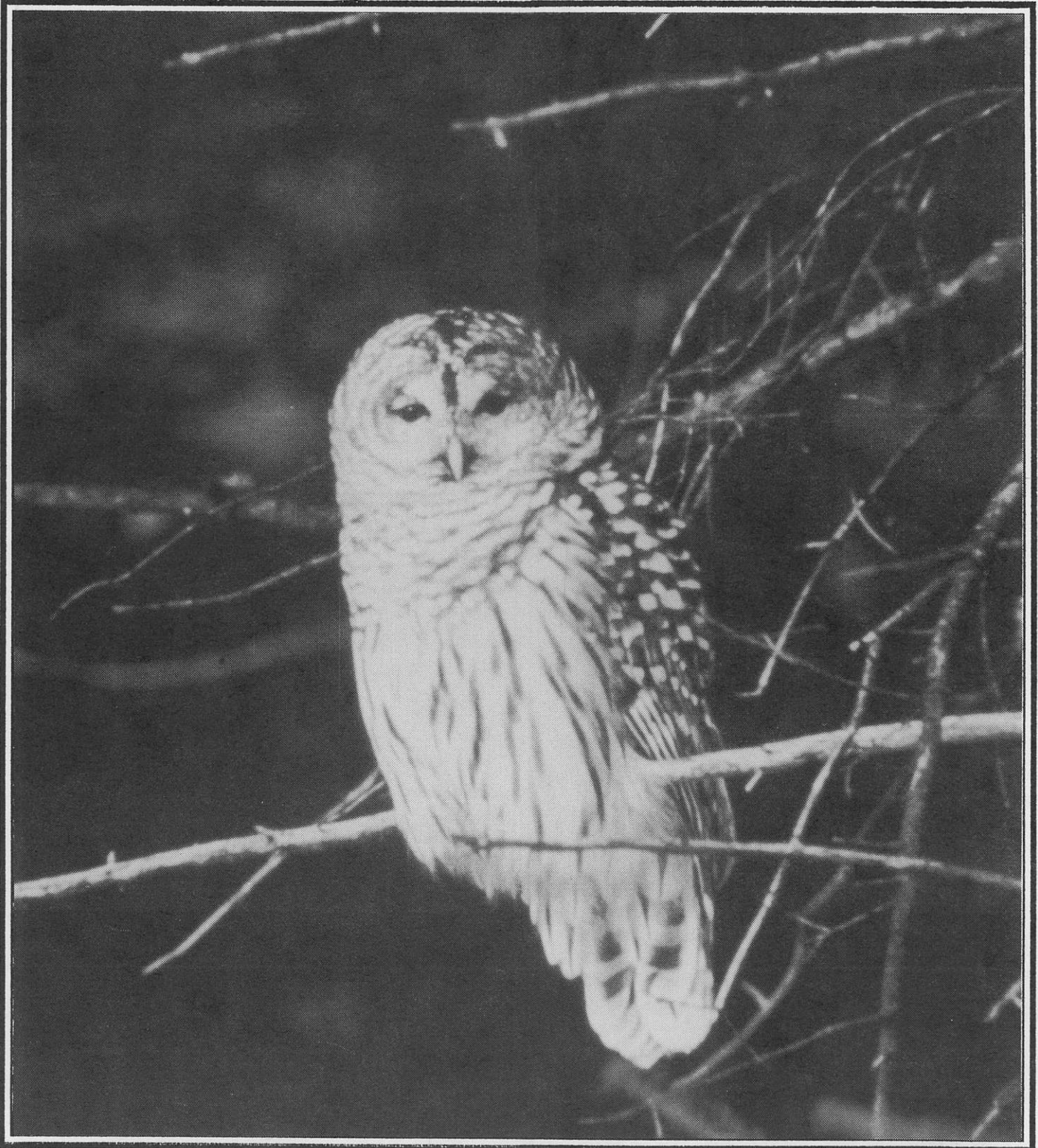


# The Victoria NATURALIST

JANUARY  
FEBRUARY  
1994  
VOL 50.4

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FEES ARE  
DUE DEC. 31



# The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the  
**VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
 P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4  
 Contents © 1993 as credited.  
 ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada

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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, birding and botany notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We will accept and use copy in almost any legible form but we encourage submission of typed, double-spaced copy or an IBM compatible word processing file on any size diskette, plus printed output. Having copy submitted on diskette saves a lot of time and work for the publications group and we really appreciate the help. If you have an obscure or very old word processing program, call the Associate Editor, **Lynton Burger**, at 383-4535, or save the text in ASCII format. Blank diskettes may be obtained from the editor and we will return any of your own diskettes submitted. Photos and slides submitted may be picked up at the Field-Naturalist, 1241 Broad Street, or will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

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## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Birding Observations<br/>around Blenkinsop Lake</b><br>By Michael A. Carson.....            | 4  |
| <b>Target Bird Surveys:<br/>Trumpeter Swan and<br/>Western Bluebird .....</b>                  | 4  |
| <b>Bird Seed Preference Experiment<br/>From the Cornell Laboratory<br/>of Ornithology.....</b> | 12 |
| <b>Thank You.....</b>  | 12 |
| <b>Magical Moments in Hawaii</b><br>By Gwennie Hooper.....                                     | 13 |
| <b>Welcome to New Members.....</b>   | 13 |
| <b>Owling in Victoria:<br/>Etiquette and Techniques</b><br>By David Allinson.....              | 14 |
| <b>Birding Games</b><br>By Keith Taylor.....   | 14 |
| <b>Mount Norman<br/>Regional Park Opens</b><br>By Christine Morissette.....                    | 15 |
| <b>Survey Shows Strong<br/>Support for CRD Parks</b><br>By Christine Morissette.....           | 16 |
| <b>Yellow Point at Risk</b><br>A letter from Anne Erlebach .....                               | 16 |
| <b>Pacific Octopus</b><br>By Lynton Burger.....  | 17 |
| <b>Calender .....</b>  | 18 |
| <b>Bulletin Board .....</b>  | 19 |

## Our Cover

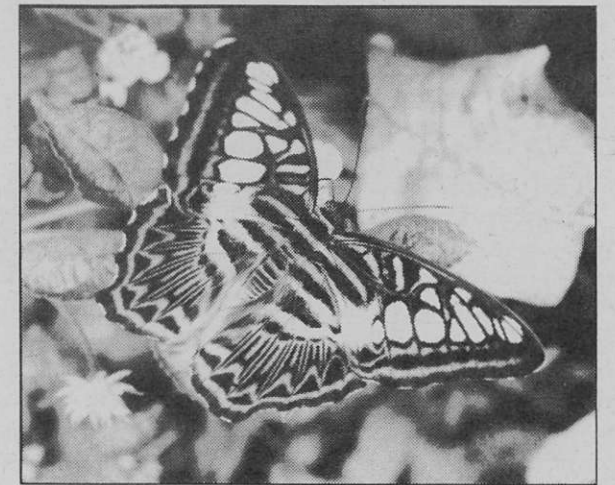
Our cover this issue features a Barred Owl, photographed at Witty's Lagoon by David Allinson, vice president of the Victoria Natural History Society. David has a special passion for both diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey.

His article, "Owling in Victoria: Etiquette and Techniques," which appears on page 14 of this issue, provides helpful hints on the best times of day and year to sight owls, owl birding locations, and the ear-birding techniques that help in sighting them.

If you would like some first-hand experience locating nocturnal predators, such as the rarely seen the Barred Owl, join one of two Owling trips planned for January and February, 1994 (see Calendar, Page 18.) Pre-register with David Allison at 380-8233. Trips are limited to 12 participants.

I will be away for the next two issues of the *Victoria Naturalist*. Taking over the editorial duties will be Lynton Burger, Associate Editor and Kim Nemrava, Chair of the Publications Committee. Information about the Naturalist and articles for submission should be submitted to Lynton at the following address: 2nd Floor, 525 Head Street, Victoria, B.C., V9A 5S1. He can also be contacted at 383-4535 during working hours or by fax (383-0103).

Warren Drinnan, Editor



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# Birding Observations around Blenkinsop Lake

By Michael A. Carson

## Background

The Blenkinsop Valley, especially the area around the lake, has long been recognized as one of the prime birding areas in Greater Victoria. Over the years, however, as trees have been cleared, land drained and development has encroached upon it, there has been a gradual loss of habitat supporting this avifauna. As such, the area is one of several designated by the Parks and Conservation Committee of the Victoria Natural History Society as a "sensitive area" and monitored intermittently.

In recent years, the prospect of trail construction around the lake, plans for a bridge across the water, possible increased use of water for irrigation and the long-term threat of light rapid transit along the Lochside right-of-way, have stressed the need for a more thorough inventory of the bird population in the valley. To this end a one-year weekly bird count was undertaken beginning in June, 1992. This article describes the results of that bird survey and incorporates other data collected

## Target Bird Surveys: Trumpeter Swan and Western Bluebird

VNHS is undertaking a survey of two bird species this winter (and spring). One is the Trumpeter Swan (TRUS), numbers of which have steadily increased in the checklist area in the last 10 years; the other is the Western Bluebird (WEBL) whose numbers have declined drastically in the last 30 years.

The TRUS survey is already in operation. You can help by recording the following information whenever you see TRUS anywhere in the checklist area: date, time and location; numbers (adult and immature); in flight (direction) or on ground (habitat); and apparent food source. Please phone your information to Michael Carson at 658-5029 or record it on paper and hand it to him at Birders' Night. The survey will continue through April.

The WEBL survey will begin in January. Very few birds have been observed in the last few years but historically the best sighting time has been February-April prior to the nesting period. In the past, WEBL has usually been seen in semi-open areas: treed farmland in Metchosin (Pears Road) and in North Saanich (West Saanich Road), as well as on higher ground on Mt. Tzuhalem, Saltspring Island and on Galiano Island. You can help by making a special effort to bird these areas during late winter and spring. Please report any sightings (or calls) to the Rare Bird Alert (592-3381) and to 658-5029.

since 1979 into a monthly checklist of birds. The final section discusses changes in the avifauna since the late 1940s, at which time a detailed survey was undertaken by the Provincial Museum (Hardy, 1956). The article is an abbreviated version of a report on file with the Society.

## The survey

A location map of the Blenkinsop Valley is provided, taken from the Blenkinsop Local Area Plan of Saanich. The present survey covered only the central part of the valley, beginning mid-way along Lohbrunner Road, then down Lochside Drive and Trail as far as the lake shoreline. The area covered is considered representative of the valley as a whole and comprises four main habitats: open fields; woodland margins; hedgerows and trees flanking the lake and Lochside Trail; and the lake itself.

In the construction of a checklist, the data from the weekly surveys were supplemented by other observations in the valley made beyond the geographic limits of the regular weekly survey, as well as by sightings within the regular count area but by other observers. Additional mid-week mini-surveys within the regular count area were also undertaken, especially during the two migration times in the 1992-93 period.

In total, 128 species were recorded in the valley during the 12-month period starting from the first week of June 1992. This was broken down as 29 species of water-based birds (plus possible Greater Scaup), 32 non-perching species (plus possible Virginia Rail, Ring-billed Gull and Thayer's Gull) and 62 passerines (plus possible Hammond's Flycatcher).

## Monthly checklist

The data from the 1992-93 observations were supplemented by all sightings of irregular species reported for the Blenkinsop Valley in past issues of the Victoria Naturalist or logged in the bird-sighting records program of the Royal B.C. Museum between 1979 and 1988. The combined data set is summarized as a monthly checklist, each month being represented by *probability of observation* of species. Sightings of irregular species between 1979 and 1988 are represented on the checklist by shading.

All irregular species for which records were actually searched in the Museum database (whether observed in the valley or not) are also presented in a separate table based on the actual frequency of sightings of these species. The values in that table represent the numbers of years (maximum 10) in which a sighting was recorded in that month. Most of these observations were in the area surveyed in

the 1992-93 inventory. Some, however, were more frequently reported from the area around the golf course adjacent to Blenkinsop Road: this is especially true of Yellow-headed Blackbirds and some owls.

The total number of species on the checklist is 160. Some species that were not reported in 1979-88 (and therefore not listed) have been observed in the last few years. These include Swainson's Hawk (1989 August), Sandhill Crane (1990 May), Long-eared Owl, Swamp Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow (the last three all seen in 1993 November). A total of at least 165 species have therefore been noted since 1979.

The checklist should provide a useful guide to the probability of seeing different species in the valley, though, of course, certain features of the 1992-93 year may not be replicated in the future. One is the abundance of Steller's Jays in the area that winter. Another is the severe cold spell during January, which led to the lake being frozen for a period of four weeks and resulted in the departure of most of the regular waterfowl. Other chance year-to-year variations are certainly embodied in the checklist.

In addition, it should be noted that not all species that were missed in the 1992-93 count were the subject of a Museum

file search. And some which were recorded only once or twice in the 1992-93 survey were also not searched because the card files for Grid 92B/6 (Victoria area) were too big to search in the time available. Included in these categories were Eurasian Widgeon, Canvasback, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Snipe, Olive-sided Flycatcher (missed in 1992-93).

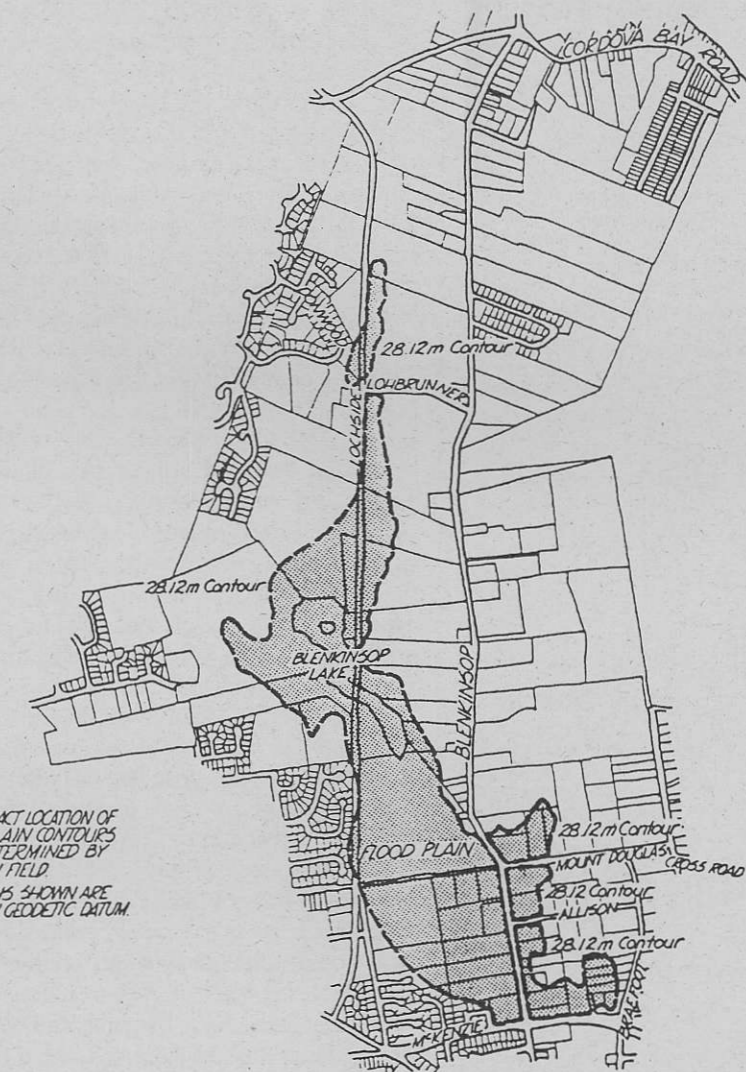
A separate table is provided showing the *numbers* of birds seen for each species during the regular weekly bird surveys of 1992-93. These data are expressed as the average number of birds seen per survey in each month. Because of limitations of space, the table is restricted to birds which were observed at least 5 times, on the average survey, in at least one month. These data provide some indication of abundance of bird life in a way that is not directly conveyed by the checklist. The larger numbers of most bird species during the autumn migration, compared to spring, is particularly evident.

## Highlights

The year's birding provided numerous highlights which made the long cold treks of winter all worthwhile in the end. These included:

- three fledgling Pied-billed Grebes seen regularly, with

## Blenkinsop Valley Location Map



NOTE: EXACT LOCATION OF FLOOD PLAIN CONTOURS TO BE DETERMINED BY SURVEY IN FIELD. ELEVATIONS SHOWN ARE BASED ON GEODETIC DATUM.



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# Bird Seed Preference Experiment

From the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Although millions of people feed their backyard birds, few have asked the birds what seeds they like best. This winter that's about to change, as the Cornell Lab of Ornithology enlists thousands of bird watchers in what may be the most widespread experiment ever conducted—the National Science Experiment Seed Preference Test.

The experiment is simple and anyone can participate. Here's how it works. On one or more days between November 1, 1993 and April 30 1994, volunteers will set three pieces of cardboard on the ground, place one kind of seed (black-oil sunflower, white millet or red milo) on each one, then record the kinds and numbers of birds that choose each seed type during a series of five-minute watches. Finally, they'll send their observations to the Lab of Ornithology for analysis.

Detailed instructions and data forms are contained in a \$7.00 kit supplied by the Lab, which helps to cover the costs of forms, data analyses, newsletters and postage. The kit also contains a full-colour bird identification poster painted by the noted artist Larry McQueen, showing about 40 common feeder

birds. And, the fee includes a one-year subscription to *Birdscope*, the Lab's newsletter, which will include reports on the experiment's findings.

"No single researcher or even a team of researchers could collect this volume of information," said Margaret Barker, Education Outreach Coordinator at the Lab of Ornithology. "We're hoping that at least 10,000 people in the United States and Canada will set up the seed preference experiment, learn to make scientific observations and help answer a question of interest to bird watchers and ornithologists alike."

Why does the Lab of Ornithology want to know what seeds birds prefer? Surprising as it may seem, no one has ever conducted bird-food preference studies on a large geographic scale. As a consequence, some "conventional wisdom" may be untrue.

Consider red milo. This large, round seed is usually considered a "filler" in most commercial bird-seed mixes, added to the mix for bulk and colour but largely ignored by the birds. But during the pilot study for the National Science Experiment, observers found red milo to be almost as tempting as sunflower seed for some birds in certain regions of the United States.

The National Science Experiment is real science. "We've designed the experiment to have as few variables as possible," said Rick Bonney, the Lab's Director of Education. "For example, the way that observers will count birds at their feeders is clearly spelled out."

Obtaining seeds for the study has also been addressed. U.S. participants who cannot find the necessary seeds locally will be able to purchase them at wholesale cost from Stanford Seed, which produces Lyric Wild Bird Food and is a project sponsor.

The Seed Preference Study is one of several National Science Experiments coordinated by the Lab of Ornithology and supported, in part, by the National Science Foundation. In other experiments, inner-city children are examining the effects of feather coloration on the success of street pigeons and advanced birders are studying the breeding success of tanagers in forests of different sizes.

"When the seed experiment is finished, ornithologists may know whether seed preferences differ by location, time of year, weather conditions or other factors," Barker said. "Equally as important, participants in the study will have learned about the process of scientific inquiry."

And the birds will finally get to vote with their beaks. People interested in the Seed Preference Experiment can join by sending \$7.00 (U.S. funds, made payable to Cornell Lab of Ornithology) to NSE/SPT, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850 or by calling 1-800-843-BIRD with a credit card number. For more information you can call Margaret Barker, Education Outreach Coordinator, or Patty Porupski, Program Assistant at (607) 254-2440.

## Thank You

I wish to thank all those VNHS members who helped with the Birds, Bees, Flowers, Trees Weekend Showcase at the Provincial Museum. Museum staff put on a great display and did a lot of work for this event. I would also like to thank the student volunteers from the University of Victoria's Biology Undergraduate Society for their hard work.

Bev Glover

# Magical Moments in Hawaii

By Gwennie Hooper

Introduced birds are common in Hawaii—Mynahs from India, House Sparrows and Skylarks from England, Ring-necked Pheasants from Asia—so it was especially thrilling to find four native birds on the slopes of Mount Haleakala in Maui. Our first were four Nene geese, tame, hoping for forbidden handouts, with ropelike ridges of feathers on their necks. They had a typical goose call but were far from water. In the shrubs nearby were Akepa, little warblers with yellow crowns and black through the eye. Lower down in a wooded gully was a brilliant red bird with a long, curved bill, the Liwi ("ee-ee-vee") and a gorgeous orange/vermillion jewel, the Apapane, also with a long, curved bill.

On the island of Hawaii we visited Halemaumau Crater in Volcanoes National Park. This huge circle of black lava cliffs was formed as recently as 1974 and had patches of yellow and white sulphur and impressive steam vents. ("Is this a crater that the Creator created?," quipped Gordon.) In this sterile vastness, as we choked on the gases, we saw a bird. A white bird, delicate, slim, narrow wings with black markings, yellow bill and an immensely long, narrow tail—a White-tailed Tropicbird. In all we saw five, flying round and round by a certain cliff

where gases spewed upwards. None of them appeared to be flycatching and it was fall, so they weren't nesting, so what were they doing in a recent volcano crater? We didn't know but seeing them was exciting.

As I look back though, a familiar bird stands out as one of the high spots. We were in Honolulu at the west end of Waikiki Beach with all its sky-scraping hotels. There's a small lagoon with a few trees on one side open for public bathing but too shallow for anyone but children. I noticed a shorebird on the beach and through binoculars saw it was an American Golden Plover. Just a small, frail-looking, inconspicuous bird. They sometimes migrate through Victoria. We'd seen them nesting at Old Squaw in the Northwest Territories and again on Herschel Island in the Arctic, and now here was this little bird that had flown much further than we had, without benefit of a Boeing 747, and was wintering in Hawaii. I can see how it could find its way down the coastline of North America or possibly by the east coast of Asia but how—and why—had it flown across the vast Pacific Ocean to find this speck of land? The bird book says they winter in Hawaii so they do the journey every year, north in the spring and south in the fall. It fills me with awe and amazement.

Just then a flock of white pigeons hastily took to the air. We looked up to see what had disturbed them and saw a big black bird with long stiff, elbowed wings and white chest. It grabbed something (a fish?) from another bird. A Great Frigatebird. An ocean bird a stone's throw from teeming Waikiki Beach. A magical moment indeed.

## Welcome to New Members

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Oct. 1 Todd Redding, of Pipeline Road: studies soil science, wildland conservation and vegetation ecology.</p> <p>Oct. 1 Chris Motherwell, of Humboldt Street.</p> <p>Oct. 1 Tyler Innes, of Collinson Street: is interested in nature and environmental concerns.</p> <p>Oct. 12 Joan McLellan, of Lincoln Road: is a birdwatcher.</p> <p>Oct. 12 Peter and Elizabeth Dodwell, of Waring Place: have a great love of the outdoors.</p> <p>Oct. 13 Eric Redekop, of Asquith Street: studies photography, botany and climatology.</p> <p>Oct. 13 Susan Lawrence, of Magnum Place: is involved in the identification and preservation of native species, native plant gardening, hiking and is the editor of <i>Hiking Trails 1</i>, a guide book.</p> <p>Oct. 23 Karen Hogg, of Brett Avenue: enjoys birdwatching and hiking.</p> <p>Oct. 28 Jim Fliczuk, of Queensbury Avenue: is a birder.</p> | <p>Oct. 28 Jean Anne Wightman, of Stannard Avenue: is active in Garry Oak meadow restoration.</p> <p>Oct. 30 Erling Friis-Baastad, of Langham Court.</p> <p>Oct. 30 Warren Lee, of Shelbourne Street.</p> <p>Nov. 1 Bill Scott, of Richardson Avenue.</p> <p>Nov. 10 Mrs. P. M. Sandham, of Courtland Avenue.</p> <p>Nov. 19 Ron and Anita Fownes, of Rithet Street: are birdwatchers.</p> <p>Nov. 19 Ruth Munn, of Falcon Heights Road: enjoys hiking, nature, birding and music.</p> <p>Nov. 24 Daryl Johnson, of Chippewa Road in Duncan: is interested in birds, botany and hiking.</p> <p>Nov. 24 Richard Sturney, of Festubert Street in Duncan.</p> <p>Nov. 24 Joe Girard, of Oakland Avenue: is involved in birding and conservation.</p> <p>Nov. 24 Ralph Currie, of Jura Road: is a birder.</p> <p>Nov. 27 Annette Parker, of Paul Kane Place: has a post graduate degree in botany.</p> |
|--|--|



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# Birding Games

By Keith Taylor

Birding has the potential of being the only sport/hobby that comprises both amateur and professional components; there are few recreations where each participant may have a complete individuality. Self-interests run from science to festivity—a long-term study within a narrow field of the habits of a specific species, migration counts of a genus, population and distribution studies, the pursuit of listing or just enjoying the song of some unnamed bird during a walk through the park. All birders, however, have one interest in common—listing—the drive to see a new species of bird! Some may be satisfied spending time watching their own bird-feeder, some a particular checklist area, while others wander the world in search of new species. No matter what category you may fall into, the key word to birding is “fun”—and an integral part is playing games.

Listing is usually the principle game. Take the Victoria checklist area as an example—Big Days: to observe as many species as possible in a 24-hour period; Year Lists: to see as many species within the Victoria checklist area as possible in one year; Lifetime Victoria Checklist—you get the picture. Other “listing games” have some scientific value (although the overlying interest is still to beat the other guys’ totals) like Christmas Counts and Breeding Bird Census’.

A lesser-known game that has been played among members of the birding fraternity is guessing the next species to be added to a particular list - the American Birding Association or A.B.A. (see

Birding, Vol. XX, Number 6, December, 1988), Canada, British Columbia or the Victoria Checklist. Although unofficially organized, friends in Victoria have challenged each other through the years as to what *that* new species would be. Although some knowledge of avifaunal distribution is needed to better the chances of guessing the next “new” species to be added to the Victoria Checklist, the choice is still just a guess and any novice birder has an equal chance. Knowing what extralimitals have occurred in Alaska and what species are expanding from the south, for example, will increase your chances of a correct guess. A non-migratory species from, say Florida, or a flightless rail from an isolated Pacific Island, or more seriously, a species from Asia, previously unrecorded from North America, would be poor choices. As a species must be confirmed before it is added to the Victoria Checklist (and to win the game), be aware of choosing species that are difficult to confirm such as Horned Puffin (which has been seen several times without confirmation; i.e., they seldom stay in one area long) or birds so shy they are seldom relocated, birds such as a Siberian Rubythroat.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s a long list of new birds were added to the Victoria Checklist as prior to these times there were few birders to cover the region thoroughly to find these expected species. Recently, however, with the ever-growing number of excellent birders continuing to inspect the checklist area so completely, the number of possibilities to be added to the checklist have dwindled dramatically. Even so, predictably there should be at least one or two new additions per year.

I put forward for consideration two official games: “Addition to the Victoria Checklist” and “Best Bird of the Year”. A small fee from each participant playing the “Addition to the Victoria Checklist” would purchase a plaque, a trophy, engraving

# Owling in Victoria: Etiquette and Techniques

By David Allinson

Owling is a wonderfully rewarding and challenging birding experience. This short article is in response to an increasing interest and enthusiasm by birders for observing owls. However, there are a number of guidelines one should follow to enhance the outing.

1. Owling is best just after dark or just before dawn.
2. Best months are between January and March, during the peak of the owl’s breeding season.
3. Keep in mind that we only see owls 15-20% of the time on owling trips, so be patient and persevere. Most often, one will only hear the owls due to their secretive nature.
4. Whilst walking around, avoid excessive flashlight use (but try not to walk into trees or over cliffs!). Let your eyes adjust to night vision. You’ll be surprised at how much you can see if you give your pupils a chance to acclimate to the darkness.
5. Keep talking to a minimum and avoid wearing “noisy” clothing (e.g., nylon jackets or jogging pants) because owling is very dependent on ear-birding techniques.
6. Use a tape recording of owl calls but keep its use to a minimum so as not to harass the owls. Owls are very territorial and can be distracted for hours long after you leave as they attempt to drive off the “intruder”. Mouse “squeaking”, by kissing the back of your hand, can also be very effective for bringing owls in close.

7. Avoid returning to the same location over and over in search of owls. There are a number of excellent locations in town to alternate between in order to give the owls a break. Locations like Beaver and Elk Lake Park, Thetis Lake, Durrance Lake, Freeman King Park, Goldstream Provincial Park and even Mount Douglas Park come to mind. Organized trips of groups of 2-6 people are best.

8. Turn off your flashlight while calling in owls. If an owl does indeed come in to your calling, aim the flashlight slightly off centre so as not to temporarily blind the bird!

9. Start off with the calls of smaller owls and work your way up in size if necessary. Starting off with a Barred Owl or Great Horned Owl will scare off the smaller owls they hunt.

10. When you are calling in owls, stand in a semi-circle and let your eyes scan open areas that has some sky in the background. Look for movement or dark silhouettes flying in to your location. Listen for branches creaking or bark cracking as owls are very silent flyers. After a few minutes, if you don’t see or hear anything, use your flashlight to scan the exposed branches (both close in and in the background) for round “blobs” that don’t quite look like leaves or branches. Binoculars can help by gathering light.

11. Learn the owl calls from tape recordings before you go out as this will improve your chances of seeing and identifying an owl.

David Allinson is Vice-President of the Victoria Natural History Society. He has a particular passion for both diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey.

plates and the cost of engraving the new checklist species and to win the “Best Bird of the Year” trophy. In addition, each engraved plate would record the species and the dates of observation. The plaque and trophy would be held by the winners until a new winner is found. If the best bird of the year were to be found by someone outside Victoria (i.e., Mongolian Plover) the trophy would be housed in a Victoria institution.

## RULES:

(1) Everyone would pay one dollar to play. The species chosen to be the new addition (to the checklist) by a game player must be retained until the next addition (species) is found. Only when a new addition is found can a player change his/her species choice, although a player can keep the same choice of species as long as they wish (i.e., until that species is found).

(2) When a new addition to the checklist is found, everyone must pay an additional dollar to continue playing. At that time if you decide to choose a new species an additional dollar must be paid to change your choice (i.e., \$ 2.00)(the additional money is needed to pay for engraving each time and to ensure enough money is gathered to pay for trophies).

(3) Any bird can be chosen including those already on the checklist as needing further verification (these birds are hypothetical sightings).

(4) As one species may be chosen by several individuals, you can change your choice if you desire within a short time limit, or keep your choice and share the trophy.

(5) Anyone can win the bird of the year trophy. If disputed, the bird of the year could be chosen by (perhaps) the records committee. If there are not enough funds to by a decent trophy and to engrave it, alternative funds may be sought.

(6) The trophy and plaque could be presented to winners at Birder’s Night, where details of “Best Bird of the Year” may be further discussed.

A few choices for addition to the checklist for those without their own:

- Black-footed Albatross
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Pink-footed Shearwater
- Rufous-necked Stint
- Ross’ Goose
- White-rumped Sandpiper
- Garganey
- Black Tern
- Smew
- Parakeet Auklet
- Black-shouldered Kite
- Horned Puffin
- Snowy Plover
- Three-toed Woodpecker
- Eurasian Dotterel
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher
- Spotted Redshank
- Scrub Jay
- Far Eastern Curlew
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Dusky Warbler
- Eye-browed Thrush
- Gray-cheeked Thrush
- White Wagtail

- Gray Catbird
- Yellow Wagtail
- American Redstart
- Yellow-breasted Chat
- Green-tailed Towhee
- Clay-colored Sparrow
- Rustic Bunting
- Great-tailed Grackle
- Lesser Goldfinch
- Common Rosefinch

Keith Taylor is a local wildlife artist and author of the recent book “A Birders Guide to British Columbia”. If you would like to participate in these contests send \$1 to Keith Taylor, 1559 Bay Street, Victoria, B.C. V8R 2B5 along with your choice, or see him at any Birder’s Night.

# Mount Norman Regional Park Opens

By Christine Morissette

Saturday, September 18th was a typical autumn day on Pender Island. The morning started out cool and quiet, the coastline shrouded in mist, but by noon the sun was shining strong, bringing gold and yellow and green together on the hills...a perfect day for the official opening of the Mount Norman Regional Park.

Mount Norman was established in 1988 as the first CRD Park in the Gulf Islands. Over the past five years - through community consultation, open houses, natural resource inventories and the development of a parks management plan - CRD Parks was able to protect and preserve Mount Norman’s natural resources.

The park encompasses over 100 hectares of mixed woodland and dense forest, bedrock outcrops, and dry hills. Despite selective logging that took place in 1985, Mount Norman remains an appealing natural parkland environment. It is home to a variety of wildflowers, such as Starflower, Western Columbine and Stonecrop; birds such as Sharp-shinned Hawk, Winter Wren and Chestnut-backed Chickadee; and trees such as Arbutus, Western Red Cedar and Douglas-fir. As time passes and the natural habitat is restored, many more plants and animals will return to this area.

Mount Norman’s landscapes and natural resources are protected for public enjoyment and recreation opportunities such as hiking, viewing, nature study and photography. The park also offers unique interpretive opportunities and park management challenges. Over time, you’ll be able to observe the recovery of an ecosystem after significant alteration by human activity. In the meantime, take the 30 minute hike to the summit and enjoy the spectacular views. Here at the top, you’ll recognize other nearby Gulf Islands and the distant San Juan Islands. On a clear day you can see the Coast Mountains on the BC mainland and the mountains of Vancouver Island. You’re standing on the edge of the world and the world is fading into the blue horizon.

To reach Mount Norman Regional Park, take the ferry from Swartz Bay to Otter Bay. Once on Pender Island, look for the signs to Bedwell Harbour. Follow Canal Road, turn right after the bridge and the road will lead you to the park entrance.



# Yellow Point at Risk

## A letter from Anne Erlebach

Dear Sirs:

It has come to my attention that the B.C. Ferry Corporation has selected Yellow Point (near Ladysmith on Vancouver Island) as a possible site for the development of a new ferry terminal. This will also entail putting in a four lane highway that will run directly through property owned by the Hill family who are proprietors of Yellow Point Lodge. Many other inns, such as the Inn of the Sea, will also be negatively affected, a fact of which I am sure the proponents of this development are well aware.

There are a number of practical reasons why Yellow Point would be unsuitable for the new terminal. These include:

1. Longer sailing time (16km+).
2. Expensive to develop. There is no fresh water available at Yellow Point.
3. Dangerous. Poirer Pass, through which the ferries must navigate, is known to have unpredictable and dangerous tidal currents.

In addition, I would like to bring to your attention the following considerations:

1. Tourism will be virtually eliminated. No one wants to vacation near a ferry terminal. Yellow Point enjoys a successful tourist trade all year round. People visit it from all over the world and you can be sure there is no place quite like it. Its uniqueness brings people back again and again. The people who live there will lose their livelihood. Some of them have been carrying on the family business for generations.
2. Rare species of plants will be destroyed. The proposed development will be directly through acreage that has been protected and nourished. Opportunities to study rare plants will vanish.
3. Animals and aquatic life make Yellow Point home. Visitors enjoy seeing sea lions, seals, otters, eagles as well as a multitude of birds. This is a bird watchers' paradise. In addition, there is a salmon run nearby and a breathtaking herring run every spring.

From an historical perspective, Yellow Point has enjoyed significant notoriety. A man by the name of Gerry Hill, whose biography *Custodian of Yellow Point* (by author Marilyn McCrimmon and published in 1991) and whose taped interview are in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, developed a lasting legacy to British Columbia by building Yellow Point Lodge which has become legendary, almost myth-like, because of its rich history. Through Gerry Hill's pioneer efforts to preserve this area, countless people have achieved and enjoyed a greater understanding and awareness of B.C.'s fragile coast.

If the B.C. Ferry Corporation destroys Yellow Point, and there is no way to avoid this if a ferry terminal is built here, then they will be destroying the legend of Yellow Point, an integral part of the rich natural history and

heritage of British Columbia. For more information, contact the *Friends of Yellow Point*, an organization dedicated to preservation of the Point.

I ask that serious consideration be given to the foregoing and that an alternative site for this terminal be found.

*Copies of this letter were also sent by the writer to Premier Harcourt, Glen Clark, Minister of Employment and Investment, Moe Sihota, Minister of Environment, and Gretchen Brewin, Mayor's Committee, NDP Caucus.*

## Survey Shows Strong Support for CRD Parks

By Christine Morissette

Capital Regional District Parks (CRD Parks) recently released the results of a Householder Survey undertaken in late 1992. The survey, distributed to nearly 4000 homes, was designed to obtain residents' ideas, opinions and use of CRD Parks; the findings will be used for future planning, management and development.

An overwhelming 92% of respondents stated that outdoor recreation was important to them, compared to other interests; the same number stated that a natural environment was important for them in outdoor recreation. Sixty-five percent of respondents visited a CRD Park in 1992.

Survey results indicated strong support for the purpose of CRD Parks, as well as for funding, public nature education programs and park facilities and services:

- 90% of respondents agreed with the natural environment conservation and outdoor recreation roles of CRD Parks;
- 70% said they would support an increase in municipal taxes to protect more regional parkland;
- 81% said CRD Parks' public nature education programs are important;
- 68% said they were satisfied with CRD Parks' facilities and services.

Respondents expressed a desire for more public participation in decision-making and planning. They also identified a number of priorities for CRD Parks to address over the next five years. The main priorities included:

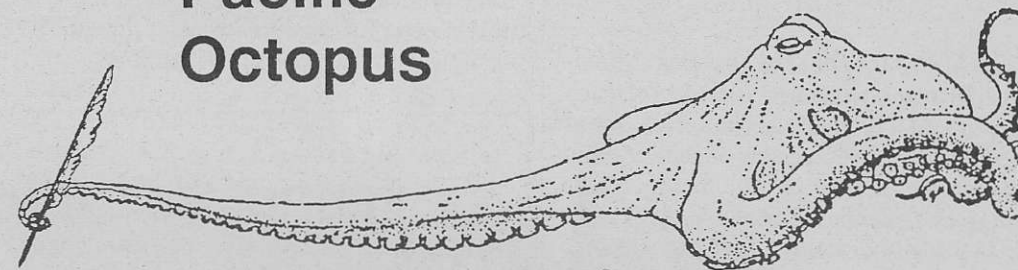
- Natural environment conservation and protection;
- acquisition of more parkland, with an emphasis on wilderness, beach and coastline settings (respondents mentioned Tod Inlet, the Gowlland Range and East Point Lighthouse as three areas needing immediate attention); and,
- Provision of a regional cycle path.

Based on the results of the survey, the CRD Parks Committee endorsed a number of recommendations. These include the development of a protected natural environment strategy, a public information strategy, a park policy which includes maintenance of ecological integrity, and the acquisition of more parkland.

For information on these and other recommendations arising from the 1992 CRD Parks Householder Survey, please contact Jeff Ward, CRD Parks Planner, at 478-3344.

*Christine Morissette is Information Coordinator for CRD Parks.*

## Pacific Octopus



By Lynton Burger

### Marine Protected Areas

Less than one tenth of one percent! That is how much area British Columbians have set aside of their marine environment.

### Why Do We Need to Set Aside Marine Protected Areas?

There are several very important reasons why. Firstly, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are needed to preserve representative portions of our unique west coast marine ecosystems. Protecting marine ecological integrity by having areas of "no take" in turn helps preserve biodiversity as well as to preserve individual species.

So, MPAs benefit the marine environment but how does this help us humans. The most obvious answers are: recreation; economic benefits from eco-tourism (one of the fastest growing industries in the world today); educational benefits; and other, harder-to-measure, aesthetic and spiritual benefits (just having marine or underwater place to go that is pure and unspoiled). However, not many people realise that MPAs can play an important and positive role in fisheries management too. Fishermen are easily upset by closures that arise as a result of MPAs being implemented. Rightly so, since it would appear that their livelihood is being threatened. Well, the truth is, MPAs have been shown in several parts of the world (e.g., Florida in the US, Tsitsikamma in South Africa, The Great Barrier Reef in Australia) to actually have a positive and beneficial effect on local fisheries. The logic is simple: fish stocks, particularly reef species with relatively small home ranges (like our rockfish), begin to recover in the closed area. The proportion of large, breeding individuals in the population increases as time goes by. Almost all commercial fish species in the world are broadcast spawners (i.e., they release their eggs/sperm into the water column where the ensuing larvae/juveniles are dispersed by currents), so when they spawn their offspring are carried out of the MPA. The end result — better recruitment in the fishery. This same principle holds true for many commercial invertebrate species (e.g., crabs, abalone and other shellfish).

### Marine Conferences in 1994

There are two important conferences coming up next year that will address marine issues and in particular the whole idea of establishing Marine Protected Areas. The first is the 2nd International Conference on Science and the Management of Protected Areas - Ecosystem Monitoring and Protected Areas. This conference will be held at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia between 16 and 20 May 1994. If you require more information contact me at 383-4535 or by contacting Mr. Neil Munro, Parks Canada in Halifax (fax number: 902-426-7012).

The second conference is also in Nova Scotia. Coastal

Zone Canada '94 will be held from the 20-23 September 1994 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This conference has a session dedicated to conservation of the coastal environment. For more details phone (902) 429-9497 or fax (902) 429-9491.

### First Annual Lingcod Nest Census

Birders beware, the divers are catching on! The Marine Life Sanctuaries Society (MLSS) of British Columbia is getting together the first annual lingcod nest count. Modelled on the successful annual Christmas Bird Count, the idea is for divers throughout the province to make a note of lingcod egg masses they encounter on one particular day during the coming spawning season. This project is still being set-up so it's not too late to get involved. For more information you can contact the MLSS at (604) 929-4131.

Lingcod stocks in many areas have been in decline for a number of years. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has implemented measures such as reduced bag limits and spawning season closures in an effort to reverse this trend. Potentially, a lingcod nest census would help assess populations of this valuable species.

### THE OCTOPUS IN 1994

During 1994, the octopus hopes to take a look at male pregnancy in the bay pipefish (sometimes mistaken for juvenile *Cadborosaurus*) and murrelets that feed underwater in the sea and then fly miles with one fish to feed their young inland. We'll also keep up with the developments on the Marine Protected Areas front and take a look at ducks that spend their whole lives underwater.

## WHALE HOTLINE



harbour porpoise



Dall's porpoise

Report marine mammal sightings and strandings to:

380-1925 in the Victoria area  
On the water: VHF channel 68 to the vessel *Sundiver*

1-800-665-5939 toll-free anywhere in B.C.

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.

## CALENDAR

**REGULAR 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. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

## JANUARY EVENTS

**Tuesday, January 4**

**Board of Directors' Meeting.** Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Note that Parking Lot "A" by the Cunningham Building no longer exists.

**Tuesday, January 11**

**VNHS General Meeting.** Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Dave Nagorsen of the Royal British Columbia Museum will present the slide-illustrated talk *Bats: Creatures of the Night*.

**Sunday, January 16**

**New Year Birding at Martindale Flats.** Come and kick-start your year list at one of the most productive winter sites in all of Canada. Great numbers of waterfowl are attracted here, as are birds of prey and songbirds. Leader TBA at press time but meet at the old Farmer's Market at the corner of Island View Beach Road and the Pat Bay Hwy at 9:00 a.m. for this morning trip.

**Tuesday, January 18**

**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. The featured speaker will be announced on the VNHS Events Tape (479-2054).

**Wednesday, January 26**

**Birders Night.** Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Rob Butler of the Canadian Wildlife Service in Delta will present a slide illustrated talk on *Shorebird Migration and Shorebird Banding Opportunities for the VNHS*. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend, a coffee mug and your binoculars.

**Saturday, January 29**

**Victoria Owling Trip No.1.** Join Darren Copley on the first of two evening jaunts in search of our nocturnal predators. Owls begin breeding early and are quite active and vocal at this time of year. These trips will be designed to introduce to rarely seen and usually heard-only species such as Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl and Western Screech Owl. In order to minimize our impact on these birds, the two trips will be limited to only 12 participants and will begin at 8:45 p.m. The location may vary depending on conditions and will be decided closer to the

trip date. Probable locations include the Munn Road-Prospect Lake area or Goldstream Provincial Park. Consult the article in this issue for tips on "owling etiquette." Pre-register your name with David Allinson at 380-8233.

## FEBRUARY EVENTS

**Tuesday, February 1**

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

**Saturday, February 5**

**Birding at Whiffen Spit and Sooke Basin.** The waters near Sooke are home to many waterfowl and seabird species during the winter months. Birds like Pacific Loon, Barrow's Goldeneye and Eurasian Widgeon are regularly recorded here and rarities like Emperor Goose and Glaucous Gull are always possible. Leader TBA at press time but meet at the Whiffen Spit parking lot in Sooke at the end of Whiffen Spit Road, off Sooke Road (Hwy #14) at 9:00 a.m.

**Tuesday, February 8**

**Annual Banquet.** This year the banquet will be held at the Ballroom of the Princess Mary Restaurant. Happy hour begins at 6:00 p.m. with a buffet dinner served at 6:30 p.m. There will be ample choice for vegetarian and non-vegetarian alike. Get your tickets early. Cost is \$20 per person (GST included). Tickets are available from Freda Woodworth (382-6693) or Beth Chatwin (592-5346).

We are pleased to have **Sid Cannings** of the Conservation Data Centre as our banquet speaker. He will present a slide illustrated talk on the natural history of Costa Rica.

**Tuesday, February 15**

**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. The featured speaker will be announced on the VNHS Events Tape (479-2054).

**Saturday, February 19**

**Victoria Owling Trip No. 2.** Our second trip of the season will seek out our secretive and fascinating nocturnal predators. See details from the Saturday, January 29 trip announcement above. Pre-register with leader David Allinson (380-8233) as there will be a limit of **only 12 participants**. Location TBA but we will probably go to either Durrance Lake or the Prospect Lake-Munn Road area. The trip will begin at 9:00 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 23**

**Birders Night.** Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Robert Ward of Victoria, an accomplished bird photographer, will take us on a photographic tour of the *Birds and Birding in Hawaii...a great way to escape the February winter*. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend, a mug and your binoculars.

## MARCH EVENTS

**Wednesday, March 23**

**Birders Night.** Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Calvor Palmateer of Victoria will present a slide-illustrated talk on *The Western Bluebird of Vancouver Island: its past, present and future*. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend, a mug and your binoculars.


## BULLETIN BOARD

**Reminder!**

The Swan Lake Nature Centre holds birding walks regularly on Wednesdays and Sundays at 9:00 a.m. Everyone is welcome to join in.

**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 Available for sale: National Geographic's *Field Guide to Birds*; the *Naturalist Guide to the Victoria Region*; *Birds of Vic-*



A BIRDERS  
GUIDE TO  
**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**  
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- \* Checklists and maps
- \* Species Index

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330 pages

\* Loop trips connecting all of British Columbia's outstanding birding destinations with exact kilometrage.

\* Directions for finding all of the regularly occuring species and "specialties" of the province.

Also available: "A Birders Guide to Thailand"  
"A Birders Guide to Costa Rica"  
"A Birders Guide to Vancouver Island"

Pick-up your copy at :

**The Field-Naturalist, 1241 Broad Street**

*toria*; the Victoria Area Bird Checklist; and, the new Victoria Natural History Society's Window Decals.

**Back Issues of the Victoria Naturalist**

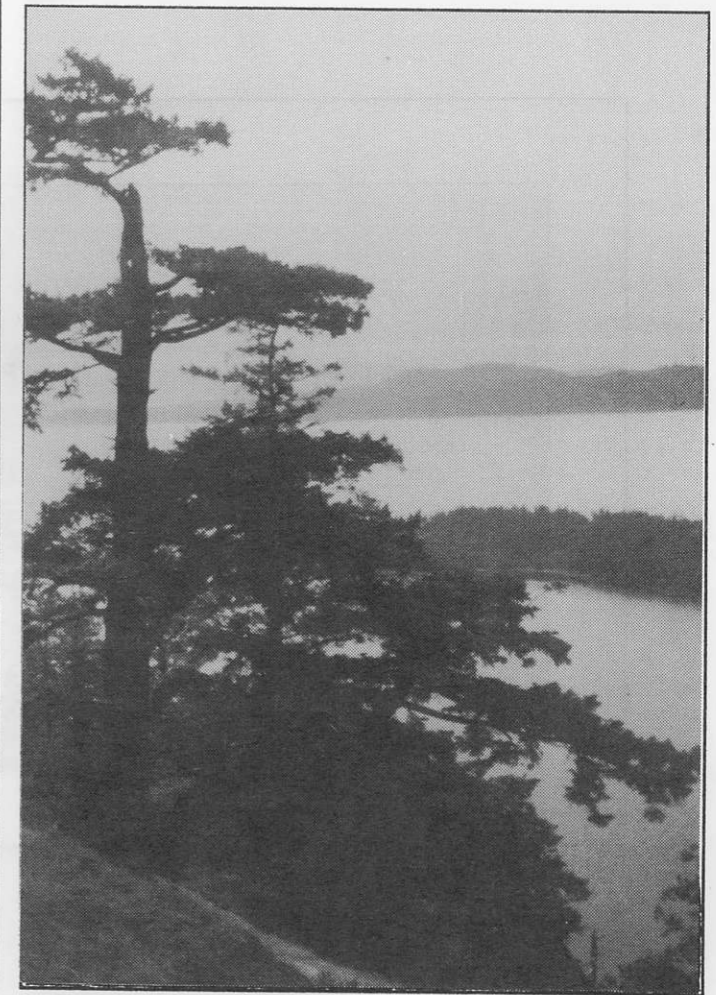
Copies of back issues and indices of the Victoria Naturalist are available from **Tom Gillespie** (361-1694).

**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**

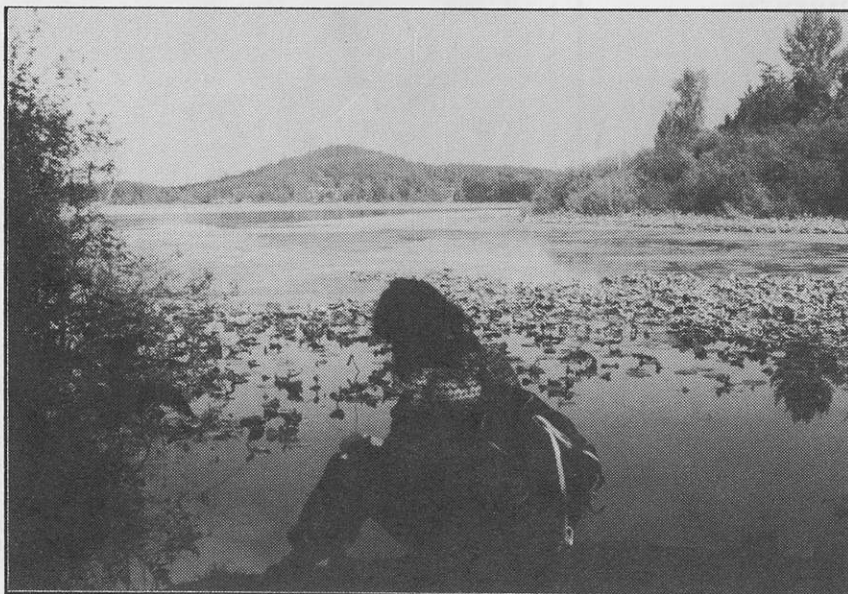
Explore British Columbia's marine bio-diversity at the Cowichan Bay Maritime Centre. Life exhibits of B.C. sea life can be seen under microscopes and in live video displays. There are also programs available for schools, camps, naturalists and educators. The Centre is located on the water at 1761 Cowichan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



Mount Norman, northwest view (Photo: Christine Morissette).

FEES ARE  
DUE DEC. 31

James A. Rainer,  
5229 Sonora Drive,  
NORTH VANCOUVER,, B.C., V7R 3V7



Pond Lilies  
and Bear Hill –  
Photo: Christine  
Morissette.