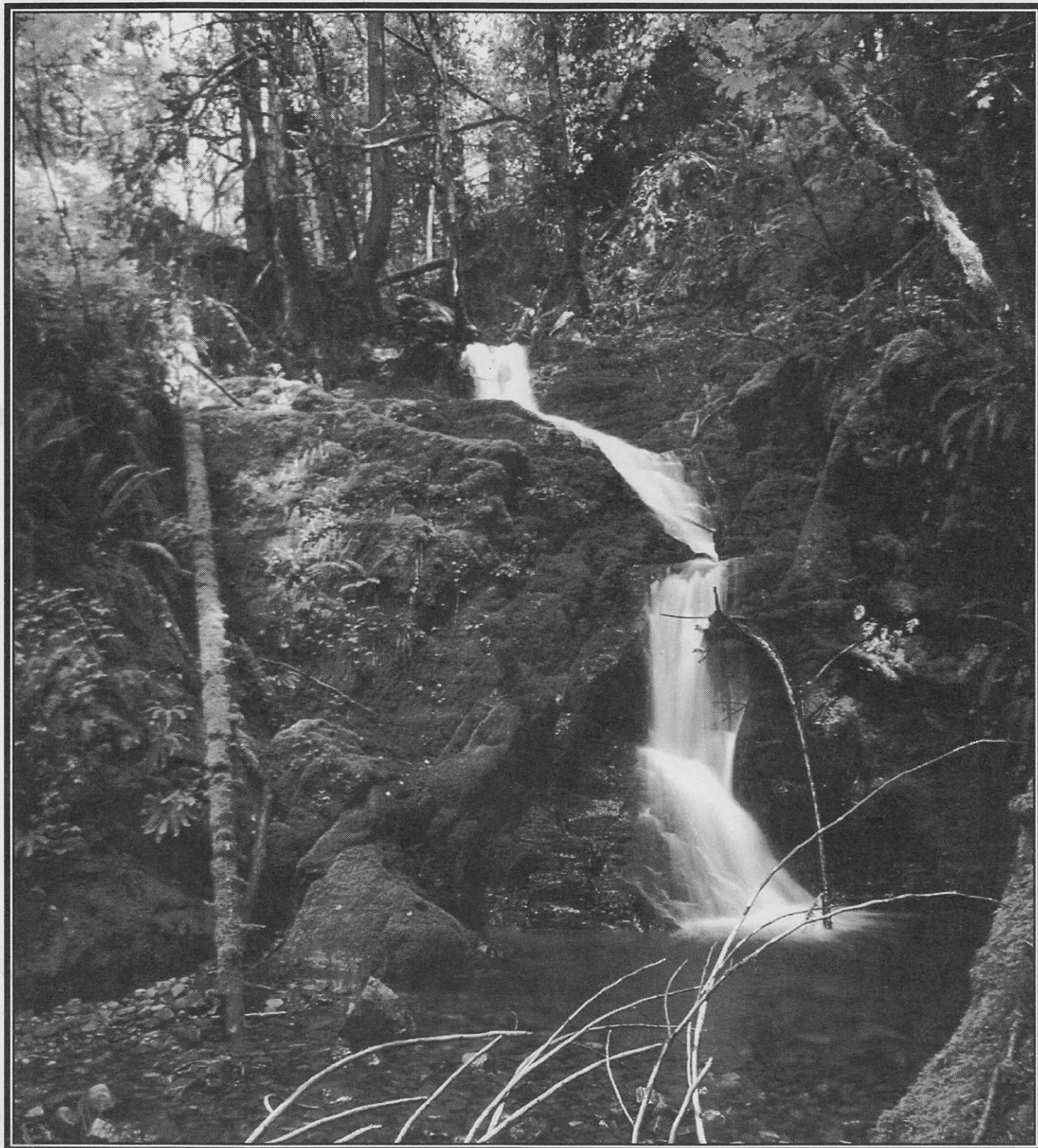


The Victoria NATURALIST

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
1997
VOL 53.4

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



MEMBERSHIP

New ☐

Renewal ☐

Gift ☐

Victoria Natural History Society

P.O. Box 5220, Station "B"

Victoria, BC, V8R 6N4

ANNUAL DUES: Membership valid for 12 months from date of first joining our Society.

Regular \$ 25.00

Family \$ 30.00

Senior (65 and over) \$ 24.00

Junior Subscriber \$ 7.00

Any donation in excess of the above fees is income tax deductible.

Membership includes subscription to the bimonthly *Victoria Naturalist*, as well as membership in the Federation of BC Naturalists and subscription to its bimonthly, *BC Naturalist*.

Why not give a gift membership to a friend or neighbour? A gift announcement card will be sent to the new member with their first issue of the *Victoria Naturalist*.

For further information please contact

Dodie Clark 477- 5158

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postal Code: _____

Type of Membership desired:

☐ Regular-----\$25.00

☐ Family-----\$30.00

☐ Senior-----\$24.00

☐ Junior----- \$7.00

Particular interests: _____

Would you be willing to assist in any of the following activities? Please check boxes.

Publications ☐

Publicity ☐

Programs ☐

Conservation ☐

Social Events ☐

Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
Contents © 1997 as credited.
ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada

Editor: Warren Drinnan. Work: 361-3543 Home: 652-9618
Associate Editors: Dalia Hull and Pamela Thuringer
Desktop Publishing: Frances Hunter, 479-1956
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.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Honorary Life Members:

Miss E.K. Lemon, Mrs. L.E. Chambers
Mrs. Peggy Goodwill, Mr. Vic Goodwill
Mr. David Stirling

Officers: 1994-95

PRESIDENT: David Allinson, 478-0493
VICE-PRESIDENT: Tom Gillespie, 361-1694
PAST-PRESIDENT: Wally Macgregor, 658-8956
SECRETARY: Hank VanderPol, 658-3482
TREASURER: Gordon Hart, 721-1264

Directors and Committees

Dodie Clark, 477-5158 (*Membership*)
Tony Embleton, 595-6812 (*F.B.C.N. Representative*)
Programs, *open*
Beverley Glover, 721-1476 (*Publicity*)
Tom Gillespie, 361-1694 (*Publications*)
David Pearce, 658-0295 (*Field Trips, Birding*)
Audrey Copping, 477-6739 (*Social*)
Wally Macgregor, 658-8956 (*Scholarships, Awards*)
Jeff Stone, 370-2449 (*Parks and Conservation*)

Other Functions

Birder's Night: Bryan Gates, 598-7789
Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: Wally Macgregor, 658-8956

Annual Dues, Victoria Natural History Society

Includes *The Victoria Naturalist* and *B.C. Naturalist*
Regular \$25.00 Golden Age \$24.00
Family \$30.00 Junior Subscriber \$7.00
(Any donation in excess of the above fees is income tax deductible)

Annual Subscription Rate, Victoria Naturalist \$17.00

RARE BIRD ALERT: 592-3381

VNHS EVENTS TAPE: 479-2054

SUBMISSIONS

Deadline for next issue: January 27, 1997

Send to: Warren Drinnan, Editor,
2284 Cooperidge Avenue, Saanichton, B.C. V8M 1N2
Phone: (Work) 370-3463 (Home) 652-9618 Fax: 652-9619
E-MAIL: wdrinnan@dataflux.bc.ca

Guidelines for Submissions

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.

ADVERTISING GUIDELINES

We do our best to ensure your ad is produced accurately. Should we make an error, please contact us and a correction can be printed in the next issue. A charge is levied for typesetting. Minor alterations to existing ads cost \$10.00. Add \$15 per photo for PMT. Advertising fees are due and payable when copy is submitted. Please submit a cheque payable to The Victoria Naturalist.

Ad Size	Price	Dimensions (in inches)
Back page	\$120	7.5" width x 8.00" height
Full page, inside	\$100	7.5 width x 9.50" height
1/2 page, horizontal	\$80	7.5" width x 4.75" height
1/2 page, vertical	\$80	3.50" width x 9.50" height
1/3 page horizontal	\$50	7.5" width x 3.25" height
1/3 page, vertical	\$50	3.50" width x 6.50" height
1/4 page, horizontal	\$40	7.5" width x 2.25" height
1/4 page, vertical	\$40	3.50" width x 4.75" height
1/8 page, horizontal	\$25	3.50" width x 2.25" height

Rates as of February, 1994. May be subject to change.

Submit advertising to:

The Victoria Naturalist, P.O. Box 5220,
Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8R 6N4
or phone Warren Drinnan at (604) 361-3543

Thank you for your patronage.

Contents

Mill Farm Park <i>By Michelle Grant</i>	4
Of Humpback Whales and Sea Lions... <i>By Christopher D. Malcolm</i>	5
Viaduct Flats Protected, for Now.....	8
Fine Dining at Viaduct Flats <i>By Barbara Begg</i>	12
Watch for Colour-Banded Cooper's Hawks	12
Hat Tricks	14
Volunteers Needed <i>By Paul Gareau</i>	15
Winter Wonder <i>By Gwen Nicol</i>	15
Birds in Southern Ireland <i>By Dale Geils</i>	16
April in Texas <i>By Keith Taylor</i>	18
Letters	21
Psst! They're Not Members <i>By Jeff Stone</i>	22
Welcome to New Members.....	23
Pacific Octopus <i>By Pamela Thuringer</i>	24
Calendar of Events.....	25
Bulletin Board.....	27

OUR COVER

This issue's cover is by Canadian wildlife photographer, Jonathan Grant. It features one of the many natural habitats accessible in Mill Farm Park and the adjacent crown lands of Mount Bruce, on Saltspring Island. Jonathan has been a lover of nature since his early boyhood years in England, when a fledgling Robin landed on his outstretched palm. He started his interest in nature photography in the early seventies and by 1988 the call was so great that he left his career in advertising to pursue photography full-time.

Jonathan's work has been exhibited in Ontario and British Columbia. On Saltspring Island his work can be seen at *Off the Waterfront Gallery and Artcraft* or at home, by appointment, at 537-9634.



**precise color
processors ltd.**

QUALITY PHOTOFINISHING

747 Discovery Street, Victoria, B.C. V8T 1H1
Phone: (604) 385-5512

Mill Farm Park

By Michelle Grant

Mill Farm Park is a 160 acres of natural habitat located on the south side of Salt Spring Island, adjacent to the crown lands of Mount Bruce. The photograph shows a beautiful waterfall that is located in the area. Nearly lost to timber concerns, the Mill Farm property came about through the hard work and dedication of the Salt Spring Island (S.S.I.) Conservancy, a small group of individuals who lobbied hard to preserve it's 65 acres of first growth dry coastal Douglas Fir, wetlands, and extensive stands of mature Arbutus and second growth fir. The cause was furthered by Bill Turner of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, among others, and the result was the creation of Mill Farm Park. Funding was provided by the provincial and federal governments, CRD Parks and the S.S.I. Conservancy.

Within the Mount Bruce/Mount Tuam area there are three endangered plant species — the Phantom Orchid, the Yellow Montane Violet, and the Scalepod, and two

endangered butterfly species — Propertius Dusky Wings and Zerene's Fritillary. There are also at least 30 threatened and vulnerable wildflower species.

It is hoped that the crown lands of Mount Bruce, Mount Sullivan and Hope Hill will also be preserved, providing a buffer for Mill Farm's old growth forest, enlarging the area for better bio-diversity and increasing opportunities for passive recreational pursuits.

To help secure these lands for parkland, please write the Honorable Paul Ramsay, Ministry of Environment, Lands & Parks, Parliament Buildings, Victoria V8V 1X4, with a copy to the Chairman of the CRD Board c/o CRD Parks, 490 Atkins Rd., Victoria V9B 2Z8.

For more information on Mill Farm, please contact Susan Evans 653-4311 or Ann Richardson 653-4632 of the S.S.I. Conservancy.

Birds and Wine 1997

South Okanagan and Douglas Lake

May 17-24, 1997 \$800 Double Occupancy

Join our trip to the sagebrush and antelope-brush landscape of "Canada's Pocket Desert". Visit scenic Douglas Lake country for birding near upland lakes. We travel by van to visit river riparian, grassland, and ponderosa pine woodlands to listen for the distinctive calls and songs of Okanagan specialties. See Sage Thrasher, Bobolink, Lazuli Bunting, Least and Gray Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Long-billed Curlew. Afternoon winery tours, tastings, and a gourmet winery lunch included.



Dannie Carsen 250-727-0155 Tom Gillespie 250-361-1694



Quesco Tours

801 Lily Avenue
Victoria, B.C. V8X 3R7



A place apart...

- ~ 180 acres of natural, oceanfront parkland.
- ~ Relaxed country hospitality.
- ~ Fine home cooking.
- ~ 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.

V0R 2E0

604 • 245 • 7422

Of Humpback Whales and Sea Lions...

By Christopher D. Malcolm

This past fall Victoria area waters were privileged with the extended visit of a Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeanglia*), a rare cetacean in this area. Historically, humpbacks were common here, once supporting a subsistence aboriginal hunt. However, commercial hunting in the 19th and early 20th Centuries eradicated them from this area. Protected since 1966 as an endangered species, their numbers are growing slowly.

Humpback Whales are a species of baleen whale. Lacking teeth, baleen whales instead have fibrous plates extending down from the roof of their mouth. These plates, termed baleen, filter planktonic prey or small fish out of the mouthful of water the whales engulf. Mature humpbacks may reach 50 feet in length. They are black with white patches and white undersides. They have long winglike pectoral fins (flippers), knobs on the top of their head and a small dorsal fin that often appears to be a "hump."

Distinctive markings on the underside of their tail flukes allow individuals to be identified.

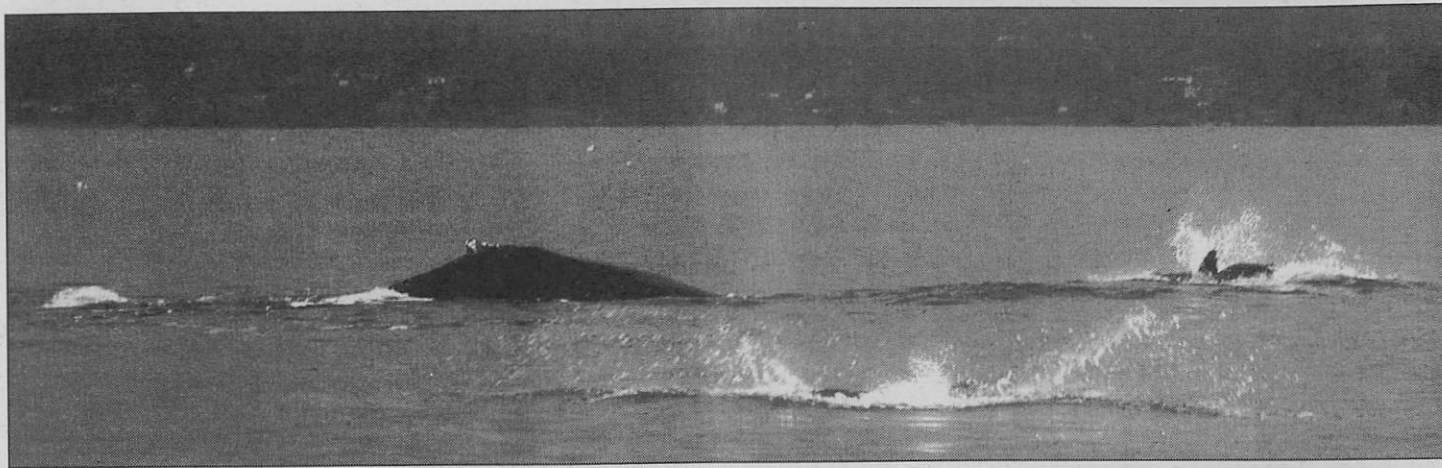
North Pacific humpbacks migrate between the waters of Hawaii during the winter, where they mate and calve, to the Gulf of Alaska and northern BC coast during the summer, where they feed. Humpbacks are known as the "singing whales", for the "songs" the males sing during mating in southern waters.

In the last several years sporadic reports have been made of Humpback Whale sightings within the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Possible sightings made on August 20, 1995, near Swordfish Island, three km northwest of Race Rocks, on July 5, 1996, at Beachy Head, plus a confirmed sighting on July 8, 1996, at Eagle Point, San Juan Island, were exciting and encouraging. But the best was yet to come!

On September 28, 1996, a Humpback Whale was reported in Perry Bay. Unlike previous sightings, this whale



Humpback Whale rolling on its side with portion of tail fluke (middle) and flipper (right) visible.
Photos: Christopher D. Malcolm



Humpback Whale with Steller's Sea Lions at right and foreground (splashes). Notice characteristic dorsal fin of Humpback Whales.

was sighted again... and again... and again! The humpback remained in the vicinity, moving about in a general area from Race Rocks east to Trial Island, and was seen regularly until November 15. Whale watching vessels and private boats alike were frequently able to travel only several kilometres from Victoria to view the rare visitor. Its blows were often visible from Dallas Road. Not only did Victoria have a resident humpback in the fall of 1996 but on October 27, a second humpback was seen near Constance Bank, approximately six kilometres south of Clover Point!

On October 25, seven of us shared a fascinating experience with the humpback. I took a group of University of Victoria graduate students on a marine field trip, planning to view sea lions at Race Rocks. I invited along another two graduate research friends, Jason Dunham, a whale researcher like myself, and Colin Laroque, a dendrochronologist. I had not planned on seeing any whales — the humpback had not been seen for a few days. It was an absolutely beautiful day, the water calm as a pond and deep blue. The Olympic Mountains were crystal clear and there were few clouds. It was 9:00 a.m. and there were no other boats anywhere between Victoria and Race Rocks. Opposite Albert Head, a Harbour Porpoise surfaced twice and disappeared. As we passed across Parry Bay and approached William Head, Colin suddenly pointed to the southeast and shouted. I looked over in time to see the whale surface — an incredibly bushy blow, 10 to 15 feet high, holding perfect shape in the still air. Great — two whale researchers in the boat and the tree-guy spots the whale! How embarrassing! It barely mattered, however — what passed over the next two hours was extraordinary.

As we approached the humpback, we could see a lot of splashing around the whale, especially about the head and tail. It was soon obvious that the whale was surrounded by sea lions, leaping and diving very close to the humpback. It was impossible to count the number of sea lions, they were moving about so quickly, but the general consensus was there were between ten and twenty. Although two species of sea lions, California (*Zalophus californianus*) and Steller

(*Eumetopias jubatus*), are common at Race Rocks during the fall and winter, there were only Steller's Sea Lions around the humpback. Over the next two hours some sea lions left, others arrived. The whale stayed at or near the surface, never descending for a deep dive. It remained in such a small area we were able to shut off the motors and sit quietly to observe the spectacle. It was so quiet, without wind, motors or city noises, that the only noise came from the splashing of the whale and sea lions. Sea lions grunts and whale blows were added intermittently.

What were we witnessing? Were the sea lions harassing the whale? Powerful tail flicks and thrashes by the humpback, throwing great sprays of water skyward, made me think it a possibility. Were they playing? The whale often slowly rolled over, sticking a four metre flipper or tail fluke into the air — not violent behaviours at all. Were they feeding? Large amounts of herring were in the area. Was this a common occurrence? I had once seen a California Sea Lion riding in the wake of a Gray Whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) in Clayoquot Sound but this was my first Humpback Whale. I needed to talk to someone!

Apparently, this behaviour is not uncommon in the Gulf of Alaska. Fred Sharpe, a doctoral student at Simon Fraser University, has seen this type of behaviour several times. Whether harassment or play, though, he is not sure. He mentions, however, that he has seen it more often with immature humpbacks. The Humpback Whale we saw was not fully grown, being perhaps 35 or 40 feet long. Others witnessed this phenomenon during the period the humpback was in the Victoria area. Ron Bates, of the Marine Mammal Research Group, described the same behaviours we observed and also saw California Sea Lions engaged with the humpback. On another occasion, Ron witnessed the humpback seemingly playing with a kelp ball, broken away during a storm. The humpback pushed it around and rubbed up against it.

The extended stay of this Humpback Whale is encouraging. Will we see more of this species next summer and fall? Have their numbers grown to the point where they will

extend their summer territory into this area more consistently in the future? Will we see sea lions and humpbacks interacting again and what is the reason for this behaviour? These questions provide new, interesting questions for local research and the possibility for exciting encounters with one of the species of the "great" whales for anyone in our local waters.

Two hours after we initially came upon this fascinating display of nature, the sea lions suddenly began to return towards Race Rocks. The whale began swimming north towards Albert Head. We were the sole witnesses to the behaviour that day — no other boats had come within several kilometres. It left me pondering again the abundance of marine nature that exists in such proximity to Victoria. As whale researchers it is important to periodically view what we research with those who have never, or rarely, observed such majestic creatures. Their reactions and comments remind us why we do so.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you very much to the following people who discussed these behaviours with me and/or provided me with important information: Robin Baird, Ron Bates, Dave Duffus, Jason Dunham, Kerry Irish, Colin Laroque, Heather Patterson and Fred Sharpe.

CHRIS MALCOLM is a graduate student at the University of Victoria who is researching Gray Whale feeding ecology. He will be teaching a marine mammal and bird identification course in February, through the Camosun College Community Education Program.

Chris also notes:

If you are ever out on the water and see a Humpback Whale please don't keep it to yourself! Reports of humpbacks, indeed all species of whales, in this area are important. Please call the Marine Mammal Research Group (380-1925), Ron Bates (386-1264), or myself (595-8649) to report where and when you saw the whale(s). If you can, record the species, where and when you saw them and what they were doing. If you do not know what species of whale you were looking at, call anyhow and describe it!

If you are lucky enough, perhaps you will observe the remarkable behaviour between a Humpback Whale and sea lions that we were fortunate enough to have experienced.

MARINE NIGHT FORUM

Do you have some slides of marine life that you would like to show at an upcoming Marine Night? You can either tell us what you know about them or ask the audience for information. If you are interested in taking part in an informal exchange such as this give Phil Lambert a call at 477-5922 and we will set aside a Marine Night in March, April or May.

Whales and Marine Mammals at Your Doorstep

Camosun College's Continuing Education program now offers an opportunity to learn about the mammals and birds that live in and around the waters of Southern Vancouver Island. Through classroom learning and field trips you will learn how to view and identify whales, porpoises, sea lions, marine birds and more.

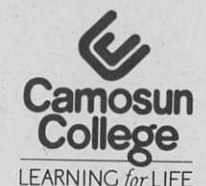
Instructor Christopher Malcolm, B.Sc., is presently working on his Masters of Science. His research experience includes whale research in Clayoquot Sound, as well as polar bear research in Churchill, Manitoba.

Course begins February 18, 1997

Fee: \$117 + GST

Location: Camosun College, Lansdowne Campus

For further information, please contact Camosun College at 370-4560 or e-mail: ceinfo@camosun.bc.ca.



Viaduct Flats Protected, for Now

By Michael Carson

Various meetings and discussions have taken place in connection with Viaduct Flats during the last nine months which should be of interest to all local birders.

One is the motion passed following the Public Hearing at Saanich on the Rezoning of the Glendale Lands on April 23, 1996. This motion required, as a condition of rezoning approval to the Province, that a conservation covenant be established on the wetlands area.

During the late summer and fall, members of the Parks and Conservation Committee of VNHS met with members of the Board of the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (whose lease from the Province of the northern part of the Glendale Lands includes the Viaduct Flats wetlands) to draft such a covenant and to discuss, more generally, plans for the management of the wetlands.

Provision for such management (including water level control) was included in the draft covenant and this was accepted, in large part, by Saanich staff and submitted to a subsequent Public Hearing on November 19. The map shown here indicates the extent of the covenanted zone; there is a reasonable amount of buffer space around the wetlands. The northern side of the covenanted zone essentially coincides with the Horticulture Centre's fence. Provision is made in the covenant for additions to the covenanted area at a later date pending further studies by the Horticulture Centre: one possible addition is the Garry Oak meadow area in the north east part of the property.

At the November 19th meeting, the covenant was accepted by Saanich Council as part of the rezoning package and, once administrative matters are completed, should soon be in effect. A copy of the covenant follows these back-ground comments.

One major omission in the covenant, compared to that drafted by the Parks and Conservation Committee and the Horticulture Centre, is the lack of a second covenantee to enforce the covenant. At present, the sole covenantee is the District of Saanich.

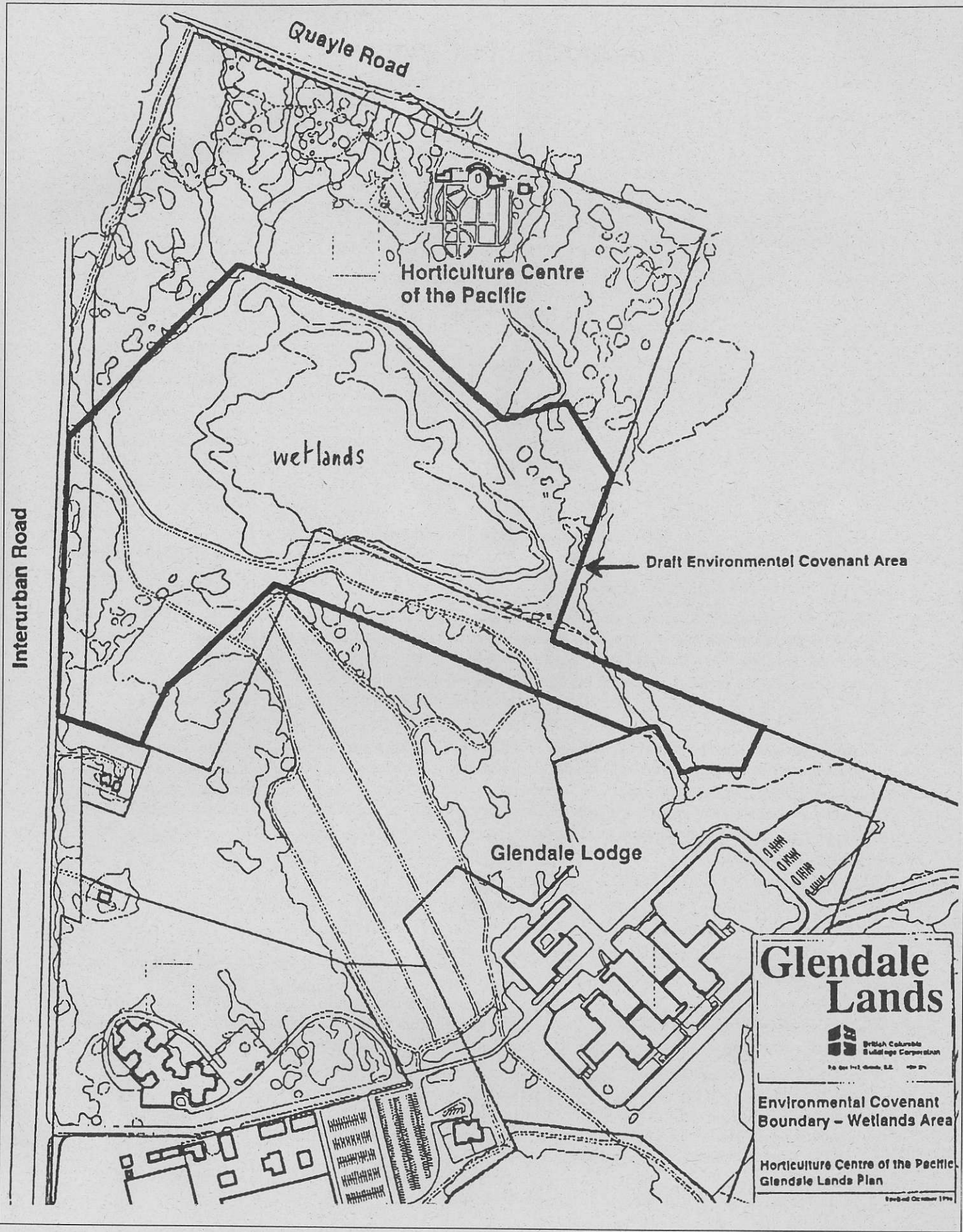
Our draft had proposed that either The Nature Conservancy of Canada or the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation (HAT) be designated a co-covenantee with the municipality. The reason for this is that, while a covenant-holder has the right to enforce the covenant, it does not have to enforce it. Councils change over time and some future Council may not be as environmentally-oriented as the Council that required this Covenant. Examples are certainly known where enforcement of covenants by municipal councils has been lacking and there is even the potential for a future Council to repeal the present covenant.

In the Viaduct Flats case, the uncertainty is increased by the likely change in ownership of the property. At the Saanich Committee of the Whole meeting of July 29, 1996, a motion was passed that Council enter into negotiations with the Provincial Government to obtain ownership of the land used by the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific or to obtain the lease. In the event that this transpires, it might well put the municipality in a "conflict of interest" position, as owner or lessee of the property, as well as sole covenantee of the conservation covenant. In fact, there is some uncertainty as to whether the municipality could be both covenantor (landholder) as well as covenantee (holder of the covenant).

Unfortunately, our lobbying to have a conservation organization as co-covenantee was turned down by Saanich municipal staff and Council took no further action. BC Lands had also previously indicated that it would not accept such a provision.

Although the future is therefore still uncertain, the land is earmarked for protection and attention needs to be directed to an appropriate management plan for the wetlands. It is expected that this management will be undertaken by a team combining representatives from the Horticulture Centre, Victoria Natural History Society, Ducks Unlimited, BC Ministry of Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and possibly other organizations.

It is important that the Society has someone with some technical expertise on this team, i.e. someone with a good background in bird habitat requirements in particular, and habitat issues in general. This is beyond the scope of members of the Parks and Conservation Committee who are already way overextended in what they are doing for habitat protection. This is a request therefore for volunteers. Please contact Michael Carson at 478-1535 if you are interested.



Fine Dining at Viaduct Flats

By Barbara Begg

In the early afternoon of 16 October, 1996, I was privileged to observe a female Mallard attempting to swallow a good-sized frog. The duck was in shallow water and when I noticed her she already had the apparently dead frog in her beak. She billed it for a few minutes, presumably to soften it, dropped it a couple of times, picked it up, then got serious about finishing her lunch. Throwing her head back each time, she made several attempts to swallow the frog, always head first, and was eventually successful. (I half expected her to collapse in exhaustion but she swam off nonchalantly.) The frog was at least five inches long from the head to the tips of the dangling hind legs. It was greenish on the dorsal surface, creamy white below and likely was one of the introduced Bullfrogs, an immature judging by the size.

According to the literature, the Mallard's diet consists

of 90%-95% vegetable matter, mainly seeds. The remainder includes molluscs, insects and their larvae, fishes and their spawn, crustaceans, worms, lizards, tadpoles and small frogs. They will even scavenge from dead salmon. In Arthur Cleveland Bent's *Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl* is a report of a detailed study in which the gizzards of 1,578 Mallards were examined and it was found that nine-tenths of the content was vegetable matter. The remainder was broken down into five categories: molluscs, 5.73% of the total diet; insects 2.67%; fishes 0.47%; crustaceans 0.35%; and, miscellaneous items, 0.25%.

It would seem that frogs are a very rare treat indeed!

Editor's Note: It has been frequently noticed that fishermen cleaning their catch at the boat ramp at Elk Lake throw the entrails into the lake water where it is fought over by several female Mallards and their young.

Watch for Colour-Banded Cooper's Hawks

Over 100 Cooper's Hawks in the Greater Victoria area were banded with red or black colour bands in 1996. This colour banding program is part of a study on the breeding ecology of Cooper's Hawks in urban Greater Victoria. Naturalists in this area can greatly assist this study by watching for and reporting these colour-banded hawks.

Colour bands were placed on the left leg and are uniquely coded with two vertical alpha-numeric characters (see illustrations). These codes, repeated three times around the band, are designed to be observed from all angles. Band codes can be easily read with a spotting scope, up to a distance of about 75 metres, or with binoculars if within 20 metres. If you observe a colour-banded hawk, please record the band colour and code, date and time, and your precise location. If you are unable to read the code but can determine band colour, please report this information as these are also useful data. Red bands signify that the hawk is a female, black signifies that it is a male. All colour-banded hawks were also banded with a standard aluminum US Fish and Wildlife band on the right leg. Cooper's Hawks observed with only a standard aluminum band on the right leg (no colour band on the left leg) were banded as nestlings in 1995 and should also be reported.

Although the Cooper's Hawk is undoubtedly Greater Victoria's most abundant year-round bird of prey, it is very secretive in behaviour and easy to miss. Cooper's Hawks may at times be seen in the very urban core of the city but are most frequently observed in suburban areas, especially near backyard bird feeders. Primary prey species during the breeding season include the American robin, European Starling and House Sparrow.

Standard US Fish and Wildlife bands were also placed on

all colour-banded Cooper's Hawks in 1996. In 1995 this was the only band placed on nestlings. These bands are always on the right leg and can only be read when in hand.

This example colour band on the next page would be recorded as "B over 6". Red bands are on females and black bands are on males. These bands are always on the left leg. Please report banded Cooper's Hawks to Andy Stewart (see below):

Urban Cooper's Hawk Study Call for Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to assist with early morning surveys to locate Cooper's Hawk nests in urban Greater Victoria. This is the third year of a long term study on the breeding biology of Cooper's Hawks in an urban landscape. Nest surveys are conducted before sunrise, generally require less than one hour and usually do not interfere with normal work routines. Surveys will be conducted from early March through late April 1997. Volunteers will be provided training and assigned a search area. Good naturalist skills and the ability to cheerfully arise on wet, stormy mornings are a definite asset. Some expenses such as personal vehicle mileage will be provided. If you are interested in becoming involved or wish to learn more about this study please contact:

Andy Stewart, BC Environment
780 Blanshard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4.
Phone: (250) 387-9780. Fax: 356-9145.
E-mail: astewart@fwhdept.env.gov.bc.ca

Watch for Colour Banded Cooper's Hawks

Over 100 Cooper's Hawks in the Greater Victoria area were banded with red or black colour bands in 1996. This colour banding program is part of a study on the breeding ecology of Cooper's Hawks in urban Greater Victoria. Naturalists in this area can greatly assist this study by watching for and reporting these colour banded hawks.

Colour bands were placed on the left leg and are uniquely coded with 2 vertical alphanumeric characters (see illustration). These codes, repeated 3 times around the band, are designed to be observed from all angles. Band codes can be easily read with a spotting scope up to a distance of about 75 m or with binoculars if within about 20 m. If you observe a colour banded hawk, please record the band colour and code, date and time, and your precise location. If you are unable to read the code but can determine band colour, please report this information as this is also useful data. Red bands signify that the hawk is a female, black signifies that it is a male. All colour banded hawks were also banded with a standard aluminum US Fish and Wildlife band on the right leg. Cooper's Hawks observed with only a standard aluminum band on the right leg (no colour band on the left leg) were banded as nestlings in 1995 and should also be reported.

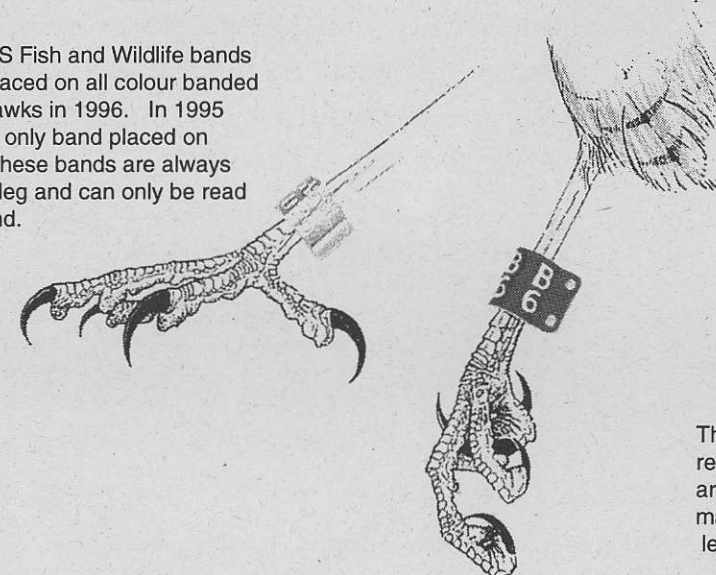
Although the Cooper's Hawk is undoubtedly Greater Victoria's most abundant year-round bird of prey, it is very secretive in behaviour and easy to miss. Cooper's Hawks may at times be seen in the very urban core of the city but are most frequently observed in suburban areas, especially near backyard bird feeders. Primary prey species during the breeding season include the American Robin, European Starling and House Sparrow.

Please report banded Cooper's Hawks to:

Andy Stewart
BC Environment
780 Blanshard Street
Victoria, B. C.
V8V 1X4

Phone: (250) 387-9780

Standard US Fish and Wildlife bands were also placed on all colour banded Cooper's Hawks in 1996. In 1995 this was the only band placed on nestlings. These bands are always on the right leg and can only be read when in hand.



This example colour band would be recorded as "B over 6". Red bands are on females and black bands are on males. These bands are always on the left leg.

Hat Tricks

A report on the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation

The new year looks to be pretty exciting for the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation. Many of the start up hoops are now completed. We are incorporated as a B.C. society and hopefully have received a registered charity number from Revenue Canada by the time you read this (i.e., it's not too late to donate). In 1997 we plan to make some major strides forward as we start to address directly the protection of our local habitat (see July/August, 1996 issue for our constitution). However, to make progress will require that we obtain your support to promote HAT and to provide assistance on various initiatives.

On the fund-raising side, back by popular demand, is *Musical Hats Again*. This entertaining fund raising event will be held Saturday, March 8 at Prospect Lake Community Hall. If you would like to volunteer your musical talents please contact Colleen O'Brien or Bruce Whittington. If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Marilyn Lambert. Last year we were sold out so be sure to get your tickets early!!

Now that the "start up" paperwork is nearing completion, we are going to put our hats on and start to do... more paper work. One component of HAT will be to provide

information on how people can help to protect our local habitat. To assist this endeavour we are preparing single page leaflets that discuss topics ranging from conservation covenants to considering HAT in your will. As such, we are looking for people with expertise or the energy to obtain background information, compile, write or review these informational leaflets. If you wish to assist on the project please contact Jeff Stone (370-2449 or 387-6672).

In the last issue, we put out a call for a logo. As of the last week of November we have received only one entry but we hear people are busy working. So, hopefully, by the next issue of the *Naturalist*, we will be able to show it off.

Finally, if you want more information on HAT or have suggestions, please contact any of the HAT Board of Directors: Jan Garnett, Marilyn Lambert, Colleen O'Brien, Leah Ramsay, Mike Shepard, Jeff Stone and Bruce Whittington. HAT can also be reached at:

VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation
P.O. Box 8552
Victoria, BC V8W 3S2
Phone: 595-2428

Musical HATs '97

Join us for an evening of entertainment in a coffeehouse atmosphere featuring the talents of local naturalists, biologists conservationists, and other assorted nature nuts. Proceeds from this event will benefit the Habitat Acquisition Trust.

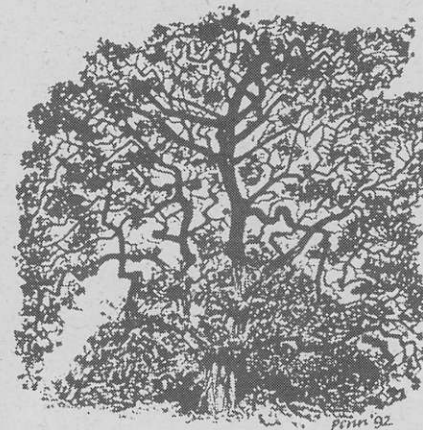
Saturday, March 8

Prospect Lake Community Hall, 5358 Sparton Road. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Entertainment starts at 7:30 p.m. Tickets: \$7.50 each available at Members' and Birders' Nights or at the Field Naturalist. Get 'em early! Last year's event sold out. For further information please call Colleen at 388-4520.

Volunteers Needed!

By Paul Gareau

A part from the transfer of statistics to a database, the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society recently completed a two year inventory of the Garry Oak trees in the City of Victoria. We have decided to embark on the same effort for the District of Saanich, which promises to be a much larger project. I would like to ask the members of the Victoria Natural History Society if there are any who might enjoy the exercise and volunteer some help.



With the aid of the municipality and Karen Hurley, their Environmental Officer, I have 37 area maps, all of which are within the Urban Containment Area of Saanich. I hope that we can interest about 20 volunteers, each of whom might take on the responsibility of carrying out

the inventory of one area (one map or equivalent).

The work consists simply of walking the streets and recording the number of Garry Oaks on each lot and recording them on the map in question. The only other detail we request is the breakdown between the number of trees four inches in diameter or less (four feet from the ground approximately) and all others. There is no time limit, although I hope that in October, 1997 we will have finished over half the work.

I do not expect much to be done during the winter months because of the weather and the difficulty sometimes in identifying the Oak tree when it is leafless. Some areas of development have left very few Oaks, in which case a slow drive in a car or on a bicycle will complete the survey quickly. Usually, however, walking is required. I would be glad to answer questions about this and give more detail for anyone interested. I think this activity is enjoyable and we hope it will be useful for the future. Members who are unable to help, might know of others who enjoy walking and might like to support this project while doing so.

For more information please contact Paul Gareau, Chairman, Program Committee for the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, Phone and/or fax: 592-9089 or e-mail: upgareau@islandnet.com.

Winter Wonder

By Gwen Nicol

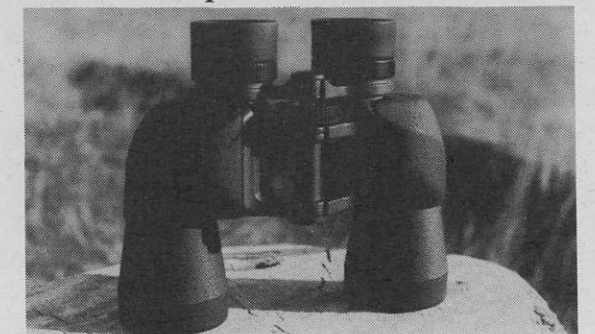
It's a cold, grey November day in the Kootenays with light snow falling all morning. I step from the warmth of my cocoon into the balcony to sweep the railing of snow, now knee deep, on the Steller's Jays who frequently drop in to grab a quick gulp of seed. As usual, I scan the scene for any life in the narrow nature strip existing below from benign neglect, and the immense Cedar and Cottonwood which stand on either side as Sentinels, heavily clad in white.

I see a small, plump bird sitting on the frozen branch of a bowed Lilac, with what at first glance appears to be a large leaf hanging below. I quickly reach for the binoculars kept handily inside and look again. In glorious magnification I see the unmistakable features of a tiny owl, tenaciously hooked to the limp body of a Waxwing. After quick reference to my golden guide it's easy to determine that it's a Northern Pygmy Owl.

It devours the waxwing's head, with only occasional wary glances about. It continues the feast for 45 minutes. All the while the body of the victim is suspended from those awesome claws, and the grey feathers float down to rest on the snow as evidence of the carnage.

Next time I look, those scattered feathers are all that remain.

This is the new benchmark
in 10 power binoculars



Nikon 10 x 42 SE

- the sharpness of porro prisms
- the contrast of Nikon coatings
- the handling of a thoroughbred

Backed by Nikon's 25 year limited warranty

the field-naturalist

Natural History . . . Sharp as a Tack
1126 Blanshard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2H6
(604) 388-4174 fax (604) 388-9236

Birds in Southern Ireland

By Dale Geils

Almost as soon as we arrived at Trinity College, Dublin, where we were to stay for a few days, I spotted this group of unfamiliar birds. Black and white, with long tails, strutting beneath the huge beech trees, not a bit disturbed by the activity around, and unknown to the students nearby, I had to wait for identification until I bought a copy of “Common Bird’s of Ireland” book. These Pied Wagtails were my first introduction to birds in southern Ireland.

Apparently, there are more than fifty different birds to be seen on campus at different times of the year. The high roofs and tall chimneys of the college buildings provide a safe refuge for several species in the centre of Dublin city where the college is located.

During my stay, I was to see and hear the harsh call of the Magpie; Starlings flying in and out of the eaves; the Mistle Thrush and Wood Pigeons in the tall trees, and Blackbirds and the House Sparrow in the bushes — to name a few.

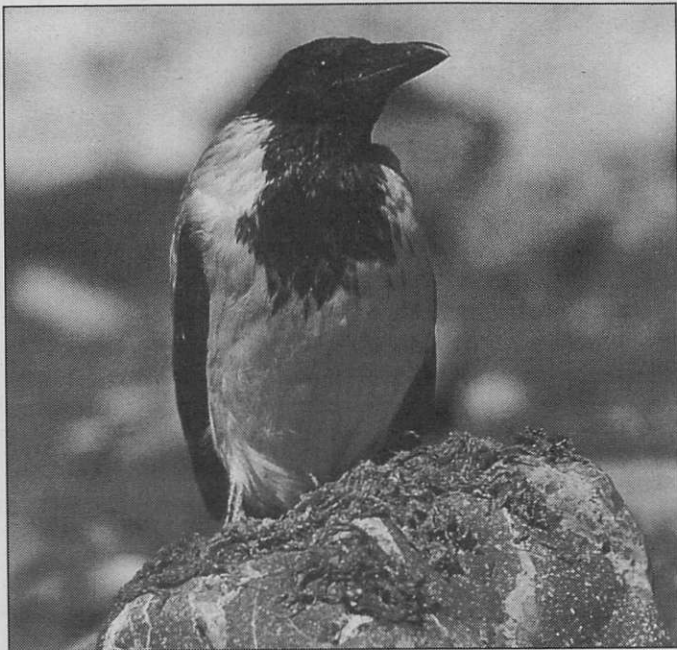
My first sighting of the Hooded Crow, which has the light grey and black colouring so distinctive from our Northwestern Crow, was along the sea-front in Howth. It is a small town north-east of Dublin, where we had gone one day. We were hoping to be able to arrange a boat trip out to Ireland’s Eye, a small island off the coast where a colony of Gannets had established nearby on a sea stack. Unfortunately the fog had rolled in and only a few fishing boats could be seen slowly disappearing into the fog and out to sea.

From Dublin we travelled to Glendalough, an historical area notable for St. Kevin who founded the monastery there, remnants of which can still be seen today. This is now part of Wicklow Mountains National Park, which was established in 1991 to protect the natural heritage of the area.

Having lunch at one of the picnic table near some bushes and small trees, I attracted many small birds with pinkish breast and greyish crowns. These were the Chaffinch, which were quite tame, coming close to pick up crumbs, flying into the trees and returning frequently.

While hiking in one of the many remote valleys in the Wicklow Mountain area, we also spotted the Peregrine Falcon swooping down over the lakes. This is one of the birds of prey which was endangered due to pesticide effects in the 50’s and 60’s but it’s numbers are recovering and the Peregrine can now be found in many of it’s former haunts. After a three day visit to Glendalough, we left this beautiful area and drove south to Wexford for a night’s stay — not enough time for birding!

Next morning we boarded a train and enjoyed a pleasant journey through the lovely Irish countryside to Tralee. From there we travelled by local bus to our next B & B in Annas-



Hooded Crow. Photo from *Irish Birds*, Eason & Son Ltd., 1992.

caul, a small village situated on the southern part of the Dingle Peninsula.

Our first hike here was around the “Inch” — a sandy spit, famous for the beauty of the beaches. It is somewhat similar to our Sidney Island spit but much longer and with immense dunes and sand hills and a salt marsh near the tip.

The high cliff area at the beginning contains nesting sites for many birds and we noticed several deep-looking burrows near the top. Here, I caught my first view of a Chough. This crow-like bird has a red bill and legs and a distinctive “chauh” call. To watch the aerobatic maneuvering of two of these birds flying together is quite a sight. They seem to be enjoying the exercise.

The numerous Oystercatchers on shore further down the beach had the familiar reddish bill, red eyes and pinkish legs, but with a black and white plumage. In the same areas were various sandpipers, Dunlins, a Ringed Plover and some Cormorants and Shags offshore.

Sometimes we took a bus into the town of Dingle — a twenty minute ride along a narrow, winding country road where the driver showed his skill at manipulating the vehicle around the sharp corners without hardly slowing down. All this to loud music from the radio. On one return trip we were entertained by an exciting soccer match being broadcast from Wexford!

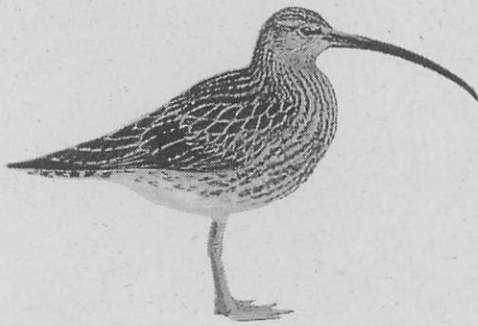


The Inch Sand Dunes, Dingle Peninsula. Photo: D. Geils

From the harbour at Dingle we walked along a coastal path to the old lighthouse. The beaches here tend to be more rocky and pebbly with seaweed washed up on shore. Here we were lucky to see a lone Curlew. This bird was probing the rocks and seaweed with its long, decurved bill for molluscs and other small sea creatures. On this occasion we also saw many Oystercatchers, Hooded Crows, Herring Gulls, Black-headed Gulls and Common Gulls. The Grey Heron, lighter in colour and smaller than our Great Blue Heron, was also seen at the water’s edge.

Quick impressions of the Dingle Peninsula, which is 112 miles long. Spectacular scenery with rugged coastline and small, secluded bays. The tranquillity of the distant hills, landscapes dotted with small white cottages, often in isolation from their neighbours.

Fields being harvested, surrounded by stone walls and hawthorn hedges. Along the roads and country lanes, hedgerows in full bloom with deep pink Fuschia blossoms and frequently clumps of Orange-spiked Montbretia. Lovely gardens bright with flowers and roses in full bloom, despite being mid-September. Most houses decorated with window boxes full of colourful flowers. And palm trees growing everywhere. Some very tall ones — about 25 feet high, along a driveway of a large old stone house with a beautifully landscaped garden.



Curlew. Drawing from *Ireland Pocket Guide to the Common Birds of Ireland*, E. Dempsey and M. O’Clery, 1995. Gill & MacMillan Ltd., Dublin.

The warming effect of the Gulf Stream has considerable influence on the climate, which tends to be mild and wet with much rain in winter, and often blustery. However we were lucky. There was no rain at all during our stay in Ireland.

The one bird I had hoped to see was the Corncrake. I had read that this bird has disappeared from most of western Europe but was still sometimes seen in parts of Ireland, though its numbers were rapidly declining. This is due to the destruction of the nests by the cutting of silage, before the chicks are hatched. This method has replaced the traditional hay cutting, which is done much later and allows time for the chicks to be out of the way.

Still, I did see the Curlew and that was a bonus and a good finish to my vacation in Ireland.

The Hooded Crow and Curlew illustrations come from two excellent books on birding in Ireland: Irish Birds, published by Eason & Son Ltd. Dublin, 1992 and Ireland Pocket Guide to the Common Birds of Ireland, E. Dempsey and M. O’Clery, 1995, Gill & MacMillan Ltd., Dublin.

April in Texas

By Keith Taylor

Texas: Spring comes early to the far southern corner of this bird-rich slate. For the birder, springtime is Texas at its best. Trees have squired their brilliant foliage by late March, wildflowers nod on scented air, resident birds are singing and nesting, and virtually all the migratory species of eastern and central North America pour northward from Central and South America. Birding the coastal oak groves of High Island can be truly a mind-boggling experience as migrants appear in staggering numbers. About forty species of essentially Mexican birds inhabit the subtropical woodlands and dry brushlands of the southern border along the Rio Grande.

Gentle, warm breezes sent undulations though the brilliant carpets of multi-coloured wildflowers lining the roadway and pushed wispy clouds across an endless blue sky. Seeded, the roads of east Texas are among the most beautiful in the world. The wave-like motion of the flowers, painted in striking hues of azure, ultramarine, gold and vermilion, prompted feelings of contentment and the short drive from Houston’s Hobby Airport to Rockport passed quickly.

Rockport rests among groves of majestic Virginia Live Oak along the sparkling shores of the Gulf. The Texas coast is as beautiful in appearance as that of Florida and shares a similar coastline of tong barrier islands edged with miles of gleaming-white beaches shaded by magnificent palms. Among the inlets and tidal backwaters are quaint buildings adored in the pastel pinks and greens so commonplace along the Gulf of Mexico. We checked into one of these — the Laguna Reef Motel. A long fishing pier stretched from the beach at our front door into the warm, aquamarine sea. A quiet afternoon was spent in the shade sipping cold drinks as we gazed across the shallows. Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Pelican, Royal, Gull-billed, Least and Sandwich Tern, Laughing Gull, Reddish and Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, Snowy, Piping and Wilson’s Plover, American Oystercatcher, Willet, Marbled Godwit and hordes of smaller shorebirds, were easily observed.

Late in the afternoon we drove nonchalantly to the Aransas Wildlife Refuge admiring the lush stands of oaks along the way. From the high viewing tower, two distant white specks were unquestionably Whooping Cranes feeding along the grassy salt flats. Wild Turkey, Inca Dove, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo and Painted Bunting were added to our trip list. At Copano Bay we dined on succulent lobster at a famed seafood restaurant. Views were magnificent as the sun set in a blaze of colour, mirrored in the lambent sea.

The air was sultry the next day as we boarded the large, comfortable boat operated to view the regal Whooping Cranes. Several species of gull and tern followed in the wake giving excellent views. Among the channels and shallow lagoons were numerous herons, egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, ibis and shorebirds — and several Whooping Cranes.

We left Rockport and moving inland, we drove by unbroken stretches of tall-grass savannas dotted with numerous clumps and groves (*mottes*) of Live Oak and mesquite. Unhurried, we stopped early at the Motel 6 in Kingsville and after a cool dip in the pool we drove south along highway 77 south of Sarita to scan several of the many vegetated ponds on the huge King Ranch. White-tailed Hawk, a Texas specialty, were easily found along the drive. The scattered ponds are excellent sites for Least Grebe, Neotropical Cormorant, Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, Mottled Duck, Northern Jacana (rare) and many shorebirds. A rarity was discovered, a Masked Duck, while in the bromelaid-festooned oaks at the Sarita rest-stop we found a pair of nesting Tropical Parula; both of these species are casual at these locations. Entrails deposited behind a poultry farm in the area attracts hawks including 50 or more Harris’ Hawk and Crested Caracara — and today was no exception.

After an excellent breakfast buffet the next morning we drove slowly along the short-grass shoulder of a farm road north of Kingsville. This guarantees flushing a few Sprague’s Pipit, which land in the plowed fields, for excellent views. After studying a few of these drab *Anthus* and hearing their loud, squeaky calls, we headed south towards McAllen and the valley.

When birders say “The Valley”, they mean the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. This is the fascinating region that attracts many Mexican exotics found nowhere else in the ABA area. The few pockets of subtropical jungle that remain along the Rio Grande harbour an abundance of birdlife. Once the valley has worked its magic on the first-time visitor, the spell never diminishes, making one longing to return.

Soon after settling into our room at the brand-new Microtel in McAllen, we headed for an afternoon stroll at my favourite site in Texas — the Bentsen Rio Grande State Park. Within the wooded trailer park hangs a plethora of seed feeders, hummingbird feeders and cut oranges which attract the valley specialties. The birds here are very tame and within minutes the raucous calls of the ABA’s only guan, Plain Chachalaca, are heard, and White-tipped Dove, Ladder-backed and Golden-fronted Woodpecker, gaudy Green Jays, Tufted (Black-crested) Titmouse, Couch’s Kingbird, Long-billed Thrasher, Altamira Oriole, Bronzed Cowbird and the modest Olive Sparrow are seen. On every

trip I have observed at least one Clay-coloured Robin and Blue Bunting, both casual Mexican vagrants. Gray Hawks are uncommonly seen on walks. Nocturnal species such as Eastern Screech-Owl, Elf Owl and Common Pauraque were found in the evening; the Pauraque sit on the paved roads and can be seen in the car’s headlights.

After devouring an excellent and inexpensive Mexican breakfast of *huevos rancheros*, we drove to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge — one of the few natural humid areas remaining in the valley; four-foot long Spanish Moss hangs in profusion within this magnificent subtropical woodland. The balmy early morning air was beginning to warm sufficient to kindle thermals. Thousands of Broad-winged Hawk and a few hundred Mississippi Kite flapped lazily over the tree tops to join the currents spiralling upward. Although Santa Ana shares the same species as Bentsen, there are several lily-covered ponds and emerald oxbow lakes which attract waterbirds: Least Grebe, Neotropical Cormorant, several species of waterfowl and shorebirds, the high-profile Great Kiskadee, and Ringed and Green Kingfisher were gratifyingly common and easily found. Groove-billed Ani, Brown-crested Flycatcher and Lesser Goldfinch were found in the dense thickets and grassy regions while Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Buff-bellied Hummingbird (a south Texas specialty) fed at the red-flowering Turk’s Cap located around the old headquarters building. The rare Rose-throated Becard is occasionally found here as well as Hook-billed Kite and Tropical Parula. Later we stopped briefly at Anzalduas County Park for Burrowing Owl which nest along the dam.

We decided to continue up the valley. A quick stop at Salmenos produced Muscovy Duck and Audubon’s Oriole. This is the only site in the USA where these large ducks are truly wild. The Muscovy first landed on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande and after several minutes finally decided to fly downstream and land on the American side where it was countable. At Rancho Santa Margarita we quickly found the huge Brown Jays, and just below Falcon Dam, Red-billed Pigeon and the rare (but regular) Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl. Although a relatively short distance from the coast, the air quickly loses humidity as you progress up the Valley. After having driven 100 miles from the coast, desert-like conditions exist around Falcon Dam. A new set of birds inhabit the dry chaparral including Scaled Quail, White-winged Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Lesser Nighthawk, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Verdin, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Bell’s Vireo, Hooded Oriole, Lark Bunting, Pyrrhuloxia, Black-throated Sparrow and Cassin’s Sparrow.

When birders say “The Valley”, they mean the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. This is the fascinating region that attracts many Mexican exotics found nowhere else in the ABA area.

San Ignacio is a tiny hamlet forty miles up the valley from Falcon Dam. Several delightful dilapidated stone buildings and a few attractive colonial homes rest under grand shade trees. The trees and dry grasses growing in the vacant lots present excellent birding — the town can be alive with migrants! The speciality here is a tiny population of White-collared Seedeater, the only colony in the ABA area. We found seedeaters in the giant stands of *Phragmites* reeds bordering the Rio Grande and feeding amongst the dry grasses in town. These reeds also attract the odd Gray-

crowned Yellowthroat from Mexico and one usually appears here every year.

The next morning, after a “Grand Slam” breakfast, we headed in the opposite direction toward the coast. At the world-famous Brownsville dump we soon found the frog-voiced Tamaulipas (Mexican) Crow among the numerous Great-tailed Grackle and White-necked Raven (a bonus: the winds blowing here often reveal the white-based neck feathers). Scanning the plowed fields along the farm roads leading to Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge we discovered a few Mountain Plover and a single Buff-breasted Sandpiper. At an overgrown lot were several Grasshopper Sparrows. At Laguna Atascosa we took the 14 mile long Bay Tour which passes through a variety of

habitats from dense thickets of mesquite, through prairie dotted with tall yuccas, through bays, mud flats and salt flats. Among the many species seen were White-tailed Kite, a pair of hacked Aplomado Falcons (uncountable), numerous waders including White-rumped Sandpiper and Hudsonian Godwit, Black Skimmer and Botteri’s Sparrow. Recent colonists from Mexico, the Red-crowned Parrot and Green Parakeet, were easily located along streets in town.

After several days of birding the valley we headed north to Winnie, a small town near the Louisiana border. After checking into the Best Western we drove around the surrounding rice fields listening for Dickcissel then proceeded to High Island. The small community of High Island has become a “must” for birders who wish to experience the greatest phenomenon of migrating Neotropical passerines in North America; only the Canadian mecca of Point Pelee is as well-known as a migration vantage point. Each evening a tremendous flight launches from the southern rim of the Gulf of Mexico and strikes northward over the dark waters. Depending on the flying conditions they encounter, they arrive over the Texas coast the following day. If the weather has been favourable most will continue well inland before landing, but if they encounter headwinds or rain, thousands — sometimes hundreds of thousands — may drop into the first vegetation encountered.

Sitting on a low, wooded rise above the surrounding flat marshes, a quarter-mile from the Gulf waters, the dark green motte of High Island is easily observed at great distances. The venerable spreading oaks attract migrants like a magnet and around noon tiny bodies begin to appear overhead. The Virginia Life Oaks, Hackberry and Chinese Tallow trees come alive with colour as flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, warblers, gnatcatchers, tanagers and grosbeaks fall like rain and alight. Among the specialties seen were Chuck-will's-widow, Wood Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo, a host of southern warblers, including the brilliant Prothonotary, the elusive Swainson's, Golden-winged, Blue-winged, Black-throated Green, Cerulean, Blackburnian, Yellow-throated, Worm-eating, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Orchard Oriole, Summer Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting and Common Grackle.

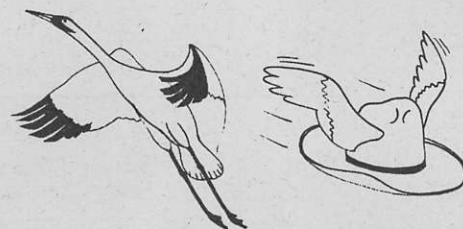
Nearby we visited one of the largest marshes on the upper coast — Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Species seen included Common Moorhen, Purple Gallinule, Clapper and King Rails, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, both night-herons, many shorebirds and waterfowl, Wood Stork, White-faced and White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Sedge Wren, Boat-tailed Grackle, Seaside Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Swarms of mosquitoes prevented us from

leaving the safety of the car that night as we searched for both Yellow and Black Rails. The mosquitoes were not a problem during the warmer hours of the day but were fierce after sunset. The tape recorder was quickly placed (playing) on the ground a few feet from the car. Listening and peering through a fine netting taped over the open window, we searched for the rails with a powerful flashlight.

Our final destination was Silsbee and the pinewoods and hardwoods of southeastern Texas. We checked into the delightful Pinewoods Inn in the heart of the "piney" woods to search for the specialties: Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler and Bachman's Sparrow. The fragrance of the dry pine needles, the azure skies and large tracts of virgin river-bottom forests, were indeed memorable. Most of the birds here are typical of eastern woodlands and include Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Fish Crow, Acadian and Great Crested Flycatchers, Carolina Wren, Caroline Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Prairie Warbler and Field Sparrow.

Our final trip list included some 330 species!

KEITH TAYLOR is a regular contributor to The Victoria Naturalist. He has published several books on birding in Costa Rica and British Columbia.



SOUTHERN TEXAS APRIL 5 - 17, 1997

Join David Stirling and Bruce Whittington on a Tour of the Birding Hotspots of Southern Texas. Green Jays along the Rio Grande, Whooping Cranes at Aransas and migrating warblers at High Island highlight this tour.

Tour Cost: \$1750.00 CDN (double) from San Antonio to Houston
Includes: Ground Transportation in Texas, Accommodation, 15 meals, a boat tour of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, wonderful birds and great camaraderie.

All proceeds from this tour will be donated to the Victoria Natural History Society's Habitat Acquisition Trust.

For more information, please call Marilyn at 477-5922.

Letters

Dear Editor:

I attended a most interesting program on November 12 at the Society's monthly presentation at the University of Victoria. There were 14 other people in the audience — three members of the VNHS board, two first-time attendees and nine VNHS members. It was such a shame and most embarrassing that so few people were there. The President and past President had put in a lot of work to arrange the speaker, and bring in the slide projector, TV and VCR for the program. Jim Cosgrove gave an excellent and informative presentation really involving the audience as there were lots of questions during his talk. Those who did not attend missed a very good evening.

The monthly presentation does not begin with a business meeting. The gathering starts with a welcome, announcements of upcoming events and then well before 8:00 p.m. the program starts, so it is not a late evening. Attendance of these presentations has been sparse for a long time and the purpose of this letter is to try and find out why.

Birders night attracts a large number of our members but very few of those people attend the monthly presentations. Are they not interested in learning more about other aspects of the natural world? There would not be birds if it was not for "habitat" and the plants and animals that share that habitat with birds.

I am curious to know why members do not attend and what it would take to bring you out — a different night? A different location? Do give me a call at 744-5750 to tell me your ideas about why VNHS monthly presentations attract so few people. The VNHS Board will give any ideas their consideration because they would like to have better attendance at the meetings.

Make a note on your calendar for the second Tuesday of each month to come to the monthly presentations and bring a friend and we will have a good turn-out.

I hope to see you all at future meetings.

Lyndis Davis

MORE ELECTRONIC BIRDING

Here are some additional web sites with birding information. If anyone has other sites to offer, or comments on the ones we have published, please let us know at the *Naturalist*.

<http://home.sol.no/tibjonn/>

<http://www.mbr.nbs.gov> — Patuxent Wildlife Refuge Center

<http://www.nj.com/life/audubon> — New Jersey Audubon Society

<http://biosci.cbs.unm.edu/~mou> — Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

Dear Editor:

I write regarding the letter by Stan Orchard in your November/December issue. I can only concur with Mr. Orchard's view that the Western Terrestrial Garter Snake is misnamed; I even agree that it should be called the Western Garter Snake (a suggestion of which he is not sole originator, by the way). Nevertheless, to then describe this snake as "aquatic" is as misleading as to call it "terrestrial". This widespread species is hypervariable in its ecology from place to place in British Columbia. It is indeed most frequently associated with bodies of water and often feeds on aquatic prey, sometimes nearly exclusively. However, even where it is associated with water, it sometimes eats mainly terrestrial prey (slugs and small mammals). Finally, this snake is sometimes found in completely terrestrial habitats; a good example was the small population (now extirpated) inhabiting the former meadows (now buildings) on the University of Victoria campus in the 1970's.

Patrick T. Gregory
Professor, Department of Biology
University of Victoria

BIRD CANADA

★ Terrific Leaders

★ Wonderful Itineraries

★ Great Prices



Burrowing Owl

• Point Pelee - May
with Peter Burke

• Southern BC - May
with Bryan Gates

• Okanagan - June
with Dick Cannings

• Manitoba - June
with Brian Henshaw

• Churchill - June
with Brian Henshaw

• Alberta - July
with Alvaro Jaramillo

• The High Arctic - July
with Peter Burke

• Nova Scotia - September
with Ian McLaren

Call: (604) 231-9661 or 1-800-373-5678

P.O. Box 94672, Richmond, BC V6Y 4A4 E-Mail: birdtours@eagle-eye.com

Eagle-Eye Tours Inc.

Psst! They're Not Members

By Jeff Stone

From time to time at a VNHS Board of Directors meeting, questions arise about non-VNHS members at Birder's night. Should everyone have to show their VNHS membership card at the door? Should non-members have to pay a fee? At first glance, it might appear obvious that, except for financial hardship, everyone attending the presentations should pay in some form or other. Sometimes, however, with a closer inspection, the obvious may not be clear.

Over the past year while investigating a constitution for the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation, I have had the opportunity to look closer at the VNHS constitution (provided at the end of this discussion) and the role of societies and charities, as defined by Revenue Canada. From this look, I am convinced that we should be actively encouraging rather than discouraging non-members to participate in our activities. This belief is drawn from understanding what the VNHS is, both as a legal entity and as a collection of members with an interest in natural history.

First, from the legal entity perspective. The VNHS is registered as a non-profit organization (i.e., a society), under the Society Act of British Columbia, and a registered charity under the Income Tax Act of Canada. As an incorporated non-profit society, we do not pay taxes and have legal rights as a society. As a charitable organization (i.e., we can issue receipts for income tax deduction purposes), we have the obligations of providing a needed service (e.g., protection of the environment) to the community. What charitable status infers is that we are not a service club which provides benefits primarily to its own members. Our open door policy to our presentations and walks demonstrates our desire to meet the obligation of providing a needed service. Additionally, we refrain from supporting individual candidates for elected government positions.

Secondly, from a members perspective. As seen in our bylaws, the prime objectives of the VNHS are to: a) stimulate active interest in natural history; and, b) to study and protect flora and fauna and their habitats. As members of a society, we should feel an obligation to these goals. Being a member of a society should not be about what I can get (e.g., magazines, talks) but how I, as a member and part of a society, can express those values that attracted me to the society in the first place.

One of the great things about a society such as the VNHS is that as we strive to meet our objectives there are many fun and interesting activities along the way. As a society we try to stimulate interest in natural history. We do this through our monthly presentations such as Birder's Night, Marine Night, Botany Night and Natural History Presentations, member-led walks, operation of the rare bird alert and events lines, and the publication of the *Victoria Naturalist*.

We also have some more serious (but also enjoyable) activities. The Christmas and Spring Bird Counts provide

extensive information on our bird fauna. Intensive surveys such as has been conducted at Blenkinsop Lake, Rithet's Bog and Viaduct Flats, have provided baseline information needed for habitat preservation or management decisions. The Parks and Conservation Committee ensures that our conservation values are heard by the various levels of government through letters and presentations. We also extend into the community with our information displays and by providing financial support for education through donations and scholarships.

Aside from meeting our objectives, if we want our presentations to continue we need to encourage as many people as possible to attend. The volunteers who put the effort into speaking, moderating, searching out speakers, placing the information on an event line, are only rewarded by the smiling faces in the audience. The person who prepares coffee is not there because they like to make coffee. They are there because they want people to be better informed about our natural history and to develop a heartfelt desire to conserve it. So show those volunteers that you appreciate their work by attending and encouraging the participation of non-members in VNHS activity and hopefully the non-members will find out why it is worthwhile to be a Victoria Natural History Society member.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

1. The name of the Society is the Victoria Natural History Society, hereinafter referred to as "the Society".

2. The objects of the Society are:

(a) to stimulate active interest in natural history;

(b) to study and protect flora and fauna and their habitats;

(c) to work with other societies and like bodies having interest in common with this society, within and beyond the Province of British Columbia.

3. The operations of the Society are to be chiefly carried on in Southern Vancouver Island.

4. The Society shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members and any profits or other accretions to the organization shall be used in promoting its objectives.

5. The Directors shall have power to invest in securities pursuant to the Trustee Act of British Columbia such surplus funds as may from time to time be in their hands and may sell the same and reinvest the proceeds of sales pursuant to resolutions of the Board as approved by a General Meeting of the Society.

6. Upon the winding-up of the Society, or its dissolution, the extraordinary resolution authorizing such winding-up or dissolution shall specify that all assets remaining which are owned by the Society shall be distributed to one or more recognized organizations in Canada.

7. Clauses 4, 5 and 6 of this Constitution are unalterable in accordance with Section 17 of the Societies Act.

Welcome to New Members

OCTOBER

James Bullen
of Cadboro Bay Road
is interested in identification
and photography of local
birds

Drew Fafard
of Hillside Avenue
enjoys birding

Laura Fagan
of Denman Street
interests include conservation
and public education in all
fields of environmental issues

David Greer
of Windsor Road

**J. McCutcheon and
D. Nurse**
of Richmond Road
are birders

**Pamela Meneguzzi and
Craig Kardeluch**
of Quadra Street
enjoy birding, shore walks,
marine life and exploring
San Juan and Gulf Islands

Joan Mogensen
of Crestview Road
is interested in birds and
environmental protection

James and Jennifer Taylor
of Windsor Road

Devon Anderson
of Harder Road
enjoys birding, baseball,
travelling and reading

Bill and Theresa McMillan
of Hallsor Drive

John and Nelly Topham
of Pandora Avenue
observe marine life

NOVEMBER

Shirley Jasperse
of Shorncliffe Heights

Gerry and Sally Bell
of Saanichton
interests include birds,
wildflowers and marine life

Steve Koerner
of Queenswood Drive

Betty MacNaughton
of Fairfield Road
is interested in birds,
Garry Oak, whales
and BC natural history
especially coastal area and
islands

Heather Robinson
of St. Albert, Alberta

Erin Stinson
of Fort Street
interests include
amateur birding,
nature interpretation
and wildlife management
in Victoria area

A. Storey
of Sidney
enjoys bird watching

Miriam Tomlinson
of Terlane Avenue
is interested in birding,
botany and conservation

Frank and Lois Seddon
of Colville Road
enjoy birds and
wildflowers

Natural Greece

Off the beaten track in comfort with expert local naturalists

28 April - 13 May, 1997

Eyros Hills, Lakes of Thrace, Mount Olympus, Skopelos Island and Mount Parnassus

Did you know that Greece sustains some of the richest wildlife and flora in Europe? Now is the time to discover Greece's off-the-beaten-track landscapes and culture on an educational tour led by expert Greek naturalists.

Our 16-day trip this Spring will leisurely explore the most outstanding natural areas in Greece, including the richest reserve for birds of prey in Europe at Dadia. We'll watch the spectacular migration of pelicans, flamingos and shorebirds in the lagoons of Thrace. On Mt. Olympus the diverse flora and birdlife complements the scenic alpine grandeur. Legendary Mt. Parnassus has stunning orchids and Greek fir forests! Skopelos Island is home to Eleonora's falcons, Yelkouan shearwaters and wild "rock gardens" full of wildflowers and migrant songbirds. On this trip last Spring we saw 172 bird species, hundreds of wildflowers and dolphins five times!

This nature tour is designed and led by Biogeographer, Stam Zogaris and Educator Vasso Vlami. These experienced leaders have worked on research and conservation in Greece for over a decade. This Ecotour promotes nature conservation in Greece.

Tour cost is very reasonable and includes all flights and transportation, all accommodation in superb "B" Class hotels and lodges. Please book early, space is limited.

For booking and information, please call Patti at Omega

Telephone: 738-7161 or 1-800-663-2669



Omega Travel, 3220 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V6K 2H4

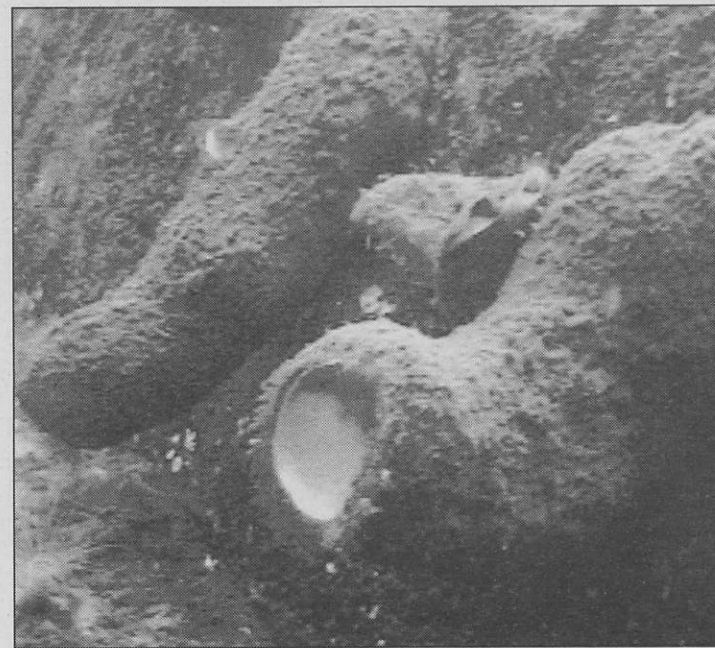
Pacific Octopus

by Pamela Thuringer

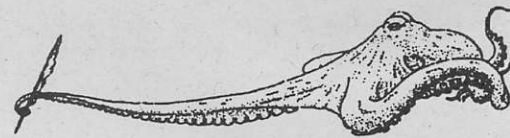
As a diver for the past ten years, I sometimes pause and think about little moments in the undersea realm. The experiences are as unique as the first time I saw hoar frost hanging off the limbs of an old birch tree in the early morning hours of a cold prairie winter day. Even though the procedure of gearing up and safety checks should most assuredly follow a methodical regime, I find there is nothing routine about the experience of diving.

I recall feelings of apprehension and excitement in preparation for my first open water night dive. After ensuring that all the hand-held and video lights were functioning properly, we cracked the glow sticks attached to our tanks and backpack straps to activate the bright yellow hue. We then plunged into the dark water to locate the buoy line that would guide us to our 95-foot destination into the nocturnal underwater world.

Coasting downward along the line, we immediately noticed the phosphoresce in the water column with every movement of our flippers. Limited by the scope of the light beam, our field of view was soon full of tiny shrimp-like organisms called mysids darting around at a depth of 45 feet. Looking down, I remember vividly the few sets of red glowing eyes on the bottom and thinking back to a conversation about Sixgill Sharks (*Hexanchus griseus*) spotted days before on a night dive in the same vicinity. Upon reaching the rather stark sandy substrate, I was relieved and quite pleased to find several Ratfish (*Hydrolagus collieri*) hovering above the ocean floor. Ratfish primarily inhabit soft bottom areas and were



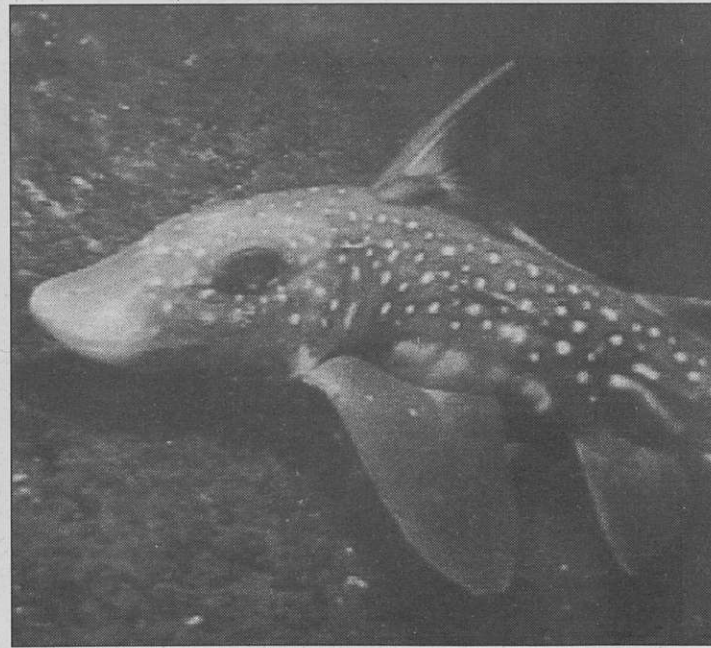
Boot sponges (*Rhabdocalyptus dawsoni*) approximately 1m in length on base of bedrock cliff, 90 feet deep.



most unflatteringly named as a result of the resemblance of its long tapered tail to that of its namesake. In spite of its unappealing name, and general reaction by fisherman who often see the mangled and twisted torsos in their nets, I found this fish particularly charming and graceful to watch move around. A turn to the left and I've watched our Ratfish companion witness our find of a lone Sea Pen (*Ptilosarcus gurneyi*) on the desolate sandflat we were soon to leave.

Encouraged to experience yet another subtidal habitat in the dark, we ventured over a bedrock cliff, teaming with life, with nothing below us but the unknown of shear darkness. A bit of a surprise was the sudden appearance of a four-foot Spiny Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*), obviously confused by the light source as indicated by its behaviour of a series of sudden darting motion in several directions. Also startled by the sudden encounter, it took me a moment to realize the bedrock cliff was a wall of Boot Sponges (*Rhabdocalyptus dawsoni*), delicate, yet hundreds of years old (for those one metre in size or greater). Quite an amazing sight. I remember peering into the centre of one large Boot Sponge and finding an adult Quillback Rockfish (*Sebastes malmiger*) nestled within, an excellent final vivid memory to add to my first dip in the dark.

There have been times I questioned whether to continue diving after experiences such as running out of air at 80 feet, closely witnessing the explosion of a steel tank valve from overfilling, recovering a dropped weight belt that laid to rest on a rock ledge at 115-foot and getting entangled by scrap



Ratfish (*Hydrolagus collieri*) approximately 1m in length on base of bedrock cliff, 90 feet deep.

Subtidal video images: Pamela Thuringer

metal under a dock. However, these moments fade into the distant background when compared to dives such as the one I have just described. With such a limited field of view during these night ventures into the ocean, every invertebrate and fish encountered appeared more dramatic in my mind's eye than during any daytime visit. I often wonder how these stories of underwater moments will play back in my memory

ten years from now! Experience, a calm and relaxed approach, and common sense are tools every diver should bring with them and hopefully every dive will be as unique an experience as I find them to be.

PAMELA THURINGER is a marine biologist working with a local environmental consulting firm.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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. **NOTICE:** We would like to encourage everyone to attend those meetings which are of interest to them but especially the Natural History Presentations. The volunteers and speakers at these meetings work hard to provide an entertaining and informative evening. We should all show our appreciation by coming to as many as possible.

JANUARY EVENTS

Sunday, January 5

Cordwood to Live-wood

See how nature has reclaimed a former rail line. Join a CRD Parks naturalist on a walk down the old route of the Cordwood Limited of the Victoria & Sidney Railway Company. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the Elk/Beaver Lakes Regional Park Information kiosk in the Hamsterley Beach parking lot, off Brookleigh Road.

Sunday, January 5

Broom Bash at Mount Tolmie Park

Help out the Mount Tolmie Conservancy Association, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., rain or shine. Follow the flagging tapes from Mayfair Drive parking to work area. For further information call Eric Redekop at 595-7270.

Tuesday, January 7

Board of Directors' Meeting

Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 8

Elk/Beaver Lake and Bear Hill Regional Parks Hike

Join CRD Parks for a moderately strenuous hike starting at the SW end of Beaver Lake. Pre-registration required; call CRD Parks at 478-3344. The fee is \$8.00. The hike runs from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 12

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Special Guest John Maher, Regional Environmental Coordinator for B.C. Hydro, presents an informative slide show and exhibit on B.C. Hydro's program for *Making Powerlines Safer for Birds*. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 12

CRD Parks Cedar Grove Hike

Hike up the Cedar Grove Trail and back down to the Galloping Goose Trail. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the Roche Cove Regional Park parking lot off Gillespie Road in East Sooke.

Sunday, January 12

Broom Bash at Mount Tolmie Park

(See details, January 5.)

Tuesday, January 14

VNHS Natural History Presentation

The program wasn't available at press time but they are always enjoyable evenings. Contact the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for details. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Wednesday, January 15

Parks and Conservation Committee

7:00 pm, Swan Lake Nature House. All VNHS members are welcome to join in discussions and express their concerns about local conservation issues. Contact Jeff Stone at 370-2449 for further information.

Saturday, January 18

Owling

This popular trip in search of nocturnal predators returns. Breeding season comes early for these birds and they are quite active at this time of year. To minimize our impact, the trip is limited to 12 people. To register and find out more details call Darren Copley (479-6622). It is worth coming out at night just to hear Darren's Barred Owl call.

Saturday, January 18

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Special Guest Steve Lohn, Environmental Educator from Maine, presents a slide show and all ages program *What Makes a Hawk a Hawk and an Owl an Owl?* (And what makes them both raptors?) Meet at the Visitor Centre at 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 19

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Double Feature: Join amateur naturalists Toni Alexander and Walt Punnett as they each present a detailed slide show on the *Life and Times of a Nesting Raptor*. Toni's slide show features Bald Eagles and Walt treats us with some rare Turkey Vulture shots. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 12:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 19

Winter High at Lone Tree Hill Regional Park

Join CRD Parks for a walk up to the summit. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the parking lot on Millstream Road in the Highlands.

Sunday, January 19

***Broom Bash at Mount Tolmie Park* (See details, January 5.)**

Tuesday, January 21

Botany Night

David Fraser will be presenting a slide-illustrated talk. Details of the program were not available at press time. Contact the VHNS Events Tape at 479-2054 for details. Join Dave at the Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 22

Birders' Night

Join Syd Cannings who will be presenting a slide-illustrated talk on *The Birds of South Africa*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Saturday, January 25

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Special Guests from the Victoria Falconry Association are coming to tell us what they do, answer questions and let us meet some of their feathered friends. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, January 25

Will-derness to survive

Learn some basic outdoor survival skills at Francis King Regional Park. Pre-registration required and fee is \$8.00. Class runs from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Call CRD Parks at 478-3344 to register.

Sunday, January 26

"Magical Mystery Tour"

Learn about plant mythology, magic and medicinal uses with CRD Parks. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the Francis/King Regional Park nature house on Munn Road in Saanich.

Sunday, January 26

Sweep the Broom from Christmas Hill.

Help out the Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Meet at the Nature House Parking Lot with gloves and sturdy footwear. Refreshments afterwards. This project is for all ages so families are encouraged to participate.

Sunday, January 26

***Broom Bash at Mount Tolmie Park* (See details, January 5.)**

Monday, January 27

Marine Night

Dr. Alan Burger, University of Victoria, will give a slide lecture with the intriguing title of *Windows into the Black Box — Using Seabirds to Study Ocean Processes*. Alan is a well-known seabird specialist with extensive experience along the coast of BC. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Saturday, February 1

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Special guests from the Victoria Falconry Association. (See January 25th for details.)

Sunday, February 2

Tiny Tracks

Snow, mud or sand — they tell us a story. Come and "read" the story with CRD Parks at Francis/King Regional Park nature house on Munn Road. Starts at 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 2

***Broom Bash at Mount Tolmie Park* (See details, January 5.)**

Tuesday, February 4

Board of Directors' Meeting

Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 5

Matheson Lake Hike

Follow the lakeside trail through ancient cedar groves and marshy wetlands. This hike is four hours long (starts at 10:00 a.m.). Sturdy shoes and a lunch is recommended. Pre-registration required; at the fee is \$8.00. Call CRD Parks at 478-3344.

Saturday, February 8

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Special Guest Myke Chutter, Provincial Bird Specialist, will entertain the audience with an anecdotal slide show on the Birds of Prey of B.C. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 12:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 11

Annual VNHS Banquet

The Annual Banquet will take place at the Princess Mary Restaurant. Happy hour is at 6:00 p.m. and the dinner starts at 7:00 p.m. The price is again \$22.00 and must be purchased ahead of time so that we can give the restaurant accurate numbers. Tickets will be available at the January VNHS Natural History Presentations and Birders' Night or contact Audrey Copping at 477-6739. The dinner will be in the DOWNSTAIRS BALLROOM which will greatly improve the viewing of the evening's presentation. Confirmation of the guest speaker is expected soon — contact the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for details. We have extended the "Happy Hour" by 30 minutes to give everyone more time to socialize. Hope to see you all there!

Saturday February 15

Goldstream Provincial Park's Eagle Extravaganza

Special Guest Tom Ethier from Penticton will present a slide show and informative talk on Goshawk studies on Vancouver Island. Meet at the Visitor Centre at 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 15

Feline Phobias

Come and expand your view of the Cougar with CRD Parks. Starts at 7:00 p.m. at Francis/King Regional Park nature house on Munn Road. Pre-registration required. The fee is \$4.00 per person or \$10.00 per family of three or more. Call CRD Parks at 478-3344.

Sunday, February 16

Raincoast Winter Survival

Join a CRD Parks naturalist to discover how the First Nations people used the forest to survive the winters. Meet at the Witty's Lagoon Regional Park nature trailer off Metchosin Road. Runs from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 16

***Broom Bash at Mount Tolmie Park* (See details, January 5.)**

Tuesday, February 18

Botany Night

Members are invited to show their own slides at the Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. Telephone Adolf Ceska at 477-1211 for arrangements.

Wednesday, February 19

Parks and Conservation Committee

Swan Lake Nature House at 7:00 p.m. All VNHS members are welcome to join in discussions and express their concerns about local conservation issues. Jeff Stone, 370-2449, for further information.

Birders' Night Fundraising

Susanna Solecki will be taking over the Birders' Night fundraising raffles. If you have items to donate to the raffle please contact her at 391-0587. Money from the fundraising will go to the VHNS general accounts to help support events such as Birders' Night.

Request for Volunteers

There is a need for volunteers with experience with habitat issues in general and in bird habitat requirements in particular to assist with the development of an appropriate management plan for Viaduct Flats (see Viaduct Flats Protected, for Now by Michael Carson, on page 8). If you are interested in helping out, contact Michael Carson at 478-1535.

Eagle Extravaganza, Goldstream Provincial Park

The past three winters have brought record numbers of Bald Eagles to the estuary. The naturalists are celebrating this fact by keeping the Visitor Centre open over the winter until February 21st, 1997 and by hosting the Royal B.C. Museum's exhibit Diurnal Birds of Prey of Canada. We will also have Special Guest speakers and family activities on weekends and through the holidays. Call us for any updates at 478-9414.

Saturday, February 22

Snowy Owls and Boundary Bay

Join David Allinson on another excursion to Boundary Bay. Our last trip in November located four species of owls and this winter up to 50 Snowy Owls have been seen in Boundary Bay. We also expect to see huge flocks of wild fowl and a variety of shorebirds, raptors and song birds. If we car pool effectively, travel costs should be approximately \$30.00 per person. To sign up call David at 478-0493.

Sunday, February 23

Winter Birds at Island View Beach Regional Park

Take an early morning walk at Island View Beach. Meet at the end of the far parking lot on Homathko Drive off Island View Road at 9:00 a.m.

Monday, February 24

Marine Night

Is the expanding aquaculture industry on the coast of British Columbia good for the economy but bad for the environment? Hear biologist Steve Cross of Aquamatrix Research, who has carried out numerous impact studies, present the facts in the case in talk entitled *Bane or Boon — Impacts of the Developing Aquaculture Industry in British Columbia*. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, February 26

Birders' Night

Andy Stewart will present the results of his continuing studies on *Cooper's Hawk Nesting in the Urban Environment of Greater Victoria*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

BULLETIN BOARD

Park Naming Contest

The Strawberry Vale Wetlands and Agricultural Lands Nature Stewardship Society (SWANS) is pleased to announce the creation of a new park. It is located off Roy Road/Glenside Avenue and Holland Road, near the Interurban Road/Wilkinson Road interchange. SWANS will be providing a list of park names to the Saanich Parks and Recreation Committee which will make the final name selection. The winner will participate in the opening ceremonies. Submit your choice by May 14 to: Name the Park Contest, c/o Strawberry Vale School, 1351 Hastings Street, Victoria, BC V8Z 2W4.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are needed for the nature interpretation programs with visiting school children at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. An interest in local flora and fauna, particularly birds, is an asset. Programs start in late January. Orientation and training is provided for all volunteers. For information please call Joan at 479-0211 before January 15th.

Reminder!

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



ANNUAL VNHS BANQUET



When: Tuesday, February 11th, 1997

Where: Princess Mary Restaurant

Downstairs Ballroom



Happy hour begins at 6:00 p.m. and the dinner starts at 7:00 p.m.
Tickets are again \$22.00 which must be purchased ahead of time.

*Tickets can be purchased at the
VNHS Natural History Presentations
or at Birders' Night*

Contact Audrey Copping at 477-6739 for details.

expire: 31-12-96

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