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The Victoria NATURALIST

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OUR COVER

This month's cover is a photograph of baby flying squirrels taken by Bertha McHaffie Gow which she has titled "Flying Squirrels at Play." The picture was one of the entries in the Goldstream Art Show that was held in September (see article in this issue) and was subsequently purchased by a patron. Bertha has been a long-time member of the VHNS. Her interest in photography began in the early 1960s and she now does her own development in her home.

INSIDE

Several meetings on local environmental issues are discussed in this issue of the *Naturalist*. On November 2 a Public Meeting to discuss possible park development near Glencoe Cove will be held by the Saanich Council. Michael Carson and Tony Embleton bring us up to date on the Blenkinsop Trail Biking/Habitat issue, while the *Pacific Octopus* reports on developments with respect to Marine Parks in B.C. Lots to think about.



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Christmas Bird Count — December 18, 1993

By David Pearce

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 18, 1993. The purpose of the C.B.C is to count birds observed within a 15-mile diameter circle covering the Greater Victoria area, centred on the intersection of Grange Road and Jasmine Avenue in Marigold. The circle is divided into 22 land areas and two ocean areas, each having an area leader.

Victoria Natural History Society members are encouraged to participate in the Christmas count either as an active "counter" in the field or as a feeder watcher.

If you participated as a "counter" in the Christmas count last year, you will be contacted and asked if you would like to participate this year. If you did not take part in the Victoria count last year but would like to participate, please contact David Pearce, Count Coordinator, at 477-2664 by November 30, or sign up at the November Birder's Night (Wednesday, November 24)

If you have a feeder in your yard and wish to participate

as a feeder watcher, simply watch your feeder on December 18 and record all bird species and number of individuals of those species. Mail or bring your list into the Field-Naturalist/Swiftsure Tours, 1241 Broad Street, Victoria, V8W 2A4. Please put your name, address and telephone number on the list. Your report must be received by Wednesday, December 23 in order to be included in the count records.

If you see a rare bird at your feeder on December 18 (see the Victoria Area Checklist of Birds or last year's Christmas count results in the March/April issue of the Victoria Naturalist to find out what is rare in December), please phone your sighting immediately to the Rare Bird Alert at 592-3381 and leave a message on the tape.

Victoria currently holds the Canadian Christmas Bird Count record of 152 species set in 1991. This was achieved by getting an exceptionally good coverage with over 150 people taking part. So please mark December 18 in your calendar and join us in trying to set another record!

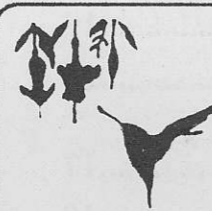
After the count we plan to hold a meeting at Gordon Head United Church starting at 7:30 p.m. This will be the same format as a regular Birder's Night. Coffee, tea and biscuits will be served and we will discuss the day's count results.

Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award was established by the Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors in 1988. This prestigious award is granted to a member who has contributed in some outstanding way to the aims and objectives of the Society. Awards are made at the annual dinner in February. All members of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

Nominations should be forwarded by January 15, 1994 to Mike McGrenere, Awards Committee Chairperson at 1178 Sunnygrove Terrace, V8Y 2V9.

All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least three other members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards. For more information, contact Mike McGrenere at 658-8624.



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American Black Ducks on Vancouver Island

By Chris Sandham

American Black Ducks (*Anas rubripes*, hereafter "Black Duck") and Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) are considered by some authorities to be losing integrity as separate species with hybridization increasing in the east. However, Black Ducks are more of a forest nesting species and the American Ornithologists' Union (1983) states that these two species "...differ somewhat behaviorally and tend to segregate as species." In its native range the Black Duck inhabits ponds, lakes, marshes, estuaries, and salt water.

Finding American Black Ducks in the Yellow Point Area

On Saturday, September 4, 1993, Keith Taylor and I investigated a sighting of a Black Duck (discovered by Derrick Marvin) at Quamichan Lake, Duncan. There, amongst a flock of Mallards, Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) and, of all things, a Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*), was an immature Black Duck. The bird was quite small and appeared as if it had just recently fledged. Following past reports of Black Ducks from the Crow and Gate Pub and Michael Lake, we headed for Yellow Point. The pub pond supported fourteen birds and at a pond on the property of Woodmont Farm we located at least another eight or nine birds. The latter locale is private property but one pond is visible from the road. We suspected that birds were also frequenting the other ponds at the farm.

To get to the farm, turn right on to Cedar Road from Highway 1 (00.0 km), five kilometers north of the 49th parallel in Ladysmith (which also happens to be the cut-off line for the Victoria Checklist Area). After driving 2.6 km continue straight ahead on Yellow Point Road for an additional 2.1 km (4.7 km), turn right onto Doole Road and proceed 0.3 km (5.0 km). At anytime of day or year American Black Ducks should be found on these ponds at Woodmont Farm. At dusk the birds congregate before flying off to roost on nearby saltwater, possibly at Kulleet Bay.

Return to Cedar Road turning right (00.0 km). After driving 6.0 km (or 8.6 km. from the corner of Cedar Road and Highway 1), turn right onto Yellow Point Road and follow the signs for the Crow and Gate Pub. After 1.5 km (7.5 km.), turn at the Crow and Gate Pub sign down their gravel entrance road for 0.2 km (7.7 km.). Directly in front of the pub is an artificial duck pond that supports a number of resident Black Ducks and also a few exotic farmyard ducks. As populations of Black Ducks are on the decline on the "Lower Mainland", Yellow Point may be the best site in B.C. to see this species (see Ecology, Feeding, and Breeding).

Origin of American Black Ducks in B.C. and Sightings from the Victoria Area

Now we knew the sites the birds were frequenting but we still had no idea of their actual origin. After asking a few locals

about the Black Ducks, we tracked down the person who had turned the original flock loose, who happens to be a great waterfowl enthusiast, though not a birder. In fact, he knows a tremendous amount about Black Ducks. He regularly counts the birds in winter during freeze-ups when the birds are forced to what little water is left open, often Michael Lake.

Campbell *et al.* (1990) indicate that Black Ducks were first introduced to the Vancouver area in the late 1960's at George C. Reifel Waterfowl Refuge but that all birds were apparently killed by predators. Around the same time separate introductions occurred at Pitt Meadows and Mission. Those birds, especially at Pitt Meadows, also suffered a high mortality due to predators, namely coyotes and perhaps mink. It was a short time after (1970) that birds were re-introduced to Reifel Refuge. It was the stock at Mission that provided the birds for the Yellow Point area which were released about 25 years ago.

The first Victoria record of Black Ducks was a bird collected from Discovery Island, in 1976 (Campbell *et al.* 1990, Royal BC Museum 16168). Mattocks and Hunn (1980) suggest that Black Ducks seen in Victoria and Saanich may have originated from a separately introduced population in Everett, Washington but that assumption now seems to be proven wrong. It is highly likely, considering the date of the first sighting, that the Victoria birds were coming from the much closer Yellow Point flocks. From 1976 to 1988, each fall and winter, two Black Ducks and one hybrid visited Beacon Hill Park and the Model Yacht Pond. During the same time period in the summer one of these Black Ducks frequented Esquimalt Lagoon. Also during those years, birds were regularly seen in spring (non-breeding) at Quick's Bottom. Recently a hybrid was seen at Quick's Bottom.

Ecology, Feeding and Breeding Biology

Taylor (1993) brings up an interesting point as to the viability of the Black Duck population at Yellow Point. Every evening the owner of Woodmont Farm feeds his domestic ducks and geese. The Black Ducks are aware of this opportunity and each evening the total population returns to feed! This introduced species may be dependant upon this food source during winter freezes for survival. If the ducks do rely on this feeding, would they be a viable, "countable" population?

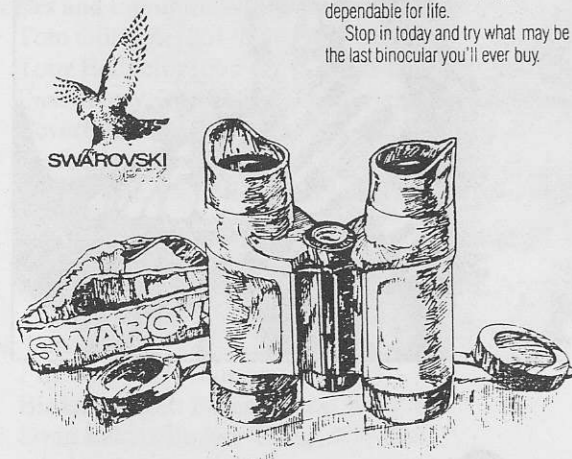
The population has remained a constant 70 birds from near the time of introduction with minor fluctuations. Reasons for the lack of growth and/or expansion of the flock may include possible competition with Mallards and a lack of substantial protein for the chicks.

There have been few records of Black Ducks breeding at Yellow Point but they have suggested that the Black Ducks are breeding late and producing a low number of eggs per clutch. There are only three records of breeding in Vancouver, all of broods. The number of chicks per brood were ten, six, and five. The brood of ten was from Pitt Meadows where predation is thought to be a larger concern for the ducks.

The insect harvest in spring may not produce sufficient biomass to feed the growing, protein-thirsty Black Duck chicks. In the first five days after hatching, young Black Ducks were found to consume 90 per cent aquatic invertebrates (the balance consisting of plant matter); by the time the birds were fully feathered the invertebrates decreased to about 40 per cent

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of the diet (Reinecke, 1979). That is to say, adults can sustain themselves on plant matter if invertebrates are scarce but the young birds growing feathers rely on a supply of animal protein. If the chicks can't get enough their growth will certainly lag behind chicks fed almost entirely on animal matter. In the east, acid rain seems to hamper the reproductive success of Black Ducks. Rattner *et al.* (1987) provided evidence that duckling reared on acidic fields, especially when competing with fish, spent more time looking for food, displayed altered foraging behaviour and had lower growth rates.

Black Ducks in the east are suffering from over hunting (not a factor at Yellow Point), acid rain, and competition with the more aggressive Mallards. In southern Ontario, Mallards are gradually replacing Black Ducks. It is suggested that the Mallards are not filling a void where the disappearing Black Ducks once bred but that Mallards are colonizing productive wetlands used by Black Ducks and then out competing them for breeding territories (Merendino *et al.*, 1993). All the wetlands surveyed by Merendino *et al.* (1993) in southern Ontario, where Mallards had replaced Black Ducks, had, on average, higher alkalinity, calcium, pH, and conductivity. The wetlands where Black Ducks still persisted had, on average, the lowest values for most water chemistry parameters. They also concluded that habitat "disturbance" and hunting had little impact on the population of Black Ducks in southern Ontario.

Much is yet to be understood about Black Ducks on Vancouver Island. Mallards breed in the Yellow Point area and it is not known how they impact the breeding success of Black Ducks. Mallards breed widely throughout the Victoria Checklist area and they may prevent Black Ducks from breeding in

this area. What is the water chemistry of wetlands on southern Vancouver Island? Do the Black Ducks rely on the feed at Woodmont farms during winter? Data on breeding records of Black Ducks, nest predation and relative abundance of aquatic invertebrate from the Yellow Point area, are also needed to understand the confinement (lack of spreading and population stability) of this introduced duck to Vancouver Island.

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- Chris Sandham is a Grade 11 student at Victoria High School. He started birding about three years ago and his interest has taken flight since then. His present wish is to win a trip to the Rio Grande/South Texas area to up his life list.

Blenkinsop Trail: Birders Make Way for Bikers?

By Michael Carson and Tony Embleton

The days of relaxed and rewarding birding on Lochside Trail between Lohbrunner and Blenkinsop Lake may soon be a thing of the past. Saanich Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) seem intent on converting the trail to a commuter-recreational bikeway with a bridge across the lake.

The Parks and Conservation Committee (PCC) first got wind of the plans a year ago and tried to convince Saanich PRD that this was a mistake because: (a) the trail is already used by many as a retreat from urban noise and bustle, and continued use in this way might be difficult in the presence of a non-stop flow of fast-moving bikes; (b) the trail hedgerows are a haven for migrating, breeding and overwintering birds, and cutting back the bushes to produce a wider trail (to accommodate the planned multipurpose use by bikers, equestrians, joggers and pedestrians and their dogs) would jeopardize this resource; and (c) a bridge across the lake, with the constant noise and visual presence of trail users, would likely disturb many of the breeding and overwintering waterfowl, and convert the water body to a Beacon Hill style pond of mallards.

Though the proposed bikeway and bridge are part of the planned rails-to-trails conversion masterminded by CRD Parks, the initiative for a bridge crossing is largely a Saanich one. CRD Parks itself seems much more sympathetic to our concerns but is largely powerless. Our attempts to convince the Director of Saanich Parks and Recreation (Mr. Don Hunter) and the Manager of Saanich Parks (Mr. David DeShane) met with no success.

Accordingly, PCC communicated its concerns directly to Mayor Murray Coell and Saanich Council, proposing a bypass along Lohbrunner and Blenkinsop Road (using the paved shoulder for cyclists) to avoid the lake area, and asked that Council explore the option of designating the lake area as a Nature Sanctuary. The matter was referred to a Committee of the Whole meeting (April 13, 1993) at which time Mr. Hunter reiterated his position that the only realistic option was a bridge crossing, unless Western Forest Products would agree to a bikeway through its property on the west side of the lake. WFP has consistently refused such an option arguing that this would expose its seed nursery to vandalism, as well as impede operation of its day-to-day activities in the area.

The position of the Saanich PRD director was loudly criticised at the April 13 meeting by a spontaneous coalition of local landowners and naturalists and Council referred the mat-

ter to a Task Force to provide recommendations to Council, at which time the matter would go to another Committee of the Whole meeting.

The Task Force was duly set up on May 20, comprising 17 individuals representing local landowners, Saanich Parks and Recreation Committee, Saanich PRD itself, CRD Parks, various cycling organizations, Saanich Greenbelt Association and VNHS. After three meetings, and more than seven hours of wrangling, it was concluded that the only "option" that commanded a majority approval of the Task Force was the Blenkinsop Road bypass option.

At its last meeting (July 15) the Task Force overwhelmingly passed the motion to set up a sub-committee to focus attention on the Blenkinsop Road option and to acquire as much technical detail as possible before presenting its final recommendations to Council.

This conclusion was relayed to Saanich Parks and Recreation Committee by the Task Force Chairman on July 22 but, in an *in camera* session, the Committee rejected the Task Force recommendation, disbanded the Task Force, and passed its own resolution that Saanich ask its own consultants to undertake an Environmental and Social Review of the bridge and bypass options.

This resolution was approved by Council at a Committee of the Whole meeting on September 20. Ideally, such a review would provide an impartial, as well as informed, assessment. In reality, it is unusual for consultants to make recommendations to municipalities which conflict with the preferred options of municipal staff. A steering committee, to be made up of key elements of the Task Force, is supposed to be set up to "work in conjunction with the consultants" but no information has yet been provided on this aspect.

The final decision regarding the fate of the trail and lake rests with Saanich Council, not the Saanich PRD, but Council is usually guided by the recommendations of its municipal staff.

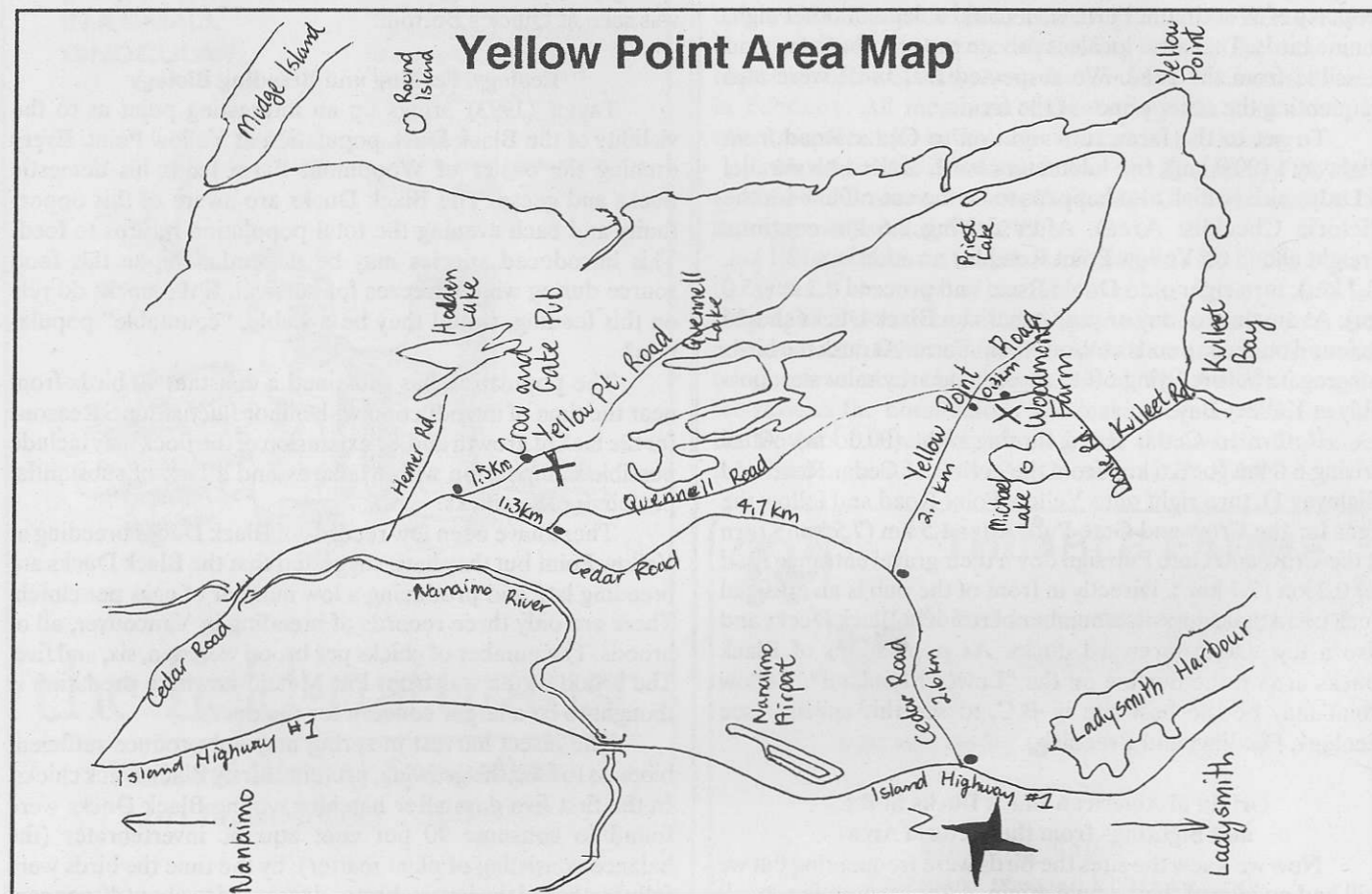
... the days of good birding on Blenkinsop Trail and Lake are starting to look like a thing of the past. The expectation – as indicated by CRD Parks staff – is that 200 or more cyclists would be using the trail and bridge on a typical Saturday morning. Watch your scope!

In addition, the cycling lobby is well represented on Saanich Council through at least one individual alderman.

So there it is. Unless the momentum shifts, the days of good birding on Blenkinsop Trail and Lake are starting to look like a thing of the past. The expectation – as indicated by CRD Parks staff – is that 200 or more cyclists would be using the trail and bridge on a typical Saturday morning. Watch your scope!

Anyone with concerns is welcome to contact either of us for more details, or to communicate directly with the mayor and other members of Saanich Council. It should not be forgotten that positions on Council come up for election in mid-November.

Michael Carson and Tony Embleton are both members of the VNHS Board of Directors with special responsibility, respectively, for bird habitat protection and for parks and conservation. Both were members of the Blenkinsop Lake Task Force. A report on birding around Blenkinsop Lake is scheduled for the next issue of the Naturalist.



Birds In The Blizzard: News From Project Feederwatch

From the Cornell
Laboratory
of Ornithology

While the eastern half of North America was digging out from a massive snowstorm last March, hungry birds were digging in at backyard feeders, according to Project FeederWatch co-ordinator Margaret Barker.

The winter bird survey documented a surge in feeder visits during the "Blizzard of '93," explains FeederWatch data analyst Diane Tessaglia. "In the week immediately following the blizzard, we saw a significant increase in bird numbers. In areas the blizzard did not hit, numbers actually declined."



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Meanwhile, FeederWatchers in the West tracked another natural disaster. Salmonella, a deadly bacterial infection, killed numerous Pine Siskins and other feeder birds.

Continent-wide, the news was more cheerful. Despite a popular perception that many species are declining, FeederWatch data show that most feeder birds seem to be holding steady.

Project FeederWatch is a joint effort of two bird research centres: Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario and Cornell Lab of Ornithology in New York. Every two weeks, from November to March, thousands of "kitchen-window scientists" across North America count birds at their backyard feeders, noting which species visit, and how many.

Together, the volunteer FeederWatchers collect far more data than a single scientist ever could. Cornell ornithologists use the information to track bird population trends.

For example, this past winter many FeederWatchers thought they saw fewer birds than normal at their feeders. But the FeederWatch data, once analyzed, did not support this gut reaction. According to Tessaglia, the "missing" birds were mostly invasion species—birds such as Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin. These birds breed and winter in northern areas but sometimes wander south when food is in short supply. This past winter was not a big invasion year, perhaps because food was plentiful in the north.

Other bird species that really did decline the previous winter showed modest increases this past winter, including Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, European Starling, American Goldfinch and Black-capped Chickadee.

On the down side, some ground feeding sparrows showed declines. For White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow and Harris' Sparrow, this was the second year in the row that FeederWatch noted a downward trend.

But for these birds, fewer feeding visits many not mean a real change in population levels. For the last two years, eastern winters have been mild, with little snow. As a result, says Tessaglia, birds may have shunned feeders because natural food was easy to find.

This coming winter, says Barker, FeederWatchers will have a chance to expand the scope of their backyard investigations. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is launching a novel program, the National Science Experiments, that offers research opportunities for bird lovers of all abilities. FeederWatchers are especially invited to take part in one experiment, the Seed Preference Test—they will help to find out which foods birds like best.

For more information you can contact Project FeederWatch (519) 586-3531 or write to:

Project FeederWatch
Long Point Bird Observatory
P.O. Box 160
Port Rowan, Ontario
N0E 1M0

The Invasion Of Finnerty Cove

By David Pearce

The foghorn booms through the mists warning of the danger of the impending invasion. It is mid-October and Finnerty Cove is enmeshed in morning fog. Gradually a beacon of light shows in the south-eastern sky and sinister black shapes begin to appear near the shore. As the fog lifts, raft after raft of black shapes appear as far as the eye can see. The invasion of Finnerty Cove by Surf Scoters and White-winged Scoters has reached its peak with some 3,000 birds collectively diving and rising.

I have noticed this annual invasion of Finnerty Cove since 1987 and it has been quite a dramatic event. The first sea ducks would return in late September and gradually increase in numbers until mid-to-late October. By the beginning of November

they have been reduced to a quarter of their peak. However, the most interesting feature of the past six years is that the numbers have increased every year. In 1987 the number of scoters grew from 210 at the end of September to 500 by October 17 and then back to 250 by November 1. In 1989, the peak reached 600 on October 17 followed by 1,600 in 1990, 2,000 in 1991 and then 3,000 in 1992. In 1992 there were 1,350 scoters by October 1, 2,000 by October 8 and 3,000 on October 17 and 24.

In addition to the Surf and White-winged Scoters, there are also the occasional Black Scoter, up to 250 Old Squaw and a few Pacific Loon, Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Horned Grebe, Western Grebe, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, American Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Pigeon Guillemot, Common Murre and Ancient Murrelet.

It will be interesting to see if these numbers continue to increase in 1993. A good vantage point for seeing these ducks is from the beach access at the end of Haro Road.

David Pearce co-ordinates the annual Christmas Bird Count each year and incorporates the results into a database for presentation in the February/March issue of the Victoria Naturalist.



Mongolian Plover (Photo: Tim Zurowski) first (possibly second) sighting in B.C.

Glencoe Cove Update

Saanich Council will hold a Public Meeting on Tuesday, November 2nd, to consider the proposal for re-zoning and development around Glencoe Cove. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at the Garth Homer Centre, 813 Darwin Avenue.

Glencoe Cove is on the Gordon Head ocean-front. There is a cormorant rookery located there and it is a good spot for viewing seabirds of all types.

In the Gordon Head Area Plan, the ocean-front section of the property in question was to become a park. The developer plans to leave a small proportion of this "planned

park" and have waterfront lots along the rest of the property.

People who wish to visit the area can follow Ferndale Road to Paul's Terrace and then to Shore Way. At the end of Shore Way there is a fenced-off level field. This is the ocean-front part of the large property that is up for re-zoning. There are stairs down to the beach at the right. To see the cove in question, and the cormorant rookery, one has to go along the rocky foreshore at low tide, since it is private property which has been posted.

A large turnout at the meeting would help show that the public wants to stick to the original park plan as proposed by Saanich planners. Those who wish to continue to follow this issue after the November 2 meeting may contact Les Waye at 477-1660.

Are Killer Whales Harassed By Boats?

By Nicole E. Phillips and Robin W. Baird

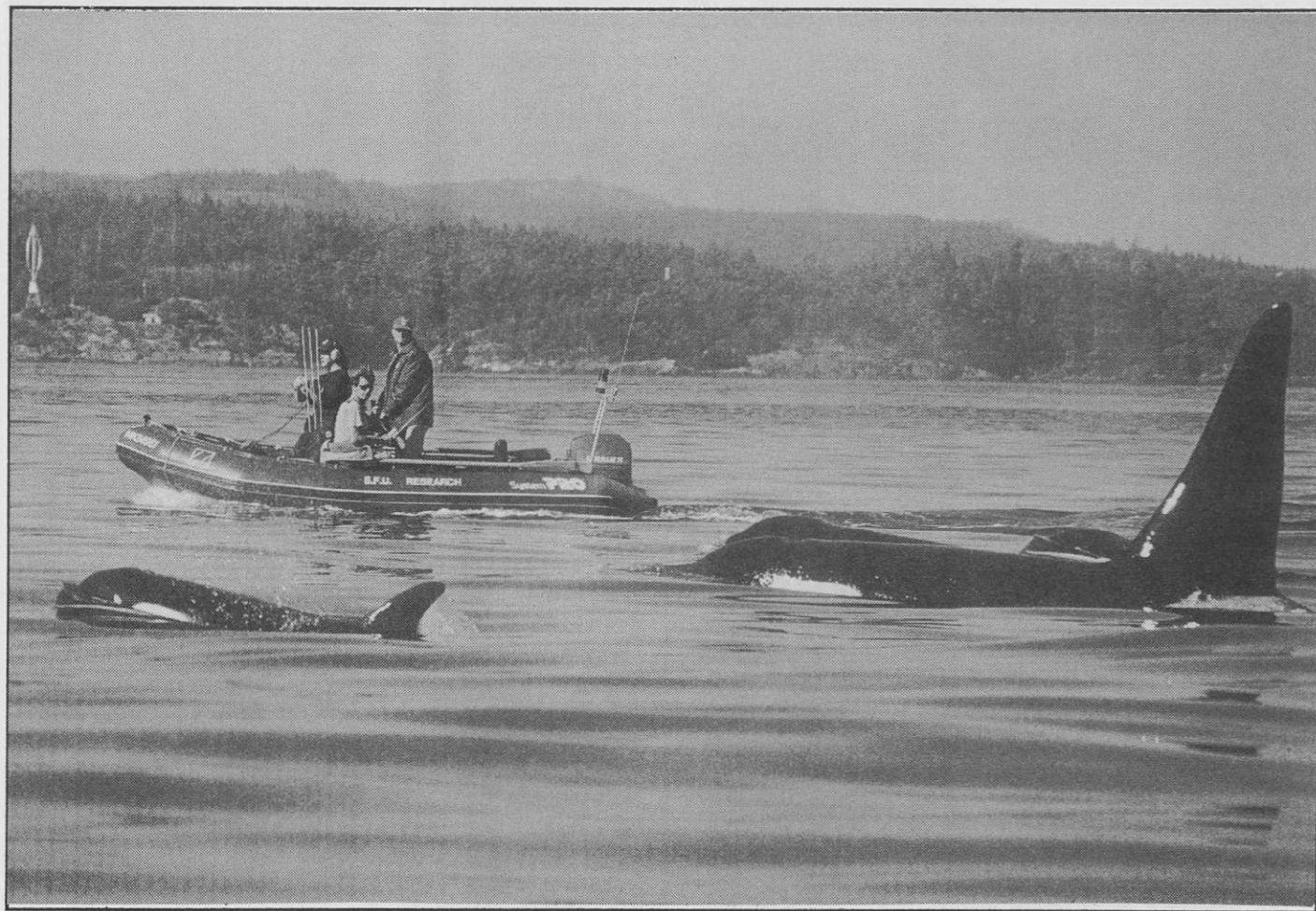
Since the early 1970's, when the "save the whales" movement began, people have become increasingly aware of, and concerned about, the welfare of the world's cetaceans.

One result has been a desire by the public to see these animals in their natural setting, and the whale watching industry has thus grown extensively. In recent years, this activity has come under closer scrutiny as concerns have been raised about the possible impacts that boats may be having on the animals. This is especially true since the threat of commercial whaling has been virtually eliminated and a new crop of issues regarding the conservation and protection of whales has come to the forefront (e.g., the use of drift nets, captivity, and overfishing). Boat harassment is one of these new issues and in this area, where the local populations of

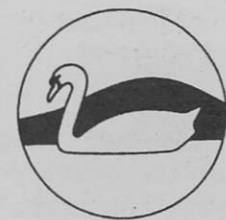
Killer Whales have been well studied and are well known by the public at large, it is one about which many feel very strongly. However, it remains to be seen if this concern is really warranted given current knowledge about how boats and Killer Whales interact.

One study done involving northern resident pods of Killer Whales in the Johnstone Strait area seemed to give credence to the notion that the proximity of boats has an impact on whales (Kruse, 1991). Kruse claimed that her results (based on 19 hours of observations of whales with boats nearby and 20 hours of whales without boats) indicated Killer Whales increased their speed with the approach of boats closer than 400 m.

According to other researchers, however, Kruse's conclusions are not supported by the data she presents (Duffus and Dearden, 1992). Furthermore, a similar study on the west coast of San Juan Island by Professor Robert Otis (which began in 1990 and is still in progress), finds no evidence that Killer Whales are affected by the presence or proximity of boats. Like Kruse's, his is a land-based study which uses a theodolite (a surveyor's instrument) to give exact coordinates of boats and whales. The distances between them can then be calculated, as well as the speed and compass bearing of the animals. Besides looking at changes in speed, his study also encompasses surface behaviours, dive durations and direction of travel. Otis' study additionally accounts for the "behaviour" of boats, i.e., their



Resident Killer Whales with boat off Victoria. R.W. Baird 1993.



Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

3873 Swan Lake Road
Victoria, B.C.
V8X 3W1
(604) 479-0211

Executive Director:
Terry Morrison

A Newsletter about our activities and programs

BROOM BASH

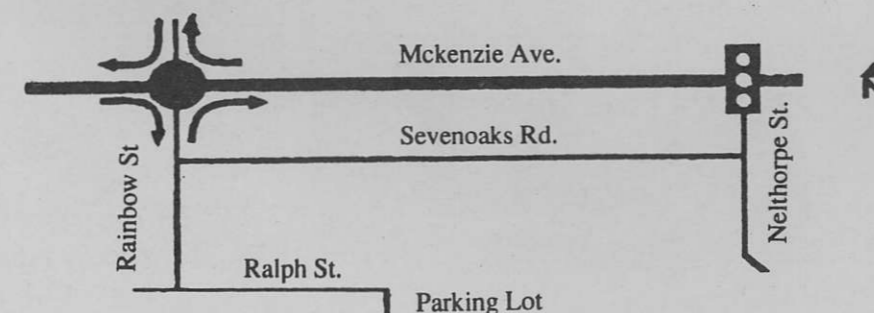
Sunday, November 21st -
1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Now is the time to "Bash The Broom" on Christmas Hill. The wildflowers are dormant and the soil is damp, making conditions ideal for pulling Broom. All we need are volunteers to help pull and remove the Scotch Broom which is crowding out the native vegetation on the hill. Give us an hour, two hours, or the whole afternoon and we will treat you to hot chocolate and cookies when it is all over. Meet in the parking lot at the Nature Sanctuary and we will arrange car pools to the hill. Bring gloves and clippers if possible.

Make it your Christmas gift to nature. Return Christmas Hill to the "wild ones" and "bash the broom" on November 21st.

GETTING HERE IS HALF THE FUN!

The Ministry of Transportation and Highways has changed the intersection at Rainbow Street and McKenzie Avenue, eliminating left turns off of McKenzie. Visitors to the Sanctuary arriving from the east will therefore need to use Nelthorpe St. and Sevenoaks Rd. to get onto Rainbow St.



DINNER BY THE LAKE

Gourmet food and wine, live music, and good fellowship will all be part of a special event planned for the evening of November 26th. Major corporate donors to the Sanctuary will be honoured at a recognition dinner at the Nature House, catered to by Chantecler Restaurant. The evening will also include a multi media presentation and a silent auction including art works by distinguished B.C. artists such as Robert Bateman. Tickets for the dinner go on sale November 5th for Friends of the Sanctuary, and November 12th for the general public. The cost of the dinner is \$40.00 per person / \$75.00 per couple. There is a limited number available and it is expected this event will sell out quickly. Contact the Nature Sanctuary at 479 - 0211 if you wish to attend.

Inside:

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Christmas Programs - page 3
Fun For Kids - page 3
The Friends - page 4

LOOK WHO HAS JOINED US.....

Welcome to the newest Friends of the Nature Sanctuary:

Kim A. Abraham, Pearl Arden, Mrs. J.V. Boettger, Mrs. Joan M. Drew, Betty Eckgren, Mrs. Enid L. Ford, Sara W.A. Hamill, Marie O'Shaughnessy, H.S. Pollock, and Mary Van Alstine

There are also 12 new volunteers who have joined our staff this fall:

Volunteer Naturalists: Shirley Desorcy Connor, Gail Davoren, Jacquie Denton, Lisa Humphries, Marilyn Lambert, Kelly Ness, Tracy Pehar, Robyn Rankin, Mavis Smales

Animal Care Assistants: Ted Moro and Daniel Walrafen

Site Maintenance: Pat Esmond

DID YOU KNOW

Scotch Broom was introduced to Vancouver Island by Captain Walter Calhoun in the 1850's. He brought it with him from Hawaii and planted it on his farm near Sooke.

FALL AND WINTER BIRDING AT SWAN LAKE CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY

By David Allinson

As the cooler days of fall approach, one begins to notice a change in the birdlife at Swan Lake as well. Fall migrants are arriving and some are beginning to take up residence.

In particular, one can expect to see more waterfowl on the lake (numbers are usually at their highest in the early morning and evening). As the numbers increase, look for the distinctive rusty heads of the rare Eurasian Wigeon among the common American Wigeon. The wigeon regularly frequent the flooded field beyond the Tuesday Pond bird blind from November to March. Also keep an eye out for other uncommon ducks on the lake itself, such as Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, and check the rafts of Canvasback for a possible Redhead.

Songbirds also arrive at the lake to spend the winter. Up to three Swamp Sparrows have overwintered at the Sanctuary: look for them especially near the Tuesday Pond blind. They are a secretive species, more often heard than seen, but can often be enticed out into the open if you make a habit of spilling some oil sunflower/millet mix onto the trail. They are smaller than the Song Sparrow showing some white on their throats and rust on their scapulars. Fox Sparrows and Golden-crowned Sparrows become the most common songbirds at this time of year. A walk along the boardwalk can produce Yellow-rumped Warbler in the dogwoods and willows. These warblers are in their fall plumage but still show some yellow on their sides and rump. Don't forget to check the feeders near the Nature House - you may be rewarded with either a Harris' Sparrow or a White-throated Sparrow.

Finally, birds-of-prey also become concentrated in the Sanctuary during the winter. A Great Horned Owl often can be found roosting by day in the firs between the parking lot and the Nature House. A Merlin or even a Peregrine Falcon may be seen perched atop some of the larger trees east of the lake. Both of these falcons can take prey up to the size of waterfowl, especially Green-winged Teal. Northern Shrike is fairly regular in the field beyond Tuesday pond or perched on the willows around the edge of the lake, on the lookout for a mouse or even an unwary House Finch.

Few places outside of Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary in Victoria can regularly yield 40 to 50 species of birds on a fall or winter's day. As usual, you are all welcome to come on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. to join me for a two-hour stroll around the lake. Remember too that Max Sternberg leads a similar outing at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesdays. Good Luck and pleasant birding!

DID YOU KNOW

Farley Mowat visited the Nature Sanctuary in September while he was in Victoria promoting his latest book. He was impressed with the serenity and natural beauty of the area.



BIRD FEEDING HINTS

By Ann Scarfe, Program Manager

West coast residents are blessed with a diverse number and variety of bird species that visit bird feeders. For successful bird feeding 3 needs should be met:

1. Well located and appropriately stocked feeder(s)
2. Shrub/tree cover to provide shelter from wind and for refuge and roosting.

3. A supply of fresh clean water

While wild bird seed mix is most universally available, it is usually less expensive and more versatile to purchase separate seed types and mix them or leave them in separate feeders. Feed stores have many seed varieties available in bulk, so you can purchase small or large amounts.

The most common seed types eaten are:

- 1) Sunflower Seeds: There are several types available but the small black oil sunflower seeds are cheaper and have more food value. (Preferred by most winter garden birds)

- 2) Millet: White proso millet is often preferred to red proso or german millet. (Eaten by Towhee, all sparrows, and House Finches)

- 3) Peanut Hearts: Expensive but often eaten by Juncos and song sparrows. Note: Juncos are ground feeders.

- 4) Thistle (niger): Expensive but the preferred food by American Goldfinches and sometimes Purple Finches.

- 5) Peanuts: A favourite of Steller's Jays, Towhee, and Starlings

(cont.)

Bird Feeding (cont.)

You may not need to cater to all bird species, but experiment, and vary the menu to add to your observations and the birds' variety. Remember there are exceptions to every rule. By keeping notes on your results you will learn the habits of birds in your locality. Whatever seed or seed mixture is offered, try to keep it as dry as possible. It is healthful to the birds, as well, to sweep and clean out your feeder on a regular basis.

Avoid table scraps, which often attract less desirable species such as starlings, gulls, and crows. An exception to this rule, if you are just beginning bird feeding, is to temporarily use whole-grain bread. This "No-no" is an excellent way to attract birds to a new feeder but please remember to place some seeds with it to make sure your new visitors get "real" food as well, and discontinue the bread once the feed has been discovered.

The following books are excellent resources for anyone interested in feeding the birds:

- 1) Attracting Backyard Wildlife by Bill Merilees, published by Whitecap Books

- 2) A Guide to Feeding Winter Birds in British Columbia by Bob Waldon, published by Whitecap Books

- 3) Attracting and Feeding Birds in British Columbia by Wayne Campbell and Harold Hosford, Royal British Columbia Museum #7, 1979



COMING UP FOR CHRISTMAS

Join us for these seasonal family activities. All programs are free. "Lug a Mug" and enjoy warming seasonal refreshments too. Donations are appreciated.

PAPERMAKING - MAKE YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS CARDS!

Saturday, November 20, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Make Christmas cards from scratch using paper pulp. This process is so simple even small children can do it. A Family Affair!

A CHRISTMAS TREE FOR THE BIRDS

Sunday, December 12, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Outdoor tree "decorating" for bird feeding.

CHRISTMAS SPICES DISPLAY

December 18 to January 2

Look....Smell....Taste. Recipes will also be available.

Monday, December 27 - To Be Announced

HOLIDAY VIEWING THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE

Tuesday, December 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

A closer look at nature and Christmas through the microscope.

SNAKES, SNAKES AND MORE SNAKES

Wednesday, December 29, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m., repeated at 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

BEAKS AND FEET

Thursday, December 30, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m., repeated at 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.

Birdwalk and hands-on program focusing on bird's beaks and feet.

CHRISTMAS NATURE HOUSE HOURS:

- December 24 and January 31: 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
- Closed December 25, 26 and January 1
- Open December 27 to December 30: 8:30 to 4:00 p.m.

FUN FOR KIDS

Birds and Butterflies is our popular preschool program with Margaret. Each session has 4 classes with a different theme and is available for children 4 to 6 years of age.

Sessions run from February to June 1994 / Monday or Friday, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Cost: \$32.00

Junior Nature Explorers with Karen is a new program this fall that we will again be offering in the new year. The program is designed for children, ages 7 to 10. Each session has 4 classes with a different theme.

Sessions run February to June, 1994 / Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Cost: \$32.00

Pre-registration for both programs begins December 1

PLEASE HELP US....

- Preserve one of the few remaining natural areas of Victoria
- Provide Nature Education to the People of Greater Victoria

BY JOINING....

THE FRIENDS OF THE NATURE SANCTUARY

"FRIENDS" pledge a regular annual donation, in one of the suggested categories below, towards the operation of the Nature Sanctuary:

SINGLE MEMBERSHIP _____ \$25

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP _____ \$50

SPONSOR MEMBERSHIP _____ \$100 or more

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP _____ \$200 or more

FRIENDS RECEIVE:

- Membership pin
- Tax receipt for income tax deduction
- Free subscription to Sanctuary Newsletter
- Invitations to special events
- Discount rate for Sanctuary programs

By pledging a regular amount, the Friends organization enables us to carry on and improve our service to the community. Contributors may determine where their funds are to be applied, or they may choose to leave allocation of the funds to the discretion of the Board of Directors.

BE AN ACTIVE FRIEND OF NATURE!

Clip this coupon and send it to:
Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary
3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria B.C. V8X 3W1

I wish to become a Friend of the Nature Sanctuary, and enclose my cheque for \$ _____

I am unable to make a donation at this time, but would like to find out more about the volunteer program.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Signature _____

10/93

The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is a registered charitable organization. Donations to the Friends Membership are tax deductible in full.

The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is operated by a registered charitable organization. Its purpose is to foster appreciation of nature and provide experiences that will develop responsibility for the care and protection of the environment.

The Sanctuary consists of 116 acres of fields and hedgerows surrounding Swan Lake, and 27 acres of rocky hilltop Garry Oak forest on Christmas Hill.

A 2 1/2 kilometre loop trail provides access around the lake. The Christmas Hill trail is connected to the Swan Lake area by a trail corridor.

In order to protect the flora and fauna, neither dogs nor bicycles are permitted in the Nature Sanctuary at any time.

- Saanich By-Law

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
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 Tony Roberts
 Frank Neate
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 Dr. Barbara Hawkins
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 Volunteer Coordinator - Joan Cowley

Attention Readers: If any of the information on your mailing label is incorrect or if you received more than one copy of the newsletter, we would appreciate it if you would let us know.

speed and direction relative to the whales. The preliminary results indicate no correlation between the activities of the whales and those of the boats.

Aside from short duration behavioral changes, another aspect of potential harassment is what long term effects may be from close approaches by boats and at this point there is little that can be said conclusively. However, Richard Osborne (a PhD student at the University of Victoria) examined whether Killer Whales have used the Haro Strait area less often as the number of commercial whale-watching vessels has increased over the years (Osborne, 1991). He could find no decrease in the number of days per year resident Killer Whales were seen in the area; in fact, there has been a slight increase in the number of days.

We have also spent considerable time watching Killer Whales, both from boats and from land, while undertaking research on whale behaviour (one of us for over seven years). Our observations support the results of the above-mentioned studies; namely, that the proximity of boats to Killer Whales does not seem to have a negative impact on them. It is probable that these animals have habituated to the presence of boats, similar to the behaviour of many large carnivores in Africa.

This does not mean that boaters should not take care when travelling around Killer Whales. Collisions are certainly possible (although the last recorded collision between a local Killer Whale and a boat was by a B.C. Ferry in the early 1970's - Anonymous, 1974). Sudden changes in direction or speed should be avoided when in the presence of whales, to minimize the possibility of such an accident. Regardless of boat behaviour, Killer Whales will occasionally approach boats closely. Killer Whales have been seen riding the bow and stern wakes of both large and small vessels, and will sometimes circle boats.

Despite the evidence, people watching whales (ourselves included) may experience negative feelings about the proximity of boats. Watching such interactions from shore exacerbates these feelings, as from this perspective it is extremely difficult to accurately estimate the distance between boats and whales. As well, it is easy to forget that Killer Whales live in a three-dimensional environment and only spend a small fraction of their time at the surface, close to boats.

We suggest that the negative feelings people experience when boats are, or seem to be, close to whales may actually be rooted in personal aesthetics. For many, the presence of boats mars their whale-watching experience - a point of concern which is perfectly valid. So regardless of any effects on the whales (or lack thereof), when boating around whales people should be sensitive to the presence of others watching, both from shore and from other boats.

Guidelines that exist regarding boating around Killer Whales seem to have been written exclusively to protect the whales. Unfortunately these guidelines, and future laws that may spring from them, may not have a basis in biology. Other problems, for example over-fishing and pollution, may be much more important to the animals.

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Anonymous. 1974. *A field report*. Vancouver Public Aquarium Newsletter 18(5):11.

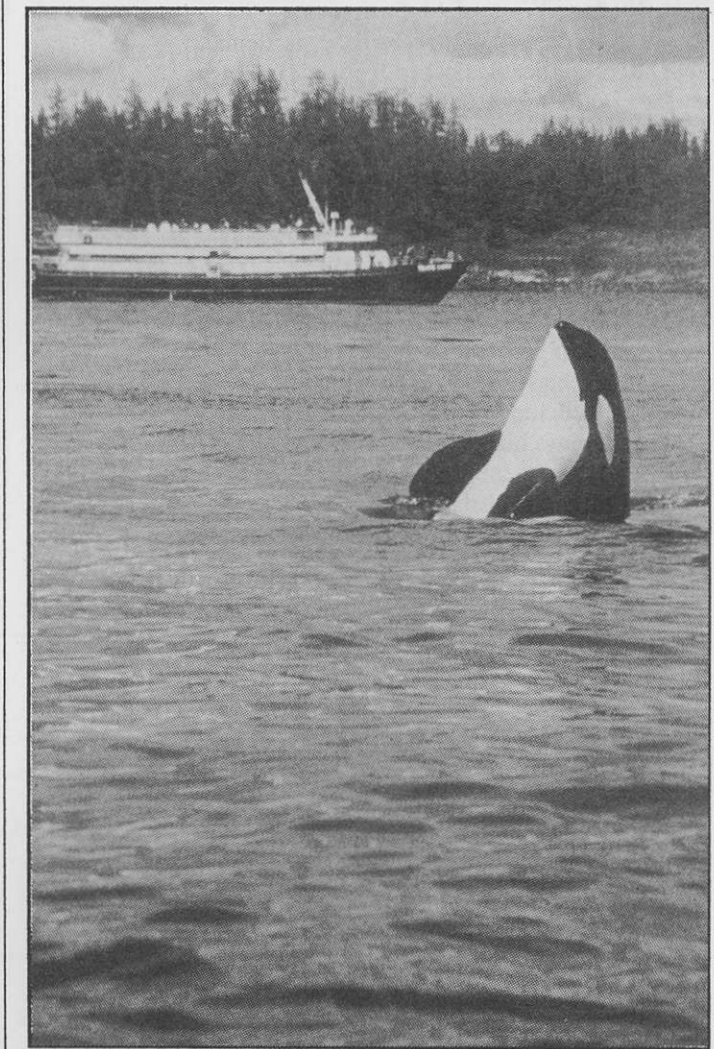
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Osborne, R.W. 1991. *Trends in killer whale movements, vessel traffic, and whale watching in Haro Strait*, pages 672-688. In: Proceedings of Puget Sound Research '91, Seattle, WA, January 4-5, 1991.

Nicole Phillips and Robin Baird are involved in the Marine Mammal Research Group which investigates and documents marine mammal sightings in B.C. waters. Data are archived in a database which is available to researchers and other investigators.

For more information write to: Marine Mammal Research Group, Box 6244, Victoria, B.C. V8P 5L5, or phone (604) 380-1925 (fax 380-1206).



Resident Killer Whale spy-hopping off San Juan Island. P.J. Stacey. 1991.

Welcome To New Members:

- Aug. 15 Barbara Dowd, of Hillbank Road: enjoys hiking and observing birds, wildflowers and lichens.
- Aug. 22 Carol Christianson, of Plymouth Road.
- Aug. 28 Paul Lebrooy, Romney and Jordan, of Toronto Street.
- Aug. 28 R.J. and Cheryl Mackie, of Tracey Street: are birdwatchers.
- Aug. 28 Derrick and Thomas Cameron and Shirley Hoehne, of Derby Road: study birds and wildlife at nature sanctuaries.
- Aug. 28 David and Donna Horton, of Rogers Avenue: are interested in birds and hiking.
- Sept. 4 Ray Sundby, of Roslyn Road.
- Sept. 10 Everard and Barbara Myasaki, of Sentinal Place.
- Sept. 10 Laura Gretzinger, of Cedar Hill Road: likes birdwatching.
- Sept. 10 Genevieve B. Dark, of Lovat Avenue.
- Sept. 10 Jane Watt, of Aloha Avenue: studies all nature, birds in particular.
- Sept. 10 Heather Basio and Robert Thompson, of Doney Road: enjoy birding, hiking and are active in conservation.
- Sept. 10 Alison McKerrow, of Rolmar Crescent in Cobble Hill: is interested in wildflowers.
- Sept. 14 Thomas Belzer, of Pasadena City College in California and Pender Island.
- Sept. 21 Robert Chapman, of McKenzie Avenue: is an Envirotech student at Camosun College and a scuba diver.
- Sept. 21 Neil and Olive Colbourne, of Mary Ann Crescent: enjoys birds, wildflowers and all of nature.
- Sept. 22 Max Sternberg, of Rockland Avenue: watches birds.
- Sept. 22 Peggy Lehmann, of Dallas Road: enjoys birding.
- Sept. 24 Jim and Helen Barwise, of Rock Street: are interested in birds, animals and preservation of our environment.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21

ROYAL BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM
WEEKEND SHOWCASE

This special event is designed to showcase the museum's collections. Each Sunday a different topic is chosen and little seen artifacts are put on display. There will be tours behind the scenes and activities for kids.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 21 IS
NATURAL HISTORY DAY
Cost is admission to the museum.

Nighthawk Noises

By Dannie Carsen

A quiet insistent "fooom" caught his attention as he walked along the abandoned railway bed. George couldn't place the sound at first. Fooom. It was a whispery muffled rattle as though someone was fanning the air. He felt a tingle at the back of his neck as he walked through the dry Sagebrush and Jumping Cactus. The muggy air was sweet from the ripening Saskatoon berries at the edge of the river. He could almost imagine a Cougar calling to its mate or a gentle cough of a Black Bear. Before he was completely spooked he remembered. It was a Nighthawk. First they sat around at the roost calling "paaint". Dusk urged them up into the darkening sky to hawk for insects. Their wing feathers made a kind of fooom as they swooped and dove through the warm night air.

George looked down at his faded camouflage suit and high desert boots and smiled. Tonight, he had a human quarry. He knew Rowan Crawley was around here somewhere. The miserable old twitcher came to the Okanagan almost every year about this time in late May or early June. He had his favorite spots to visit like 22 Road, White Lake, the cliffs near Vaseux Lake and a few others. George had already checked the other spots where Crawley sometimes parked his van. His face was hot and shiny with the gleam of sweat from driving down the White Lake Road in the 30° heat. Late in the afternoon, he spotted tire tracks and a rough table of Ponderosa Pine deadfalls that looked like Crawley's style way down 22 Road. He figured he had just missed him there.

While he was sitting in his truck eating supper, he decided to try Crawley's favorite spot one last time. Two days ago he had scanned the area with binoculars from high up the cliffs where they fed the Mountain Sheep but there was no sign of the man at the oxbow ponds. You either had to use a canoe or drive down the other side of the lake from Okanagan Falls to get a closer look. George decided he would drive the old CPR railway right-of-way back to the oxbow ponds on the Okanagan River. Crawley usually camped between the first and second ponds. This was the last place he might be able to corner the slippery old bugger. It would have been just about impossible to approach his camp by canoe without being seen.

George drove the truck past the ranch house and onto the right-of-way. It was a pretty drive, passing between rock faces and along the thick willows and Cascara that marked the edge of the river. He put the truck in four wheel drive and pulled up a side road to the gas pipeline. From here he would walk. He stayed off the old railway bed as he approached the final turn to the second pond.

He chose a route angling up the hillside to give him cover and a good view of the ponds. He jumped as a Red-winged Blackbird broke into noisy song right ahead of him. Nerves of steel, he thought cynically. He touched the gunstock in his backpack to reassure himself as he walked. The warm night air surrounded him like a cloud and he felt a prickle of sweat on his back. He lifted his boot over the Ponderosa Pine deadfall and almost fell over in his haste to stop. In the twilight, he could just make out the shape of a

large rattler coiled on a rock the size of a table. The damn things didnt rattle anymore. The cattlemen and orchardists had killed all the snakes that rattled. He backed up slowly and went around the snake, careful not to alarm it. He snapped a twig in his efforts to avoid the rattler. He froze, hoping desperately that Crawley had not heard him.

He peered around the Antelope Brush and used his binoculars to scan the curve of the isthmus that separated the two ponds. He smiled to himself as he remembered the first time he had driven down this way in the old Scout with Renman Thatcher, the old fellow who had offered to show him the petroglyphs on the cliffs. The spot was still as beautiful. Even Rowen Crawley might like to surround himself with a little paradise.

He stiffened. There it was. It was an old white Econoline van with square corners and a high ungainly hump sported by the earliest Ford camper vans. It was in the exact spot where he and Sylvia had stayed two years ago. He moved the binoculars along the narrowest point of the isthmus savoring the grand views of both ponds. He remembered walking the Ponderosa Pine woods of the isthmus and the climb to the flat of the old lake bed above.

It was almost too dark to see. By squinting, he could just make out a folding chair sitting alongside the van and an indistinct shape in it. He grinned to himself and whispered "Yessssss" under his breath. He had finally caught up with the fabled Crawley. He sat there quietly for a minute, just thinking. Crawley didn't look like he was going anywhere and it was getting much too dark to see much. He decided to bivouac on the spot. He noticed a windfall a few feet away where he could hide his tent. He quickly unloaded his little survival tent and one pound sleeping bag. Just as the night sky overwhelmed the steppe around him, he was finished. He lay in his sleeping bag underneath the log and looked down at Crawley's camp. He was still there. Satisfied, he chewed a few handfuls of smoked salmon, drank from his canteen, and lay on his back to sleep.

He awoke with a start, a chorus of young birds insistently shrieking in his ears. Must be young Northern Orioles, he thought grumpily. Turning over, he had a quick look at the van. No one up yet. His watch said 4:45 a.m. and he groaned. Might as well get up. Crawley was a goer. Started at 5:00 or 5:30 every morning and caught the dawn chorus. Cold joints creaking, he zipped open his bag and stumbled out to urinate over the

deadfall. He stuff the bag back in the pocket in his little pack and quickly rolled the tent into a cylinder which fit next to the gunstock in the main pouch.

As he crunched granola and dried apples for breakfast, he listened with interest to the profusion of calls. Black-capped Chickadees, Song Sparrows, Northern Orioles, and what sounded like a Gray Catbird, serenaded him. Hmmm. Where was the call of the Yellow-breasted Chat? Sylvia and he had heard one not far from here. Suddenly, a Western Meadowlark gave a call that pierced like the oboe in a quartet. He liked meadowlarks. They picked the top of little hills to patrol, just like him.

Throwing his food bag back in his pack George walked quietly to the huge clump of Antelope Brush on the edge of the slope. There, he resumed his surveillance of the van. After ten minutes a slight figure walked around the side of the van and down the road with a steady march.

He stumbled in his haste to follow. By now, streaks of light crossed the sky and it was easier to see. The adrenaline raced through his body as he traversed the hillside trying to keep Crawley in sight on the steppe road. Jumping Cactus grabbed at his ankles and he mumbled "damn stuff" to himself.

Crawley kept up the pace as they climbed higher up the hillside. George ran eight kilometers a day and felt fit but even he grudgingly admitted he was having trouble keeping up. Finally, they reached the steppe. Rising above them were the rusty yellow cliffs that were covered with petroglyphs. Crawley continued along the trail, then struck off to the left. It looked like he was going for the hillside right next to the cliffs. There was a grove of Ponderosa Pine next to the rock face. From behind the big pine in the middle of the steppe, George watched Crawley disappear in the grove of trees.

A golden glow suffused the cliffs ahead as the sun breasted the cliff. George moved slowly through the Antelope Brush scrub. He carefully watched for a flash of the blue shirt Crawley was wearing. Nothing. Then he spotted him. He was standing motionless next to an ancient Ponderosa Pine. George felt his feet move forward almost on their own. He had to get closer. Couldn't see why Crawley was standing so still. George finally stood behind him less than 100 feet away and peered at the pine that Crawley was facing. Suddenly, a black-bodied bird with a white head emerged from a hole in

—continued following page

Birders Journal

Latest observations from across Canada; rarity reports; identification and distributional articles; Ontario Round-Up; international conservation news; Photo-Quiz and Prize-Bird; colour photographs; top-quality artwork and colour plates; CBC news; letters; Product Reviews; Book Reviews; Notes and regular columns.

The Leading Magazine for Canadian Birders

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the dead pine. It couldn't be. A White-headed Woodpecker! The boys back in Vancouver wouldn't believe it.

Back to business. He reached behind him and slowly eased out the rifle stock. Running his fingers along the smooth stock he touched the carving of a grouse for luck. He quietly stepped from tree to tree until he was no more than 35 feet behind Crawley. The blue-shirted figure hadn't moved but his head was tilted slightly up. George could finally see the small hole eight feet up the tree. Insistent food begging calls punctured the quiet. He smiled to himself. Crawley couldn't hear him because of all the noise. He lifted up the rifle stock and rested it lovingly on the branch of a small pine. He waited. Got to time this just right.

Yellow-fringed mouths opened wide with begging as the adult birds fed the demanding youngsters about every 10 minutes. He took aim as he caught a glimpse of one of the woodpeckers flying to a nearby tree. Pulling the trigger, he felt his finger take up the slack. Just as the male woodpecker flew to the tree and perched at the edge of the hole, he shot.

He squeezed off three shots before the bird disappeared into the tree. Perfect! The 600-mm lens he was using framed Crawley's head and the bird beautifully. Too late, he realized Crawley had heard the noise of his autowinder.

"You", a surprised Crawley grated menacingly as he turned around. "I told you no pictures." George continued shooting, getting Crawley's head and shoulders and then just the reddening face as he advanced.

Finally, he had to stop. He whipped the gunstock and camera back into the backpack and stood his ground. "I got you Crawley. That's your 400th on your B.C. list, isn't it?"

Crawley stopped three feet in front of George. Even at 75, he looked tough and strong. He was only 5'6", but he was five feet wide. He glared at George through bushy white eyebrows and nodded. The look on his face softened as he muttered, "My first White-headed. What the hell, you may as well see the woodpecker too." George could tell he was happy, maybe even pleased to have someone to share his find.

They stood there in silence as the parents came back two or three times to feed their brood. George started thinking about the case of scotch he was going to enjoy when he got back to Vancouver. Those hot-shot birders in his Christmas Count group had to pay. He had photographed one of the most elusive species of them all. The wayward twitcher, Rowan Crawley. Crawley went on a legendary birding trip each spring or summer and came back every year with two or three new birds for his British Columbia list. George had bet his friends he could "bag" Crawley getting his 400th B.C. bird and he had done it. He never thought it would be a White-headed Woodpecker! Solemnly, he reached in his pack for his small canteen and poured Crawley and himself a drink. He looked Crawley in the eye and raised his glass. "May the spring migration always find you."

Dannie Carsen is an active member of the Victoria Natural History Society. He has been a Director of the Society and Chair of the Publications Committee and is currently a member of the City of Victoria Parks and Recreation Committee.

Highest Mountain On Saturna Island Is Home To Garry Oaks

Robert Ballantyne of the Canadian Nature Federation sends this report:
"Did you know about the Garry Oaks on Saturna, the southern-most of the Gulf Islands?"

In late August, with my family, we drove to the top of the highest mountain on Saturna Island. There is a road because that is the site of the mast for CHEK-TV. I do not know the elevation of the summit but it must be about 1000 feet. Most of the south-western face of the mountain is a very steep meadow. Goats graze there.

The view is fine and, while looking at the other gulf islands, boats and birds with binoculars, I spotted some trees below me that seemed to have the tangle of branches illustrated in your [Garry Oak Preservation Society's] literature. With my eight-year old, we made our way down to see. It was steep! And slippery on the grass. Yup, they were oaks. This is not really an oak meadow environment because it is mainly grassland for the goats. There are several oak trees and they are mature. Whoever owns the land would probably want to preserve the trees (or at least not mind if someone else planted meadow species). Other than feeding the goats, at the moment there would be little use for the high slope. I wonder if the folds at CHEK would know about the ownership or would like to become involved in a project by their transmitter site?

If anyone decides to go and see what is there, take hiking boots and leave those behind who are afraid of high places. And take it easy on the slopes."

WHALE HOTLINE



harbour porpoise



Dall's porpoise

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On the water: VHF channel 68 to the vessel *Sundiver*

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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.

"Wildlife Tree" Mapping In Goldstream

By Joe Materi

In July and August of this year, I took part in a volunteer research project to identify, map and mark trees that have a high value to wildlife in Goldstream Provincial Park. Such trees may be valuable as nesting, feeding and perching sites for birds, or as denning and caching areas for mammals. Another student in Camosun College's Environmental Technology Program, Nina Suutarinen, helped with the fieldwork.

The project had a number of objectives. Foremost among these was increasing public awareness of the importance of dead trees, or "snags," to wildlife. In total, we hung twenty-three of the bright yellow identification plates on important trees near trails and campsites. We hope this will make park visitors reconsider the wildlife value of trees in their own area, especially as it relates to construction or firewood cutting. It was also a priority to give people a sense of the variety of wildlife



These two Douglas Fir trees have potential for cavity nests, open nests, perching and feeding.

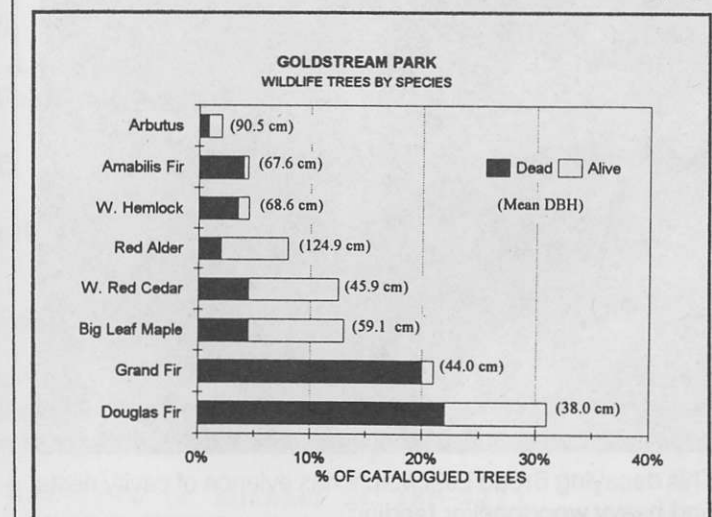


trees. To this end, trees of several species were chosen for marking - many in different stages of decomposition and with obvious (we hope) differences in use.

It was also decided to establish an inventory of easily-tracked trees in the park. This would allow us to get a "handle" on the number of wildlife trees in a relatively undisturbed area and permit long-term research to be carried out on individual trees. This latter goal can be achieved with the contributions of any visiting "birder" who reports their sightings to the Visitor Information Centre. On a personal level, we saw this project as an opportunity to expand and improve on our own field skills and become more useful as technicians-in-training.

Over the study period, we collected data on some 150 trees. The three broad areas of interest could be described as location, tree characteristics, and wildlife value. Being fairly precise about location would facilitate follow-up studies and input into a Geographic Information System (GIS) data base. A good deal of effort went into documenting the characteristics of the tree. This included attributes such as: species, diameter & height, percentage of bark remaining, whether or not it was topped, and probable cause of death. The section on wildlife value involved making a number of "educated guesses" as to

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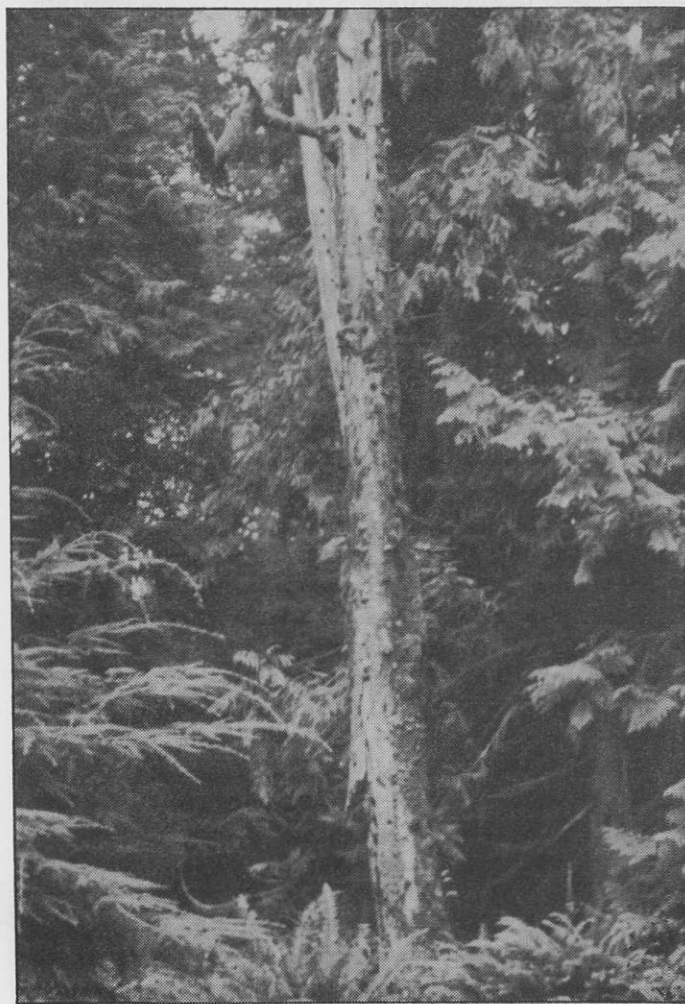
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what was a probable cavity nest, open nest, or perching site. We were very fortunate to enlist the services of Carol Berryman and other Goldstream interpretive staff, who gave us a number of field keys for guidance.

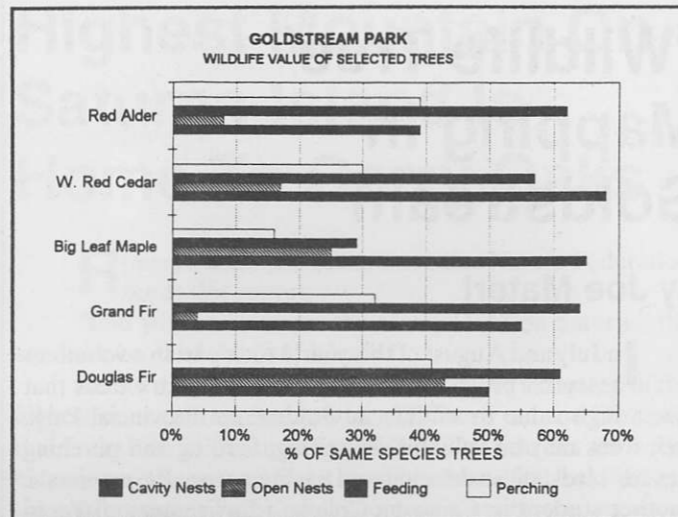
Although the database will become more valuable when actual species use can be determined, a number of interesting findings came out of this summer's research. For instance, two species - Douglas Fir and Grand Fir - accounted for more than half of all wildlife trees catalogued. As well, graphing the percentage of live versus dead wildlife trees for each species went a long way towards showing the importance of dead and dying trees (Figure 1).

We also determined the wildlife value of trees by species (Figure 2). The most striking thing about this second graph is that it shows every species to have elements of multiple-use by wildlife, with each being important for cavities as well as for feeding. Douglas Fir seems to be the best-suited for open nesting and perching sites. Red Alder in the bottom lands, however, can also be seen as important for perching - especially during the Chum Salmon spawning period.

Because of this study, we came to appreciate the importance of the Pileated Woodpecker to the forest ecosystem. This species, along with other birds such as the Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, and Hairy Woodpecker, make up what is known as the "Primary Cavity Excavators," or PCE's.



This decaying Broad Leaf Maple has evidence of cavity nests and heavy woodpecker feeding.



Because the Pileated Woodpecker creates a new nest hole each year, a number of "Secondary Cavity Users," or SCU's are able to nest in a safe place. The list of SCU's includes most owl species found on Vancouver Island, as well as many ducks such as the Wood Duck, Goldeneye, and Bufflehead.

If you are interested in learning more about hanging "Wildlife Tree" signs you can contact Todd Manning at 642-6936 or write him c/o:

BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
Integrated Management Branch
780 Blanshard Street
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X5

Reference:

Backhouse, Francis. 1993. *Wildlife tree management in British Columbia*, B.C. Silviculture Branch, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, pp. 22-23.

Joe Materi is a student enrolled in the Environmental Technology Program at Camosun College.

The Owl And The Pussy Cat

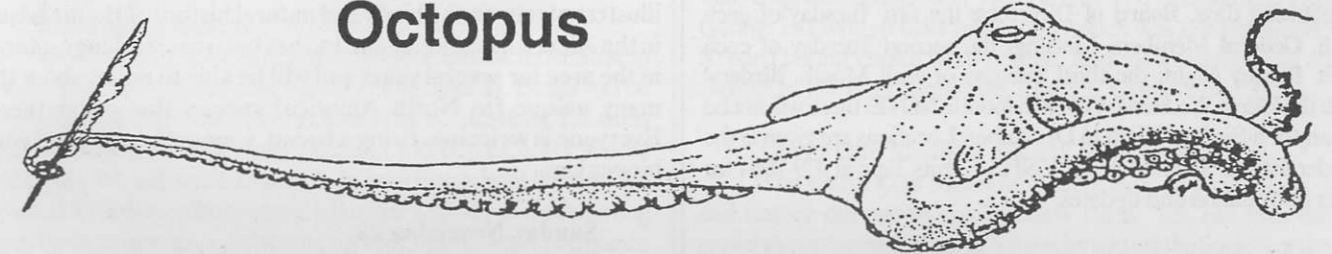
Barbara Faulkner sent us this bit of natural history from Mystic Vale:

"My home is right opposite to Mystic Vale and we are fortunate to be able to observe many species of birds, among them a pair of eagles and a pair of owls.

In the spring of this year the call of the adult owl to its young brought my daughter, my son-in-law and me out to the edge of Mystic Vale where it appears that some training was in progress. We probably interrupted a very important hunting lesson but we were thrilled to watch the proceedings.

Meantime the family cat, Scrappy, came over to see what was going on and the adult owl became agitated. Suddenly, and silently, she swooped down. Scrappy must have heard something because he rolled over onto his back with his claws extended. The owl returned to her perch to continue to watch her offspring. And the cat - he shot back across the road to the safety of home."

Pacific Octopus



By Lynton Burger

"Sea The Future" Retreat is a Big Success

The Marine Life Sanctuaries Society (MLSS) of British Columbia recently held a two-day retreat entitled "Sea The Future". More than 50 members gathered on Gabriola Island for a weekend of discussions, presentations and group-visioning exercises. The aim of the gathering was to plan a route ahead for the MLSS which has grown steadily over the last few years. You may, or may not, know that British Columbia has less than one tenth of one percent of it's marine environment totally protected. The MLSS has been at the forefront of trying to get decision-makers to recognize the need for marine protected areas in British Columbia.

The positive energy present at the workshop was overwhelming. People provided input from various and many perspectives and I came away from the weekend feeling assured that the dream most marine enthusiasts share (having representative parts of our marine ecosystems protected) will one day be realised. Once again I urge you to become involved and to join the MLSS. You can find out more by writing to the MLSS, P.O.Box 48299, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C. V7X 1A1 (Ph: 929-4131).

CPAWS' Marine Parks Campaign

The MLSS are not the only organisation involved in

trying to protect our marine environment. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) have a dedicated Marine Parks Campaign on the go. Their campaign is stressing the need for protecting our marine environments on a rational ecological basis. CPAWS sees these last three words as the essential criteria for setting up marine protected areas and I agree completely with this philosophy. Whilst it may be clever to try and go for as much of the coast as possible, it is wise to try and define coastal ecotypes and to then lobby for representative portions of those eco-regions.

Whilst the MLSS is an important "shouter" (and there is certainly much to shout about), CPAWS has the potential for being the "clouter" as they have the ability to bring together people in both Federal and Provincial Governments. This they are doing and you can get involved too by phoning Debby Ianson (737-7669) who is the co-ordinator of CPAWS' marine parks campaign.

Marine protected areas are essential in British Columbia. MPA's have been shown in many countries around the world to fulfil several important ecological, social and economic functions (in my next column I will take a look at some of these functions). British Columbia, and indeed Canada as a whole, are years behind many third world countries in marine parks implementation. What is heartening to see is that a rapidly growing number of people in B.C. want to change this state of affairs. I hope you are one of them.

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CALENDAR

CALENDARREGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month. **General Members Meeting:** the second Tuesday of each month. **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday of each month. **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday of each month. **NOTE:** there will not be a Botany or a Birders' Night in December. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday, November 2

Board of Directors' Meeting. Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 9

VNHS General Meeting. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. This month's meeting features speaker Lisa Kadonaga, from the Department of Geography, University of Victoria. Her talk, entitled "A Visit to the Polar Bear Capital of the World", discusses the natural history of Churchill, Manitoba and some of the scientific research projects that have been carried out there.

Sunday, November 14

Reifel Bird Sanctuary Snow Goose Field Trip. Join David Allinson (380-8233) for this day trip to view the annual congregation of up to 10,000 Snow Geese at this famous sanctuary in Ladner, B.C., near the mouth of the Fraser River. The Reifel Sanctuary also holds a rich variety of avifauna besides waterfowl, including raptors, shorebirds and songbirds. If we car-pool effectively, our travel expenses will be approximately \$20.00 each. Contact David for details and to sign up.

Tuesday, November 16

Botany Night. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Join Adolf Ceska for another in the series on the identification of B.C. vascular plant families. This month he will be talking about the Mustard family. The featured speaker will be announced on the VNHS Events Tape (479-2054).

Saturday, November 20

The Eagles, Gulls and Salmon of Goldstream River Estuary. Our annual outing to Goldstream Provincial Park is timed to observe spawning salmon and the many eagles and gulls they attract. Meet at the parking lot of the park off the Trans Canada Highway at 9:00 a.m., for this morning trip.

Sunday, November 21

Royal B.C. Museum and VNHS Weekend Showcase. Royal B.C. Museum, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This is a chance to learn more about the museum's bio-collections and the staff who care for them. There will be displays, seldom seen specimens, behind the scene tours and children's activities. Cost is the museum admission price. VNHS volunteers are also needed to help. Contact Bev Glover at 721-1476.

Wednesday, November 24

Birders Night. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Ian Jones of Vancouver will present a slide illustrated talk on the birds and natural history of Buldir Island in the Aleutian Islands chain. Ian has been researching seabirds in the area for several years and will be able to tell us about the many unique (to North America) species that occur there. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend, your coffee mug and your binoculars.

Sunday, November 28.

Birding at Martindale and Island View Beach. Hone your skills in preparation for the upcoming Christmas Bird Count in one of the best winter birding areas in all of Canada. Meet leader Brent Daikow (656-3190) at the Farmer's Market building at the corner of Highway #17 and Island View Beach Road at 8:30 a.m. Be sure to bring appropriate footwear as conditions may be wet or muddy in some places.

DECEMBER EVENTS

Saturday, December 4

Birding at Esquimalt Lagoon. The sheltered lagoon and offshore waters at Esquimalt Lagoon attract thousands of waterfowl every fall and winter. Species to be expected include Western Grebe, Oldsquaw and Black Scoter. With luck, we may pick out an Eared Grebe or even a Tufted Duck among the rafts of scaup. Meet at the north end of causeway at the wooden bridge, 9:00 a.m. Leader TBA.

Tuesday, December 7

Board of Directors' Meeting. Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 14

VNHS General Meeting. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. December is Members' Night. Sip hot apple cider and meet with friends for an evening of Christmas Cheer and slide presentations on interesting topics and destinations by our many talented members. Everyone is encouraged to think about a ten-minute presentation on topics that they would like to share with VNHS members. If you wish to show some slides, contact Pam Stacey at 721-2817 or Bev Glover at 721-1476.

Saturday, December 18

Victoria Christmas Bird Count (C.B.C.). Come and participate in the Christmas count in one of two ways, either as an active "counter" in the field or as a feeder watcher. Contact David Pearce, Count Co-ordinator, at 477-2664. (See also the article in this issue.)

Sunday, December 19.

Sooke Christmas Bird Count. Make it a birding weekend and join the Sooke C.B.C. Contact Mike Shepard at 388-4227.

Monday, December 27

Duncan Christmas Bird Count. The Duncan Naturalists welcomed the help of Victoria birders last year and invite them to come and participate again. Please contact Derrick Marven at 1-748-8504.

BULLETIN BOARD

Volunteers Needed!

The Royal B.C. Museum and the VNHS need members to help with the showcase weekend on Sunday, November 21. Duties will be to watch the collection and answer natural history questions. The shifts are from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. We will need 15 people to help throughout the day. We also need VNHS members who are familiar with any of the following topics: birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and plants. Contact Bev Glover at 721-1476 if you can help out.

For Sale

Ocean to Alpine - A British Columbia Nature Guide. This new book by Joy and Cam Finley is available from Lyndis Davis (477-9952). Also for sale: National Geographic's *Field Guide to Birds*; the *Naturalist Guide to the Victoria Region*; the Victoria Area Bird Checklist; and, the new Victoria Natural History Society's Window Decals.

Back Issues of the Victoria Naturalist

Copies of back issues and indices of the Victoria Naturalist are available from Tom Gillespie (361-1694).

Mini-Pelagic Birding. Register your name with Hank Van der Pol (652-1924) if you are interested in informal field trips this fall as a walk-on passenger aboard the *M.V. Coho* to Port Angeles. These same day return trips are weather-dependent, as many rare or uncommon



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"A Birders Guide to Vancouver Island"

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The Field-Naturalist, 1241 Broad Street

seabirds are pushed into our offshore waters after stormy weather.

Biography of Lavender and Philip Monckton. The Moncktons were long-time residents of Victoria and VNHS members. Their son George has written their biography which was self-published. Only 50 hard-bound copies were printed. Persons interested can contact George at 787 Berkshire Drive, London, Ontario, N6J 3S5.

Garry Oak Meadow Society Membership

The Garry Oak Meadow Society aims to promote, conserve and restore our native oak meadow lands. You can help them to preserve our rarest Canadian habitat by joining the Society or through donations to any branch of Pacific Coast Savings Credit Union. For further information contact Joyce Lee at 386-3785.

Marine Ecology Station

Explore British Columbia's marine bio-diversity at Cowichan Bay Maritime Centre. Life exhibits of B.C. sea life can be seen under microscopes and in video displays. There are also programs available for schools, camps, naturalists and educators. The Centre is on the water at 1761 Cowichan Bay Rd. For information phone 746-4955.

Goldstream Art Show

By Leah Ramsay

Just under 13,000 people went through the doors of the Goldstream Park Visitor Centre during the "Nature of Island Artists" exhibition. This venture was jointly run by BC Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society, with the VNHS providing staffing for the show. The co-ordination of this volunteer effort by the Chatwins, Anne Adamson and several other "phoners" is highly commended. A special thanks also goes out to Arenaria staff who put in a lot of extra time in the set up and take down of the show. BC Parks staff (Malahat District) was very helpful throughout.

Of the 60 pieces of art for sale, 32 sold through the silent auction. While the final bookkeeping has not been completed, the 1993 show looks like it did even better than the 1990 show. The final tally will be published in the next edition of the *Victoria Naturalist*. Part of the extra profit was brought in through coffee, cookie and muffin sales, the donation box, good raffle sales and good poster (Morgan Warren's Steller's Jays) sales. Thanks to Linda Smith for coordinating much of the cookie and muffin sales. The raffle was a great success thanks to the donations from the artists. Thank Morgan Warren, Rose Leonard and Rob Cannings next time you see any of them. Also thanks to Robert Bateman for the donation of his lithograph.

The People's Choice Award went to Roland Klahm's "Harmony". The voting was very close amongst the top choices and every piece was someone's favourite! The following are the "Top Ten":

1. Roland Klahm - "Harmony"
2. Lissa Calvert - "Wild Blue Yonder"
3. Jan Sharky Thomas - "Mystery"
4. Maarten Schaddlee - "Afternoon Delight"
5. Wesley Clark - "The Lindsay-Dickson Forest, Denman Island"
6. Morgan Warren - "A Squabble of Jays"
7. Steve Madsen - "Quiet Times" (Green-winged Teal Hen)
8. Rose Leonard - "Kingfisher"
9. Gretchen Markle - "Rain Forest"
10. Mark Nyhof - "Steller's Jay"



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"Nature of Island Artists" Art Show.