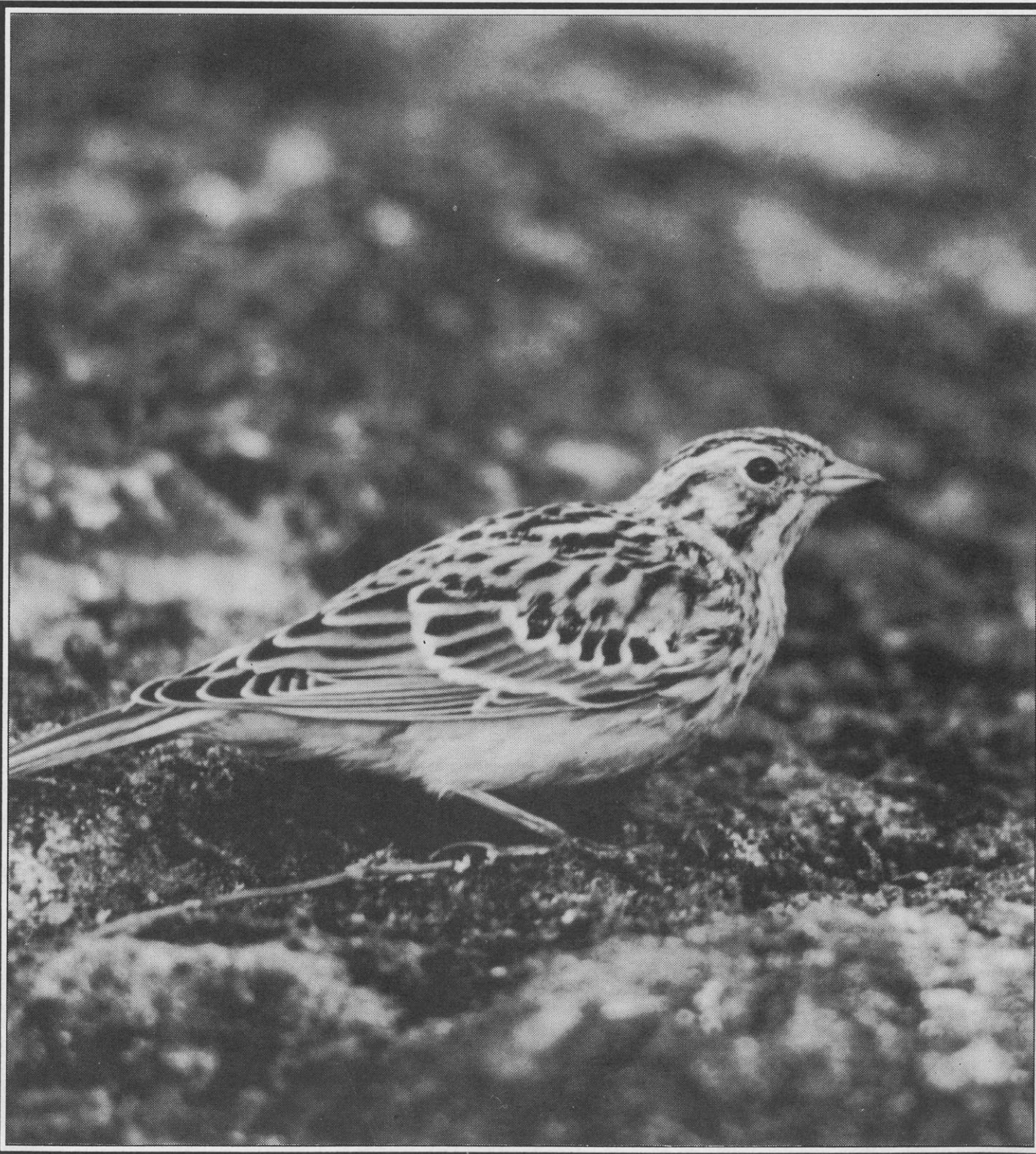


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The Victoria NATURALIST

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Our Cover

By Tim Zurowski

This month's cover photo of a Smith's longspur was taken by Tim Zurowski of Victoria. The bird represents the first sighting for Vancouver Island, which was present for several days last September up on Mount Tolmie. Tim has had previous photos published by *The Victoria Naturalist*, including one of a Kittlitz's murrelet found off Victoria's south coast, a Canadian first. Tim has also has photos in the new *Birds of British Columbia* (Campbell et al., 1990), in *Canadian Wildlife* and *Hummingbirds*, both published by Image Bank, and *Waterbirds of the World*, published by the Audubon Society. Tim has recently returned from Florida with many good slides which he will be showing at the October, 1991 "Birders' Night" meeting.

This Issue

The articles in this issue of the *Victoria Naturalist* are mostly about birds. While many of our readers are interested in this subject we would like to encourage material on other topics such as stories on plant and animal communities in our region, reptiles and amphibians, native use of plants, or even insects. This is your chance to be a published author.

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Playing Chopsticks With Herons

By Grace Cockburn

A few years ago we had the great good fortune to live opposite a Great Blue Heron colony, at the very top end of Portage Inlet. At high tide, the foot of our garden was waterfront; at low tide it was a mudflat. A wonderful variety of wildlife was on parade for our enjoyment and on top of our list were the herons.

The colony was on the far side of the mudflat, in a clump of rather scraggly Douglas Firs. At one point there were ten active nests that we knew about. Several of the nests were visible from our windows and we were able to follow the herons through the business of raising their families.

First came the early labours of nest repairing, which involved very tall birds manipulating very long sticks while trying to balance on impossibly thin, wavering fir branches. Small wonder the nests aren't neat.

After the peaceful interlude of incubation came the frantic and noisy business of trying to keep enough groceries in the house to satisfy their growing broods. In this stage, the parent herons made endless flights to and from the nests, beaks loaded with fish, crabs, frogs - whatever daily specials the inlet offered. Fascinated, we would watch those wide, wide wings tuck and fold themselves to avoid the tangle of branches through which they flew. We never saw a collision.

Young herons are not only impossible to fill up (they have very long "hollow legs"), they are impossibly noisy at meals. A colony is not a peaceful place at the best of times. Heron voices are rough and raucous. Heron parents are easily (and understandably) upset by crows, ravens, eagles, and other threats to eggs and young, and are not shy about raising the alarm. Add the usual mix of territorial squabbles and general conversation and you have a dawn to dusk cacophony.

But when a parent heron returns to the colony with dinner, the noise level increases exponentially. Hungry young herons respond to the arrival of a meal by clacking their beaks together. The beaks are very long, hard and hollow and they reverberate like brittle drums. CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACK! CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACK! On the "squeaky wheel" principle, the young heron who can clack the loudest in an sensitive parental ear is the first (and maybe only) one to get fed. Thus, each and every sibling in the nest is encouraged to be as loud and obnoxious as possible, and while one of the brood is happily having half-chewed frog rammed down his throat, the clacking of his nestmates increases in frantic appeal.

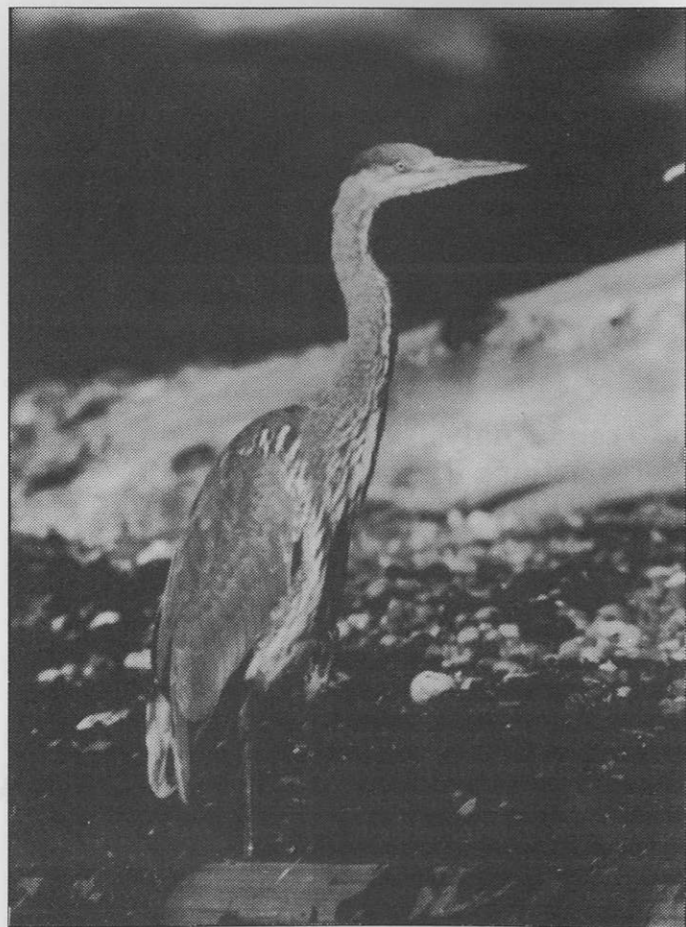
The noise from one nest is shattering but what really happens is that the young herons in every nest in the colony get in on the act. It has the same general effect seen when one child at the baseball game is presented with the treasured small brown bag of penny candy. Me too, me too! CLACKETY CLACKETY!

One of my favourite memories involves this feeding

response, and it still brings a smile. One summer we were raising "Cornelius", a baby crow who had fallen from his nest (another story). We had built a large cage in the back yard and, in imitation of parent birds, we made our own multitudinous trips out there to feed him. We would remove him from the cage and let him sit on the top of the fence, which was the perfect height for comfortable feeding. The process was frequent, and took a while, so comfort was important. His staple diet was canned dog food, which we crammed down his throat on the end of a wooden chopstick.

Quite innocently, we had developed the habit of tapping the chopstick on the fence rail to get his attention, a sort of supper call which became a way to bring him back to us if he wandered too far down the fence. One evening, I banged the chopstick a bit louder than usual and from the colony came an answering volley of baby blue herons. CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACK! Not sure at first that it might not just be coincidence, I banged the chopstick again. Clack, clack, clack on the fence. CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACKETY CLACK from the colony. I called my husband and demonstrated for him. Same response. It was great fun.

But I felt guilty all the same. It was dusk. Exhausted parent herons had just settled their demanding offspring for the night. It was too dark to go fishing. I could sympathize - it was like the 2:00 a.m. feeding where you drop the last bottle of formula in the house and the baby just won't understand. CLACKETY CLACKETY. The baby herons went on and on.



Great blue heron. (Photo: Steve Pridgeon)

Their clatter was joined by impatient, querulous, adult heron voices demanding to know what the problem was. I returned Cornelius to his cage and went back indoors. I can't say I never played "Chopsticks" with the herons again. I did. But never at night.

Finally the time comes when the heron parents can begin to teach their youngsters to fly and (even better) find their own groceries. Watching a young blue heron learn to fly is a nerve-wracking experience. Like all young birds, herons go through a "Woodstock" phase, where their enthusiasm is ahead of their skill. But most young flyers don't have quite such a long gangly body to coordinate. The heron is the ultimate awkward adolescent. If he manages to cock his neck back in the approved manner, his legs will swing out on him. It is all very difficult.

But somehow they manage and come tumbling out of the trees in their parents' wake to learn to fish and hunt. At first they aren't very good at it, frankly, and spend a lot of time splashing and striking at nothing at all, and ruining a good day's fishing for everyone. But going home hungry is a good lesson and they catch on quickly.

Finally the big day comes and a young heron goes fishing solo. Another favourite memory involves this stage of development. One of the young herons wobbled down from the trees on a misty late summer day. He was doing quite well, all things considered, although his landing was a long stumbling run which left him well splattered with mud. Never mind. He was down in one piece. After a moment to collect himself he set about the business of finding lunch.

There was a tentative, careful quality about his movements that was endearing. Not the deliberate assured movements of his parents, whose pauses are canny and considered. No, these pauses were due to his not being entirely sure what to do next, and needing time to think and remember his lessons. One could almost see the "Heron Manual" in his mind as he reviewed, step by step, what he had been taught about fishing: "Stand up straight." Right. "Tuck wings firmly in place." Check. "Raise one leg." O.K. Oops, balance! Whew! "Tuck in chin - all the way back." Good. "Stand still and wait." All right. "Now - STRIKE!"

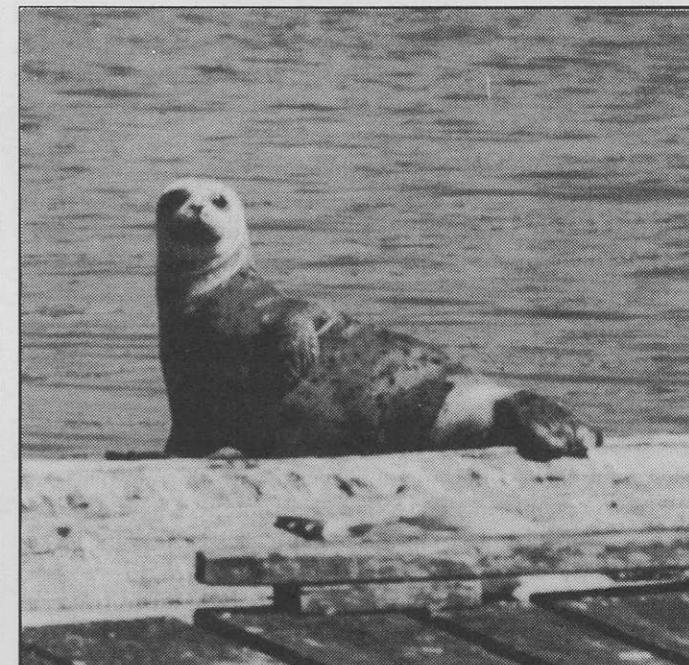
His neck stretched out, his head flew forward, and his beak buried itself in the mud with a "schlock". He came back up encased in mud from shoulder to beak, shaking his head furiously, flinging mud from his eyes and otherwise empty beak. I don't suppose he was self-conscious, but he certainly looked it. He glanced over his shoulder, shuffled his feet a few times, shook his head, and resettled his wings. Then the gleam of determination re-entered his eye and he set out to try again.

And again, the "instruction manual" was reviewed. He stood up straight. He tucked in his wings and chin. He raised one foot, found his balance, and stood there. He counted to ten. And once again he flung his face into the mud and came up begrimed and spluttering and unrewarded.

He was tenacious, if nothing else. We watched him for almost half an hour. Time and again, he shook off the clinging goo of the tidal flat and, with touching faith in authority, reviewed his instructions and followed them to the letter. In the end, wearing enough mud to put his take-off in the miracle class, he left, still hungry. I felt so sorry

for him. He had done his best. He had followed the rules. He had done everything right. Except for one thing. It was low tide. No water. No fish.

Postscript: I have to add that, today, there is also no colony and no herons. The stand of douglas fir where the herons lived was privately owned by an old man who loved the herons. We tried to convince the authorities to purchase the land for a sanctuary, but we weren't successful. A few years later the old man died, the land was sold, and the douglas firs were thinned and replaced with houses. The herons were displaced and dispersed. I read this story to my sons and my elder one, at ten, sighs and says, with regretful acceptance as he has before: "And I'll never see it."



Harbour seal. On August 18, Bev. Glover and Phoebe Dunbar will lead a trip to a little known grotto which houses a seal nursery. See Calendar, Page 22, for details. (Photo: © Robin Baird)

New Publications Committee Chair Appointed

The Victoria Natural History Society welcomes Michelle Choma as the new Chair of the Publications Committee. Michelle, who moved back to the Island last year after a hiatus in North Vancouver, brings a wealth of experience to *The Victoria Naturalist*. She was Contents Editor for the Vancouver Natural History Society's publication, *Discovery* and is an avid outdoor enthusiast. We welcome Michelle to our team.

The Naturalist would also like to thank its past Chair, Dannie Carsen, for his invaluable help over the past several years. Dannie was instrumental in developing the present format of the magazine and contributed many hours gathering articles, collecting photographs, and editing and proofing draft manuscripts. We wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours.

Point Pelee: The Birds of Spring

By Sue Cumming

In May, the peak period of spring migration, birds are just about everywhere. During the period of May 4th to 12th Ontario's Point Pelee National Park saw the return of the black and white warbler, least flycatcher and white-eyed vireo—and large numbers of a different species: the Tilly-hatted, sneaker-footed, Canadian birder.

The apex of Point Pelee is Canada's most southern mainland at north latitude 41° 55', and lies south of part or all of seventeen states of the United States, including northern California. Point Pelee was established as a national park in 1918. The migration of birds, perhaps more than any other natural phenomena, has made Point Pelee world famous among ornithologists.

For me, making the pilgrimage to Pelee was the realization of a dream. If you want to see birds this is the place to be. Sadly though, numbers have been declining over the last few years and experts told me they were down again this year. Nevertheless, to a western birder, the migration to southern Ontario brought a colourful collection of 49 lifers. A first glimpse of an indigo bunting, a Blackburnian warbler or an American redstart, was a view of feathered jewels.

Our trip began in Toronto and worked its way southwestward to Point Pelee, with a first stop at the Toronto Islands where chimney swifts mingled overhead with tree, barn and Northern rough-winged swallow. En route to Chatham, good numbers of red-tailed Hawks, American kestrels and turkey vultures were seen. Saint Clair National Wildlife Area produced bobolinks, black-crowned night herons, rose-breasted grosbeaks, a lone wood thrush, and Forster's terns.

High winds and driving rain accompanied us on the ferry crossing to Pelee Island. The little boat pitched and tossed throughout the one and a half hour crossing. Twelve intrepid birders, green around the gills, staggered ashore hoping the trip would be worth the nausea—it was!

Pelee Island, in the western basin of Lake Erie, is overlooked by most naturalists. This is unfortunate, for it has so



Virginia rail calling. (Photo: Tim Zukowski)

much of interest in the natural world. It is located about 50 miles southeast of Windsor, Ontario and a similar distance northwest of Cleveland, Ohio. The island is a limestone dome which has been glaciated and glacial striae or grooves can be observed on exposed rock in a number of places. The bare rock displays many fossils, particularly corals, indicating a much warmer climate millions of years ago. A deposit of clay was left by the last ice-sheet.

When the winds dropped and the rain abated, the woods of Fish Point and Brown's Point produced the best birds of the whole trip. Hundreds of ruby-crowned kinglets and yellow-rumped warblers aside, these areas were rich with yellow-throated vireos, redheaded woodpeckers, and an elusive Carolina wren. The list of warblers included Nashville, Cape May, Northern parula, Blackburnian, black-throated blue, and chestnut-sided, as well as American redstarts. Scarlet tanagers and orchard orioles were also present. A glimpse along the shore gave us a good look at great black-backed gulls in various plumages.

Our group not only sought birds but became involved in beach clean-ups. While reaching into the underbrush for cans, plastic bottles, and other debris, we flushed a black-billed cuckoo. Overhead, a blue-gray gnatcatcher flitted from branch to branch, giving sideways twitches of its long tail. A white-eyed vireo sought insects along the limbs of an adjacent tree.

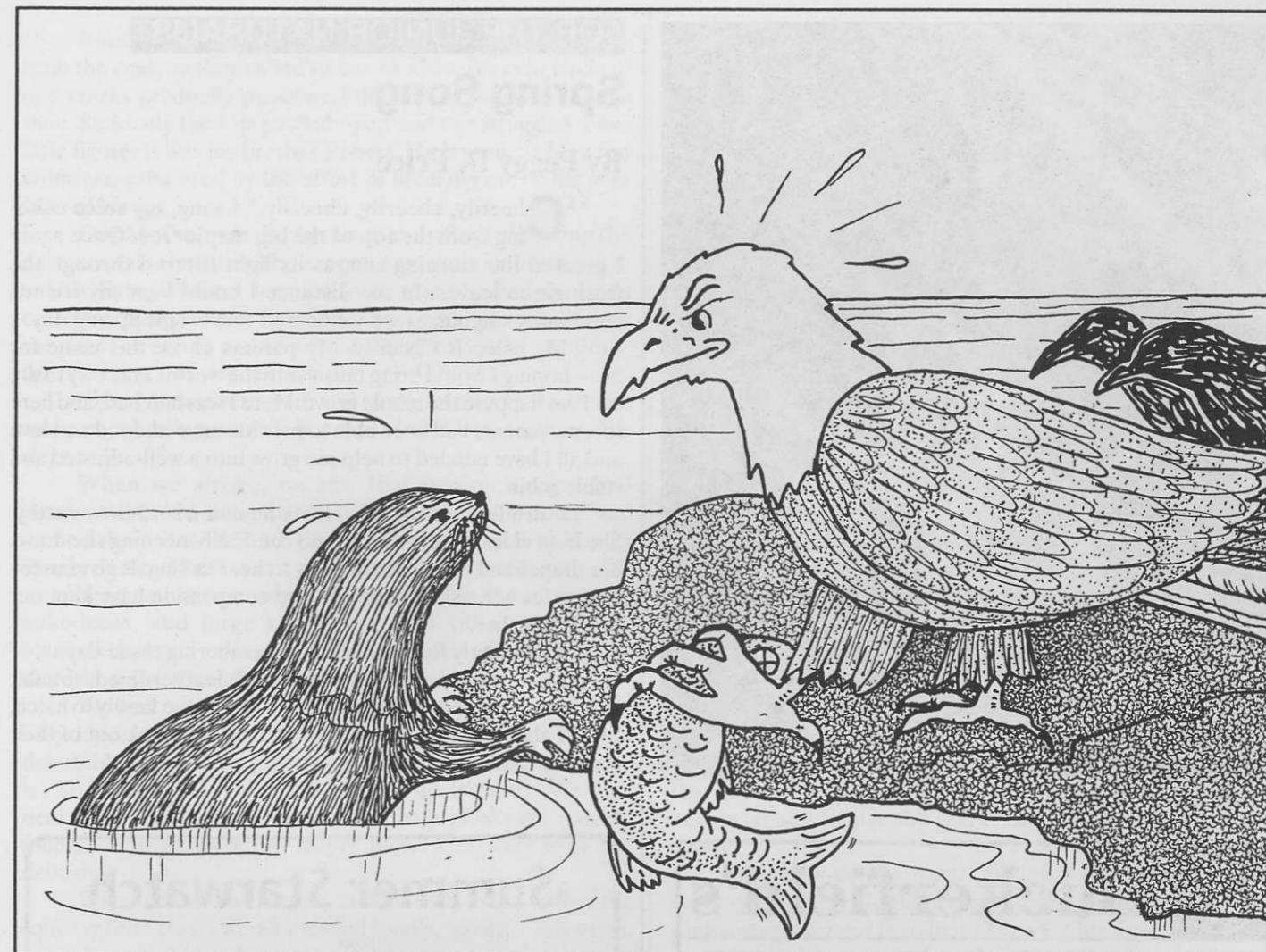
For the nature lover, this island is like no other. Some of its lands are now being set aside as conservation areas. Pelee Island has long been a paradise for more than 150 species of songbirds and it situated along the migratory route of monarch butterflies. We found many species of flowers and plants here that have long since vanished from most places on the mainland.

After three days on the island we recrossed Lake Erie and set off for Point Pelee National Park. The parking lot was packed, the trails crowded with birders. Everyone there was pursuing one rarity or another. A bulletin board in the Visitor Centre kept everyone up-to-date on exciting new arrivals. Those who participate in this fastest growing recreational pastime are a commendable lot. Despite the large numbers on the trails, all was quiet. Everyone spoke in whispers and nobody crossed your line of vision. Great respect was paid to the surrounding habitat and there were no signs of trampled plants or people crashing through the underbrush.

Highlights for this area included seven broad-winged hawks, a tufted titmouse, an Eastern screech owl (gray phase), brown thrashers, hooded warblers and a Louisiana waterthrush. At Hillman Marsh, an uncommonly bold Virginia rail broke cover in response to a recorded call and was heading towards our van when a passing car sent it back to the reeds. But this was a great view of a bird I had only heard at Quick's Bottom.

A rare bird alert was passed around and Point Pelee experienced a mini-exodus, as we all headed for the sewage ponds at Lampson where a white-winged tern had been sighted. There, among a large flock of Forster's terns, we found our tern. A flight of seven pectoral sandpipers added to the pleasure.

Our tour ended back in Chatham on May 12th. Our minds were filled with the sights and sounds of the last eight days. Exhausted from our intensive pursuits, we laid our heads down with the lullabies of birdland playing softly in the background.



(Cartoon: Anne Algard)

Eagle Power

By Anne Algard

Birding May 5th with Dave Stirling at Witty's Lagoon proved to be bonanza time. It would have been enough to see the mud flats being punched out by hundreds of beaks of assorted lengths, some straight, some with subtle curves; comparison birding at its best. But the main feature was still to come.

When we reached the sea we spotted a bald eagle on a nearby island. Even as many pairs of binocs watched, he swooped into the water—but not to make the usual clean pass with outstretched talons and come away. No. When the splashing ceased, it was clear that he had been grappling with an otter for a pre-caught fish. Eagle won.

He rowed to shore using mighty wings as oars! The river otter wasn't going to give up that easily and rushed up the rocks to reclaim its catch. After several attempts, he must have thought better of it, being considerably out-beaked by that eagle.

The otter returned to the water and hung around, bobbing up and down like an irritated tea bag. Meanwhile, two

crows were strutting around as referees, hoping for a few pieces of the action. They didn't have to wait long. The eagle selected parts of the fish and took off with laboured wing beats for a flight to its nest in a distant tree.

We felt privileged to witness such an interaction. Wouldn't a wild life photographer kill for a sequence like that?

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Robin at nest with young. (Photo: Mark Nyhof)

FOR THE JUNIOR NATURALIST

Spring Song

By Peggy D. Price

"Cheerily, cheerily, cheerily," I sang, my voice echoing from the top of the big maple tree. Once again I greeted the morning sun, as its light filtered through the fresh green leaves. In the distance I could hear my friends and family singing, as we welcomed this bright Spring day.

My name is Cheerily. My parents chose this name for me — hoping I would bring music into the world. This I try to do, for I am happy in the maple grove. Here I was hatched, and here too, my parents had been able to provide me with food and love and all I have needed to help me grow into a well-adjusted and stable robin.

I also feel secure here, for a human friend lives nearby. She is an elderly lady, who has no cat. Each morning she draws her drapes and opens her window to hear us sing. It gives us joy to sing for her, as her kindness and compassion have kept our family together.

I sat quietly for a moment, remembering those days.

My earliest memories are of a soft, feather-lined, circular nest built of twigs and mud. I was the first in the family to hatch, so was able to watch my brother and sisters break out of their sky blue eggs.

B Buckerfield's

"The Bird Place"

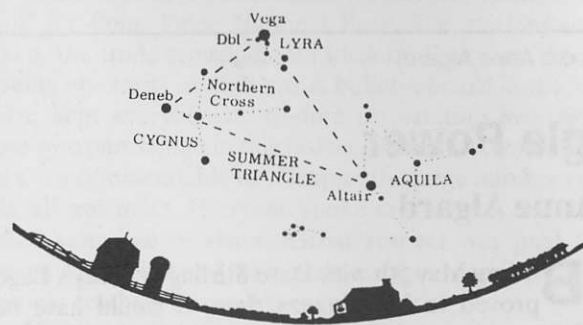
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It was a wonderful, fascinating event. I could hear cheeps from the eggs, as they called to our Mother. An even circle of tiny cracks gradually punctured the end of the smooth blue shell. Suddenly the top pushed open and out struggled a wet little figure. It was my brother Robert. He lay quietly for a few moments, exhausted by the effort of breaking out of the confines of his egg.

Our Mother was not far away and after inspecting the new arrival, she took the empty egg shell in her beak — swiftly flying away. I learned later that she had dropped our empty egg shells far from our nest so that hungry raccoons or crows would not be attracted by these colourful reminders of our arrival.

Then Mother returned, and gently lowered herself onto our nest, warming us with her fluffed and cosy feathers. We slept.

When we awoke, we saw that two more eggs had hatched and we now had two little sisters. Mother had named them Rosalie and Turdus. Turdus was an old Latin family name. There was a strong family resemblance — for we all had rather scrawny bodies, a bit of fuzz to cover our nakedness, and large beaks edged in yellow. Later we learned that our yellow trim made it easier for Mother to aim when she brought our meals.

We had enormous appetites and our parents were kept busy trying to keep us supplied with nourishment. What a delectable array of tasty morsels arrived — worms, grubs, beetles and caterpillars were all gobbled up instantly. We particularly enjoyed the soft green little caterpillars our parents found on the leaves of our maple home. They were juicy and delicious.

When one of our parents arrived with a beak full of the squirming little treats we all pleaded loudly, mouths wide open, hoping we would be chosen.

The days passed quickly, our pin feathers sprouted, and we became quite handsome. Our bony breasts filled out and were soon covered with fine spotted feathers. Our nest seemed to get tighter by the day, as the four of us struggled for a little wing room. Finally, we took turns sitting on the edge of our nest so that there would be more room for those inside.

One day my sister Rosalie took her turn on the edge of the nest. Suddenly, a dark shadow swooped down and she was gone. We heard her cry once as the cruel crow carried her away.

Our parents returned and immediately saw what had happened. With loud cries they took off after the crow. All the other robins in the neighbourhood gathered, shouting threats and abuse at the cruel black robber, who had settled in a nearby alder tree. He became quite uneasy with all this noise and attention and shifted his feet from side to side. Suddenly, he dropped my little sister to the ground below. She lay quite still.

All this noise and commotion attracted the attention of the elderly lady who was working nearby in her flower garden. She picked up her cane and shook it angrily at the black nest robber. He stood his ground for a few seconds and then took off. He did not even try to retrieve the small body at the foot of the tree.

The lady noticed the still, little pile of feathers on the ground. Stooping, she gently cupped Rosalie in her hands and lifted her. Her face was sad as she smoothed the ruffled feathers on my little sister's body.

She stood this way for several minutes, looking down at the quiet little form in her hand.

Suddenly, her eyes brightened and a warm smile spread across her face. We could see now there was a movement and Rosalie was alive!

The kind lady lifted her eyes, searching the trees for our nest. It was difficult to see, for it was well hidden among the large maple leaves. When she found it, she gently laid Rosalie in a cardboard box, upon a nest made from her folded apron. Disappearing for a moment, she returned with a wooden ladder and placed it against our tree. Climbing unsteadily, with one hand on the ladder and the other holding Rosalie, she was able to reach our nest.

"How huge she is" whispered Robert, as she looked down at the three of us huddled in the shadows. "She won't hurt us" I replied, "see how gentle she is with Rosalie." I knew she cared about us and I did not feel fear, even though she towered over our nest.

Our parents watched carefully from the higher branches and were very quiet now.

Then Rosalie was gently returned to the nest. Still in shock, she was trembling. It took some time for her to realize she was safe and at home with her family. After that terrible experience, one of our parents was always nearby, ready to give the alarm should danger threaten us again.

We grew larger each day and our wing feathers developed. We all did flapping exercises regularly, to develop wing strength for our first flight. Then the big day arrived. I was the eldest in the family, so I would be first. Revving up, I bravely jumped from the branch and soared off into thin air. After a few yards of flight I began losing altitude rapidly. Suddenly, with a shock, I crash-landed into a holly bush. Shaken, but unhurt, I tried again and this time managed to stay aloft. Soon I was flitting from tree to tree shouting encouragement to Robert, Rosalie and Turdus, who were still rather apprehensive and hesitant.

Before the day was out we had all found our wings. Our parents then called us all over to have a little talk about the problems we could face as we flew out into the world. Dad reminded us of the terrible end of our Uncle Rufus. How could we forget him. He had been eating cherries in an orchard about a mile away when a loud explosion was heard. Uncle Rufus fell to the ground, mortally wounded. He had been shot by the heartless owner of the cherry tree, who had never been taught to share.

Our family always became very quiet and sad whenever they talked of Uncle Rufus. We knew that we must never, never go near that cherry tree, no matter how luscious and appetizing the cherry crop. Instead, we have chosen to stay in the maple grove, near the kind lady who loves to hear us sing.

When the rising sun greets each Spring morning, we still sing from the tops of the maple trees. Our elderly friend draws her drapes, looks up at us, and smiles.

Observer Programme of the Parks and Conservation Committee

By Tony Embleton

The Observer Programme was set up to obtain greater Victoria Natural History Society member participation in habitat protection and awareness of the kinds of measures necessary to protect critical areas. The observers' purpose is two-fold. Firstly, to become familiar with the outlined area and to be knowledgeable about its important characteristics, such as its flora and fauna, wetland areas, forest or woods, as well as its shoreline, geological or historical features. The second objective is to observe and report to the coordinator any damage, pollution or threats to the area, including any community or development plans.

The coordinator reports to the Parks and Conservation Committee, which then takes any necessary action. If there is an emergency, the proper authorities are notified immediately. Observers are also encouraged to phone the coordinator prior to the Committee's meeting on the fourth Thursday of the month. Following is a list of those taking part. If any other Society members would like to volunteer, they would be very welcome as we would like other areas covered.

Pat Bay Boat Ramp: Bruce Whittington 652-1529
Haro Woods: Gwennie Rooper 477-1152
Cuthbert Holmes Park: Dannie Carson 384-4924
(Dannie is looking for a replacement)
Island View Beach: Sheila Rymer 652-5588
Panama Flats:
Mike Savory, Shaune Hamilton 479-7543
Thetis Lake: Jane Toms 598-3417
Christmas Hill: Wally McGregor 658-8956
Knockan Hill Park: Wilf Medd 658-5829
Elk/Beaver Lakes: Darren Copley 479-9879
Beacon Hill Park: John Mitchell 388-9371
Rithet's Bog: Barbara Hanwell 658-2240
Tod Creek Flats: Sheila Moilliet 479-8353
Blenkinsop Lake: Lynn Husted 479-3165
Garry Oak Preservation: Lynn Husted 479-3165
Bazan Bay and Park: Barbara Begg 656-5296
James Island Dock: Lola Brockie 384-3673
Ardmore Shoreline: Heidi Stenner 656-1805

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595-7803

Cowichan Head: Gordon Devey 652-6879
Cordova Bay: Midge and Jim Philips 658-8473
McMinn and Dumac Parks:
Midge and Jim Philips 658-8473
Arbutus Cove: Mary Henderson 477-2151
Ten Mile Point: June Meyall 477-3601
Telegraph Bay: Jean Thompson 477-7343
Cadboro Bay: Doris Carr 477-2127
Loon, Spoon and Willows Bay:
Margaret Wainwright 592-1310
Bowker Creek to McNeil Bay:
Yorke Edwards 598-7503
Foul Bay and Chinese Cemetery: Lissa Calvert 598-4025
Songhees Walk to West Bay: Stan Buxcey 385-7501
Saxe and Macauley Points: Stan Buxcey 385-7501
Esquimalt Harbour: Harry Davidson 479-1286
Esquimalt Lagoon: Don Beresford 478-6510
Albert Head Lagoon: William Dawkins 478-7353
Devonia Beach (end of Taylor Road): Tom
Johnston 478-0228
Pearson College and Pedder Bay:
Gary Fletcher 478-5591 Ext. 235
William Head Institution:
Randie Scott 363-4642 Ext. 104
Sooke Basin: Janet Broadbent 642-5290
Sooke Harbour: Ron Potter 642-3076
Whiffen Spit: Fredrica Philip 642-3421
Sooke Harbour House Shore:
Fredrica Philip 642-3421



Shooting Star. (Photo: Diana Jolly)

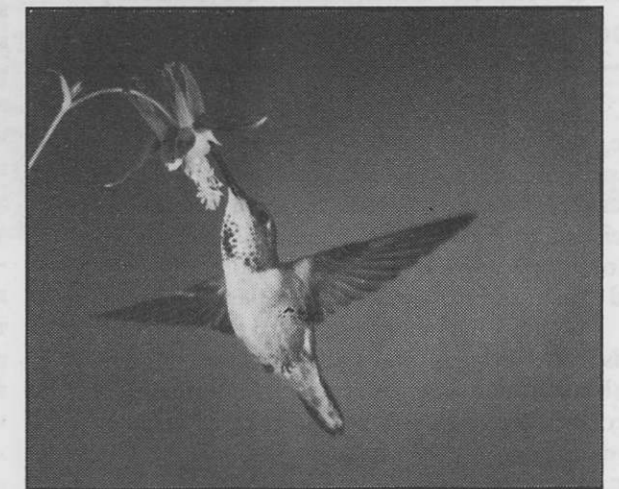


Tiger Swallowtail. (Photo: Diana Jolly)

Welcome to New Members

- March 27. Hendrick Blouw,
of Cardiff Place.
Hank is a birdwatcher.
- March 28. R.K. Bryden,
of Praisewood Terrace.
A gift from Colleen Bryden.
- March 28. M.L. Hamilton,
of Quadra Street.
- April 15. John Lankford,
of Lovat Avenue.
- April 15. Lloyd Eralsen,
from Surrey, B.C.
Interests include birdwatching.
- April 19. Melodee Mole,
of Parkcrest Drive.
Interested in all aspects of nature and ecology.
- April 24. Deanna Skinner,
of Belmont Avenue.
- April 24. Bradly J. Dick,
of Granville Avenue.
A gift from Arlene Frater.
- May 10. Dr. C.F. Strauss,
of Ridgeway Street.
A gift from Dr. Nigel Mathews.
- May 10. Enid Verbon,

- from North Pender Island.
Interested in birdwatching.
- May 10. Robert and Michaela Kirby,
of Olympic View Drive.
- May 2. John Ballard,
of Redfern Street.
Interested in nature observation, birding, and
travel related to seeing new environment
and habitat.



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—GONE TO TOWN—
WELL'S USED BOOKS
has moved to 832 Fort Street
(between Blanchard and Quadra)
New Phone: 360-2929

Remember 10 % discount to VNHS members!

Spring Bird Count Produced 159 Species

By David Pearce

After participating in six Victoria Christmas Bird Counts, including the Canadian record setting count of 147 species in 1988, I have long wondered what it would be like to do a Christmas Bird style count in the spring. Well, it was certainly not as easy to organize as the Christmas count, as half the regular leaders for the 21 areas were out of town! This required co-opting new leaders and hoping for a reasonable turnout. Choosing a date was not easy either, as the aim was to catch as many wintering species as possible before they left, while holding it late enough to catch most of the returning spring migrants. The birders committee finally decided on the second Saturday in May, which this year was May 11. The Victoria checklist shows the possibility of about 200 species that could be seen at this time but our initial hope was that we would find about 160 species.

... counting birds in the spring is totally different from the winter. The birds are spread out more evenly and most of them can only be heard and not seen

May 11 turned out to be a perfect day, weather-wise, with the sun shining in a clear sky and the temperature reaching 20 degrees. The count started at midnight for some people, and 6:00 am for most of the others, and every area was covered. We had a total of 109 observers, about half the number for the Christmas Bird Count, and the count was completed at noon.

As many beginners soon discovered, counting birds in the spring is totally different from the winter. The birds are spread out more evenly and most of them can only be heard and not seen. The biggest challenge for most people were bird calls but, in spite of this frustration (and challenge for the future), most people seemed to enjoy the day.

The count produced 159 species. The highlights include a single late red-throated loon, black scoter, ruddy duck, Barrow's goldeneye and trumpeter swan. Other interesting counts were nine semipalmated plovers, one wandering tattler, three ruddy turnstones, five pectoral sandpipers, two Vaux's swifts, one red-breasted sapsucker, five purple martins, and nine Western tanagers. A barbecue was held afterwards at Goldstream Park and there was overwhelming agreement to make this an annual event.

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5
Anna's Hummingbird					
Rufous Hummingbird	17	35	15	10	26
Belted Kingfisher		1		3	
Northern Flicker	2	26	11	17	11
Red-breasted Sapsucker			1		
Downy Woodpecker			1	4	
Hairy Woodpecker			5	1	2
Pileated Woodpecker	6	4	10	4	3

Olive-sided Flycatcher		3			
Western Wood-Pewee		1			
Hammond's Flycatcher		6	2	10	
Willow Flycatcher					
Pacific Slope Flycatcher	9	21	70	27	13
Eurasian Skylark	5				
Tree Swallow			3	2	14
Violet Green Swallow	129	37	31	35	85

Purple Martin					
Northern Rough-winged Swallow				1	
Cliff Swallow	3	20		4	
Barn Swallow	86	2	2	8	18
Steller's Jay	1	4	15		17
Northwestern Crow	120	15	32	24	69
Common Raven	47	17	8	5	4
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	32	17	72	20	9

Bushtit	6	1	1	16	6
Brown Creeper	2	3	12	7	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	7	14	13	14	8
House Wren	1	5	1	14	
Winter Wren	6	3	93	7	12
Bewick's Wren	8	7	2	6	12
Marsh Wren	1	1		1	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	3	16	5	

Ruby-crowned Kinglet					
Townsend's Solitaire		1			
Swainson's Thrush					
Hermit Thrush					4
Varied Thrush	1	10	9	7	
American Robin	148	33	125	105	151
American Pipit	12				
American Dipper			9		

Cedar Waxwing					
European Starling	111		49	37	46
Hutton's Vireo		2	2		

1. Butchart Gardens/ Northern Highlands
2. Central Highlands
3. Goldstream
4. Thetis Lake/ Hastings Flats
5. Langford Lake

CRD PARKS SUMMER PROGRAMS 1991

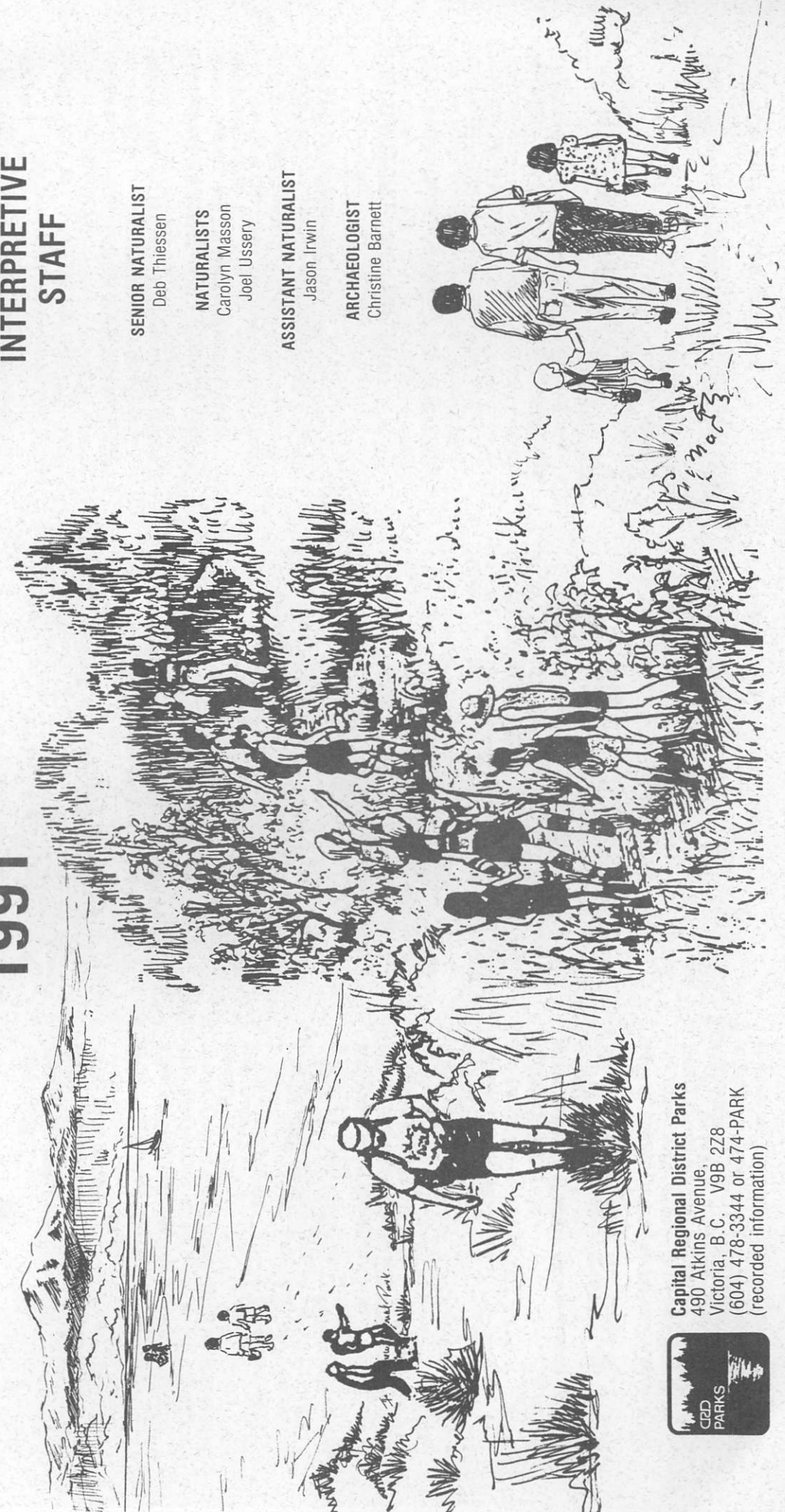
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NATURALISTS
Carolyn Masson
Joel Ussery

ASSISTANT NATURALIST
Jason Irwin

ARCHAEOLOGIST
Christine Barnett



Capital Regional District Parks
490 Atkins Avenue,
Victoria, B.C. V9B 2Z8
(604) 478-3344 or 474-PARK
(recorded information)





Capital Regional District Parks — Summer Programs - 1991

NATURE PROGRAMS



NATURE WALKS — Join CRD Park Naturalists for interesting explorations of the beauty and wonder in your CRD Parks. From seashore snoops to archaeology digs to forest rambles, these interpretive walks offer something for everyone. (Some programs can accommodate people with disabilities).

Pick up a copy of the monthly program flyer or call the 24-hour recorded information line at 474-PARK (474-7275) for weekly details on topics and meeting places. No charge or pre-registration required.

Nature walks are held on weekends and on various days mid-week throughout the summer. For information on times and dates call 474-PARK (474-7275) or look for our monthly program brochure at CRD offices, community recreation centres and libraries.

SUNRISE-SEEKERS • FAMILY CANOEING — Canoe through the early morning mist with our Park Naturalists, searching for elusive birds and other lakeshore life.

SATURDAYS: July 7 to August 10 from 6:00 am - 8:30 am
August 17 through September from 6:30 am - 9:00 am
SUNDAYS: July 14 from 6:00 am - 8:30 am
August 18 & September 1 from 6:30 am - 9:00 am

Programs are held at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. Meet at Hamsterly Beach. All equipment is provided. Pre-registration and pre-payment of fees is required. (\$6.00 for adults and teens and \$2.00 for children twelve and under).

COMMUNITY EVENT

SAANICH STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL — Join CRD Parks staff as we help Saanich celebrate its annual Strawberry Festival at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, Sunday, July 7 at Beaver Lake 9:00 am - 4:00 pm.

- Pancake breakfast
- Special demonstrations
- Petting zoo
- Horseshoe competition
- CRD Parks family nature walks
- CRD Parks children's nature games
- Family entertainment
- Pony rides
- Children's face painting
- CRD Parks nature exhibits
- Food concessions

Free shuttle bus available starting at 12:00 noon from the Royal Oak Shopping Centre.



SHARING NATURE WITH CHILDREN - AN ADULT WORKSHOP

This one is for you 'grown-ups' who want to rediscover your childhood and wish to learn about ways in which to share wonder with your children, so be sure to keep this date open.

SUNDAY, JULY 28 - 10:00 am to 3:30 pm
Francis/King Regional Park
Naturalists will lead you on a special day of games, walks, and explorations designed to deepen your experience of nature and help you to share this experience with children.

This workshop is suitable for parents, community group leaders, teachers, and any adults who want to explore nature with children.

Fee: = \$12.00 per person
Pre-registration required. For additional information call 478-3344. Limited enrolment.

“LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG PEOPLE” -

This is a playful and exciting two-hour program for children and their adults exploring nature together through games, stories, nature walks and crafts. Big people, be sure to come prepared to participate!

Program I Francis/King Regional Park
Thursday, August 8
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Program II Coles Bay Regional Park
Thursday, August 22
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

(Both programs are for children ages 5 - 7 and adults)

FEE: Adults \$3.00, Children \$1.00

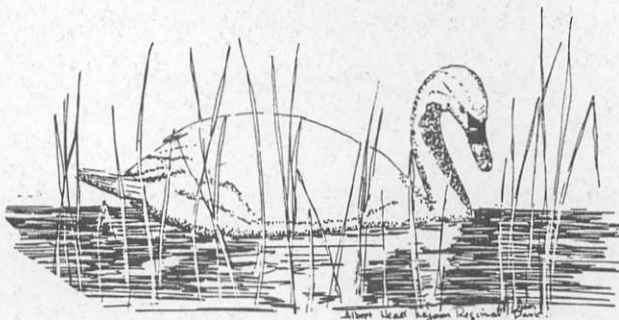
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

JUNIOR NATURALIST - ages 10 - 13

In this special 4-day conservation day camp, girls and boys with a keen interest in nature will have an opportunity to learn about local **Wildlife and Their Habitats**.

One program only July 23 through 26
10:00 am to 2:00 pm (Tuesday to Thursday at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in Metchosin)
9:00 am to 1:30 pm (Friday at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park)
\$20.00 per child

Note: For this program we will endeavour to assist in car-pooling through exchange of participant phone numbers. Enrolment limited so register early!



ADVENTURES IN ARCHAEOLOGY - ages 10 - 13

A special 4-day archaeology day camp where girls and boys with a curiosity for things of the past can get some hands-on experience. Find out what an archaeologist **really** does!

One program only August 6 through 9
10:00 am - 2:00 pm (Tuesday to Thursday)
\$20.00 per child

Note: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park (Metchosin). Friday is at the Royal B.C. Museum. We will endeavour to assist in car-pooling through exchange of participant phone numbers. Enrolment limited so register early!



YOUNG NATURE EXPLORERS

These 2-hour nature programs are for children ages 5 to 9 (age grouped 5 - 7, and 8 & 9), and include games, nature explorations and crafts.

July 11 10:00 am to 12:00 pm or 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
at Francis/King Regional Park
“**Trees' Knees**” - Do trees really have knees? Since when was tree bark the perfect place for condominiums? This great program answers these questions and more.

August 1 10:00 am to 12:00 pm or 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at
Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park
“**Slither and Slime**” - Some of our most interesting forest creatures don't have legs to stand on. Snakes and slugs are the focus of this program.

August 15 10:00 am to 12:00 pm or 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at
Witty's Lagoon Regional Park.
“**Creepy Crawlers**” - Spiders are nature's top of the line architects. Insects and bugs are some of the fastest movers and strongest weight lifters around. This program is great for those who enjoy exploring for such critters.

FEE: \$4.00 per child per program. Note that the morning and afternoon programs of the same title are the same program, and enrol your child in either one or the other of any given theme.

Pre-register early to avoid disappointment!

FAMILY EVENTS



SUNDAY, JUNE 23 -
ELK/BEAVER LAKE REGIONAL PARK (in Saanich)
“**SPRING INTO SUMMER!**”

11:00 AM TO 4:00 PM
To begin our season of summer programming, come and Spring Into Summer on this day of fun for the whole family. This year is our 25th Birthday as a Parks Department, so come and celebrate with us!

- Travelling Nature House with Live Displays (snakes etc.)
- Nature Songs with The Whistling Gypsy
- Nature Drama ('Froggy Feats') with Faye Mogenson
- Elderwood the Elf
- Refreshments
- Free to all
- Games
- Prizes



SUNDAY, JULY 21 -
DEVONIAN REGIONAL PARK (in Metchosin)
“**SLUG FEST**”

11:00 AM TO 4:00 PM
Have you ever kissed a slug? Did you know that a slug has a built in water slide? And what about that hole in the side of its 'head'? This is a day in celebration of this hitherto much maligned mollusc. Fun for the whole family!

- Slug Walks
- Slug Races
- Games
- Free to all
- Slug Talks
- Travelling Nature House
- Prizes, Refreshments & more!



SUNDAY, AUGUST 11 -
COLES BAY REGIONAL PARK (in North Saanich)
“**TALK TO THE ANIMALS**”

11:00 AM TO 4:00 PM
When is a squirrel angry? Can you call like a crow...or an owl...or a quail? And what about human communication (we're animals too)? Lots of fun for the whole family, so be prepared to learn and laugh.

- Travelling Nature House
- Races
- Displays
- Free to all
- Games
- Nature Walks
- Prizes, Refreshments



SUNDAY, AUGUST 25 -
WITTY'S LAGOON REGIONAL PARK (in Metchosin)
“**STEP BACK IN TIME**”

11:00 am to 4:00 pm
A Western Communities Heritage Days event. Join CRD Parks naturalists and special guests as they step back in time for a look at Witty's Lagoon before the white settlers arrived.

- Archaeology displays
- Native tool display
- Indian myths and legends
- Native craft demonstrations
- Special exhibits
- Traditional Native Salmon BBQ
- Visits to pre-historic native sites
- Wheelchair Accessible
- Ethnobotany walks
- Nature walks
- Cedar Mystery box
- Refreshments
- Prizes
- Picnic sites



THURSDAY, AUGUST 29 -
WITTY'S LAGOON REGIONAL PARK (in Metchosin)
“**SNAKE DAY**”

12:00 noon to 4:00 pm
SNAKES, SNAKES, AND MORE SNAKES...A return of this very popular snake program. There will be two Snake Shows (at 1:00 and 3:00) and more:

- Local snakes
- Snakes to touch
- Wheelchair Accessible
- Snake lore
- Guest Snakes (exotic)
- Free to all

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL
2							3	3	1			2				11
41	10		1			2	1	1		1	6	50	26	5		247
2	1		1				3	1	2				1	2		17
13	2		1	1						1		5	12	6		108
																1
1	2		1			3	2	2	4	4	5	7	3			39
										1		3	2			14
1	1			1			3		1			1	3	5		43

5	2			1									3	2		16
										1				2		4
2								1					3			24
	1															1
1	5												15	29		190
													4			9
4	1									4	4	22	8	20		82
129	31	9	30	9	2	20	73	25	14	60	80	120	150	126	4	1,199

		5														5
									2	1		2		3		9
	2		12								8	4	8	2		63
18	35		7	7	7	45	27	6	12	48	16	34	14	93		485
4												1	1			43
108	35	20	19	67	35	12	69	26	20	90	80	119	62	156		1,178
3	5		3	2		2	5			1	3	4	13	9		131
27	4		6			15	12	11	17	7	10	43	37	14		353

2	2		11	1		12	2	11	3	30	6	28	19	5		162
3	1					1				6		8	1	3		55
	2		2	1		4	1	5	4		1	23	16	14		129
10	4										4	3	19	1		62
10	3		5	3		1	1				2	5	1	11		163
13	5		4	12		8	20	13		21	20	16	5	25		197
										2			16			21
1	2									1			3			33

																2
													1			5
	1												1			1
																4
																27
187	49		28	47		45	103	47	60	150	79	467	232	235		2,291
														25		37
																9

2			12				17	11		12		3	5	2		64
117	20	17	58	185	25	35	80	42	20	100	170	211	91	216		1,630
1												1	1			7

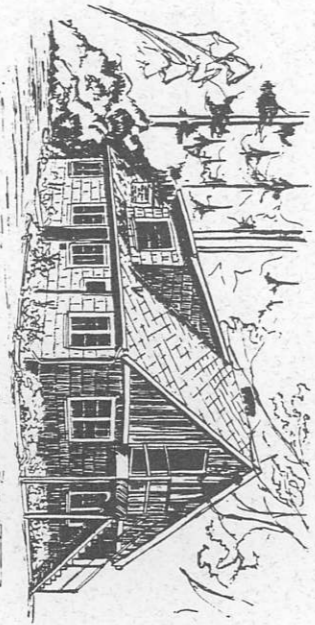
- 6. Albert Head/ Triangle Mountain
- 7. Esquimalt Lagoon/ Mill Hill
- 8. Esquimalt Harbour
- 9. Portage Inlet/ The Gorge
- 10. Victoria Harbour
- 11. Beacon Hill

- 12. Oak Bay
- 13. University/ Cadboro Bay
- 14. 10 Mile Point
- 15. Gordon Head/ Mount Douglas
- 16. Swan Lake/ Cedar Hill
- 17. Blenkinsop/ Panama Flats

- 18. Elk Lake Cordova Bay
 - 19. Prospect Lake/ Quick's Bottom
 - 20. Martindale/ Bear Hill
 - 21-23. Oak Bay Islands.
- Count continues following page

ENJOY YOUR CRD PARKS

Hiking, swimming, nature study, picnicking, fishing, horseback riding, bird watching, beachcombing, and photography - CRD Parks offers all this and more...



Visit your CRD Parks

- Albert Head Lagoon (Metchosin)
- Bear Hill (Saanich)
- Coles Bay (North Saanich)
- Devonian (Metchosin)
- East Sooke (Sooke)
- Elk/Beaver Lake (Saanich)
- Francis/King (Saanich)
- Galloping Goose Trail (Western Communities)
- Horth Hill (North Saanich)
- Island View Beach (Central Saanich)
- Lone Tree Hill (Langford)
- Mill Hill (Langford/View Royal)
- Mt. Norman (South Pender Island - proposed opening 1992)
- Mount Work (Langford)
- Reeson (Victoria)
- Roche Cove (Sooke)
- Witty's Lagoon (Metchosin)

GROUP NATURE PROGRAMS

CRD Parks has limited openings for group nature walks and special programs designed especially for community groups.

If you and your group would like to spend an hour or two exploring one of your CRD parks with a Parks Naturalist, give us a call. Pre-registration required. For additional information call 478-3344.

FACILITIES RESERVATIONS

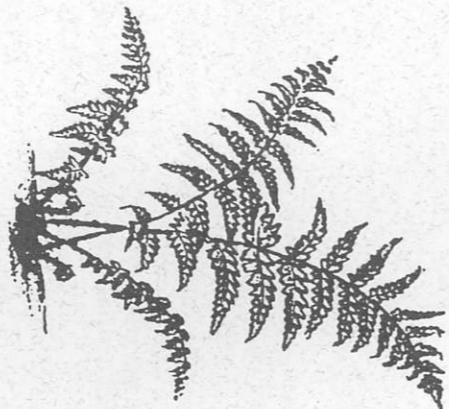
Group picnic sites in some CRD Parks are available for reservation at a nominal fee. Booking of these sites requires a permit. The Forester's Cabin at Francis/King Regional Park is also available for small group meetings. For more information contact CRD Parks' headquarters.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CRD PARKS?

By dialing 474-PARK (474-7275) you have 24-hour access to details on nature house hours, recent natural history sightings and Elk/Beaver Lake boating closures.



CRD Parks offers special programs and has facilities available for people with disabilities. For a copy of the CRD Parks Access Guide and for information on special nature programs, call 478-3344. A number of our interpretive programs are integrated and wheelchair accessible and are noted as such in this brochure and in our monthly program fliers.



Friendly CRD Parks staff and volunteers await your visit to our interesting and informative nature houses. See, touch, and smell the live exhibits, view the interpretive displays, watch a film or talk to a naturalist.

The nature houses are located in Francis/King Regional Park on Munn Road in Saanich, and in Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in Metchosin. No admission charge.

Both nature houses are wheelchair accessible.

Summer Hours:

Francis/King

Noon - 4:00 pm
Friday - Sunday and holiday Mondays
June 30 to September 2

Witty's Lagoon

11:00 am - 4:00 pm
Wednesday - Friday
10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Saturday, Sunday and holiday Mondays
June 26 to September 2

We'd like to hear from you! To help us in our efforts to continually improve CRD Parks programs, we welcome your comments at any time. Please contact Lloyd Rushon, Programs Coordinator, 478-3344 or write to 490 Atkins Avenue, Victoria, B.C. V9B 2X8

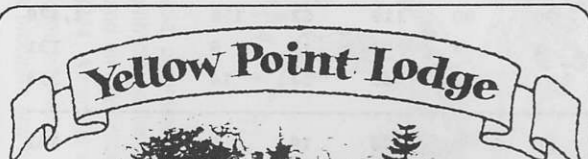


Black-headed grosbeak feeding young. (Photo: Mark Nyhof.)

**WANTED
PHOTO EDITOR (OR PHOTO TEAM)
for The Victoria Naturalist**

Duties help to gather and organize photographic material for the magazine and coordinate material for the front cover.

Contact Warren Drinnan, Editor,
652-9618 (work) or 598-0471 (home)



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- ~ 1 mile of waterfront with secluded coves and beaches.



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1991 Spring Bird Count Data

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5
Black-bellied Plover					
Whimbrel					
Greater Yellowlegs				1	
Lesser Yellowlegs					
Spotted Redshank					
Wandering Tattler					
Short-billed Dowitcher					
Long-billed Dowitcher					

Ruddy Turnstone					
Dunlin					
Sanderling					
Western Sandpiper				1	
Least Sandpiper	12			5	
Pectoral Sandpiper	4				
Bonaparte's Gull					
Mew Gull					

California Gull					
Glaucous-winged Gull	98	5	12	24	43
Common Murre					
Pigeon Guillemot			2		
Marbled Murrelet					
Rhinoceros Auklet					
Turkey Vulture	3	13	10		
Golden Eagle					

Bald Eagle	4	1	8	2	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk		1	1		
Cooper's Hawk					1
Red-tailed Hawk	7	4	1		1
Osprey					
Merlin					
Ruffed Grouse		2			
Blue Grouse		1			

California Quail	44	20	5	22	26
Ring-necked Pheasant	3	2		6	
Band-tailed Pigeon	3	2	2	7	
Rock Dove	2			3	11
Mourning Dove					
Common Barn-Owl	2				
Great Horned Owl			1		
Barred Owl	2				

Western Screech-Owl	1				
Northern Saw-whet Owl					
Vaux's Swift					

1. Butchart Gardens/ Northern Highlands
2. Central Highlands
3. Goldstream
4. Thetis Lake/ Hastings Flats
5. Langford Lake

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL
	4	1															5
		2					18										20
		2	1														4
	2																2
							4										4
							1										1
	48	1															49
		8					5										13

		3															3
	118	5					18										141
	4	32											6				42
	65	50		8			17	31									172
	141	1								5							164
							1										5
		2						8									10
	15	9			3		2			1			3				33

	1										10						11
	87	90	40	34	83	64	65	149	68	40	79	49	248	149	174	4,000	5,601
															2		2
	3	4	3		4	11	5	1	24				6		2	30	95
	2		2		2				9	2			25				42
			2		9	28	18	1	4							6	68
	3	1										2		5			37
														1			1

	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	1		1	3	3	3	2	44
							1				1		1		1		6
					1			1	1		2		1		6		13
	2	1										1	13	4	5		39
												1	2	2			5
	1												1	1			3
	2																4

	42	1		3			17	14	5	12	7	10	34	26	33		321
	5	1		2	1		5	1			7	5	2	5	8		53
	3											1	14	1	2	2	37
	4	23	10	21	55	27	1		1	2	4	27	1	5	24		221
								1									1
																	2
													3	5			9
														1			3

		3												5			9
															1		1
														2			2

6. Albert Head/ Triangle Mountain
7. Esquimalt Lagoon/ Mill Hill
8. Esquimalt Harbour
9. Portage Inlet/ The Gorge
10. Victoria Harbour
11. Beacon Hill

12. Oak Bay
13. University/ Cadboro Bay
14. 10 Mile Point
15. Gordon Head/ Mount Douglas
16. Swan Lake/ Cedar Hill
17. Blenkinsop/ Panama Flats

18. Elk Lake Cordova Bay
 19. Prospect Lake/ Quick's Bottom
 20. Martindale/ Bear Hill
 - 21-23. Oak Bay Islands.
- Count continues following page



Young Hawk. (Photo: Mark Nyhof)

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5
Common Loon			1		
Pacific Loon					
Red-throated Loon					
Western Grebe					
Red-necked Grebe					
Horned Grebe					
Pied-billed Grebe					4
Double-crested Cormorant	1		2	2	6

Brandt's Cormorant					
Pelagic Cormorant					
Great Blue Heron	3	1	3	1	2
Trumpeter Swan				1	
Mute Swan					
Canada Goose	37	4	15	14	21
Brant					
Mallard	31	9	2	57	22

Gadwall				2	
Green-winged Teal				4	
American Wigeon				2	
Northern Pintail				4	
Northern Shoveler	1			2	
Blue-winged Teal	1			6	
Cinnamon Teal					15
Ruddy Duck					

Wood Duck		5		7	
Greater Scaup					
Lesser Scaup					
Black Scoter					
White-winged Scoter					
Surf Scoter					
Harlequin Duck					
Oldsquaw					

Barrow's Goldeneye			1		
Common Goldeneye	1				
Bufflehead			7		
Common Merganser			6		
Red-breasted Merganser					1
Hooded Merganser		1			
Virginia Rail					
American Coot					

Black Oystercatcher					
Semipalmated Plover					
Killdeer	11	5	2	10	

1. Butchart Gardens/ Northern Highlands
2. Central Highlands
3. Goldstream
4. Thetis Lake/ Hastings Flats
5. Langford Lake

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL
	3	3	1			1		2	3	1			98		3		116
									1				11				12
			1														1
		2	5		1												8
	3	5	3		8	9	1	6	9				6				50
													6				6
														1			5
	7	35	34	24	65	34	25	15	10	6	8	3	11	2		400	690

			2		2						2		3			60	69
	6	1			7	6	4	2	10	2			20		2	300	360
	5	27	17	24	3		3	1	2		5	4	5	5	11	6	128
																	1
	2	9		4							1	1					17
	15	47	33	20	3			6	4		3	4	28	33	98	2	387
	65	7			4		2		9						99		186
	77	28	1	33	6	5	5	85	14	13	30	13	57	26	66	1	581

																	2
	7											2			1		14
											3				1		6
																	4
						1		4			4						12
						2					2		3				14
														3	2		20
													1				1

													9	6			27
						22											26
											10						10
		1															1
		7						2	9	3			13			12	46
	19	6			1	21		24	140	14			227		92		544
	10		2		1	16	5		12	2			18		5	4	75
								6	15				63		3		87

																	1
	9																10
	23	7		16	2			2	2	20	1		37			1	118
	3								1				2	8	16		36
		13			18			5	2	6			56		17		118
	4			3										2			10
														2			2
													1		1		3

	3	2	1		3		4	2	1							8	24
	8	1															9
	8	1			2			2			1	1	6	4	2	12	67

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6. Albert Head/ Triangle Mountain | 12. Oak Bay | 18. Elk Lake Cordova Bay |
| 7. Esquimalt Lagoon/ Mill Hill | 13. University/ Cadboro Bay | 19. Prospect Lake/ Quick's Bottom |
| 8. Esquimalt Harbour | 14. 10 Mile Point | 20. Martindale/ Bear Hill |
| 9. Portage Inlet/ The Gorge | 15. Gordon Head/ Mount Douglas | 21-23. Oak Bay Islands. |
| 10. Victoria Harbour | 16. Swan Lake/ Cedar Hill | Count continues following page |
| 11. Beacon Hill | 17. Blenkinsop/ Panama Flats | |

Victoria Eaton Centre 384-5313
1889 Oak Bay Avenue 595-0033

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Solitary Vireo	2	5		3		1	1						
Warbling Vireo	2	3					1						
Orange-crowned Warbler	64	42	134	61	60	43	19		15	3		5	10
Yellow-rumped Warbler	8	6	37	11		5	2					2	
Black-throated Gray Warbler	14	6	14	12		1	1						
Townsend's Warbler	8	10	116	77	2	6	6					1	
Yellow Warbler	1	6		8	2	8	2					2	
MacGillivray's Warbler		3	23	2	11	2							

Wilson's Warbler		8	18	14	3	8			2	1		2	
Common Yellowthroat	20	7		14	11	2	2						
Black-headed Grosbeak												1	
Rufous-sided Towhee	18	36	16	28	13	16	9		4	1		8	24
Savannah Sparrow	24			4		8	5				4	5	1
Song Sparrow	28	18	39	24	9	22	4	2	9	5		4	7
Chipping Sparrow	1	2		18	3	7	4						
Dark-eyed Junco	9	10	19	7	7	13	6						2

White-crowned Sparrow	13	46	22	12	13	16	6		5	7		2	
Golden-crowned Sparrow	3	4			3	8	2			1		5	9
Fox Sparrow					2								
Red-winged Blackbird	52	8	1	22	27	21	25	2	2	1		45	10
Brewer's Blackbird	2			2	5	15	3		3	1			14
Brown-headed Cowbird	6	12	2	20	12	12	5		1	5		6	3
Western Tanager		1	1	1									
House Sparrow	4			4	8	5	8		40	28	3	17	39

Pine Siskin	4	8	5	83	2	8	2						2
American Goldfinch	9	21	1	2	8	7	7					2	1
Red Crossbill			6			6	2					5	1
Purple Finch	20	19	14	22	7	12	5						6
House Finch	8	3		8	1	10	15		17	35	1	31	49
Evening Grosbeak	1	2											1

TOTAL BIRDS	1,354	654	1,159	1,051	860	1,801	811	214	517	710	301	584	964
TOTAL SPECIES	69	67	62	74	53	92	88	24	43	48	19	58	57

1. Butchart Gardens/ Northern Highlands
2. Central Highlands
3. Goldstream
4. Thetis Lake/ Hastings Flats
5. Langford Lake
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19. Prospect Lake/ Quick's Bottom
20. Martindale/ Bear Hill
- 21-23. Oak Bay Islands.

1991 Spring Bird Count Data

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL
						6	2		20
						1	2		9
	27	6	9	10	45	118	48		719
	2		1	3		21	5		103
			1			6			55
				1		13	21		261
		1	6	14	3	6	4		63
									41

	7		12	3	25	3			106
			25	13		10	37		141
									1
	24	9	40	15	49	55	38		403
	1	1	2	8	9	1	80		153
	3	6	16	36	71	30	88		421
				2		2	3		42
					3	56	9		141

	1	1	7	6	20	2	19		198
	3		7	3	1		5		54
		1	3	3	1				10
	4	2	60	43	41	55	54	9	484
					10	14	46		115
	19	2	7	6	54	68	18		258
			2			4			9
	14	6	60	58	34	5	53		386

	6		2	6	81	13	16		238
	3	3	3	7	24	32	49		179
	6	2							28
	16	4		5	5	34	49		218
	39	2	39	24	52	21	37		392
			80		50	4			138

	747	356	1,095	888	2,802	1,658	2,387	4,847	25,760
	58	47	59	51	82	83	75	17	159

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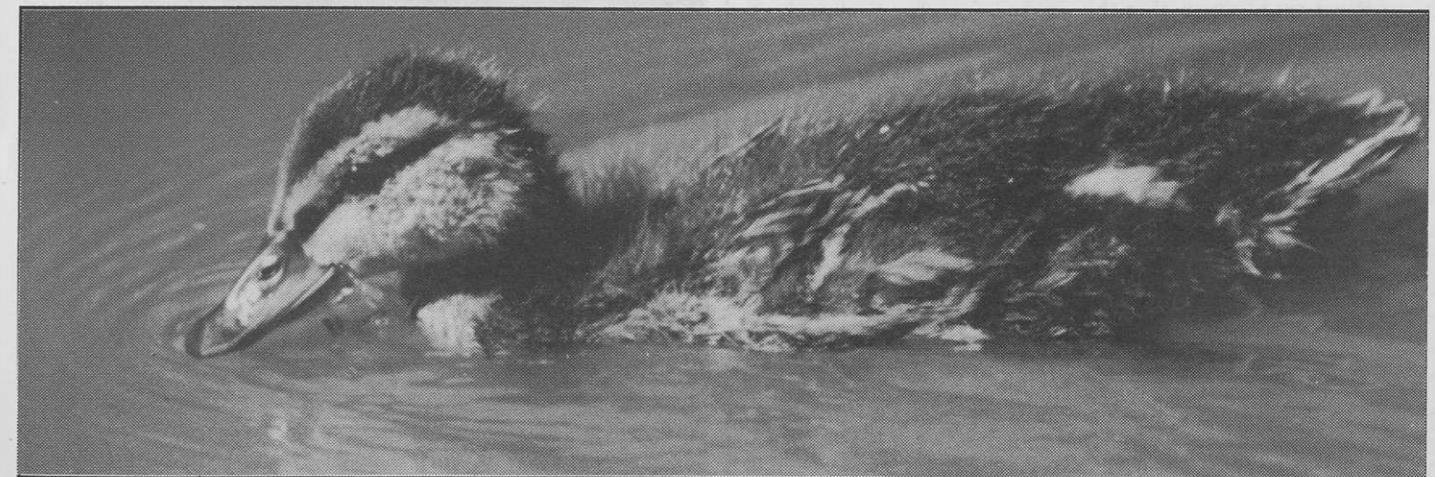
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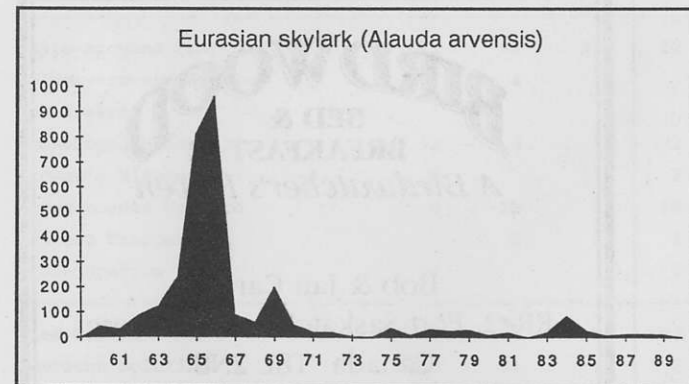
Mallard Duckling. (Photo Mark Nyhof)

Trend Analysis of Victoria's Christmas Bird Count Data

By R. Warren Drinnan and Malcolm J.R. Clark.

A well-known annual event for the Victoria area is the Christmas bird count, part of a continent-wide program sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The counts are carried out over a 24-hour period one day in December, typically between the 15th and the 30th of the month. The count area, 15 miles in diameter, is divided up into smaller units and teams of volunteer birders identify and count all the birds within their unit. Results from every Christmas bird count in the Victoria area since 1960 have now been compiled into a North America Christmas Count database by the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University.

While the bird count is not intended to be a rigorously-designed scientific study, there is nevertheless valuable information in the compiled data sets, especially when they cover a



(Graph: Malcolm J.R. Clark)

long time interval. We offer the recently-published *Birds of British Columbia* (Campbell et al., 1990) as evidence to the value of material generated in this manner. The authors thought it would be interesting to see if Victoria's thirty years of Christmas bird count data showed any trends and, if so, to speculate on what factors might account for these trends.

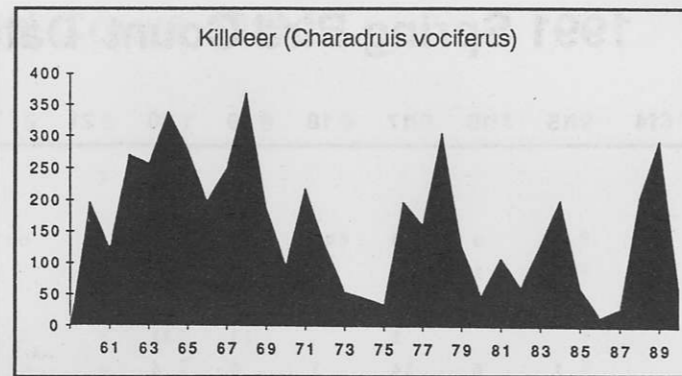
We want to stress that this analysis is only a first evaluation of what actually may be occurring and we urge caution in interpreting the results. One obvious influencing factor is the number of observers, which has steadily increased in both numbers as well as in their skills in identification, since the early years of the bird count. As a consequence, a positive trend (i.e., increases in a particular species) may be an artifact brought about by the increase in participants. On the other hand, a negative trend (a statistically significant decrease in the numbers of a particular species) is more likely to be real. A 99%

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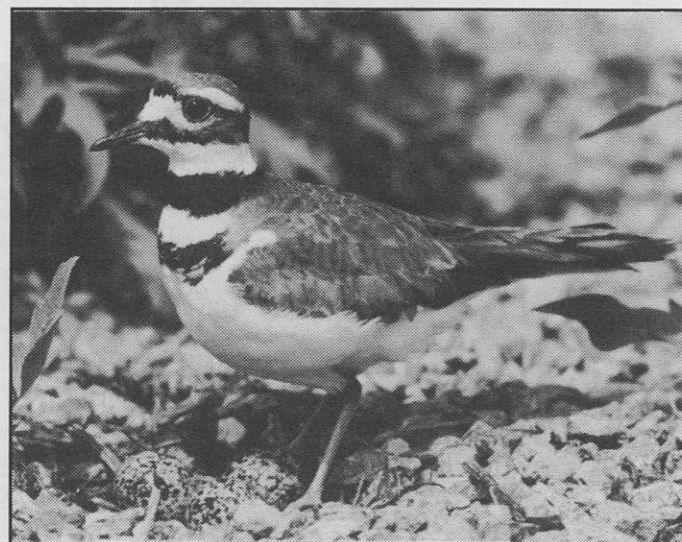
(Graph: Malcolm J.R. Clark)

probability reflects the fact that it is statistically unlikely that these trends could be due to chance alone.

Significant changes in bird numbers, both positive and negative, may be a result of several factors. These include changes in habitat, either available wintering habitat in the Victoria area or breeding habitat elsewhere, or because of extreme weather conditions. Some species, such as many seabirds, starlings or cedar waxwings, tend to stay together and bird count data may fluctuate considerably depending on whether a particular flock was observed or not, or even counted on more than one occasion, as they moved from one count sector to another.

In spite of these difficulties, and because we simply were curious as to exactly what trends (if any) existed, we carried out statistical trend analysis for a number of bird species. Two "ecological groups" were chosen for this initial approach - species which inhabit meadows or fields, and waterfowl. We have speculated that in the Victoria area, fields and meadows have been decreasing over the years as a result of expanding developments. Similarly, we thought that overwintering waterfowl may have suffered a similar loss in available habitat.

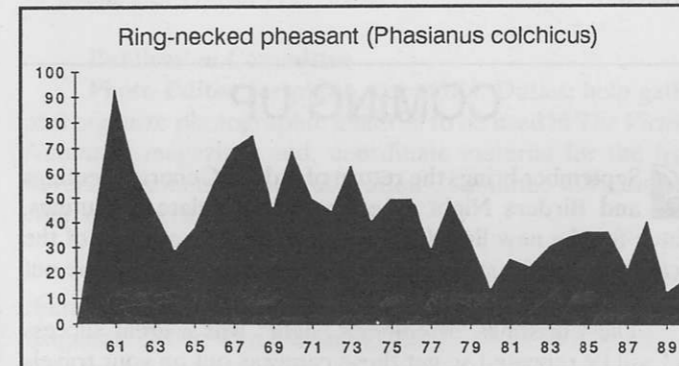
Although we did the analysis for thirteen species, we have presented graphs only for those which showed a decreasing trend for the period 1960 to 1990. Note that all graphs show zero at the origin; the first value is for 1960 midway between the origin and '61' for '1961'.



Killdeer at nest. (Photo: Mark Nyhof)

Meadows and Fields

Eurasian skylark: the computer flags the 1965-66 peak as an atypical event; even ignoring results for these two years, there would appear to have been a significant decrease (99% probability) in numbers over the time period 1960 to 1989 (no 1990 data were available). It is highly likely that this represents



(Graph: Malcolm J.R. Clark)

a loss in available habitat (see article by Barbara Biggs in the May/June issue of the *Victoria Naturalist*).

Killdeer: significant decrease (99% probability), with the decrease of over 50%. Decrease in available habitat?

Ring-necked pheasant: significant decrease (99% probability). Decrease in available habitat?

Song sparrow: after no significant difference over more than 20 years from 1960 to 1983, counts suddenly jumped (99% probability) in 1984-90, with the 1990 count an all-time high for Victoria.

Savannah sparrow: while not present every year, counts have steadily increased (99% probability) over the past three decades, with the 1990 count an all time high.

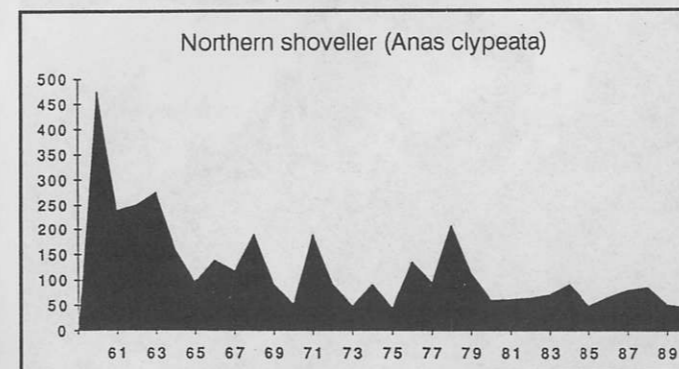
Red-tailed hawk: a significant increase (99% probability). This increase may be due to improved observations.

Fresh Water Habitat

Northern shoveller: a significant decrease (99% probability). This may reflect either a loss in overwintering habitat in the Victoria area or a decrease in the population due to loss of breeding habitat.

Trumpeter swan: small data set but nonetheless there is a statistically valid increase (99% probability). The 1990 count was an all time high.

Tundra swan: no significant change, but the data set was



(Graph: Malcolm J.R. Clark)

too small for a meaningful statistical evaluation.

Northern pintail: no significant change.

American Wigeon: no significant change.

Green-winged teal: no significant change.

Mallard: significant increase (99% probability).

Of the thirteen data sets examined, four showed decreasing counts - the skylark, killdeer, ring-necked pheasant and northern shoveller. Given that both the numbers and skill of observers has been increasing over this time period, the results suggest some concerning trends. Of the remaining data sets examined, four species (tundra swan, Northern pintail, American widgeon, and green-wing teal) did not show any changes, in spite of the increase in observers, while five species (song sparrow, savannah sparrow, red-tailed hawk, trumpeter swan and mallard) showed significant increasing trends.

We will be reviewing the database for additional species for publication in a future issue, and will incorporate the number of observers into the analysis. If anyone has any comments or specific interests, please contact the Editor of the *Victoria Naturalist*.

We wish to acknowledge the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for providing us with the data set, Commonwealth Scientific Limited for covering the computer costs and making available proprietary software, and the Audubon Society and Victoria Natural History Society for coordinating and organizing the Christmas bird counts. Thanks also to all the many individuals who participated in the counts over the years.

Reference:

Campbell, W., N.K. Dawe, I. McTaggart-Cowan, J.M. Cooper, G.W. Kaiser, and M.C.E. McNall. 1990. *The birds of British Columbia. Volume I - nonpasserines*. Royal British Columbia Museum and Canadian Wildlife Service, Victoria, B.C. 514 pp.

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CALENDAR

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held as follows: Board of Directors meetings the first Tuesday of each Month; Botany Night the third Tuesday, and Birders' Night the fourth Wednesday, of each month. Locations are given in the calendar listings.

FIELD TRIPS. Please meet at the location indicated for each trip and BRING A LUNCH. Be equipped for changes in weather, with hat, rain gear and boots, if necessary. Always phone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 before a trip to get further details or find out about changes in plans. On VNHS trips, participants usually pool vehicles to reduce parking problems and costs. The Board suggests that fuel costs be shared with the driver.

JULY EVENTS

Friday to Sunday, July 5-7. Carmanah Valley Field Trip for marbled murrelet. Call Alan Burger (749-9833) to sign up and get details. Group transportation can be arranged if needed. Participants should be self-equipped and supplied for camping. This is an opportunity to experience the pre-dawn flights of marbled murrelets over old growth forests in Carmanah and Walbran Valleys and to contribute to research being done by a team from the University of Victoria. Be prepared for easy hiking...and very early mornings! Birders who would like to help with this project at other times through the summer are also very welcome and should contact Alan.

Sunday, July 21. Skylarks and Mountains. Meet at the market on Highway 17 (Pat Bay Highway) and Island View Beach Road at 7:30 a.m. Leader: Barbara Begg (656-5296). Bring lunch and spend the day searching for skylarks on the peninsula followed by a birding walk along the slopes of Mount Newton.

AUGUST EVENTS

Saturday, August 17. Birding at Cowichan Bay. Meet at Helmcken Park'n'Ride at 8:30 a.m. or at Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 9:15 a.m. Leader: Mike Grenere (658-8624). The southern migration of shore birds will be on again. Other interesting birds are sure to turn up and (if breeding is successful) so should young purple martins.

Sunday, August 18. Seal Grotto and Seal Cove. Meet at Helmcken Park'n'Ride at 8:30 a.m. or at the Forestry Board at waterfront in Jordan River at 10:00 a.m. Leaders: Bev Glover (721-1476) and Phoebe Dunbar (642-6371). This is an all day trip and participants should bring lunch and water. The walk is fairly easy and short. This fascinating and little known grotto (sea cave)

houses a harbour seal nursery. Phoebe and the Sooke Community School built and maintain trails and a blind at the site, located between Jordan River and Port Renfrew. At this time of year you might witness nursing, late pupping, and mating, in addition to general seal behaviour. Explore the shore and hike to Seal Cove and learn about the attempt to get this site protected.

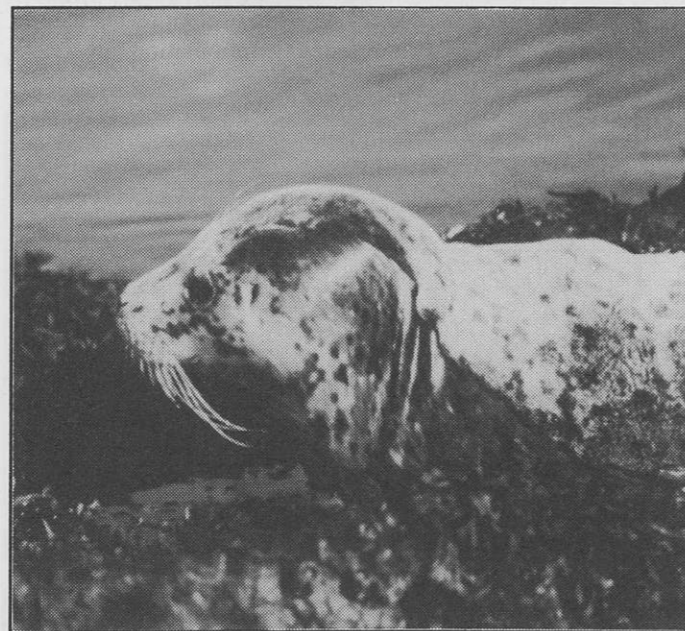
COMING UP

September brings the return of indoor General Meetings and Birders Night meetings, plus a slate of outings. Watch for the new list of speakers in upcoming issues of the *Victoria Naturalist* and on local bulletin boards and come out to enjoy them.

The Christmas "Member's Night" was a great success and will be repeated so get those cameras out on your travels this summer and try for one of the six or seven, ten minute slots.

BULLETIN BOARD

Urgently Needed: Martindale Volunteers. Our Martindale Survey is year-round! Although the summer is not busy for the flats, information on its use by birds is vitally needed. We know summer is a busy season for many members but if you can lend your time for even one Saturday morning, please phone Eric Walters (385-0927) or Darren Copley (479-9879). We would hate to have this important survey grind to a halt due to lack of volunteer help. The survey is carried out from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. each Saturday. It is important that you register so that you can get details, a map, and a checklist to fill in. For more information on the survey see the Bulletin Board in the March/April or May/June issues of *The Victoria Naturalist*.



Harbour Seal Pup: (Photo: © Robin Baird)

Volunteers needed

In order to successfully run a club it takes many volunteers! Taking on any job, no matter how small, helps tremendously the committee chairs in carrying out their large tasks. The following committees need helpers. If interested, contact the Committee chair (phone numbers at front of publication) or phone Bev Glover (721-1476).

Publication Committee

Photo Editor (or photo team OK). Duties: help gather and organize photographic material to be used in *The Victoria Naturalist* magazine; and, coordinate material for the front covers. Members of the Publication Committee will assist and train new recruits.

Managing Editor. Duties: help collect articles and type them on disk (if needed); edit articles; and, proof-read magazine drafts. The Managing Editor could also be responsible for a regular column.

Program Committee

Assistants for indoor meetings. Duties: help think of ideas and do some phoning to invite speakers.

Outings team (3 or 4 people ideally). Duties: brainstorm for ideas for field trips; organize outings; and obtain leaders. We would like to have at least four outings a month. Team should coordinate with Birding and Environmental Committees, then pass information to the Publicity Committee.

Publicity Committee

Assistants (more the merrier). Duties: help organize displays; help distribute posters in their area; assist in mailings to newspapers; place free ads on cable TV; help make a permanent display; write articles about the indoor meetings; specialty jobs to promote the club and raise public awareness of our group; design and make a club brochure, etc. This new committee needs lots of volunteer assistants.

For Sale

National Geographic Field Guide to Birds, Naturalist Guide to the Victoria Region, and *Victoria Area Bird Checklists* are for sale by contacting Lyndis Davis at 477-9952.

EVENTS

Nature Art and Natural Areas - VNHS Nature Art Show. September 7 to 22.

The Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) and BC Parks are again sponsoring an exhibition of nature-inspired art at the Goldstream Provincial Park Visitor Centre. This will be similar to the 1988 show, which attracted over 16,000 visitors and raised two thousand dollars for the Victoria Natural History Society's scholarship fund.

The theme of this year's show is *Parks and Diversity*. Each participating artist will be asked to write a brief paragraph on this theme, to be exhibited along with their artwork. We are

looking for as diverse array of artwork as possible - stained glass, paintings, sculpture, photography, fibre art, wood carvings, or any other medium. Artists must be from Vancouver Island or the Gulf Islands to participate.

If you would like to exhibit a piece, or you know of an artist that you think should be invited, call David Fraser or Leah Ramsay at 479-0016 (evenings) or the Visitor's Centre at Goldstream Park at 478-9414.

Again, we will be requiring volunteers to help staff the show, as well as help with the set-up and take-down duties. Anne Adamson and Victor and Beth Chatwin have agreed to help coordinate the volunteers to staff the show. If you would be willing to staff the exhibit please call Victor at 592-5346. It was the excellent level of volunteer help that made the previous show such a success! This year's show is shaping up to be bigger and better.

A variety of events are being planned for this two-week period as well. The exhibit will be open to school and other groups and workshops and exhibits by artists are hoped for. If you have any ideas, or are willing to put on a workshop or demonstration, please give us a call. If you are willing to help with other aspects of the show, please call David or Leah at 479-0016.

Your Invitation: There will be a special Wine and Cheese Gallery Opening for VNHS members staffing the display, the artists, and BC Parks personnel, on Friday, September 6, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. (Bring a pocket flashlight for the stroll back to the parking lot.)

NATIVE PLANTS

A wide variety of native trees, shrubs, ferns and flowering perennials available now.

Orders for native plant bulbs must be received by August 25.

Oenothera biennis, *Penstemons*, *Holodiscus discolor*, *Amelanchier alnifolia*, *Lupinus polyphyllus* and dozens more.

Camassia quamash 7.90/10 bulbs, 64.00/100.

THIMBLE FARMS
175 Arbutus Rd.,
P.O. Ganges, B.C., V0S 1E0
at the north end of Salt Spring Island
ph. 537-5788 Open 10 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. daily

EXPLORATION OF THE SEA & SHORE AT THE BAMFIELD MARINE STATION

The Bamfield Marine Station, a modern university-sponsored research facility, is located on the south side of Barkley Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The town of Bamfield is a picturesque fishing village located on two inlets. Water connects the community making boats the only means of transportation. The great diversity of marine and terrestrial habitats and local history make it an ideal location for a variety of natural history field trips.

The program cost includes accommodation, meals and instruction. For further information and registration please call the Bamfield Marine Station at (604) 728-3301 during office hours (08:30 - 16:30).

BIRDS OF THE SEA AND SHORE (Sept. 13-15, 1991)

Experience the fall migration of seabirds and shorebirds on the outer edge of Vancouver Island. Dr. Alan Burger, your instructor, has spent several years conducting seabird research at the Bamfield Marine Station. The program will include field trips as well as lectures and laboratory projects. An offshore trip on the M/V Alta to view pelagic species is planned. Cost: \$220 (2 nights)

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE WEST COAST PEOPLES (October 11-14, 1991)

This field trip is designed to introduce participants to the history and prehistory of Bamfield and the Broken Group Islands. The program includes exploration of many sites of historical and biological significance. Discussions and seminars will reveal the fascinating stories behind what is seen. Denis St. Clair, author of a number of works on the prehistory of the Barkley Sound area, will lead the group. Cost: \$330 (3 nights)

BAMFIELD MUSHROOM WORKSHOP (October 18-20, 1991)

"What morsels they be," but what morsels are they? Dr. Brenda Callan, research mycologist and John Dennis, technical mycologist, from Forestry Canada will show you how to find out. We will discuss some of the unique and fascinating features of fungi, what some of their many roles are in the environment, and how to go about identifying the more common and some of the less common forest species. We will go on forays in the Bamfield area, and then examine some of our collections in the lab to prove our field identifications. No background knowledge is necessary, just bring your enthusiasm and any mushroom books that you may have. Cost: \$220 (2 nights)

FORESTRY AND FISHERIES INTERACTIONS (October 25-27, 1991)

This weekend course introduces participants to the ecology of west coast streams and native fish species. Your instructor, Dr. Gordon Hartman, will discuss how the systems function as a whole and how they are affected by forest management practises. A field trip to Carnation Creek will be part of this weekend course. Cost \$220 (2 nights)

MARINE BIOLOGY FOR EDUCATORS (November 8-10, 1991)

A course for teachers, interpreters, outdoor-trip guides - or anyone who might want to know more about the marine environment. This course will cover biology and ecology of marine organisms through field trips, labs and lectures. Ideas for activities, field trips, labs and resources will be an integral part of the course. Your instructor will be marine educator and Public Education Coordinator for the Bamfield Marine Station, Adrienne Mason. Cost: \$220 (2 nights)

BAMFIELD Marine Station

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CANADA V0R 1B0. (604) 728-3301




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