Highlands | 14. Ten Mile Point-Arbutus Rd. |
| 3. Goldstream-Finlayson Arm | 15. Gordon Head-Mt. Douglas |
| 4. Thetis Lake-Hastings Flats | 16. Swan Lake-Cedar Hill |
| 5. Langford Lake | 17. Blenkinsop Lake-Panama Flats |
| 6. Albert Head-Triangle Mountain | 18. Elk Lake-Cordova Bay |
| 7. Esquimalt Lagoon-Mill Hill | 19. Prospect Lake-Quick's Bottom |
| 8. Esquimalt Harbour | 20. Martindale-Bear Hill |
| 9. Portage Inlet-The Gorge | 21. Zero Rock |
| 10. Victoria Harbour | 22. Chain Islets |
| 11. Beacon Hill Park-Ross Bay | 23. Juan de Fuca |
| 12. Oak Bay | |

	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6
Red-throated Loon						3
Arctic Loon	1					
Common Loon	2					5
Pied-billed Grebe				4	13	1
Horned Grebe	10					7
Red-necked Grebe	5					2
Eared Grebe						
Western Grebe	1					
D-cr. Cormorant	22	1	17		37	6
Brandt's Cormorant						
Pelagic Cormorant	2					5
Great Blue Heron	1		4		4	5
Cattle Egret						
Trumpeter Swan	22		4			
Mute Swan			6		2	4
Snow Goose						
Canada Goose	108			32		
C (Cackling) Goose	1					
Green-winged Teal			5	60	42	
"Eur" Gr-wing Teal						
Am GW X Eur GWTE						
Mall X Am. BLDU						
Mallard	270	9	40	249	48	38
Northern Pintail				119	7	
Northern Shoveler	15			3	7	
Gadwall					2	
Eurasian Wigeon	2			1		
American Wigeon	540		25	96	162	317
EUWI X AMWI						
Canvasback						
Ring-necked Duck	6			169	7	1
Greater Scaup						
Lesser Scaup	3				4	
scaup sp.	3					
Harlequin Duck						6
Oldsquaw						9
Black Scoter						
Surf Scoter						40
White-wing. Scoter						3
Common Goldeneye	3		20	1		4
Barrow's Goldeneye	24		55			
goldeneye sp.	15					
Bufflehead	16		71	7	9	55
Hooded Merganser	7		12	14	6	29
Common Merganser	9		105	31	35	1
Red-br. Merganser	6					22
Ruddy Duck						
Bald Eagle		2	8		2	2
Northern Harrier						
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1					1
Cooper's Hawk					2	
Accipiter sp.						1
Red-tailed Hawk	1	1	2	1	3	3

	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	Area 10	Area 11	Area 12	Area 13	Area 14
	17	8				1		1
	9			5	12	8		
	10	15		7	6	15	3	9
	8	1	5	5				
	20	44		42	49	35	15	27
	4	64		61	10	25		10
		3				1		
	575	10		4	12	12	2	3
	14	50	104	57	8	7	6	19
		7		3	3	1		3
	7	13	9	42	67	75	9	88
	15	23	5	24		17	6	8
	4	1	7	1	1			
	1		15					
			3					
	27	1	101	21	379	40	93	43
			1		5	1	1	
	30	4	248	33	231	78	115	29
	53		2					
	1							
		3	7		10		1	
	47	1	33		7			
						12		4
	2	40		29	73	22	2	62
	1	28		18	19	51	25	76
					8			
	86	45	20	36	30	36	8	54
	171	3	5	12	5	55	2	6
	71	55	6	14	8	32	11	14
	225	81	113	45	58	171	37	69
	4	40	34	55	1	14	105	21
	2	9		4	18			
	72	50	10	17	8	25	19	40
			7					
	3	1		2		2	3	4
				1	1		1	1
	2	2			1	2	1	
	2	3	1					1

	Area 15	Area 16	Area 17	Area 18	Area 19	Area 20	A 21-23
Red-throated Loon				5		9	
Arctic Loon		2		6		2	7
Common Loon	7			10		7	2
Pied-billed Grebe			5	2		14	5
Horned Grebe	44			93		20	49
Red-necked Grebe	1					7	16
Eared Grebe	2			5			
Western Grebe				106		4	
Double-crested Cormorant	1	9	1	22	8	1	22
Brandt's Cormorant	2			2			120
Pelagic Cormorant	10			3		2	95
Great Blue Heron		9	4		3	5	.19
Cattle Egret	1		1				
Trumpeter Swan					2		
Mute Swan			5		2		
Snow Goose			1				
Canada Goose			194	1	82	44	
"Cackling" Goose							
Green-winged Teal	6	17	7		71	84	4
"Eur." Green-winged Teal		1					
"Am" X "Eur" G-w. Teal		1					
Mallard X Am. Black Duck		1					
Mallard	24	331	889	289	408	1487	
Northern Pintail		3	203	1	2	105	
Northern Shoveler		16			2	8	
Gadwall				14	46		
Eurasian Wigeon		1	7			2	
American Wigeon		1110	599	62	220	3130	2
Canvasback				6	7	4	
Ring-necked Duck		2	10	37	170	5	
Greater Scaup	33			12			
Lesser Scaup		2	1	5	2	20	
scaup sp.						2	
Harlequin Duck	10					6	73
Oldsquaw	10			66		35	12
Black Scoter							
Surf Scoter	11			47		67	27
White-winged Scoter	6			6		1	35
Common Goldeneye	7			9	5	9	36
Barrow's Goldeneye	2						
goldeneye sp.							
Bufflehead	16	16	6	28	11	43	206
Hooded Merganser		15	4	45	17	2	38
Common Merganser			2	136	11	3	
Ruddy Duck	9			10		13	17
Bald Eagle (ad)		6			12		
Northern Harrier		1	1	4	7	4	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk						1	
Cooper's Hawk	1	1	2	1	1		
Accipiter sp.		2	2	1	3	2	
Red-tailed Hawk	2	1	3	3	10	5	1

	TOTAL
Red-throated Loon	44
Arctic Loon	52
Common Loon	98 Second Highest
Pied-billed Grebe	63
Horned Grebe	455
Red-necked Grebe	205
Eared Grebe	11
Western Grebe	729
Double-crested Cormorant	414
Brandt's Cormorant	141
Pelagic Cormorant	427
Great Blue Heron	152 All Time High
Cattle Egret	2 Second Record
Trumpeter Swan	28
Mute Swan	33
Snow Goose	1
Canada Goose	477
"Cackling" Goose	1
Green-winged Teal	299
"Eur." Green-winged Teal	1
"Am" X "Eur" G-w. Teal	1
Mallard X Am. Black Duck	1
Mallard	4787
Northern Pintail	440
Northern Shoveler	51 Second Lowest
Gadwall	62 All Time High
Eurasian Wigeon	21 All Time High
American Wigeon	7031
Eurasian X American Wigeon	1
Canvasback	72
Ring-necked Duck	408 All Time High
Greater Scaup	66
Lesser Scaup	125
scaup sp.	21
Harlequin Duck	325 Second Highest
Oldsquaw	350
Black Scoter	8
Surf Scoter	507
White-winged Scoter	310
Common Goldeneye	305
Barrow's Goldeneye	81 Second Highest
goldeneye sp.	15
Bufflehead	1283
Hooded Merganser	463 Second Highest
Common Merganser	366
Red-breasted Merganser	318
Ruddy Duck	25
Bald Eagle (ad)	48 All Time High
Northern Harrier	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12
Cooper's Hawk	20 All Time High
Accipiter sp.	1
Red-tailed Hawk	43 All Time High

	Area 15	Area 16	Area 17	Area 18	Area 19	Area 20	A 21-23
American Kestrel			1				
Merlin		1		2			
Peregrine Falcon		1	2			1	
Ruffed Grouse							
Ring-necked Pheasant	1		1	2	2	13	
California Quail	12		13	40	11	21	
Virginia Rail				5	7		
American Coot	22	2	1		10		
Black-b. Plover		1				50	12
Killdeer	1	2			3	2	
Am. Black Oysterc.							1
Greater Yellowlegs	5				12	13	
Spotted Sandpiper							1
Whimbrel							16
Black Turnstone							7
Surf Scoter							
Sanderling							3
Rock Sandpiper							28
Dunlin						121	3
Common Snipe	8	6			5	3	
Bonaparte's Gull							58
Mew Gull	7	43	129	4	9	120	712
Herring Gull							
Thayer's Gull	1		12	1	16		65
Western Gull						8	1
Glaucous-winged Gull	141	79	153	960	575	489	340
Glaucous Gull		96		59	4431		
gull sp.						2	124
Common Murre	7					1	35
Pigeon Guillemot	1			3			209
Marbled Murrelet	3						4
Ancient Murrelet							2
Cassin's Auklet							
Rhinoceros Auklet							
Rock Dove	2	36	37	38	47	109	
Band-tailed Pigeon				15			
Common Barn-Owl			4	4	2		
W. Screech-Owl					1	1	
Great Horned Owl							3
Snowy Owl							

	TOTAL	
American Kestrel	2	
Merlin	6	All Time High
Peregrine Falcon	7	All Time High
Ruffed Grouse	1	
Ring-necked Pheasant	37	
California Quail	156	
Virginia Rail	14	All Time High
American Coot	149	All Time Low
Black-bellied Plover	73	
Killdeer	64	
Am. Black Oystercatcher	27	
Greater Yellowlegs	40	
Spotted Sandpiper	1	
Whimbrel	2	
Black Turnstone	188	
Surf Scoter	17	
Sanderling	45	Second Highest
Rock Sandpiper	6	
Dunlin	219	
Common Snipe	33	
Bonaparte's Gull	60	
Mew Gull	4318	
Herring Gull	24	
Herring X Glaucous Gull	1	
Thayer's Gull	1000	All Time High
Western Gull	7	All Time High
West. X Glaucous-wing. Gull	9	
Glaucous-winged Gull	12162	
Glaucous Gull	1	
gull sp.	6588	
Common Murre	147	
Pigeon Guillemot	80	
Marbled Murrelet	232	Highest since 1965
Ancient Murrelet	11	
Cassin's Auklet	2	
Rhinoceros Auklet	2	
Rock Dove	680	
Band-tailed Pigeon	63	
Common Barn-Owl	1	
Western Screech-Owl	10	
Great Horned Owl	3	
Snowy Owl	3	

	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6
Anna's Hummingbird	2				9	1
Belted Kingfisher	1	1	3	1		3
Downy Woodpecker	1	1	2	2	11	2
Hairy Woodpecker		1	1		7	
Northern Flicker	2	6	1	9	8	15
Pileated Woodp.	1		3	1	1	2
Eurasian Skylark	5					
Steller's Jay	6	7	2	9	35	16
Northwestern Crow	415	14	30	81	115	43
Common Raven	55	13	17	19	13	
Ch.-b. Chickadee	19	16	40	75	77	53
Bushtit	25		8		24	
Red-br. Nuthatch		1	3	4	10	5
Brown Creeper	2		11	2	3	1
Bewick's Wren		9	4	2	24	3
Winter Wren	3	17	39	30	12	8
Marsh Wren	1				8	
American Dipper			4			
Golden-cr. Kinglet	6	25	172	126	74	27
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	1	5	5	2	17	3
Townsend's Solit.						
Hermit Thrush			1			
American Robin	15	55	90	84	453	540
Varied Thrush	23	7	25	5	39	14
Water Pipit						
Cedar Waxwing						
Northern Shrike						1
European Starling	362	10	10	1816	190	764
Hutton's Vireo						1
Orange-cr. Warbler						
Yellow-r. Warbler						
Ruf-sided Towhee	2	11	5	16	34	10
Savannah Sparrow						
Fox Sparrow	4	18	5	20	43	9
Song Sparrow	3	41	40	4	79	14
Lincoln's Sparrow						1
White-thr. Sparrow						1
Golden-cr. Sparrow	10	4	4	10	38	11
White-cr. Sparrow	1			6	7	
Dark-eyed Junco	40	36	20	38	270	180
D-e (S-c) Junco						
Red-w. Blackbird				54	165	
Western Meadowlark						
Brewer's Blackbird					20	
blackbird sp.						
Brown-headed Cowb.				20		
Purple Finch	8	20	24	9	22	8
House Finch	6			21	62	3
Red Crossbill					3	8
Pine Siskin	2	2	41		87	176
American Goldfinch						
Evening Grosbeak			32			
House Sparrow	16	2		19	30	
	8425	46	3840	3472	2620	3129

	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	Area 10	Area 11	Area 12	Area 13	Area 14
Anna's Hummingbird	1						8	3
Belted Kingfisher	2	6	2	4		3	3	1
Downy Woodpecker	1	2		1	3	4	5	5
Hairy Woodpecker								
Northern Flicker	9	52	6	2	3	6	12	24
Pileated Woodpecker	1						2	
Eurasian Skylark								
Steller's Jay	3	11	2		3	3	9	11
Northwestern Crow	18	290	121	72	92	65	76	672
Common Raven	4	7	4	1			7	2
Ch.-b. Chickadee	33	63	33	2	45	12	78	41
Bushtit		98	20	43	32	60	67	110
Red-br. Nuthatch		2			6	3	7	5
Brown Creeper	2	5			3	1	3	4
Bewick's Wren	6	2	6	4	9	9	4	17
Winter Wren	2	7	15		10	7	3	9
Marsh Wren		1						
American Dipper								
Golden-cr. Kinglet	1	46	25	2	55	15	6	12
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	1	3	3	4	8	2	6	4
Townsend's Solit.								
Hermit Thrush					1			
American Robin	152	560	94	16	76	34	118	262
Varied Thrush	1	26		1	1		2	17
Water Pipit								
Cedar Waxwing	6							1
Northern Shrike				1				
European Starling	49	470	73	156	1160	41	310	639
Hutton's Vireo								
Orange-cr. Warbler				1				
Yellow-r. Warbler								
Ruf-sided Towhee	5	14	12	2	9	16	24	11
Savannah Sparrow	1							
Fox Sparrow	4	43	2	1	8	9	13	16
Song Sparrow	6	34	22	26	18	15	21	7
Lincoln's Sparrow			1					
White-thr. Sparrow								
Golden-cr. Sparrow	6	1	7	26		12	27	19
White-cr. Sparrow							4	3
Dark-eyed Junco	46	394	67	20	76	37	113	51
D-e (S-c) Junco								
Red-w. Blackbird		41		2				
Western Meadowlark	1					1		
Brewer's Blackbird				6				
blackbird sp.								
Brown-headed Cowb.								
Purple Finch	1	9	4	1	2	3	7	7
House Finch		16	27	5	11	25	26	10
Red Crossbill					10			
Pine Siskin	112	105	69	22	24	30	42	57
American Goldfinch								
Evening Grosbeak						20		
House Sparrow	24	135	44	27	91	16	65	20
	2406	4456	1729	1636	4547	1963	1714	3740

	Area 15	Area 16	Area 17	Area 18	Area 19	Area 20	A 21-23
					1		
				5	7		1
5	5	3		1	5		
2							
4	11	8	12	29	11	4	
2			2	3			
						24	
4	1	3	17	34	18		
53	785	411	721	614	142	86	
6	6	7	11	26	11	1	
85	26	40	156	199	26	12	
49	74	21	63	8	1		
4	1	2		16		4	
5	2	2		7	1	1	
8	15	4	15	8	3		
11	4	1	20	17	6		
3	4	2	1	28	4		
36	7	25	242	297	19	2	
2	7	3	22	98	4		
				1			
				2			
88	89	32	368	2542	129	9	
5		1	22	33		1	
					71	1	
				3	1		
		1		2	4		
454	1695	72	106	8129	1567	70	
			1		1		
1							
12	19	6	54	33	19		
19	13	3	25	16	8		
16	54	12	32	41	33	20	
				2			
11	4	14	4	49	28	1	
2		1		2	11		
53	63	51	291	446	132	37	
1							
5	46		7		60		
15	1	6				1	
150		6				12	
						80	
						6	
6		2	9	39		6	
28	27	47	50	28	35	4	
4			8			30	
50			127	17	72		
3			1				
				6			
23	53	35	32	28	3		
1607	4859	3125	4615	19055	8655	2695	

	TOTAL
Anna's Hummingbird	24 All Time High
Belted Kingfisher	31
Downy Woodpecker	66 Second Highest
Hairy Woodpecker	19 All Time High
Northern Flicker	234 Highest Since 1967
Pileated Woodpecker	18 Second Highest
Eurasian Skylark	29
Steller's Jay	194 Highest Since 1967
Northwestern Crow	4916
Common Raven	210 All Time High
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	1131 All Time High
Bushtit	703 All Time High
Red-breasted Nuthatch	73
Brown Creeper	63 All Time High
Bewick's Wren	152 Second Highest
Winter Wren	221 Second Highest
Marsh Wren	52 All Time High
American Dipper	4
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1220 All Time High
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	200 All Time High
Townsend's Solitaire	1
Hermit Thrush	4
American Robin	5808
Varied Thrush	233
Water Pipit	73 All Time High
Cedar Waxwing	11
Northern Shrike	10 All Time High
European Starling	18183 All Time High
Hutton's Vireo	3
Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Rufous-sided Towhee	314 Second Highest
Savannah Sparrow	1
Fox Sparrow	279 All Time High
Song Sparrow	540 All Time High
Lincoln's Sparrow	3
White-throated Sparrow	3 All Time High
Golden-crowned Sparrow	286 All Time High
White-crowned Sparrow	38 Second Highest
Dark-eyed Junco	2463 Second Highest
"Slate-colored" Junco	1
Red-winged Blackbird	380 Second Highest
Western Meadowlark	26
Brewer's Blackbird	194 Lowest Since 1964
blackbird sp.	80
Brown-headed Cowbird	27 All Time High
Purple Finch	187 All Time High
House Finch	422
Red Crossbill	74
Pine Siskin	1035
American Goldfinch	24
Evening Grosbeak	38
House Sparrow	663 All Time High
	88658 All Time High

SOOKE BIRD COUNT

Red-throated Loon	49	Merlin	7
Arctic Loon	30	Peregrine Falcon	1
Common Loon	34	California Quail	43
Pied-billed Grebe	3	Virginia Rail	3
Horned Grebe	68	American Coot	4
Red-necked Grebe	40	Black-b. Plover	5
Western Grebe	14	Killdeer	54
D-cr. Cormorant	122	Am. Black Oystercatcher	21
Brandt's Cormorant	1219	Spotted Sandpiper	2
Pelagic Cormorant	83	Black Turnstone	79
Cormorant Sp.	47	Surfbird	2
Great Blue Heron	9	Dunlin	40
Mute Swan	4	Long-billed Dowitcher	1
Green-winged Teal	69	Mew Gull	261
Mallard	141	Herring Gull	1
Northern Pintail	7	Thayer's Gull	10
Northern Shoveller	1	Western Gull	2
Gadwall	20	H. x G-w. Gull	1
Eurasian Wigeon	4	W. x G-w. Gull	1
American Wigeon	1231	Glaucous-w. Gull	1341
Canvasback	6	Glaucous Gull	1
Ring-necked Duck	4	Gull Sp.	162
Greater Scaup	109	Common Murre	1935
Lesser Scaup	7	Pigeon Guillemot	4
Harlequin Duck	7	Marbled Murrelet	30
Oldsquaw	11	Ancient Murrelet	2
Black Scoter	5	Rhinoceros Auklet	4
Surf Scoter	402	Rock Dove	19
White-winged Scoter	176	Great Horned Owl	2
Common Goldeneye	332	N. Saw-whet Owl	1
Barrow's Goldeneye	48	Anna's Hummingbird	2
Bufflehead	698	Belted Kingfisher	19
Hooded Merganser	42	Downy Woodpecker	6
Common Merganser	25	Hairy Woodpecker	1
Red-br. Merganser	58	Northern Flicker	74
Bald Eagle (ad)	8	Pileated Woodpecker	4
Bald Eagle (imm)	3	Steller's Jay	44
Golden Eagle	1	Northwestern Crow	787
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	Common Raven	52
Cooper's Hawk	4	Ch-b. Chickadee	279
Northern Goshawk	1	Bushtit	21
Red-tailed Hawk	6	Red-br. Nuthatch	31
American Kestrel	1	Brown Creeper	23

Bewick's Wren	13	Fox Sparrow	85
Winter Wren	119	Song Sparrow	173
Marsh Wren	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
American Dipper	2	Golden-cr. Sparrow	8
Golden-cr. Kinglet	674	White-cr. Sparrow	6
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	38	Dark-eyed Junco	306
Hermit Thrush	2	Red-w. Blackbird	76
American Robin	165	Brewer's Blackbird	97
Varied Thrush	46	House Finch	9
European Starling	367	Red Crossbill	171
Hutton's Vireo	3	Pine Siskin	1114
Townsend's Warbler	1	Evening Grosbeak	12
Ruf.-sided Towhee	61	House Sparrow	10
TOTAL SPECIES	107	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	14095

NATURALISTS AS SCIENTISTS

by Yorke Edwards

Naturalists are scientists. There is no getting away from this fact after a whole week of trying to find its flaws. I have looked at it from all angles and as the thought stood there, firm and impregnable as Gibraltar, I became more and more surprised. I have been a naturalist for most of my life, since before 1937 in fact, and through all that time I called myself a naturalist, while through part of that time I also called myself a scientist. Not once in those years did it occur to me that a naturalist is already a scientist from the moment that an ordinary interest in the natural world becomes an extraordinary one.

There was another surprise as I realized this, which was that I had been brainwashed into thinking otherwise. Somehow in the 1900's that word "scientist" became used only for those university-trained research scientists using long words and symbolic equipment like microscopes as they made new discoveries and wrote about them in the very specialized journals most of us find unreadable. The 1800's, in contrast, had a clear understanding that naturalists were among the most acceptable of scientists. That word "naturalist", then as now, simply described someone especially well informed about the natural world (which includes everything but us humans and our works, it seems - a dangerous concept because I feel quite natural and I suspect that you do too, but this is a side issue for another time). There is still no doubt in these 1900's that an especially intensive involvement with facts concerning the natural world defines a scientist, so what else can we call naturalists but scientists?

The "professional" scientists, the ones that the news media love to show wearing white coats as they look into microscopes that appear to have been fashion-designed by General Motors, will quite properly continue to call themselves scientists. They cannot expect to have exclusive use of the word, however. We naturalists are in that word with them, and some of us may be just as sophisticated, or knowledgeable, or have just as good a record of discovery as those unwilling to join us in the word "naturalist". Most of us will not be, however, so will confine our scientific efforts to fairly effortless hobbies as we enjoy ourselves by knowing more than most people about birds, or beetles, or diatoms, or trees - an endless list of possible interests and specializations.

If you lined up all of us natural history scientists (or to put it another way, all of us involved in the natural sciences) and put everyone in order from the least involved to the most, you would make what we scientists call a "continuum", for there would be in this line-up a gradient of capability from one end of the line to the other, an orderly and continuous change in amount of involvement. Most people with natural science as a hobby would be toward one end of the line, those with a handful of university degrees in the natural sciences and still working professionally in those sciences would be toward the other end. There would be exceptions throughout, for there would be some university degrees among the hobbyists, and for some parts of the sciences there would be hobbyists in some abundance at the end holding most of the professionals from the ivory towers of learning. It might be said that the "amateurs" are at one end and the "professionals" at the other, but this is not so. In fact, I am not sure what the words "amateur" and "professional" really mean. No need to pursue the matter here, however, because no matter what old-fashioned or modern meanings we give to these words, we get a mix through the continuum, with some clustering of naturalists at one end and of those not using the word at the other.

When my small study of naturalists as scientists arrived at this point, an interesting question raised its difficult head: is one end of the continuum more important than the other? There is no answer to such questions that will satisfy everyone, for that word "important" is a tricky one. Everyone has his own value scale for the importance of things. The news media have settled on the important end as the one with white coats, and I for one agree that the scientists there are bright, hard working, thoroughly involved people enjoying exciting and satisfying lives as they probe successfully into the unknown. To succeed, they must work from a base of up-to-the-minute, world-wide information about what is known about their fields of special interest. These are the research scientists, advancing human knowledge and enlarging human capability. They and their work are clearly important, and many people would say they are supremely so.

People near the middle of the continuum are different. Here are found most scientists who are less specialized in discovery itself but instead have the broadest store of knowledge. These are the good teachers and lecturers in science; the many hobbyists who have wide experience both from the literature (which is the recorded experiences of others) and from their own observations; and the more broadly based researchers who search as specialists for new knowledge on a part-time basis.

At the other end of the line are those with more casual interests in natural science. They are nonetheless scientists. Nowhere is it written by divine hand that a person must have an interest that exceeds a certain level of intensity in order to qualify for the term. Here is the housewife who knows by correct name all the birds at the feeder near the window; the family that can hardly wait to get back to "the cottage" at "the lake" with its loons and deer and bass at the river mouth; and here is the group dedicated to wildflowers and to defending a plot of wild land so it will always have wildflowers. These people have all the enthusiasm, and knowledge, and curiosity, and a commitment to learning, as they discover what to them at least is new about the world. For these reasons, they are as much scientists as the white-coated people who have quite the same attributes, although their interests may differ in detail and their commitment in degree. One clear difference is that the housewife, the cottage owners, the wildflower lovers, and others like them in our society number in many millions. Because they are so numerous they are not news, so the name "scientist" is popularly attached only to those at the sparsely populated end of the continuum. Unfortunately, the modern idea of news leans strongly toward the different, the unusual, in a sense therefore toward the extraordinary. This is unfortunate, for it is important to reveal the true nature of the ordinary too, which most of us are usually unaware of, and this seems to be true for the same reason that if fish could evolve an awareness of themselves, and of their surroundings, among their last discoveries would be water.

There is something else about the people in the continuum that is worth noting. At different times of the day, week, or year some individuals could qualify for quite different locations in the line. Most people can fill quite different roles in the same general field of interest, and do so to satisfy different needs. The narrowly focused, deep-digging research scientist may excel not only in the laboratory, but also in the lecture hall while speaking broadly and brilliantly to largely uninformed students; and again on Saturdays he might join local birders in an amble across some wild countryside, in this role just enjoying anew what he has seen before, sometimes also discovering for himself what has been known by others for centuries, but discovering new things, too, such as the year's first flowers on an Indian plum.

So, I have just made the personal discovery that should have been obvious long ago, that because I am a naturalist I am a scientist. This should lead to other matters of interest, but time will tell.

Strange, is it not, that like the fish unaware of water, I have been unaware of my immersion in science every time I admired a plant, or an animal, or a mountain, which through the years has been very, very often.

WESTERN BLUEBIRDS AT ROCKY POINT

by Charlie Trotter

Last Spring, when we sent out over 100 plans to people interested in building nesting boxes for Bluebirds, we expected to receive many reports of bird sightings and nestings. We were disappointed.

In October, Harold and Phyllis Pollock were out in the Sooke District and came up with the bright idea of advertising in the local newspaper (The Sooke Mirror) asking for reports of Bluebird sightings. While in the newspaper office, Harold and Phyllis met a reporter, Anne Williams, who became so interested in our project that she decided to write it up for publication. Harold, holding a nesting box, was photographed, and the account and picture were printed in the issue of October 17. Several phone calls resulted -- some reported Steller's Jays but a few were the real thing.

The one of most interest was from Mr. Percy Brown of Becher Bay. He had a friend, Mrs. Ada Barber, who worked at the Arsenal at Rocky Point and who daily saw as many as 15 bluebirds around the buildings there. Mr. Brown offered to take us to Mrs. Barber for a look at her bluebirds. Naturally we were glad to accept. We found Mrs. Barber most knowledgeable about bluebirds, showing us a small flock. She made a claim which interested us very much -- that the birds stay there all winter. Harold and I put up 40 nesting boxes in the area and also a feed-in station which would admit bluebirds but not starlings. Mrs. Barber agreed to keep the feeder stocked with raisins and currants. She had no customers until the snow fell at the end of December, when the birds found the food. She reports now (Jan. 15) 5 or 6 bluebirds at the feeder, daily.

Their wintering at Rocky Point would account for the bluebirds' very early arrival (Feb. 11 in '83 and Feb. 12 in '84) at our nesting boxes at the Whitney-Griffiths farm and on Pears Road. Our hope now is that we can encourage nesting at Rocky Point, then, when the birds are more numerous, that they will overflow into other areas.

The Rocky Point Arsenal of course has restricted access but the manager has given us special permission to enter except when military exercises are in progress. It is unfortunate that we cannot take our general membership to see the bluebirds; it is such an ideal location. The grass is kept mowed

short by a few hundred sheep run there by a local farmer. Short grass is excellent for bluebirds who like to sit on a fence or low tree-branch, spot an insect on the ground, drop down to capture it, then return to the perch to eat it. At Rocky Point, one source of food has been blowflies which swarm around the buildings and attract the birds.

With bluebird nesting season upon us again, we would like to appeal to our membership to report sightings to us -- phone Harold at 386-4449 or myself at 477-4365. We have available the 1985 plan for the ideal bluebird nesting box and would be pleased to supply you with one, or if you can't do the carpentry, Harold might be persuaded to provide you with one of the 300 which he has made.

Because Wildlife Canada has granted me a permit for banding birds, we expect to be able to expand our records of bluebirds. Anyway, I hope we can make 1985 a banner year for one of our most beautiful species.

WESTERN BLUEBIRDS NEAR LAYRITZ PARK

by Hank Vander Pol

During the spring and summer of 1984, I watched what in my opinion must have been one of the hardest working female bluebirds in all of B.C. From the middle of April until almost the end of August, this bluebird and her mate built 3 nests and raised 2 broods of 3 young each.

During the middle of April, I observed a pair of Western Bluebirds carry nesting material into a hole in a dead fir tree. This tree, about 8" in diameter, was one of a small cluster of Douglas fir situated on the edge of a large grassy area. This grassy area can be seen when looking south from Glendale Lodge, near Layritz Park, in Saanich.

When I spoke to Harold Pollock at the April birders' night about my discovery, he suggested that some nest boxes be placed around the area in order to attract more bluebirds. So, armed with nest boxes one evening, we set out for the spot where the bluebirds were nesting. As we approached the area, I became strangely aware that something was different. To my great shock, the "bluebird tree" had been felled by a chain saw. In fact, all the dead trees in the immediate surroundings had been felled. We inspected the nest cavity, found a complete nest, but no eggs. The bluebirds were gone.

We quickly set out to secure some nest boxes to fence-posts in the immediate area. In all, we set out 12 boxes, hoping that at least one of them would attract the departed pair. Sure enough, 3 days later, the female was carrying nesting material into one of the boxes.

One week later, I discovered, again with a sense of shock and disbelief, that the box which the female had chosen, was vandalized. The roof had been ripped off, and crudely replaced. The box contained a complete nest. By this time, I could not have blamed the birds had they left the area, but they were still there, softly calling from nearby trees. I repaired the roof, and hoped for the best. One week later, the end of the second week in May, I visited the area and found that the birds were building a nest in another box only 2 fence-posts away from the first box. An almost complete nest had already been built. By May 20th, 5 blue eggs were in the nest. No disturbances occurred after that. By June 9th, 3 young were in the nest, and 2 eggs did not hatch. A week later, I removed one egg; the other had already gone. By June 30th, all 3 young had fledged.

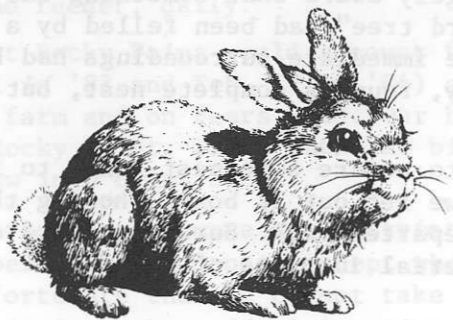
On July 7th, the first egg of the second brood had been laid, and by July 14th, 5 eggs were in the nest. The three young birds were still in the nearby trees. On July 23rd, there were still 5 eggs, but by July 28th, there were 4 young birds in the nest. On August 4th, there were only 3 young birds in the nest, and I assumed that one had died and been removed by the parent.

During one of my hikes in that area in August, I actually saw 9 Western Bluebirds: the adult female, her three fledged young, her three young in the nest, and a male and female about 50 meters away on one of the playing fields in the park. The male western of the nesting pair was not seen again after the first brood had fledged. He had probably had enough!

By August 14th, 2 young had fledged, and by August 18th all young of the second brood had fledged. By the end of August, all bluebirds had left the area.

Some of the other boxes were occupied as well. A pair of Tree Swallows successfully fledged 5 young, and pair of Violet-green Swallows also fledged 5 young.

I am eagerly anticipating next spring to see how many of the boxes will be occupied by Western Bluebirds.



NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL SURVEY
(Unpublished Reports: Sept. 6-Dec. 15, 1976-1983)

by K. Taylor
Bob Hay

While I was doing deer surveys during off-birding years, it soon became apparent to me that:

1. Northern Pygmy-Owls were at least locally common during October (high country).
2. They had a southward movement in Fall.
3. They possibly migrated across the straits (birds at low elevations along ocean front, Sooke-Port Renfrew Road and Metchosin in October).

The surveys were done on both Saturday and Sunday of every weekend between Sept. 6 and December 15, 1976 through 1981 and in November of 1981-1983. As the surveys began prior to dawn and ended after dark, at least 8 hours were put in every day.

Most owls were heard, most just prior to dawn, with lesser numbers at dusk. Occasional birds were heard during the day. It is unfortunate that exact dates and numbers were not kept during this period, but approximate numbers would be:

September: 0-3 birds per month
October : 75-100% of every trip produced 1 or more birds
Early November: 50-75% of every trip produced 1 or more birds
Late November-Mid-December: 0-2 birds per period

To give an example of extremes: six birds were heard on one morning in mid-October at Granite Creek, and four at one spot on the Victoria Watershed, on one morning in October.

All areas on the eastern half of the map were surveyed regularly and birds found in the proportions described, as well as at Granite Creek. However, Flora Lake, visited irregularly, produced none.

While it is true that Northern Pygmy-Owls are rare on the Saanich Peninsula, the status for southern Vancouver Island should be changed.

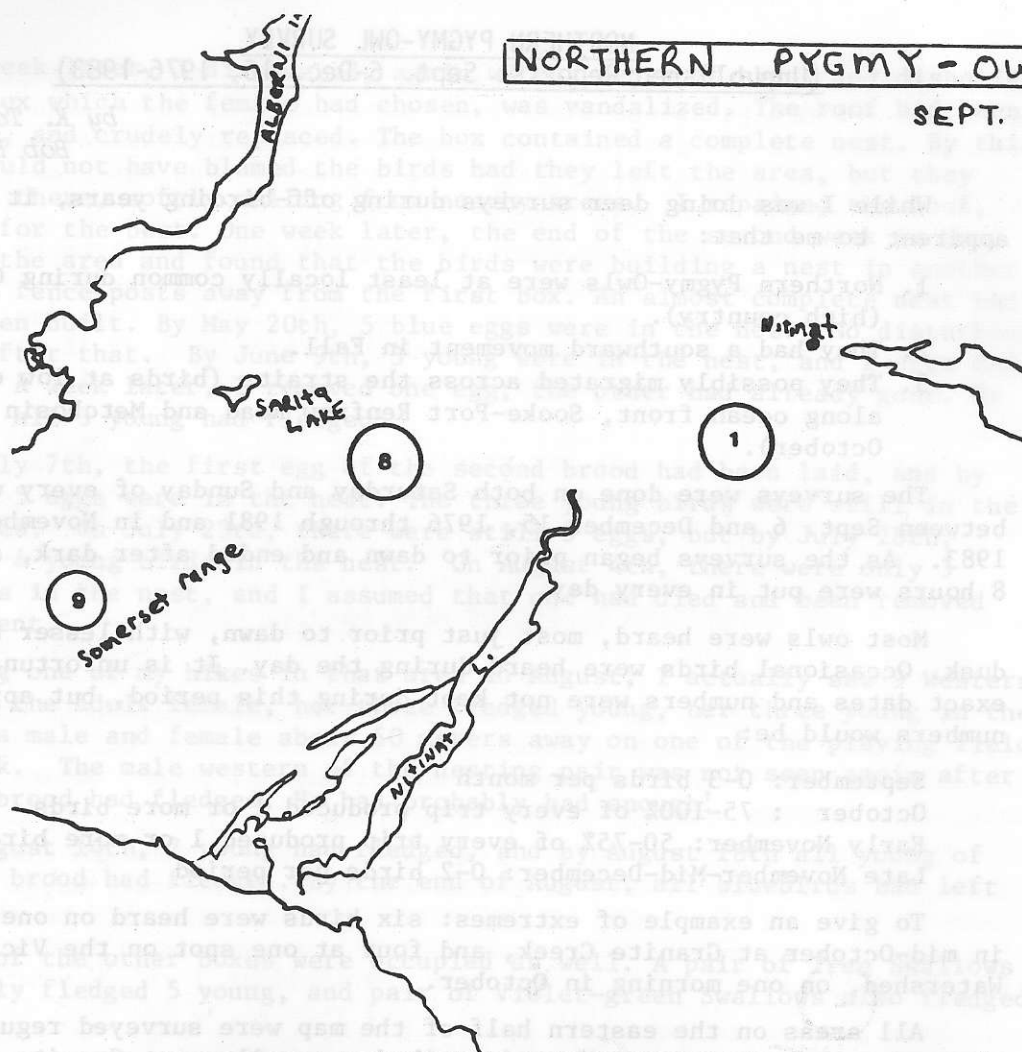
More work is needed to find the summer residence status of this species.

Please refer to Graph on pp. 58-59.

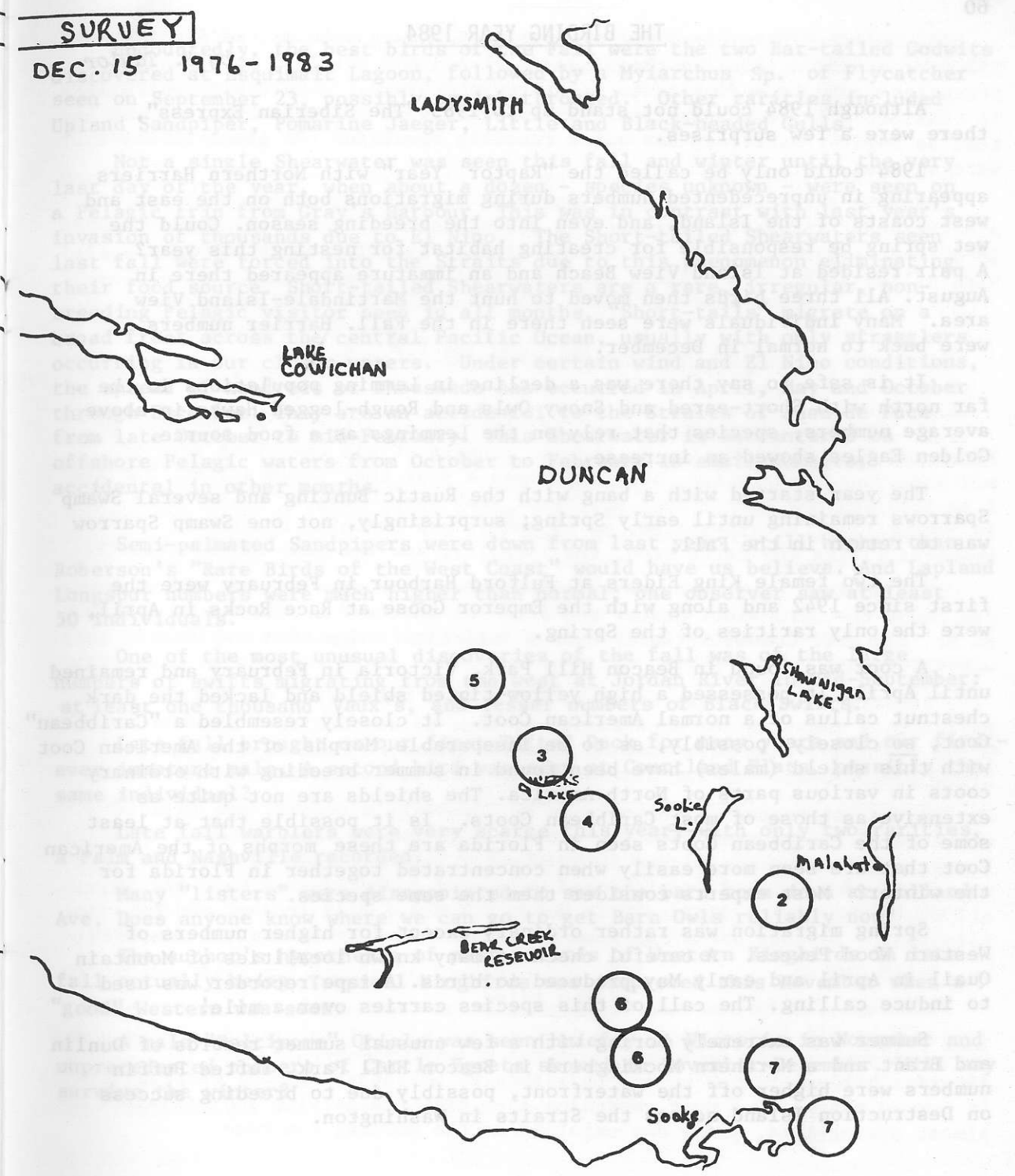
NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL

SURVEY

SEPT. 6 - DEC. 15 1976-1983



- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | GRANITE CREEK | 1977-1980 (REGULAR) |
| 2 | VICTORIA WATERSHED | 1976-1978 (REGULAR) |
| 3 | WEEKS LAKE | 1976-1978 (REGULAR) |
| 4 | SURVEY MT. | 1976-1980 (REGULAR) |
| 5 | WATERLOO MT. | 1976-1978 (REGULAR) |
| 6 | BUTLER MAIN | 1978-1983 (IRREGULAR) |
| 7 | METCHOBIN | 1980-1983 (IRREGULAR) |
| 8 | FLORA LAKE | 1979-1980 (NO BIRDS) |
| 9 | Somerset range | 1980 (2 BIRDS ON SEPT 6.) ONE TRIP |



THE BIRDING YEAR 1984

by K. Taylor

Although 1984 could not stand up to 1983 "The Siberian Express", there were a few surprises.

1984 could only be called the "Raptor Year" with Northern Harriers appearing in unprecedented numbers during migrations both on the east and west coasts of the Island, and even into the breeding season. Could the wet spring be responsible for creating habitat for nesting this year? A pair resided at Island View Beach and an immature appeared there in August. All three birds then moved to hunt the Martindale-Island View area. Many individuals were seen there in the Fall. Harrier numbers were back to normal in December.

It is safe to say there was a decline in Lemming populations in the far north with Short-eared and Snowy Owls and Rough-legged Hawks in above average numbers, species that rely on the Lemmings as a food source. Golden Eagles showed an increase.

The year started with a bang with the Rustic Bunting and several Swamp Sparrows remaining until early Spring; surprisingly, not one Swamp Sparrow was to return in the Fall.

The two female King Eiders at Fulford Harbour in February were the first since 1942 and along with the Emperor Goose at Race Rocks in April, were the only rarities of the Spring.

A coot was found in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria in February and remained until April. It possessed a high yellow-tinted shield and lacked the dark chestnut callus of a normal American Coot. It closely resembled a "Caribbean" Coot, so closely, possibly, as to be inseparable. Morphs of the American Coot with this shield (males) have been found in summer breeding with ordinary coots in various parts of North America. The shields are not quite as extensive as those of most Caribbean Coots. Is it possible that at least some of the Caribbean Coots seen in Florida are these morphs of the American Coot that are seen more easily when concentrated together in Florida for the winter? Most experts consider them the same species.

Spring migration was rather ordinary except for higher numbers of Western Wood Pewees. A careful check of many known localities of Mountain Quail in April and early May produced no birds. A tape recorder was used to induce calling. The call of this species carries over a mile!

Summer was extremely boring with a few unusual summer records of Dunlin and Brant and a Northern Mockingbird in Beacon Hill Park. Tufted Puffin numbers were higher off the waterfront, possibly due to breeding success on Destruction Island across the Straits in Washington.

Undoubtedly, the best birds of the Fall were the two Bar-tailed Godwits discovered at Esquimalt Lagoon, followed by a Myiarchus Sp. of Flycatcher seen on September 23, possibly an Ash-throated. Other rarities included Upland Sandpiper, Pomarine Jaeger, Little and Black-headed Gulls.

Not a single Shearwater was seen this fall and winter until the very last day of the year, when about a dozen - species unknown - were seen on a Pelagic trip from Gray's Harbour. This was in contrast with last year's invasion of thousands due to El Nino. The Short-tailed Shearwaters seen last fall were forced into the Straits due to this phenomenon eliminating their food source. Short-tailed Shearwaters are a rare, irregular, non-breeding Pelagic visitor seen in all months. "Short-tails" migrate on a broad front across the central Pacific Ocean, usually with only stragglers occurring in our closer waters. Under certain wind and El Nino conditions, the spread of hundreds or thousands has occurred in April, May and October through December. They are an accidental to the Straits of Juan de Fuca from late October to mid-February. This Shearwater is encountered on offshore Pelagic waters from October to February in small numbers; accidental in other months.

Semi-palmated Sandpipers were down from last year, still higher than Roberson's "Rare Birds of the West Coast" would have us believe. And Lapland Longspur numbers were much higher than normal; one observer saw at least 50 individuals.

One of the most unusual discoveries of the fall was of the large numbers of swifts migrating from the west at Jordan River in mid-September: at least one thousand Vaux's, and lesser numbers of Black Swifts.

Late fall brought us our first Tufted Duck for many years and our first-ever immature male. A second bird was seen at Courtland Flats, possibly the same individual?

Late fall warblers were very scarce this year, with only two rarities, a Palm and Nashville recorded.

Many "listers" were disappointed to see the barn torn down at Holland Ave. Does anyone know where we can go to get Barn Owls reliably now?

The author's hypothesis of past records of Western Kingbirds in late fall actually being Tropical Kingbirds was disproved this November when a "good" Western was seen.

A male "Baltimore" Oriole was seen briefly in Victoria in November and unprecedented numbers of Cattle Egrets showed in November-December. Will any survive the winter?

On December 23 a first-winter Iceland Gull was seen on the Saanich dump. The bird was identified by the banded tail and sub-terminal spots on the primaries: otherwise similar to a first-winter Thayer's Gull with which it is considered to be conspecific. These birds were possibly here all the time as regular rarities, but until recently specifics for identification were unknown.

Lastly, a Thick-billed Murre was seen on the west coast, a Laysan Albatross off Tofino in September, a second Costa's Hummingbird photographed in July at Nanaimo, and of course the Green-tailed Towhee in Comox, the bird of the year!

BIRD REPORTS, OWLS AND THE S.P.C.A.

by A.R. Davidson

The "Bird Information Bureau" in Victoria is situated at the home of Peggy and Victor Goodwill. To them go reports of all the birds seen on southern Vancouver Island, and five times a year they issue a list. The one I am studying now covers four months of last year - August to November. It is typewritten, single-spaced, on 69 sheets and contains reports of 232 species; giving the dates seen, the locality, and the name of the observer.

All unusual sightings are verified and put on tape so that all of us can phone the Bird Alert number and find out what's doing in the bird world. So Mr. and Mrs. Goodwill really have a full-time occupation and do a wonderful job.

Reports such as these are done for all of Canada and the United States, mailed to a compiler for each district, then to the National Audubon Society which publishes them five times a year in "American Birds", our society being subscribers. So the status of birds in North America is well known.

I was interested in the owls in Mr. Goodwill's report, and this is where the S.P.C.A. come into the picture. Of the 14 Saw-whet Owls seen, 9 were hurt and either picked up by the S.P.C.A. or taken to them, as also were 2 Screech Owls, 2 Great Horned Owls, and 1 Short-eared Owl, and in all cases the report reads: "Rick West, S.P.C.A.; Will recover and be released." So they are doing good work and deserve our financial support.

FIELD TRIPS

Iona Island and Reifel Waterfowl Sanctuary - Dec. 1st *by Hank Vander Pol*

Six keen birders turned up for this trip to the other side of Georgia Strait. It turned out to be a most rewarding day, both weatherwise and birdwise. An almost spring-like, sunny day unfolded as the morning sun rose.

Taking the 7:00 a.m. ferry, we were rewarded as we approached Active Pass with hundreds of Brandt's Cormorants flying in long lines, probably towards their feeding grounds. Active Pass produced numbers of Bald Eagles and Arctic Loon. Leaving the ferry at Tsawwassen, we observed Black and Surf Scoter along the causeway, and many different species of ducks.

Heading for Iona Island first, we were greeted by a Northern Shrike on a fencepost along the highway. Red-tailed Hawks were also out in numbers. Along the airport road we saw our first Rough-legged Hawks. Although Iona Island did not yield anything unusual, we did see large numbers of Northern Shovelers and Green-winged Teal in the sewage ponds. A Northern Harrier flew nearby, and a Greater White-fronted Goose was seen amongst the flock of domestic geese at the plant.

After having lunch in the sun at the Iona causeway, our journey to Reifel Waterfowl Sanctuary yielded Western Meadowlark, and more Red-tailed Hawks and Rough-legged Hawks. The sun was shining brightly when we walked from Reifel's entrance gate on the road to the Sanctuary, which proved to be a good decision. An immature Merlin had us fooled for a while as we tried to identify it not more than 30 feet away, but against a low sun. A Great Horned Owl, seen at close range along the waterway leading into the Sanctuary, was our highlight for the day. The Sanctuary itself produced Snow Geese (only about 30), and a Snowy Owl in the outer marshes. By this time, we had seen so many raptors that the leader got a bit carried away. A Merlin seen from the back turned out to be a Band-tailed Pigeon. A very tame Sandhill Crane, which had flown in from Pitt Meadows, could be approached to within a foot. It had been at the Sanctuary for a few months, and we had some discussion whether or not it could be counted as a species seen. We decided not to.

The Sanctuary is undergoing changes which none of us appreciated. The fields between the outer marshes and the inner part of the Sanctuary had all been plowed, thus yielding no birds at all.

Although we were told where to find numbers of Short-eared Owls (the Vancouver Airport yielded none), time had run out and darkness was descending upon us. All told we saw or heard 69 species of birds on an incredibly beautiful day. No matter which way we looked, the raptors were out in numbers, which made for a very satisfying day.

Goldstream Park and Esquimalt Lagoon - Feb. 9th

by Roy Prior

Leader: Dave Fraser. Weather: cold, with 1" of snow underfoot; one short snow shower. Participants: 14. Highlights: at Goldstream, 1 albino Glaucous-winged Gull (we think), 3 Trumpeter Swans offshore; at Esquimalt Lagoon, 16 Great Blue Herons sitting on the rocky islet in the middle of the Lagoon, 22 Canvasback, 1 Western Meadowlark.

NOTICES

National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds - further copies of this guide are being ordered, price about \$18.50. Ring Lyndis Davis, 477-9952.

Wanted: Information on the Whereabouts of the Vancouver Island Marmot

The Wildlife Section, Ministry of Environment, Nanaimo Office, is very interested in learning of any recent sightings of marmots and/or marmot signs such as burrows, etc., that members of our organization may be aware of. They are particularly interested in current (1980's) sightings; however, they are also anxious to obtain any historical marmot observations (pre-1980) that may be available. Reported sightings by the public increase the Wildlife Section's knowledge of marmots.

Marmot report forms are available from Roy Prior, 383-2347.

Correction: Nesting Chart (pp. 28-29) (Jan./Feb. magazine)

For Great Horned Owl - should read: - full clutch of eggs - Feb. 20-27
- eggs hatch - Mar. 20-27

Thetis Park Nature Sanctuary Assn.

March 21, 1985: Jessie Woollett - "Remember When: Old Victoria".
Newcombe Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.

Membership Fees: were payable in January. We would remind you that no further issues of the Victoria Naturalist will be sent to those whose dues remain unpaid on April 15th.

CORRECTION:

We regret that we omitted to specify in the last issue that the cover photo was by Tim Zurowski.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

DECEMBER

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
1	Glaucous Gull	1	Hartland Ave. Dump	Keith Taylor et al
1	Harris' Sparrow	1	3020 Austin Ave.	Roy Prior
2	Long-billed Dowitcher	2	Hd. Cowichan Bay	Alice Cassidy
*1	Tufted Duck	2	Wallace Drive	Mike Shepard
1	Rough-legged Hawk (Dk. Phase)	8	Martindale Flats	Keith Taylor et al
11	Cattle Egret	8	Port Renfrew	Margaret Ashmore

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
* 1	Cattle Egret	17	4233 Blenkinsop Rd.	Nancy Lovett
1	Yellow-billed Loon	22	Deep Cove	Keith Taylor
1	"Kumlien's" Iceland Gull (immature)	23	Hartland Ave. Dump	Keith Taylor
6	Western Bluebird	24	Rocky Point	Ada Barber
1	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	26	1764 Orcas Park Terr.	Beryl Holt
90+	Eurasian Skylark	31	McIntyre Road	Dave Stirling

JANUARY

1	Gyrfalcon	1	Victoria Int. Airport	Keith Taylor
9	Horned Lark	1	McHugh Road	many observers
2	Mourning Dove	2	Puckle Road	M. & V. Goodwill
1	Common Barn-Owl	4	Puckle Road	Dr. Bob Houston
10	Bohemian Waxwing	5	Norris Rd. at Madrona Dr.	Keith Taylor & Tim Zurowski
1	White-throated Sparrow	6	opp. 640 Dallas Rd.	Ed Coffin
2	Whimbrel	11	Ft. of Tudor Ave.	Dave Aldcroft
1	Ring-billed Gull (immature)	20	Goldstream River	Ron Satterfield

* Final Sightings

PROGRAMME
MARCH - APRIL 1985

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.

Saturday, March 2 Salamanders and Pond Life. Combined Junior & Senior Field Trip. Leader: Dr. Alex Peden (381-7878 or 387-6515), Curator of Aquatic Zoology, B.C. Prov. Museum. Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m. or at Durrance Lake parking lot at 9:30. Bring gumboots.

- Saturday, March 9 Birding at Witty's Lagoon. Leader: Bruce Whittington. Meet 9:00 a.m. at Witty's Lagoon Parking Lot.
- Tuesday, March 12 Annual General Meeting, Newcombe Auditorium, 8:00 p.m. Programme: Dr. Bob Ogilvie, Curator of Botany, B.C. Provincial Museum, speaking on: "Unique Plants of B.C.", using slides and specimens. Bring a friend.
- Thursday, March 14 Botany Night at Swan Lake Nature House at 7:30 p.m. Bring your own slides of spring wildflowers. Leader: Mr. Leon Pavlick, Assistant Curator of Botany, B.C. Provincial Museum.
- Friday, March 15 Bird of Freedom, by Herman Kitchen. About the
- Saturday, March 16 Bald Eagle. Newcombe Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.
- Saturday, March 16 Early Spring Flowers, including Limnathes Macounii, a species of Meadowfoam unique in the world, endemic to Rocky Point. Leader: Dr. Adolf Ceska, Botanist at B.C. Provincial Museum. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Devonian Park parking lot.
- Saturday, March 23
or
Sunday, March 24 We hope to have a birding trip to the Nanaimo area, details to be announced.
- Wednesday, March 27 Birders' Night, Arbutus Junior Secondary School, Edgelow Street, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, April 6 "Birds, Flowers, Algae, Shells, etc. - Beacon Hill Beach Walk". Combined Junior and Senior Field Trip. Leader: Dr. Alex Peden, Curator of Aquatic Zoology, B.C. Provincial Museum. Meet at parking lot by Cairn near Mile 0, Beacon Hill Park, at 9:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, April 9 General Meeting, Newcombe Auditorium, 8:00 p.m. Programme: Speakers Brent Cook; Geoff Stewart; and Donna Warren of B.C. Provincial Museum. A sneak preview of the future Natural History exhibits "Open Oceans to Alpine Meadows" of B.C. Provincial Museum (a slide presentation with models).

- Thursday, April 11 Botany Night at Swan Lake Nature House at 7:30 p.m. Guest Speaker: Mr. J.E. (Ted) Underhill (author of the 4-book series, "Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest") will give a slide presentation on "Wildflowers of the Sagebrush Country".
- Saturday, April 13 Birding on the Saanich Peninsula. Leader: Art Durkee. Meet 9:00 a.m. at Mayfair Lanes.
- Friday, April 19
Saturday, April 20 Wild Canada, by John Wilson, 8:00 p.m., Newcombe Auditorium.
- Saturday, April 20 "Pink Lilies, Sutton Creek Wildflower Reserve". Leader: Mr. Leon Pavlick, Assistant Curator of Botany, B.C. Provincial Museum. Please phone Bird Alert prior to April 12 in case of change of date. Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m.
- Sunday, April 21 Birding at Cowichan Bay. Leader to be announced. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 8:30 a.m. or Robert Service Memorial, Cowichan Bay, 9:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, April 24 Birders' Night. Tour of the Vertebrate Zoology Division of the Provincial Museum. Meet Wayne Campbell at the main door of the Museum at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, April 27 Birding Field Trip: in search of early warblers. Leader: Keith Taylor. Time and place to be announced.

JUNIOR PROGRAMME

- Leader: Dr. Alex Peden (381-7878 or 387-6515)
Curator of Aquatic Zoology,
B.C. Provincial Museum.
- Saturday, March 2 Field Trip, "Salamanders and Pond Life". Meet at Mayfair Lanes at 9:00 a.m. or Durrance Lake parking lot at 9:30 a.m. Seniors are welcomed. Bring your parents.
- Saturday, April 6 Field Trip, "Birds, Flowers, Algae, Shell, etc., Beacon Hill Beach Walk". Meet at parking lot by Cairn near Mile 0, Beacon Hill Park, at 9:00 a.m. Bring your parents, Seniors are welcomed.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BIRDER?

(Identification Wise)

by K. Taylor

Several times while talking on the phone to a certain young lady, who helps run the hot-line, I have been asked this question - here goes.

Perspicacity - This is number one in my book, the ability to understand what one sees. Many times I have been asked, how can you tell that is a so-and-so? Usually my answer is, because it is the same as the illustration in the book. For people with perspicacity, birding is that simple; matching a field guide illustration with the wild bird, either locally or visiting a foreign country. One local birder who has been birding for a short time with perspicacity has realized this time and time again. Others have spent years birding without this ability and still find identification difficult; still others have a great deal of knowledge about identification of birds but lack this ability and turn unusual common species into rarities.

There are, of course, always exceptions, highly variable species such as gulls, hawks, and moults in small species such as shorebirds, and difficult to observe species such as pelagics. Birding would be simple if not for these variables, which cannot all be illustrated fully. There are also a few certain features missing even in the best of field guides. And this is where knowledge comes in.

Knowledge - All birders have field guide knowledge but field guides do not have the space to go into great detail about variables. Reading other materials such as Roberson's "Rare Birds of the West Coast", "Birding", "British Birds", and "West Coast Birds" will show you that not all identification of birds is clear cut. Examples: Herring Gulls may have yellow legs (L.A. taimyrensis), or very dark mantles (L.A. taimyrensis - L.A. vega). The latter is a subspecies found in Alaska which might be confused with Slaty-Backed Gull. I was surprised the bird was not illustrated in "National Geographic". Tundra Swans have a red gape and some lack the yellow spot on the bill; I learned this only last winter by being blasé and mis-identifying this rather common species. These two white beauties are best identified by the subtle differences in head-bill shape, and these are best seen and learned through our next category.

Experience - This gives us the ability to identify birds even without actually seeing field marks. Robins seen as black specks are identified by the way they fly, Spotted Sandpipers by their stiff-shallow wing beats or characteristic "bobbing". More importantly, seeing some species in the wild in comparison with others makes identification easier. Example: jaegers and shearwaters are most easily identified by the way they fly. This can only be learned by seeing the live bird, not in illustration. Other aspects best learned in the field are: size comparisons between species, silhouettes, plumage variables, habitats, calls and songs, moults and subtle shape and size differences. When I first got back to birding

after a seven year lay-off, I soon realized how much experience had been lost and how some had to be re-learned; I had lost the fine tuning that experience teaches us, and some species were difficult for a time.

Caution - If you know enough about a species less caution is needed. A milli-second may be all that is required to see all the field marks on a killdeer. Time does not change the field marks on a bird, but time may be needed to catch these on a skulking bird or one that has only subtle differences. Make sure that all field marks are seen on difficult species - all the caution in the world will not be sufficient if knowledge is missing. Take, for example, a group of the best birders in Victoria staring at a well-worn juvenile Least Sandpiper at five feet for over three hours. None knew exactly what to look for and assumed the bird to be a Long-toed Stint because of mis-information that these birds look like leasts with black backs. The bird appeared to have very long toes but no one had really studied the toes on leasts before. I don't believe anyone was really satisfied it was a Long-toed Stint when they left. Now that information is available, I'm sure that a Long-toed Stint could positively be identified in a few minutes.

Interest - Without enough interest, the time required to spend time in books or in the field, either at home or travelling, or listening to bird recordings, will be shortened. This of course will not allow skills to be sharpened. Each and every bird must be looked at closely to learn variables and to check for look-alike rarities. Take no bird for granted. To heighten a flagging interest ask yourself, "Am I positive there was no Eye-browed Thrush in that flock of Robins?" "What do I really know about the plumage of Robins?" Look again, more closely, at each one.

So, good birders have a degree of perspicacity, continue to gain and retain new knowledge, get in the field regularly and are always interested in making new discoveries about identification, even in common species. And great birders find these new means of identification.

