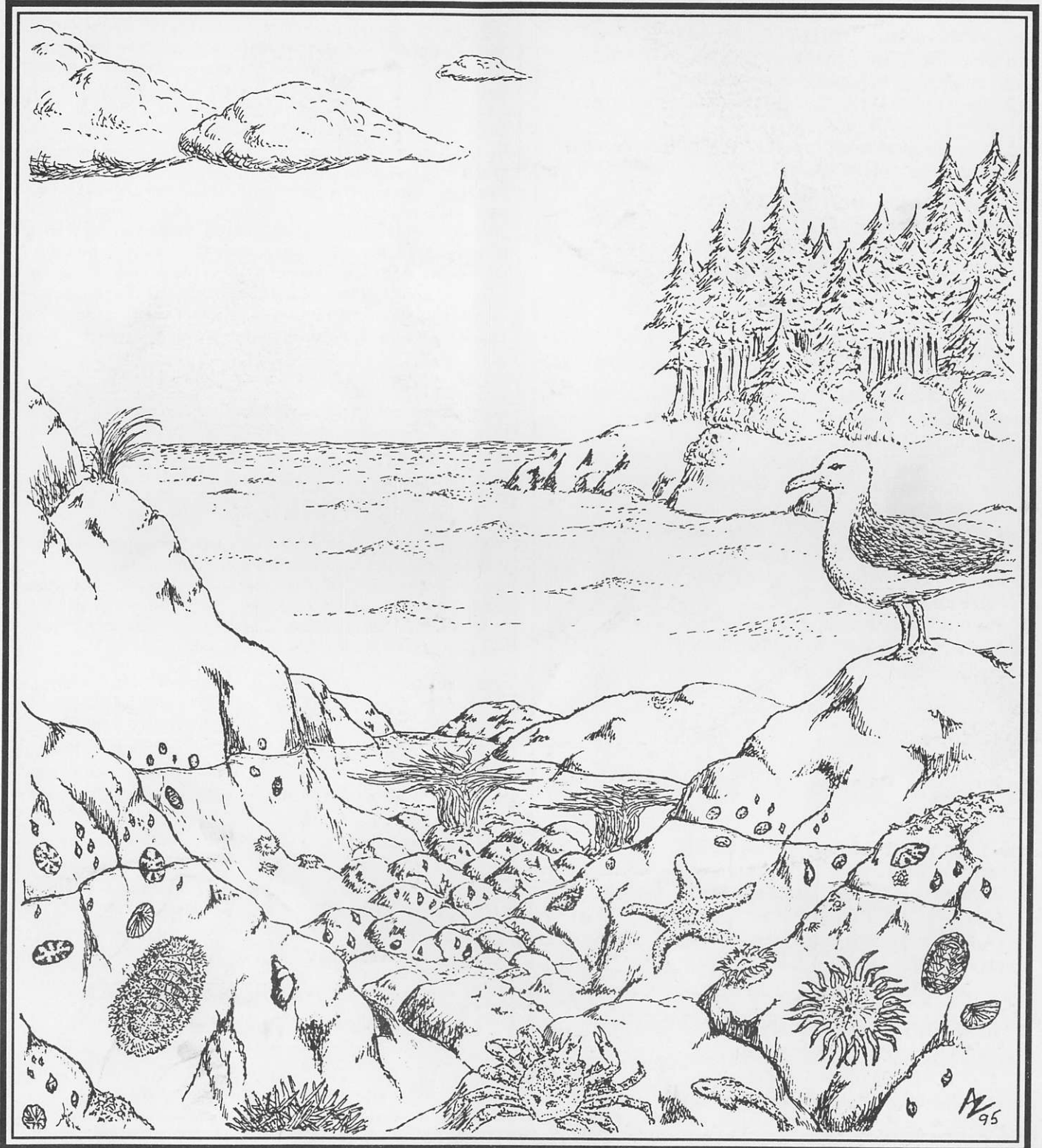




The Victoria NATURALIST

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1995
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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



The Victoria NATURALIST

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Editor: Warren Drinnan, Work—361-3543, Home—652-9618

Associate Editors: Dalia Hull and Pam Thuringer

Contributors: Bev Glover, Marillyn Lambert

Desktop Publishing: Robert Allington, 595-7803

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2nd Floor, 525 Head St., Victoria, B.C. V9A 5S1
Phone: 361-3543
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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

Our cover is a drawing by local artist Andrew Zoltay.


“My inspiration for this drawing is based on the following. Growing up on the Pacific Ocean's edge has fostered my interest in the creatures which inhabit its shores. I have spent many hours exploring the coast, and with each visit, I am amazed at the diversity of life I encounter.”

Andrew's primary focus is in sculpture of marine mammals. The theme of the next Marine night, on September 25th, is a talk on the seashores from a naturalists point of view.

Thank you

The VNHS would like to thank Lynton Burger for his contributions to The Naturalist. He is moving to South Africa and can no longer produce the Octopus. We wish him all the best!



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A Shorebird Reporting Primer

This article is reprinted from "Winging It" a Newsletter of the American Birding Association, Inc. Volume 7, Number 7 - July, 1995.

Make a copy of this information and keep it in the back of your field guide. Besides observing the colors of the flags and/or bands, be sure to mark carefully the position of each one: left or right leg, above or below the joint (the "knee").

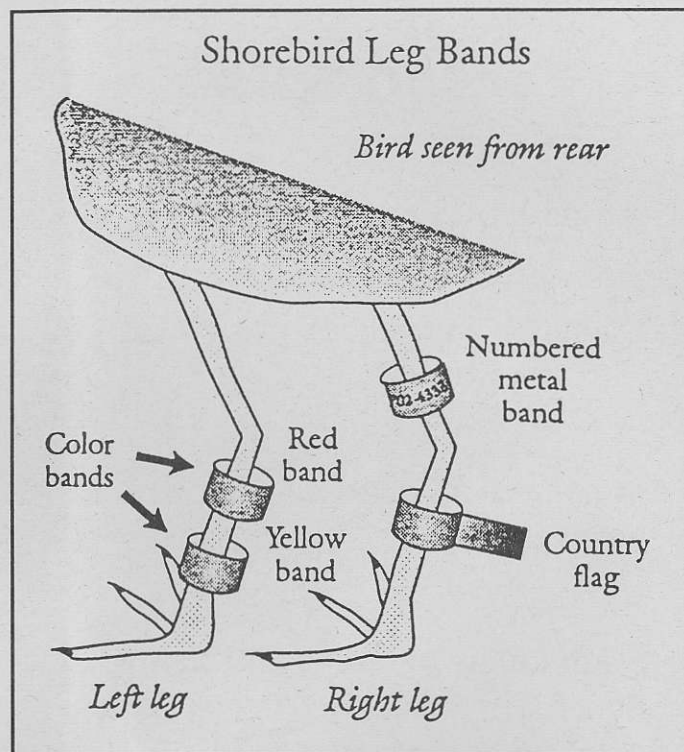
The Pan American Shorebird Program has assigned one or two flag colors to each participating country. For example, all birds banded anywhere in the United States will carry a dark green flag, in addition to a combination of various colored bands.

There are two standardized shortcuts to notating the order of bands and flags. No matter which you use, the order is always given as if you were viewing the bird from the rear. In the bird illustrated, the notation would be reported as:

—,RY:m,Fr

The dash indicates a position on the leg that is without bands. Color bands are written with capital letters. The colon separates the two legs, and the comma separates bands above the joint from those below it. The numbered metal or aluminum US Fish and Wildlife Service band is expressed by a lower-case "m". The flag is abbreviated with an upper-case "F" followed by a lower-case letter denoting the color. This example, Fr, indicates a red flag, the color assigned to birds banded in Chile.

The second shortcut involves creating a quadrant and filling in the same abbreviations; see diagram at left. The information to the left of the vertical line represents the left leg; to the right, the right leg. Information above the horizontal line represents bands and flags above the joint; below it, below the joint, indicating directly which band is on top. Dashes, again, state the lack of bands.



Note that both dark green and light green flags are used. Distinguish between them by marking GD or GI. Be aware that the plastic used for flags and bands tends to fade, so that a color that might appear white might once have been blue. Also, flags or bands do occasionally fall off. Include the location of your sighting, the species and all pertinent band or flag information. If you are able to read the metal band number, send that information, too. Be sure to provide your name and full street address. Send all shorebird sightings (but only shorebirds) to Dr. Cheri Gratto-Trevor, c/o Pan American Shorebird Program, Canadian Wildlife Service, 115 Perimeter Rd., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0X4 Canada.

Bird bands and color-marker sightings of all species (goose collars, leg bands, patagial markers, etc.) can be sent to Mary Gustafson at the Bird Banding laboratory, 12100 Beech Forest Rd., Laurel, MD. 20708. The e-mail address is: BBL@nbs.gov. She will forward shorebird sighting to Gratto-Trevor.

Pan American Shorebird Program Flag Codes

North America	El Salvador — red over blue	Columbia — light green over yellow
Canada — white	Panama — red over white	Ecuador — light green over red
Mexico — red over yellow		Guyana — light green over dark green
United States — dark green	Caribbean Islands	French Guiana — light green over blue
	Haiti — yellow over red	Peru — yellow
Central America	Puerto Rico — yellow over dark green	Brazil — blue
Honduras — red over gray	Dominican Republic — yellow over white	Chile — red
Costa Rica — red over black		Bolivia — orange over red
Guatemala — red over orange	South America	Paraguay — orange over yellow
Nicaragua — red over dark green	Venezuela — black	Uruguay — orange over blue
Belize — red over light green	Suriname — light green	Argentina — orange

Clone or Coincidence

By Brian Gates

Ah, the coincidences of life that make things interesting. On June 24, while on a nature cruise in southeast Alaska, I led a group from a rocky beach up a wet and muddy bear trail into Spurt Lake, near Juneau. In a bog meadow above the lake we happened upon a recently dead raptor.

After showing this keen but soggy group of hikers why it was a Great-horned Owl and not a hawk or eagle, and after speculating on the cause of death (partly eaten, but no conclusion), I plucked a long primary feather — Primary VII, I believe — from the right wing (yes, I know — illegal and all that, but after all, I teach bird identification and just had to show people back on the ship the soft texture of an owl's feathers, a factor that renders most of these birds so silent in flight).

At home the next day, I showed by wife and family, and left the feather on the kitchen counter. Two days later my wife came in the back door carrying "the feather" and asking how it came to be lying under the rhododendron bush below the kitchen window. Open window and a breeze, I guess. Or the cat dragged it out? I admired it again and placed it back on the counter.

Two hours later, after shuffling mail and telephone messages, I looked and realized that there were two feathers on the counter. Two identical feathers! Same colour patterns. Exactly the same length. One marginally broader than the other. But both "right primary VII" and both from Great-horned Owls.

Now, I have seen and heard Great-horned Owls in my yard on occasion — perhaps 5 times in 20 years — but what are the chances? What are the odds that one should stand on my roof, molt a wing feather (I can only conclude that it was a molted feather . . . not other feathers about) and that that feather should settle to the ground about 15 feet from where the identical feather from the Alaska bird lay on the counter?

Someone suggested that if I wait long enough I'll have all the parts and can make my own owl. I'm waiting.

Marine Night Spawned on April 24, 1995!

Conducting an intertidal survey is a good way of getting people to observe and appreciate the life there, contends Dr. Bill Austin at the first Marine Night. Dr. Bill Austin is the Director of the Marine Ecology Station in Cowichan Bay. He reported to an enthusiastic audience of sixteen, about a project in which several leaders aided by volunteers conducted an intertidal survey of Burrard Inlet in 1994. He demonstrated some of the techniques for obtaining quantitative data in a repeatable way, an important aspect of biological sampling. This summer he will return to re-sample the same spots.

A discussion followed on how the Natural History Society might conduct surveys in the Victoria area. It was pointed out that the Botanical Beach Park near Port Renfrew and the proposed trail to Sooke, will open up that coastal stretch to greater human impact. Perhaps a survey of the stretch would be a useful project. Without baseline abundance data we

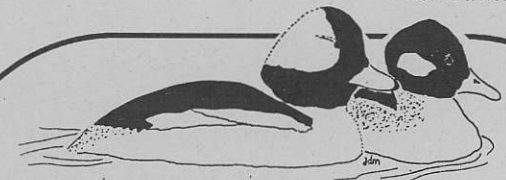
have no way to quantify future changes.

Some members felt they were not quite ready to launch such a project and asked for a series of talks and field trips to provide some "training." In the meantime, Phil Lambert offered to contact Parks and find out what studies have been done at Botanical Beach. A series of three field trips to some local beaches were arranged for the summer months. The audience also suggested topics for speakers. At the May meeting, yours truly presented a talk on the diversity of west coast marine life. Considering it was a bright and warm spring evening we had a good turn out of about 25 people. Let's hope we can build on that in the Fall.

As of this writing, we have run three summer field trips, one to Macauley Point where about 15 people were introduced to the intertidal treasures of a local rocky shore by Gordon Green. A second field trip was with twenty people at the Ogden Point Breakwater on a blustery day. Although the intertidal was not as accessible as we would have liked, the highlight was our dive team of Gordon Green and Lisa Kirkendale bringing up some subtidal specimens for all to see. Then on August 12 Phil and Marilyn Lambert led a dozen enthusiastic beach crawlers at Whiffin Spit in Sooke. After a brief shower the sun came out and we spent a pleasant three hours grovelling amongst the seaweed and rolling rocks to uncover all manner of marine plants and animals.

Marine Night will reconvene on September 25th with David Stirling presenting a talk on the seashore from a naturalist's point of view. In October Gordon Green will give a talk on west coast crustaceans. See the events calendar for details.

Phil Lambert



Fall Birding Courses with: the field-naturalist

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- led by Bruce Whittington and Andrew MacDonald



Beyond Beginning Birding - \$70 plus GST

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- tips on difficult birds and birding by ear

Register soon by phone, 388-4174 or in person at The Field-Naturalist, 1126 Blanshard, Victoria, BC

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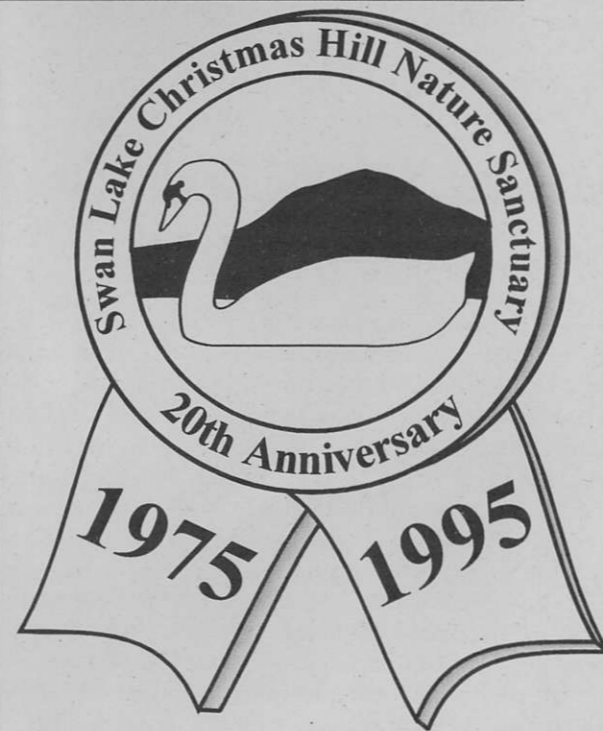
Nature Walks

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The Victoria Natural History Society provides an annual grant of \$2,500 to the Nature Sanctuary Society which goes toward the maintenance of a safe trail system and the control of invasive exotic plants at Swan Lake (photo: courtesy Swan Lake Nature Centre).

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary — the First Twenty Years

By Terry Morrison

On June 16th, 1995, the Nature Sanctuary Society turned twenty! The Society was formed and officially incorporated on that date in 1975.

The Sanctuary's story actually began in the early 60's, when the Municipality of Saanich began acquiring lands around Swan Lake and Christmas Hill with the aim of retaining the area in its natural state, for the use and enjoyment of the public. (Records indicated that much of the property around the lake had been purchased by 1973, for approximately \$230,000!)

By 1973, the Municipality felt that it was time to start opening and operating the site. An imaginative proposal was produced and published by the Planning Department, which called for extensive development work, of what would be a beautiful sanctuary, which would preserve the unique assets of the site and provide excellent educational facilities.

The proposal also advocated completion of acquisition of lands around the lake, the upper parts of Christmas Hill, and a connecting corridor of land between the two sites, along the route of Nelthorpe Street. Thanks to substantial investments of

funds by the National Second Century Fund of B.C. and the provincial Greenbelt Fund, the remaining lands around the lake were bought. Only a relatively small number of lots around the edge remained out of public control. Both the organizations mentioned leased their purchases to the Municipality of Saanich on long-term leases at nominal rents, on condition that the land be used for a nature sanctuary. By 1980, the Municipality had also secured sufficient land to assure the availability of the connecting corridor to Christmas Hill. More than half of the land required on the hill had also been bought. Between 1965 and 1978, approximately \$650,000 was spent on buying land around Swan Lake for the proposed Nature Sanctuary.

After consultation with local naturalists, school districts, the University of Victoria and the Regional and Provincial Governments, the Municipality decided to form a Society under the Societies Act of B.C., to develop and operate the site. It was named the "Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Centre Society" and was duly incorporated in June of 1975. Many of the organizations consulted with are now members of the Board, and send representatives to serve on the Board, making the Sanctuary truly a community effort.



Swan Lake (photo: courtesy Swan Lake Nature Centre).

The Society hired its first staff in the summer of 1975 to carry out an extensive survey of the lands and the lake, and to produce the first site development plans. In the fall of 1975, under a Federal Labour Grant, the first site development projects were undertaken, with the construction of the first section of trail and floating boardwalk, the initial efforts at tree planting, and the beginnings of the Sanctuary's education program.

As the Society did not have a building in which to base its operations, the site crew was given a back corner office space on the main floor of the Municipal Hall. This was probably the first time that dripping, muddy chest waders were worn regularly in the offices there (and probably the last time!). In the spring of 1976, the crew was ushered out of the Municipal Hall and into a somewhat derelict 1912-vintage farmhouse on Ralph Street, complete with a pond in the dirt basement every winter when the lake waters rose. This building served until 1977, when the residence at the end of Swan Lake Road—the current Nature House site—came available. The bedrooms were converted to offices, the dining room and living room transformed into the display area/classroom, and the one bathroom (with one toilet) had to meet the needs of staff and classes of children. Though this house was often bursting at the seams, it served as the headquarters for staff and program activities for 10 years.

During that time, a concrete-lined swimming pool on the lake side of the house had to be removed. However while it was still full of water, it did serve as a site to raise and release 50 young Wood Ducks, and once as a rehabilitation area for an injured swan. In 1984 the pool was filled with rocks, dirt and soil, to form the "wetland" area of the Native Plant Garden, and the slate from around the pool edge provided the material for the trail through the garden.

In the meantime, with the assistance and support of Saanich Municipality, the Societys member organizations, and countless devoted community members, the trail facilities were developed, trees and shrubs were planted, and the education programs began to flourish. Residents of Saanich began to appreciate the real value of this undiscovered gem in the midst of a quickly growing urban area.

In 1986 the Society began developing plans for the new Nature House facility. Though the temporary Nature House was physically sound, it occupied the most logical site for the new facility, with its southern exposure and commanding view of the lake. The decision was made to remove the house, and use the original foundation for the new building. Beginning with a \$100,000 grant from the Municipality of Saanich, the Society mounted a fund raising campaign, and by the spring of 1988 had raised another \$400,000 from the community and the Provincial Government, to build and furnish the Nature House

and provide some of the displays. The facility was officially opened in September of 1988.

The Sanctuary did not remain undiscovered for long. With the addition of the new Nature House, the use of the area, especially by community residents, increased rapidly. Participation in the Sanctuary's programs swelled from 850 in 1976 to 15,279 in 1994!

Since its humble beginnings in 1975, the Society has enjoyed a close relationship with the Victoria Natural History Society. The VNHS provides an annual grant of \$2,500 which goes toward the maintenance of a safe trail system and the control of invasive exotic plants. The VNHS is also a member of the Nature Sanctuary Society, and sends a representative to serve on the board. In this way, the VNHS maintains direct input into the decisions which have shaped the Sanctuary over the past 20 years. Hopefully that relationship will continue to flourish over the next 20.

Real Ducks Don't Eat Bread!

Taken from a Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Centre Society Pamphlet

Any time of the year is a great time to feed ducks in Victoria. For many families a trip to the local pond to feed the ducks is a great way to spend an afternoon. As friends of waterfowl, we always want to keep the best interests of the birds in mind when selecting duck food.

Feeding any type of bread or crackers to ducks, therefore, is not recommended. Veterinarians and wildlife officials give the following reasons for not feeding bread to waterfowl.

Bread is of low nutritional value for waterfowl and does not contain enough fibre for proper digestion by birds. Bread, especially white bread, tends to swell and get caught in a bird's digestive tract, which could lead to digestion problems. This swelling also causes birds to feel "full" and may result in the birds becoming less inclined to search for their natural food sources which would provide them with the proper nutrition they required to remain healthy. It is also not very likely that birds benefit from the sugar, salts and chemicals which most breads typically contain and which are foreign to their diet.

Leftover uneaten bread poses other problems as well. Waterfowl can contract Aspergillosis: a respiratory infection caused by the inhalation of mold spores from decaying bread. Family pets have become ill from unknowingly eating moldy bread left over from duck feedings.

Grain, "flatted" or rolled oats are much better alternatives to household breads for duck food. All float and have a fibre content closer to the natural diet of water birds. They are easily digested by waterfowl and pose no health risks for either birds or pets.

All waterfowl will gladly eat household bread if offered, in the same way children will eat "junk food" if offered. Be kind to our birds and feed them whole grains instead of bread. After all, we do want to keep the best interests of our feathered friends in mind.

House Finches Flock to Brassica

By Yorke Edwards

If you like house finches you should be growing field mustard (*Brassica campestris*). It alone attracts far more birds than any other plant in our garden. The local bible on luring wildlife into gardens, *Attracting Backyard Wildlife* by Bill Merilees, does not mention it, nor do the many magazines article suggesting that we grow gardens to attract birds and butterflies by growing irresistible plants.

House finches flock to both the yellow flowers and seeds of this mustard, briefly to eat parts of the countless small flowers in May, later to ripe seeds through July into October. The plants are shrub-sized, 1 to 1.5 m high, and in June many lose their flowers and most leaves to become yellowy-green skeletons of their former selves, but loaded with seed pods up to 7 cm long. In wetter sites they stay green longer. As I write, our largest mustard is ripening an estimated 2000 pods, while a small one near it has 24.

Field mustard seems to like dry sites in dry climates. Harold St. John, in his *Flora of Southeastern Washington and Adjacent Idaho*, places it as a weed in sagebrush and bunchgrass country. Our plants are in Oak Bay where urbanization decades ago overgrew grassy meadows with groves of Garry Oaks. Droughty summers and perhaps frequent fires precluded coniferous forest. Our *Brassica* plants grow a few yards from the sea in an untended and rarely watered strip of grasses and herbs thoroughly salted by seawater spray during winter storms.

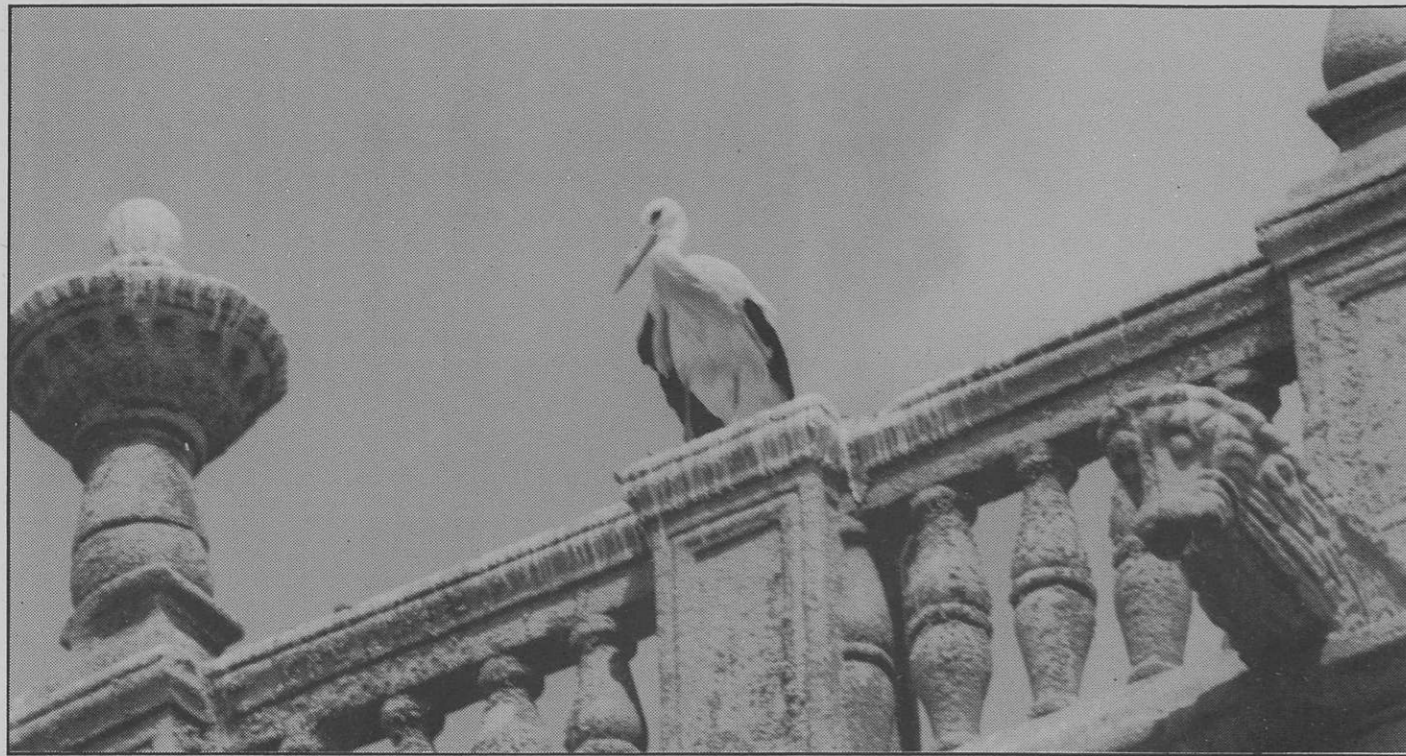
Three floras in my library list up to five species of mustard in the genus *Brassica*, and one adds two species well known as cabbage and turnip (*Brassica* is latin for cabbage). One flora calls *B. campestris* "rutabaga." Another member of the genus is black Mustard which has the seeds that we grind into black pepper. All *Brassica* species found wild in North America are classed as weeds, and all are foreigners, natives of Eurasia.

But my particular plants are not weeds because a weed is a plant growing where not wanted, and I want them. For months they are often the liveliest places in the garden.

WANTED VNHS VOLUNTEERS

The VNHS Board of Directors would like 3 to 5 VNHS members to participate on a short-term committee that will investigate membership growth and fees issues. The committee will first meet in September.

Please contact Jeff Stone (370-2449)
to express your interest
or for further information.



White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*, (photo: courtesy Robert W. Maule).

Stork Town

by Robert W. Maule

"I must be losing my mind," I lamented. "I forgot the real name of *Stork Town*?" I had never seen such an abundance of nesting White Stork and thought I could never forget anything about that incredible experience. My wife and I had discovered this spectacle in May of 1994, quite by accident, as we drove the back roads of western Spain. Now, in April of 1995, I was ready to return for some more serious observation—but what was the name of the town?

Finally, after a great deal of map study and a process of elimination, we decided the town must be Brozas. Soon I was on my way from our holiday house in Portugal, across the now unguarded border to Spain, navigating toward what I hoped was our *Stork Town*. Two other enthusiasts joined me.

As we neared Brozas along a deserted road, the C522, I commented that when we had come into town from the other direction in 1984 we had been rewarded by a good view of a Hoopoe, that spectacular highlight of any North American's birding trip in Europe. No sooner said when our sharp-eyed back-seat passenger Mary cried, "There's one!" By the time I had braked to a stop, the bird had dropped from sight, but immediately another obediently landed on the roadside stone wall less than 50 feet ahead. There he stood, showing off his long decurved bill and spectacular crest. Soon he flew into the field, flashing his cryptically striped black and white wings, but not before he had rewarded us with a short sample of his "poo poo" cry from which he takes his English name. This wonderful bird belongs to the monotypic family Upupidae and bears the tongue-pleasing binomial, *Upupa epops*.

Such a sighting was an obvious good omen, but soon we found more definitive proof that we were on the right road. At kilometer post 35, a small pond glistened among the dry fields to the east of the road. On all sides of the pond scores of stork were striding solemnly or standing impassively, while still more were moving slowly through the fields to the west. We were quite dazzled by the sheer numbers of stork. As long as we stayed in the car, the birds continued their stately, majestic walk in search of prey. As soon as we opened a car door, however, first one, then several, then squadrons of these regal birds took to flight. Each group flashed striking patterns of black and white against the azure Spanish sky. We assumed that these individuals were the feeding, off-duty mates and that a massive nesting site must be nearby. *Stork Town* was undoubtedly close at hand.

Although we were more anxious than ever to reach our goal, other opportunities stopped us again and again. Once it was to observe raptors, an unidentifiable falcon and both Black and Red Kites. At another point we walked among the fields to the sound and sight of numerous Crested Larks and clouds of Spanish Sparrows (*Passer hispaniolensis*), those country cousins of the ubiquitous House Sparrow. Each swirling sparrow flight contained hundreds, if not thousands, of birds. Mary's husband Alan, an avid birder, told me he had never walked a more productive field.

Then, once again our alert back-seat passenger brought us to a quick stop with the cry "Owl". I missed this treat the first time, but on our way back we stopped again at Kilometer marker 33 and the owl was still in evidence, this time atop a low stone wall some 75 meters to the west of the road. Our diminutive friend turned out to be a Little Owl (*Athene noctua*), an 8 1/2 inch, partly diurnal, predator of farm and stony open lands. Peterson says that this owl has a "fierce, frowning expression." Mary disagreed and felt that the bird's delightful, light-colored

eyebrows bestowed more of a professorial air, albeit a professor scowling at a particularly inept class.

At last we approached the junction with the C523 and could see the town of Brozas. Now we were certain. There once again was *Stork Town*, centered on its hill, two churches prominent in silhouette on the sky line. Ignoring the numerous nests on outlying buildings, we drove directly to the principal church, the center of stork life in Brozas. Here every available flat surface atop the church held stork nests, ranging from the impressive mounds of sticks that must have taken years to construct, to the rudimentary, insignificant efforts of neophyte nesters. We decided the largest nests belonged to Grandpa and Grandma Stork, with successive generations occupying increasingly smaller accumulations.

The White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) had long been one of my favorite birds. I had seen it in the past in various parts of its breeding range, from Denmark, to Iraq and Iran, and also enjoyed watching vast migrating flocks in Turkey. The birds I had seen in various parts of Portugal and Spain are migratory like their more northerly cousins, although some in the more southern part of Iberia remain throughout the year. According to *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, in most cases the various populations of storks tend to winter in separate and distinct areas, with the Spanish breeding population concentrating from the Niger inundation zone (Mali) to northern Nigeria. These birds cross to Africa across the Straights of Gibraltar, while the more easterly populations make the voyage across the Bosphorus.

To stand in the streets of Brozas is a memorable experience. Soaring stork seem to appear from all directions, homing toward nests. White and black wings, and bright red daggers of bills stand out against a bright blue sky. Soon wings spill lift, and long red "landing gear" drop to support the birds as they settle gently and balance on or adjacent to the nest. Almost inevitably, the newly arrived bird demonstrates its bill-clattering display. Throwing its head backwards rapidly, until its crown touches its back, the bird then more slowly returns its head forward, clattering its mandibles together rapidly. The sound carries for long distances and is unforgettable in the confines of a village where the clattering echoes down narrow lanes. One source likens the sound to that of distant machine-gun fire, but not like any such weapon that I have ever heard. The best description I can offer is that of two small boards rapidly clapped together.

There was no way to observe the contents of the nests. Even if we could have found a way to climb to the belfry, we would not want to risk disrupting the birds. We believe, however, that egg laying had not yet occurred as there seemed to be no concerted effort to incubate. Some birds were still nest building, in a rather desultory manner, although we understand that this behavior can continue throughout the nesting season. When we had visited in 1994 it was later in the season and the young were already to be seen, distinguished from the adults by their all black, less prominent bill. There were no immatures to be seen this time.

Although fascinated by the constant activity of the storks, we were distracted from time to time by other species. Sparrows, and possibly other small birds, made themselves at home in the sides of the larger stork nests, coming and going with nesting material of their own. The host storks appeared not to

mind, or, to be more accurate, ignored the constant movement of their numerous "guests". Overhead, feeding Barn Swallows feasted, swirling above and through the narrow streets. They were joined in their feeding by Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*). They too seemed to be taking insects on the wing. This was a surprise to us, but later reading confirmed that this species often feeds in this manner. Adding to the cacophony were several Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*), uttering their characteristic and unforgettable high pitched, metallic, "jack".

Brozas has little to offer the tourist, other than its avifauna. There is a pleasant small square, but no shops of interest. The church itself is worth a visit if the door is unlocked. I can find no information about its history, but it is obviously old. The church is much more grandiose than would seem justified by the town. The portals are Romanesque, but the interior is Gothic, with attractive, ornate altars indicating later Baroque additions. Like most churches and cathedrals of the area, it appears to have evolved over the centuries, defying any simple description of its architectural style. It does have one distinction not shared with many other churches—the pavement on all sides has been boldly "whitewashed" by the resident storks. Parishioners coming to Mass in Sunday finery must require the shelter of a parasol, or be subject to an added decoration or two. We were surprised that the villagers seem to take no notice at all of the abundant bird life around them.

Become an Observer

For the last two and a half year, Ruth and Gordon Telford have been 'Observers' for the VNHS's Parks and Conservation Committee.

"We live right beside Devonian Park," says Ruth. "It's not a huge commitment—mainly its noticing and providing an 'overall watchfulness'. I'm watching for any disrupting or destruction of the natural balance of things".

Our society currently has 30 Observers willing to walk through a natural area or along a shoreline on a regular basis and report any deterioration to the committee. Two years back, the Telfords noticed repair work being done to navigational poles located in the pond in Devonian Park. They also have observed that red-winged blackbirds, which used to winter in the spot, have disappeared. This information and a report on other damage was conveyed to the CRD so that in the future, work could be scheduled outside of the breeding window.

We invite others to join the program. Observers are needed for Ardmore Shoreline, Panama Flats, Songhees West Bay Walk Way, Saxe and Macaulay Points and Thetis Lake Park. Your own favourite area could also be added to the list.

If you are interested in helping to protect the environment by becoming an Observer, contact Tony Embleton at 595-6812.

As Brozas is far from normal tourist travel (we saw no others on either of our visits), the residents must have wondered why we strange North Americans showed such an interest. Unlike their Portuguese neighbors, the Spanish of the area seem cold and unfriendly, ignoring our proffers of a "Buenos Dias" here and there.

This article would be incomplete without at least an attempt to quantify the town's stork population, but we found it difficult to arrive at an estimate. We tried to count the nests on the main church, but many were barely visible from the ground. We believe there were probably at least 30 nests on the main church, plus 20 or more on the second church and dozens more elsewhere in and around the town. One source states that there were 44 nesting pairs in 1989, but we believe that the total now may be twice that number. The impressive quantity of grazing stork south of town tends to support this conclusion. Again it was difficult to estimate those numbers as well, but there must have been well in excess of a hundred birds.

It was difficult to leave the spectacle, but a long drive home awaited us. The road to Lisbon holds many other sites of touristic interest, but we confined ourselves to the one place that is a "must" for any traveller in the area. Marvao, just over the border into Portugal, is an ancient walled city, perched high above its surrounding cliffs. Birdlife is limited to sparrows and swallows, but its other attractions make it worth the stop. We were still excited about our day in Brozas, and attempted to share our enthusiasm with shopkeepers. Surprisingly, nobody had even heard of Brozas, just an hour away.

It did appear strange that this delightful place had not been mentioned, either in general tourist guides or in standard bird-finding books to which I had access. After I began writing this article I learned that the situation has changed. The just

Welcome New Members

June 13, 1995

Mary Le Huquet of Glenelg Ave:
is a hiker and nature lover

Lorie Image of Fairfield Road:

Michael Sutton of Wetherby Road:
enjoys birdwatching

Robert Fyfe of Sidney:
interests include birds, insects, plants
and intertidal marine life

July 7, 1995

Anita Birt of Joan Crescent:
studies birds and sea mammals

July 11, 1995

Donna Sanford of Victoria Street:
interested in botany, birds, entomology and
conservation

Rosemary Mason of Harriet Road:
enjoys botany, kayaking, birds and marine life.

published book *Where to Watch Birds in Spain and Portugal* includes Brozas among a wealth of information about the entire Iberian peninsula. This 214 page book is complete with maps and excellent color plates of local specialties. I have not yet had the chance to "field test" the book, but a first impression is that it is a "must" for any birder headed for this area.

Now that *Stork Town* has acquired a real name, we shall endeavor never to forget it again. But should we do so, we need only reach for a back issue of the *Victoria Naturalist* to refresh our memories. Perhaps other members would enjoy tracing our steps to Brozas, surely an unsung ornithologic hot-spot that should be included on every birder's Iberian itinerary.

To Find Brozas

Brozas is located in west central Spain, in the province of Extremadura, northwest of the interesting, ancient town of Caceres, Spain. Although it would be possible to travel to Brozas by bus, the only practical means to reach the town in comfort and to enjoy birding in and around the area is by automobile. The closest major international airport is in Lisbon, Portugal. Although rental cars are usually available on arrival at the airport, it is less expensive to reserve a vehicle through an airline or travel agent before leaving home.

From Lisbon take the toll road, the A-1, north towards Porto. This is an excellent high speed motor way, but beware the Portuguese drivers, whose near suicidal maneuvers turn a leisurely drive into a day in the Indianapolis 500. Leave the super highway at exit 7, signposted Abrantes. This is also an excellent road for some miles, then becomes the much slower N118. After passing a branch road to Marvao, one crosses the Spanish border, now unguarded thanks to the European Union. Continue on this road, now the Spanish N521, to Valencia de Alcantara, then 42 kilometers to the junction with the C522. Turn left on this minor road, and continue north 24 kilometers to Brozas. There is excellent birding all along this road.

Travel from Madrid is also possible, via the E90 to Trujillo, then west on the N521, through Caceres to the above mentioned junction with the C522.

Brozas is decidedly not a tourist town. Bring a picnic lunch and drive either to the pleasant city of Caceres or the delightful, hill-top, walled city of Marvao for hotels and restaurants. Good birding!

Mushroom Show

Sunday October 29, 1995

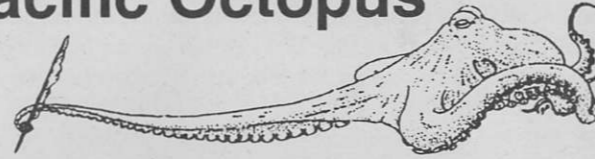
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

at

Swan Lake Nature Centre

Organized by
The South Vancouver Island
Mycological Society

Pacific Octopus



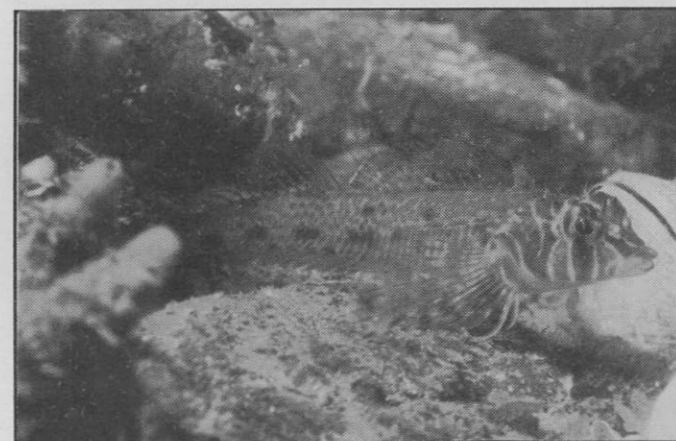
by Lynton Burger

I am sitting in the work area of the Bamfield Marine Station library—surely one of the most knowledge-inspiring study areas on the planet. Through a large floor to ceiling window, I look up from my laptop and stretch my eyes across Barkley Sound. Dark green cedar-cropped islands are patches on the grey-blue water. Down below me, where the cables of the trans-Pacific telephone line once entered the sea for their 4,000 mile journey to Fanning Island in the South Pacific, there are now experimental tanks and research labs, dripping water back into the sea. My eyes dive down into the still waters and I see images of urchins grazing kelp, greenlings resting on their pelvic fins, camouflaged between blades of red and green algae, *Pycnopodia* perambulating along the seafloor. A movement catches my eye and I turn to follow a fishing boat as it heads out of Bamfield Inlet.

I am filled with a measure of sadness as I know this is the last time I will sit here for a long time. But what a place to choose to write my last few Octopus lines! I am also strengthened by the knowledge that the Octopus will continue, buoyed by the strong and growing interest in marine life by the members of the VNHS.

Every marine biological enthusiasm in B.C. should visit Bamfield Marine Station. It is, in my opinion the Mecca, the heart, of marine biology in B.C. Most professional marine biologists have spent time here, either as a student attending one of the summer program courses, or as a visiting lecturer, attending a workshop, or just (like me) as a plain, old common visitor. I look around me in the reading area and I see students and scholars pouring over biological texts, infusing ideas and names and concepts. Gaining knowledge that will, ultimately, help preserve B.C.'s marine ecosystems. That, surely is the bottom line. All the research projects, all the talks, all the field trips, . . . all the knowledge gained will help us understand and see the value of what is under and on the waves.

As I prepare to leave B.C., I reflect on the state of marine conservation in this beautiful province. I think of the many



Longfin Sculpin (*Jordania zonope*) (photo: Andrew Fedoruk).

people who care a great deal about the sea and who are actively involved in pushing for more marine protection (for as I write, B.C. still has less than 1% of its 27,000 kilometre coastline completely protected!). I reflect on the desire of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee to include the marine environment in their plan for a green belt that stretches from Sooke to Saanich Inlet. I reflect on the campaigns, most of them grassroots and driven by dedicated individuals, around the province to have some special reef, delta, marshland or other bit of the Chuck declared a marine protected area. I have met many of these people and I salute them. If you are not one of them, I ask you to support them with your votes, letters and support.

The underwater world of B.C. is worth preserving. We need to protect marine habitats to sustain our fisheries. We need to protect marine biodiversity as this is our pantry from which we will take cures for diseases, solutions to nutritional problems. We need the sea for cultural and spiritual enrichment. We need it to feed our natural curiosity.

So, from beautiful Bamfield I wish all Octopus readers Good Bye. Although I am heading far away, I know I will always be connected to B.C., just as Bamfield once was connected to far-flung shores by a telephone cable. It has been a pleasure writing this small piece these last three years and I look forward to reading about further marine pursuits within the society. *Shalagashle!* And make sure you visit and support Bamfield Marine Station!

Yellow Point Lodge



A place apart...

- ~ 180 acres of natural, oceanfront parkland.
- ~ Relaxed country hospitality.
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- ~ Beach sauna and hot tub.
- ~ Salt water swimming pool.
- ~ 5 miles of walking and jogging trails.
- ~ Tennis courts, volleyball, badminton, canoes, row boats, ping-pong.
- ~ 1 mile of waterfront with secluded coves and beaches.



R.R. #3, Ladysmith, B.C.

VOR 2E0

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CALENDAR

REGULAR MEETINGS 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. **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday of each month. **Marine Night:** the last Monday of each month. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday, September 5.

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, September 12.

VNHS Natural History Presentation. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Rob Cannings from the Royal British Columbia Museum will give a presentation on the *Success of Six Legs: Insect Diversity in B.C.* Bring a cup and a friend.

Saturday, September 16.

Botany Field Trip. Join Adolf Ceska and search for late summer water plants, wetland plants and mushrooms. Meet Adolf at the main parking area at Beaver Lake Park at 10:00 a.m. Don't forget your rubber boots.

Tuesday, September 19.

Botany Night. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Dr. Chris Brayshaw will talk about his new guide: *Guide to Trees and Shrubs of B.C.* which will be published soon.

Wednesday, September 20.

Hawk Watch at Beechey Head. The annual Hawk migration over East Sooke Park should not be missed. In previous years up to 13 species of raptors, including Broad-winged Hawk, have been seen from the Beechey Head overlook. Last year a pod of Killer Whales was seen too! Meet David Stirling (477-0625) at the Aylard Farm entrance to the Park at 10:00 a.m.

Monday, September 25.

VNHS Marine Night. Join the marine sub-group of the *Victoria Natural History Society* at the Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Join David Stirling for a talk on the seashore from a naturalist's point of view.

Wednesday, September 27.

Birders' Night. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. **Members Night,** your chance to show a few slides (maximum 15) and to tell us briefly about recent birding experiences, favourite birding locations or to present tips on

bird identification and behaviour. Anyone can participate as a speaker call Brian Gates at 598-7789 or leave a message on the rare bird alert number (592-3381) if you would like to give a presentation. Everyone Welcome. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Saturday, September 30.

Hawk Watch. The Hawk migration continues over East Sooke Park. Carpool at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:30 a.m. or meet at the Aylard Farm entrance at 10:00 a.m. Leader: David Allinson (380-8233).

Saturday, September 30.

Cake at the Lake. A celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. Activities will include nature walks, nature games, displays, music, and cake and ice cream. All activities will be at the Swan Lake Nature Centre at 3873 Swan Lake Road from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Sunday, October 1.

Mini Pelagic Birding. Hank Van der Pol (658-1924) will lead a series of trips on board the M.V. Coho. The crossing takes 1 1/2 hours and there is the possibility of seeing shearwaters, alcids and phalaropes. We will be birding from the bow of the boat so dress warmly. Food service on the ferry is not great so we recommend bringing your own, especially coffee. Also bring proof of citizenship and \$17.70 return ferry fare. Meet at the Coho Ferry Terminal at 10:00 a.m. The ferry arrives back in Victoria at approx 2:15.

Tuesday, October 3.

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, October 10.

VNHS Natural History Presentation. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Brenda Costanzo of The Biology Department at the University of Victoria will give a talk on how to propagate native plants in gardens. Bring a cup and a friend.

Sunday, October 15.

Birding with Barbara Begg. Walk the quiet country roads and trails around the south slope of Mt. Newton. We will be crossing a variety of habitats so expect a good selection of species. A check for skylarks is also a possibility. Meet Barbara (656-5296) at the Prairie Inn parking lot (corner of East Saanich Road and Mt Newton X Road) at 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, October 17.

Botany Night. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Bring your most interesting botanical slides (5-10) to

show. Phone Adolf Ceska at 387-2423 if you have any questions.

Wednesday, October 25.

Birders' Night. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. The presentation will be either birding in Ecuador with Nigel Mathews of Victoria or birds and natural history of Namibia with Brian Gates. Everyone Welcome. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Sunday, October 29.

Mini Pelagic Trip. See October 1 for details. Meet Hank at the Coho Ferry Terminal at 10:00 a.m. This trip returns to Victoria at 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 29.

Mushroom Show at the Swan Lake Nature Centre from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Organized by the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society.

Monday, October 30.

VNHS Marine Night. Join the marine sub-group of the *Victoria Natural History Society* at the Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Join Gordon Green for a talk on west coast crustaceans.

BULLETIN BOARD

VNHS Conservation Volunteers Wanted

Are you concerned about the future of Greater Victoria's natural heritage? Want to do something to help? The VNHS Parks and Conservation Committee would like to know about your concerns. We are also interested in members who would like to be involved with the VNHS Parks and Conservation Committee or to Volunteer time on specific projects. To voice your concerns or to volunteer your time (even a single hour is helpful), please contact Jeff Stone at 370-2449.

Volunteer Needed

The Parks and Conservation Society has a small project for a willing volunteer. Someone is needed to gather information and fill out an application for a grant proposal for money to complete work on projects such as our inventory of Sensitive Areas. If this interests you, contact Tony Embleton at 595-6812.

Birders Wanted.

Share your birding knowledge and enthusiasm. Be a part of a volunteer team to lead bird walks on Sunday mornings at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary. Birders are invited to sign up for one or more days per month. These popular Sunday events are held between 9 and 11 a.m. and usually have six to twelve participants of all levels. For more details contact Joan at the Nature House (479-0211) or FAX 479-0132.

Announcement!

BEN - Botanical Electronic News - is an electronic botanical newsletter distributed on Internet by Adolf Ceska in about bi-weekly intervals. To subscribe to BEN send a message to: aceska@freenet.victoria.bc.ca.

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

The Garry Oak Meadows Colloquium. A colloquium was held at the University of Victoria in 1993 to study the Garry Oak (*Quercus garryana*) and its associated meadow ecosystem. This is one of the rarest and most endangered ecosystems in British Columbia, remaining only in isolated patches on SE Vancouver Island and some Gulf islands. *The Garry Oak Meadows Colloquium* is edited by Richard Hebda and Fran Aitkens and published by the Garry Oak Meadows Protection Society. The proceedings includes papers on the Garry Oak, wildflowers, grasses, insects, and ethical, educational and development issues. To order, send \$12.00 (includes postage and handling) to Tom Gillespie at 954A Queens Ave. Suite A, Victoria, B.C. V8T 1M6.

For Sale

National Geographic's *Field Guide to Birds*; the *Naturalist Guide to the Victoria Region*; *Birds of Victoria*; the Victoria Area Bird Checklist; and, the Victoria Natural History Society's Window Decals.

Back Issues of the Victoria Naturalist

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

Garry Oak Meadow Society Membership

The Garry Oak Meadow Society aims to promote, conserve and restore our native oak meadow lands. You can help them to preserve our rarest Canadian habitat by joining the Society or through donations to any branch of Pacific Coast Savings Credit Union. For further information contact Tom Gillespie at 361-1694.

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 more information phone Dr. Bill Austin at 746-4955.

GOLDSTREAM ART SHOW

"The Nature of Island Artists"

September 2 - 17, 1995

9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

at

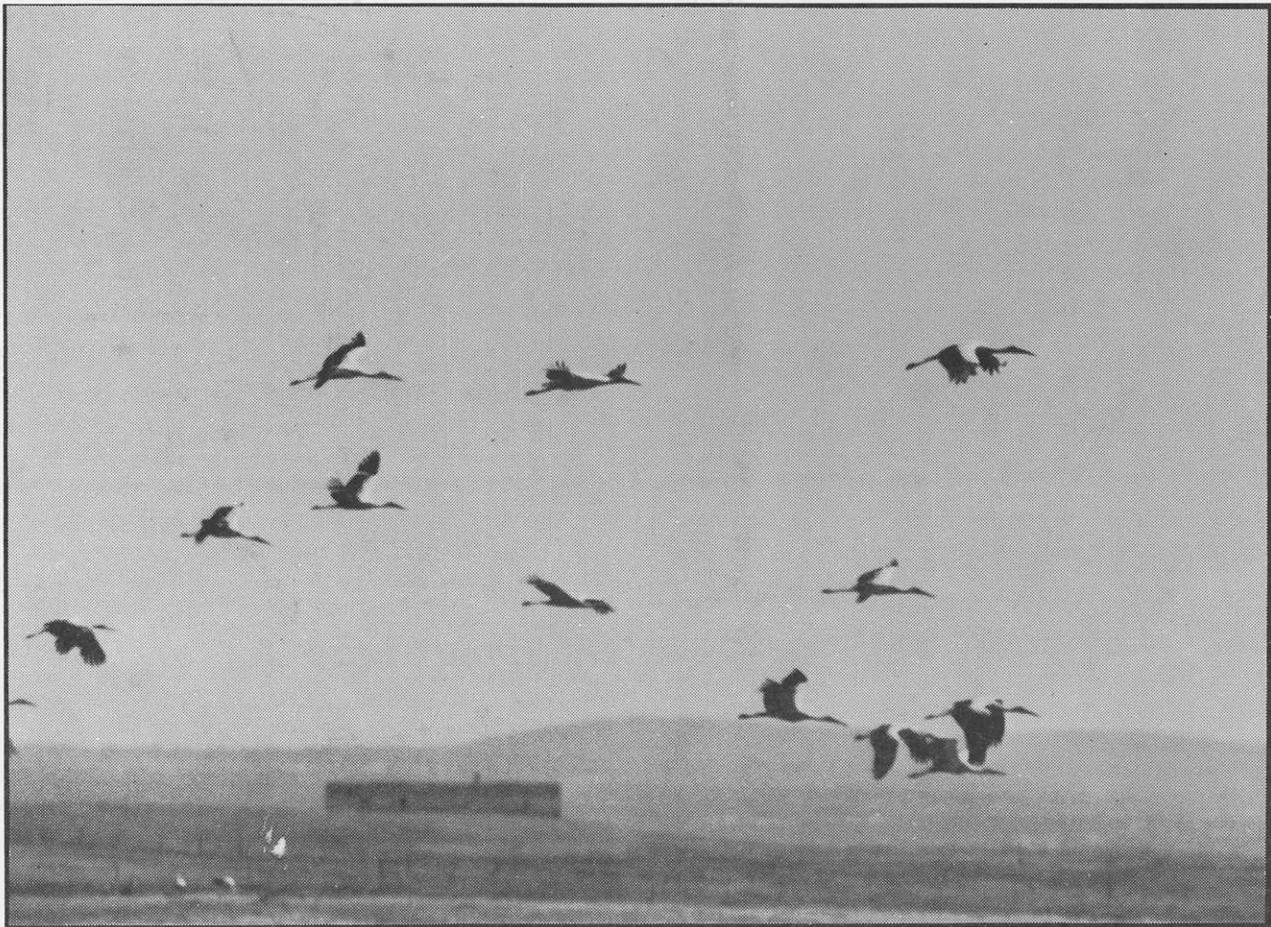
The Freeman King Visitor Centre
Goldstream Park



The Victoria NATURALIST

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



White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*, in flight (photo: courtesy Robert W. Maule).