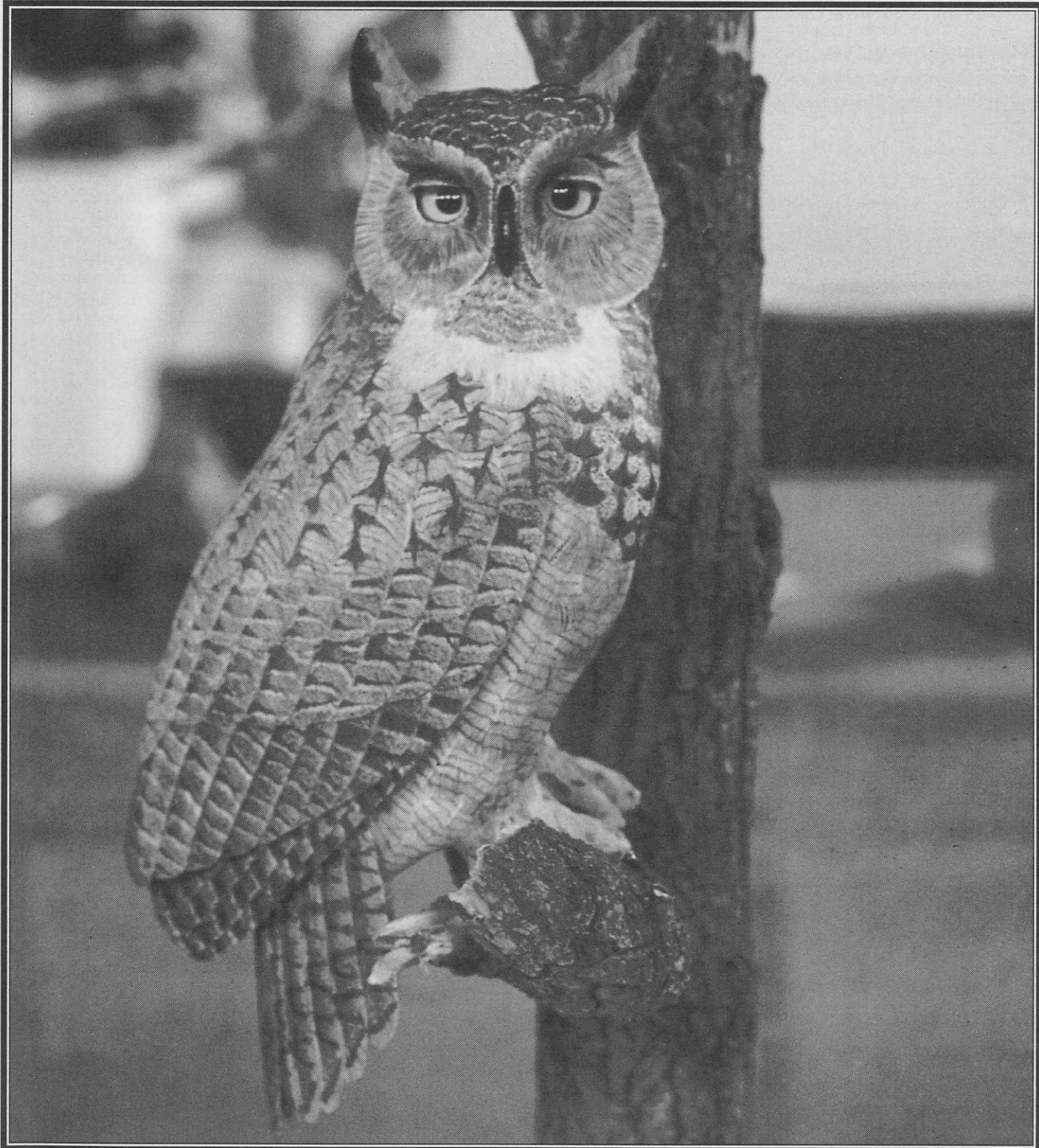


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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, birding and botany notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We will accept and use copy in almost any legible form but we encourage submission of typed, double-spaced copy or an IBM compatible word processing file on any size diskette, plus printed output. Having copy submitted on diskette saves a lot of time and work for the publications group and we really appreciate the help. If you have an obscure or very old word processing program, call the Editor, Warren Drinnan, at 361-3543, or save the text in ASCII format. Blank diskettes may be obtained from the editor and we will return any of your own diskettes submitted. Photos and slides submitted may be picked up at the Field-Naturalist, 1126 Blanshard Street, or will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

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OUR COVER

April 11-12-13 is the annual Brant Wildlife Festival at Parksville-Qualicum Beach. Included in the activities are nature walks, the big day birding competition and a wildlife carving exhibition. Our cover features blue ribbon winner R.M. Lathwell's carving of a Great Horned Owl, photographed by Anne Gransden. Other examples of past winners can be found inside with the article on the festival.

Andy Stewart also has provided some initial results from his urban Cooper's Hawk study in his article on page 7, which was described in our last issue (January/February, 1997). This unique study still needs volunteers to help assist with early morning surveys to locate Cooper's Hawk nests. Observers are also encouraged to report any sightings, especially birds which have the leg bands.

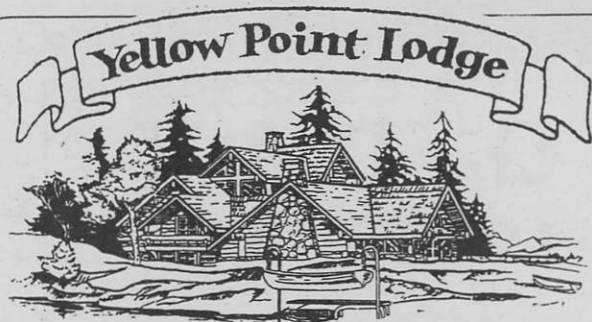
Finally, Victoria Natural History Society members are encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m., Begbie Building, Room 159, University of Victoria. Attendance is urged as a quorum of members is required to pass important motions for the coming year. The feature speaker at the AGM will be Jim Cosgrove of the Royal British Columbia Museum who will present a slide and video presentation entitled *Skin Deep Beauty and Motherly Love*.



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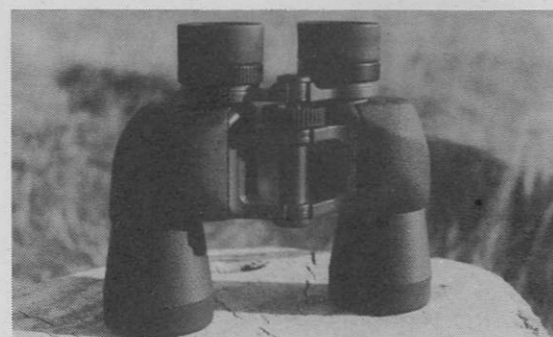
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Colour-Band Sighting Report — Urban Cooper's Hawk Study

By Andrew C. Stewart

Banding has long been a tool used by bird researchers to answer a variety of questions such as "how long do they live?", "where do they winter or breed?" and "what migration routes do they take to get there?". The numbers stamped into standard aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife bands are rarely legible on free-moving birds and invariably require that the bird be found dead or be recaptured before the band can be read. The recovery or "return" rate for many bird species is frequently less than 1%, therefore requiring a large number be banded before a meaningful return can be expected.

Since 1994, I have been studying the breeding ecology of the Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) in Greater Victoria's urban landscape. One important aspect of this ongoing study has been to band these birds of prey at their nest sites. During the past two breeding seasons over 160 hawks, mostly nestlings, have been banded in this area. During the first year of banding, I used the standard U.S. Fish and Wildlife band and over the course of the following year received about 13 reports of banded Cooper's Hawks from around the city. Although encouraged by these sightings, they were unfortunately of limited value since there was no way to identify which individuals were being observed, whether they were male or female, or even if they were "my" birds being seen.

In an attempt to increase the value of future sightings, I decided to try colour-banding. In June, 1996 I began banding Cooper's Hawks with two types of bands. On the right leg I placed the standard U.S. Fish and Wildlife band and on the left leg I fitted a special anodized aluminum colour-band. Each colour-band is uniquely coded with two vertical alphanumeric characters (i.e., number over number, letter over number, number over letter, etc.) repeated three times around the band for enhanced visibility. Black bands were used on males and red bands were used for females. Providing the hawk is cooperative, colour-bands can be read with binoculars up to a distance of about 20 m or as far as 75 m when using a spotting scope.

During the period 1 September, 1996 to 24 January, 1997, forty-one banded Cooper's Hawk sightings were reported to me. Of these, seven observers reported seeing a plain aluminum band on the right leg but no colour-band on the left, three others noted a colour-band on the left leg but couldn't determine the colour, 16 reported the colour but couldn't read the code, and 15 reported the colour and code. From the latter 15 reports, 11 different individual hawks could be identified. Two of these were observed on more than one occasion (see Figure 1).

Although it is far too early in this study to draw many conclusions from these sighting data, one interesting pattern

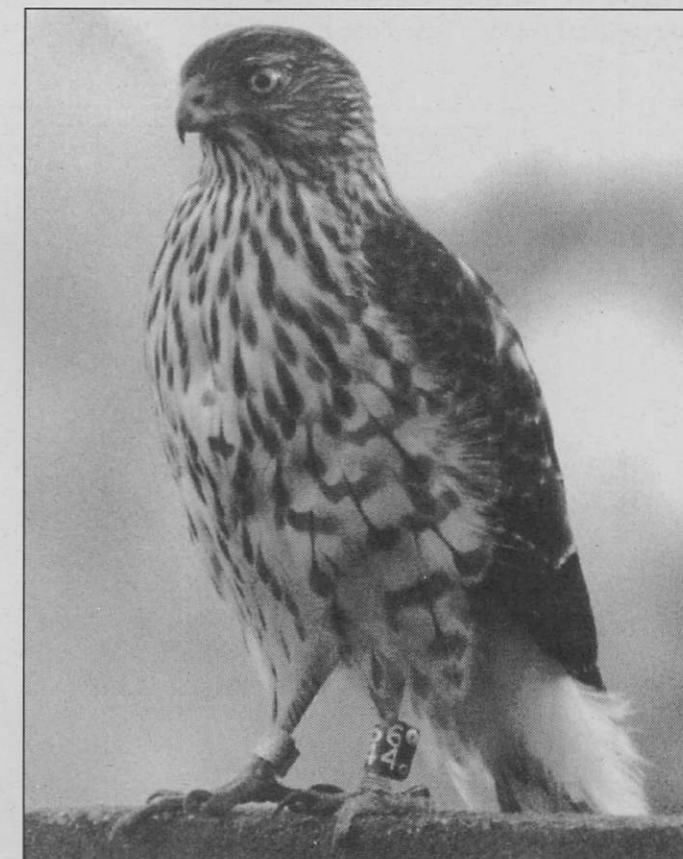


Figure 1. Colour-banded juvenile male Cooper's Hawk photographed in Esquimalt on 7 November 1996. Black "6 over 4" has been observed on three different occasions at the same location. (Photo: Bob Chappell).

has already begun to emerge. In many other raptor species, juvenile females have been shown to disperse farther from their natal nest sites than juvenile males. A preliminary analysis of these data suggests a similar juvenile dispersal pattern may be occurring in birds from this study. For example, the furthest distance a colour-banded male has been observed from the study area to date is 11 km (Figure 2). In contrast, four colour-banded females have been reported at distances greater than 25 km from the study area (Figure 3). The two furthest observations were made in Delta and Boundary Bay, approximately 70 km to the north of where they were banded. Band codes for these two females also show that they were siblings from the same nest in Oak Bay.

Another interesting bit of information from these data is that 33, or 80%, of all banded hawks were observed by people while in their home or yard, whereas only eight were

seen by observers away from their residence. More than half of all banded hawks were seen near (or on) bird feeders and five of them, all males, were observed eating small birds. Colour-banded hawks were observed in every month since September suggesting that this island population is non-migratory.

My thanks to all those observant naturalists who took the time to report their sightings. Since I managed to observe and record just two of these sightings myself during the study period, I couldn't have done it without you. Thanks

also to Bruce Whittington and his staff at the Field-Naturalist for shepherding several misdirected observations my way. Keep up the good work everyone. With your continued help, I hope to report more results this time next year.

ANDY STEWART is a wildlife biologist with the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. He has written several articles for the *Victoria Naturalist*, including one in our previous issue (January/February, 1997) describing the Cooper's Hawk study.

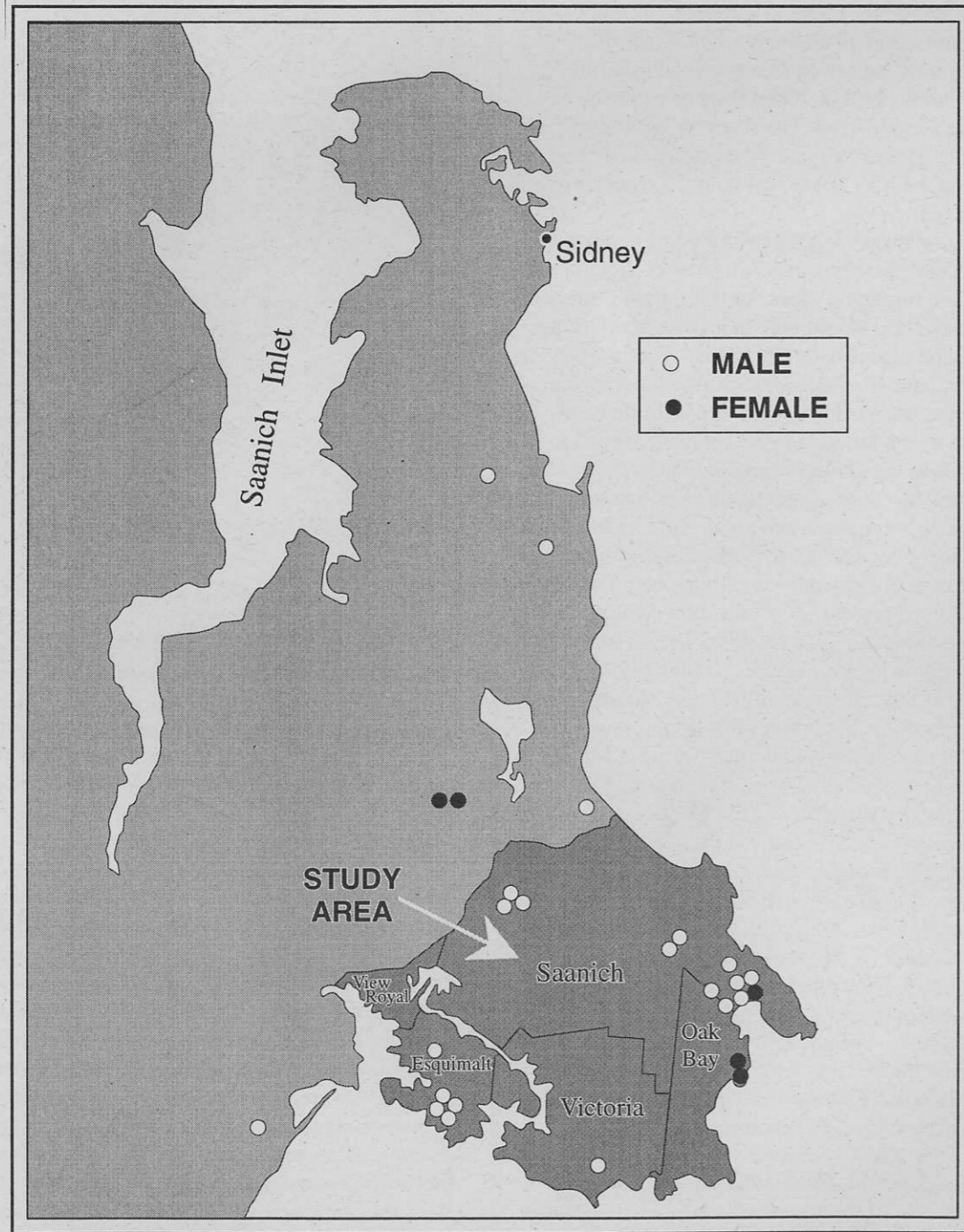


Figure 2. Locations of colour-banded male and female Cooper's Hawks observed in the Greater Victoria area during 1 September 1996 to 24 January 1997. (Graphic: R. Pawlas)

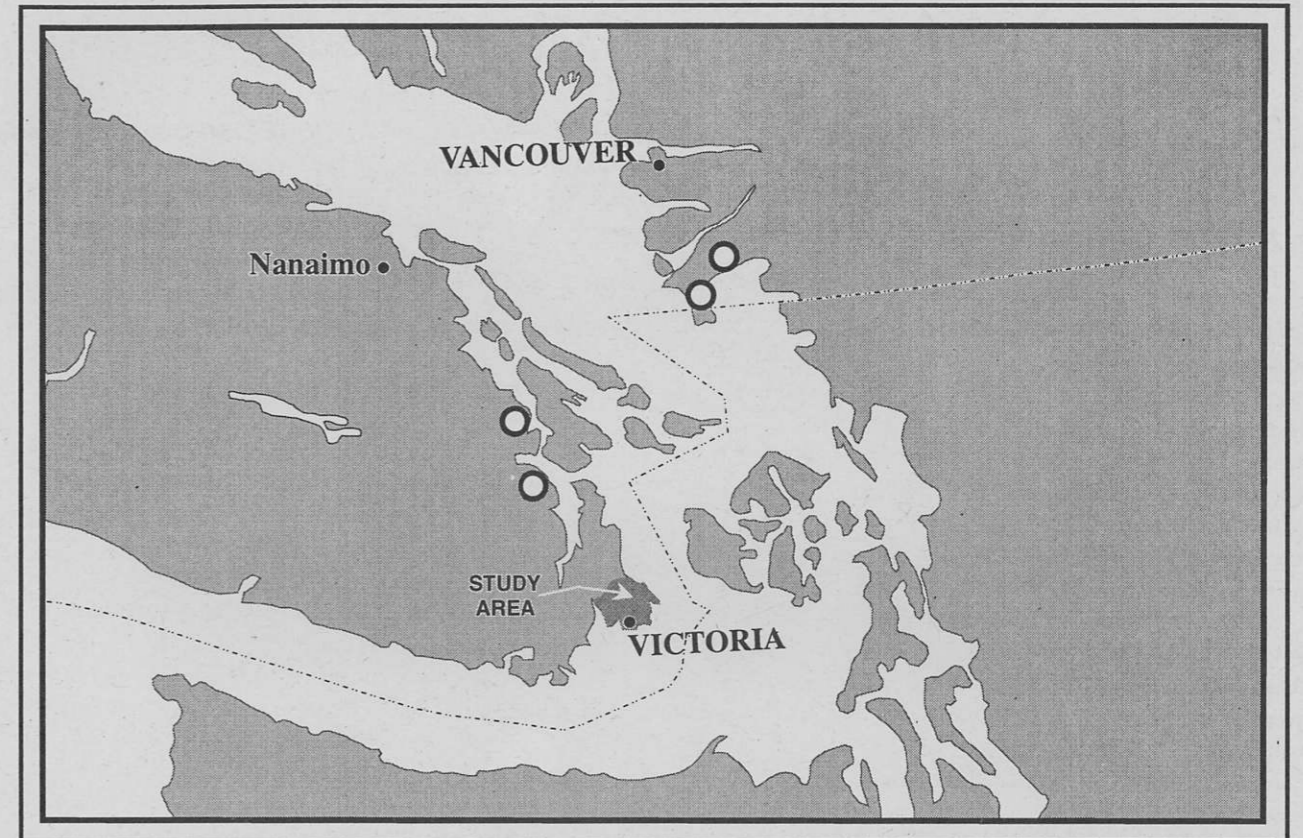


Figure 3. Locations (circles) of colour-banded female Cooper's Hawks observed at distances >25 km from study area during 1 September 1996 to 24 January 1997. (Graphic: R. Pawlas)

1996 Christmas Bird Count

Introduction by David Pearce

On December 21, 170 participants took part in the 1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count (down from 209 in the previous year). We were very fortunate with the weather as we received a massive five feet of snow starting the day after the count. It was dry and a cool five degrees, with a strong wind on the ocean, which made pelagic birding extremely difficult. In fact, when Marilyn Lambert and David Stirling set out in the zodiac, all the fishermen were returning as the seas were so rough! We recorded a total of 95,610 birds and a species count of 146, our third highest ever and once again the highest count in Canada.

Our most exciting event was to add a new species to our CBC list as six Turkey Vultures, seen in Metchosin and Esquimalt Lagoon, became species number 210 since the count started in 1957. Other species not seen recently were the Western Tanager, seen last in 1962, and a Rusty Blackbird not seen since 1972. We recorded 11 record highs for the following species (previous highs are in parenthesis): Trumpeter

Swan - 458 (243); Greater White-fronted Goose - 23 (15); Canada Goose - 4,476 (3,180); Gadwall - 105 (100); Bald Eagle - 266 (222); Red-tailed Hawk - 61 (54); Anna's Hummingbird - 74 (55); Hairy Woodpecker - 22 (20); Common Raven - 420 (382); Hermit Thrush - 35 (34); and, House Finch - 1,349 (1,340). Unfortunately, we also set record lows for Dunlin 19 (24) and Pigeon Guillemot 12 (13). Poor Pigeon Guillemot sightings (and other alcids) were due to the rough weather and there were over 300 Dunlin in the Victoria area in early January 1997.

Other highlights included a Tundra Swan at Panama Flats; a Snow Goose and Rough-legged Hawk at Martindale Flats; a Snowy Owl in Oak Bay; Northern Goshawks on Mt. Doug and Viaduct Flats; a Glaucous Gull at Knockan Hill Park; three Townsend's Solitaire on Jocelyn and Scafe Hills; and a Swamp Sparrow at Viaduct Flats.

A compilation of the 1996 count data is presented on the following pages.

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Red-throated Loon			1			5	3	1	1			1
Pacific Loon	3		21			4	4	1		13	1	2
Common Loon	2		1			3	3	8		6	5	
Pied-billed Grebe		6		7	21	1	5		3	1		
Horned Grebe						10	3	1		24	7	1
Red-necked Grebe			3			22	5	18		15	24	11
Western Grebe	4					2	479			3		
Double-crested Cormorant	2	3	15	2	41	18	2	23	38	35	6	1
Brandt's Cormorant						6	1	13		1	2	
Pelagic Cormorant			1			4	3	11		49	15	17
Great Blue Heron	2	1	4		5	4	15	9	3	3	3	1
Tundra Swan												
Trumpeter Swan	254			33								
Mute Swan			2			5					1	
Greater White-fronted Goose						9						
Snow Goose												
Canada Goose	917		13	161	30	5	222	60	271			
Wood Duck												
Green-winged Teal	169	16	8	189		23	2		26			
American Black Duck									1			
Mallard	2,058	50	72	244	54	81	481	12	307	41	370	36
Northern Pintail	102	1		23	2	33	59		8			
Northern Shoveler	4	4			8						1	
Gadwall							7					
Eurasian Wigeon	2			1					1		4	1
American Wigeon	533		24	45	11	54	76	350	250	126	410	39
Canvasback									2			
Ring-necked Duck	37	13		29	22	2	5					
Greater Scaup		5	5			2	75	1	115			
Lesser Scaup		4					1		54		4	18
Harlequin Duck					10	7	24			13	32	23
Oldsquaw					1	21	4			3	2	1
Surf Scoter			64			16	78	13		97	84	20
White-winged Scoter			5			8	4			1	2	
Common Goldeneye	7	4	56	6		28	107	57	10	103	1	49
Barrow's Goldeneye			58									1
Bufflehead	20	23	63	6	5	89	202	156	181	160	142	89
Hooded Merganser	6	5	9	6	24	22	6	24	9	36	7	12
Common Merganser	26	2	49	19	10	3		6		13		4
Red-breasted Merganser	2		15			11	188	59		64	31	5
Ruddy Duck					2							
Turkey Vulture						4	2					
Bald Eagle	19	6	131	8	11	9	22	5	3	3	2	3

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
		1						1		14	
		12	8			8		18		95	
		3	1			4		9		45	
				12	1	6	8			71	
		30	44			281		62		463	
		7	2					9		116	
						4		2		494	
	2	3		7	4	20	13	4		239	
			3							26	
		16	1			6		2		125	
	1	2	1	5	4	3	2	12		80	
					1					1	
					35	8	30	98		458	All time high (previous high 243 in 1994)
										8	
						12		2		23	All time high (previous high 15 in 1983)
								1		1	
	4			60	280	73	130	2,250		4,476	All time high (previous high 3,180 in 1994)
				4	2					6	
				4	47	52	28	173		737	
										1	
	220	115	11	266	419	424	72	2,650		7,983	
					157	5	3	94		487	
	3			12		12	44			88	
							98*			105	All time high (previous high 100 in 1992)
				2			1	4		16	
	40			395	14	89	61	741		3,258	
					32	31				65	
				1	63	62	103	2		339	
			9			6		21		239	
								1		82	
	2	16	3			2		4		136	
		71	8			27		54		192	
		17	8			178		114		689	
		3	16			7		14		60	
	1	9	32			21	2	49		542	
										59	
	21	33	93	18		127	6	171		1,605	
	19	8	3	6	5	85	23	25		340	
					1	430	19	12		594	
		45	11			78		31		540	
				2			6			10	
										6	New species
	5	8	7	1	4	5	5	9		266	All time high (previous high 222 in 1995)

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
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SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Northern Harrier					1							
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	1	1	2		1	2					
Cooper's Hawk	3	6		2	3		2		2		4	
Northern Goshawk												
Red-tailed Hawk	11	6	1	5	1	4	2	1	2			
Rough-legged Hawk												
Golden Eagle										1		
American Kestrel			1									
Merlin	2	1		1		2	1					1
Peregrine Falcon												
Gyr Falcon	1											
Ring-necked Pheasant				4								
California Quail	33	34	17	29	17	8	3					32
Virginia Rail		2										
American Coot	18						3		1			4
Black-bellied Plover							2			30		
Killdeer	78	1			15		6	1				6
Black Oystercatcher						2				2	1	1
Greater Yellowlegs				2						1		
Spotted Sandpiper												
Black Turnstone						2	108	7		29	29	1
Surfbird											1	
Sanderling								30				
Dunlin						1	1					1
Common Snipe	1						1					
Mew Gull	18		27			7,300	614	236	60	84	562	135
Ring-billed Gull			1									
California Gull						2						1
Herring Gull			7			1				1		
Thayer's Gull	7		6		4	240	4	792	301	55	2	345
Western Gull	1						1	1		1	4	
Glaucous-winged Gull	1,162	22	572	59	133	3,200	114	450	618	345	720	267
Glaucous Gull				1								
Common Murre						14	2			3	2	
Pigeon Guillemot						2						1
Marbled Murrelet						5		4		1		1
Ancient Murrelet						1						
Rhinoceros Auklet			5			3		5		13		
Rock Dove	19	4		8	16	8	62	11	112	50	174	25
Band-tailed Pigeon		2					2	16				2
Western Screech-Owl	1	3				1						
Great Horned Owl	1	1	1			3						
Snowy Owl												1

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

- | | |
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| 13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY | 18. ELK LAKE - CORDOVA BAY |
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| 17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS | |

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
									1	
2			1	1	1	3	1		19	
3	1		2	1	2	1	4		36	
		1				1			2	Equals previous high in 1962
3	1	1	3	1	3	6	10		61	All time high (previous high 54 in 1995)
							1		1	
									1	
									1	
2						1			11	
1				2			2		5	
									1	
					1		2		7	
17	34			12	42	2	40		320	
					1	2			5	
			31	20	114	19	1		211	
							2		34	
							64		171	
	8								14	
	1								4	
	1								1	
		3							179	
									1	
							19		49	
							16		19	All time low (previous low 24)
	1			1		3	2		9	
130	61	27	6	41	44	36	990	2,250	12,621	
									1	
									3	
									9	
			31	120		17	19		1,943	
									8	
128	97	138	231	205	826	132	497	750	10,666	
									1	
	5							4	30	
	9								12	All time low (previous low 13)
	2						1		14	
	56								57	
		1							27	
			3	22		33	74		621	
									22	
									6	
					4	4			14	
									1	

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	1										
Barred Owl											2	
Short-eared Owl												
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1					1						
Anna's Hummingbird					1	5						1
Belted Kingfisher	4	1	4	2		5	5	1	2	2		
Red-breasted Sapsucker				2			1					
Downy Woodpecker	4	12	5	1	6	2	8	5	5	2	7	
Hairy Woodpecker	3	4	1	2	2	1	3					
Northern Flicker	57	46	7	27	19	22	39	7	32	5	9	7
Pileated Woodpecker	5	5			1		2					
Sky Lark												
Steller's Jay	37	44	12	17	46	35	31	2	7			
Northwestern Crow	815	29	230	104	145	51	108	97	179	108	27	68
Common Raven	101	58	12	57	36	16	23	5	6	2	7	2
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	235	128	50	75	71	108	161	53	66	10	74	35
Bushtit	82	55	4	7	90		18	95	200	57	27	76
Red-breasted Nuthatch	22	41	2	40	14	23	13	3	6		6	1
Brown Creeper	11	9	6	8	4	8	16	1		2	4	2
Bewick's Wren	16	16		18	8	6	10	8	18	3	11	
Winter Wren	42	55	48	36	13	18	46	10	15	4	15	2
Marsh Wren				1								
American Dipper			6									
Golden-crowned Kinglet	269	280	343	206	195	110	220	110	88	4	69	10
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	25	19	4	35	14	20	72	2	13		13	2
Townsend's Solitaire		2		1								
Hermit Thrush	2	12	1	1	1	1	2		1	1		1
American Robin	411	216	44	398	136	115	273	71	721	93	788	257
Varied Thrush	58	83	17	35	24	75	68	15	19	3	34	1
American Pipit												
Cedar Waxwing												
Northern Shrike	1											1
European Starling	419	11	15	22	45	62	362	130	241	111	174	27
Hutton's Vireo						1			2			
Orange-crowned Warbler												
Yellow-rumped Warbler												
Townsend's Warbler								1				
Spotted Towhee	59	32	4	27	35	53	47	20	21	10	17	11
Savannah Sparrow												
Fox Sparrow	18	28	6	9	9	17	59	3	23	5	9	2
Song Sparrow	58	46	7	25	22	19	79	10	16	12	11	9
Lincoln's Sparrow	1											
Swamp Sparrow												

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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

SPECIES	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
Northern Pygmy-Owl										2	
Barred Owl							2			4	
Short-eared Owl								1		1	
Northern Saw-whet Owl							2			4	Equals all time high in 1991
Anna's Hummingbird	17	27	5	5	2	11				74	All time high (previous high 55 in 1995)
Belted Kingfisher		2	1			3	1			33	
Red-breasted Sapsucker										3	
Downy Woodpecker	6	11	4	4	4	11	4	5		106	
Hairy Woodpecker	1		1			1		3		22	All time high (previous high 20 in 1991)
Northern Flicker	12	24	6	21	13	36	27	31		447	
Pileated Woodpecker		2	5			1	2	1		24	
Sky Lark								27		27	
Steller's Jay	5	7	5	3	2	15	13	34		315	
Northwestern Crow	162	59	1,100	269	664	532	123	1,489		6,359	
Common Raven	8	5	4	2	2	16	32	26		420	All time high (previous high 382 in 1991)
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	246	105	135	42	38	224	102	126		2,084	
Bushtit	66	98	60	95	58	80	35	128		1,331	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	10	19	9	5	3	9	15	15		256	
Brown Creeper	3	9	6	5		20	4	11		129	
Bewick's Wren	7	16	13	13	12	9	11	36		231	
Winter Wren	5	17	18	3	5	35	16	37		440	
Marsh Wren					2	1	6	2		12	
American Dipper										6	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	12	83	114		18	164	134	108		2,537	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4	9	6	6	8	24	16	23		315	
Townsend's Solitaire										3	
Hermit Thrush		6	2	1	1	1		1		35	All time high (previous high 34 in 1965)
American Robin	343	327	120	665	804	300	174	618		6,874	
Varied Thrush	3	27	13	2	4	34	30	49		594	
American Pipit								126		126	Equals all time high in 1993
Cedar Waxwing		2								2	
Northern Shrike		1					1	2		6	
European Starling	148	39	11	226	103	203	175	1,053		3,577	
Hutton's Vireo		1					1			5	
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	1								2	
Yellow-rumped Warbler						1		2		3	
Townsend's Warbler										1	
Spotted Towhee	30	34	14	16	31	68	21	72		622	
Savannah Sparrow								5		5	
Fox Sparrow	5	25		17	11	20	23	38		327	
Song Sparrow	27	26	7	20	25	36	18	78		551	
Lincoln's Sparrow								3		4	
Swamp Sparrow							1			1	

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
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SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
White-throated Sparrow			1									1
Golden-crowned Sparrow	58	19	7	50	16	27	9	8	48	13	2	33
White-crowned Sparrow	6			5			15	2	20	1		4
Harris' Sparrow												1
Dark-eyed Junco	480	203	49	317	195	131	242	199	209	17	40	87
Red-winged Blackbird	7	155		7	107	6	14					
Western Meadowlark												
Rusty Blackbird			1									
Brewer's Blackbird	50				10	3	119					
Western Tanager												
Purple Finch	2		4	2	2	5	2	6	19	16		27
House Finch	135	14		23	66	16	65	19	159	16	15	74
Red Crossbill		41	37	9		10						
Pine Siskin	600	954		284	634	382	304	26	66	3	62	2
American Goldfinch											7	2
Evening Grosbeak	43	2										
House Sparrow	12	3		80	35	28	47	195	382	185	27	94
TOTAL BIRDS	9,678	2,850	2,186	2,825	2,438	12,676	5,502	3,513	4,963	2,111	4,112	1,999
TOTAL SPECIES	73	60	61	59	53	84	82	61	53	61	58	66

1996 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| 17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS | |

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
	1				1					4	
	27	25	13	48	40	54	10	141		648	
	14	1		14	21		2	21		126	
										1	
	101	224	194	68	106	372	119	729		4,082	
			3	26	60	23	17	11		436	
					7			18		25	
										1	Last seen in 1972
			33	9	19		8	34		285	
		1								1	Last seen in 1962
	61	5			43		2	4		200	
	61	63	45	148	112	116	59	143		1,349	All time high (previous high 1,340 in 1995)
							3			100	
	11	57	543	11	63	505	494	998		5,999	
	1									10	
										45	
	104	60	40	285	150	112	54	86		1,979	
	2,106	2,094	2,962	3,132	3,939	6,129	2,672	14,719	3,004	95,610	
	50	66	54	51	60	70	71	89	3	146	

Gardening for Wildlife

Second Annual Native Plant Gardening Sale and Demonstration

Why To promote the use of native plants and creation of wildlife habitat in your back yard.
To provide revenue to support the operation of the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

When Saturday, April 19 and Sunday, April 20 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Where Swan Lake Nature Centre, 3873 Swan Lake Road

What Sale of over 60 species of native plants/seeds, books, bird feeders, nesting boxes & gardening supplies

Presentations Creative native landscaping for you and for wildlife • Attracting birds to your garden
• Insects you want in your garden • Native plant gardening: hands-on, how-to • Biodiversity and your back yard
• Xeriscaping: water wise gardening • Guided tours of the Native Plant Garden.

Cost \$3.00 per person or \$5.00 per family. Free for "Friends" members.

For more information contact Terry Morrison or Joan Cowley at the Nature Centre office at 479-0211.

Annual General Meeting

All VNHS members are invited to attend the 1997 Annual General Meeting on

Tuesday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m.,

Begbie Building, Room 159, University of Victoria.

Topics to be discussed will include nominations for the Board of Directors, a brief overview of financial statements and the Presidents Annual Report. Attendance is urged as a quorum of members is required to pass important motions for the coming year.

We are pleased to have **Jim Cosgrove** of the Royal British Columbia museum as our guest speaker at the AGM. He is a respected authority in marine biology specializing in cephalopods (e.g., octopus, squid and cuttlefish). He will present a slide and video presentation entitled *Skin Deep Beauty and Motherly Love*.

Sooke Christmas Bird Count — January 4, 1997

By Michael G. Shepard, Count Compiler

Having just survived the blizzard, 29 people ventured out into the snow-covered landscape to scour the Metchosin-East Sooke-Sooke area for lingering winter birds. The weather was great, mostly light overcast and light winds. We tallied nearly 16,00 birds of 102 species, not including the Mandarin Duck seen in the harbour. Highlights included 85 Bald Eagles (21 at Race Rocks), ten Cooper's Hawks, one Spotted Sandpiper, 11 Western Gulls, one Anna's Hummingbird, 432 Varied Thrushes and one Swamp Sparrow.

I wish to thank those of you who took part this year, and

particularly Mike McGrenere, who organized the area coverage.

Participants: David Allinson, Devon Anderson, Barbara Begg, Andy and Marilyn Buhler, Alan Burger, Sydney Cannings, Brent Diakow, Charles Dorworth, Joanne Draper, Bev Glover, Elsa Holgren, Neil Hughes, Marilyn Lambert, Andrea Lawrence, Gerhardt Lepp, Dick and June McDonald, Barb and Mike McGrenere, Jack and Jean McLeod, Marilyn Miller, Glen and Judy Moores, Ken Morgan, Colleen O'Brien, Michael Shepard, Carol Slater.

Count Results

Red-throated Loon-12	White-winged Scoter-43	Glaucous-winged Gull-610	Golden-crowned Kinglet-470
Pacific Loon-113	Common Goldeneye-131	gull sp.-700	Ruby-crowned Kinglet-10
Common Loon-67	Barrow's Goldeneye-20	Common Murre-25	Hermit Thrush-2
Pied-billed Grebe-6	Bufflehead-834	Pigeon Guillemot-21	American Robin-621
Horned Grebe-74	Hooded Merganser-52	Marbled Murrelet-22	Varied Thrush-432
Red-necked Grebe-41,	Common Merganser-38	Ancient Murrelet-351	European Starling-1,183
Eared Grebe-1	Red-breasted Merganser-316	Rhinoceros Auklet-15	Spotted Towhee-118
Western Grebe-76	Turkey Vulture-3	Great Horned Owl-1	Fox Sparrow-168
Double-crested Cormorant-191	Bald Eagle-85	Rock Dove-13	Song Sparrow-156
Brandt's Cormorant-155	Sharp-shinned Hawk-7	Band-tailed Pigeon-24	Swamp Sparrow-1
Pelagic Cormorant-59	Cooper's Hawk-10	Anna's Hummingbird-1	Golden-crowned Sparrow-67
Great Blue Heron-27	Red-tailed Hawk-16	Belted Kingfisher-6	White-crowned Sparrow-31
Mute Swan-3	Merlin-4	Red-breasted Sapsucker-3	Dark-eyed Junco-935
Canada Goose-126	California Quail-165	Downy Woodpecker-15	Red-winged Blackbird-190
Green-winged Teal-4	Virginia Rail-1	Hairy Woodpecker-6	Brewer's Blackbird-90
Mallard-348	American Coot-11	Northern Flicker-95	Purple Finch-21
Northern Pintail-7	Black-bellied Plover-2	Pileated Woodpecker-9	House Finch-106
Gadwall-4	Killdeer-23	Steller's Jay-240	Red Crossbill-131
Eurasian Wigeon-5	Black Oystercatcher-38	Northwestern Crow-546	Pine Siskin-2,626
American Wigeon-1043	Spotted Sandpiper-1	Common raven-100	American Goldfinch-1
Ring-necked Duck-5	Black Turnstone-51	Chestnut-backed Chickadee-300	Evening Grosbeak-82
Greater Scaup-76	Surfbird-1	Bushtit-50	House Sparrow-107
Lesser Scaup-11	Dunlin-1	Red-breasted Nuthatch-57	
Harlequin Duck-35	Common Snipe-7	Brown Creeper-40	TOTAL - 15,986.
Oldsquaw-45	Mew Gull-198	Bewick's Wren-15	
Black Scoter-1	Thayer's Gull-28	Winter Wren-161	
Surf Scoter-377	Western Gull-11	American Dipper-3	

Hat Tricks

A Report on the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation

As Directors of HAT, the big question we are continually asking ourselves is — What has HAT actually done to help with the conservation of local habitat since it was initiated one year ago? As of this writing, based on what we have spent (less than \$300 of the \$7500 raised to date) for incorporation fees and setup expenses, we can probably say, not much. However, as Directors we are excited about what is to shortly come including holding conservation covenants on several significant parcels of land; determining a target area for an initial fun-raising campaign; and, initiating the organization of a Land Stewardship Alliance. Such work is a slow process but keep on asking us what has HAT done (and don't forget to ask yourself also, what have I done for the VNHS and its HAT).

For HAT to progress, we (the Board of Directors) require your assistance. Please sit back and think about how you might contribute. We are looking for contributions at the Director, Committee and individual levels. At the Director level, nominations for the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation Board of Directors will be made by the VNHS Board of Directors in May. Directors will normally serve three years. However, to initiate a staggered turnover of members, initially there will be one, two and three year appointments. If you are interested, please contact Jeff Stone (370-2449) for application information prior to the April 15 deadline.

At the Committee level, we require volunteers to be involved with short- and long-term fundraising initiatives.

At the individual level, we ask that you help promote HAT and, most importantly, be responsible land stewards yourself.

Last call for two fun fundraising events.

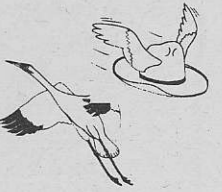
Musical Hats '97 will be happening Saturday, March 8 at the Prospect Lake Community Hall. Join in this evening of entertainment and music while raising funds for the protection of our local habitat. Contact Colleen at 388-4520 to see if any tickets are left.

You can also help our local habitat by visiting Texas. Join David Stirling and Bruce Whittington on a tour of birding hotspots of southern Texas from April 5 - 17. Contact Marilyn at 477-5922.

in case that last seat has not yet been taken. The success of similar events held last year account for most of our current bank account.

Thanks to all who submitted logo designs and ideas. The winner of the design contest was Andrew MacDonald. Andrew has graciously donated the prize to the raffle to be held at Musical Hats '97.

OOPS! Our phone has not been ringing off the hook. It is probably because we gave out the wrong number. Our correct number is 995-2HAT (i.e., not 595-2428 as mentioned in last month's *Victoria Naturalist*). Our address continues to be: VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation P.O. Box 8552, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3S2.



Applications for the Board of Directors of the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation

The VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation (HAT) is a registered non-profit society established by the Victoria Natural History Society. HAT was established in 1996 to promote the preservation of the natural environment. Its mandate is to raise funds necessary for the conservation of habitat by acquisition and by legal mechanisms such as conservation covenants and the promotion of land stewardship.

If you are interested in being a Director or in further information about HAT, please contact us at:

VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation
P.O. Box 8552, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3S2
Messages: 250-995-2HAT.

The deadline for applications is April 15, 1997.

Cheep Trills Bird Quiz

By Aziza Cooper

Almost all of these questions are about local birds, commonly found in season. (The last two questions are about birds conspicuously absent.) Some questions may have more than one correct answer. To play for points, score one point for each correct species or correct statement. Total points possible: at least 44.

1. Which two species that look alike can best be told apart in flight by the shape of their tails?
2. Which species is the only songbird that preys on other adult birds?
3. Which species nests on city rooftops in Victoria?
4. Which of our wintering waterfowl has a name which is racist, age-ist and sexist?
5. What is #4's name in Great Britain?
6. Which has a name derived from a prairie ungulate?
7. Which has a call that sounds like "owl-omelet"?
8. Which two species have white crescents on their faces? (Male birds only)
9. Which two look-alikes are best told apart by one's pointy head?
10. Why is an attentive audience like a falcon's kill?
11. Which species has a call that sounds like a frog? Which frog?
12. Which sparrow recently changed its name?
13. Without looking, name the birds found on Canada's currency (including the recently extinct \$2 bill). (eight possible)
14. In which family are the females usually 1/3 larger than the males?
15. In which species are the females more colourful than the males? (One of these is a year-round resident)
16. Which species' common name means 'wanderer'?
17. Which species have black masks over their eyes?
18. Which species' call sounds like a typewriter?
19. Which species that have the same word in their common names are only distantly related?
20. Which species, now common, was first found here only 30 years ago?
21. Which diver can submerge gradually and surface so that only the eyes show above water?
22. Which woodpecker makes square or hexagonally-shaped holes?
23. Which now common wintering species was near extinction 50 years ago?
24. Which species common on the Olympic Peninsula are never (or virtually never) found on Vancouver Island?
25. Why don't they cross the 20 miles of water to get here?

[Note: Some of the answers are dependent on the writer's opinion and so may differ somewhat from the reader's.]

Answers: Page 24

1996 Butterfly Counts

By Jeff Gaskin

In 1996, butterfly surveys were carried out six times during the year. These counts took place beginning in April and continued into September. The Citizens Association to Save the Environment (CASE) organized the first count in 1991, with a single survey in August. In 1992, three more surveys were conducted and from 1993 to 1995, five monthly surveys were carried out between May and September.

The area covered by these surveys is similar to the area covered by the Victoria Christmas Bird Count. The number of participants in 1996 averaged between 70 and 80, which is an increase of about 20 people from the previous year.

A total of 36 species of butterflies were located during last year's count. However, three of those species were questionable. Among the highlights were: two California Tortoise Shells; eight Green Commas, of which four were found in Goldstream Park; 18 Rosner's Hairstreaks, all of them near Sooke Lake Road; and, two Two-banded Checkered Skippers, seen in May at a residence in the Highlands District. Great Arctics, which normally occur every even-numbered year, and do so usually in high country, were unfortunately missed this year.

Due to the late spring Victoria had in 1996, many butterfly species occurred later in the year than expected. This resulted in fewer butterflies of some species and more of others, depending on the season. Also of interest, is that Painted Ladies, and their close relatives West Coast Ladies, were virtually absent in 1996, with most observers saying they never saw either one. Hopefully, 1997 will be much better for butterfly watching.

We are always looking for new volunteers. Additional observers are needed almost everywhere but especially in the Western Communities. If you would like to participate, even if it's just your own back yard, you are asked to contact Jeff Gaskin at 384-1573.

SUNDAY, APRIL 20

Camas Day at Beacon Hill Park

Join the annual Camas Day festivities at Beacon Hill Park. Activities include a bird walk at 9:00 a.m. and three walks: Wildflowers; Butterflies; and Native History — each of which will start at 11:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. All walks start at the flagpole at the top of Beacon Hill. This event is supported by the Victoria Natural History Society and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park. For further information contact **Helen Oldershaw** at 592-6659.

1996 VICTORIA BUTTERFLY COUNT DATA

SPECIES	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	TOTAL
Anglewing species	15	2		1			18
Anise Swallowtail	34	73	31	40	34	3	215
Blues species	4	3					7
Brown Elfin	35	7					42
Cabbage White	386	469	407	1,114	821	518	3,715
California Tortoise Shell	2						2
Clodius Parnassian				2			2
European Skipper		1		3,057	321		3,379
Fritillary species	2	1					3
Green Comma	6	2					8
Greenish Blue?			1				1
Grey Hairstreak	4	8	1	1	10	1	25
Icariodes Blue?	1		3				4
Lorquin's Admiral			38	671	115	4	828
Milbert's Tortoise Shell	4			9	1		14
Moss' Elfin		2	1				3
Mourning Cloak	29	14	8	4	4		59
Mylitta Crescent	7	9	2	7	9	6	40
Northern Blue?		1					1
Painted Lady	1	3	3	3	3	1	14
Pale Swallowtail		15	104	77	4		200
Persius Duskywing			4				4
Pine White		4	3	17	116	10	150
Propertius Duskywing	28	13	7				48
Purplish Copper		2	28	18	215	85	348
Red Admiral			2	9	14	2	27
Rosner's Hairstreak		15	3				18
Sara Orange Tip	171	39	4				214
Satyr Anglewing	101	20	24	10	4	1	160
Silvery Blue	1	10	22	1			34
Skipper species				1			1
Spring Azure	513	388	63	1			960
Two-banded checkered Skipper		2					2
Vancouver Island Ringlet		10	59	3	21	3	96
Veined White			1				1
Western Meadow Fritillary			1				1
Western Pine Elfin	3						3
Western Sulphur		1			1		2
Western Tiger Swallowtail	1	36	288	498	19	1	843
Woodland Skipper				3	1,968	141	2,012

The Opportunists

By Hank VanderPol

I would have never thought I'd say this: I think I am starting to like STARLINGS! I know how dangerous that is to say, as I could be running the risk of damaging my reputation as a normal, reasonable, relatively sane birder. But it has to be said. So what made me change my mind about a species which not too long ago I thought should be outlawed (forever, I mean), to saying I am starting to like them? Well, maybe I am starting to RESPECT them — that's probably a better work than "like".

Just the other day, a couple of weeks after the Blizzard of '96, I saw a group of Starlings, about 35 or so, on someone's front lawn in my neighbourhood. They were busy, as they always are, probing continually into that lawn, digging up who knows what. They were just working overtime feeding, I assumed. But for the life of me I could not tell what they were eating. I

couldn't see any grass in their beaks, and since they were probing, there must have been *some* goodies in the ground for them. Maybe they eat soil and sand to keep their insides clean, while we always thought they were eating grubs.

I wonder why they do this, all this probing in fields. Have you ever noticed how often you will *see* a group of a hundred birds or so probing on grassy playing fields? What are they digging for, in the middle of the winter, on a playing field that has seen a thousand gulls feeding on it before, and dozens of crows, and often hundreds of other starlings? But there they were, undaunted, digging frantically into the ground as if their life depended on it (well, maybe it did). How could there be ANY food left in this "gone-over-by-thousands-of-other-birds" field. Let me share a secret with you: they are not digging for food, they are merely exercising their neck and sharpening their bills. This, you see, makes them much more effective as suet feeders, or platform feeders and any other feeder.

But they are opportunistic in other ways. Have you noticed how they find a cavity in almost any structure and turn it into their homestead? New buildings, old buildings, trees, roofs, eaves, you name it — they'll find it and call it home. And they particularly like the new cement electric poles that have a number of holes in them at various heights. I once saw a Starling inspect one of those holes before the pole was even up! That's how smart they are. These poles are like apartments: choose a hole 15, 20 or 30 feet up, whatever their new partner likes best.

And then there is the way they fly. You rarely see them just soaring around or floating in the air. Look up and you'll see a bunch of them flying straight over your head, with purpose and determination. They know which field they are

aiming for, no wasting time and energy to get there. Fast, in a straight line, and together — yes always in brotherhood (sisterhood too, of course).

They are also smart in fending off enemies. Now, I am not saying that they don't ever get caught by a cat or Cooper's Hawk. Hey, even the best of us are asleep sometime. The other day I was out at Martindale Flats and a group of Starlings, about 150 or so, suddenly arose out of a field and formed into a very tight, whirling ball in the sky. Well, I thought, there's a bad guy in the neighbourhood. Sure enough, a Merlin showed up and was licking his lips at the sight of so much easy food. But the Starlings outsmarted the Merlin, who in desperation dove into the whirling ball of Starlings several times, with nothing to show for it. The Starlings know how to confuse a Merlin. You can imagine this poor hawk with an

eyesight eight times more powerful than ours, looking from close range at this whirling mass and not able to focus on one single bird. That's just got to be hard on the eyes. So it wasn't long before the Merlin, in total frustration, flew off. I could actually see its shoulders droop as I heard the Starlings laugh.

Oh yes, in case you didn't know, Starlings have a real sense of humour. They speak many languages which they learn while intently listening to their flying neighbours. Which one of you hasn't been fooled by the call of a Bald Eagle, or Killdeer, or Meadowlark, only to discover that the bird making those sounds is a Starling? And they make no apologies either. They do all this right in the open, without shame, or self-consciousness, or any of those things. They just do it — it's all in the genes. They don't even know they are doing it. I think they want to attract the attention of birders, which they do. And when you look up and see these birds sitting on a wire making eagle-like noises, you can't help but admire the critters. Have you ever tried to imitate the call of a Bald Eagle, Killdeer and Meadowlark all within 15 seconds or less?

They are opportunists! They are survivalists! And I don't think any of them ever dies, as there seem to be more of them every year. Regardless of what some people think of them, in less positive terms, I just can't help myself begrudgingly giving them my admiration. No, I will not chase them from my feeder any more. I always lose that one anyway. There are just too many of them and only one of me. I think they have rightfully earned their place in the nature of things. Maybe!

HANK VANDERPOL is a Director of the Victoria Natural History Society. He frequently leads local birding trips and assists with the VNHS Rare Bird Alert.

They are opportunists! They are survivalists! And I don't think any of them ever dies, as there seem to be more of them every year.

Welcome to New Members

DECEMBER

William and Christina Munro of Sidney are interested in birds, especially seabirds and waterfowl

Marguerite Hobbs and Richard Parfett of Songhees Road enjoy birding

Fiona and Dan Cawsey of Morrison Street

Nicola Parfett of Morrison Street

Heather Waye and Chris Shewchuk of Cedar Hill Road

Kelly Parkhouse of Duncan Place is interested in botany, native plants, birds, mammals and ecology

JANUARY

Penny Stevens and Gil Bernard of Broadmead Avenue interests include birding and flora and fauna

Bud and Jo Henning of Parklands Drive are birders

Mark Rourke of Dallas Road is interested in terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna

Myron and Ellen Kowalyk of Sidney enjoy birding, wild flowers and marine life

Beryl and Ashleigh Roundhill of Foul Bay Road are birders

Jeff Diekmeier of Mitchell Street likes birding

Susan and Tony Knowler of Tiswilde Road

Dianna Mallory of Tall Tree Place enjoys birdwatching and beach combing

Aaron Maxwell of Homer Road interests include environmental education, natural history, birding and scuba diving

Laura Porcher of Robertson Street is a birder

Mike Shepard of Cook Street is involved in birding and conservation

Pamela Thomson of Chartwell Drive is interested in wildflowers, trees and feeding birds

Isabelle Jourdain of Brodick Crescent interests include forestry, birding and wildflowers



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THE EVENING CHORUS

By David Allinson

The quiet of winter evenings has given way to spring bird chorus.
A peace and contentment fills the night air
As robins proclaim new territory and vent energy,
Hummingbirds tank up one last time until morning,
And wrens return with bigger twigs to fill newfound nest cavities.
Birders exclaim of the overwhelming harmony of the dawn chorus,
But few point out the peaceful order of the evening chorus.
Paradise to me is that slack time in early spring
When the cool breezes of the twilight glide over trees and bushes
Slowly lulling the robin's song to a few clucks and calls.
Each morning brings new hope to a birder's excitable heart,
But it is the evening which brings home Nature's beauty and wonder.
Memories of birding expeditions far and wide and
Dreams of trips to come are strongly felt in these dwindling hours.
As night falls and silence looms, one can gaze skyward
And imagine tiny songbirds speeding northward
By starlight and moonlight in the wonder of bird migration.
Birding should not be a twelve hour hobby.
Instead, its appeal is spread over a full twenty-four hours
For spring's majesty can also be found in the chorus of the evening.

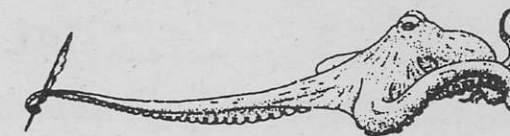
Cheep Trills Bird Quiz

Answers

1. Common Raven, Northwestern Crow. Or, Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-Shinned Hawk.
2. Northern Shrike, Common Raven. Songbird= passerine, a perching bird. (Ravens and crows prey on chicks and eggs.)
3. Glaucous-Winged Gull, Common Nighthawk.
4. Oldsquaw: First Nations, Senior Citizen, a female.
5. Long-Tailed Duck.
6. Bufflehead, from Buffalo, for the head shape. Brown-headed Cowbird followed the buffalo herds, leaving its eggs in other bird's nests along the way.
7. Oldsquaw.
8. Barrow's Goldeneye, Blue-Winged Teal.
9. Lesser Scaup has the pointy head, Greater Scaup doesn't.
10. Because both are rapt. 'Rapt', related to 'raptor', means to be held in a tight grip, as in a falcon's talons.
11. American Bittern. Bullfrog.
12. Rufous-Sided Towhee is now Spotted Towhee.
13. Coins: \$1 - Common Loon; penny (1967) - Rock Dove; \$1 (1967) - Canada Goose. Bills: \$2 - American Robin; \$5 - Belted Kingfisher; \$10 - Osprey; \$20 - Common Loon; \$50 - Snowy Owl; \$100 - Canada Goose; \$1000 - Pine Grosbeak.
14. The Falconiformes: hawks, eagles and falcons.
15. Red, Wilson's and Red-Necked Phalaropes; Belted Kingfisher, the resident.
16. Peregrine Falcon. *Peregrinus* is Latin for 'wanderer'. And: Wandering Tattler.
17. Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Shrike.
18. Marsh Wren.
19. Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak, Black-Headed Grosbeak.
20. Barred Owl.
21. Pied-Billed Grebe.
22. Pileated Woodpecker.
23. Trumpeter Swan.
24. Hermit Warbler, Black-Capped Chickadee, Spotted Owl (and others).
25. Who knows what goes on in their little bird brains?

Pacific Octopus

By Pamela Thuringer



Every once in a while my attention is drawn to a particular species of marine invertebrate or algal assemblage or some specific ecological process from repetitive exposure over a short period of time. In the last few months, two friends have most enthusiastically invited me over to see the newest addition to their saltwater aquariums, buster and squeeze, pet octopuses. In that same timespan, I have viewed three individual octopus in atypical situations and wonder why it is this particularly "intelligent" member, as often deemed, of the invertebrate community has been brought to my attention.

Generally, the octopus is a nocturnal, bottom dwelling animal which is usually found hiding amongst or underneath rocks or squeezed into discarded human refuge such as bottles, cans, or tires during the daytime. Since octopuses are masters of disguise, changing their colour and sometimes skin texture to mimic their surroundings, it is very often difficult to recognize this cephalopod even if it is as close as one metre from a diver. There are some clues which give away an octopus den, such as a pile of clam shells or crab carapaces stacked outside a pile of boulders or beneath a rock crevice. Octopuses are limited to movement in confined space only by the size of their beaklike jaws, which enable this carnivore to bite and tear its varied food source. It is not surprising that new divers are often reluctant to get near an octopus den, with thoughts of this eight-legged mythical monster laying in wait to seize an unsuspecting diver, drag the person into its lair, then proceed to restrain the diver by using the powerful suction on its tentacles before commencing to feed. I need not ever wonder where stories of giant octopus terrorizing mariners originate from!

One of my three latest encounters with this rather

interesting looking cryptic invertebrate took place in 15 feet of water along a predominately rip rap slope within the confines of a marina. My dive partner was busy poking around the rocks, engrossed by a very dense clump of the Spindle Whelk, *Searlesia dira*, as I was snorkelling on the surface watching the goings on from above. I am not quite sure how I spotted the octopus from ten feet away through murky waters, as it lay virtually motionless on a patch of sandy substrate beside an algal encrusted pile of boulders. As cryptic as it was, I found it quite unusual that the octopus appeared so exposed during midday and seemed quite unconcerned about our presence. I tapped on my clipboard to grab my partner's attention so he could obtain some footage of this dormant appearing creature. After about ten minutes, it seemed that our looming presence was a bit much and the octopus started making its way across the sand to the rip rap siding. It was not until it slowly crept across the sandy bottom to safer cover that I noticed its size, with a mantle at least a foot across plus eight curling tentacles — a good sized octopus. The octopus came to rest beside a brightly coloured crumpled Canadian flag and we were treated to a five minute colour change as it "decided" whether to mimic the white or red. Quite a display.

I am off to dive in the waters of southern Haida Gwaii in two weeks and cannot help but wonder what lies ahead in terms of future encounters with the Pacific Octopus. I have always wanted to witness this animal during its propulsion through the water column and may very well have the opportunity.

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

Below: Pacific Octopus (*Octopus dofleini*)

Left: Pacific Octopus (*Octopus dofleini*) mimicking barnacle encrusted boulders.



Subtidal video images: Pamela Thuringer

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.

MARCH EVENTS

Tuesday, March 4

Board of Directors' Meeting

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

Tuesday, March 11

Annual General Meeting & VNHS Natural History Presentation

All members are encouraged to attend the 1997 Annual General Meeting. Topics to be discussed will include nominations for the Board of Directors, a brief overview of financial statements and the President's Annual Report. Attendance is urged as a quorum of members is required to pass important motions for the coming year.

Our guest speaker at the AGM will be **Jim Cosgrove** of the Royal B.C. Museum. Jim is a respected authority in marine biology, specializing in cephalopods (e.g., octopus, squid and cuttlefish). He will present a slide and video presentation entitled *Skin Deep Beauty and Motherly Love*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 15

Birding the Victoria Waterfront

Search for Rock Sandpiper and other shorebirds along the Victoria Waterfront from Ogden Point to Cattle Point with **Bev Glover** (721-1476). Meet on Dallas Road at the Ogden Point Breakwater, 8:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 16.

Nature Walk at Mount Tolmie Park

Join the Mount Tolmie Conservancy Association on a walk around Mount Tolmie from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Meet at the summit and bring your camera and binoculars; be sure and wear sturdy shoes. For further information call **Eric Redekop** at 595-7270.

Wednesday, March 19

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. Information: **Jeff Stone** at 370-2449.

Tuesday, March 18

Botany Night

Program details were not available at the time of publishing. For details, telephone **Adolf Ceska** at 477-1211 or the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, March 24

Marine Night

Tim Tinker of Glenside Ecological Services has spent the last seven years studying marine mammals, from the east coast of Canada to the Aleutian Islands. In tonight's talk, *Sea Otters of the Aleutians*, he will discuss individual patterns of behaviour and diet of sea otters and how these patterns provide clues to population trends. He also promises to present a whirlwind tour of the western Aleutian Islands. (**Please note:** for this month only, Marine Night is on the second to last Monday rather than the last.) Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, March 26

Birders' Night

Dr. Nigel Mathews of Victoria will give a slide-illustrated talk on his recent round-the-world birding tour. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and coffee cup.

Sunday, March 30

Birding Martindale

Search for spring migrants through the Martindale Valley with **Hank VanderPol** (658-3482). Meet at the Farmers' Market, corner of Island View Road and the Pat Bay Highway at 8:00 a.m. and wear rubber boots.

Sunday, March 30.

Nature Walk at Mount Tolmie Park. See March 16 notice.

APRIL EVENTS

Tuesday, April 1

Board of Directors' Meeting

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

Saturday, April 5

Botanical Beach - Port Renfrew

The spring raptor migration takes place over Cape Flattery and peaks at the beginning of April. Last year 927 raptors of 12 species were seen on this date crossing over to Vancouver Island. **David Allinson** (478-0493) and **Susanna Solecki** (391-0587) will co-lead an all-day trip to Botanical Beach in hopes of seeing this migration as well as enjoying the spectacular tidal pools in the park. Susanna requests that everyone wear running shoes and not hiking boots on Botanical Beach to protect the fragile marine environment. Carpool at Helmcken at 7:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 8

VNHS Natural History Presentation

Meet **David Morris** of the Provincial Capital Commission who will be discussing present and future plans of the Greenways Project. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Bring your coffee cup and a friend.

Sunday, April 13

Nature Walk at Mount Tolmie Park. See March 16 notice.

Tuesday, April 15

Botany Night

Program details were not available at the time of publishing. For details telephone **Adolf Ceska** at 477-1211 or contact the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 16

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. Information: **Jeff Stone** at 370-2449.

Saturday, April 19

Lone Tree Hill

David Pearce (658-0295) leads a walk through this interesting regional park. The spring wild flowers will be at their peak and there's a good chance of seeing Townsend's Solitaire. Carpool at Helmcken at 7:30 a.m. or meet in the parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, April 19 and Sunday, April 20

Gardening for Wildlife

Come and help promote the use of native plants and creation of wildlife habitat in your backyard by attending the Second Annual Native Plant Gardening Sale and Demonstration. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. For more information contact **Terry Morrison** or **Joan Cowley** at the Nature Sanctuary office at 479-0211. (See also box on page 16.)

Sunday, April 20

Camas Day at Beacon Hill Park

Join the annual Camas Day festivities at Beacon Hill Park. Activities include a bird walk at 9:00 a.m. and three walks: Wildflowers; Butterflies; and Native History — each of which will start at 11:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. All walks start at the flagpole at the top of Beacon Hill. This event is supported by the Victoria Natural

History Society and the Friends of Beacon Hill Park. For further information contact **Helen Oldershaw** at 592-6659.

Wednesday, April 25

Birders' Night

Ian Goudie of the Canadian Wildlife Service, Vancouver, will talk about his current research on the *Biology of Harlequin Ducks in Coastal British Columbia*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Saturday, April 26

Birding at Cowichan Bay

Join **Derrick Marven** (748-8504) to see the northward migration of shorebirds and the arrival of the Purple Martins. Meet at the Helmcken Park'n'Ride at 8:15 a.m. or the Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 9:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 27

Nature Walk at Mount Tolmie Park. See March 16 notice.

Monday, April 28

Marine Night

The west coast of North America is home to a greater diversity of sea stars than any other temperate region. **Phil Lambert**, Invertebrate Curator at the Royal B.C. Museum, has written a handbook about sea stars, and a book about their relatives, the sea cucumbers, is now in press. Tonight he will present *Spiny-skinned Animals: the Ecology of Sea Stars and their Kin*. The talk will include colour slides and video footage from local waters. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

MAY EVENTS

Saturday, May 10

Spring Bird Count

This annual event returns to the May time frame to record the bird migration through Victoria. It is the same format as the Christmas Bird Count and the same area leaders will be contacting their troops to do the count in warmer weather. Let us see if we can beat our record of 170 species set in 1993. Contact **David Pearce** (658-0295) if you wish to participate and are not already on the CBC database. There will be a post count gathering at 12:30 p.m. at the Swan Lake Nature Centre.

Sunday, May 18

Nature Walk at Mount Tolmie Park. See March 16 notice.

BULLETIN BOARD

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 VNHS 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. If you are interested in helping out, contact **Michael Carson** at 478-1535.

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.



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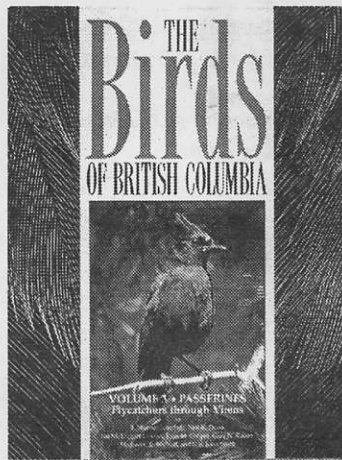
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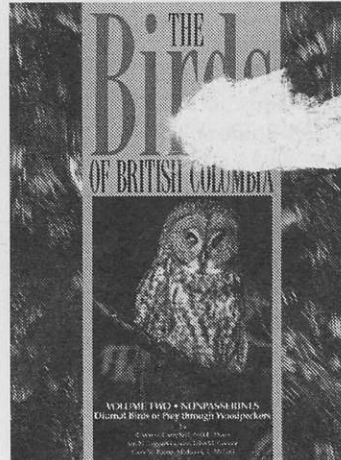
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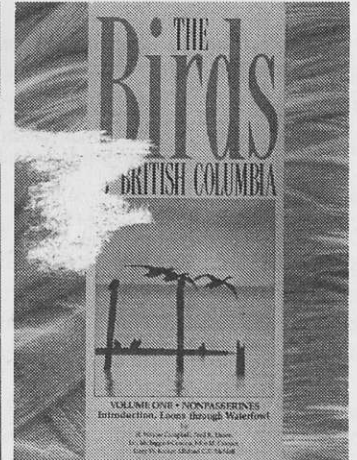
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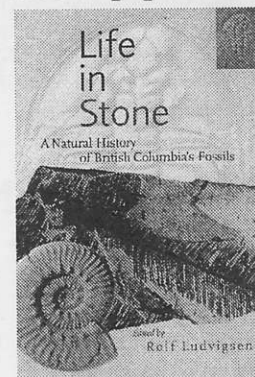
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