



# The VICTORIA NATURALIST

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

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Annual Dues – including "The Victoria Naturalist" - Juniors: \$2.50 - Regular: \$10.00  
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Financial Year – January 1st to December 31st

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

COVER PHOTO: by Bertha Gow  
"THE VANISHING LEAF"  
Caterpillar of Anise Swallowtail Butterfly in a Victoria park feeding on Indian Consumption Plant. Lime-green with black bands and yellow spots on body.

SOME CLIFF HANGERS AROUND VICTORIA

by Kaye Suttill

They look at a distance like cascades of living colour tumbling down the cliffs, these plants that cling to steep rock faces or high ledges around Victoria. Most visible, of course, are the late spring bloomers, Broom and Sedum, and even Tall Camas making it in near perpendicular rock niches. Other cliff hangers show from late January into summer, when the Woolly Sunflowers and Small-Flowered Alumroot brighten clefts in the rock faces.

Saxifrages are by derivation "rock breakers", and the earliest flora we have observed hugging the sea cliffs is the Western Saxifrage, *S. occidentalis* var. *rufidula*. It shows some years in late January, followed in April by the more clustering Tufted Saxifrage, *S. caespitosa*, its soft white blooms so opposite in appearance to its rough matrix rock.

While seepage still moisturizes patches of moss or thin soil on the cliffs, Monkey Flowers, both the large *Mimulus guttatus*, and small *M. alsinoides*, make little flower falls down the rocks or patch the rocks with splashes of yellow. Then in late spring drying out, the *Mimulus* overs to *Sedum* and, in some exposed sites, the tiny white needle-leaved Vernal Sandwort, *Arenaria rubella*.

Dwarfism, reminiscent of some Alpine Flora, seems to occur in certain species in exposed sites on the weathered sea cliffs, like *Delphinium Menziesii* dwarfed on some steep rock faces in East Sooke. Now there are some of this type almost at sea level near the one cliff site, as well as random others high above Beechy Head.

Another small edition of lush lower elevation plants is the Few-flowered Shooting Star, *Dodecatheon pulchellum*, multiplying on several widely separated cliff ledges in Sooke. Even Sea Blush, *Plectritis congesta*, seems to miniaturize itself high up on cliff ledges above the sea.

Jocelyn Hill is a great place for various cliff hangers, some of them, like Camas and Mouse-Eared Chickweed shortening their stems, hugging the ground rock of their exposed sites, which seem more precarious as the spring dries out. Jocelyn's own cliff hanger special, though, is its Gold Stars, *Crocidium multicaule*, spotting the steep cliffs with yellow cascades.

We later noted these in a similar site on Mt. Tzuhalem's Ecological Reserve. Now it is saddening to think how the floral treasure of Jocelyn Hill is threatened by the scope of the present housing development there, which also could possibly destroy the nearby cliff stand of *Luina hypoleuca*, Silverback. Usually we see these creamy rayless flowers over in the Olympics; they home the Cascades and Coast Ranges, too. However, though considered a "beautiful mountain plant", according to Dr. Lewis J. Clark in Wild Flowers of British Columbia, and first observed by us in the Olympics, *Luina hypoleuca* has thrived for some years on a ledge above Finlayson Arm of Saanich Inlet. Now this area, too, is nearly inaccessible and its future in jeopardy due to the housing development around Jocelyn Hill.

Flower watching is like bird watching - the more observers get out in the field and note the species, the more sites will be discovered, and so the wider the distribution of our cliff hangers, miracles of life magic high up on the rocks.

### CAMP SQUAMISH

*by Lyndis Davis*

Katherine Sherman made arrangements for the Society to have a weekend at the Lions Camp at Squamish on May 9-11, and 38 members arrived for supper on Friday night. The camp had comfortable rooms for couples or 4 people, the food was plentiful and there was an indoor pool.

Birding was the top priority with most campers and we had the expertise of Alf Porcher and Rob McKenzie-Grieve as well as Peter Axhorn from Squamish. They led 'early morning birding' along the river dyke both days. Peter took us to the estuary of the Squamish River. There was a variety of habitats - slews, the railway line, marshy areas, the river and stands of deciduous and coniferous trees; consequently, many species could be observed.

We also went to Alice Lake for birding and botany. There was a good loop hike past three small lakes through cedar forest; unfortunately, very few flowers and not many birds.

The weather was quite cool though sunny. We saw most species of warbler, including a Black Throated Gray carrying nest material. There were 8 Western Tanagers, a Townsend's Solitaire and a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers in the campgrounds. Also seen were a Red-breasted Sapsucker, a Great Horned Owl, and a fawn-coloured crow on the river sand bar. The weekend species total was 92.

Margaret Jeal and Lyndis Davis disturbed a Northern Goshawk moments after it had captured a male wood-duck. The hawk left its prey to perch in the branches of an alder; the wood-duck 'limped' off across the slew into the overhanging brush - it was swimming very low in the water. The hawk was being mobbed by three crows, but stayed long enough for us to view it before taking off.

Katherine had arranged evening entertainment - a nature quiz, and Sharon Godkin taught a Scottish country dance. We also took advantage of the pool.

Several carloads made the 40-minute trip to Whistler Resort, others went to Shannon Falls or the trailhead to Diamond Head meadows.

It was a stupendous weekend and our thanks go to Katherine for all the work involved in finding, arranging and organizing.

### SQUAMISH BOTANY

*by Sharon Godkin*

Those few who took time to see the flowers found many charming plants not common in the Victoria area. The estuary was fragrant from the red and white flowers of vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) and the creamy panicles of red alderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*). Insects swarming to the blossoms attracted a variety of insect-eating birds magnetic to the birding contingent.

The abundant yellow trumpets of the Black Twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*) shrubs were claimed by pugnacious Rufous Hummingbirds. Common around the camp were Hooker's Fairy-bell (*Disporum hookeri* var. *oreganum*) and its look-alike cousins, the Twisted-stalks (*Streptopus amplexifolius* and *S. roseus*), Stink Currant (*Ribes bracteosum*), Swamp Black Currant (*Ribes lacustre*), and Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridum*). At higher elevations, blueberries (*Vaccinium alaskinsi*, *N. ovalifolium*) were blooming, the False Azalea (*Menziesia ferruginea*) spread its soft leaves, and the prim Western Teaberry (*Gaultheria ovatifolia*) was rebounding from the depressing weight of recently-departed winter snow. Delightfully aromatic sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), a shrub that likes lots of water, was found along the river bank and lake shore. In short, the Squamish area was rich in plants typical of high rainfall and mountainous habitats.

## A BOTANICAL FIND

*by Katherine Sherman*

In May 1984, Sharon Godkin and I, in the course of making a pre-Field Trip survey of the plant life in Uplands Park, came across a very unusual buttercup. Growing in a wet place, it was about 20" tall, with pale, yellowish-green stem and leaves. But it was the long, narrow shape of these leaves that made the plant so distinctive.

Later, from Hitchcock and Cronquist, FLORA OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, we found out it was Ranunculoid Alismaefolius, or Plantain-leaved Buttercup. Although listed in Dr. Szczawinski's FLORA OF THE SAANICH PENINSULA, it is described as "sporadic and decreasing". Some months later, when talking to Dr. Brayshaw of the Provincial Museum, he said he had never seen it and did not think there had been any recent records of it.

So, this last May when the plant re-appeared in the same spot, we phoned Dr. Brayshaw who came out and photographed it for Museum records. Although there was one small seedling nearby, no other specimens were found that day. Fortunately, about a week later, Sharon Godkin found eight other specimens growing in a vernal pool in another part of the Park. Let's hope the species will manage to survive and multiply!

If anyone else finds Ranunculoid Alismaefolius growing in any other location, I am sure the Museum would be interested.

## A LOST TOOTH FOUND AFTER 30 MILLION YEARS

*by Richard Kool  
Education Officer  
B.C. Prov. Museum*

From the early days of Victoria's history, the Sooke area has been a favourite vacation spot for the citizenry. For many years, its white sandy beaches have been a source of both fun and serious interest for many Victorians. Cliffs above many of the Sooke beaches are filled with fossils, and for years both amateur and professional naturalists have been going out to the beaches to poke around in the cliffs and have a good time.

Whether Miss Egerton of Victoria was primarily poking around in the cliffs, or just having a good time on the beach, no one knows. She was on the beach near what was then called Coal Creek. We now call it Kirby Creek, no doubt because there were 50 "Coal Creeks" on Vancouver Island at that time! The year was 1916, and it was summertime.

What Miss Egerton found was lost (so to speak) about 30 million years ago. At that time a hippopotamus-like animal lived in the shallow seas off of what is now Vancouver Island. No one knows very much about these animals, as they seem to have left no descendants. All they left us was a few of their bones and a couple of teeth.

The tooth that she found was unlike anything anyone at the Provincial Museum had ever seen. Similar teeth, however, had been found in California and Japan, and had been given the name Desmostylus hesperus (from the Greek desmo, meaning bundle, and stylus, meaning pillar). Miss Egerton's find was the first Desmostylus tooth found in Canada.

In 1921, Rev. Robert Connell and Ira E. Cornwall found a tooth similar to that found by Miss Egerton. Both fellows were local celebrities. The good Reverend was both a skilled writer for the Daily Colonist, a clergyman of note, and an early MLA representing the CCF. Mr. Cornwall worked at the quarantine station at William Head and was a noted Victoria naturalist. Cornwall felt that these teeth were sufficiently different from the California and Japanese tooth to give their fossils a new name: Desmostylus sookensis, in honour of the type locality.

A few years later, a noted biologist from the States decided that the Sooke tooth was even more different from the California and Japanese teeth than Cornwall had thought. He honoured the Victorian by renaming the animal from which the Sooke tooth came to Cornwallius sookensis. The newly named teeth were put on display in the old Provincial Museum, but did not stay here long.

May 24, 1928. The Cornwallius teeth were gone, stolen out of their display case. Imagine the dismay of the museum staff! The only specimens of their kind in the world, type specimen, lost. Then a fragment of the tooth was found in July 1930, hiding under a heater. Bill Newcombe, son of the more noted C.F. Newcombe, found the rest of the teeth in 1932. They were located on a moulding near the fossil case, wrapped in pages of the Vancouver Province and packed into a tobacco tin. As far as I know, they were never returned to the display case.

The teeth kicked around the museum for a number of years, and, as often happens to specimens not in the care of a curator, were again lost. We found them five years ago, this time in the museum's display division. As we now recognize their value, they are stored with the museum's other biological treasures in the type collection, no more to wander.

NOTICESNATURE CANADA BOOKSHOP:The World of Robert Bateman

The most exciting publishing event of 1985 will be the release in October of The World of Robert Bateman, an entirely new selection of 85 full-colour paintings by the well-known Canadian naturalist and artist, Robert Bateman. The artist's commentaries on his paintings show Bateman's skills as a naturalist and give the reader a fascinating insight into how a Bateman painting is created.

The Nature Canada Bookshop is offering a pre-publication discount for copies reserved by September 15th. For orders placed by September 15th, the cost will be \$45.00, with no postage and handling charge. After September 15th, our price will be \$45.00, plus a postage and handling charge of \$4.00. The suggested retail price is \$50.00.

As a member of a Canadian Nature Federation affiliate, you can reserve a copy by sending a cheque or money order for \$45.00 payable to Nature Canada Bookshop; or a Visa/Mastercard number and expiry date. Mail by September 15th to Nature Canada Bookshop, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6G1. Please indicate that you are a member of a CNF affiliated organization.

1985 Christmas and Annual Catalogues

If you would like to receive a copy of our 1985 colour Christmas catalogue and our 1985/86 40-page book catalogue, please write to Nature Canada Bookshop, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6G1 by August 15th, indicating that you are a member of a CNF affiliated organization. We will include your name as part of our mailing of the Bookshop's fall selection in September.

Mycology: For those interested in Fungi, there is a club in Vancouver. Contact: The Vancouver Mycological Society, c/o E.R. Tamblin, Secretary, 403 - 3rd St., New Westminster, B.C., V3L 2S1.



*"It amazes me how they find their way back each year."*

BIRD OBSERVATIONSAPRIL, 1985

No.	Species	Date	Area Seen	Observer
2	Barred Owl	1	UVic Campus	Scott Fowler
1	Western Screech-Owl	7	Francis Park	Keith Taylor
3	Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel	7	Haro Strait	Robin Baird
10M	Bonaparte's Gull	8	Porlier Pass	Dave Fraser
1	Cinnamon Teal	9	Witty's Lagoon	R. Mackenzie-Grieve
1	Semi-palmated Plover	10	Martindale Flats	M. & V. Goodwill
1	Harris' Sparrow	11	1071 Wain Road	Dave Fraser
1	Green-backed Heron	11	Swan Lake	Margaret Wainwright
1	White-throated Sparrow	11	3250 Exeter Road	Margaret Wainwright
2	Yellow-billed Loon	13	D'Arcy Island/Sidney	Swiftsure Tour Boat Trip
32	Eared Grebe	13	Zero Rock	" " "
1	Baird's Sandpiper	14	Interurban/Viaduct Flats	Keith Taylor, et al
1	Vesper Sparrow	16	Cobble Meadows	M. & V. Goodwill
1	Snowy Owl	20	Trial Islands	Mike Edgell
2	Horned Lark	24	Coburg Peninsula	J. & R. Satterfield
1	Lapland Longspur	24	Coburg Peninsula	J. & R. Satterfield
1	Short-eared Owl	27	Cedar Hill Golf Course	J. & R. Satterfield
1	Wandering Tattler	29	Victoria Golf Course	Ron Satterfield
2	Whimbrel	30	Trial Islands	Mark Nyhof

MAY, 1985

1	Marbled Godwit	1	Witty Beach	Barbara & Mike McGrenere
1	Solitary Sandpiper	1	Columbia Avenue	Bruce Whittington
1	Western Kingbird	3	Lohbrunner Road	Bryan Gates
4	Ruddy Turnstones	4	Sooke River Estuary	Bob Hay
2	Pectoral Sandpiper	5	Witty's Lagoon	Dave Fraser, et al
1	Common Barn-Owl	5	Lamont Road	Dave Fraser, et al
1	Wilson's Phalarope	7	Columbia Avenue	Bruce Whittington
1	Yellow-headed Blackbird	7	Martindale Road	Dave Fraser
1	Blue-winged Teal	8	Quick's Bottom	Leila G. Roberts
2	Redhead	9	McIntyre Reservoir	Bruce Whittington
1	Northern Oriole	10	Martindale at Lochside	Hank Vander Pol
1	Hudsonian Godwit	11	Cordova Spit	Gladys Anderson
2	Mourning Dove	13	McIntyre/McHugh Roads	Ian Gibson
2	Caspian Tern	17	Esquimalt Lagoon	Mike McGrenere
1	White-winged Crossbill	18	Swan Lake	Mike Bently
2	Tufted Puffin	18	Trial Islands	Mike Bently
180	Band-tailed Pigeon	20	7300 Block, Highway #17	J. & R. Satterfield
1	Lazuli Bunting	27	South Slope Mt. Newton	J.B. Tatum

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.*

SATURDAY, JULY 20

Birding Field Trip. - Quick's Bottom, Elk Lake and Beaver Lake.

Leader: Ed Coffin.

Meet Mayfair Lanes, 9:00 A.M.

AUGUST 2, 3, & 4

Proposed Botany & Birding Weekend to Mt. Washington.

Motel accommodation is available in Courtenay and R.V. parking at Lodge. Lodge will be open for washroom facilities.

If interested, contact Sharon Godkin, 386-1517 by July 15th.

AUGUST 10

Joint Birding Field Trip with Vancouver Natural History Society - to Sea and Iona Island.

Vancouver Natural History Society will meet the 7 A.M. Ferry (from Victoria) in Tsawwassen.

For pick-up, phone Leader Doug Kragh, 112-731-3831 by July 31st.

Meet as foot passengers on 7:00 A.M. Ferry to Tsawwassen or take your own car.