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The Victoria NATURALIST

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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 Editor, Warren Drinnan, at 361-3543, 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, 1126 Blanshard Street, or will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

VNHS MEMBERSHIP

For membership information and renewal, please contact Dodie Clark at 477-5158, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4.

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Our Cover




Photograph by Pamela Thuringer

Our cover features two environmental technology students from Camosun College participating in a nearshore habitat study for the City of Victoria at Ross Bay. The students completed habitat transects every 50m along the shoreline of Ross Bay, recording distances and elevations of intertidal habitat zones and recording substrate types and dominant plants and animals

within each zone, as well as completing beach seines to assess the community structure of fish in shallow water off Ross Bay Beach. The results of their efforts will be used by the City of Victoria to assess impacts to nearshore habitats by the proposed beach replenishment project at Ross Bay.

In this issue we once again draw your attention to things marine. Growing numbers of our members are getting involved in the society's seaward thrust. Make a point of joining one of the several marine outings listed in this issue's calendar.



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Requiem for the Portable Blind

By Dannie Carsen

As we drove from Princeton to Keremeos, I thought of how the blind would have enjoyed our favourite spot at Granite City campsite on the Tulameen River. Sadly, and without much hope, I set the tripod up near the sap drills where I and the portable blind watched the red-naped sapsuckers just last year. Just then, a sapsucker flew in, gave a ceremonial tap or two to the old site, and flew off. I didn't have the heart to find the new nest.

Earlier that month, when I had cleaned out my closet for the move, I had found the blind. It was already too late. You see, the bones of the blind had cracked and broken into pieces. The fabric of the blind hung limp and lifeless in my hands as I laid the blind at the bottom of a box of old camping gear.

We had set off from Victoria late in the afternoon that Sunday of the May long weekend. I knew the portable blind would have muttered something about camping at midnight. My wife gripped the dash of our Dodge van as I sped down the highway, trying to make that five o'clock ferry. I imagined the blind teasing me "you'll never make it", which just stiffened my resolve and hardened my foot on the gas pedal. We made the

six o'clock ferry. I somehow made the drive over the Hope-Princeton and we arrived at the PetroCanada gas station in Princeton around midnight.

As we careened around the curves of the road to Coalmont, I swear I could hear the blind chuckling vindictively in the back of my brain. I willed the noises to stop and it was all quiet as we drove stealthily through downtown Coalmont. Only took 30 seconds. We turned into the Granite Creek Forestry campsite to find it full. Some campers had gas lanterns set up that illuminated the whole damn place, and the party was still underway. I pulled off near the hillside on the far side of all this activity, and we settled into bed. Mercifully, the campsite quieted down and we slept.

The next day the portable blind would have been scandalized. We actually went for an early morning walk up the road along Granite Creek **without binoculars or a camera**. Of course, Susan spotted a bird with a chestnut patch on its cheek. We believed this bird was a Cape May warbler and it went **undocumented**. I made a mental note to pack the camera and 10 pounds of telephoto lens for all further expeditions. As usual, our successive trips up this road to confirm the sighting with the camera or listen for a song were unsuccessful. We left for the Okanagan the next day still wondering.

We pulled into our favourite little rest area at 21 Road near Osoyoos at six that evening. A year ago, from the open doors of the van, Susan and I had watched a female pied-billed grebe flanked by two striped, fluffy chicks meander along the shoreline. I hoped for a reappearance so the camera was loaded with film and the tripod was attached. A faint noise in my brain sounded like "never see that again" as we made supper. I twisted my lips in soundless agreement. Only the liquid song of Bullock's orioles and yellow-headed blackbird screams punctuated the soft hiss of the gas stove.

We had planned to start from the Camp McKinley road up Mount Baldy to do an Okanagan Big Day. It was a particularly warm Okanagan evening as we drove through Oliver later that evening. We drove over the cattle guard and up the hill to the antelope brush plain a few kilometres up the road. I drove slowly with the windows down on the van. Susan suddenly called "Look, what's that? Over by that clump of antelope brush, what is that, it's all brown." Sue took a moment to lift her binoculars as I stopped. The bird flew up again. "Look at the beak on that thing!" We turned to each other and laughed. "Really, I mean it" she said.

I was busy trying to find the bird in my binoculars while a regular pulse of interest came from the blind. "Get out there and take a picture, walk up on it." The interior voice of the blind urged me on. Just then, I got a look at the beak. I whistled. "That beak looks about ten inches long. Must be a curlew.

"Which kind", Susan asked excitedly.

A long-billed curlew, of course." I said this with a superior smug tone because I had just read the Mount Baldy site guide which stated "watch for long-billed curlews at kilometre four". We were on Indian Reservation and I didn't feel good about trespassing to get a picture up close, so we wandered on wistfully up the road in the fading light. It was that gray indefinable colour of long past sunset when we arrived at the

ski trails that led into Coteau marsh. We took time to back the van into the little service road so we could look out at the lodgepole pines. We both dropped off to sleep quickly, without further comment from the blind.

I suddenly awoke. "You hear that Sue?" There was a slurping sound coming from our gray water bucket outside the van.

"What is it?", she asked nervously.

"I'm not going outside to find out", I quipped. The voice of the portable blind was urging me to shine a flashlight, you have a flash for that camera, don't you, what a wimp, have a look, just one little look. I resisted all suggestions and tried to go back to sleep. The slurping subsided, and I drowsily hoped it wasn't a big black bear tongue that had been making it.

Dawn. The chorus started at four. We had decided to get up at 4:15 so there wasn't much point in sleeping more. Grumbling, I dragged my stiff cold body to the stove and started the coffee. "Lots of noise out there", I commented to Sue. She just yawned and pulled the covers up around her ears. It was freezing at 3500 feet.

As I stepped out of the van to take my early morning pee, I expected to be serenaded with rare bird song. Instead, all I could hear was heavy breathing and a little sob as a skinny hound came sniffing around my ankles. The blind chuckled, deep in my brain somewhere, and I had to snicker too. The way the dog hovered anxiously around me as I let it into the van confirmed it. The dog was hungry. He whimpered briefly when I took out a can. I put the can of salmon outside and it was inhaled in fifteen seconds. The hound wandered off down the road after his breakfast, and I kept hearing baying noises coming from down the hillside as we ate breakfast. It was strange.

We started off with the light coming up fast and spent the first half an hour hearing lots of songs. MacGillivray's warblers, Wilson's warblers, mountain chickadees and willow flycatchers sang to us as we walked. At Coteau pond we listened to a Virginia rail, a sora, and a winnowing snipe. As the light started to come up on the pond, we walked back slowly along the trails, just enjoying the crisp, clear mountain air. It was hard to concentrate because of all the "hurry up, get going, it's a big day" noises coming from the back of my brain.

We decided to go to kilometre 24.7 to a little pond where Rob Cannings had promised a northern waterthrush. The blind itched at my ear a bit when I got out of the van here. There was a nice little trail along a beaver dam into the edge of the pond. It was a cool clear morning and the light was particularly sparkling in that way it gets first thing. I got about 20 feet away from a yellow warbler singing away in the riparian tangle along the pond. You could see its bill moving as it sang. The blind gave a great grumble about then.

"Too darn small to get a good picture", I whispered in response. I looked wistfully at the warbler, so close now that I could see the reddish streaks on the glistening yellow breast. Just then a spotted sandpiper flew in and made a great show of landing 15 feet away on a little island in the

pond. It dipped its tail a few times and gave a warning call as it spotted me. I brought the camera up just as it flew. I muttered something unprintable and waited. I heard the buzzy call of yet another dusky flycatcher and then something else. It sounded like...dwee, dwee, dwee, dwee...dwaw, dwaw dwaw dwaw". I dipped one foot in the pond in my excitement as I tried to locate the bird's position. I could hear it, but even a portable blind wouldn't have been much use in seeing it. Time to get birding.

We drove back down the hill and headed for gray flycatcher heaven. At kilometre 10 at the cattle grate, the bird was supposed to be seen every year. I wandered across the road

and stood against the fence listening. A soft "chulip" resonated through my brain. Couldn't be. "Chulip, chuwee". There is was again.

I had to see this bird, it couldn't be this easy. I wandered up and down that hillside, listening and waiting. Finally, halfway up a trembling aspen, there it was. It sure didn't look like much, just a grayish breast and a typical flycatcher profile. Couldn't see

any orange at the base of the bill against the light but I was convinced. I had my first gray flycatcher. I had been so preoccupied by getting a photograph, I didn't think about confirming nesting sites. As I was taking pictures of the bird, the portable blind murmured something about setting up at a nest. I shook off that tempting thought.

We stopped again at kilometre four and only heard a faint "curlee, curlee" in the distance. Just as we drove down the last kilometre of the road before getting back to Oliver, Susan spotted a northern harrier cruising the fields. I steadied myself against a tree and got an action shot of the harrier against the skyline.

There were no more comments from the blind as we made our way north, stopping at Vaseaux Lake, Penticton, Peachland and finally Vernon. We had the most enjoyable walk near Silver Star RV Park on the east side of Swan Lake. Families of mallards wandered the wharf as we spotted ruddy ducks, redheads, shovellers, and gadwall that had stopped there to nest. A yellow-headed blackbird serenaded us from six feet up a weeping willow. We meandered across a big field and walked the creek to where the bullrushes started at the lake. The sky was getting luminous and the evening air was feather light against the skin.

Kalamalka Lake park was our final stop for the evening. It was almost dark when we arrived. Our only chores were to prepare the bed and make our final few notations about the day. We listened for common poorwills. A few barnyard sounds from the farm next to the park and some sharp whistles from the ground squirrels were the only noises. "What's that?" Susan suddenly called out. A faint "cago" drifted up the hillside. We both laughed. Even the California quail were tired. I think the portable blind drifted away then, through the park gates and over the rolling hills.

I suddenly awoke. "You hear that Sue?" There was a slurping sound coming from our gray water bucket outside the van.

"What is it?", she asked nervously.



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Volunteers Wanted

CRD Parks is searching for volunteers to staff the Witty's Lagoon and Francis King Nature Houses on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays - starting in the fall. The ideal person for this interesting volunteer opportunity is someone who enjoys dealing with the public, is able to commit a minimum of 4 hours every three weeks, is able to work independently, has some knowledge of natural history and has an interest and concern for regional parks. If you are interested in applying for these volunteer positions or would like more information please contact the Coordinator of Volunteers at CRD Parks (ph: 478-3344).

CRD Parks

Capital Regional District Parks has a variety of park programs for children and adults throughout the summer. Some family activities include nature walks and talks, orienteering courses, canoeing, slug fests, snake days and more. Many programs are free of charge. Please contact CRD Parks at 478-3344 for more information or visit the nature centre at Witty's Lagoon (Metchosin Road) or Francis/King Park (Munn Road) for summer program brochures.

For a summary of some CRD Parks programs see the back cover of this edition.

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Welcome New Members

March 22, 1995

Mike and Sandy Sharlow
of Mount Joy Avenue:
enjoy travel and birds

March 28, 1995

Stephen and Elizabeth Byatt of Lincoln Road:

Hugh Campbell of Sherwood Park, Alberta

April 6, 1995

J. Bruce McKinnon of Austin Avenue:
interested in birds and botany

V.I.P.I.R.G. -
Native Vegetation Committee of the
University of Victoria

Larry Bomford of Graythorpe Place:
interests include botany, field trips and conservation

April 12, 1995

Linda Benn and family of Rockridge Place:
enjoy birds and plants

Valerie Edwards of Brooke Street

June Montgomery of Medana Street:
is interested in the marine environment

Pamela Lewis of Medana Street:

Roy Prior of Balmoral Avenue:
enjoys birding

April 13, 1995

Derek and Judy Spearing of Eric Road

Sue Staniforth and William Gibbons of Sidney:
interests include environmental education,
conservation, wildlife, gardening,
birding and botany

Elaine Taylor of Harriet Road:
enjoys birds, plants and trees

Catherine Weed of Townsend Drive:
is interested in native plants and animals,
preserving native habitat and local parks

April 26, 1995

Robert and Elma Chappell of Bewdley Avenue:
enjoy birding, hiking, kayaking and mushrooms

Ann Griffiths of Johnson Street:
interested in getting rid of Broom on Mount Douglas

May 2, 1995

Anne Speer of Estevan Avenue:
interests include botany, birding and tidal ecosystems

May 9, 1995

Kevin Conley of McBriar Avenue:
a bird watcher who enjoys botany

Bill and Cheryl Kinkaid of Saanichton:
interests: birding, hiking, wild flowers & conservation

Rod Swift of Errington

May 16, 1995

Ria Clements of Piedmont Gardens:
enjoys birding

May 26, 1995

Bob Fridel of Oscar Street:
enjoys birding, hiking and
adventure outings

Report Of The Auditor To The Members

I have examined the Balance Sheet of the Victoria Natural History Society as at December 31, 1994 and the Statements of Income and Expenditure for the year ended on that date. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Directors of the Society. My responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements.

My examination included a general review of the accounting procedures and such tests of accounting records and other supporting evidence as I considered necessary in the circumstances.

In my opinion, these statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Society as at December 31, 1994, and the results of its operations for the year ended in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

Victoria, March 5, 1995

J.B. Phillips, B. Comm.
original signed

Victoria Natural History Society					
Balance Sheet As At December 31, 1994					
	General Account	Conservation Account	Scholarship Account	Total	Total
	1994	1994	1994	1994	1993
Assets					
Cash at bank	\$3,986			\$3,986	\$789
Term deposits	440	3,866	2,002	6,308	
Short term investments at cost	6,810	71,812	36,208	114,830	104,502
Market Value 1994		\$107,098			
Market Value 1993		\$111,680			
Accounts receivable	736			736	4,470
Inventory of books	7,553			7,553	6,940
Long term investment at cost	291	63,832	12,928	77,051	77,059
Market Value 1994		\$76,314			
Market Value 1993		\$85,827			
	\$19,816	\$139,510	\$51,138	\$210,464	\$193,760
Liabilities					
Accounts payable	\$7,382			\$7,382	\$2,028
Membership and subscriptions paid in advance	2,081			2,081	1,386
Fund balances	10,353	139,510	51,138	201,001	190,346
	\$19,816	\$139,510	\$51,138	\$210,464	\$193,760
Notes:					
It is the policy of the Society that:					
i) The General Account shall be self sustaining;					
ii) The Conservation and Scholarship Funds be maintained as Separate Funds;					
iii) Accounting shall be performed on an accrual basis;					
iv) Insofar as it is appropriate, the first charge on income shall be to provide for the protection of the capital of the Conservation and Scholarship Funds from erosion of value due to inflation during the year.					
					Approved On Behalf Of The Board
					J. B. Phillips, Director
					Gordon Nevey, Director/Treasurer

Victoria Natural History Society
Statement of Income and Expenditures For The Year Ending December 31, 1994

General Account		Conservation Fund Account			
	1994	1993		1994	1993
Income				Income	
Membership dues and donations	\$13,564	\$14,162	Interest	\$10,417	\$10,947
Publication (Net of Cost of Goods Sold)	740	1,554			
Interest	517	169			
Miscellaneous income		220			
	\$14,821	\$16,105		\$10,417	\$10,947
Expenditures				Expenditures	
Naturalist- Production & Mailing (Net of advertising & subscription revenue)	\$6,382	\$7,131	Conservation projects	\$3,356	\$3,195
Cost of meetings	250	250			
Postage & stationery	663	816			
Affiliation fees	6,100	4,920			
Telephone, bird alert system & information service	932	971			
Miscellaneous	2,338	1,488			
	\$16,665	\$15,576		\$3,356	\$3,195
Excess of income over expenditures	\$-1,844	\$529	Excess of income over expenditures	\$7,061	\$7,752
Funds on hand at beginning of year	12,197	11,668	Funds on hand at beginning of year	132,449	109,099
Donation	10,025	31,121	Transfer from General Account		15,598
Less: Transfer to Scholarship Fund	-5,000	-31,121			
Transfer to Accounts Payable	-5,025				
Funds on hand at end of year	\$10,353	\$12,197	Funds on hand at end of year	\$139,510	\$132,449

Victoria Natural History Society
Statement of Income and Expenditures For The Year Ending December 31, 1994

Scholarship Fund Account		Conservation Project Account			
	1994	1993		1994	1993
Income				Income	
Interest	\$3,488	\$3,389	Donation	\$0	\$358
	\$3,488	\$3,389		\$0	\$358
Expenditures				Expenditures	
Scholarship and bursaries	\$3,050	\$2,050	Donations Swan Lake	\$2,500	\$2,500
			Donation Martindale flats		1,000
			Bird boxes		821
			Miscellaneous	856	482
	\$3,050	\$2,050		\$3,356	\$4,803
Excess of income over expenditures	\$438	\$1,339	Excess of income over expenditures	\$-3,356	\$-4,445
Funds on hand at beginning of year	45,700	28,838	Funds on hand at beginning of year		1,250
Transfer from General Account (donations)	5,000	15,523	Transfer from Conservation Fund	3,356	3,195
Funds on hand at end of year	\$51,138	\$45,700	Funds on hand at end of year	\$0	\$0

The Eurasian Skylark on Vancouver Island

by Barbara Begg

An apparent increase in the population of Skylarks on the Saanich Peninsula was first noted in the winter of 1992/1993 when flocks were seen on snow covered fields by several observers. Although this increase was only partially reflected in the 1993 spring census, the 1994 and 1995 spring counts show the highest numbers since a regular census was initiated in the spring of 1983.

Accurate counts in the spring are almost impossible to obtain, as the birds are mostly behind the fences at the Victoria International Airport, or in farm crops.

Therefore, numbers are arrived at by a combination of two methods--counting birds on the ground, or moving about, and taking note of sexual differences in behaviour, and/or by extrapolation, the counting of singing males, and assuming there is a mated female.

Skylarks are normally monogamous according to very detailed information in the *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa* by S. Cramp et al. To complicate matters, females sing an abbreviated song, usually from the ground. Counts are done at each location at least once a month during March, April and May. During this time, the nature of the fields often change, i.e. short or long vegetation, flowers, cow grazed pasture, etc.

Probably the best way to get a good count is in the winter when fields are frozen or snow covered, but "fortunately" this is not an annual occurrence. An example of this is the aforementioned snowy period in 1992/1993 when, at Vantreights' farm and Martindale Flats, vegetation was high enough to protrude above the snow, thus providing food and shelter. A minimum of 173 Skylarks were counted January 1, 1993, yet only 82 were tallied for the entire Saanich Peninsula, using the extrapolation method, during the 1993 spring census (B. Begg). It is doubtful that winter mortality would have been so great as to account for the large differential. In 1995 Skylarks were found at the Victoria International Airport, Martindale Flats, Vantreights' fields at Central Saanich Road/Wallace Drive, Mabers' flats between Keating Cross Road and Wallace Drive, and Pendrays' Farm on West Saanich Road, bordering the airport properties. These areas are all in either Central Saanich or North Saanich, on the Saanich Peninsula of southern Vancouver Island. There were no reports of Skylarks from any other parts of the Island. Taking the highest actual count from each of the Skylark locations, I arrived at a total of 102 birds, or 126 using extrapolation. Figures for 1994 were 103 and 120 respectively, so there seems to be little change in two years.

By comparison, in 1983, 42 singing birds were recorded from 12 sites by Alan MacLeod and Bruce Whittington. So, even though we have an increase in Skylarks recently, it is a far cry from the "close to 1,000 birds by March 1962" estimated by David Stirling and Yorke Edwards.

It seems the skylark is declining in Britain. Ralph Whitloch, in his column in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, February 19, 1995, wrote: "But if present trends continue, the

day is not so very far distant when we shall have to go to Canada to hear the Skylark. How scarce it is becoming!"

In answer to my inquiry, Dr. J.T.R. Sharroch, managing editor of the periodical "British Birds", states:

"Yes, there is very firm evidence that the Skylark *Aluada arvensis* have declined considerably in Britain over the past decade or so. There have been similar declines among many other farmland birds. In this particular case, it is the coincident decline of a number of species in the same habitat which is the cause for concern and investigation."

Reference

S. Cramp et al., *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa*. Oxford University Press (1988): New York

1995 Spring Bird Count

Introduction by David Pearce

The fourth annual Spring Bird Count took place on May 6 with 105 participants. The day was sunny throughout reaching a high of 19 degrees.

This is the earliest we have held the spring count so a few of our winter visitors were still here while some of the spring migrants had yet to return. As a result we recorded 160 species and a record 29,533 birds, 1,022 more than last year's record. We have now recorded a total of 199 species since the Spring Bird Count started five years ago.

Spring arrived early this year, due to a very mild winter. Highlights of this year's count included 6 new species: a yellow-billed loon at Esquimalt Lagoon; a late canvasback at Viaduct Flats; a late peregrine falcon at Martindale Flats; a marbled godwit on the Victoria Golf Course; a tufted puffin off Trial Island; and a blue jay near Mt. Douglas.

Other highlights included 237 pacific loons in Cordova Bay; 593 Brandt's cormorants; 7 blue phase snow geese flying south over Goldstream Park; 5 ruddy duck at Viaduct Flats; a blue grouse, northern pygmy-owl and 2 red-breasted sapsuckers on Scaif Hill; and a wandering tatter at McMicking Point. Record highs were set for 46 species and record lows were recorded for 14 species.

Species that are recording a continual increase are peid-billed grebe, Canada goose, wood duck, hooded merganser, turkey vulture, bald eagle, Cooper's hawk, California quail, killdeer, marbled murrelet, Anna's hummingbird, rufous hummingbird, common raven, brown creeper, Bewick's wren, solitary vireo, common yellowthroat, chipping sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, house finch and house sparrow.

Species on the decline include pelagic cormorant, great blue heron, mute swan, hairy woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, tree swallow, yellow warbler, and Wilson's warbler.

The post count gathering was held at the Swan Lake Nature Centre, which proved to be a popular gathering place. A discussion was held as to the timing of the spring count and it was decided to convert it into a more useful summer resident count to assess breeding distribution, rather than just a big day, by holding it in early June. As a result, next year the Spring Bird Count will be held June 8.

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. BUTCHART GARDENS/NORTHERN HIGHLANDS | 5. LANGFORD LAKE | 9. PORTAGE INLET - THE GORGE |
| 2. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS | 6. ALBERT HEAD - TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN | 10. VICTORIA HARBOUR |
| 3. GOLDSTREAM | 7. ESQUIMALT LAGOON - MILL HILL | 11. BEACON HILL |
| 4. THETIS LAKE/HASTINGS FLATS | 8. ESQUIMALT HABOUR | 12. OAK BAY |

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Pacific Loon						4		1				
Common Loon						6		1	1	1	3	
Yellow-billed Loon							1					
Pied-billed Grebe												
Horned Grebe												
Red-necked Grebe						5	10	9		1	5	9
Western Grebe												
Double-crested Cormorant			2	2	2	6	97	122	34	158	2	180
Brandt's Cormorant						5				245	15	
Pelagic Cormorant						3	2	1		7	6	50
Great Blue Heron		3	3	8	1	2	16	10	16	4	14	
Green Heron												
Trumpeter Swan				1								
Mute Swan			1			2	7				1	
Greater White-fronted Goose												
Snow Goose			7									
Brant											11	
Canada Goose	129	20	12	110	22	14	16	27	46	26	3	5
Wood Duck	2	6	7	1	1							
Green-winged Teal	36					3						
Mallard		14	6	38	33	39	29	10	53	26	262	7
Northern Pintail					2	2						
Blue-winged Teal												
Cinnamon Teal												
Northern Shoveler				1		2	10					
Gadwall												
American Wigeon	3					3	2					
Canvasback												
Ring-necked Duck	8	2										
Greater Scaup									5			
Lesser Scaup							3		10			
Harlequin Duck								2		2	39	24
Oldsquaw												
Surf Scoter						8	13			6	5	
White-winged Scoter						17	2					
Common Goldeneye							1					
Bufflehead	9		7		6	19	15		10	2	2	4
Hooded Merganser	5				1	4	6		8			
Common Merganser	4		9				15					
Red-breasted Merganser						6	30	1	5		9	1
Ruddy Duck												
Turkey Vulture	22	8		4	2	4						
Osprey					1							

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY | 18. ELK LAKE - CORDOVA BAY |
| 14. 10 MILE POINT | 19. PROSPECT LAKE - QUICKS BOTTOM |
| 15. GORDON HEAD - MOUNT DOUGLAS | 20. MARTINDALE - BEAR HILL |
| 16. SWAN LAKE - CEDAR HILL | 21 - 23. OAK BAY ISLANDS |
| 17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS | |

SPECIES	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
Pacific Loon						237		84		326	All time high (previous high 27 in 1993)
Common Loon		6	4			4		6		32	
Yellow-billed Loon										1	New species
Pied-billed Grebe							8			8	All time high (previous high 7 in 1994)
Horned Grebe								3		3	
Red-necked Grebe			5			1		5	6	56	All time high (previous high 50 in 1991)
Western Grebe								1		1	
Double-crested Cormorant	12	30	3	6	6	8	1	9	455	1,135	
Brandt's Cormorant			3					3	320	593	All time high (previous high 213 in 1994)
Pelagic Cormorant			6			2		3	123	203	All time low (previous low 289)
Great Blue Heron	5	6		5	4	2	5	3	15	122	All time low (previous low 123)
Green Heron					1					1	
Trumpeter Swan										1	
Mute Swan										11	All time low (previous low 12)
Greater White-fronted Goose					15					15	
Snow Goose										7	Blue phase
Brant										11	
Canada Goose	6	7		17	14	27	83	102	25	711	All time high (previous high 601 in 1994)
Wood Duck						5	12	2		36	All time high (previous high 28 in 1994)
Green-winged Teal						8	5		4	56	All time high (previous high 43 in 1992)
Mallard	30	24	5	79	29	88	92	47	12	923	All time high (previous high 911 in 1992)
Northern Pintail						2			2	8	
Blue-winged Teal						1	4	1		6	
Cinnamon Teal							1			1	
Northern Shoveler						6	2		4	25	All time high (previous high 12 in 1991)
Gadwall							8			8	
American Wigeon	1			2		2	5		6	24	
Canvasback							1			1	
Ring-necked Duck							12	1		23	All time high (previous high 8 in 1993)
Greater Scaup										5	
Lesser Scaup										13	All time high (previous high 10 in 1991)
Harlequin Duck		7	5						35	114	All time high (previous high 77 in 1992)
Oldsquaw								10		10	
Surf Scoter		10	108			332		135	16	633	All time high (previous high 544 in 1991)
White-winged Scoter		10	3			2		1	10	45	
Common Goldeneye		1								2	
Bufflehead	18		1	1	1	72	3	11		181	All time high (previous high 127 in 1993)
Hooded Merganser							8	7		39	All time high (previous high 37 in 1994)
Common Merganser								1		29	
Red-breasted Merganser		1	5			21		23	2	104	
Ruddy Duck							5			5	All time high (previous high 2 in 1994)
Turkey Vulture	2		1		4		8	7		62	All time high (previous high 51 in 1994)
Osprey						1				2	

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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| 2. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS | 6. ALBERT HEAD - TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN | 10. VICTORIA HARBOUR |
| 3. GOLDSTREAM | 7. ESQUIMALT LAGOON - MILL HILL | 11. BEACON HILL |
| 4. THETIS LAKE/HASTINGS FLATS | 8. ESQUIMALT HABOUR | 12. OAK BAY |

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Bald Eagle	15		2	1	1	2	1	3	2		2	1
Northern Harrier								1				
Sharp-shinned Hawk												
Cooper's Hawk				1	1	1					3	4
Red-tailed Hawk	14	1	2	1	1	1			3			
Merlin					1							
Peregrine Falcon												
Ring-necked Pheasant	5	1		18		1	1					1
Blue Grouse				1								
Ruffed Grouse						4						
California Quail	61	46	11	41	19	59	4	3	15	29	6	6
Virginia Rail												
Sora	1											
American Coot												
Black-bellied Plover						1						10
Semipalmated Plover						3		2				
Killdeer	16	1		13	3	1	4	4		19		
Black Oystercatcher						2		1		4	1	2
Greater Yellowlegs						3	1					
Lesser Yellowlegs												
Wandering Tattler												1
Whimbrel												17
Marbled Godwit												1
Black Turnstone						2						
Western Sandpiper						102	4					
Least Sandpiper				7		21						
Dunlin						1						
Short-billed Dowitcher												
Common Snipe	2											
Mew Gull			1			18	39	24			1	1
Ring-billed Gull												
California Gull						4	2					
Thayer's Gull			2									
Glaucous-winged Gull	131	5	1	5	16	87	14	140	73	128	534	140
Common Murre						4						
Pigeon Guillemot						7				1	6	2
Marbled Murrelet						27						17
Rhinoceros Auklet						23	5	2			28	6
Tufted Puffin												
Rock Dove	24			5		1	19	2	50	46	72	7
Band-tailed Pigeon	6	2	11	8	2	19	3	4				
Mourning Dove												
Western Screech-Owl						3						

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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| 17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS | |

SPECIES	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
Bald Eagle	6	5	4			1		8	11	65	All time high (previous high 58 in 1993)
Northern Harrier										1	
Sharp-shinned Hawk					1					1	
Cooper's Hawk	1	3	1	1	1		3	1		21	All time high (previous high 18 in 1993)
Red-tailed Hawk	1	1	1		1		6	7	1	41	
Merlin					1					2	
Peregrine Falcon									1	1	New species
Ring-necked Pheasant			1	2	4	2	11	6		53	Equal high with 1991
Blue Grouse										1	
Ruffed Grouse										4	Equal high with 1991
California Quail	12	8	5	7	38	18	44	84		516	All time high (previous high 419 in 1994)
Virginia Rail					1	4	2			7	
Sora									1	2	
American Coot						13	3			16	All time high (previous high 3 in 1991)
Black-bellied Plover										16	27
Semipalmated Plover									3	8	
Killdeer				5	15	3	5	30		119	All time high (previous high 95 in 1994)
Black Oystercatcher		7								5	22
Greater Yellowlegs							6	1	1	12	All time high (previous high 4 in 1991)
Lesser Yellowlegs								5		5	All time high (previous high 3 in 1993)
Wandering Tattler										1	
Whimbrel		1					1		4	23	
Marbled Godwit										1	New species
Black Turnstone										2	
Western Sandpiper	1							190		297	
Least Sandpiper							12		1	41	All time low (previous low 72)
Dunlin								2	4	35	42
Short-billed Dowitcher									1	1	All time low (previous low 37)
Common Snipe										2	
Mew Gull				1				3	25	113	All time high (previous high 49 in 1993)
Ring-billed Gull										1	
California Gull										6	
Thayer's Gull										2	
Glaucous-winged Gull	43	51	36	99	50	53	15	173	3,000	4,794	
Common Murre										4	
Pigeon Guillemot		18	5					12	27	78	
Marbled Murrelet		7	14			1				66	All time high (previous high 43 in 1994)
Rhinoceros Auklet	6	13	1					16	45	145	
Tufted Puffin									1	1	New species
Rock Dove	6	10		47			5	42		336	
Band-tailed Pigeon		10				9	21	4		99	
Mourning Dove			2				1	2		5	All time high (previous high 3 in 1992)
Western Screech-Owl										3	

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Great Horned Owl						2						
Northern Pygmy-Owl				1								
Barred Owl	2											
Anna's Hummingbird						1						
Rufous Hummingbird	45	17	35	12	47	22	15	10	3			1
Belted Kingfisher	7	1	3	1		3	5	1		1		
Red-breasted Sapsucker			1	2								
Downy Woodpecker	2			2	2	3	1	2	5		8	2
Hairy Woodpecker				2	2	1						
Northern Flicker	20	8	8	19	9	2	7	2				
Pileated Woodpecker	5	2	5	5					1			
Olive-sided Flycatcher	1	2		1		3						
Willow Flycatcher	1											
Hammond's Flycatcher	1	9		11	1							
Pacific Slope Flycatcher	47	22		55	17	22	9	12				
Eurasian Skylark	5											
Purple Martin										4		
Tree Swallow	2		2			4						
Violet-green Swallow	224	41	39	149	98	139	45	64	102	28	16	12
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	2					5						
Cliff Swallow	18	15		4		3			11			
Barn Swallow	73	6	7	25	15	64	13	35	11	5	22	10
Steller's Jay	7	8	11	3	14	1	1					
Blue Jay												
Northwestern Crow	141	21	27	63	43	47	39	76	133	81	61	34
Common Raven	82	50	5	21	4	5	3					
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	79	33	6	64	24	24	16	24	22	2	16	3
Bushtit	14	2	1	6	27	4	1	20	36	9	4	4
Red-breasted Nuthatch	19	21	2	39	10	5	3	12	3	1	12	
Brown Creeper	5	1	2	20		22	2	1	2	2	5	
Bewick's Wren	31	6		13	12	15	11	22	43	3	8	24
House Wren	7	16		16	12	7	3					
Winter Wren	23	8	11	26	10	4	9	12	6	1	1	
Marsh Wren					1							
American Dipper			1									
Golden-crowned Kinglet	23	1	6	8	1	4	3	4	1		3	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1							1				
Townsend's Solitaire												
Swainson's Thrush				1		1						
American Robin	190	57	93	142	105	227	38	62	137	47	64	27
Varied Thrush		3	2	6	3							
American Pipit												
Cedar Waxwing												

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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| 16. SWAN LAKE - CEDAR HILL | 21 - 23. OAK BAY ISLANDS |
| 17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS | |

SPECIES	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
Great Horned Owl		2								4	
Northern Pygmy-Owl										1	
Barred Owl						3				5	Equal high with 1994
Anna's Hummingbird	7	12	1		1	7				29	All time high (previous high 22 in 1994)
Rufous Hummingbird		5	26		12	9	25	4	2	290	All time high (previous high 283 in 1993)
Belted Kingfisher		3	4			2	1	2		34	
Red-breasted Sapsucker							1			4	All time high (previous high 2 in 1993)
Downy Woodpecker	4	2		4	6	2	3	3		51	All time high (previous high 50 in 1993)
Hairy Woodpecker										5	All time low (previous low 9)
Northern Flicker	9	4	2	4	6		10	3		113	
Pileated Woodpecker	1		1			1	8	5	1	35	
Olive-sided Flycatcher			2							9	All time low (previous low 16)
Willow Flycatcher										1	
Hammond's Flycatcher						1				23	
Pacific Slope Flycatcher		2	3			2	12	21		224	
Eurasian Skylark								14		19	All time high (previous high 68 in 1993)
Purple Martin										4	
Tree Swallow			12		14		4	11		49	All time low (previous low 82)
Violet-green Swallow	47	75	12	76	108	93	163	104	8	1,643	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow			4			5	4	5		25	
Cliff Swallow						7	2	7		67	
Barn Swallow	17	5	15	30	21	16	13	83	1	487	
Steller's Jay										45	
Blue Jay			1							1	New species
Northwestern Crow	99	73	21	104	89	47	37	218	10	1,464	
Common Raven	4	7	3	3	1	4	16	8	2	218	All time high (previous high 160 in 1993)
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	5	18	28	3	20	9	84	22		502	
Bushtit	4	32	7	26	20	5	14	12		248	
Red-breasted Nuthatch		10	6	1	2	5	18	2		171	
Brown Creeper		7	9	2	3	2	4	1		90	All time high (previous high 65 in 1993)
Bewick's Wren	29	18	7	28	42	15	24	26		377	All time high (previous high 281 in 1994)
House Wren	1	6	4		2		22	4	2	102	
Winter Wren		1	21			4	5	8		150	
Marsh Wren				6	3		20			30	
American Dipper										1	
Golden-crowned Kinglet		3	3		6	1	1	1		69	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet						2	1			5	
Townsend's Solitaire			1							1	
Swainson's Thrush										2	
American Robin	97	59	60	112	147	94	108	183	2	2,051	
Varied Thrush			1			2	3			20	
American Pipit								32		32	
Cedar Waxwing		14								14	

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
European Starling	76	17	22	47	66	179	27	66	255	176	23	29
Solitary Vireo	1	13	2	18	7	6	4		1			
Hutton's Vireo	1	2	4			1		5				
Warbling Vireo	2	10	4			2			1			
Orange-crowned Warbler	117	76	16	99	81	42	23	23	23	8	2	10
Yellow Warbler	7			1				1	1			
Yellow-rumped Warbler	3	6		19	11	9	6				2	
Black-throated Gray Warbler	24	1		12	2	1	6			1		
Townsend's Warbler	26	34		73	23	19	9	1				
MacGillivray's Warbler	3	19	6	8	8	1						
Common Yellowthroat	17	4	1	7	10	3	9					
Wilson's Warbler	3	3	4	20	6			2		1		5
Rufous-sided Towhee	43	40	3	34	32	11	9	25	21	6	10	25
Chipping Sparrow	21	5	3	30	8	11	8	3	2			
Savannah Sparrow	35					3	13		1	5		3
Fox Sparrow						1						
Song Sparrow	49	25	21	37	31	7	4	4	16	5	7	6
Lincoln's Sparrow			2					1				
Golden-crowned Sparrow	3		4			5	2	3	1	1	3	3
White-crowned Sparrow	12	29		18	31	8	8	18	6	20	2	2
Dark-eyed Junco	28	24	6	41	7	15	9	1		2		
Red-winged Blackbird	37	10	1	19	30	9	14	1	2	16		6
Brewer's Blackbird	30				4	6	8					
Brown-headed Cowbird	24	14		16	10	21		11	4		4	12
Western Tanager					3	1						
Purple Finch	15	20	3	16	5	4		1	2	20		
House Finch	44	2	5	43	44	11	8	33	78	18	36	27
Pine Siskin	36	22	5	60	9	85	15	25	14		17	2
American Goldfinch	12	6	1	5	3	39			1			1
Evening Grosbeak												12
House Sparrow	6			30	11	6	14	38	213	110	14	10
TOTAL BIRDS	2,245	841	464	1,636	1,014	1,697	792	992	1,489	1,278	1,370	766
TOTAL SPECIES	75	57	55	69	62	99	68	57	48	43	46	47

1995 Victoria Spring Bird Count

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| 17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS | |

SPECIES	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
European Starling	53	70	34	175	136	19	46	194	6	1,716	
Solitary Vireo			1		11		2			66	All time high (previous high 56 in 1994)
Hutton's Vireo		2				1	1	1		18	All time high (previous high 10 in 1994)
Warbling Vireo					1			1		21	
Orange-crowned Warbler	2	18	12	6	35	16	33	63	3	708	
Yellow Warbler				7			4	7		28	All time low (previous low 30)
Yellow-rumped Warbler			1			4	2	18	5	86	
Black-throated Gray Warbler						5	19	1		72	
Townsend's Warbler				1			27	1		214	
MacGillivray's Warbler							1			46	
Common Yellowthroat				44	36	11	33	24		199	All time high (previous high 143 in 1993)
Wilson's Warbler			4		1	1	3			53	All time low (previous low 61)
Rufous-sided Towhee	19	30	22	27	38	26	15	34		470	
Chipping Sparrow	2		3		7		16	30	1	150	All time high (previous high 124 in 1994)
Savannah Sparrow	8		3	6	23	2	7	98	4	211	
Fox Sparrow										1	All time low (previous low 2)
Song Sparrow	6	6	9	26	33	27	13	36	2	370	
Lincoln's Sparrow										3	
Golden-crowned Sparrow				2	1		6			34	
White-crowned Sparrow	2	13	11		9	5	23	25	6	248	All time high (previous high 244 in 1993)
Dark-eyed Junco			3		8		32	9		185	
Red-winged Blackbird	4	2	22	66	97	43	103	26	8	516	
Brewer's Blackbird	1			1	10		2	39		101	
Brown-headed Cowbird	3	15	8	7	17	7	17	38	3	231	
Western Tanager				1						5	All time low (previous low 9)
Purple Finch	1			2	32	3	5	4		133	
House Finch	55	64	30	62	20	30	28	77	4	719	All time high (previous high 577 in 1994)
Pine Siskin	10	29	37	5	17	8	74	29	4	503	
American Goldfinch		1	3	2		1	15	17		107	All time low (previous low 141)
Evening Grosbeak										12	All time low (previous low 13)
House Sparrow	60	30	24	227	110	16		94		1,013	All time high (previous high 692 in 1994)
TOTAL BIRDS	700	883	694	1,336	1,331	1,508	1,519	2,693	4,285	29,533	
TOTAL SPECIES	42	57	65	42	55	73	85	85	49	160	



Birding Walk on Camas Day.

A Glorious Camas Day In Beacon Hill Park

By Helen Oldershaw

The fourth annual Camas Day, Sunday, April 22, 1995, turned out to be a glorious day, a time to revel in nature's visual bounty. The Garry Oak meadows of Beacon Hill were indeed the "seas of blue" mentioned in the journals of Lewis and Clark when they first encountered this unique ecosystem in 1806. The various yellow hues of Spring-gold, Western Buttercup, Sanicle, and the rare Prairie Violet perfectly complemented the blue-purple of the Camas, while the discovery of the Chocolate Lilies, of more muted colour, tucked in among the grasses at the edges of the shrubby oak copses, provided a special kind of delight. The good showing of wild flowers this year is probably largely due to a later mowing policy being implemented by park staff.

The combined birding walk was led by Darren Copley, Jeff Gaskin, and Tom Gillespie. We had excellent views of a Pelagic Cormorant, Harlequin Ducks, an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Bewick's Wren, a Rufous-sided Towhee, and the Red-breasted Merganser in particular, while the leaders gave us interesting observations of their behaviours. A total of 30 birds were seen.

Dr. Grant Keddy, archaeologist at the Royal B.C. Museum, took us back in time to before the arrival of the Europeans, describing the significance of the burial cairns, the Camas beds, and the fortified village at Finlayson Point built by the Songhees.

Drs. Chris Brayshaw, Adolph Ceska, and Robert Ogilvie, curators of botany at the museum, led informative and enjoyable plant walks. Their extensive knowledge of the park's native flora make it possible for someone to join their walks every year and still learn something new each time.

Gordon Hart introduced his group to the world of butterflies with the aid of excellent illustrations and two of the real McCoy - an Anise Swallowtail and the introduced Cabbage White.

Committee members and volunteers were: Joyce Harrison and Helen Oldershaw (joint co-ordinators), Tom Gillespie (signs), Barbara Faulkner (correspondence), Bev Glover (posters), and Wally MacGregor, Julie Lane, Lynn Husted, Mary Morrison, Connie Hawley, Lola Brockie, and John Shaneman (walk assistants). Many thanks for their help.

Goldstream Art Show

Goldstream Provincial Park and the Victoria Natural History Society are co-sponsoring a show of natural history related art from September 2 to September 10, 1995 at the Freeman King Visitor Centre.

The title of this year's exhibition will be "The Nature of Island Artists" and will showcase artists from Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The exhibit aims to increase public awareness of the importance of conserving natural areas through the use of a medium that is accessible to all, art.

The successes of the three previous shows in 1988, 1991 and 1993 were due to the participation of a team of Natural History Society Volunteers and the artists involved.

In 1991, over 10,000 people viewed the exhibition and in 1993 almost 13,000. A commission of 25% of the pieces sold will be shared between the Victoria Natural History Society's Freeman King Scholarship fund (for a university student showing outstanding interest in natural history) and implementation of the wildlife viewing plan for Goldstream Park.

Many pieces will be for sale by silent auction. Those that

BC Field Ornithologists Annual General Meeting to Be Held September 15-17

The BC Field Ornithologists is a provincial organization founded in 1991 to promote the study and enjoyment of birds in BC. The 1995 AGM will be held in the Victoria area at Dunsmuir Lodge, overlooking the Saanich Peninsula and the southern Gulf Islands.

The program for the AGM will include a reception on Friday evening, field trips on Saturday and Sunday, guest speakers on land birds, a business meeting and a banquet on Saturday evening with Terry Wahl as the banquet speaker. Terry is well known for his pelagic trips from Westport, Washington.

Registration packages will be sent to all BCFO members in July. Registration packages for non-members can be obtained by leaving your name and mailing address with Mike McGrenere (658-8624) or Ken Morgan (655-1987).

The Art Show Is On Again
sold at a set price and can be still contested at closing time on the last day will be sold via verbal auction. be purchased immediately

HELP!

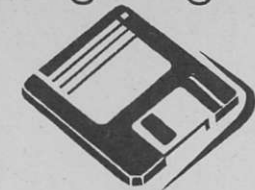
We require a large team of VNHS volunteers to mount the show. If you are able to volunteer during the art show please call Beth or Victor Chatwin at 592-5346 (afternoons and early evening best).

If you can help with show set up or take down phone David Fraser: We are in particular need of some people with the following skills: computer skills, carpentry skills, a good eye, someone that can glue, cut and paste.

If you know of artists that should be invited to the show call David Fraser at 479-0016 or have them send a photograph of the work, and their address and phone number and an indication of the medium to: Victoria Natural History Society Art Show committee, c/o 5836 Old West Saanich Road, Victoria, B.C. V8X 3X3. Photographs accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope will be returned.

Artists, BC Park and VNHS volunteers who work with the show are invited to attend a private wine and cheese opening on September 1 at 7:30 p.m.

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Wildlife Observation System

Special VNHS Member Prices:

Standard Version: \$60.00

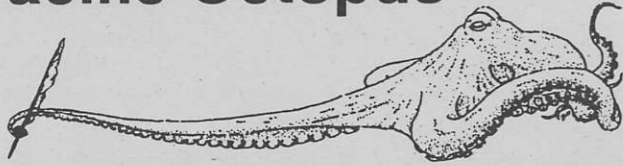
Mapping Version \$130.00

Available at:

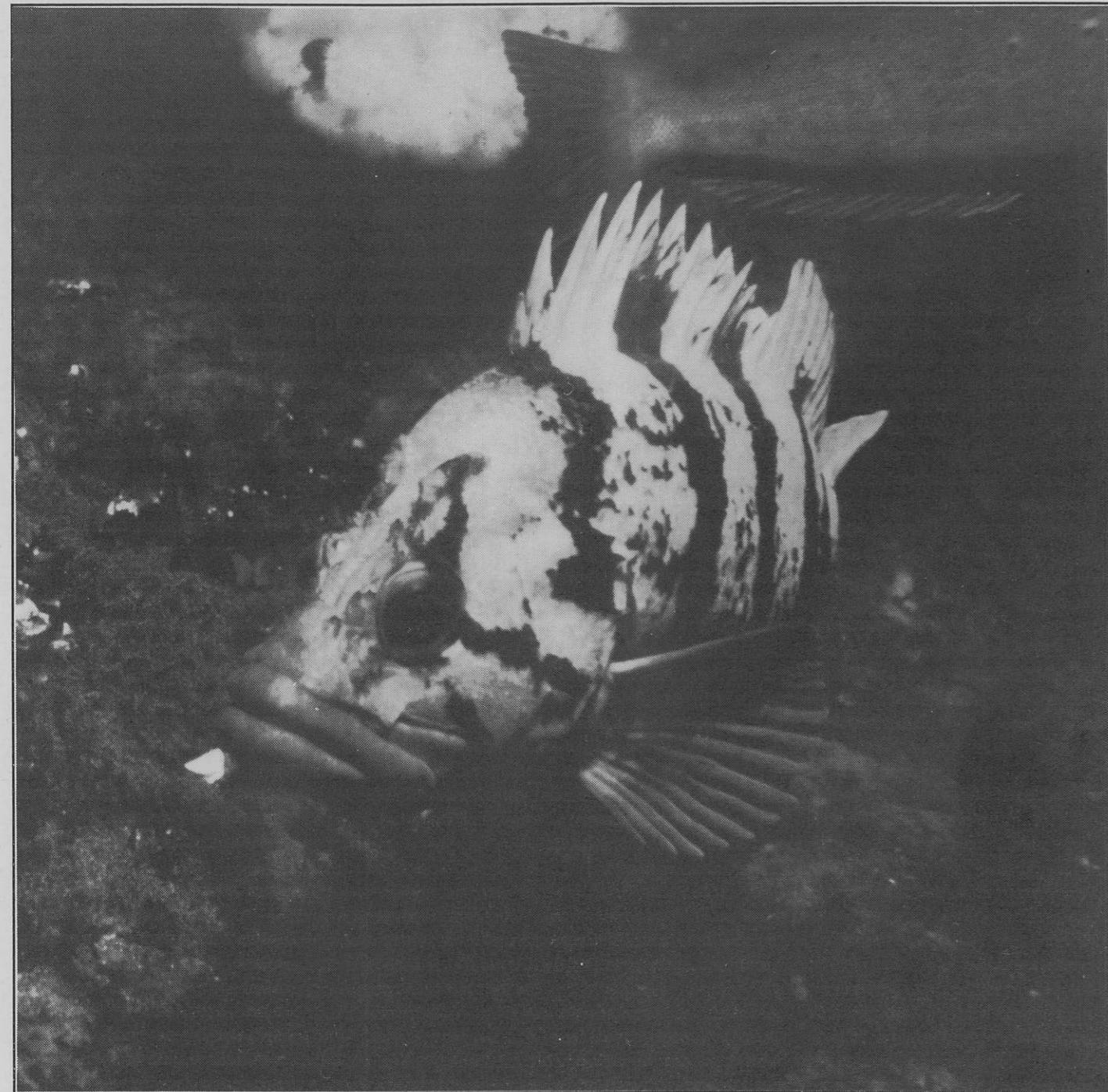
the field-naturalist

Natural History - in Bits and Bytes
1126 Blanshard Street 388-4174

Pacific Octopus



On a clear, moonlit winter's night, two yelloweye rockfish met near the crest of the reef. She was nearly fifty. He was more than seventy. Two well-matured fish reaching the prime of their lives. Together they swam over the reef, cruising over crevasses, filing past caves and overhangs. The



Tiger Rockfish, *Sebastes nigrocinctus* (photo: Andrew M. Fedoruk).

reef crackled and bustled with nocturnal goings-on. It was breeding time for yelloweye rockfish: she had a belly-full of unfertilised eggs (more than two million eggs in fact) and he was ripe with sperm. In an age-old dance they twirled around each other, their bodies a brilliant breeding orange. They were oblivious to other pairs not far off, engaged in the same courtship display.

Reaching the climax of their dance, the male darted in next to the female and as they twirled together, he inserted his gonadal papilla into her genital slit and released his sperm. Without further adieu, the two separated and went their way on the reef.

During the next month the eggs developed steadily inside the female until small black specks on the eggs' surfaces had developed into eyes: larvae now, but really not much more than eggs with eyes. After two months, she released them, millions of fairly undeveloped, wriggling individuals, into the unloving arms of the sea, joining the myriad other organisms that formed the plankton of the sea.

The transparent hatchling swam through the grey misty world that it found itself in. Its eyes were disproportionately large for its slender little body - two black balls on the end of a slim, transparent sliver. Through the nebulous plankton mist it began to focus on the shapes that floated past it. A menacing menagerie of creatures floated or wriggled by. Spherical comb jellies cruised by, a thousand flailing arms in rows around its orb carrying it along, its deadly stinging tentacles dangling aft. Grotesque crab larvae appeared in its vision, enormous eyes glared out below the awesome spikes on their heads. Strange transparent capsules drifted past with monstrous megalops larvae seemingly entombed. Flat ribbon-like eel larvae undulated by. Diatoms twirled and drifted in the soup, dented spaceships in the endless realm of "Plankton Space".

Even though it had hundreds of thousands of brothers and sisters (which one of these it was, it didn't yet know!) it hardly ever saw any of them. All the different kinds of larvae and micro-creatures were mixed up in a pea soup that floated near the surface of the ocean. During the day the larva followed the rest of the floating animals downwards away from the light but at night they wriggled and swam upwards to feed on the phytoplankton that drifted near the surface - dots of green life that spread across the open sea, linking oceans with oceans.

Even stranger beasts would migrate up from the deep at night, past the growing rockfish. Lantern fish with luminescent scales cruised passed. Cloaked angler fish with gaping jaws lined with rows of tiny needles finned around slowly, snapping at anything that came in their path. From the end of a fleshy stalk shined the pale light of its bait - a phosphorescent lobe that lured small animals nearer to the maw. The small fish approached the wriggling light and then finned away madly as its jaws closed to impale another curious larva who went before it.

The plankton world is a dangerous one for a young fish. The rules are simple: eat or be eaten. The fish larva ate anything it could swallow and swam away frantically when anything larger than itself came in to view. Around it others didn't escape. A large jellyfish drifted by with a fish captured by one of its tentacles. Slowly it retracted the tentacle to its body cavity.

It was a race against time. The larva grew at an alarming rate and after a few weeks it had trebled in size. The rest of its body had caught up with its eyes and they looked more in place on its streamlined little body. After a few months a few spots of pigment developed and it started sticking out in the plankton. It was time to return to the reef. Helped by the mysterious sub-sea currents that oceanographers have long sought to explain, the fish larva dropped down into the water. Down, down to the reef that lay below.

The reef that our fish landed on was far out to sea. Lying approximately 180 kilometres off the west coast of Haida Gwaii, it rises up from the seafloor and reaches up through half-a-kilometre of increasingly clear, blue oceanic water, for the roof of the Pacific Ocean. The dark, volcanic rock of the

pinnacle comes to within 20 metres of the surface. It is called Bowie Seamount. Out of sight, out of mind, and unprotected.

Life on the reef was not much easier than in the plankton stream. Every hole and crevasse held potential danger for the small fish. Anemones waved their deadly tentacles in the water and squid darted above the reef.

After twenty years had passed and the two light bands on its side had faded and became replaced by the adult orange, the fish developed ovaries and it became she. For ninety long years she grew and spawned each spring to early summer. For the last seventy years the fish, by now almost thirty pounds in weight, dominated an overhang created by the solidifying larva. She spent most of her time finning slowly along the rim of the overhang. At dawn and at dusk when the light from above was dim on the reef, she would venture out to feed on small fish, squid and crabs. She guarded her territory endlessly and chased away any fish that came near to it. From time-to-time seals, sea lions, dolphins and orcas hunted on the reef and she would dart into the caves and crevasses for refuge as the predators flashed past.

Once a wolf eel eased along the rim of the reef toward her. The black hole of the cave beckoned irresistibly and the wolf eel stopped - closed and opened its prune-like fangs slowly and slithered toward the entrance. The rockfish watched from the darkness and as the wolf eel approached, she puffed her body and with all her fins and rays erect, she went out to meet the devil. Poised in front of the eel, who was coiled at entrance of her cave, she opened her jaws and flashed her gill covers to appear large and frightening. Without warning the wolf eel lunged and struck at the side of the rockfish, closing its jaws onto scales and flesh. As the eel struck, she arched around and bit it fiercely.

The eel writhed in a mid-water coil and a flurry of scales fell from its mouth. The rockfish struck again and grabbed onto the eel's body and again the eel coiled, pushing the rockfish into the side of the cave. Shrimps and mysids scampered out of the way as the two locked in battle. A cloud of debris and silt billowed around them. After a series of timed bites by the rockfish the eel backed off and settled on the bright orange coral, juxtaposed against the dark reef, its tiny polyps retracting at the eel's touch.

The eel eyed the rockfish with small, dark eyes; impulses flew around the eel's synapses and it chose to retreat. Turning, the eel slithered off into the grey-blue light. She followed a short way, as if in pursuit, but then she turned and swam back into her lair, her fins laying flat. Her roving eyes spotted a polychaete worm, dislodged by the fighting, flailing in the cloud of debris that was settling, and she swung around in the water and in a quick lunge the worm disappeared.

As she settled on her pectorals the light from above shone down and showed the white wound on her side from the wolf eel's bite. With the scales and the mucous removed by the bite, it had no protection against bacteria in the water and for several weeks the wound festered and ate into her flesh. Slowly it healed as scar tissue formed beneath it.

For ten more years the rockfish lived on the reef, guarding her refuge and venturing out to feed and to breed, until the day the hook bit into her cheek as she clamped down her jaws on the inviting piece of squid. Her frantic flailing just lodged the hook deeper until a sudden tug lifted her off the reef as the

long-line was reeled in. Her air bladder expanded as she was pulled steadily up through the water, until it pushed her stomach right out of her mouth, showering the water with the remains of a crab recently eaten. Up she went, together with hundreds of other rockfish, many of them old, mature yelloweyes.

A snapped spine ended her century-long life. The otoliths (ear-bones) that would attest to her age were gingerly removed by a fisheries biologist and placed in a container filled with preservative. Her body, now discoloured and faded, was a length statistic on a line, her flanks were destined for a Californian restaurant, the rest of her destined for a dogfishes stomach.

For thousands of years the seamount has survived as a pinnacle of life in the desert of the open ocean. A myriad organisms hustling for space and food. Living cells forming and growing, jaws and juices breaking down cells to build others. Polyps, fans and tentacles searching the liquid space for nutrients. Each day of sunlight trapped by the floating motes of green life, by the wafting algae at the crest of the pinnacle, then passed on. Innumerable cycles forging. Life. Sacred life. Now, most of the rockfish, a keystone species in this isolated system, are gone. Lifted from the reef by the hooks of an "experimental fishery". For the last few years Canada has allowed short but intense fishing on this isolated and unique reef. Dutifully, scientists have collected scientific information about a stock that is likely decimated by the very act of collecting that information in the first place. I think this is an international conservation scandal. Bowie Seamount should be a marine reserve. Very few countries have any seamounts, yet we are not looking after the precious few we do have.

HELP WANTED

**Volunteers required for
behavioral ecology research on
Western Grebes
off Saanich Peninsula
and Gulf Islands.**

**Assistants required for
marine bird surveys on
Sunday mornings
and for observations
of foraging behaviour.**

**Contact: James Clowater
Telephone: 598-4570
E-Mail: clowater@sfu.ca**

CALENDAR

REGULAR MEETINGS will resume in September and are generally held on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month. **Natural History Presentations** (formally known as the General Members Meeting): the second Tuesday of each month. **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday of each month. **Birder's Night:** the fourth Wednesday of each month. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tapes at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

JULY - AUGUST, 1995

Sunday, July 2

Herb Walk. Meet a variety of domestic and wild plants with Carol McGrath. The walk will be in Carol's garden and Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. Pre-register - \$15 fee (475-3730).

Wednesday, July 5

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Sunday, July 9

Bird 'N Breakfast. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Join David Pearce from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. for a walk around Swan Lake. Muffins, cheese, juice, coffee and tea served in the Nature House after the walk. Please pre-register - \$5 fee (free to friends of members)

Wednesday, July 12

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Friday, July 14

Ecological Herbalism: Replanting the Fields We Love. Join Rosemary Gladstar from the California School of Herbal Studies for a talk and slide presentation on edible and medicinal plants. This workshop is part I of a series (Part II is on July 15) and is located at the University of Victoria, Commons Building, Green Room and is from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Call Carol McGrath at 475-3730 or register at Good Nature Market, 109 - 3995 Quadra St., fee is \$25 or \$75 for both talks.

Saturday, July 15

Six Steps to Becoming an Excellent Herbalist. Join Rosemary Gladstar from the California School of Herbal Studies for part II of this workshop (see July 14 for part I) at the Happy Valley Herb Farm, 3497 Happy Valley Road.

Call Carol McGrath at 475-3730 or register at the Good Nature Market, 109 - 3995 Quadra Street. Fee is \$60 or \$75 for both workshops.

Saturday, July 15.

Intertidal Investigation. Join Gordon Green (387-6034) and Kelly Sendall to explore the rocky intertidal zone at Macauley Point. Meet at the Esquimalt Anglers Association parking lot at the foot of Lampson Street at 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, July 19

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Sunday, July 22

Introduction to Herbs. Plant identification, medicine making, harvesting/drying/storage, herbal remedies for common conditions and first aid. Call Carol McGrath at 475-3730 to register, fee is \$60.

Wednesday, July 26

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Saturday, July 29.

More Intertidal Investigation. Meet Phil Lambert (477-5922) at the Ogden Point Breakwater at 10:00 a.m. to check out the life between a rock and a hard place (other rocks!). We may have divers there to bring up some subtidal life as well.

Sunday, July 30.

Seabirds, Shorebirds and Songbirds. Join David Allinson (380-8233) to experience the incredible diversity of birds in the Sidney Island area. The day will start with a cruise around Mandarte Island, the largest seabird colony in Georgia Strait. The spectacular cliff face on the south side of the island is covered with nesting cormorants, gulls and guillemots. An elusive pair of Tufted Puffins also nest on the island. Then on to Sidney Island where early migrant shorebirds congregate on the tidal flats. Topped off by a walk on the forest trail loop for songbirds. Bring a lunch, drinks and \$10.00 ferry fare. Meet at the ferry dock at the foot of Beacon Avenue in Sidney at 8:15 a.m.

Wednesday, August 2

Wednesday Bird Walks With Max. Morning walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels welcome. Bring binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Wednesday, August 9

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird

watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Saturday, August 12

Still More Intertidal Investigation. The rocky intertidal area at Whiffen Spit in Sooke is home to a tremendous variety of marine organisms. Join Phil Lambert (477-5922) and discover who these critters are and how they survive in this harsh environment. Car pool at Helmcken Park and Ride at 8:30 a.m. or meet at the parking lot at the end of Whiffen Spit Road at 9:30 a.m. Don't forget your rubber boots.

Sunday, August 13

Bird 'N Breakfast. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Join David Allinson from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. for a walk around Swan Lake. Muffins, cheese, juice, coffee and tea served in the Nature House after the walk. Please pre-register - \$5 fee (free to friends Members)

Sunday, August 13

Birding at Cowichan Bay. Derek Marven leads our annual expedition to explore the Cowichan River Estuary. Migrating shorebirds, waterfowl and Purple Martin nestlings will be the highlights of the day. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride to car pool at 8:00 a.m. or meet Derek at 9:00 a.m. on the Cowichan Bay Dock Road.

Wednesday, August 16

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Wednesday, August 23

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Sunday, August 27

Sidney Island Birding. Spend the day on this delightful island searching for shorebirds, waterfowl and songbirds. Meet David Pearce at the ferry dock at the foot of Beacon Avenue in Sidney in time for the 9:00 a.m. sailing. Bring lunch, drinks and \$7.00 ferry fare.

Wednesday, August 30

Wednesday Morning Bird Walks With Max. Morning bird walks around Swan Lake every Wednesday. Bird watchers of all skill levels are welcome. Bring your binoculars and hats. Allow 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Friday September 15, to Sunday September 17

B.C. Field Ornithologists Annual General Meeting, will be held at Dunsmuir Lodge. The program will include a reception Friday, field trips, guest speakers, a business meeting and a banquet on Saturday.

Claudia
Weiss and Darren Copley
657 Beaver Lake Road
VICTORIA BC V8Z 5N9



CRD Parks
nature programs
Summer '95
June • July • Aug
Capital Regional District Parks

summer at a glance

June

- 4 *On the boardwalk* (Francis/King)
- 10 *50+ orienteering* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 11 *The lost diary* (Witty's Lagoon)
- 17 *Life on the rocks* (Witty's Lagoon)
- 25 *Spring into summer* (Elk/Beaver Lake)

July

- 1 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 1 *Sidney Days* (Tulista Park)
- 2 *Peek into the past* (Francis/King)
- 3 *Homes, havens and hideouts* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 4 *Woodpecker whittlings* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 8 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 8 *50+ Budding birders* (Witty's Lagoon)*
- 9 *Strawberry Festival* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 11 *Giants of another Age* (Island View Beach)
- 15 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 15 *Seals! Seals!* (Witty's Lagoon)
- 16 *The plant and people connection* (Thetis Lake)
- 18 *Birding basics* (Witty's Lagoon)*
- 22 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 22 *Tree tea and other medicines* (Devonian)
- 23 *Slug Fest!* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 25 *Bugwise* (Francis/King)
- 29 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 29 *Roche Cove rambles* (Roche Cove)
- 30 *Sunrise seekers* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 30 *Up, up and away* (Lone Tree Hill)

August


- 1 *The Sea: our bounty* (Albert Head Lagoon)
- 1 *Sunrise seekers* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 5 *Compass capers* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 6 *Fabulous frog festival!* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 7 *Western Communities Day* (Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre)


- 8 *Woodpecker whittlings* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 12 *Sunrise seekers* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 12 *50+ Steam pit cook* (Witty's Lagoon)*
- 13 *Sunrise seekers* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 13 *Birds of Island View Beach — A beginner's look* (Island View Beach)
- 15 *Pictures of the past* (East Sooke)
- 19 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 19 *A peek into the past* (Francis/King)
- 20 *Bear Hill bramble* (Bear Hill)
- 22 *Homes, havens and hideouts* (Elk/Beaver Lake)
- 24 *Snake day* (Witty's Lagoon)
- 26 *Sunrise seekers canoeing* (Elk/Beaver Lake)*
- 26 *Knock knock, who's there?* (Witty's Lagoon)
- 27 *Walk on the wild side* (East Sooke)
- 29 *Giants of another age* (Island View Beach)

*Note: All guided nature walks last approximately 1½ hours unless otherwise noted.
* Indicates programs requiring a fee and pre-registration. To register call CRD Parks at 478-3344.*

nature facilities

Drop in before or after your hike. Check out the displays, sit and read awhile, or chat with one of our volunteer naturalists.

Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
Nature Information Centre
(Metchosin Road in Metchosin) 

Francis/King Regional Park
Nature House
(Munn Road in Saanich) 

12 to 4 p.m. (to June 26th: Sat., Sun, and holiday Mondays)
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (June 28th to Labour Day, Sept 5th; Wed to Sun, and holiday Mondays)