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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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RARE BIRD ALERT - 382-5562
Phone bird sightings to 382-9652

COVER PHOTO: by Mark Nyhof

GREAT GREY OWL AT PROSPECT LAKE (see story below)

GREAT GREY OWL IN VICTORIA

by Mark Nyhof

Until recently, the Great Grey Owl was listed as a hypothetical species for Vancouver Island. It possibly has been seen before but there were no documented, confirmed sightings. On the morning of February 18th, however, all questions about this owl on Vancouver Island were answered when Giff Calvert found one sitting on a fence-post in his back yard. The owl provided a bit more than a fleeting glimpse; in fact it appeared regularly for almost three weeks.

The attraction to the Calvert property was simple: voles, and lots of them. The grassy areas were riddled with the trails and diggings of these little rodents. Besides several reported observations of actual kills, further evidence of the owl's attraction to voles could be found in all of twelve pellets I examined.

The owl usually hunted early in the morning and then again during late afternoon, but on several occasions it appeared at mid-day. Its hunting strategy was hardly an active pursuit of food but rather was a patient waiting game. Using a fence-post as a perch, the owl would sit motionless watching and listening for any unsuspecting voles moving in the grass below. During these periods of intense concentration the owl was very approachable. On one occasion I moved to a point only eight feet away from the preoccupied owl. But when a vole was spotted, the owl reacted quickly and it was only a matter of seconds before its prey was secured and swallowed whole.

The Great Grey Owl finally left on March 9, but not before it had been seen by dozens of birders, (most seeing this species for the first time).

Many thanks should be given to the Calverts who welcomed so many birders to their property during the owl's stay.

SOME PLACES OF INTEREST

by Wilf Medd

1. Reifel Island Bird Refuge

Reifel Refuge was discussed at the executive meeting of the F.B.C.N. February 2nd, 1985, a special meeting devoted entirely to ecological and conservation matters, and has required further action by the F.B.C.N.

Reifel Refuge has been subject to the same budget cuts imposed by the Canadian Wildlife Service throughout, and is also subject to complexities in the administration and control. The details of this are not easily summarized. There is, however, assurance that the Refuge will be kept open, and that the sanctuary designation on the foreshore will remain unchanged. The cuts call for staff reduction, and elimination of the interpretive program.

2. Creston Wildlife Centre

In general effect, similar to the above. Cuts and reductions in service. Will be kept open June, July and August.

3. The Ecological Reserve at Honeymoon Bay

As news, it is not particularly new news, but it is still good news, and I think it should be duly noted that the beautiful field of flowers at Honeymoon Bay has been established as an ecological reserve (August 1984).

Every year for many a year, the Victoria Natural History Society has sponsored a field trip to see the pink lilies - and many other plant species - beside Sutton Creek at Honeymoon Bay. The reserve was originally set up by Rayonier and later, rather recently, passed under the control of Western Forest Products who donated it to the Nature Trust. Your executive kept a watchful eye on these affairs, and was several times in communication with those concerned, but were assured that the reserve would be carefully preserved, which was done. Our thanks go out to all these organizations, thanks which I am sure will be seconded by many other groups and private citizens - our children and grandchildren as well. The Nature Trust, who are not in the business of administering property on a long-term basis, has leased it for a nominal fee to the province, in order to create one more of our invaluable ecological reserves.

RARE BIRD ALERT - 382-5562
Phone bird sightings to 382-9652

4. Botanical Beach

An excellent article about Botanical Beach in The Islander (some time last year) needs no elaboration, but in case you missed it let us summarize briefly the present situation. A chunk of land at the end of the trail to the beach, of 1.6 hectares (or 4 acres, as it is called in a quaint old pre-metric system) was recently purchased by the Nature Conservancy to be administered by the Department of Lands, Parks and Housing. Access to the beach is assured because the road down there was gazetted quite some time ago. This has to do with the Ministry of Highways. I don't know exactly how things get gazetted, but it establishes right of access. The beach itself up to high tide is public property as are all shorelines, but it is further protected by a foreshore lease, which prohibits such activities as log booming, boat repairing, or whatever.

As you may remember, the Victoria Natural History Society and other organizations recommended that an area, or at least a strip all along the coastline, be purchased and made park land. This was not to be. The one small area purchased, although a far cry from this ideal solution, will be invaluable.

For those unfamiliar with this beach and its fascinating tide-pools, the map in Hiking Trails 1, Victoria and Vicinity (local book stores) will get you there from Port Renfrew. I have a further detailed map of the roads and trails which also shows the location of the 1.6 hectare public area - copy of my copy available on request.

WILDLIFE FILM SERIES

Anne Adamson

As the 1984-85 Wildlife Film Series comes to an end, the board has decided, for a variety of reasons, to discontinue the series. It is now time to say thank you to the many faithful workers and supporters who have assisted in some way to make the Series a success.

For almost forty years, first as Audubon Wildlife Films and then as Wildlife Film Series, many Natural History members have given unstintingly of their time and talents to ensure continued success of this worthwhile project.

First of all, let us say thank you to the many fine speakers who have presented their wildlife and conservation films for our enjoyment and edification.

Unfortunately, we cannot name all the local helpers but people such as Enid Lemon, Albert and Eleanore Davidson, Doug Turnbull, Katherine Sherman, Vera Guernsey, Dorothy McCann, Chess Lyons, Mrs. Beaven and Mr. Chatterton come to mind as a few of the many devoted and constant supporters. To ensure success many workers were required, such as ticket-sellers, ushers, season ticket handlers, programme assistants, publicity chairmen, finance managers, speaker introducers and hospitality hosts. Add to this the constant help of the Provincial Museum staff without whose assistance we could not have operated.

And finally, we cannot forget our faithful audience who, year after year, turned out to support the Wildlife Film Series. To one and all, a most sincere vote of thanks. You made my job both joyful and pleasant.

PLANT NAMES FOR PEOPLE:
Pacific Northwest Coast

Kaye Suttill

Why were certain men chosen to be plant-identified with our Pacific Northwest Coast? Did they actually see "their" plants, or were they distantly honoured? Let's remember a few of them now, for soon we will be looking at their floral namesakes in the living spring.

The first naturalist to walk ashore and collect some of the incredible plants of our area was Archibald Menzies, in 1792, Surgeon Botanist (and sometime Ornithologist, too) with Capt. George Vancouver. He is identified with all our wondrous Arbutus Trees, *Arbutus menziesii*, as well as the Coast Delphinium, *D. menziesii*, so joying the slopes around Victoria when spring is well on, and the False Azalea, *Menziesia ferrugina*, of wettish woods at higher elevations. We know he saw our Chocolate Lily, *Fritillaria lanceolata*, and an onion believed to be *Allium acuminatum* (Hooker's Onion).

If only Menzies' journal, now in the British Museum, could be reprinted and made available to the general public; a certified copy of it is in our Provincial Archives. Then we could check his plant and bird sightings. But what frustrations he endured along with the unique joying of plant discovering. To row ashore and tramp the coast wilderness, overwhelmed by all the new plants he longed to bring back to England - there were plant frames and pots to keep alive, many on the Discovery's deck - and forever to be pressured to hurry on, missing so many places and plants he wanted to check out, because Vancouver's mission was to press on more, charting the thousands of miles of unknown coastal waters. Then, on the long lap homeward from St. Helena, some of the plant frames on deck were left uncovered and in a downpour many of the plants were damaged or destroyed.

David Douglas was luckier than Menzies in one respect: he, not attached to any ship but on commission for the Royal Horticultural Society, had only deadlines to meet ship departures to carry his specimens back to England. For nearly ten years he walked over our Pacific Northwest, up the Columbia River Valley, across B.C. to Hudson Bay, before his tragic death in 1834 in Hawaii. He was on his way back to England when, with very poor eyesight, he fell into a pit trap for wild boars. He was only thirty-five. But we think of David Douglas in our Oregon Grape, *Berberis aquifolium*, which he found at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1825, and in the Musk Plant, *Mimulus moschatus*, which flowers around Victoria almost to summer's end. Douglas himself considered the Flowering Currant, *Ribes sanguinea*, one of his best plants; it had been discovered by Menzies at Nootka Sound. Most of all, we say David Douglas' name in our Douglas Fir and our Satin Flower, *Sisyrinchium douglasii*, herald of spring around Victoria, while over in the Olympics he specially joys us atop Hurricane Hill in the deep pink floral masses of *Douglasia laevigata*.

Our coast flora also honours Dr. Louis Fournier Henderson in our Broad-leaved Shooting Star, *Dodecatheon hendersonii*. He was a Professor of Botany in Oregon, living in that interesting time span from 1853, botanizing in the latter 19th century, through the first part of our 20th century, to 1942. I do wonder if he first collected or described it!

To capsule in short notice, let's not forget our Pacific Dogwood *Cornus nuttallii*, remembers that indefatigable botanist, Thomas Nuttall, who in his thirty-five years of exploration for plants, covered the length and breadth of the present U.S.A., more longitudes and latitudes of North America than anyone in the first part of the 19th century.

Some honoured of our flora never actually saw it but were eminent botanists in their own right, like Sir William Jackson Hooker of Kew and his son Joseph Dalton Hooker (Hooker's Onion), and Zacheus Collins (Collinsia grandiflora and parviflora, Blue-eyed Mary), an early American botanist, and Dr. Johann vonHeucher of Wittenberg, Germany, whose name we say in all our Alumroots, including *Heuchera micrantha* which rises like a spray of very fine lace from rock crevasses along the coast around Victoria and on drying-out hill slopes. Our Tall Camas, *Camassia leichtlinii*, remembers Max Leichtlin, a 19th to early 20th century German horticulturist who introduced many wild plants into gardens. Most honoured of all the absentees, I think, is Nikolai Rumiantzev, Count Romanzoff, the Russian who sponsored the Kotzebue Expedition, 1823-1826, southward from Alaska. His *Romanzoffia unalaschensis*, Coast Mist Maidens,

which we found once in the Sooke area; and Cliff Mistmaidens, *R. sitchensis*, of the Rockies, are little white beauties, less common in my seeing but treasures when beheld.

So our Pacific Northwest Coast flora honours men special for their wilderness discoverings, and special in the minds of those who honoured them. This is but a partial remembering.

REPORTS ON MARKED SANDERLINGS

A large project on the habits of Sanderlings, sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund, is now being carried out, and needs the co-operation of birders. More than 3000 birds have been marked, and at least some of these will be appearing on East and West Coast beaches this spring and fall. If you see a marked bird, the most important thing to note is the colour of its leg flag. This is a small plastic band with a short stub sticking out one side. This stub, or "flag", is very visible and indicates the country in which the bird was banded: Green represents the United States; yellow, Peru; red, Chile. These are the three countries in the project with the greatest number of marked birds but other countries and colours are: orange, Argentina; black, Venezuela; light blue, Brazil; orange over yellow (two flags), Paraguay; light green over yellow, Colombia; and red over dark green, Nicaragua.

Once you confirm the flag colour, look for colour bands on the birds. These identify when and where within a particular country the bird was banded. (Many birds carry combinations permitting researchers to identify them as individuals.) Red, yellow, green, blue and white bands are used, and in addition, every banded sanderling carries a silver metal band on one or the other leg.

Even if you aren't certain of all your data, any information you can provide will be of great interest. The location, date, time of day, length of beach, and number of birds in the company of the banded bird are important, along with whatever data about the colour and position of the bands you can supply.

Your replies will be acknowledged, and researchers will tell you the bird's history, including when it was banded, how old it is, and where else it has been sighted. Last year one sanderling, banded in Oregon as it migrated north, was seen again on Cape Cod as it flew south. Another bird, banded in Peru, was sighted in Texas on its way north and again on Cape Cod during the fall migration.

Sightings may be reported on the West Coast to the Sanderling Project, Bodega Marine Laboratory, Bodega Bay, California, 94923.

NOTICES

The Victoria Naturalist - A.R. Davidson

Three indexes for the above have been published, as follows:

April 1944 to March 1954

April 1954 to May 1964

September 1964 to June 1974

Now the Society has completed its 40th year, and it would be appreciated if one of our members would undertake the compiling of the index for the fourth decade, from September 1974 to December 1984. These indexes have proven very useful and I regret not being able to continue this work.

Christmas Counts - A.R. Davidson

The National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Census for 1983 was received on February 11th - seven months late, as it is dated July-August, 1984. Anyone interested can borrow it from the library at 2144 Brighton Ave.

Correction:

In the March-April issue, the article "The Birding Year 1984" contained two errors: on p. 60, last line, "Destruction Island" should be "Protection Island"; on p.61, line 7, "from Gray's Harbour" should be "on M.V. Coho".

Deadline for submission of items for the July-August edition of the Victoria Naturalist is May 31st.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

* *First Report
of the Season*

FEBRUARY, 1985

<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Area Seen</u>	<u>Observer</u>
1	Barred Owl	2	Queenswood Dr.	Keith Taylor & Charles Harper
5	Hermit Thrush	2	Queenswood Dr.	Keith Taylor & Charles Harper
2	Whimbrel	2	Ten Mile Point	Keith Taylor & Charles Harper
1	Common Barn-Owl	2	Courtland Avenue	Tim Zurowski

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
1	Townsend's Solitaire	3	Lone Tree Hill	Dave Stirling
5	Rock Sandpiper	3	Clover Point	Ed Coffin
1	Sabine's Gull	11	Clover Point	Keith Taylor
* 1	Great Grey Owl	12	Prospect Lake Road	Giff Calvert
1	Townsend's Warbler	16	Kaltasin Road	Keith Taylor
* 1	Osprey	17	View Royal	Ron Satterfield
5	Redhead	17	Beaver Lake	Keith Taylor
1	Short-eared Owl	17	Dewdney Flats	Ray Williams
1	Snow Goose	22	Panama Flats	Michael & Faye McNall
* 2	Violet-green Swallow	23	Head of Cowichan Bay	Dave Stirling
3	Western Bluebird	26	Metchosin Golf Course	Harry Coleborn
* 2	"Black" Brant	27	Gotha Point	Betty Rote
2	Turkey Vulture	28	Goldstream Park	Gordon Davidson
<u>MARCH, 1985</u>				
* 1	California Gull	3	Hartland Ave. "Dump"	Keith Taylor
* 1	Orange-crowned Warbler	9	Bamberton Lookout	Ray Williams
1	Rough-legged Hawk	9	Saanichton	Keith Taylor
20	American Goldfinch	9	John Street	Brian Gates
24	Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel	16	M.V. "Coho"	Keith Taylor & Charles Harper
1	Rufous Hummingbird	16	5170 Old W. Saanich Rd.	Gale De Silva
* 1	Pine Grosbeak	19	UVic Campus	Dave Fraser
1	Yellow-Billed Loon	24	Royal Roads	Michael Shepard
* 2	Cinnamon Teal	28	Columbia Avenue	Bruce Whittington
* 2	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	29	Saanich	M. & V. Goodwill
10	Bonaparte's Gull	29	Active Pass	Dave Stirling

The Great Grey Owl was the first confirmed record for Vancouver Island. It was last seen on 9 March.

CONCLUSION TO 1984-85 SEASON OF BOTANY NIGHT by Leon Pavlick

With our April 11th meeting, our "Botany Night" program for the 1984-85 season is concluded. These meetings were held for members of our society, guests and other interested persons. It was my privilege to organize and conduct these meetings this year. We met once a month (the second Thursday) at the Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Centre (a special note of thanks goes to Terry Morrison of the Nature Centre for making space, facilities and help available to us). The format used this season was to invite members to bring some slides, to invite guest speakers to some of the sessions, and to speak myself on other nights. The slide presentation was emphasized. For half of the meetings we had a "full-house"; for other nights smaller numbers turned out; one night only five persons came.

Summary of events for the season:

November: Presentation by Leon Pavlick on the botany of the Keremeos-Cathedral Lakes area.

December: Presentation by Al Funk of the Pacific Forest Research Centre (Canadian Forestry Service) on mushrooms of our area.

January: Presentation by John Trelawny of the University of Victoria Biology Department on Yukon wildflowers.

February: Presentation by Leon Pavlick on plants of the East Kootenay Valley and Tobacco Plains.

March: Presentation by Adolf Ceska on rare and little-known plants of the Victoria area. Also: slides of local flora contributed by Sharon Godkin.

April: Presentation by Ted Underhill on wildflowers of the sagebrush country and eastern slopes of the Rockies.

Our thanks go out to the above persons and the others who have contributed to the success of "Botany Night". Members who are interested in continuing "Botany Night" next season and those who would participate in the meetings, are invited to contact either myself or Mary Lou Florian. Whether we have a "Botany Night" in the 1985-86 season depends on the interest shown!

PROGRAMME

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.

SUNDAY, MAY 5

Mt. Tzouhalem - Ecological Reserve. Trip to see spring flowers with leader Hans Roemer, Biologist with Ecological Reserve Program, Lands, Parks & Housing. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m. or Duncan Bus Stop, 10:00 a.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 11

Birding at Francis Park and Munn's Road. Leader: Charles Harper. Meet Mayfair Lanes, 8:00 a.m. or Francis Park Nature House, 8:30 a.m.

FRIDAY - SUNDAY
MAY 10 - MAY 12

Camp Squamish.
Leader: Katherine Sherman, 598-3237.

TUESDAY, MAY 14

General Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Newcombe Auditorium.
Program: "Our Forests and Their Environment".
Speaker: Retired Forester, B.C. Forest Service, Mickey True.

SATURDAY, MAY 18

Interior Camping and Birding Trip with Vancouver Natural History Society, Oliver and Osoyoos area.
Leader: Brian Self, Vancouver, 732-7128.

SATURDAY, MAY 25

Birding Field Trip: dawn chorus in the Saanich Highlands.
Leader: Keith Taylor.
Time and meeting place to be announced.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

Botany Trip to see late spring flowers at Koksilah Falls and a secret spot nearby.
Leader: Dr. Adolf Ceska, Botanist, B.C. Provincial Museum.
Meet 9:00 a.m., Helmcken Park and Drive parking lot.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

Trip to view big trees on an island in the Nimpkish River. Organized by Arrowsmith Natural History Society for all the Island naturalists clubs.
Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Parksville - in the back lot of Overwaitea in the centre of Parksville, or at 9:15 a.m. at the Courthouse in Courtenay. Phone Nell Whellam, 248-6328 if you're going (or Lyndis Davis, 477-9952).

SATURDAY, JUNE 8

Summer Songbirds at Spectacle Lake.
Leader: Alice Elston and Anne Knowles.
Meet Mayfair Lanes 8:30 a.m. or Spectacle Lake parking lot, 9:15 a.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 11

General Meeting, 8:00 p.m., Newcombe Auditorium.
Programme: "Your Favourite Slides".
Organizer: Mary-Lou Florian. Phone 387-5552 to participate.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

A field trip to study bird nests and to learn how to make observations for "B.C. Nest Record Scheme". Details on Bird Alert.
Leader: John Cooper, Vertebrate Zoologist, B.C. Provincial Museum.
Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

Birding at Tugwell Lake.
 Leader: Ray Williams.
 Gumboots recommended.
 Meet Mayfair Lanes, 8:30 a.m.



SATURDAY, JUNE 22
 Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 a.m.
 B.C. Provincial Museum,
 Vancouver, B.C.
 Learn how to make observations for
 this bird trip and "Best Record Scheme".
 A field trip to study bird nests and to
 Service, Victoria.

TUESDAY, JUNE 21
 8:00 p.m., Vancouver

FRIDAY - JUNE 18
 8:30 a.m. Mayfair Lanes
 Lake parking lot, 598-3237.

SATURDAY, JUNE 18
 8:00 a.m. or Francis

9:15 a.m. at the Courthouse
 Home Nell Whelan, 248-6328
 (or Lydia Bayle, 479-9222)

SATURDAY, JUNE 17
 8:00 a.m. at Parkville - in the

9:00 a.m. at Belcher Park and
 U.C. Provincial Museum.
 Leader: Dr. Anoll Cook.
 S.N.V. No.

SATURDAY, JUNE 16
 8:00 a.m. at Kalkaska and

SATURDAY, MAY 22
 8:00 a.m. at Tugwell Lake