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# The Victoria NATURALIST

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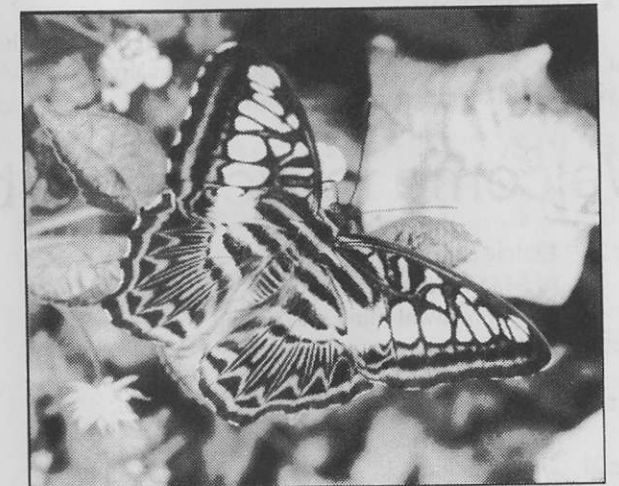
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## OUR COVER

Our Cover this month is a Pine White Butterfly, *Neophasia menapia*, photographed by Cris Guppy, of the Biological Collections section of the Royal British Columbia Museum. Mr. Guppy provides readers of *The Victoria Naturalist* with a Checklist of Butterflies of Vancouver Island in his article appearing on Page 6 of this issue. The list is especially valuable to the novice butterfly watcher since it provides a standard list of common names for for the 66 species of butterflies recorded on the island. The Pine White Butterfly pictured on our cover is on one of 10 members of the Family Pieridae (Whites and Suphurs) recorded on the island.

## Publications Chair

Kim Nemrava has temporarily given up her role with the VNHS in order to fill a position in Prince George. However, she promises to return and to maintain her involvement while away, she will be working on an updated index for the *Victoria Naturalist*. We wish her luck and look forward to her return next spring.



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## Our Winter Ruddy Ducks

By G. Allen Poynter

During the winter of 1958-59 a solitary ruddy duck could be seen in Oak Bay. The following winter three birds stayed over and each winter season this small flock has increased in numbers; their maximum numbers are approximately 18 this year.

While the forming of a wintering flock is of interest, it is not unusual to find "Ruddy's" in this area. Esquimalt lagoon and Canoe Cove can boast flocks of 200 or more, while Elk and Beaver Lake, as well as many of our other small lakes, are suitable habitat where from the first week of October this fascinating duck can be seen until the last spring migrants leave for the nesting grounds during the latter part of May.

The ruddy duck needs no description. Although its winter plumage is quite drab many of its characteristics are obvious; diminutive size, tail cocked vertically, oversized mandible and very aggressive attitude. It is worth a day's birding in spring to find a male "Ruddy" in breeding plumage immediately prior to spring migration.

Southern British Columbia is the most northern limits of the ruddy ducks' wintering range which extends down the west coast on North America across the entire southern states and northern South America and north again to the State of New York on the east coast.

The spring migration of this species is slightly later than most of our ducks but the little "Ruddy" makes up for this with the vigour and splendour of its courtship ritual. This is per-

formed in the nesting area throughout the central and northern states and into the prairie areas of Canada to northern Saskatchewan, Alberta and central British Columbia. A few birds are reported on migration annually in the eastern Canadian provinces.

Unable to walk on land the ruddy duck seeks out the sloughs with tall bulrush and cattails. Here the female often lays as many as 16 to 18 oversized eggs which must be stacked in layers to enable her to incubate. Unlike many other ducks, the male ruddy duck does not desert the family scene but stays close by to assist in the rearing of the young.

Although it is a small duck it is considered a good table bird by the hunting element if it can be collected before feeding on the vegetable matter in the shallow salt water bays. It is these hunters who have dubbed the species with more than ninety colloquial names from "Spoon-Billed Butterball" to "Bumblebee Buzzer".

During a very fast-moving birding trip through the interior of British Columbia with Jeremy Tatum last spring, one of our most gratifying moments was spent observing a lone male ruddy duck feeding in a small slough. The contrast between the red body and the bright blue bill was magnificent, making it hard to believe that it is the same bird we have wintering with us in Victoria at present.

*This article is reprinted from the April 1966 issue of the Victoria Naturalist. "Garry Oaks," by Freeman King on the following page is also a reprint from 1966.*

## Welcome to New Members

- May 29 Dulcie Snider, of Magdelin Street: enjoys birdwatching and hiking.
- June 20 M.G. Roger, of Dallas Road: is interested in wildflowers and viewing *Corvus burgerbunius*.
- June 21 Jim Mulchinnock, of Cooperidge Drive: is Associate Editor of *The Victoria Naturalist*.
- June 29 Arlene Aylard, of Wain Road: likes birding and hiking.
- June 30 Jacquelyn Nelson, of Elwood Avenue: is a bird watcher.
- June 30 Burl Jantzen, of Leslie Drive: enjoys birding, canoeing and photography.
- July 10 John and Liz Owen, of Denison Road: they enjoy birdwatching, hiking and acting.

- July 12 Vicki Hansen, of Campbell River: is studying mosses and related botany and would like to hear from others who have the same interests.
- July 14 Judith Mostyn and Les MacLaren, of Rockland Avenue: are interested in birds, whales and wildflowers.
- July 18 Dafeny S. Horne, of Scolton Road.
- July 18 Brian and Sonja Mallory, of Tall Tree Place: are new to British Columbia and enjoy birding, hiking and gardening.
- July 20 Jeanne Tweten, of Bellevue Road: likes sea birds an ocean walks, wildflowers, mountain parks, birding, camping and hiking.
- July 24 Diane C. Taylor, of Lovell Avenue: is interested in saving hedgerows and Garry oak meadows, and in encouraging native plants in landscaping. She is presently an elementary school teacher.

## Raptor Spectacle, Fall 1991

By David Allinson

The fog lifted slowly. The sun, a ball of dull yellow, began to glow more fiercely. My day's HawkWatch started with those first shafts of sunlight. My boredom was soon to be replaced by expectation, as I anticipated the first of the morning arrivals who were intent on riding the thermals, those warm upwellings of air that rose from the rocks and forest in East Sooke Park. An soon all my senses would be put to the test, but for now I waited, like a patient heron awaiting prey to approach.

Then it began. First one turkey vulture appeared out of the rapidly thinning mist and then another and another. I began to quiver with excitement as something told me I would be rewarded well as I stood alone above Beechey Head. Gradually, over the next half-hour, the turkey vultures, or "Tuvus" for short, developed into 150 birds, all gliding effortlessly and within 100 feet of my lookout. Some of the "Tuvus" began to settle atop the firs below me to the north and began their ritual "sunning". With a five-and-a-half foot wingspan, these master soarers appeared larger than ever as they sat with wings outstretched, gathering heat, drying feathers or straightening feathers in the early sunlight. The only sound heard was the lighthouse foghorn, the gentle waves in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the rush of air as these otherwise silent vultures flapped overhead, slowly gathering height.

## Garry Oaks

By Freeman King

The Garry oak is British Columbia's only native oak. It grows mainly on the east coast of Vancouver Island but it is most abundant in the Victoria area. It does not grow north of Comox but there are small groves at Sumas and at Yale on the mainland. It also grows in Washington and Oregon where it is called the Pacific post oak because it is extensively used as fence posts. The heart of the wood will last almost indefinitely but the soft sap wood rots when in contact with moisture. It is a very slow growing tree and very few of the acorns germinate.

It is slowly disappearing from the landscape through indiscriminate cutting where buildings are being erected. This surely is a crime when with some thought and planning of an area this beautiful native oak can be saved. No matter where you see it, it is rugged, strong and fascinating. Perhaps some enterprising nurseryman would do well to grow it as an ornamental tree and so save it from becoming a museum piece. Nature lovers should advocate its preservation and protection. Surely this means all members of the Victoria Natural History Society.

*This article was first published in the April, 1966 issue of The Victoria Naturalist but it is still relevant today, 26 years later. See this issue's Bulletin and Calender for recent activities of the Garry Oak Meadow Group.*

The flock of 150 developed into a kettle of 300 but by noon became a "boil" of 500 individual birds circling effortlessly around Babbington Hill, Rocky Point and back to Beechey Head. Over the course of the four hours I watched that day, I would record six other species of raptor and eleven for the weekend.

Just after noon a merlin came full tilt over the ridge and within ten feet of me as I lay on the moss watching the spectacle above. The falcon was apparently oblivious of me but intent rather on capturing one of the dark-eyed juncos that were feeding nearby. Red-tailed hawks, sharp-shinned hawks and Cooper's hawks joined the vultures as the day cleared into a cloudless one. At 12:36 pm a flock of band-tailed pigeons circled restlessly over a nearby ridge, perhaps unsettled by the presence of so many predators in the air. Then, three red-tailed hawks caught my eye and were soon joined by a fourth, much smaller, buteo. As I focused in on the bird with my scope I could not hold in a twitcher's shout of glee as I noted the clean underwing except for a dark trailing edge and a tail banded black and white. The adult, light-phase broad-winged hawk circled above me for ten minutes tantalizingly close but yet distant and wildly free. I recalled seeing thousands of broad-winged hawks in eastern Canada but that did not diminish my admiration for this out-of-place bird, soaring with its larger cousins.

The rest of the day is a blur after the broad-winged hawk departed to the west. However, my memories of the morning spent so close to the vultures, and a day capped off with a wonderful rarity, will hold me over until the fall HawkWatch of 1992.

*David Allinson is Vice-president of the Victoria Natural History Society. An avid, active birder he is also a self-proclaimed "raptor-holic".*

## New Books . . . .

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- Handbook for Butterfly Watchers . . . . . \$16.95
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- Birds of Jamaica . . . . \$39.95
- Mammals of the Neotropics (II) . . . . . \$49.95

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# A Checklist of the Butterflies of Vancouver Island and Their Common Names

By Cris Guppy

In early 1992 an official list of the common names of North American butterflies was produced by the *Xerces Society* in cooperation with the *Lepidopterists' Society* (Miller, 1992). The list is the equivalent of the Ornithologists' Union *Checklist of North American Birds*. Most North American amateurs and professionals interested in the conservation of invertebrates belong to the *Xerces Society*, and those interested in butterflies and moths belong to the *Lepidopterists' Society*. This list should be used as the source of common names of butterflies, in order to standardize usage.

I question only one aspect of the official list of common names. Some words have been split into two words, with "orange tip" becoming "orange tip" and "tortoiseshell" becoming "tortoise shell". I am contacting Jacqueline Miller to determine the reason for these changes, and will publish a separate note with the resulting explanation.

There are 66 species of butterflies recorded from Vancouver Island and the adjacent islands of the Gulf of Georgia, either at present or historically. I have provided below a list of official common names which are applicable to the different species of butterflies. However, there is no official list of common names for subspecies. Many of the subspecies present on Vancouver Island will be listed in a separate publication on the "endangered" butterflies of British Columbia.

Only one species, Reakirt's Copper, has two subspecies on Vancouver Island. *Epidemia mariposa charlottensis* occurs in the high rainfall north and west while *Epidemia mariposa penroseae* occurs in the drier southeast part of the island.

This checklist of Vancouver Island butterflies is based on more than a century of collecting. Some species, such as Barry's Hairstreak and Rosner's Hairstreak can only be reliably told apart after collection and dissection. In 1990 I

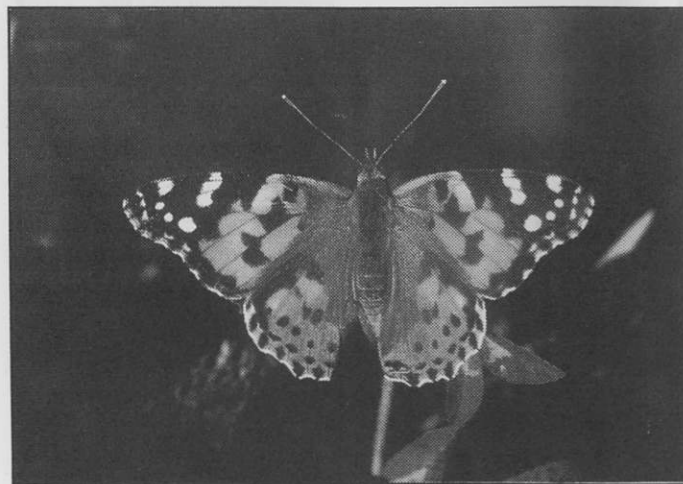
added the Western White to the Vancouver Island list with a trip to Mt. Albert Edward (with a park collecting permit!). The northern part of the island, from Strathcona Park north, is virtually uncollected. Additional collecting in the subalpine and alpine should turn up more of the species known from the mainland coast range on the mountains of northern Vancouver Island.

It is very easy to misidentify butterflies. As a result sight records alone are not acceptable when recording the presence of butterflies new to an area. All new records must be accompanied by either a specimen (preferred) or photographs showing the identifying characters. Written descriptions are seldom of much value.

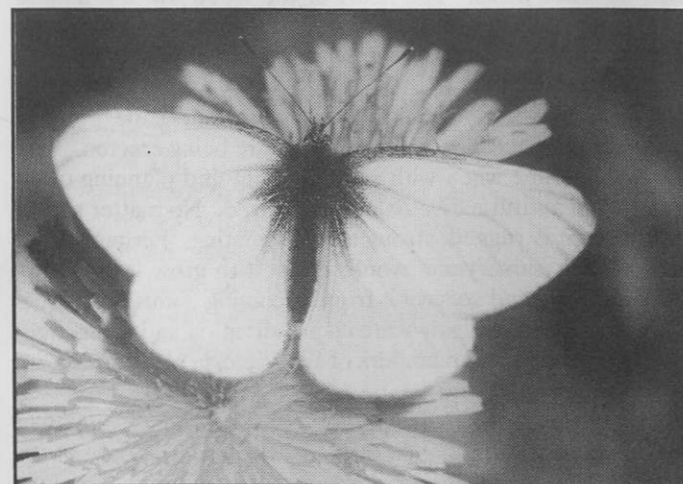
I provide this checklist of the butterflies of Vancouver Island with a two-fold purpose. The first is to provide a standard list of common names, which should help prevent confusion for the novice butterfly watcher. Secondly, a list of which butterflies occur on the island will make identifications easier and more reliable by insuring that local naturalists know which species are possible and which are unlikely to be present.

## Skippers: Family HESPERIIDAE

- Silverspotted Skipper — *Epargyreus clausus* (Cramer)
- Northern Cloudy Wing — *Thorybes pylades* (Scudder)
- Dreamy Dusky Wing — *Erynnis icelus* (Scudder & Burgess)
- Propertius Dusky Wing — *Erynnis propertius* (Scudder & Burgess)
- Persius Dusky Wing — *Erynnis persius* (Scudder); undetermined subspecies
- Two-banded Checkered Skipper — *Pyrgus ruralis ruralis* (Boisduval)
- Arctic Skipper — *Carterocephalus palaemon mandan* (W.H. Edwards)
- Common Branded Skipper — *Hesperia comma oregonia* (W.H. Edwards)
- Woodland Skipper — *Ochlodes sylvanoides sylvanoides* (Boisduval)



Painted Lady — *Vanessa cardui*. (Photo: Cris Guppy)



Mustard White — *Pieris napi*. (Photo: Cris Guppy)

- Dun Skipper — *Euphyes vestris metacomet* (Harris)
- Roadside Skipper — *Amblyscirtes vialis* (W.H. Edwards)

## Swallowtails and Parnassians: Family PAPILIONIDAE

- Clodius Parnassian — *Parnassius clodius claudianus* (Stichel)
- Phoebus' Parnassian — *Parnassius phoebus olympianus* (Burdick)
- Anise Swallowtail — *Papilio zelicaon zelicaon* (Lucas)
- Western Tiger Swallowtail — *Papilio rutulus rutulus* (Lucas)
- Pale Swallowtail — *Papilio eurymedon* (Lucas)

## Whites and Sulphurs: Family PIERIDAE

- Pine White — *Neophasia menapia tau* (Scudder)
- California White — *Pontia sisymbrii flavitincta* (J.A. Comstock)
- Western White — *Pontia occidentalis occidentalis* (Reakirt)
- Mustard White — *Pieris napi marginalis* (Scudder)
- Cabbage Butterfly — *Pieris rapae* (Linnaeus)
- Large Marble — *Euchloe ausonides* (Lucas); undescribed subspecies
- Sara Orange Tip — *Anthocharis sara flora* (W.G. Wright)
- Clouded Sulphur — *Colias philodice eriphyle* (W.H. Edwards)
- Alfalfa Butterfly — *Colias eurytheme* (Boisduval)
- Western Sulphur — *Colias occidentalis occidentalis* (Scudder)

## Gossamer Wings: Family LYCAENIDAE

- Purplish Copper — *Epidemia helloides* (Boisduval)
- Reakirt's Copper — *Epidemia mariposa charlottensis* (Holland) and *Epidemia mariposa penroseae* (Field)
- Acadian Hairstreak — *Satyrium acadicum* (W.H. Edwards)
- Johnson's Hairstreak — *Mitoura johnsoni* (Skinner)
- Rosner's Hairstreak — *Mitoura rosneri acuminata* (K. Johnson)
- Barry's Hairstreak — *Mitoura baryi plicataria* (K. Johnson)
- Brown Elfin — *Incisalia augustinus iroides* (Boisduval)
- Moss' Elfin — *Incisalia mossi mossi* (Hy. Edwards)
- Western Pine Elfin — *Incisalia eryphon sheltonensis* (F. Chermock & Frechin)
- Grey Hairstreak — *Strymon melinus atrofasciatus* (McDunnough)
- Western Tailed Blue — *Everes amyntula albrighti* (Clench)
- Spring Azure — *Celastrina argiolus echo* (W.H. Edwards)
- Silvery Blue — *Glaucopsyche lygdamus columbia* (Skinner)
- Northern Blue — *Lycæides idas* (Linnaeus); undetermined subspecies
- Greenish Blue — *Plebejus saepiolus insulanus* (Blackmore)



Satyr Angleming, *Polygonia satyrus*. (Photo: Cris Guppy)

- Icariodes Blue — *Icaricia icariodes blackmorei* (Barnes & McDunnough)
- Rustic Blue — *Agriades rusticus megalos* (McDunnough)

## Brushfoots: Family NYMPHALIDAE

- Zerene Fritillary — *Speyeria zerene bremneri* (W.H. Edwards)
- Hydaspe Fritillary — *Speyeria hydaspe rhodope* (W.H. Edwards)
- Western Meadow Fritillary — *Clossiana epithore uslui* (Kocak)
- Field Crescent — *Phyciodes pratensis pratensis* (Behr)
- Mylitta Crescent — *Phyciodes mylitta mylitta* (W.H. Edwards)
- Chalcedona Checkerspot — *Euphydryas chalcedona perdiccas* (W.H. Edwards)
- Edith's Checkerspot — *Euphydryas editha taylori* (W.H. Edwards)
- Satyr Angleming — *Polygonia satyrus* (W.H. Edwards)
- Green Comma — *Polygonia faunus rusticus* (W.H. Edwards)
- Zephyr — *Polygonia zephyrus* (W.H. Edwards)
- Oreas Angleming — *Polygonia oreas silenus* (W.H. Edwards)
- California Tortoise Shell — *Nymphalis californica* (Boisduval)
- Mourning Cloak — *Nymphalis antiopa antiopa* (Linnaeus)
- Milbert's Tortoise Shell — *Nymphalis milberti milberti* (Godart)
- American Painted Lady — *Vanessa virginiensis* (Drury)
- Painted Lady — *Vanessa cardui* (Linnaeus)
- West Coast Lady — *Vanessa annabella* (Field)
- Red Admiral — *Vanessa atalanta rubria* (Fruhstorfer)
- Lorquin's Admiral — *Basilarchia lorquini burisoni* (Maynard)

## Satyrs, Browns and Wood Nymphs: Family SATYRIDAE

- Ringlet — *Coenonympha tullia insulana* (McDunnough)
- Common Wood Nymph — *Cercyonis pegala incana* (W.H. Edwards)
- Great Arctic — *Oeneis nevadensis gigas* (Butler)

## Monarchs and Queens: Family DANAIDAE

- Monarch — *Danaus plexippus* (Linnaeus)

## REFERENCES:

- Miller, J.Y. (ed.). 1992. *The common names of North American butterflies*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington & London, 177 pp.

Cris Guppy is with the Biological Collections Section of the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria.



Large Marble, *Euchloe ausonides*, Princeton, B.C., 1975

# Camas Day Report

By Helen Oldshaw

"...the quawmash is now in blume and from the colour of its bloom at a short distance it resembles lakes of fine clear water, so complete in this deception that on first sight I could have sworn it was water."

Meriwether Lewis: *Original Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition* (entry of June 12, 1806)

Yes, the world is a different place since the days of Lewis and Clark. The quawmash, as the First Peoples called the bulbous plant which provided them with essential carbohydrates for thousands of years before the coming of the Europeans. There are two species of camas the great camas (*Camassia leichtlinii*) and early camas (*C. quawmash*), no longer cover the meadows of the narrow coastal strip from southern Vancouver Island to Sierran California in lake-like abundance. In fact, if development continues at its current pace and methods (strip, build, replant with exotics), the existence of these marvellous plants within the Garry oak ecosystem, in which it plays an integral part, is seriously threatened.

Camas Day was the brainchild of Connie Hawley. She suggested that it be co-sponsored by the *Friends of Beacon Hill Park*, who had formed a society in 1989 for the purpose of protecting the natural and cultural history of the Park. Environmentalists no longer naively make the assumption that the plants and animals in a park, particularly in an urban setting, are automatically protected. Poor management practices, arising out of an ignorance of, and an insensitivity to, the native flora and fauna, along with increasing pressure to hold large-scale organized activities in natural areas, put them very much at risk. In Beacon Hill Park, the threats continue. The *Great Canadian Picnic Society* had applied again this year to Council to hold their event on the southern meadow below Beacon Hill.

They had obtained permission to hold it there last year and had done considerable damage. A stage had been set on top of, and beside, patches of blossoming harvest brodiaea (*Brodiaea coronaria*), one of the most exquisite of the meadow flowers. When it was all over, the area looked like the aftermath at a fairground, the grass and the harvest brodiaea trampled flat.

Most people do not realize that a wildflower meadow (sometimes called a 'relic prairie' in the States) is not the same as a farm pasture, and it is definitely not a lawn. The person who walks blindly past a group of native orchids tucked in among the drying grasses at Holland Point, and mutters "When are they going to cut the damn grass?", is sadly unaware of the intricate ecosystems that function beautifully in a somewhat harsh environment. Although the soil is deep and sunlight conditions are obviously favourable, low rainfall and cool prevailing winds laden with salt provide a challenge for the survival of the meadow plants whose habitation is so near the sea. Compound these adverse factors with poor park management practices, such as yearly mowing before the native plants have set their seed, and the nonnative species start to take over. These (mostly European) invaders have had thousands of years to adapt to seasonal grazing and mowing, so they fit in quite nicely and push out the native species.

Along with the continuous lobbying of politicians by both the *Friends of Beacon Hill Park* and the *Victoria Natural History Society*, there needs to be more on — the — spot education for the public, the politicians, and the senior management staff of the park. (I emphasize "senior", not only because they have a considerable amount of decision-making power, but because I have observed an encouraging renaissance among several of the C.U.P.E. staff members who have shown an awakening interest in and concern for native plants.) Camas Day is a step in the right direction.

Shirley Embra and Tom Gillespie have joined our organization committee. Others shared their particular talents: Lyndis Davis (signs), Gordon Friesen (volunteer button design), Anne Fletcher, Dave Fraser, Leah Ramsay, Joyce Lee,

and Bryony Penn (displays).

April 25 dawned cloudless and calm. About two hundred and fifty people took part in the walks, with over thirty volunteers helping out. They reminded people not to stray off the paths, and were important as a "visible presence" from the two sponsoring organizations. The walk leaders were excellent — contributing their considerable talents to each walk. The two birding groups, led by John Ballard and Don L'Heureux, started off early in the morning with their usual vigour, traversing the several types of habitat that the park has to offer. A clear sighting of the resident Cooper's hawk of the southeast woods was one highlight.

The native plant walk started soon after, with a member from the Royal British Columbia Museum leading three walks. Chris Brayshaw has known and loved Beacon Hill Park for many years; his sincerity and clear analysis of Park maintenance policies captured the interest of his listeners. Adolf & Oluna Ceska's laidback style allowed for magical interludes; the last golden paintbrush shimmered in Darren's scope as an ethereal presence. Robert Ogilvie has the ability to describe clearly how one plant interacts with another; he illustrated how well — equipped the invasive plants are when taking over an area from native plants.

The First Peoples knew a long time ago about the intricacies of Nature's Plan and how to lead "the good life". This was shown in the display posters on the camas bulb roasting method, prepared by Rose Henry, Earle Claxton, and other native language teachers of the Lau'wellnew Tribal School. Grant Keddy, an archaeologist with the Museum, in his guided walks described the importance of the camas harvest, the burial cairns and the fortified village of the Songhees.

Taking us into the future was the display of Leah Ramsay and Dave Fraser. They demonstrated how the home gardener can raise camas to plant in one's own yard or to help replenish denuded natural areas. It is ironic that in Europe the camas is a highly regarded and much sought — after garden plant.

In hindsight, Camas Day produced some disappointments. The press and the mayor attended the Peace March that day instead. Councillor Craighead showed up, joined a walk, and appeared impressed; a few weeks later he unaccountably voted in favour of allowing the Great Canadian Picnic to be held again on this same southern camas meadow below Beacon Hill.

A number of lessons can be drawn from this year's experience. We need more educational activities like Camas Day. We need to provide more education to municipal staff and local politicians (the mayor did change his vote after a submission at Council by the *Friends of Beacon Hill Park*). The *Victoria Natural History Society* now has a representative on the *Advisory Parks and Recreation Commission*. Dannie Carsen, as chairperson of the Beacon Hill Park sub — com-

mittee, is now working on a review of the interim Beacon Hill Park Resource Management Plan, which has been prepared by the Park Planner.

In my own mind, I am convinced that it is absolutely essential to everyone's future well — being, indeed survival, to preserve the last remaining great meadows of the Garry Oak — Camas ecosystem, generous in its beauty and biodiversity, unique in the world, and irreplaceable.

Bouquets To The Volunteers: Kim Nemrava, Jan Talbot, Karen Franzen, Cecily Meek, Bill Spriggs, Margaret Wainright, Melissa Brandy, Helen Currie, Emlen Littell, Edward Bruner, Bernice and Neil Adderson, Jean Hay, Jack Husted, Mary Morrison, Jean Muir, Ralph Wooley, Isobel Dawson, Sheila Stuart, Ann Belither, Sylvia and Ken Austin, Doris Brix, Darren Copely, Lola Brockie, Laurel Nash, John Shaneman, Bev Glover, Dannie Carsen, and Robert Allington.

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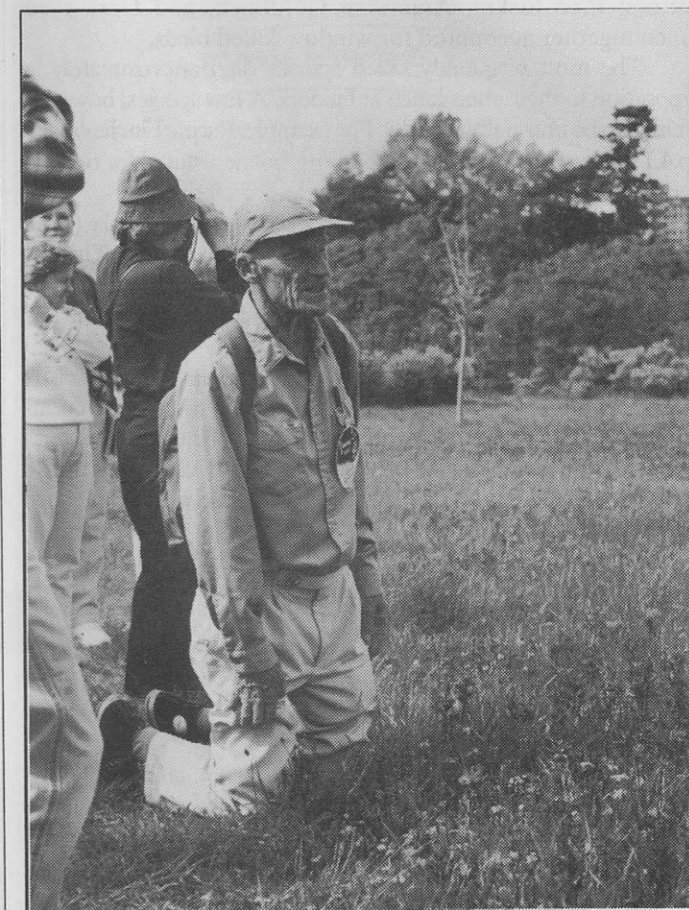
**CAMAS DAY -**  
**April 25 dawned cloudless and calm. About two hundred and fifty people took part in the walks, with over thirty volunteers helping out. They reminded people not to stray off the paths, and were important as a "visible presence" from the two sponsoring organizations. The walk leaders were excellent — contributing their considerable talents to each walk.**

---

Helen Oldshaw is a founding member of the Garry Oak Meadow Group.



Dr. Chris Brayshaw leads a native plant walk at Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, on Camas Day, 1992.



Dr. Chris Brayshaw contemplating the fate of the Beacon Hill Camas meadow.

## Project Feederwatch Counts Birds Killed In Window Collisions

What's ubiquitous, nearly invisible, and deadly to birds? The windows on your house. Birds often fly full tilt into unseen windows; some are killed, others are left stunned and vulnerable to predators. A recent study by Project FeederWatch provides insight as to just how many birds meet death by collision each year.

Project Feederwatch, launched in 1987, is a long term survey of the numbers and kinds of birds at backyard feeders in North America. Over 7000 volunteers participated in 1990-91. Scientists at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, and Long Point Bird Observatory, Port Rowan, Ontario- the organizations that sponsor FeederWatch - use the data to track changes in resident songbird populations.

During the winter of 1989-90 FeederWatch recorded the number of birds killed in window collisions at their homes. Nine percent of all FeederWatchers reported finding one or more window-killed birds, with an average of 2.0 deaths per home reporting kills. Homes where window kills occurred typically had above-average numbers of bird feeders (and therefore large numbers of birds visiting). Window kill sites were usually located in rural areas close to woods and open water, and the yards had plenty of vegetation.

FeederWatchers documented 66 different species of birds killed in window strikes. Most were common feeder visitors: Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, and Dark-eyed Junco together accounted for window-killed birds.

The most frequently killed species died approximately in proportion to their abundance at feeders. A few species, however, seemed to be unusually unlucky. For example, Purple Finches make up 4.1 percent of all window-killed birds but accounted for only 1.8 percent of all the birds counted at FeederWatch sites.

All of the over-represented window-killed birds (Pine Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Downy Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush, and Cedar Waxwing) are woodland or tree-loving species; thus, these birds are often present at the homes FeederWatchers has identified as being prone to window strikes.

Most window strikes probably happen because a bird just isn't paying attention. FeederWatchers don't always witness the events leading up to a window strike. But in 16 percent of the window strikes reported, observers saw a panic-stricken bird escaping from a raptor. In an additional 1.5% of window kills, the victims had been chased by other birds or startled by loud noises or passing cars.

The exact number of birds killed in window strikes each year is difficult to determine. Predators and scavengers quickly remove stunned or dead birds; in this study, for example, some FeederWatchers saw hawks grab birds as they bounced off the window. But extrapolating from the 1989-1990 study period, scientists estimate that 0.55 birds per FeederWatch home per year are killed in window collisions.

How does that compare to other window kill studies? To date, the best estimate of total annual window-strike deaths in the United States comes from Dr. Daniel Klem at Southern Illinois University. He believes that one to ten birds are killed annually for every building in the country, for a total of 95 to 950 million victims. Our data suggest Klem's lower estimate may be the more realistic one.

Still, ninety-five million birds is one or two percent of the


estimated total autumn population of birds in the United States - not a trivial number. We should strive to prevent window kills, particularly because the birds that die have been lured close to our houses by our feeders.

Recently, Klem also published the results of the first rigorous study of window strike-prevention devices: the hawk silhouettes, wind-socks, one-way films, and screens that are sold by many bird feeding supply outlets. Under Klem's experimental conditions, these commonly used deterrents did not reduce window strikes. The most effective window guard turned out to be a closely spaced grid of adhesive strips.


Few people, however, want to obscure their windows to this extent. FeederWatch participants who have had problems with window strikes recommend a less intrusive contraption: black plastic garden-protection netting mounted on frames installed about a foot away from the window. At one FeederWatch home where as many as seven collisions a day had occurred, bird mortality went down to a total of only nine over the entire winter after the netting was installed.

Project FeederWatch coordinator Dr. Erica H. Dunn, presented the data on window strikes at the 1991 meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists; an article is being prepared now for publication in an ornithology research journal.

*This article is reprinted with permission from Project FeederWatch newsletter, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.*



harbour porpoise



Dall's porpoise

### WHALE HOTLINE

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All sightings, no matter how old, are useful for research purposes and are entered into a computer data base. Records are available to all researchers. When current local sightings of killer whales or any unusual species are reported, researchers will try to respond to them. Please report date, time, location, description of the animals, number, direction of travel, and behaviour, as well as your name, phone number and address in case further information is required.

## Bird Feeding: Boon or Bane?

Are people who feed birds unwittingly causing the decline of migratory bird populations? According to Project FeederWatch, a winter bird feeding survey sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the answer seems to be no.

Concern for migratory birds has been mounting in recent years. Surveys suggest that many populations have declined seriously over the past decade. In his recent book, *Where Have All the Birds Gone?*, ornithologist John Terborgh discusses the possible causes.

He mentions deforestation on the neotropical wintering grounds and fragmentation of breeding habitat in North America, which most biologists agree are the main problems. But he suggests that bird feeding may be a worry as well. He wonders whether feeders may be causing increases in birds such as brown-headed cowbirds, which are nest parasites, or blue jays, which are notable nest robbers. If so, he reasons, then bird feeding may be inadvertently contributing to the declines of many forest-dwelling species, such as warblers and vireos, that never even visit feeders.

To examine this possibility, Cornell ornithologist Erica H. Dunn turned to information from Project FeederWatch as well as data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), a continent-wide survey of bird numbers in the spring. She used the FeederWatch data to determine which feeder species are most widespread in North America and the BBS data to learn which of them had been increasing and which had been decreasing during the past 25 years.

Surprisingly, she discovered that 70 percent of the most widespread feeder birds showed significantly declining populations. These included not only the nest-robbing blue jay but also nest-site competitors such as the European starling and house sparrow, as well as several other species often considered "pests". The brown-headed cowbird also declined, although not as much as many others. These findings don't mean these species are not hurting migratory birds through their predatory or parasitizing actions but it does suggest that feeding them is not increasing their populations.

These observations raise another question - is bird feeding bad for bird populations? Are species such as the blue jay being hurt by the practice?

Probably not. Most of the declining feeder species belong to groups that are declining as a whole—even though some species in those groups don't visit feeders. These include mimids (thrashers and mockingbirds), towhees, certain blackbirds and sparrows - birds that nest primarily in grassland or shrub habitats, which are also declining.


Bird feeding may harm some species, however. One study in England showed that regular feeding induced some blue tits and great tits to nest in suburban areas rather than their natural habitat, deciduous woodland. The suburban nesters showed very poor reproductive success because natural foods, especially the insects needed to feed nestlings, were in short supply. We don't know whether blue jays are responding


to feeding by nesting in suburbia, only to suffer insupportable predation by cats and raccoons. We do know that American robins, which often nest in suburbia, are showing population increases nationwide.

Conclusive evidence for the effects of bird feeding on bird population awaits more detailed studies of each species. Meanwhile, bird feeding does not seem to cause increases in most of the species that frequent feeders, including "pest species."

If you feed birds in your backyard and you would like to contribute to an international effort to monitor bird populations, now is the time to sign up for the 1992-93 FeederWatch season. Participants receive a complete instruction packet, data forms and a subscription to *FeederWatch News*, a biannual newsletter that covers not only FeederWatch results but bird feeding tips, notes on feeder bird behaviour, and more. For information on how to join, write to: Project FeederWatch, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, or call (607) 254-2414.


*This article is reprinted, with permission, from the Autumn 1992 FeederWatch News, published by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Long Point Bird Observatory.*





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## Hang in There!

By Peggy Price

In the attic of an old farm house lived a family. In fact, there were several families. They rested by hanging upside down from the rafters. Although this might seem to be a very uncomfortable position for us to them it was the only way to relax, for they were little brown bats.

When evening came, and the light grew dim, they became restless. Suddenly one took flight, making its way through an old vent near the eaves. Soon all the bats were moving about, creating a rustling sound as they made their way through the opening to the fading light of day.

This evening was special, for it was a time of feasting. Swarms of newly hatched flying ants were dancing about in the darkening sky. These tasty snacks were easily captured as the bats swooped and dived, using their sonar pulses to pick off the fluttering insects.

Basil, our hero, was a young and handsome bat. He was now just over a month old, and had recently left his mother's care. Last evening she told him that it was time for him to look after himself, and find his own food. She encouraged him to depend upon his own two wings to meet his needs. "You must learn to be strong and independent," she said seriously. "I will not always be here and I want to be sure that you can find enough to eat, and stay out of trouble."

"Don't worry Mum," Basil shouted, as he took off to share some of the flying insects with his relatives. He did a couple of barrel rolls and loops, to show off his flying skills, snapping up a few tasty ants in the process. "My sonar is working just fine," he shouted, as he passed her again, dodging and weaving to avoid the power lines which led into the old barn nearby.

His mother could see he was too confident. "Slow down, Basil" she pleaded, "when you are travelling at such a speed, it is not easy to avoid an accident. You must always be prepared for the unexpected."

"You worry too much, Mum." Basil's voice faded in the distance as he swooped high into the sky, rolling and tumbling as he tested his newly discovered aeronautical abilities.

The open door of the hay barn looked interesting and he zoomed into the dark loft. He was startled to see small furry creatures, much like himself but without wings. They ran for cover under the loose hay as he flew by. He had heard the elders talking about mice, but these were the first he had seen.

He sensed there were other creatures in the building attached to the hay barn. He could hear munching sounds and heavy breathing! The urge to investigate got the better of him and he flew out of door of the loft — turning sharply to enter the open door of the cattle barn.

It was quite dark inside and Basil could make out the huge forms of the cows in their stalls. They were enjoying their meal of fresh hay, and slapped their tails about in an effort to drive away the many flies which were settling on their backs and sides. Basil snapped up a few of the flies as he explored the barn. Licking his lips, he decided he preferred the taste of flying ants.



Spotted Bat. (Courtesy: Royal British Columbia Museum.)

As he neared the far wall he turned to make his exit. Suddenly, he came to an abrupt halt as his wing came in contact with a sticky object hanging from the ceiling. His mother's worst fears were realized. He had become overconfident and now was in great trouble. The more he struggled, the more the sticky coil attached itself to him. There were flies on the coil as well — some dead, others buzzing in agitation as they tried to free themselves.

Basil was too far from his family to call for help and even if they did hear his cries, they would not be able to free him from the fly coil which by now had draped itself around his struggling body.

"What can I do?" His thoughts raced as he tried to think of a way to escape this terrible situation. He tried to lift one wing, but as he did so another part of him stuck to the dangling trap. "If only Mother were here," he thought. "If only I had listened to her. But it's too late now, I can never escape." He closed his eyes, worn out from his struggles, feeling very alone and without hope.

Basil hung through the long dark night. He drifted in and out of consciousness, waking to realize it was not a nightmare, that his predicament was very real, and there was no escape.

When the first light of day filtered through the barn windows, he heard human voices in the distance and sounds of metal buckets being carried towards the barn. The door creaked and two humans entered. Farmer Tom Green and his young daughter Tammy had come to milk the cows. The light was switched on and Basil watched in despair, for had he been free he would have been far away by now.

"Hello, what have we here?" Mr. Green stepped back in surprise. He had spotted Basil, hanging limply in the fly coil. Basil stared back, trying not to reveal the panic within. "Look, Tammy, we have a visitor." She had been washing the cows' udders and had not noticed Basil until her father called. "The poor little fellow." She looked closer. "He looks exhausted. He's probably been hanging there for hours!"

"He must be a young one," said her father. "Normally, bats send out sonar signals when they fly, and can avoid this type of problem." Not only did Basil feel trapped and alone, now he began to feel rather foolish. He had not used his sonar in the barn, as he had been intent on exploring, and had felt quite safe.

"What can we do to help him?" pondered Tammy, as she studied the pathetic little body hanging from the ceiling. "Perhaps we can clean him up by washing him in some soapy water. That may help get rid of the glue." "It's worth a try," said her father. "With the number of flies and mosquitoes we have around this place, we need all the help we can get to keep them under control. One bat can devour a large number of pests and its better than using a lot of poison sprays." With that, Mr. Green detached the fly coil from the ceiling and placed it, with Basil attached, in a cardboard box.

"Take him up to the house and ask Mother to give you a dish of warm soapy water. Then cut away as much of the coil as you can and soak the little chap for awhile. Mind he does not bite — he may not realize you are trying to help him."

Soon Basil found himself immersed in a pan of warm water. The glue was very reluctant to dissolve, so Tammy found an old tooth brush and proceeded to gently scrub his furry body, being careful to keep his tiny nose above water. He struggled in her grasp, for he had never been in water before. This, on top of the fly coil experience, was almost more than he could bear.

Finally Tammy called. "Mom, could you hold him while I scrub — he is so slippery I can't hold and wash him at the same time." Her mother gently wrapped Basil in a cloth while Tammy extended each rubbery wing and worked at the stubborn glue.

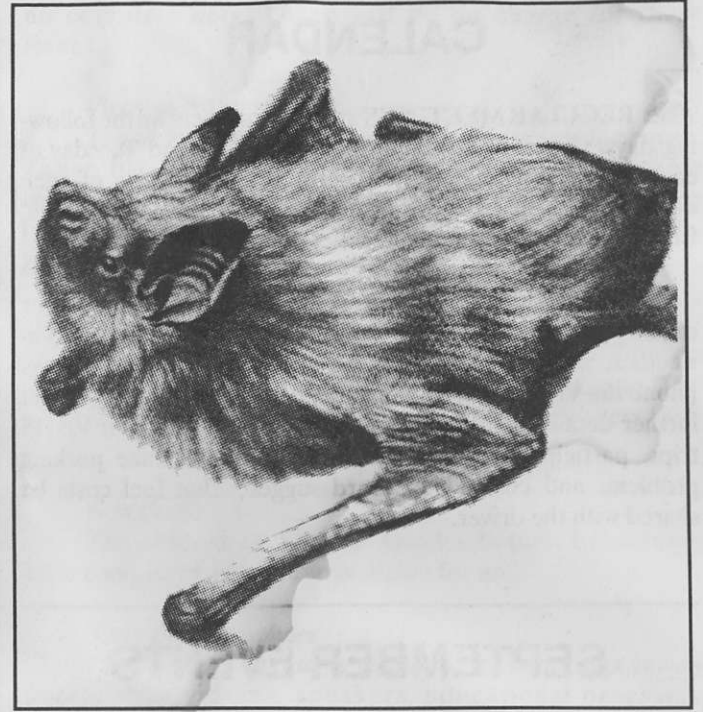
After some time the soapy water was exchanged for clear water and Basil was rinsed, dried, and wrapped in a cosy towel. He was totally exhausted, and lay with his eyes closed. Tammy and her mother made a little bed for him in a clean cardboard box, and let him sleep.

He woke toward evening, feeling surprisingly well after such a terrible experience. He discovered a little pile of dead flies in front of him and eagerly gobbled them up. He had not eaten for many hours. He now realized that these large humans were his friends. They had rescued him, cleaned him and fed him. He hauled himself out of the towel, over the edge of the box, and had just explored the back of the chesterfield when the door opened and Tammy came in.

"Mom", she shouted. "He is alive!" Her mother came into the room. "Well, will you look at him." She smiled as he dragged himself along the arm of the sofa. "You'd think he lived here. I'll wager that not many bats have had a bath in Ivory Liquid. Won't he have some tales to tell when he gets home!"

"I think he is ready to go now," said Tammy, and reached for the towel. He did not struggle as he was carried outside, for he was not frightened anymore. It was dusk once again, and Basil's relatives and friends were circling high in the distance. The towel was loosened, he flapped his wings and soared into the sky. Tammy and her mother smiled as they watched him rejoin his family.

When the bats returned to the attic, Basil's mother did not chastise him for his lack of judgement. Rather, she took her place next to him on the rafter, very thankful that he was safe at home. He had learned a lesson which he would never forget. "You have had a very disturbing experience Basil," she said



Big Brown Bat. (Courtesy: Royal British Columbia Museum)

quietly, "but you have made new friends."

Basil thought of Tammy and her parents, and of his mother's love for him. He felt very secure as he fell asleep.

*Peggy Price is a frequent contributor of children's stories to the Victoria Naturalist*

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## CALENDAR



**REGULAR MEETINGS** are generally held on the following days. **General Members Meeting:** the second Tuesday of each month. **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday of each month. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday 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 479-0254 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.

## SEPTEMBER EVENTS



**Tuesday, September 1**  
**Board of Directors Meeting.** The meeting will be held in the Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 pm.

**Sunday, September 6**  
**Birdwatching at Sidney Spit.** Explore this unique marine provincial park with its sand dunes and tidal flats and search for migrant shorebirds, songbirds and gulls. Leader will be announced on the VNHS Events Tape (479-2054) and the VNHS Rare Bird Alert (592-3381). Meet at 9:45 am at the foot of Beacon Avenue in Sidney. Bring a lunch and ferry fare.

**Tuesday, September 8**  
**Members Night.** Cornett Building, Room B112, University of Victoria at 7:30 pm. Nick Massey of the Geological Survey of British Columbia will present *Oceans beneath your feet*. This is a look at the unique and interesting geological formations of the Sooke and Metchosin area.

**Saturday, September 12**  
**Race Rocks Sea-fari.** Join Blackfish Expeditions on board the 47-foot Qaa-nas west coast whaling canoe. Meet at 9:00 am at Coast Victoria Hotel (just past Laurel Point on the Inner Harbour). Paddle and sail your way to the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve in search of seals, whales and seabirds. The trip is limited to 15 participants so please register with David Allinson (478-0457). Cost is \$25.00. Bring a lunch for this four to five hour trip.

**Tuesday, September 15**  
**Botany Night.** Swan Lake Nature Centre at 7:30 pm. A slide-illustrated talk on *Spring flowers of Arizona* will be given by Brenda Constanzo and Bruce Bennett. Everyone is welcome to attend this colourful presentation.

**Wednesday, September 23**

**Birders Night.** Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 pm. *Hawks on the Move.* Michael Shepard and David Allinson will give a slide-illustrated talk on hawk migration, identification, and purpose of hawk watching. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend and a fledgling raptor recorder.

**Sunday, September 27**

**Turkey Vulture and Hawk Migration.** East Sooke Park at 10:30 am. Join Leader David Pearce (477-2664) to view the peak weekend for hawks. Last year, up to 13 species of raptors were observed on a single weekend, including two broad-winged hawks. Meet at the Helmcken Park 'n Ride at 10:00 am or at the Aylard Farm Parking Lot in East Sooke Part at 10:30 am. Bring a lunch.

**Sunday, September 27**

**Mini-Pelagic Birding.** Walk on with Hank Vander Pol (658-1924) on board the M.V. Coho to Port Angeles for a chance to see shearwaters, alcids and phalaropes. Departure time is 10:30 am, returning on the 12:45 pm sailing. The trip is in part weather dependent so contact Hank for details. Please note that if there is sufficient interest, this trip may continue throughout September and October on the 10:30 sailing Saturdays or, if raining, on Sundays.

**Tuesday, September 29**

**The Garry Oak Meadow Group Meeting.** Swan Lake Nature Centre at 7:15 pm. Bill Huot of the British Columbia Heritage Conservation will speak on the legal protection strategy for Garry oaks. Everyone interested in preserving this rare habitat is invited to attend.

## OCTOBER EVENTS



**Tuesday, October 6**  
**Board of Directors Meeting.** The meeting will be held in the Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 pm.

**Sunday, October 4**

**Birding at Esquimalt Lagoon and East Sooke Park.** This is a joint field trip with members of the British Columbia Field Ornithologists and Victoria Natural History Society. Join co-leaders Mike McGrenere (658-8624) and David Allinson (478-0457) for shorebirds and waterfowl at Esquimalt Lagoon in the morning and then venture on to East Sooke Park to view the hawk migration. Meet at Esquimalt Lagoon at 8:30 am. Bring a lunch.

**Tuesday, October 6**

**Members Night.** Begbie 159, University of Victoria, at 7:30 pm. Robin Baird will present *Real killer whales don't eat fish*, a look at the behaviour and ecology of transient killer whales.

**Sunday, October 11**

**Mini-Pelagic Birding.** Walk on with Hank Vander Pol (658-1924) on board the M.V. Coho to Port Angeles for a chance to see shearwaters, alcids and phalaropes. Departure time is 10:30 am, returning on the 12:45 pm sailing. The trip is in part weather dependent so contact Hank for details. Please note that if there is sufficient interest, this trip may continue throughout September and October on the 10:30 sailing Saturdays or, if raining, on Sundays.

**Tuesday, October 20**

**Botany Night.** Swan Lake Nature Centre at 7:30 pm. Adolf Ceska and others will talk about *Plants of the Olympic Mountains*. Everyone welcome.

**Sunday, October 25**

**Birding at Island View Beach Park.** Come venture out onto the dunes and beach at Island View Beach Regional Park with Bruce Whittington (652-1529). The park is an excellent place to view grebes, scoters and sea ducks, as well as northern shrikes and possibly short-eared owls. Meet at the park parking lot at 9:30 am.

**Wednesday, October 28**

**Birders Night.** Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 pm. David Pearce will present a slide-illustrated talk on birding in Costa Rica. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend and a novice birder.

## BULLETIN BOARD



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

**Back Issues**

Back issues of the *Victoria Naturalist* are available from Tom Gillespie (361-1694) for interested members. Some date back as far as 1944; however, there are



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### Victoria Naturalist Index

Ten year indexes are available for a small charge. These list all the articles by author and subject for quick reference up until June, 1984. An updated index of more recent issues is currently being prepared by Kim Nimrava.

### Volunteers

The Martindale Survey is being extended and volunteers are needed for surveys on Saturday mornings 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Contact Darren Copley (479-9879) or Eric Walters (385-0927).

### New Facilities

The observation blind at Quick's Bottom has recently been completed and is now available for use.

### Slide Photographers

The 1992 program is continuing. Meetings incorporate slide viewing, speakers, educational programs, field trips and member participation. Club meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 8:00 p.m. at Windsor Park Pavilion, Oak Bay. For further information please contact Wayne Maloff, President, Greater Victoria Colour Film Study Group, at 385-1640.

### Garry Oak Meadow Group Membership

The Garry Oak Meadow Group is dedicated to conserving and re-establishing this unique and rare southern Vancouver Island habitat. Anyone interested in joining the group can do so by contacting Tom Gillespie (361-1694).

### Garry Oak Acorn Scavenger Hunt

Garry oak acorns are falling throughout September. The Garry Oak Meadow Group would appreciate naturalists collecting fallen acorns, sorting out the "floaters", and drying and bagging the "sinkers". Be sure that the location where they were collected is clearly marked on the bag. Acorns can be brought to Swan Lake Nature Centre.

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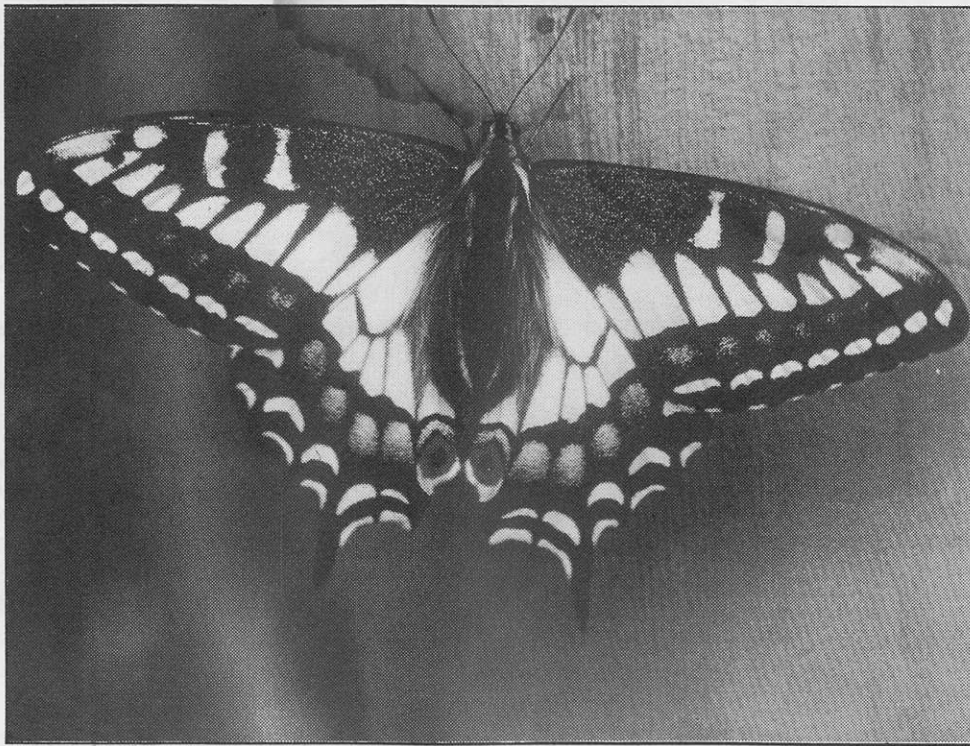


# The Victoria NATURALIST

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Anise Swallowtail, *Papilio zelicaon*. (Photo: Cris Guppy)