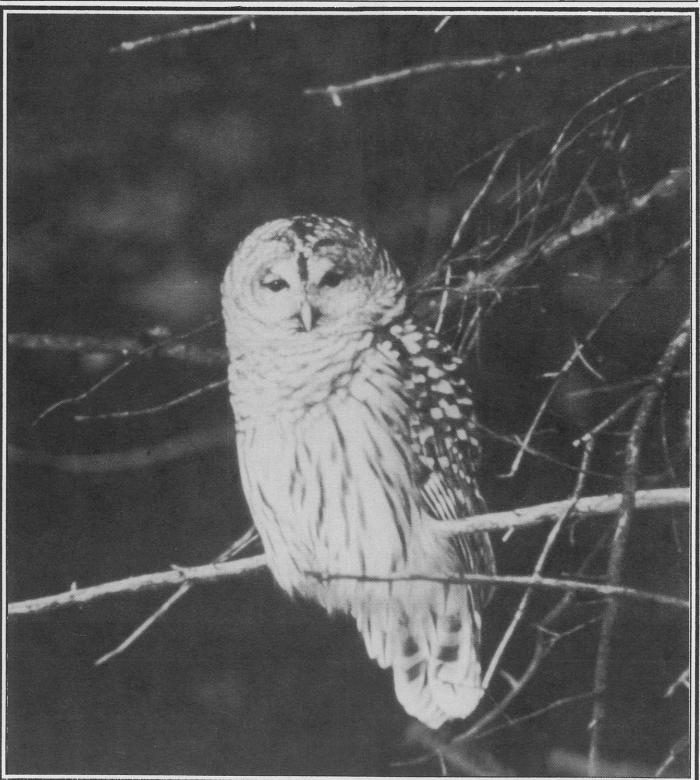


# The Victoria NATURALIST

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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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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# **Our Cover**

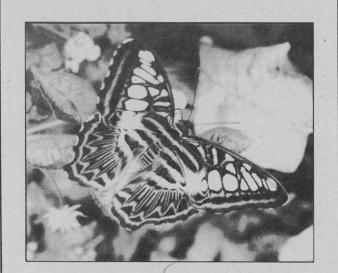
Our cover this issue features a Barred Owl, photographed at Witty's Lagoon by David Allinson, vice president of the Victoria Natural History Society. David has a special passion for both diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey.

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

If you would like some first-hand experience locating noturnal 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 DavidAllison 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

NHS 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.

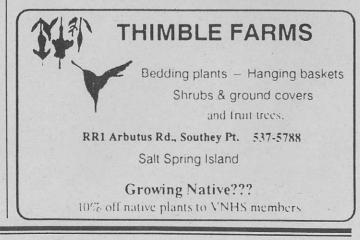
In the construction of a checklist, the data from the weekly surveys were supplemented by other observations in the valley made beyond the geographic limits of the regular weekly survey, as well as by sightings within the regular count area but by other observers. Additional mid-week mini-surveys within 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

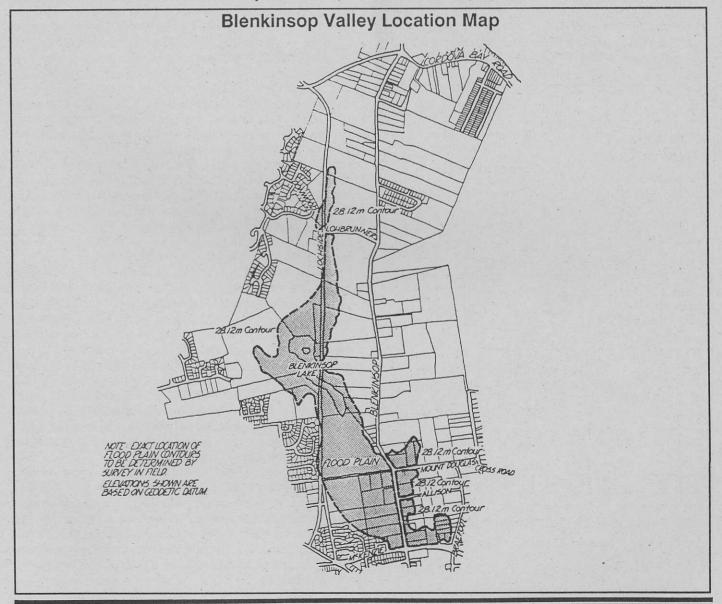
file search. And some which were recorded only once or twice in the 1992-93 survey were also not searched because the card files for Grid 92B/6 (Victoria area) were too big to search in the time available. Included in these categories were Eurasian Widgeon, Canvasback, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Snipe,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

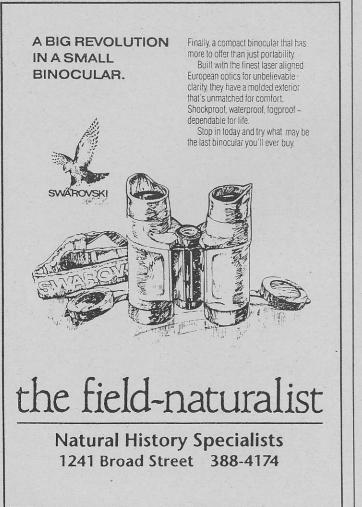
The year's birding provided numerous highlights which made the long cold treks of winter all worthwhile in the end. These included:

• three fledgling Pied-billed Grebes seen regularly, with



parent, on the lake June 7-27; no grebes were seen during the spring of 1993;

- fleeting glimpses around the lake of one or two Greenbacked Herons through the spring of 1992 followed by discovery of three fledglings in the first few days of flight on July 26; at least one pair and a separate bird were seen regularly during the spring of 1993;
- a Cattle Egret wandering around a paddock in October 1992, finally being chased away by the horses and alighting on a pile of rubber tires; another was seen in late October 1993 (ET);
- a very small, immature Greater White-fronted Goose, believed to be of the tundra race, which arrived at the Marley's Farm on the south east side of the lake in fall migration and which stayed through the winter until the last week of April;
- a male Ruddy Duck in full breeding plumage on the lake on May 11;
- a brood of four fledgling Cooper's Hawks, first seen in the woods of Faithwood and Broadmead on the west side of the valley on July 26, of which several were seen hunting over the Blenkinsop Valley through the winter;
- an unusual pair of Red-tailed Hawks nesting at the top of a tall fir tree in a copse on the east side of the valley, first seen in May of 1992, and then repeatedly through



the year. The female was a classic western subspecies but the male was extremely pale (with whitish tail) and thought to be dominantly Krider's in genetic makeup. Two young were fledged in 1992, and two more in 1993. Interestingly, the two young looked quite different, resembling their contrasting parents. First signs of nest rebuilding in 1993 were noted on January 9; mating was observed (by ET) on March 10; first signs of young in the nest were noted on May 10; an Osprey, seen on two occasions during May, hovering over the lake and fishing successfully;

- a Northern Saw-whet Owl, first seen roosting by DA on February 16, and seen several times between then and March 12, by the irrigation ramp boards on the northeast side of the lake; the Long-eared Owl found in November 1993 was roosting in the same tree;
- a Western Kingbird seen flycatching over the fields from a snag on the trail in May and an American Tree Sparrow hawking over the lake edge in November; at least two Eastern Kingbirds were seen in June 1993, but none in the 12 months of survey;
- a Yellow-headed Blackbird seen with Brown-headed Cowbirds around horses in the paddocks east of the southern part of the lake on August 21: two more were reported in May 1993 (RBA) in the vicinity of the golf course on Blenkinsop Road.

# Use of the valley by birdlife -Waterfowl and marsh birds

The lake is a haven for waterfowl during both migrations and throughout the winter. Although Mallards may number more than 300 at the end of winter (and constitute almost 90% of the waterfowl at that time), the lake is a significant overwintering area for several other species, especially Ring-necked Ducks (with flocks up to 50 birds) and Hooded and Common Mergansers. The lake is rich in fish, mostly introduced catfish and sunfish (Hardy, 1956) and especially pumpkinseed sunfish (Fisheries Branch, 1982), attracting nonbreeding Double-crested Cormorants in the spring and Belted Kingfishers from Cordova Bay at all times of the year.

The deserted appearance of the lake in late spring is misleading as male Wood Ducks, in their magnificent breeding plumage, glide in and out of the water lilies. The nesting status of the Wood Ducks is uncertain. No juveniles have been seen and most birds appear to be unattached males. Nesting boxes erected in 1984 were found to be largely in a state of disrepair and six new boxes were installed by the Society on the northern part of the lake in March, 1993.

A pair of Green-backed Herons nested in 1992 and at least one pair was resident in the summer of 1993. Great Blue Herons are found throughout the year but no breeding adults have been noted. A pair of Mute Swans nested by the edge of the seed orchard in the 1980s (Marley, 1993).

The status of Sora and Virginia Rail is unclear. Neither responded to taped calls during spring 1993 but the high lake water made access to the shoreline difficult in many places and only a small percentage of the periphery was examined. Museum records show observations in up to four of the years 1979-88. One bird, thought to be a Virginia Rail, was very briefly seen after having been flushed from one area of water lilies into another during July 1992.

#### Raptors

The valley is an excellent area for almost all raptors found in southern Vancouver Island, with regular visits by Merlin during fall migration and by Peregrine Falcon (light-phase, presumed to be anatum subspecies) and Sharp-shinned Hawk in the winter. Red-Tailed Hawk and Cooper's Hawk were resident all year in the valley. A Northern Harrier was seen flying over the valley on two occasions but none were seen hunting in the area.

#### Shorebirds

Killdeer are common (and nest) in the fields but, in general, the valley is not a good area for shorebirds. The steep lake edge is masked by water lilies and cat-tails, with little habitat for small waders. Flooded fields near the lake are reported to be good areas for shorebirds in spring migration (especially in 1984-86) but few were seen in 1992-93, a period which was characterized by an unusually dry winter and early spring. The exception was a pair of Spotted Sandpipers seen several times in the last few weeks of May and thought to be nesting. Common Snipe was seen on only one occasion.

The open fields, and especially over the lake, are excellent areas for all swallow species, although Bank Swallow and Purple Martin have only been reported in migration. Tree Swallows appear to be more common here than in many areas of the Saanich Peninsula, especially in 1993, and a pair is believed to have nested in the Wood-Duck nesting box opposite the VNHS viewing blind. The blind is an ideal spot for viewing swallows, especially on overcast days.

#### Other passerines

The hedgerows flanking the trail to the lake, and the riparian thickets around the lake, are rich in small birds during migration and, to a lesser extent, during the summer. Of the warblers, only Yellow Warblers (about 8 singing males), a few pairs of Orangecrowned Warblers and Common Yellowthroats (the latter more common in the riparian thickets) appear to have nested in 1992 and 1993. The nesting status of Warbling Vireo, seen frequently during late summer 1992, is unclear: two singing birds of this species were seen in the more wooded part of Lochside Trail north of Lohbrunner in June, 1993. The trail is well-known for the song of the Black-headed Grosbeak throughout the latter half of May and into June. At least six males were regularly seen on the trail or flying across the lake. A pair of House Wrens also nested on the trail in 1992 and two were seen at the same site the following year. Other more common species use the trail for breeding, including Brown-headed Cowbirds.

#### Comparison with 1940s survey

The survey reported by Hardy (1956) covered the period 1945-1950 and involved surveys conducted once a week. The total number of species seen at that time was 110. This compares with 128 species seen during the 1992-93 survey.

The longer duration of Hardy's survey might be expected to have resulted in the sighting of a greater number of rare or irregular species than was recorded in the one-year VNHS survey. However, while there were 23 species observed by Hardy that were not seen in the VNHS survey, there were 41 species observed in the 1992-93 survey that were not observed by Hardy.

Among those that were observed by Hardy but not

recorded in 1992-93, many have presumably disappeared with the change in habitat. The exact land use at the time of the 1940s survey was, however, not detailed by Hardy. The main pattern of fields appears to have been the same as today, although Hardy mentions extensive logging (in the early 1950s) on the north and west side of the lake. Hardy also mentions the removal of "islands" of old tree cover that formed part of the fields as late as the 1940s. The old railway (the bed of which now forms Lochside Trail) was discontinued about 1934, though the trestle was not dismantled until 1956.

Species that may have disappeared (or at least decreased in numbers since Hardy's survey) because of the change in habitat include: Blue Grouse and Ruffed Grouse (both rare in 1940s); Western Screech Owl (seen by Hardy in woods that were subsequently logged, and reported since only infrequently); Lewis' Woodpecker (apparently not seen by Hardy but

# Blenkinsop Trail - Lake Survey (June 1992 May 1993)

		J	J	Α	s	0	N	D	J	F	М	A	М
	Pied-Billed Grebe	3	2	- 1	6	- 5	3	0	0	0	0	1	C
	Canada Goose	1	0	26	21	91	49	42	28	2	20	5	3
ı	Wood Duck	3	7	9	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
ı	Green-winged Teal	0	- 0	0	5	13	5	0	0	2	1	. 0	C
	Mallard	21	47	28	19	147	131	208	93	316	268	35	11
	Northern Pintail	0	0	0	2	16	0	0	1	1	0	0	C
	Northern Shoveler	. 0	0	0	0	0	5	6	0	0	0	1	C
	Gadwall	0	0	0	1	3	7	8	1	0	0	0	C
	American Wigeon	0	0	0	7	48	15	15	63	51	8	5	C
ı	Ring-necked Duck	0	0	0	0	28	14	37	3	30	24	0	1
	Hooded Merganser	0	0	0	0	1	7	18	3	10	2	0	(
ı	Common Merganser	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	2	7	6	1	(
ı	California Quall	. 2	5	12	6	1	_ 1	3	0	2	3	4	3
	Killdeer	2	2	2	2	7	1	12	3	6	4	3	
i	Mew Gull	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	. (
e.	California Gull	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	(
Ę	Glaucous-wi Gull	. 8	3	4	4	12	24	35	19	16	13	26	7
i	Rock Dove	0	22	11	0	13	15	2	8	1	6	2	6
i	Band-tailed Pigeon	7	0	2	8	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	
ī	Rufous Hummingbird	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	7
ı	Northern Flicker	0	0	0	8	6	4	2	1	2	1	0	
ì	Tree Swallow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	:
	Violet-gr Swallow	28	19	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	36	7
	Barn Swallow	14	16	21	6	0	0	- 0	0	0	. 0	5	14
	Steller's Jay	0	0	1	7	3	3	4	3	4	6	7	. (
	Northwest Crow	7	13	15	19	30	23	14	6	7	9	6	-(
	Chestnut- Chickadee	2	6	3	2	5	2	1	2	3	4	3	:
	Bushtit	4	13	2	0	6	8	0	1	8	5	3	. ;
	Bewick's Wren	1	4	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	6	8	(
	Golden-cr Kinglet	0	0	0	0	5	9	4	4	4	1	1	(
	American Robin	9	15	11	33	47	68	19	34	27	54	25	23
	American Pipit	0	0	0	8	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Cedar Waxwing	1	5	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	:
	European Starling	6	4	13	66	46	124	19	81	42	96	22	10
	Yellow warbler	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9
ij	Black-head Grosbeak	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Rufous-sided Towhee	2	5	4	5	9	10	5	4	5	7	6	
	Savannah Sparrow	0	1	2	9	7	0	0	0	0	0	5	
	Fox Sparrow	0	0	0	1	4	8	3	2	1	2	2	(
	Song Sparrow	11	10	3	7	13	11	11	7	8	11	10	13
	White-cr Sparrow	2	1	1	3	8	1	1	0	0	0	4	
	Golden-cr Sparrow	0	0	0	6	23	18	15	12	7	4.	5	
	Dark-eyed Junco	0	0	0	0	12	17	7	3	4	2	1	. (
	Red-wing Blackbird	- 4	4	8	16	22	4	5	18	5	14	7	1:
	Brewer's Blackbird	1	2	0	5	26	33	54	5	0	1	4	
	Brown-head Cowbird	6	10	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
	Purple Finch	1	2	0	1	5	0	1	0	0	0	2	
	House Finch	2	8	8	7	8	14	11	3	2	6	3	
	Pine Siskin	1	2	1	0	32	40	0	0	0	0	3	1
	American Goldfinch	5	9	7	12	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	
	House Sparrow	3	9	4	2	1	- 0	2	2	2	4	3	
	suos oparion												

reported in the 1920s); Olive-sided Flycatcher (frequently found singing from tree tops and apparently nesting in the valley in the 1940s); and, Eurasian Skylark (last reported in 1980) and Western Meadowlark (both common in the 1940s in fields close to the lake). Chipping Sparrow (reported by Hardy as a common summer resident in the open oak glades) was not observed during our 12-month survey but two were seen in July, 1993 in the trail hedgerow, presumably in post-breeding dispersal.

Others recorded by Hardy, but not in 1992-93, may have become more infrequent in the valley simply because of the overall decrease in numbers on southern Vancouver Island. These include: Redhead (seen eight times by Hardy but not in 1979-88); American Kestrel (seen in autumn migration but only three times in 1979-88); Sora (reported by Hardy to be a regular visitor to the lily pads but seen in only half the years 1979-88); and, Western Bluebird (seen during migration in the open fields but not in 1979-88).

Others seen by Hardy but not in 1992-93 were: Redbreasted Merganser (occasional winter visitor); Golden Eagle and Rough-legged Hawk (2 sightings); Herring Gull (occasionally in flocks with Glaucous-winged Gull); Mourning Dove (including the first nesting record for Vancouver Island); Short-eared Owl (in migration); Common Nighthawk, Black Swift and Purple Martin (seen once or twice in migration); Northern Shrike (seen twice in early spring); and, Red Crossbill (seen once). Most of these have been reported by others during 1979-88 and a pair of Common Nighthawks was seen in July, 1993. The lack of observation by us in the 1992-93 survey is thought to be mostly chance and not a reflection of a long term decrease in numbers.

Some of those seen in 1992-93 but not by Hardy may also be simply a matter of chance: a Common Loon high overhead in May, 1993; Eurasian Widgeon; Spotted Sandpiper; Thayer's Gull; Northern Pygmy Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl; Vaux's Swift; Bank Swallow; Black-throated Grey Warbler; American Tree Sparrow; and Yellow-headed Blackbird. In most cases only a single sighting was made of these species in 1992-93. Thayer's Gull was given separate species status in 1973 and was previously designated Herring Gull (which was observed by Hardy).

Other species seen in 1992-93 but not in the 1940s survey appear to reflect increased numbers on Vancouver Island generally and in some cases actual range expansions. These include: Cattle Egret; Green-backed Heron; Mute Swan; Blue-winged Teal and Cinnamon Teal; Gadwall; Osprey; Bald Eagle; Peregrine Falcon; California Gull; Rock Dove; Great Horned Owl; Anna's Hummingbird; House Wren and Marsh Wren; European Starling; Lincoln's Sparrow; Brown-headed Cowbird; House Finch and House Sparrow.

The lack of sightings of some of the birds of prey in the 1940s may have several explanations. Gates (1993) points out that birds of prey were probably much less abundant in the 1940s because of shooting by game wardens and others. Taylor (1993) suggests that the appearance of Peregrine Falcon in the valley may be related to increased numbers of ducks and that increased observation of Great Horned Owl today may reflect introduction on southern Vancouver Island of the Eastern Cottontail Rabbit in the 1960s.

There are some species which were absent from Hardy's survey that are difficult for us to explain. These include the

Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Fox Sparrow and Song Sparrow. All were seen frequently during 1992-93. In the case of the sparrows, at least, it is difficult to believe that lack of records in the 1940s survey is simply a reflection of the inferior optics and field guides at that time.

#### Endnote

It is hoped that this survey will be useful to local birders in their future treks in the valley and that it will stimulate similar surveys in other sensitive areas. Another year-long survey has recently been initiated for Rithet's Bog in Saanich.

The present survey perhaps simply confirms what most local birders already know: that the Blenkinsop Lake area is an outstanding region of varied birding habitat. There are not many one-kilometre, non-coastal walks in Greater Victoria that can muster over 50 species in spring and 30 species on a frigid winter's day.

Some of the regular species noted above are not frequently found elsewhere in the Greater Victoria region. These include Green-backed Heron and Black-headed Grosbeak, while breeding records for Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck and Spotted Sandpiper are also believed to be relatively few in the Victoria area.

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#### Acknowledgements

More than half the regular surveys undertaken in 1992-93 were done with Gordon Hart who added an important element of credibility to the work by providing ears as well as many years of birding experience. Thanks are also due to many others who assisted in these surveys: Jerry and Gladys Anderson; Brent Beech; Tony Embleton; Tom Gillespie; Doreen Loosmore and Morwyn Marshall; Mike McGrenere; Flo Pikula and Ellen Tremblay (ET).

RBA denotes the VNHS Rare Bird Alert. David Allinson (DA) and Flo Pikula provided Christmas and Spring Bird Count data for the southern and northern parts of the valley.

Access to the bird-sighting card files of the RBC Museum was facilitated by Wayne Campbell, Michael McNall and Michael Shepherd. Acknowledgement is also accorded to all the participants of the carding program whose observations are used in this report.

Bryan Gates is thanked for his thorough review of an earlier draft. Keith Taylor provided helpful comment on changes in species presence since the 1940s survey.

Darren Copley organized and undertook much of the work involved in the construction and installation of the Wood Duck nesting boxes.

Michael Carson is a member of the Parks and Conservation Committee of VNHS.

# Blenkinsop Valley Bird Checklist

# 1992-93 probability of observation

- 5 greater than 95%
- 4 . 65% to 95
- 3 35% to 65%
- 2 5% to 35%
- 1 less than 5%
- no observations

1979-1988 records

# Nesting status

? identification uncertain

\* proven

? suspected

Ruddy Duck

# J F M A M J J A S O N D

						1							
	Common Loon					1					-		
	Pied-billed Grebe				4	1	5	4	2	5	5	5	2
	Double-cr Cormorant			1	4	3		1		1	1	2	
	American Bittern												
,	Great Blue Heron	4	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Cattle Egret										1		
	Green-backed Heron				3	3	2	4	4	5			
	Trumpeter Swan		2									2	
	Mute Swan								3	3		2	5
	Gr white-fr Goose	1	2	1	1.					1	1	1	1
	Snow Goose										1		
	Emperor Goose												
?	Canada Goose	2	3	5	5	4	2	1	5	4	5	4	5
?	Wood Duck			2	1	2	3	5	5	4	2	_	L
	Green-winged Teal		4	3						5	5	5	
*	Mallard	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Northern Pintail	3	4							3	4		1
	Blue-winged Teal					1				_		-	L
	Cinnamon Teal					1							L
	Northern Shoveler		2	2	3	1				-	1	5	4
	Gadwall	2				1.	-	1		3	3	5	5
	Eurasian Wigeon	1		1							-	-	
	American Wigeon	5	5	5	3	-	1	-		5	5	5	E
	Canvasback			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Ring-necked Duck	3	4	4	1	1	-		L	-	4	5	1
	Greater Scaup	1		?		1			1	1	-	-	1
	Lesser Scaup								1		1	-	1
	Common Goldeneye	1					_			-	1		
	Bufflehead	1	2	-					-	-			
	Hooded Merganser	2	5	4	2			1	1		1	4	5
	Common Merganser	2	5	4	2				-	-		3	1

1 1

## J F M A M J J A S O N D

Tu	rkey Vulture			2	5	4	4	4	2	2	1		
Os	prey					1							
Ba	ld Eagle	3	5	5	5	3	1		1		1	4	3
No	rthern Harrier	1									1		
	arp-shinned Hawk	4	2	2	3	1				5	5	4	3
	oper's Hawk	3	5	3	2	1	1	3	4	4	4	3	4
	d-tailed Hawk	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	4	4	5	4
300001000	ugh-legged Hawk				110								0
	olden Eagle			-									
	nerican Kestrel												
5000000	erlin	1								3	1		1
	regrine Falcon	1	3			?	1				1	2	3
		1	3								-	-	
	rfalcon	4		0			2			-	1	2	+
	ng-necked Pheasant	1	-	2	-	-	2	-	4	1	-	3	3
	lifornia Quail	288	2	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	3
	rginia Rail						1	?		-		-	
	ora							- 24	1	-	-		-
	nerican Coot										4	2	5
Ki	ldeer	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	5	3	4
Gr	eater Yellowlegs								1		_		
Le	sser Yellowlegs										1		1
Sc	olitary Sandpiper												
Sp	otted Sandpiper	0				2							
W	estern Sandpiper												1
Le	ast Sandpiper												1
Ba	aird's Sandpiper												
Pe	ectoral Sandpiper												
	ong-billed Dowitcher												
	ommon Snipe		1										
	ew Gull	2								1		2	2
	ng-billed Gull					1					T		13
	alifornia Gull	-			1	-	1		1	1	1		T
	nayer's Gull	?		-	-	-			H	T	Ť		
	laucous-wing Gull	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
		3	2	2	2	2	1	5	3	-	4	5	1
	ock Dove	1	12	-	2	2	4	0	3	4	T	-	-
	and-tailed Pigeon	+		-	-	-	1		-	H	+	+	1
	ourning Dove	-		-		-	+		-	1		+	Ť
1000	arn Owl	-			+	+		-	+			-	+
	/. Screech Owl	-					1000						+
	reat Horned Owl	-		-	-	-	+		-	+	-	-	-
	. Pygmy–Owl	-	-	-	-	1	-	200	-	+		+	+
	hort-eared Owl			-					+	-		-	-
	. Saw-whet Owl		2	2	-	-	100		-		-	-	-
	ommon Nighthawk			-	-	-	-		1		-	-	+
В	lack Swift			1	-				-		-		-
V	aux's Swift			1		1				1	1	1	1
A	nna's Hummingbird			3	1	1							
R	ufous Hummingbird			2	5	5	4	3	2				
В	elted Kingfisher	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	5	1

continued following page

# **Blenkinsop Valley Bird Checklist**

J F M A M J J A S O N D

	Lewis' Woodpecker												I
	Red-naped Sapsucker												
?	Downy Woodpecker	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5
	Hairy Woodpecker				1			1				2	1
	Northern Flicker	5	4	4	1	3			2	5	5	5	5
	Pileated Woodpecker	1						1		1	1		
	Western Wood-Pewee					1							Ī
	Willow Flycatcher					-			4				
	Hammond's Flycatcher					?							I
	Pac-slope Flycatcher								2		1		Ī
	Western Kingbird	Г				1							Ī
	Eastern Kingbird												Ī
	Eurasian Skylark												I
	Purple Martin					21/2							
*	Tree Swallow			4	5	5	2		1				Ī
?	Violet-green Swallow			5	5	5	5	5	2				T
	N. Rough-w Swallow			2	4	4							T
	Bank Swallow				1								
?	Cliff Swallow	-			2	2	3	3	1				T
*	Barn Swallow				4	5	5	5	5	4			T
	Steller's Jay	5	5	5	5	1			2	5	5	5	E
?	Northwestern Crow	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Common Raven	5	4	5	4	4	3	5	5	2	5	4	E
*	Chestnut-b Chickadee	4	4	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	5	4	2
*	Bushtit	3	3	5	5	5	3	5			2	3	T
	Red-breast Nuthatch					-		2	3	2			T
	Brown Creeper		1									1	İ
	Bewick's Wren	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	1
*	House Wren					4	3	2					T
	Winter Wren	2	3	4							4	5	2
*	Marsh Wren		3	3	5	4	3	3	2	3	Y		T
	Golden-cr Kinglet	5	4	2	2						4	5	E
	Ruby-cr Kinglet		3	2	4	1			1	2	4	5	1
	Townsend's Solitaire												T
	Swainson's Thrush							3	1		1		
	Hermit Thrush						-				1		
*	American Robin	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	I
	Varied Thrush		1	4	2		1			2	1	2	T
	American Pipit					2				2	1		I
?	Cedar Waxwing					3	3	4	4	3		3	T
	Northern Shrike												I
?	European Starling	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	E

J F M A M J J A S O N D

	Solitary Vireo							2	2	3			
	Hutton's Vireo					1			1				
	Warbling Vireo					1		2	5	4			
	Red-eyed Vireo												
*	Orange-cr Warbler			2	5	5	2	3	4	3	2		
?	Yellow Warbler				2	5	5	4	4	1			
	Yellow-rump Warbler				4	1				3	2	1	
	Black-th Gr Warbler								1				
	Townsend's Warbler				1								
	MacGill- Warbler							2	2	3			
*	Common Yellowthroat				4	3	5	5	4	3			
	Wilson's Warbler					3			1				
	Western Tanager								1				
*	Black-head Grosbeak					4	5	4	3				
*	Rufous-sided Towhee	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Amer Tree Sparrow											1	
	Chipping Sparrow												
?	Savannah Sparrow				3	4	3	3	3	5	3		
	Fox Sparrow	5	4	5	4					3	5	5	5
*	Song Sparrow	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Lincoln's Sparrow			2	3	1			2	4	2	3	1
	Golden-cr Sparrow	5	5	5	5	2			-	4	5	5	5
*	White-cr Sparrow		2		5	5	5	3	3	5	4	3	4
	Dark-eyed Junco	3	5	4	3				2	2	5	5	5
*	Red-wing Blackbird	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	4	4	5	5
	W. Meadowlark												
	Yellow-he Blackbird					1			1				
	Brewer's Blackbird	2		2	5	3	2	2		3	4	5	2
*	Brown-head Cowbird				3	5	5	5	4				
	Northern Oriole							2	2				
?	Purple Finch				4	3	2	3	2	4	3	2	2
*	House Finch	3	3	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5
	Red Crossbill												
	Pine Siskin			1	4	2	2	3	2		2	4	
*	American Goldfinch				3	4	5	5	5	5	3	3	
	Evening Grosbeak												
*	House Sparrow	3	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	3	2	2	3

\* denotes evidence of nesting? denotes nesting suspected

Highlighted name denotes RBC Museum card files searched

# **Blenkinsop Valley Bird Checklist**

Irregular species 1979-88 RBC Museum Database

Western Kingbird

Eastern Kingbird

Eurasian Skylark

Horned Lark

Purple Martin

Bank Swallow

Western Bluebird

N. Mockingbird

Northern Shrike

Red-eyed Vireo

Nashville Warbler

Black-th gr warbler

Townsend's Warbler

Tennessee Warbler Western Tanager

Amer Tree Sparrow

Chipping Sparrow

Lincoln's Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow

Snow Bunting

W. Meadowlark

Rusty Blackbird

Northern Oriole

Evening Grosbeak

Red Crossbill

Yellow-he Blackbird

Bobolink

White-thr Sparrow Lapland Longspur

Vesper Sparrow

Lark Sparrow

Lazuli Bunting

Mountain Bluebird

Townsend's Solitaire

Bohemian Waxwing

J F M A M J J A S O N D

American Bittern Great Egret Cattle Egret Black-cr Night Heron Tundra Swan Snow Goose 1 2 Emperor Goose Redhead 3 3 2 Northern Harrier Northern Goshawk Rough-legged Hawk Golden Eagle 3 2 1 American Kestrel Gyrfalcon Virginia Rail 1 1 3 2 1 Sora Sandhill Crane Lesser Yellowlegs Solitary Sandpiper 2 3 Willet 3 1 Spotted Sandpiper Upland Sandpiper Western Sandpiper Least Sandpiper 4 3 Baird's Sandpiper Pectoral Sandpiper Dunlin Stilt Sandpiper Buff-br Sandpiper Short-bi Dowitcher Long-billed Dowitcher Wilson's Phalarope Mourning Dove W. Screech Owl Great Horned Owl Snowy Owl N. Hawk Owl N. Pygmy-Owl Barred Owl Long-eared Owl Short-eared Owl

N. Saw-whet Owl

J F M A M J J A S O N D Common Nighthawk Black Swift Vaux's Swift Red-naped Sapsucker Red-br Sapsucker Western Wood-Pewee Hammond's Flycatcher Say's Phoebe

Number of years in which sighting made in each month; + denotes single sighting reported in Victoria Naturalist but not in RBC Museum files ? is unconfirmed sighting

The Victoria Naturalist Vol. 50.4 (1994) 11

# **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



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birds. And, the fee incudes 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

wish to than 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 he student volunteers from the University of Victoria's Biology Undergraduate Society for their hard work.

Bev Glover

# **Magical Moments** in Hawaii

By Gwennie Hooper

ntroduced 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 Iiwi ("ee-ee-vee") and a gorgeous orange/vermilion 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**

Oct. 1 Todd Redding, of Pipeline Road: studies soil science, wildland conservation and vegetation ecology.

Oct. 1 Chris Motherwell, of Humboldt Street.

Oct. 1 Tyler Innes, of Collinson Street: is interested in nature and environmental concerns.

Oct. 12 Joan McLellan, of Lincoln Road: is a birdwatcher.

Oct. 12 Peter and Elizabeth Dodwell, of Waring Place: have a great love of the outdoors.

Oct. 13 Eric Redekop, of Asquith Street: studies photography, botany and climatology.

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 Hiking Trails 1, a guide book.

Oct. 23 Karen Hogg, of Brett Avenue: enjoys birdwatching and hiking.

Oct. 28 Jim Fliczuk, of Queensbury Avenue: is a birder.

Oct. 28 Jean Anne Wightman, of Stannard Avenue: is active in Garry Oak meadow restoration.

Oct. 30 Erling Friis-Baastad, of Langham Court. Oct. 30 Warren Lee,

of Shelbourne Street. Nov. 1 Bill Scott,

of Richardson Avenue. Nov. 10 Mrs. P. M. Sandham, of Courtland Avenue.

Nov. 19 Ron and Anita Fownes, of Rithet Street: are birdwatchers.

Nov. 19 Ruth Munn. of Falcon Heights Road: enjoys hiking, nature, birding and music.

Nov. 24 Daryl Johnson, of Chippewa Road in Duncan: is interested in birds, botany and hiking.

Nov. 24 Richard Sturney, of Festubert Street in Duncan.

Nov. 24 Joe Girard, of Oakland Avenue: is involved in birding and conservation.

Nov. 24 Ralph Currie, of Jura Road: is a birder. Nov. 27 Annette Parker,

of Paul Kane Place: has a post-graduate degree in botany.

# **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 longterm 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 form 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 n 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

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 fro all over the world and you can be sure there is no place quite like it. It's 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 notoricty. 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 coust.

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 he 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 s 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

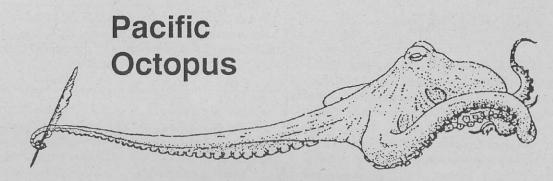
Respondents expressed a desire for more public participation in decision-making and planning. They also identified a number of priorities for CRD Parks to address over the next five years. The main priorities included:

- 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.



# 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 unspoilt). 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

# 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 calender 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 kickstart 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

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.

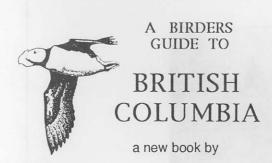
# **BULLETIN BOARD**

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-



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- Loop trips connecting all of British Columbia's outstanding birding destinations with exact kilometerage.
- Directions for finding all of the regularly occurring 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** 

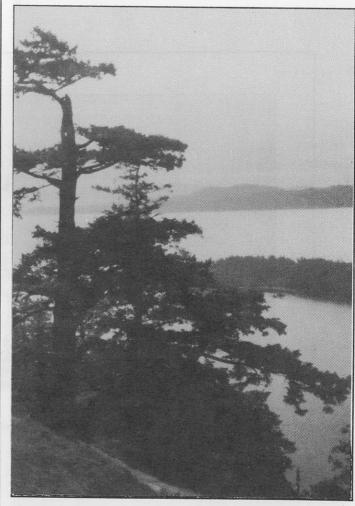
Copies of back issues and indices of the Victoria Naturalist are available from Tom Gillespie (361-

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.



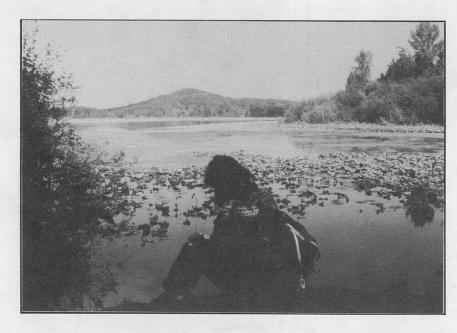
Mount Norman, northwest view (Photo: Christine Morissette).



P.O. Box 5220, Stn. B., Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4. Publications Mail Reg. 6428

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.