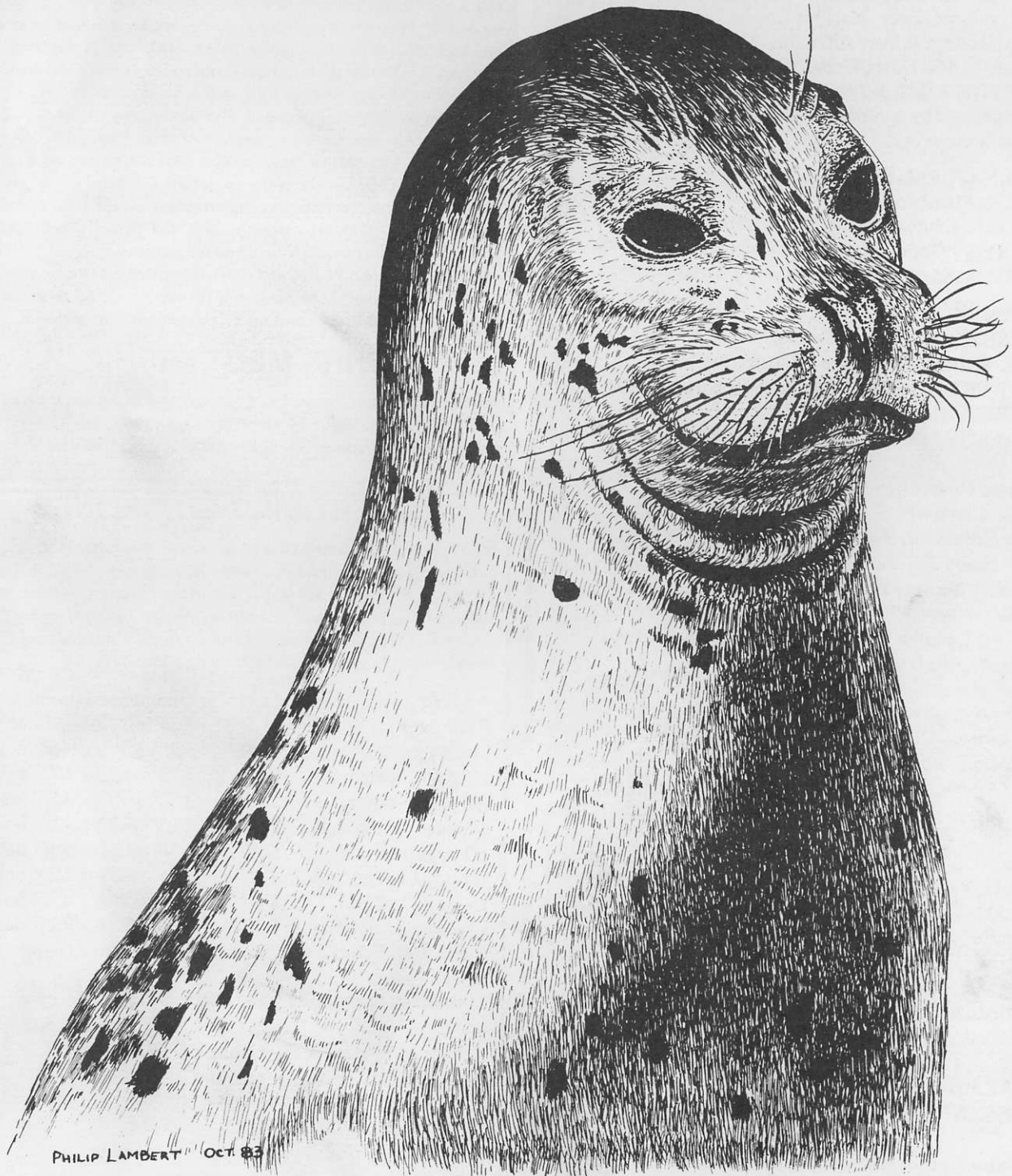


The Victoria NATURALIST

NOVEMBER
DECEMBER
1995
VOL 52.3

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



The Victoria NATURALIST

Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
Contents © 1995 as credited.

ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada

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Distribution: Lyndis Davis, Connie Hawley, Tom Gillespie

Printing: FOTOPRINT, 382-8218

Opinions expressed by contributors to *The Victoria Naturalist* are not necessarily those of the Society.

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Family \$30.00 Junior Subscriber \$7.00
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Annual Subscription Rate, Victoria Naturalist \$17.00

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VNHS MEMBERSHIP

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Our Cover


The drawing on our cover is an image of a Harbour Seal. The artist is Phil Lambert who is the Head of Invertebrate Unit at the Royal B.C. Museum.

Phil co-ordinates the VNHS Marine Night on the last Monday of every month. You can also join Phil on Friday night, November 24, at Willocks Beach for a look at intertidal marine life.

A beach seine on that date will allow participants to examine, up close, the myriad of creatures living below the low tide line on a sandy beach. Join the search for pipefish, shiners, crabs and, if we are lucky, a spiny lumpsucker or two.

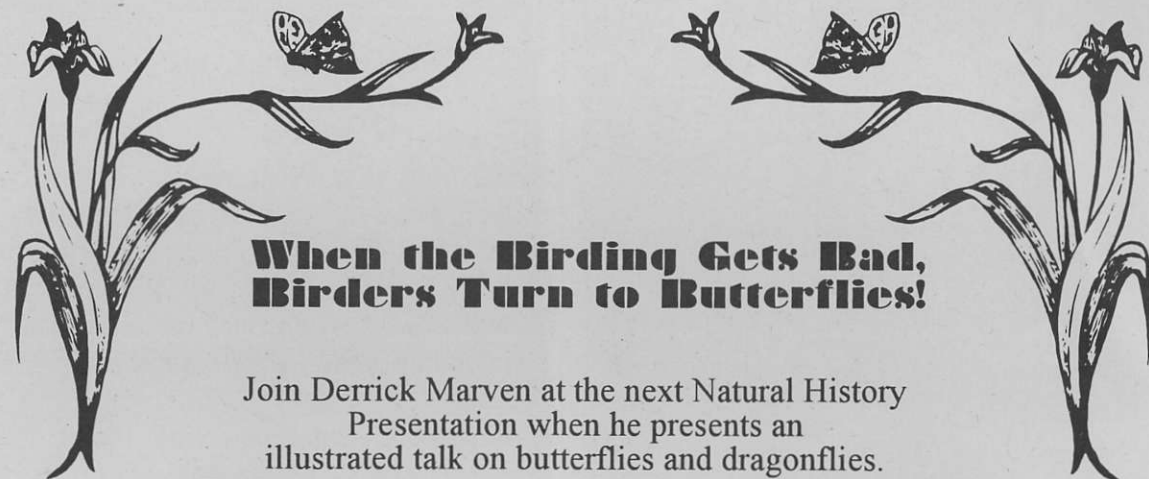
Meet Phil (477-5922) at the north end of Willows Beach at 9:00 P.M. on November 24. Be sure to bring a flashlight and wear your rubber boots.



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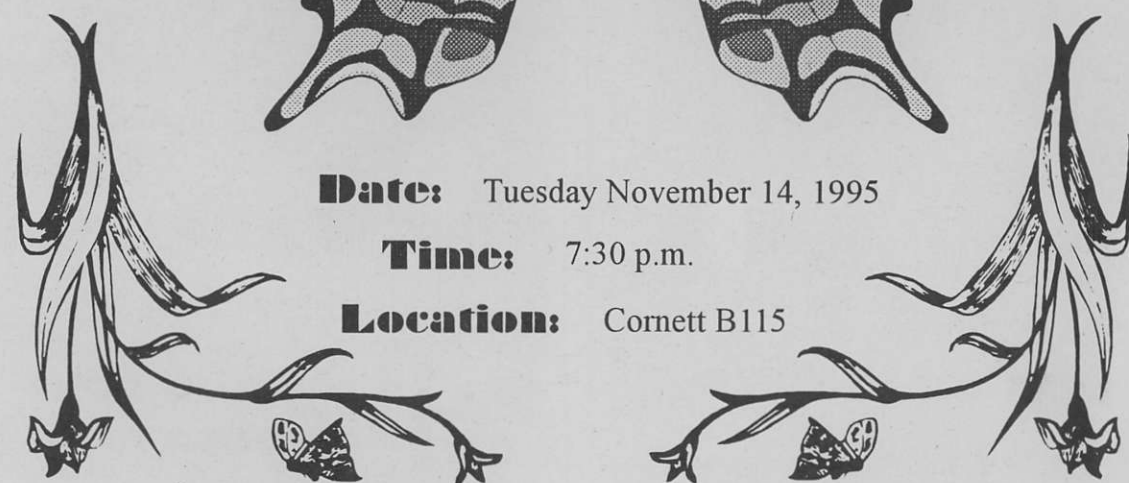
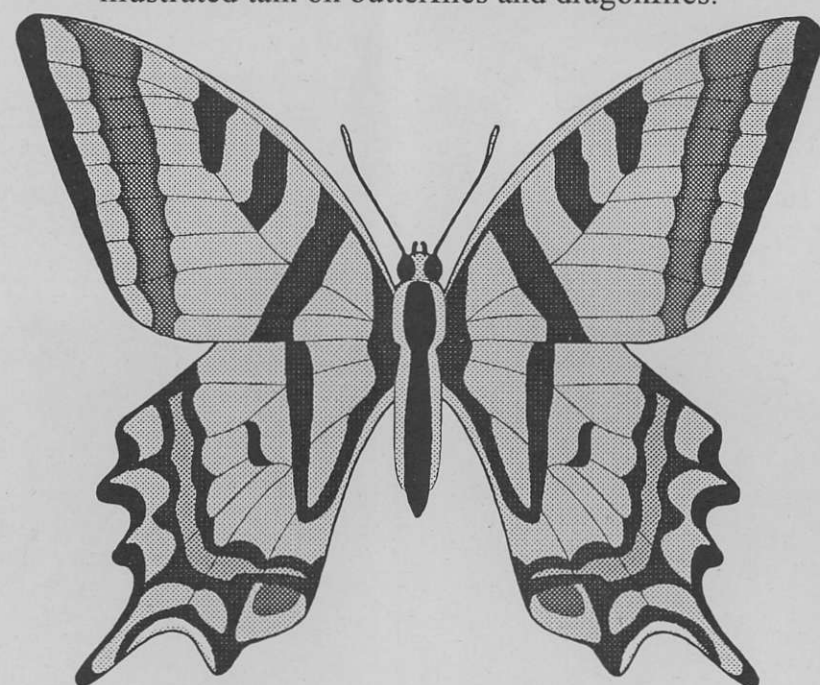
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**When the Birding Gets Bad,
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Join Derrick Marven at the next Natural History Presentation when he presents an illustrated talk on butterflies and dragonflies.



Date: Tuesday November 14, 1995

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Location: Cornett B115



Quick's Bottom viewed from old bird blind, July 1984 (photo: courtesy of Victoria Natural History Society).

Plants in Quick Succession

By Dalia Hull

Quick's Bottom is a small meadow and wetland area located in Saanich between Wilkinson Road and Markham Road which became a municipal park in 1977. The park is about 20 hectares in size with 10 hectares being wetland but only a small portion as open water. The park is home to a variety of bird species that can be seen from the bird blind (funded by Evelyn Duke, the Wardens Fund of the B.C. Federation of Naturalists, the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) and the Municipality of Saanich). Some of the species that have been seen in the marsh include Wood Duck, Bobolink, Virginia Rail, Cinnamon Teal, Marsh Wren and many others.

The marsh has gradually been invaded by vegetation and the area of open water has decreased from approximately 100,000 m² in 1954 to two areas of water totalling approximately 1,800 m². People used to ice skate on the marsh when there were more significant amounts of water. The Victoria Natural History Society has expressed concern over how fast the area of open water is disappearing. In 1994 the Parks and Recreation Committee of the VNHS

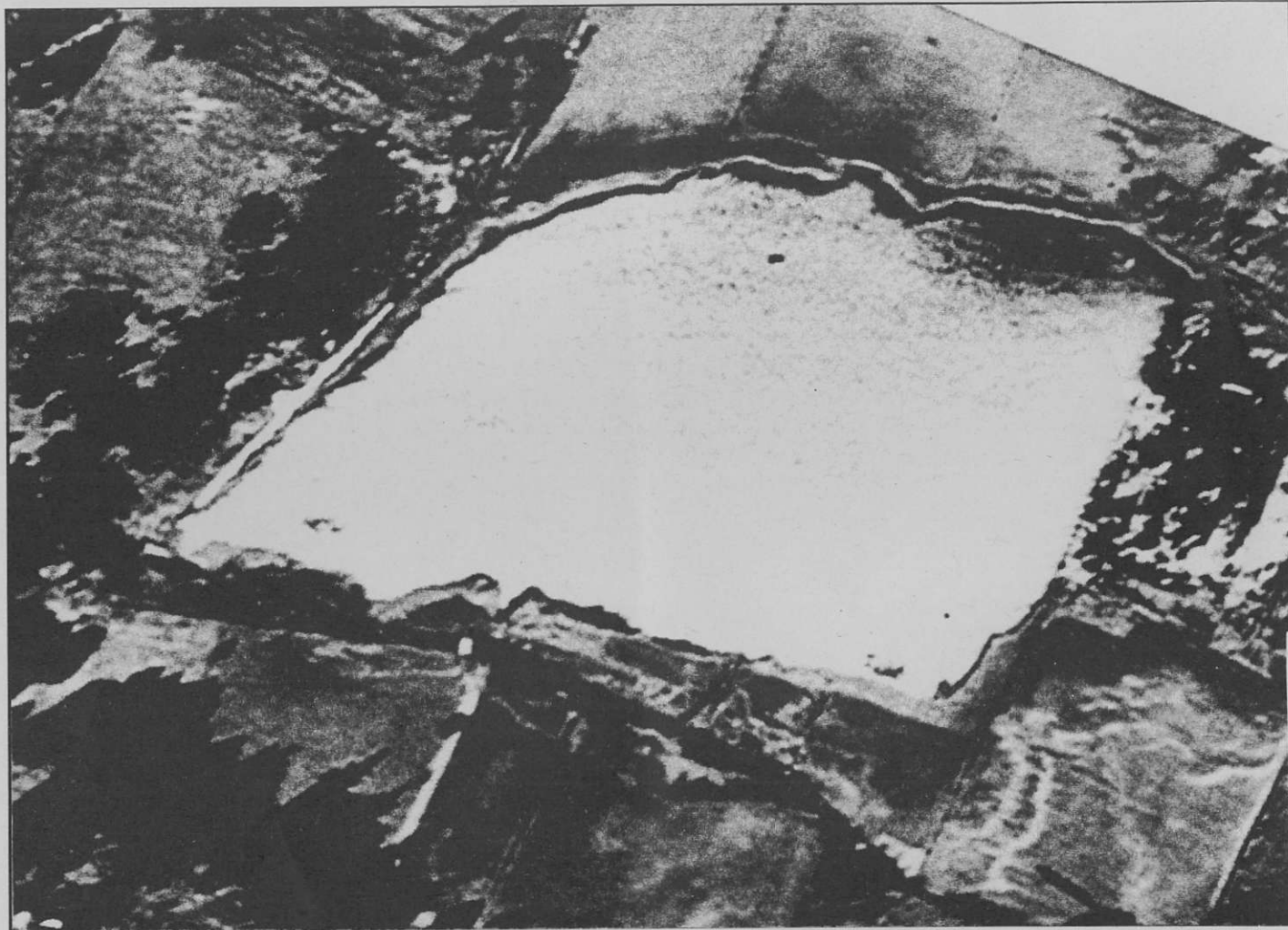
suggested a study on the marsh to investigate the problem of diminishing aquatic habitat. The study was carried out as a research project as partial requirement for graduation from the Environmental Technology Program at Camosun College.

Quick's Bottom was originally farmland that was flooded during the winter. Since the farming was discontinued there

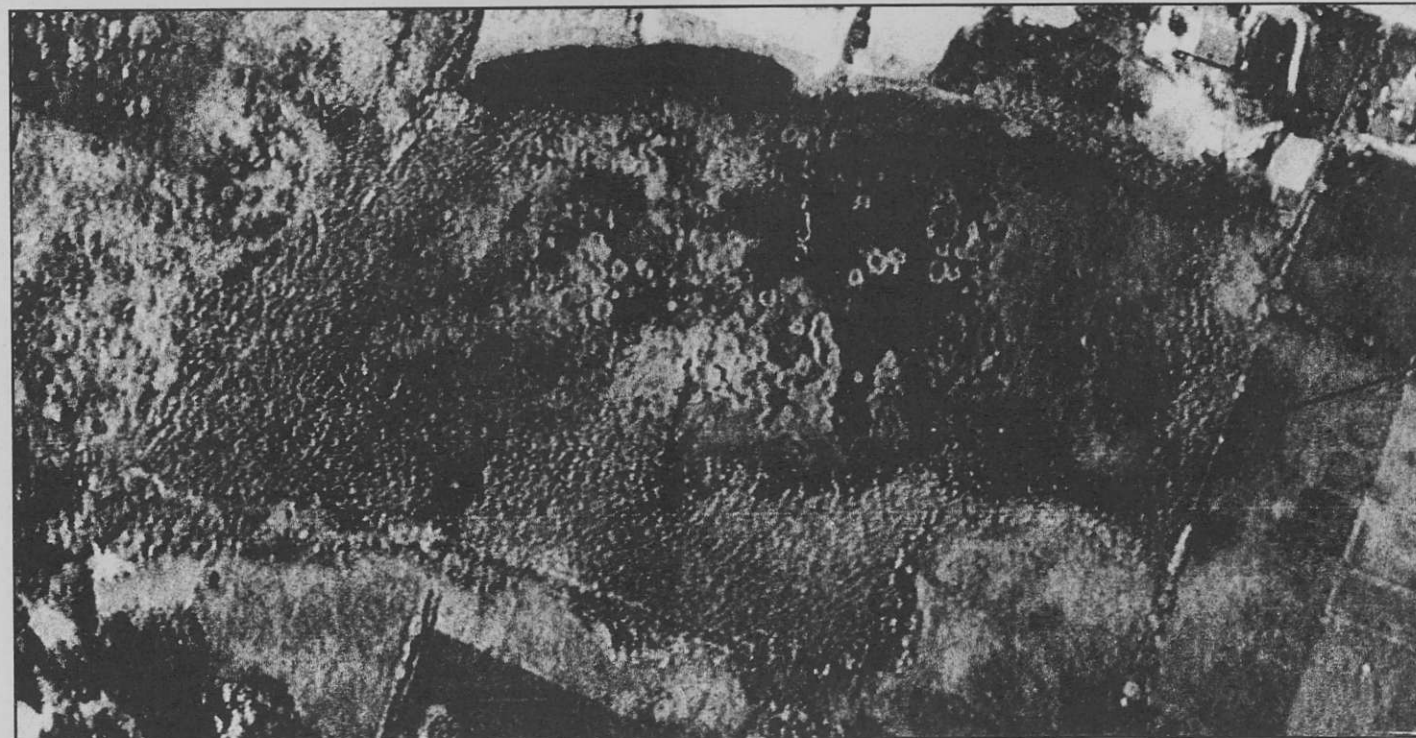
Quick's Bottom was originally farmland that was flooded during the winter. Since the farming was discontinued there has been an invasion of vegetation, especially Reed Canary Grass . . .

has been an invasion of vegetation, especially Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). This non-native grass has been used for forage for the past 100 years and is now found all over North America. It is very hardy and can withstand extreme wet or dry conditions. It is also resistant to insects and disease. Reed Canary Grass is a long-lived perennial and can grow up to two metres in height (Haworth-Brockman and Guinn, 1987). The grass does have value in wetland areas, if it is well dispersed among other plant species, by providing nesting habitat for birds and cover for deer and small mammals.

The marsh area includes Cattails (*Typha latifolia*) which also can accelerate the encroachment of vegetation into the water



Quick's Bottom, April 1954.



Quick's Bottom, May 7, 1980.

by changing the chemical and physical characteristics of the habitat through slow decomposition (Mallick, 1988).

Floating mats of vegetation also exist throughout the marsh composed of species such as Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Narrow-leaved Burreed (*Sparganium angustifolium*), Common Mares-tail (*Hippurus vulgaris*) and other perennial plants (including, in some areas, Canary Grass). The mats are so buoyant that in some areas they can support the weight of a human. These mats are also contributing to the decrease of open water by providing a substrate for other plants.

Other species in the marsh include Water Smartweed (*Polygonum amphibium*), Silver weed (*Potentilla pacifica*), American Brooklime (*Veronica americana*), and Common Rush (*Juncus effusus* var. *Pacificus*) (Ceska and Penny, pers. Comm.).

It is apparent that Reed Canary grass is overtaking the marsh in Quicks Bottom to the point that it is now the dominant species. This change from wetland to grassland is a natural process known as succession. However, in the Victoria area wetland habitat is scarce and it may be desirable to preserve what remains. To develop a management plan for Quicks

Marine Night Report

Phil Lambert

We started off the fall schedule on 25 September with an informative and entertaining talk by David Stirling, about life on and around the shore. He was introduced by our Field Trip Coordinator, Marilyn Lambert.

David was instrumental in starting the Park Naturalist Programs in British Columbia in the early 1970's. For his talk he drew on his experiences at Miracle Beach Park, Mittlenatch Island and at Long Beach to illustrate the animal and plant life adapted to living near the shore, as well as between the tides.

It was interesting to see a vast natural oyster bed at Mittlenatch Island in Georgia Strait in the 1970's that no longer exists, partly due to harvesting and a lack of successful recruitment since then. He led us on a beachcombing jaunt and identified a number of shells and other organisms typical of our west coast beaches. As an added bonus, anyone who could identify some mystery shells received an informative booklet on intertidal life!

So remember, mark the last Monday of each month on your calendar for more talks on marine subjects.

On Monday, November 27, Sally Leys, a graduate student at UVic, will speak on the biology of glass sponges in B.C. fiords.

We also plan to meet at Willows Beach on the evening of Friday, November 24th to drag a seine net through the eel grass. You will be amazed at the multitude of fish and invertebrates that live there. There will not be a Marine Night lecture in December. Consult the Events Calendar in this issue for details.

Bottom an overall goal must be established: preserve the park as a wetland or allow nature to take its course. If conservation of the wetland is the goal then mitigative measures would be required to control the spread of Reed Canary Grass and to remove some of the floating mats. Both tasks would have to be done cautiously. It is impossible to predict the effect of removing the vegetation. A different species may become dominant as a result and could have adverse affects. This study was completed during the spring and does not provide information on other seasons. Therefore, it is recommended that a longer term study be completed before any plans are made.

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- Penny, J. 1994. University of Victoria Biology student, Victoria, B.C. Personal communication.

This study was carried out by Dalia Hull, Sharon Pitt, Michelle Vackova and Jim Young as part of the Environmental Technology Program at Camosun College. The complete report is available from the program head at the Lansdowne campus. If there are any questions please call Dalia Hull at 361-3543.

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healthy environment!



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Gold-seekers at tea break (photo: David Sterling).

Gold in Them Thar Hills

by David Stirling

They were creeping up the 11,000 foot pass on the high road to Lhasa, bound for the mountains of Tibet. Hundreds of rototiller-tractors, punctuated with a few trucks, as far as we could see. The tractors, labouring onward at walking pace, delivered clouds of oily black smoke and an ear-shattering bang, bang chitty bang, bang. These small tractors are the versatile engines of rural Asia. They are a one cylinder burn, any kind of cheap fuel, motor with a skookum fly wheel and thick 'V' belts to transfer the drive to the wheels. After use in the fields at planting time, steel cleats are changed for rubber tires and with trailers attached they become noisy, smoky road vehicles for hauling anything and everything anywhere.

Drivers, grasping the handle bars, are perched on little shelves behind the engine, the noise blasting their ears and the smoke turning their lungs to beef jerky. In the trailers two or three men, sometimes a family, rested on a pile of bedding under an arched-over tarp. The trailers, like miniature covered wagons of the Old West, had frying pans, woks and pots, some stuffed with scallions and other greens for the evening stir fry, tied to their sides. Hundreds of miles ahead in the mountain wilderness the rototiller people will dig, pan and sluice, turning pristine creeks to murky eroding streams.

On the hillside above the pass the birders, too, were toiling onward. Encumbered by the paraphernalia of birdwatching, they risked broken bones on the rough terrain and pulmonary edema in the rarefied air.

Below, over the grassy shores of the great Blue Lake, the Koko Nur of the Mongolians, Quinghai Hu to the Chinese, where vast flocks and herds of sheep and yaks grazed, a lone Lammergeier, the bone breaker, scanned the pastures for a used femur. Overhead, huge Himalayan Griffon Vultures, flying barn doors, craned their snaky necks hopefully for the sight of a tasty carcass.

We were all after treasure: The great winged scavengers were seeking food. The rototiller people were going for gold. We, the birders, were after another kind of wealth: Tibetan Snowfinch, Severtzov's Tit-Warbler, Pink-tailed Rosefinch and Przewalski's Redstart.

Late news flash: *The Globe & Mail* reports China has increased gold production by 50 %. Perhaps the rototiller people got lucky. We found our birds. No word from the vultures.



Lammergeier deprivation. A load of horns and bones leaving the plateau on a tractor-trailer (photo: David Sterling)..

Welcome New Members

August 2

Mr. and Mrs. Telford, of Taylor Road: work towards the protection of flora and fauna in their natural habitats. They are the observers for Devonian Park for the VNHS Parks and Conservation Committee.

August 9

Mary Toft, of Paddon Avenue: is interested in wildflowers and birds.

August 29

Michael McGonigle and Wendy Wickwire, of Bardsey Lane in Saanichton.

Julie Knight, of Kenneth Street: enjoys riding, hiking, BC birds and wildlife.

Maureen Mitchell, of Benhomer Drive: whose interests include birdwatching, hiking, plant science, agriculture and travel.

Heather Kirk and Andrew van der Gugten, of McKenzie Avenue: are involved in parks, tourism and ecosystem management.

September 3

Kim Rasmussen, of Burns Avenue: is interested in birds.

Phil Graydon, of Cedar Hill Road

September 5

Kim MacMillan and Ron Kuwahara, of Arthur Drive: like to go on outings, particularly for owls.

September 7

Marilyn and John Jackson, of Carloss Place

September 12

Dr. Ira Robinson, of Rockland Avenue: enjoys birding.

Lawrence Alexander, of South Turner Street

September 22

Antoinette Alexander, of Moses Point Road

September 25

Kenneth and Heidi Sohm,

of Garden Grove Place: interests include birds and marine ecology.

September 27

Keith and Robbin Bracken, of Rodolph Road: are birders and study geology.

Elizabeth Howey, of Labrador Place:

is interested in birding and conservation.

Elizabeth McPherson, of Greenridge Crescent: enjoys birding.

Tuesday December 12



Natural History Presentation
Christmas Special
7:30 P.M., Begbie 159, UVIC

*Variety of Short Presentations
by VHNS Members
All Welcome. Door Prize.
Bring Coffee Mug, Friends,
Santa and the Elves*

Grasshopper Sparrow — The Second Record for Vancouver Island

by Barbara Begg

Summary to the Victoria Records Committee.

Location: Central Saanich Road, north of Mt. St. Michael Road, in Central Saanich. First Seen November 25, 1992 by Barbara Begg. Confirmed observations on November 29, 1992 - seen by Barbara Begg, Keith Taylor, Dave Fraser, David Pearce, Mike and Barb McGrenere, Bruce Whittington, Jan Garnett and Brent Beech. Photographed by D. Fraser and B. Whittington.

Details submitted to the Victoria Records Committee by B. Begg, D. Fraser and B. Whittington. Passed.

A Personal Story

When I originally found the Grasshopper Sparrow on Wednesday, November 25th, I had first been to Martindale

Flats with a couple from Kansas to show them Skylarks. They also wanted to see American Pipits, which we saw only briefly. The pipits flew off so we stopped at Vantreights' bulb fields on Central Saanich Road on the way back to my place. As we walked down the rough field beside the greenhouse/warehouse complex, a bird flushed and I was struck by the flatness of its forehead, the prominent eye-ring, unstreaked, buff breast, shortish tail, and its skulking manner.

There are usually some Savannah Sparrows in the area but they perch more openly and often call when flushed, whereas the bird in question was silent. I motioned the two visitors over and they both saw the bird as it moved again. I felt sure it was a Grasshopper Sparrow but my companions disagreed. Even though they were novice birders, the fact that they lived in Grasshopper Sparrow country caused me to doubt my identification. That evening at Birders' Night I described the bird and its actions to Keith Taylor and his confident reply was "Grasshopper Sparrow".

The next morning, with a strong wind blowing, I looked for the bird, without success. Friday I tried again, under more favourable conditions, but didn't find it, concluding that the bird had left. Saturday I put the sighting out of my mind to travel on a previously arranged trip to Vancouver to see a Ross' Goose that was with thousands of Snow Geese.

Bright and early Sunday morning I went to check at Vantreights' once more. Immediately, I encountered a bird in

the same location but it was even less co-operative than it had been the first day.

While I was staring at a clump of flattened dead grass that the sparrow was under, Keith Taylor arrived. He had remembered our brief conversation at Birders' Night and decided he should check out the site. Eventually, we had better views and other birders were phoned. They arrived quickly, some with cameras and long lenses. Everyone had extended clear views and photographs were taken by Dave Fraser and Bruce Whittington.

A fair amount of luck was involved in the confirmation of this second record of Grasshopper Sparrow for Vancouver Island. Pipits are usually easily seen at Martindale Flats in November so we no doubt would have found some in another part of the fields. If we had, we may not have gone on to Vantreights'. I also delayed putting out the alarm on the sparrow for several reasons—the Kansas birders' disagreement with my identification; the fact that I couldn't find the bird again on the next two days; the trip to Vancouver on Saturday; and lastly, the fear of a mis-identification.

This last reason was probably the most compelling as I didn't want to jeopardize a favourable vote on my White-tailed Kite sighting in North Saanich earlier that year. What I didn't know at the time was that it had already been accepted by the B.C. Records Committee.

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.

So although the gods may not have been smiling for the Grasshopper Sparrow, they were present for a small group of Victoria birders.

Barbara Begg is a frequent contributor of bird observations for the Victoria checklist area, especially Saanich Peninsula, and often reports on her sightings in the *Victoria Naturalist*.

Two Poems

by Anne Algard

There was a young man from B.C.
Who thought nothing of cutting a tree.
He found to his sorrow
He had no tomorrow
For no longer was oxygen free.

Imagine a world of macadam.
Wild spots? Nobody had em.
Id be crazy for greenery.
Go dump my machinery
And try to start over with Adam!



Grasshopper sparrow, Nantreight's bulb fields, Central Saanich Road, found by Barbara Begg (photo: Dave F. Fraser).



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Christmas Bird Count— December 16, 1995

By David Pearce

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 16, 1995. The purpose of the C.B.C is to count birds observed within a 15 mile diameter circle covering the Greater Victoria area centred on the intersection of Grange Road and Jasmine Avenue in Marigold. The circle is divided into 22 land areas and two ocean areas, each having an area leader.

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

If you participated as a "counter" in the Christmas count last year, you will be contacted and asked if you would like to participate this year. If you did not take part in the Victoria count last year but would like to participate, please contact

David Pearce, Count Coordinator, at 658-0295 by November 30, or sign up at the November Birder's Night.

If you have a feeder in your yard and wish to participate as a feeder watcher, simply watch your feeder on December 16 and record all bird species and number of individuals of those species. Mail or bring your list into the Field-Naturalist, 1126 Blanshard Street, Victoria. Please put your name, address and telephone number on the list. Your report must be received by Wednesday, December 20 in order to be included in the count records.

If you see a rare bird at your feeder on December 16 (see the Victoria Area Checklist of Birds or last year's Christmas count results in the March/April issue of the Victoria Naturalist to find out what is rare in December), please phone your sighting immediately to the Rare Bird Alert at 592-3381 and leave a message on the tape.

Victoria currently holds the Canadian Christmas Bird Count record, set in 1991, of 152 species. This was achieved by getting an exceptionally good coverage with over 150 people taking part. So please mark December 16 in your calendar and join us in trying to set another record!

After the count we are planning to hold a meeting at the Gordon Head United Church starting at 7:30 pm. This will be the same format as a regular Birder's Night, where coffee, tea and biscuits will be served, and we will discuss the day's count results. Please bring a dessert to share if you wish.

AUSTRALIA A NATURALIST'S TOUR

September-October 1996 with Bill Merilees

G'Day Mates! Join me on a naturalist's tour of my beloved Australia! Focusing on the National Parks of Queensland, we will explore magnificent gorges, rainforests, and barrier reef islands (plural). We will see platypus, koalas, wallaroos, mud skippers, noddies, bowerbirds, brolgas, and MUCH, MUCH more—all in the wild! I will even teach you a little Strine—the Aussie lingo!

This 28-30 day tour will depart early September 1996. Cost being determined. Space will be limited. An extension to Alice Springs/Ayers Rock and Darwin/Kakadu areas available.

Join a proven tour leader and "Aussie" addict.

For priority placement or further information, write me,

Bill Merilees
3205 Granite Park,
Nanaimo, BC,
V9T 3C8.

Co-sponsored by the Vancouver Natural History Society.

Pacific Octopus



by Pamela Thuringer

Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy

On July 12 1995, a news release by Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks was issued on the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy. The Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy is a five year federal/provincial program for an expanded and integrated network of coastal and marine protected areas along Canada's Pacific coast, including a new National Park in the Strait of Georgia. The following outlines details of the legacy.

Heritage Resources

The goal of the legacy is to develop a family of existing and new heritage areas on the coast to be managed cooperatively by different agencies. The legacy will also provide for the study of new national marine conservation areas on the West Coast; develop linkages between cultural, natural and recreational themes and attractions; facilitate co-operation between federal and provincial governments in sharing management resources, technical capabilities and scientific research; and, facilitate complimentary interpretation and education programs at existing and new heritage areas.

Areas of interest include:

- The Gulf Islands of the Strait of Georgia, with joint federal-provincial acquisition of key natural areas.
- Bodega Ridge (on Galiano Island) has been acquired with substantial public donations.
- Plans to establish a new national park in the Gulf Islands.
- New provincial parks and ecological reserves.
- Build on previous federal/provincial collaboration to establish Pacific Rim and Gwaii Haanas (Queen Charlotte Islands) National Park reserves.

Partnership

Other levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors will be invited to be active participants in the interpretation of the legacy. A special provincial fund for private contributions to complement government investments has been established. Other cost sharing partnerships will also be entered into. Invitations will be extended to corporate, historical and cultural elements of the West Coast heritage, including that of First Nations.

Natural Values of the Strait of Georgia

The Strait of Georgia region is perhaps the most at-risk natural environment in Canada, given the expanding urban pressures of such nearby centres as Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle. At the heart of this highly developed region lies the southern Gulf Islands.

The mix of vegetation in this area is unique in Canada, including Arbutus, Garry Oak and the more obscure Pear Cactus. More familiar species include Western Red Cedar, Pacific Dogwood and the Broadleaf Maple. Animals include Bendries Shrew, the California Bat,

Townsend's Chipmunk, Douglas Squirrel, the Western Spotted Skunk, and the Black-tailed Deer. The Strait of Georgia also supports significant populations of marine birds and is also home to diverse communities of fish and invertebrate species. The several species of marine mammals in the strait include its renowned pods of Killer Whales.

International Dimension

The combination of natural, cultural and recreational resources makes the Pacific coast internationally significant. The legacy demonstrates Canada's commitment to fulfil international obligations in support of the Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity.

Since lands and waters of Alaska and Washington form an integral part of the West Coast experience, Canada and B.C. will seek close co-operation with both state governments and the U.S. federal governments.

Implementation

Plans call for the annual investment by the federal and provincial governments of approximately \$6 million each over the next five years. There will be a joint federal-provincial management committee which will include recognition of the interests of First Nations but will not conflict with ongoing treaty negotiations. Consultations with First Nations and others will be an integral part of the process of implementing the legacy.

A public advisory committee will be created with balanced representation from First Nations, local and regional governments, and environmental, recreational, tourism and resource interests. The provincial government will manage all jointly acquired land on an interim basis until it is determined which will become a national park.

It is encouraging that governments have realized the necessity of such an initiative and are now turning their attention to the preservation of the west coast uniqueness and biodiversity. In conjunction with the establishment of the Marine Heritage Legacy and other conservation initiatives, particular attention should now be focused on the marine ecosystems.

The Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory Project on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands has identified and ranked wetlands and upland communities for the purpose of setting priorities for management and protection. The inventory should be extended to include intertidal and subtidal natural ecosystems. The wheels need to be put in motion for the creation of a rare and endangered species list for marine flora and fauna. This list currently does not exist. As the year closes on this issue of the Victoria Naturalist, one of my goals will be to bring updated information on the progress of the inventory and conservation of the biodiversity of the west coast marine environment.

Postscript:

Current provincial totals for protected areas including National/Provincial parks, ecological reserves, recreation areas and wilderness conservation areas is 9.1% of the land base or 8.58 million hectares. This information was provided by the Land Use Coordination Office in Victoria.

Pamela Thuringer is a marine biologist working with a local consulting firm. She is a member of the VNHS Marine sub-group.

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.

Please note that Botany, Birders and Marine Night meetings are cancelled for the month of December due to Christmas.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Saturday and Sunday, November 4 and 5.

Broom Pull in Uplands Park from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Bring your own gloves, pruners and saws. Contact the Swan Lake Nature Centre for more information at 479-0211.

Tuesday, November 7.

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.

Sunday, November 12

Snow Geese and The Fraser Delta. Join David Allinson on our annual excursion to view the wintering waterfowl of the Fraser Delta. We expect to see huge flocks of Snow Geese and a variety of shorebirds, raptors and songbirds. If we car pool effectively, travel costs should be approximately \$30.00 per person. To sign up call David (478-0457) or Marilyn (477-5922).

Tuesday, November 14.

VNHS Natural History Presentation. Room B112, Cornett Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. Join Derrick Marven for an informative slide-illustrated talk on butterflies and dragonflies. Please note the change in location from past VNHS Natural History presentations. Bring a cup and a friend.

Sunday, November 19

Martindale Birding. Martindale Flats is one of Canada's winter birding "hotspots" with over 90 species recorded on previous Christmas Bird Counts. Come and search out a rarity with Brent Diakow (656-3190). Meet at the Farmers Market (Pat Bay Highway and Island View Road) at 8:00 a.m. Don't forget your rubber boots!

Tuesday, November 21.

Botany Night. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. John Dennis will give a presentation on mushrooms.

Wednesday, November 22.

Birders' Night. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Dr. Adolf Ceska will present a video and talk on birds and natural history in Costa Rica. Everyone Wel-

come. Call Bryan Gates for more information at 598-7789. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Friday, November 24

Beach Seine. A beach seine will allow us to examine, up close, the myriad of creatures living below the low tide line on a sandy beach. Join Phil Lambert and search for pipefish, shiners, crabs and, if we are lucky, a spiny lump sucker or two. Meet Phil (477-5922) at the north end of Willows Beach at 9:00 P.M. Bring flashlights and wear rubber boots.

Sunday, November 26

Mini Pelagic Birding. Hank Van der Pol (658-1924) will lead this trip on board the M.V. Coho. The crossing takes 1 1/2 hours and there is the possibility of seeing shearwaters, alcids and perhaps a rarity or two. We will be birding from the bow of the boat so dress warmly. We recommend bringing your own food and 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 approximately 3:30 P.M.

Monday, November 27.

VNHS Marine Night: Glass Castles. Join the marine sub-group of the *Victoria Natural History Society* at the Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. for a presentation by Sally Leys. Sally, a graduate student at the University of Victoria, will talk about the mysteries of glass sponge biology. Her talk will be illustrated with slides and an underwater video of these intriguing animals from the depths of Saanich Inlet.

DECEMBER EVENTS

Saturday, December 2

Marine Ecology Station. Explore the marine biodiversity of British Columbia at this Station in Cowichan Bay where Dr. Bill Austin has set up live exhibits of sea life in aquaria and under microscopes. (There is a nominal charge of \$3.00 per person). For details and to sign up call Marilyn (477-5922). A stop at the Trout Hatchery on the Cowichan River is also a possibility.

Tuesday, December 5.

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

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.

p.m. Note that Parking Lot "A" by the Cunningham Building no longer exists.

Tuesday, December 12.

VNHS Natural History Presentation. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m. December is Members Night. Sip hot apple cider and meet with friends for an evening of Christmas cheer and slide presentations on interesting topics and destinations by our many talented members. Everyone is encouraged to think about presenting a ten-minute presentation on topics that they would like to share with VNHS members. If you wish to make a presentation, contact Mike Ryan at 727-2153.

BULLETIN BOARD

Bird Sightings Wanted

A bird inventory for Viaduct Flats and surrounding woods and fields is now being prepared for publication in the January/February issue. Would anyone with sightings of uncommon to accidental species in this area please contact Michael Carson with month and year of sighting. Phone 478-1535. Or mail to Ross-Durrance Road, Rural Route 5, Victoria, B.C. V8X 4M6.

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.

Birding In Arizona

A few members have expressed an interest in a birding tour of Southeastern Arizona at the end of April, 1996. This is a good time of year to visit this special area as it is not too hot! Well over 100 species of birds can be seen here, including several Mexican species that just sneak over the border. If enough people are interested I will find a leader and organize a tour. Call Marilyn 477-5922.

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 are for sale, contact Lyndis Davis at 477-9952.

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.

POSITION OPEN

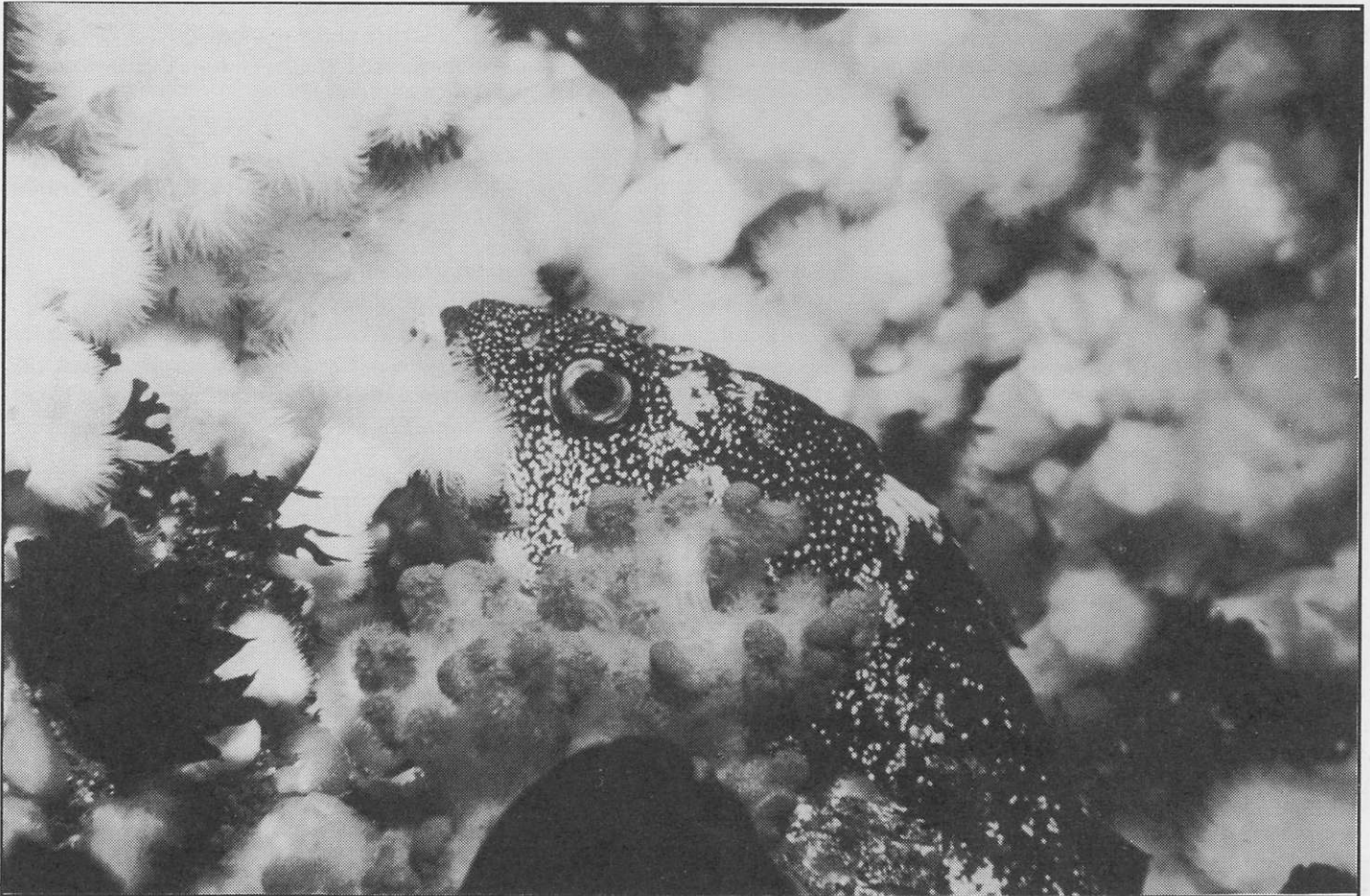
The position of Secretary with the executive of the Victoria Natural History Society is presently vacant. Main duties of the secretary include keeping minutes of Directors' meetings and the Annual General Meeting.

If you are interested in helping with the VNHS contact David Allinson at 380-8233.

 **The Victoria
NATURALIST**

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China Rock Fish, *Sebastes nigroinctus*, among sea anemones (photo: Andrew Fedoruk).