

The Victoria NATURALIST

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Society members visit Cattle Point, during a winter birding excursion.

©BERTHA GOW

The Haro Road

BY A.R. DAVIDSON

The Haro Road starts on Cedar Hill Cross road, opposite the Recreation Centre, and it certainly doesn't look very inviting, with a locked iron gate and a "No Admittance" sign hung on it, with a lot of waste land behind. But don't let these little things deter you from a walk down Haro. The sign is a legal device to absolve Oak Bay from any responsibility should a truck make a pass at you. This part of Haro is where the municipality deposits all the leaves and litter from Oak Bay streets and gardens. Further down are the vast compost heaps of leaves which in the spring and summer provide the most luxurious growth of plants of all kinds, masses of yellow flowering brassicas, also comfrey, burdock, marigolds, mallows,

fireweed, field chamomile, lesser celandine and many others. It is really quite a sight and a botanist's delight. Among them this summer was a most unusual specimen close to the path. It was about three feet across, bright green foliage, covered with yellow flowers, and the whole plant covered with sharp spines, the stems, leaves and the balls of seeds. We managed to detach a small branch and took it to Doris Page, one of our members, and an expert horticulturist, and she gave it the name of *Solanum rostratum*, a native of Mexico. It would be interesting to know how it managed to plant itself on a Haro Road compost heap.

Haro then becomes a woodland path joining the University jogging trail after which it is a black topped road with fields on both sides. A side road from here goes to the Atmospheric Research Station, once a private

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residence and from there one can walk down to Hobbs Road and Cadboro Bay. On the corner of Haro and Sinclair is the University House, and a walk down there would be rewarding (the public are welcome) as there you will find the largest arbutus tree we have ever seen, our measurements being 18 feet 2 inches in circumference. The road then crosses Sinclair, with Hobbs School on the right and continues past Arbutus Road down to the sea. All the property on both sides of Haro is part of the University grounds, including the forty-acre field on the other side of the Glen. I am very fond of this area and have enjoyed it for many years even before there was any university or Haro Road. All that was in the future. Then it was Michael Finnerty's farm, where the skylarks were released early this century.

Starting at the Cross Road, close to Haro but not visible from it, is the "Glen", which is a heavily wooded ravine paralleling Haro for much of its length. Some years ago we lived in a cottage on its edge at the end of Hobbs Road, and while there it was my favourite walk, as at that time there was a path from the cottage alongside the creek which has its start close by the tennis courts where there is a little swamp. Walking down the glen was like being in another world. Below the cottage its character changed and it became host to hundreds of small springs, which were channelled under Cadboro Bay Road and formed a skunk cabbage swamp almost at sea level. Then the developers came in, changed the swamp into a pool and created houses and roads. The road to it is called Mystic Lane, this name being derived from a story D.W. Higgins wrote about it, a century ago, which he titled "The Mystic Spring".

'Alert' Number Needs a New Home

After long providing excellent service to the Society's Rare Bird Alert system, the Goodwills have indicated they would like to have someone else take a turn. The Society sponsors the answering unit's own number, separate from your home one. The maintenance involves regularly updating the message, based on information phoned in. This keeps the membership (and visiting birders) informed about unusual species in our region, as well as about selected program and other upcoming events. Please contact Bruce Whittington (652-3525) or Dave Fraser (652-5934) to talk over your possible role in this worthwhile service. Thank you!

FREE REPLACEMENT COPIES ARE AVAILABLE FROM ED COFFIN, FOR MEMBERS WHO RECEIVE MISPRINTED ISSUES

Errata: SEPT-OCT. ISSUE WAS VOL. 43:2

For membership information and renewal please contact Ed Coffin (592-0964) or write V.N.H.S., Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C.

From the Editor

As the new editor it's customary to put in a note about the direction and needs of the magazine. As you have hopefully noticed the magazine has recently taken on a larger format with advertising and photographs throughout. Besides these changes I hope to introduce some new features to the magazine. These features or ideas have come from discussions with members and will begin to appear in future issues. Eventually I hope the magazine will take on a format where readers can expect certain departments to appear issue after issue, along with other articles. To obtain this material I have, and will, be in touch with various people in the scientific community, with specific fields of expertise. I'm happy to say that, so far, the response has been excellent.

Other areas such as articles by members and listings of club activities will remain as an important part of the magazine. As in the past, I am looking for scientific material, instructive articles, personal experiences, information on club activities and projects, humorous anecdotes, or whatever else that may be interesting reading. Letters to the magazine are also welcome and could provide an excellent way for members to participate in the society without necessarily taking part in club activities.

In the past, input from members has been somewhat mediocre. If it wasn't for the small industrious group who regularly submit articles, there would be nothing at all. I hope these people will continue to submit their writings but I also encourage other members, especially those who haven't written for the magazine before, to take part.

Articles should be typewritten and can range from a few sentences to approximately 350 words (please contact me if you feel more length is necessary). Photographs, relevant to articles or alone are also welcome. Field trip reports will also be published, as usual, but must be typewritten and will not be solicited. If you have any questions please contact me.

Finally, I welcome any ideas, from members, regarding the magazine. Turn idle complaints into constructive criticisms and send them to me:

Mark Nyhof
220 Beechwood Ave.
Victoria, B.C.
V8S 3W7

or phone me at 595-0232

JAN.-FEB. ISSUE COPY NEEDED NOV. 15

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA is now available directly through the V.N.H.S. Contact Lyndis Davis (477-9952).

Western Bluebird Report

BY CHARLIE TROTTER

In the fall, at the end of October 1985 Harold Pollock and I were monitoring the nesting boxes out at Rocky Point. In an old orchard, on the west side of the arsenal we watched a flock of 10-15 Western Bluebirds feeding among the trees and around the fences of an old corral. We were expecting to have a feeding program out there as we had had the previous winter. Such was not to be. The cold snap struck during the first week of November and the bluebirds simply disappeared.

Come Spring 1986, one pair showed on the Lundy Place on Pears Road, Metchosin. This pair used one of our boxes, producing 5 young birds which we banded when about twelve days old. One of the nestlings died but the other four fledged. The same parents built a second nest in an adjacent box, but unfortunately, we have no record of how many young birds were produced.

At the Scott's, where they nested in 1985, we were not so lucky. Mrs. Scott reported the arrival of three bluebirds (two males and one female) on February 28. They came to her window as they had the year before but only stayed a short time, then left, never to be seen again.

Our program got a tremendous boost when a young man, Calvor Palmateer, joined us. Calvor (interested in the nesting of Purple Martins) decided to take on the propagation of Western Bluebirds as well. We had had, in 1985, a report of a Western Bluebird sighting on Saltspring Island. Calvor, in looking across the water from the Malahat, decided that the west side of Mt. Tuam might be a likely spot for this species. This is a grassy area, pastured by sheep, where logging had taken place and through which fire had run a few years ago.

On his first trip over Calvor put up 12 boxes. We joined him later, bringing the total on Mt. Tuam to 74. All boxes were put up in sets of two. Bluebirds arrived and 5 pairs took up residence in the boxes. The result was that 21 young birds were banded and fledged. It is hoped that this area will become a nucleus from which a larger population will overflow into other likely spots.

It is sad to note that there are many casualties among these young birds. A couple of examples: One nest had four live birds and two dead ones; another had six dead birds. In both cases the young birds were well developed

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our birds from predators (raccoons, squirrels, hawks) and blow-fly parasites. Raccoons can sit on top of a nesting and reach into the hole to attack the occupants. Harold is trying to devise some sort of 'coon preventer'. We are hoping that the entomology department can help to alleviate the parasite problem.

We have difficulty with other birds (swallows and House Wrens chiefly) liking our nest boxes. Putting up boxes in pairs—one for Western Bluebirds, and one for others, is our current solution.

In the meantime, Harold is still making more boxes. He has made over 500 so far. He would welcome supplies of wood; short lengths of cedar boards (minimum width 5") and scraps of outdoor grade plywood.

Cowbirds on Vancouver Island

The following is an excerpt from an article in the September, 1955 issue of the *Victoria Naturalist*, by A.R. Davidson.

On May 17th, while taking in the bird life at the Cadboro Bay beach, a party of us saw a species which was new to us here, being brown and grey in solid colours, no streaks, and about the size of a Fox Sparrow. We agreed that it might have been a cowbird, but as they are rarely seen here, we were rather dubious.

However, a few weeks later, a report came in from a gentleman who lives close by, and who has a good knowledge of birds, that he had seen a cowbird in his garden, and gave us an accurate description. We were still somewhat doubtful, until he advised us on July 6th that he had seen a Yellow Warbler feeding a dark coloured bird much larger than itself. This episode, both he and his neighbours, saw several times. It is quite certain therefore, that a pair of cowbirds were in the vicinity of Cadboro Bay this spring, and that an egg had been laid in the Warblers' nest. Then in the March, 1956 issue of the magazine a letter appeared from A.L. Meugens.

On the 2nd of July, 1939, in company with Walter Maquire and Harry Middleton on a collecting trip at the far end of Sea Island, Vancouver, I had the luck to find a Yellow Warblers' nest containing three of the birds' eggs and one cowbird egg. The nest was in a wild rosebush about 12 ft. from the ground in a bunch of bushes adjoining a farm yard, where there were a number of redwings, Brewer's Blackbirds and one cowbird.

At that time it appeared the most westerly record for this bird and there seemed to be not other records this side of the Coast Range. Since then I have not heard of any other record until the one in the *Naturalist*.

Editors' note: As we all know the Brown-headed Cowbird, approximately twenty years later, is well established in Victoria and the lower mainland. For Victoria the Brown-headed Cowbird is now listed as common in summer and is often taken for granted as just another dark bird amongst blackbirds and Starlings.

The Northern Oriole, on the Saanich Peninsula

BY CHARLES HARPER AND KEITH TAYLOR

The earliest record of this species for the Peninsula and for Vancouver Island is of a male in the summer of 1934, at Deep Cove (pers. comm.). The first nesting records are for the summers of 1964 and 1965, on McKenzie Avenue at Fleet Street, Saanich, in a row of Lombardy poplars (pers. comm.). It is not known whether these nests were successful.

From 1966 to 1974 there were few observations: (Victoria) a sight record on May 23, 1968; a singing male tape-recorded in Gordon Head May 15 through June 5, 1969; a female 'Baltimore' oriole at a feeder on St. Patrick Street, Oak Bay, December 15, 1971 through March 28, 1972; and single sightings from Saanich in June 1972 and May 1973.

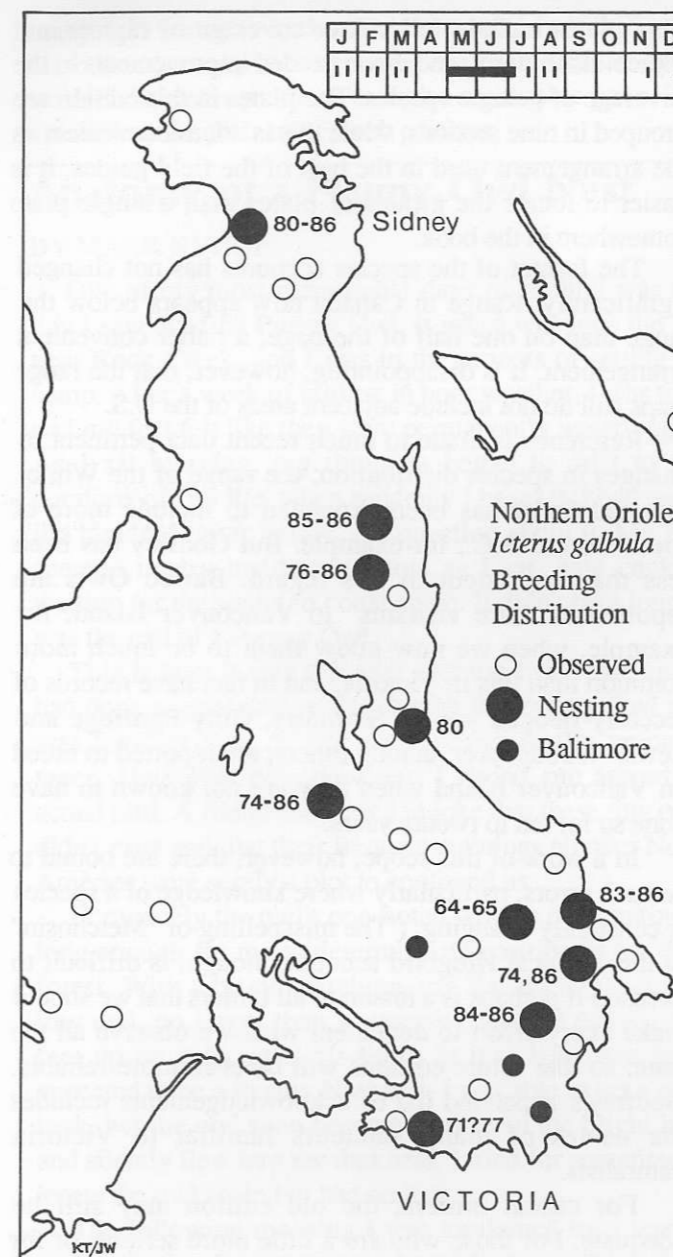
In 1974, two nesting pairs were found, one in alders at Gyro Park and the other in Lombardy poplars on West Saanich Road at Markham Street. The latter birds bred successfully, and adults have since appeared annually at this site, raising broods in 1976, 1979 and 1981-84.

Northern Orioles were again scarce from 1975 through 1978, but with a slight increase in sightings in 1977. In that year successful breeding was first recorded at Beacon Hill Park, although an old nest had been discovered there as early as 1972 (April 9).

From 1979 on, the number of observations has steadily increased. Northern Orioles may now be seen in May migration in small numbers ('very uncommon'), and at least seven nest sites are known to be present in 1986:

1. Mill's Cross Road at Meadland, in large-leaved maples. Birds have nested near here, in maples or poplars, from 1980 through 1986, all successful years.
2. Island View Road near McHugh Road, in a row of Lombardy poplars. The nest of a previous season was seen here in the winter of 1985/86, and with a pair resident in May, nesting is speculative for 1986.
3. Martindale Road at Lochside Drive, again in a row of Lombardy poplars. This site has had successful nests most years from at least 1982 to 1986; a male feeding two young was seen here as early as 1976 (July 3).
4. West Saanich Road at Markham Street, as discussed previously.
5. Locarno Lane, Gordon Head, in alders, 1983-1986. Nesting success has not been recorded.
6. Waring Place, Cadboro Bay, in an alder over a pond, where one young bird was raised, 1986.
7. Townley Place, Oak Bay, in cottonwoods, where nesting has been successful 1984 to 1986.

Addendum: Abbey Rd. Saanich (pair feeding young June 1980); a nest could possibly be found in this vicinity.



Breeding will also likely take place in the near future at King's Pond, where a male has sung during May of the past two years. This species traditionally nests near water, and has indeed tended to do so on the Peninsula.

The Northern Oriole arrives in early to mid-May, and fully-fledged young leave the nest in late June to early (rarely late) July. Both adults and juveniles soon disappear, with final sightings in late August. There are very rare winter records since 1971: a 'Bullock's' oriole November 16, 1976, and an adult male 'Baltimore' oriole November 24 - 26, 1984. One other record of the 'Baltimore' form exists: an adult male at Swan Lake from May 30 through June 2, 1981.

The observations on the map are a major selection only, to indicate range. We would appreciate hearing details of any nest sites not included in this article, including dates, street location and tree species, and nesting outcome.

Botany Night

The Victoria Natural History Society is pleased to again present Botany Night for its members and other interested person. This is an informal series of evening sessions held one night per month, the second Thursday, November through April. Leon Pavlick, Botany Curator, B.C. Provincial Museum (598-3147), will lead these sessions. It is planned to have guest speakers during the series as well as exchange by those attending. The first session is Thursday, November 13, 1986 at 7:30 p.m., in the Classroom of the B.C. Provincial Museum. Bring some slides and bring a friend!

CWS needs Barrow's Goldeneye reports

The Canadian Wildlife Service and the University of British Columbia have marked more than 200 Barrow's Goldeneye (mostly females) and 30 Harlequin Ducks with nasal disks and nasal saddles (plastic markers fitting through the nostril). They are easily visible with a telescope. Barrow's Goldeneye were marked near Riske Creek and near 100 Mile House, B.C. whereas Harlequin Ducks were captured near White Rock while molting. We are interested in locating as many birds as possible on their wintering areas.

If you see Barrow's Goldeneye this winter, could you check them for markers. If you see a marked bird, please report as soon as possible, the sex, date, location and, if possible, the colour and shape of each nasal disk to: Jean-Pierre Savard, Canadian Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 340, Delta, B.C. V4K 3Y3 Telephone (604) 946-8546 Thank you for your cooperation.

Book Review

BY BRUCE WHITTINGTON

The Birds of Canada

W. Earl Godfrey
National Museums of Canada, Ottawa
595 pp, hardcover \$39.95



One of the truisms of the world of bird books is that as soon as they are published, they are already out of date. And so it is that we will always see revisions and updates of our favourite books through the years.

Birds of Canada by W. Earl Godfrey, is of course no exception. It continues a tradition established by the National Museum of Canada with Percy A. Taverner's *Birds of Eastern Canada*, *Birds of Western Canada*, and finally *Birds of Canada*. These books took Canadians

through the early days of popular bird study, but eventually it was recognized that a new work was needed.

In 1966, Godfrey saw publication of the first edition of his own *Birds of Canada*, that wonderful book with the other wordly Arctic Tern on the dust jacket. For some 18 years, this book was the standard Canadian reference, envied by birders from other countries. But the birds could not leave well enough alone, and continued to change their ranges, their numbers, and even their names. In response to these changes, we now have the 1986 Revised Edition of Godfrey's *Birds of Canada*.

As one would expect, the revised edition is as current as can be, given the inexorable passage of time following the cut-off date of December, 1984. The number of species known to have occurred in Canada is now set at 578, plus 37 hypotheticals, as compared with 518 and 20 in the 1966 edition. An additional 67 species are now illustrated in the plates by John A. Crosby. Victoria birders will note that our Anna's Hummingbirds have finally been "accepted". Some of the plates have been improved to better reflect the current level of field identification expertise: the Western Flycatcher now has the correct almond-shaped eyering, for example.

Species names and taxonomic order follow the American Ornithologist's Union *Checklist of North American Birds* (Sixth Edition 1983) with the notable exception that Godfrey has listed Thayer's Gull as a subspecies of Iceland Gull, a move which will likely be followed by the A.O.U.

Apart from these changes in content, the new edition has undergone some physical changes as well. It is slightly larger and sports a dustjacket of more durable plastic stock. The paper seems to be superior to that of earlier editions. The quality of the plates has improved significantly. The reproduction is sharper and colour separation is better. The general appearance is cleaner and more vibrant. The plates are finally cross-referenced to the appropriate page in the text, and species names are printed directly on the plates.

New plates include full-colour coverage of raptors and shorebirds in flight, and much needed improvements in the coverage of pelagic species. The plates in this edition are grouped in nine sections; while this is not as convenient as the arrangement used in the best of the field guides, it is easier to locate the groups of plates than a single plate somewhere in the book.

The format of the species accounts has not changed significantly. Range in Canada now appears below the range map on one half of the page, a rather convenient arrangement. It is disappointing, however, that the range maps still do not include adjacent areas of the U.S.

Reference is made to much recent data pertinent to changes in species distribution; the range of the White-throated Swift has been expanded to include more of south-eastern B.C., for example. But Godfrey has been less than consistent in this regard. Barred Owls are reported as "rare visitants" to Vancouver Island, for example, when we now know them to be much more common than this in Victoria, and in fact have records of recently-fledged young. Similarly, Gray Partridge and Lewis' Woodpecker, among others, are reported to breed on Vancouver Island when they are not known to have done so for ten to twenty years.

In a work of this scope, however, there are bound to be such errors, particularly where knowledge of a species is constantly changing. (The misspelling of "Metchosin" in the Tropical Kingbird account, though, is difficult to excuse.) It perhaps is a lesson to all birders that we should make every effort to document what we observe all the time, so that future editions will be even more reliable. Godfrey's expanded list of acknowledgements includes the names of many amateurs familiar to Victoria naturalists.

For casual birders, the old edition may still be adequate. For those who are a little more serious, or for anyone who does not own an earlier edition, this Revised Edition is a most useful addition to the library. Indeed,

many will consider it essential. The price is \$39.95, and there are not many nations which can boast so thorough a work on its native avifauna at such a reasonable price. It is available in English and French editions.

Anatomy of a Pygmy Owl Nest

BY MARK NYHOF

One of my most memorable days of birding was the day I saw my first Pygmy Owl. It was a wet June the 7th near Rock Creek, and I was in the process of setting up camp. After a week of birding in poor weather, I was tired and my feet felt like they were permanently waterlogged. As I sat relaxing, my thoughts began to drift to the comforts of city life, when suddenly I heard it. I had heard it a hundred times before. No question about it. My feet seemed to dry inside my boots as I sat, ears cocked, waiting for the sound to come again. It didn't take long. It was the call of a Pygmy Owl.

This is how it was that wet evening two years ago. I had done a great deal of reading on the Pygmy Owl and was familiar with its call from commercially prepared tapes. Until this day, however, I hadn't run across an actual bird. A friend and I used to joke that these tiny owls didn't exist and that their frequent sightings all over North America were surely a plot to confound us.

Fortunately the owl's one-noted whistle call continued long enough for me to determine its position in the dark forest. With a bit of searching, my flashlight caught the tiny owl, no larger than a sparrow, perched twenty five feet up on a Douglas-fir limb. In its claws was what appeared to be a Pygmy Nuthatch. I was able to get a good look, but the owl soon became restless in the bright light and silently flew into the darkness. I tried for sometime to locate the owl again but had no luck.

The following morning I was awakened by a terrible racket coming from the spot where I had seen the owl the night before. Upon investigation I found the owl perched almost in the same spot again, with prey in its claws and surrounded by three angry robins. With my binoculars I could see its prey was again a bird, but this time it was a one-quarter fledged nestling! Before I could be surprised another owl appeared and took the prey from the first bird. The two sat for a brief moment and then the first bird, probably the male, flew off with the robins in tow. Now its mate, probably the female, transferred the prey from her beak to her claws and flew to three different perches, occasionally uttering the single note call as she sat. Finally at one perch she began a series of chattering or sizzling calls which sounded like the calls of young Screech Owls begging for food. I was now sure I was near the nest when suddenly she flew, with the prey in her talons, to a point in the forest about twenty feet away, and disappeared. I moved quickly to where she had flown, and as I approached I could hear what sounded like the chattering of several young. Following the sound, my eyes suddenly focused on the nest hole. It was a woodpecker



© MARK NYHOF

cavity ten feet up in a rotten section of a living Douglas-fir. As I approached to get a closer look a head appeared at the entrance, watched me for a moment, and then dropped back into the nest cavity.

By now, the female was gone, but the young were still restless from their last feeding and could be coaxed to appear at the nest entrance hole by imitating the one-noted call. After observing the young for some time, I decided to return at dusk hopefully to observe feedings.

I returned at 7:45 p.m. and observed two feedings. The first prey item appeared to be some type of small rodent, while the second feeding appeared to be a Red-breasted Nuthatch. The adults and the young soon became accustomed to my presence and I was able to watch feedings from an adjacent slope which put me at eye level, only eight feet from the nest cavity. As the evening progressed, I observed two more feedings and took some photographs. Both of these prey items appeared to be birds.

The following morning, I returned and found a fledgling roosting in a small fir only two feet off the ground and fifty feet from the nest site. The owlet was completely helpless and sat motionless. I was even able to massage its head.

Back at the nest cavity the feedings continued, and like before a quarter-fledged nestling, about the size of a sparrow, was brought to the nest. It appeared as though the owls were simply plucking nestlings from nearby nests and feeding them to their young. I have never read of this kind of behaviour, but it seems most efficient.

By now I was ready to move on, so it was time to climb

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the tree and count the young. Using a device I made for looking into nest holes, I carefully poked it into the entrance of the nest cavity. To my surprise, I saw six owlets staring at me. All prepared to be ready to leave the nest very soon. With the addition of the one already out, it made for a family of seven owlets. Including the adults, I had seen nine Pygmy Owls in one day. I felt very smug and couldn't wait to tell my friend that the owls did actually exist.

When I finally left the area I felt uneasy, thinking I should relish the find as long as I could. But I thought it would be best to leave the nest alone, especially during the vulnerable time when young are leaving the nest.

Naturally, the following year I returned to the nest site. This time it was early May, and as I approached the nest tree my mind worked overtime conjuring up great images of an incubating bird on a huge clutch of fifteen eggs. It was not to be. As so often has been my experience with small cavity nesting owls, the nest was empty and has remained unused. Oh well, I still have the memory of those days. By the way, I haven't seen a Pygmy Owl anywhere since.



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THE NATURALIST'S GUIDE TO THE VICTORIA REGION

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V8R 6N4

Saanich Park Referendum

On Saturday, November 15th, Saanich Municipality is holding a Parks Referendum to authorize purchase of parkland over the next five years. Three classes of park acquisition are being considered:

a) Subregional Parks

Christmas Hill	8.2
Glencoe Cove	5.3
Colquitz (partial)	5.0
Gorge Waterway	.3 ha
	18.8

b) Community Parks

8.6

c) Neighbourhood and natural parks

1.9

Total 29.3

Saanich Council has adopted a standard of 5.1 hectares/1000 residents. Acquisition of the 29.3 hectares (72 acres) over the next five years would retain this standard according to 1991 population estimates.

The cost of acquisition of 29.3 hectares of parkland is estimated to be \$6,910,000. What this means to Saanich property owners is a total cost through taxes of approximately \$8.00 on a \$100,000 residential property over the next five years.

Christmas Hill is an important part of this referendum. Because Christmas Hill is potentially such a valuable

The Rose Hips Thawed

By Mary-Lou Florian

Split separates of the snake fence steamed
Reflected heat of the firesun off the iced pond

My long black shadow dulled the crystal gilded weeds
in the sparkling meadow

The gilded leaves
the lace-like panicles of the velvet grass
the recurved clinging leaves of the goldenrod
the spike clump seeded heads of reeds
the prostrate crosshatch of leaves and stems
of meadow grass and others

The ice brittle weeds crunched under foot

Beyond my long black shadow
a rose bush - it too was crystal gilded

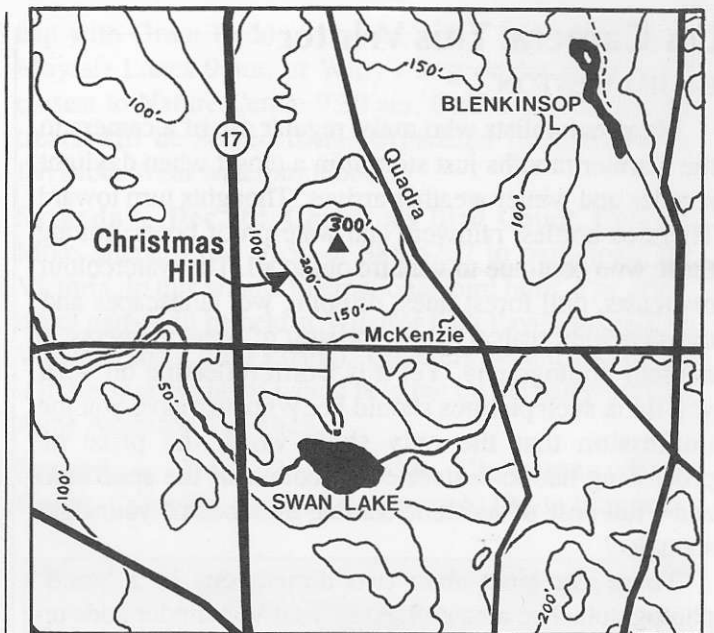
The orangehips
with tentacle sepals
encrusted with nodules of frost

The rotten brown hips
thawed greased wet

The purple horn thorned branches held brittle ice webs
of long gone spiders

A rustle in the thicket an unknown chirp
and I too was long gone.

Dec. 1985, Denman Island



component of the Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, and because the hill is presently under the threat of small-lot subdivision, the Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society urges Saanich residents to give careful consideration to this referendum, and turn out on November 15th to vote. (If you are not a Saanich resident, maybe you could pass this information on to someone who is.)

Terry Morrison, Manager
Swan Lake/Christmas Hill
Nature Sanctuary

The Ruddy Turnstone

BY KEITH TAYLOR

It is not surprising that most Victoria birders find this colourful shorebird uncommon. The spring passage is very quick with individuals showing in late April and with the major migration in early to mid May and in lesser numbers until late May. The bulk of these birds (flocks occasionally containing 50-60 birds) are found at Sooke River estuary and Whiffin Spit.

In early - to mid-July this species returns. The bulk of the species is isolated again, this time at Chatham and Discovery Islands (and to a lesser extent all outer islets) where flocks of 20 - 40 birds are found. The passage continues through early September.

During both passages numbers are found at the usual "turnstone" localities: Esquimalt Lagoon, Witty's Lagoon, Bowker Creek, Clover Point, Sooke River estuary etc. More individuals are found at these localities in the prolonged fall migration.

Lesser numbers are seen until mid-September, and stragglers are seen until mid-October. Rare individuals have been seen throughout the winter. The Ruddy Turnstone is somewhat erratic in numbers but is a locally common passage migrant.

On Camera, This Winter

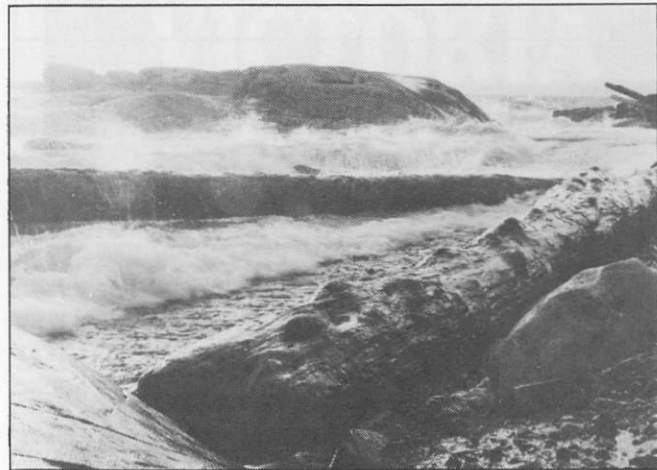
BY JIM WESTON

Many naturalists who make regular use of a camera in the warmer months just store it in a closet when daylight recedes and winter weather arrives. Thoughts turn toward Thermos bottles, rainwear and waterproof boots, among those who continue to venture out at all. The watercolour overcasts, dull forest hues, dripping wet landscapes and transient light scarcely seem the stuff of 'great moments' in outdoor photography. Yet it is worth reflecting on what you think such pictures should be. Whoever gave you the impression that the only shots worth the price of processing had to feature every colour of the spectrum, and a full dose of sunshine coming from behind your right shoulder?

There are more than two dimensions in a 'good' photograph. The area defined in your viewfinder adds up to more than width times height. As the photographer, not just the viewer of a print on the wall, you have had the benefit of experiencing the subject in person. In the face of adverse weather, muddy trails, and 'impossible' light conditions, the photographer who persists can bring home pictures that are genuine souvenirs of a winter outing.

Bigger really can mean 'better' when it comes to looking at the results of your 'off-season' photography. If you judge your shots by examining machine-made 3 x 5"

Holland Point



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East Sooke Park

© JIM WESTON

or 4 x 6" prints, you are not seeing all the details that are in the film. These are often the details you appreciated when you were on the scene: the intricate network of bare branches, the frozen dew, subtle shades in distant cloudbanks. A lot of this can, indeed, be captured without the need for large-format equipment. A custom enlargement can bring in sky values that were invisible on your smaller print, and open up shadow details you never realized were there.

Winter photography is easier with some preparation and a few equipment aids. Load up your film before you get outside, and try the 200 and 400 ASA speeds that were unnecessary in the brighter months. Keep a skylight, or warmer amber filter on your lens, to offset the blueness of indirect or overcast light. These will have more effect than just a UV filter. Some sort of filter must be kept on if you are shooting winter surf, to ensure no salt gets on coated lens surfaces. Bring along a collapsible umbrella - it will let you take the time to compose a shot, even in a downpour, without worrying about the camera. In such situations, it helps to have the camera on a tripod. The most useful tripods have independently adjustable leg angles, but any model will enable you to get sharp exposures in even the gloomiest woods.

When the leaves are down, more light reaches riversides and ravines. In wet conditions, mosses and ferns are at their best. As freezing temperatures set in, closeups on frosted vegetation present a challenge in sharpness and composition. Prolonged freeze-ups let you venture into areas that would be too muddy at other times, and of course a few centimetres of snow in the Victoria area provides a rare opportunity to photograph animal tracks. Remember to overexpose by a stop, or adjust your ASA dial, to prevent your camera from recording the snow as grey.

Let the winter months be a time in which you photograph in terms of how the outdoors feels, rather than how it 'should' look. Mechanically, your camera will appreciate continued use, and subjectively you will become both a better photographer and a more observant naturalist.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER PROGRAM

Please meet at the location indicated for each trip. No cars can be left at Mayfair Lanes. For field trips bring a lunch and be equipped for changes in the weather. **Always phone the Rare Bird Alert: 382-5562 the week before** a trip you plan to take, in order to obtain full particulars or details about changes (sometimes unavoidable) that have been made. On V.N.H.S. trips participants usually pool vehicles to reduce parking problems and costs. A considerable fuel bill can be run up on a trip; consuming 5 to 10¢ a kilometre. The Board suggests that these costs be shared with the driver. Contact Lyndis Davis at 477-9952 if you want to borrow the Society scope for a scheduled trip.

Saturday, Nov. 8: UVic Woods Birding with leaders Barbara and Alan Irwin. Meet at Parking Lot 1 (check Ring Road info boards for location). Meet at the chip trail, at corner of lot, at 8 a.m.

Saturday, Nov. 8: Mushroom Identification at Iron Mine Bay; field trip with leaders Drs. Adolf and Olung Ceska, Botanists at the BCPM and UVic. Meet Mayfair Lanes 9 am or at Pike Road parking lot (trailhead to the bay) 10 am. Wear waterproof boots.

Tuesday, Nov. 11: 'Poppies: of Flanders Fields and Others'; slide talk by Mary-Lou Florian (Past Pres. V.N.H.S.). General Meeting will follow. All welcome; bring a friend.

Thursday, Nov. 13: Botany Night 7:30 pm, BCPM Classroom, with Leon Pavlick, Botany Curator, BCPM. Bring some slides.

Sunday, Nov. 23: Elk/Beaver Lakes Birding with Ken Morgan. Meet at new boathouse beside Pat Bay Hwy. 9 am.

Wednesday, Nov. 26: Birders Night 7:30 pm, BCPM Classroom via main door. Information and planning for the Christmas Bird Count. Bring some slides; coffee served.

Saturday, Dec. 6: Gull Identification for the Christmas Bird Count at Goldstream River. Area count leaders should try to attend. Meet at Helmcken Park & Ride 9 am, or at Goldstream picnic area 9:30 am.

Tuesday, Dec. 9: 'A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A COASTAL GRIZZLY BEAR' presented by Eric Lofroth, Wildlife Biologist, Wildlife Br. General Meeting will follow. All welcome. 'The Naturalist's Guide to the Victoria Region' will be on sale for the first time, and at a special price.

Thursday, Dec. 11: Botany Night 7:30 pm, BCPM Classroom, with Leon Pavlick, Botany Curator, BCPM. Bring some slides and a friend.

Saturday, Dec. 13: The Indians' Use of Witty's Lagoon, as Seen in its Archaeology, a special field

trip with Grant Keddy, Archaeologist, BCPM. Meet at Mayfair Lanes 9 am, or Witty's Lagoon 1st parking lot closest to Nature Centre 9:30 am. Coffee and Christmas treats will be served there. Organized by CRD Parks Division. Wear waterproof boots.

Saturday, Dec. 20: Christmas Bird Count. Contact Mike Shepard 658-5850 or 388-4227 to participate for Victoria, in this annual international 'bird blitz'. The after-count party will be held at Windsor Park Pavillion (park on Windsor and Currie Roads). 'Counters' would appreciate it if the 'non-counters' would help put on the party: contact Anne Adamson 598-1623.

Saturday, Dec. 27: Sooke Christmas Bird Count. Call Mike Shepard if you would like to take part.



Bufflehead

© JIM WESTON

Junior Program

Join the Juniors: Any age up to 12 welcome. Come and bring your friends. Phone Bianca Message (after 5 pm) at 595-4254 and let her know you are coming and also if you are bringing a friend. Parents are welcome.

Saturday, Nov. 15: Salmon Spawning Observation, Goldstream Park. Meet at covered picnic area. 10 am to 12 noon.

Saturday, Dec. 6: Fascinating Rose Hips, at Freeman King Visitor Centre. Bring snack. 10 am to 12 noon.

Saturday, Dec. 20: Migratory Birds at Swan Lake. Meet at the Swan Lake Nature Centre. 10 am to 12 noon.

CONTRIBUTORS are encouraged to include photographs along with their articles. We can reproduce from slides but prefer 4" x 6" colour or black and white prints. The composition and contrast between elements should be strong enough to 'hold up' in black and white printing.

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