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TANNIS WARBURTON
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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 Arlene Yaworsky at 385-9629 (evenings only), or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4.

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Contents

Mt. Douglas Park and the Changing Environment By Graham Shorthill.....	4
Victoria S.P.C.A. Goes Wild! By Kip Parker	6
Hat Tricks	7
Benefit Slide Show and Concert Raises \$2,000 By Michelle Grant	8
Christmas Bird Count By David Pearce	10
Concerns about the FBCN Affiliation Fee Increase By David Pearce and Tom Gillespie	12
Letter to the Editor	12
Welcome to New Members	13
Pacific Octopus By Pamela Thuringer.....	15
Calendar of Events.....	16
Bulletin Board.....	19

Back cover photo by Kip Parker: Lana Reynolds
 with Sharp Shinned Hawk.

OUR COVER

Oregon Grape is one of the most widespread shrubs on the south coast. The Dull Oregon Grape, *Mahonia nervosa*, seems to prefer closed canopy forests. The species on our cover is *Mahonia aquifolium*, or Tall Oregon Grape, and it is happier in drier, more open settings. It is an attractive plant which also naturalizes well in the garden, providing rich fall colours, and food for wildlife as well.

The painting is by well-known Victoria watercolour artist Tannis Warburton. Tannis has graciously consented to the use of this image in a fundraising poster for the Habitat Acquisition Trust. She has donated her work to HAT at other times and has also supported the Victoria Natural History Society, most notably through the art shows at Goldstream Provincial Park. Her painting of Fireweed was exhibited at the most recent show.

The poster is in the final design stages and will be available for sale in the near future. It is to be printed on quality stock, suitable for framing. The tentative cost will be \$10.00, with all profits going to further HAT's work.

CORRECTION. In Barbara Begg's article on *Larks in London, Morocco and Spain*, the common name of our local species, *Alauda arvensis*, was printed as Skylark. The new accepted common name is two words, Sky Lark, to bring it in line with other lark species.



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Mt. Douglas Park and the Changing Environment

By Graham Shorthill

Whether you look at it from the sea or from the remaining farmland, it dominates the landscape. Whether you walk along the beach in the company of eagles, herons and seals or wander through the remote trails to the summit, it epitomizes the essential qualities that drew so many of us to the West Coast. However, over the last decade, the changes to the surrounding neighborhoods of Gordon Head, South Cordova Bay and Broadmead have placed many of these qualities under threat but they have also brought many potential users to the park's entrances. The dilemma is to balance the negative effects of suburban growth against the greater awareness the public now has the park's value to the community.

It is a curious fact that only a small proportion of the population know the full extent of the park's present day attractions and even fewer know about its role in the development of the region. The latter started with the cedars used to construct Fort Victoria, which were cut in the vicinity of the park by the Songhees Indians and hauled along what is now Cedar Hill Road to Victoria. This involvement with the region continues to the present day and is symbolized by the underground telecommunications centre built a few years ago at the summit.

From a legal point of view, the park came into existence when Sir James Douglas set up a Government Reserve at Mt. Douglas in 1858, which was transformed into "The Mt. Douglas Park Reserve" in 1889 and granted by the Provincial Government, in trust, to "The City of Victoria and its successors to maintain and preserve as a public park or pleasure ground for the use, recreation and enjoyment of the Public". Under this Crown Grant, the park has provided many different opportunities over the years. When Gordon Head and Cordova Bay were the sites of summer cottages, the park became the centerpiece of the summer holidays for Victoria residents. There are many accounts of beach races and parties, hikes to the summit and exploring the caves on the west side. For the more solitary, it has provided a wonderful setting for painting and drawing from nature; one of the first to do so was Emily Carr.

In a more somber mood, during the depression a work camp was established in the present picnic area and during the war the original communications tower was erected on the summit. But, from 1960 to 1990, except for the once-a-year blast of motorcycle exhausts for the hill climb, a curious calm settled over the scene. Saanich had begun its explosion of suburban development and the City had other things on its



View from Mt. Douglas Park. Aerial photo: Darrell Wick

mind. In retrospect, this period of benign neglect was the park's best defense against the ravages of development. When the various levels of bureaucracy decided to abolish the original Crown Grant and to change the status and nature of the park, the public was not in a mood to accept.

The Friends of Mt. Douglas Park Society was formed in 1989 and for the next two years we were involved in very public battle concerning the nature of the park and what development could take place within it. Although it took a long time, when the dust settled the park had a new charter (the wording is cast in bronze and mounted on a plaque at the start of the trail from the car park to the summit) and new managers. The detailed results were: there would be no four lane road through the park; no major transmitter site for all to see; the summit would stay as part of the park and not as a separate preserve; and the proposed new road allowance deeper in the park was rejected. With the new Charter and the new managers, the Society began a very productive period of discussion and planning with the various municipal departments (Parks, Engineering and Planning) which has lasted to the present day. What follows is a summary of the issues and what has happened in each case but it helps to remember that the overall goal is to maintain this park in as natural a state as possible.

Broom clearing. The major effort to remove broom has been mainly confined to the summit but its removal there has made an amazing difference to the view people have over the Strait and to the Sooke Hills. This is an area where we hope the natural wild flowers will thrive once the invasive species has been substantially removed.

Tree planting. We have identified a number of areas which would make excellent sites for the reintroduction of Garry Oak meadows. They would form a nice transition from the suburban surroundings to the natural environment in the heart of the park. We have cleared broom and brambles from the site near the fire road leading from Cedar Hill Road and have planted Garry Oaks there. In addition, we have planted hundreds of cedars, alder, etc. in the region along the fire road from Ash to Shelbourne. This is an area which is particularly susceptible to wind damage by south east gales and many trees have been lost there over the past decade.

Acquisitions. Using the clause in the new Charter, the western boundary of the park has been extended considerably over the last five years at very little cost to the municipality and the taxpayer. We hope this approach can be used more widely so the park can continue to grow and help preserve the rural character of the Blenkinsop Valley in the face of continual pressure for change.

Tree canopy. The trees, which arch over Cordova Bay Road to Shelbourne Street, have been accepted in total as a significant stand of trees and now have some protection under the significant tree regulations. This was a first; until we applied, only individual trees had been approved.

The creek. Over the last two years, we have tested the quality of the water and had experts in to determine the quality of the habitat. On the Thanksgiving weekend, we

introduced 800 salmon from the hatchery at Goldstream into Mt. Douglas Creek, to join the fish raised by the school children from the local elementary schools. At this stage, it is very much the "canary in the coal mine" scenario but, for the long term, we believe that this creek can become a fish-bearing stream again. The key to success will be adequate public awareness of the harm people cause when they discharge their wastes into the storm drain system.

Trails. The trails policy is a compromise between our ideas and Saanich's. There will be, eventually, a two-metre wide trail around the base of the mountain and it will be gravel-based for easy access. The remainder of the system will stay as narrow trails with no mechanically-laid footing. The new signs are going up gradually and there is a new trail map available. The Parks Department plans to mount them at the entrances at some stage.

Road. There is a plan in preparation which will see access to the park for all the major users, not just motorists. In particular, we look forward to accommodating the cyclists in a safe manner as they, more than any other group of users, have shown that the road must allow alternatives to motor traffic.

Sea wall. The proposal put forward a couple of years ago to build a 600 metre sea wall, at a cost of \$1.0 million, along the beach in an attempt to stop the cliff erosion, is on hold. The engineers have installed a new drainage system at the top of the cliff to remove water before it can do serious damage to the integrity of the cliff. The side benefits include keeping the beach intact and the new pool in the old gravel pit has become a mecca for the growing herd of deer within the park.

Greenways. The C.R.D. and the Provincial Capital Commission have developed a Greenways plan for the region and the park is a major node in that system. We hope this will translate into greater use of the park in the future for everyone in the region.

If any reader is interested in helping in these areas, please call one of the numbers listed below. We always need people to maintain the momentum on these activities and it is a case of the more, the merrier. We still need progress in planting native species, cataloging the wild flowers and determining the number and type of bird species the park sustains. So if there is anyone with particular interest in these areas, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please call:

Kenneth Rankin: 477-800

Graham Shorthill: 658-5873

Bob Bridgeman: 477-7464.

GRAHAM SHORTHILL is a member of the Board of Directors of The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society. The Society puts out a regular Newsletter for members of the Society and the general public outlining the on-going issues and progress made. Annual membership fees are \$5.00/person.

Victoria S.P.C.A. Goes Wild!

By Kip Parker

August has seen the opening of a brand new state-of-the-art wildlife rehabilitation centre in Metchosin. Already, over 160 wild mammals and birds of 50 different species have been treated in the first eight weeks of operation.

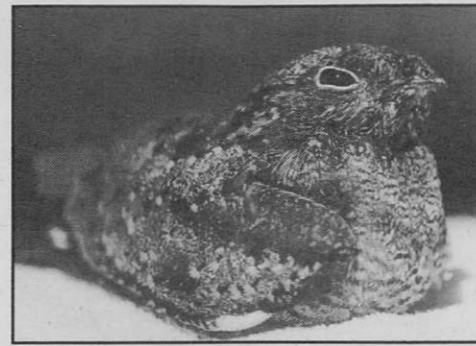
The centre, called the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre, or WILD ARC, was the 1996 Centennial project of the Victoria Branch of the SPCA. The Centre will serve southern Vancouver Island, filling a long-standing need for rehabilitating injured and displaced wildlife. The Victoria SPCA has already been handling about 1500 wildlife a year but lacks the facility to rehabilitate wildlife at its downtown location.

Located on four hectares of land adjacent to Matheson Lake Provincial Park, the Centre is equipped to handle small to medium-sized animals and birds. While unable to house large predators and raptors (birds of prey), Centre staff will be able to treat and stabilise them in preparation for transfer to other facilities. In keeping with the SPCA Victoria branches' mandate to care for all animals, WILD ARC will take in both native and introduced species of wildlife. However, every care will be taken in releasing wildlife to insure that they are returned to appropriate habitats. Where possible, mammals will be returned to their point of origin; city raccoons, for example, will not be released in rural or wild lands outside the city. Wildlife that is outside of its established range will not be released here.

WILD ARC's secluded location and overall design reflect the need for treating wildlife in an environment that is as stress-free as possible. The main building layout minimises contact between humans and wildlife, and outside cages and buildings are situated to minimise visual contact among them.

In consideration of the Centre's primary purpose — the treatment and care of injured wildlife — tours and public viewing of wildlife under care will not be possible. There are plans, however, to develop and present a variety of educational programs to schools and community groups. A strongly pro-active education program will provide humane alternatives to problems caused through human/wildlife interaction. WILD ARC in this way can make a contribution to wildlife appreciation and conservation throughout the lower island.

The Centre has started operations with 12 outside cages, including a raccoon cage and two cages with filtered water pools for water birds and mammals. Additional caging, such as deer pens, will be added as time and money allows. It should be noted that all costs for the Centre to date have been raised through public donations, and that no government or tax dollars have been used in creating the Centre. Two staff, plus the Centre Director, currently provide the



Common Nighthawk. Photo: Kip Parker

rehabilitation service for wildlife. WILD ARC is already offering high school students a Work Experience placement at the Centre, an exciting opportunity to participate in a unique service.

Wildlife rehabilitation is a strongly developing profession in North America. British Columbia has a professional association — the Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of B.C. — and the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) in the U.S. has approximately 1800 members in the U.S. and Canada. Enormous strides have been made in the last decade in treatment, surgery, diets and housing for injured wildlife. Wildlife rehabilitation can play an important role along with more traditional agencies in working with wildlife. Rehabilitators are often on the front line in dealing with wildlife disease outbreaks, in oil spill response (Exxon Valdez and the Gulf war, for example), and in alerting authorities to developing toxic events (such as lead poisoning in Bald Eagles).

WILD ARC will be rehabilitating wildlife for release — the Centre will not be keeping unreleasable wildlife. Where these animals no longer have a good quality of life, as measured in wild terms, or if there is an untreatable injury or condition, the Centre can offer the "gift of death", a humane end to suffering and pain, through euthanasia.

SPCA staff will continue to respond to calls from the public for wildlife in distress and wildlife will be brought out to the Centre by SPCA drivers. As well, animals can be brought directly to the Centre by concerned citizens. WILD ARC is currently open seven days a week from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Expanded hours in spring and summer will reflect the need to provide additional care during the wildlife baby season.

The WILD ARC telephone number is 478-WILD (9453). If you have an injured wild animal for pick up you can call the SPCA at 388-7722 (after hours emergency call 385-6521).

KIP PARKER moved from Ontario to take up the position of Director at Wild ARC in June this year. His background of 25 years experience in captive care of wildlife includes zoos in Canada and New Zealand, and both specialised and general wildlife rehabilitation centres. He serves on the board of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association in the U.S. Kip Parker will give a Natural History Presentation on January 9.

Hat Tricks

A Report on the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation (HAT)

By Jeff Stone

As a HAT director over the past five months, it has seemed that our fund raising efforts for the property bordering the estuary of Ayum Creek has taken us over. However, we have been developing some of other roles with respect to conservation covenants and land stewardship.

Our executive director, Inga Nyquist, has been planning our land stewardship role/office. The role we envision for HAT, with respect to land stewardship, is to provide coordination, training and logistical assistance to the 60+ conservation organizations and land trusts within the CRD as well as to assist individual landowners and municipalities with informational needs.

We currently have funding proposals out to four agencies to assist with various portions of our land stewardship project. We hope to initiate the process with a workshop early in 1998 that would bring together many of the local conservation organizations to discuss their needs and how an alliance or coordination of efforts could improve their effectiveness. We also expect to have an operational office by early 1998 in order that we can effectively communicate with the various organizations. We are one step closer to that goal due to the generous donation of a computer and printer by DEC through the efforts of Gil Namur.

Our Sooke Harbour House fundraiser featuring Robert Bateman was a success raising over \$15,000 for use towards the purchase of the Ayum Creek property. We would like to thank Frederique and Sinclair Philip and their daughter Jasmine of Sooke Harbour House for generously donating a wonderful venue, food and hospitality. We thank Robert

Bateman for squeezing our fundraiser into his already busy schedule, for his generous financial support of Ayum Creek, and for his efforts of increasing environmental awareness. We also thank TM Communication and Manning Press for their donation of designing and printing advertising and souvenir brochures. And thank you to the Raven String Quartet for providing the enchanting music for the evening.

Our total donations and pledges towards the purchase of Ayum Creek now (late September) exceeds the mid-way point of the purchase price (>\$312,500). On October 31st we must decide whether to purchase the property or continue with our option to March 31 (at a cost of an additional \$5,000). At this moment, we most likely will have to opt to extend our option but we are confident that we will be able to reach our goal of \$625,000+\$5,000+ expenses by March. This fall we will be initiating an awareness campaign to further attract contributions from corporate and individual donors. If you would like to pledge or contribute to the purchase of Ayum Creek, please contact HAT (995-2HAT), the Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek (Joanne at 642-7278), the Field-Naturalist (388-4174) or any HAT director (e.g., Jeff Stone at 370-2449). All support is needed and charitable donations receipts will be issued immediately for direct donations and at the time of payment for pledges.

I would like to end by paraphrasing a question that Robert Bateman posed during his thoughtful and entertaining presentation at Sooke Harbour House. What would the world be like if everyone just did one thing each day just for the earth?



HAT'S OFF AGAIN

The third annual tour to raise funds for the Habitat Acquisition Trust of the Victoria Natural History Society is in the planning stage for the first two weeks in March, 1998.

Mark Twain described the Hawaiian Islands as "the loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean". Join David Stirling on a tour of the Natural "Hot Spots" of the Hawaiian Islands. This tour will feature flowing lava, cascading waterfalls, lush tropical forests, humpback whales, black sand beaches and much, much more. The islands host a cosmopolitan variety of birds as well as over 30 species of endemics, most of which are extremely rare and we'll travel from sea level to crater top at 10,000 feet searching for them.

If a tour to these beautiful islands interests you, please call Marilyn at 477-5922.

Benefit Slide Show and Concert Raises \$2,000

By Michelle Grant

Close Encounters of the Feathered Kind, a combination slide presentation and mini-concert by Saltspring residents Lisa Maxx and Jonathan Grant, received an enthusiastic response from the crowd at the University of Victoria's Lam Auditorium on September 12.

Lisa Maxx struck deep emotional chords with her tragic tale of Terra Nova, an area of land in the Lower Mainland once rich with a diverse mix of wildlife, that in spite of concentrated efforts to save it, fell prey to the developer's bull-dozer. The images are evocative, wild geese wearily returning to ancestral homelands now black-topped and torn in the morning sun. "Where will the strutting pheasant walk, where will the Great Blue Heron stalk" speaks eloquently of the need to preserve places for wildlife.

Jonathan Grant then took the audience travelling through North America, beginning with the Everglades National Park in Florida, home to egrets, herons, Red-shouldered Hawks and numerous other birds and waterfowl. Jonathan's sensitive portrayals of wildlife in their natural habitat demon-

strated aptly the need for preservation, so that everyone might have the opportunity to experience nature in the wild.

Concluding with birds of British Columbia and the McFadden Creek Heron Rookery, brought viewers back to the real reason for the show, our need for funds to preserve the Saltspring homeland of the non-migratory coastal Great Blue Heron.

The slide show and mini-concert was sponsored by the Islands Trust Fund with proceeds going to the McFadden Creek Heron Rookery. Special thanks go to Bruce Whittington, the Field Naturalist, The *Victoria Naturalist* magazine, Munro Books, Ivy's Book Shop, The Deanery Book and Gift Shop and Tanner Books, for their help in promoting the event. Thanks also to all Victoria Natural History Society members who came out and supported the cause with their time and money.

To date, over \$105,000 has been raised including the \$2,000 in proceeds and donations from the slide show and concert.

Third Annual City-Wide Broom Bash, 1997

The second annual City-Wide Broom Bash (October 12 to November 17, 1996) was a great success. The project has increased from 12 events at 12 locations in 1995 to 20 events at 13 locations in 1996. This year a total of 25 events at 14 locations are planned, during eight weekends in October and November. *See the Calendar for dates and time.*

The locations and the coordinators include:

Central Saanich: Bob Thompson at 652-4691.

Mount Tolmie: Eric Redekop at 595-7270

Mount Doug Park: Ken Rankin at 477-8007.

View Royal Park: Andria Tetlow at 4791947.

Wildflower Lane: Linda Beare at 658-8993.

Highrock/Cairn Park: Ron Steele at 386-7886.

Thetis Lake Park: Elizabeth McMillan at 479-7694.

Blue Heron Park (Sidney): Pat Bastone at 656-6594.



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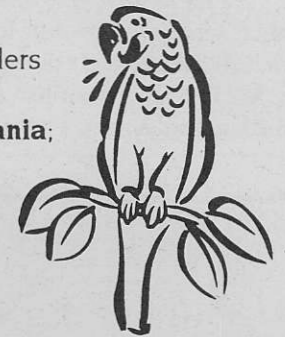
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This trip is designed and led by Biogeographer, Stam Zogaris and Educator Vasso Vlami. These experienced Naturalists have worked on research and conservation in Greece for over a decade. Their tours are famous for their sensitivity and passion for nature conservation!

Space limited to 20 participants

For itinerary and tour details call Eva Zogaris: 251-7477

For reservations call Patti at Omega:

738-7161 or 1-800-663-2669

OMEGA TRAVEL



Christmas Bird Count — December 20, 1997

By David Pearce

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 20, 1997. The purpose of the C.B.C. is to count birds observed within a 15 mile diameter circle covering the Greater Victoria area centred on the intersection of Grange Road and Jasmine Avenue in Marigold. The circle is divided into 22 land areas and two ocean areas, each having an area leader.

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

If you participated as a "counter" in the Christmas count last year, you will be contacted and asked if you would like to participate this year. If you did not take part in the Victoria count last year but would like to participate, please contact David Pearce, Count Coordinator, at 658-0295 by November 30, or sign up at the November Birders' Night.

If you have a feeder in your yard and wish to participate as a feeder watcher, simply watch your feeder on December 21 and record all bird species and number of individuals of those species. Mail or bring your list into the Field-Naturalist, 1126 Blanshard Street, Victoria. Please put your

name, address and telephone number on the list. Your report must be received by Tuesday, December 23 in order to be included in the count records.

If you see a rare bird at your feeder on December 20 (see the Victoria Area Checklist of Birds or last year's Christmas count results in the March/April issue of the *Victoria Naturalist* to find out what is rare in December), please phone your sighting immediately to the Rare Bird Alert at 592-3381 and leave a message on the tape.

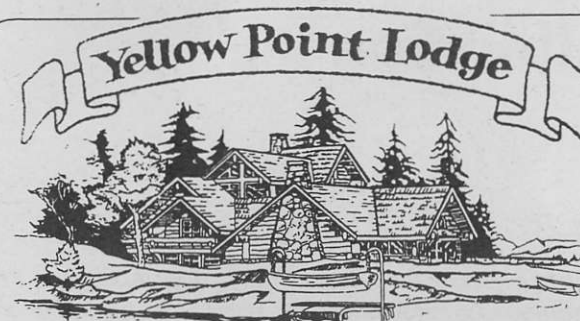
Victoria currently holds the Canadian Christmas Bird Count record of 152 species set in 1991. This was achieved by getting an exceptionally good coverage with over 150 people taking part. So please mark December 20 in your calendar and join us in trying to set another record! It is a good idea to survey your area in the previous week to see what is around if you have the time.

After the count we are planning to hold a meeting at the Gordon Head United Church starting at 7:00 p.m. This will be the same format as a regular Birders' Night, where coffee, tea and biscuits will be served, and we will discuss the day's count results. Please bring finger food, savouries or a dessert to share if you wish.

ARCTIC GOOSE CONFERENCE

The ninth North American Arctic Goose Conference and Workshop (NAAG '98) will be held in Victoria, British Columbia from January 7 - 11, 1998. The objective of the meeting is to provide a forum for discussion of research and management issues concerning Arctic geese anywhere in the world. Themes will include Life History Strategies, Population Status and Delineation, Nutritional Ecology, and Behavioural Ecology. More than 200 biologists are expected to attend the meeting. If you are interested in attending, presenting an oral or poster paper, or just receiving more information about NAAG '98, please contact:

Sean Boyd
Pacific Wildlife Research Centre
Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada
RR1 - 5421 Robertson Road
Delta, B.C. V4K 3N2
Phone: (604) 940-4682; Fax: (604) 946-7022
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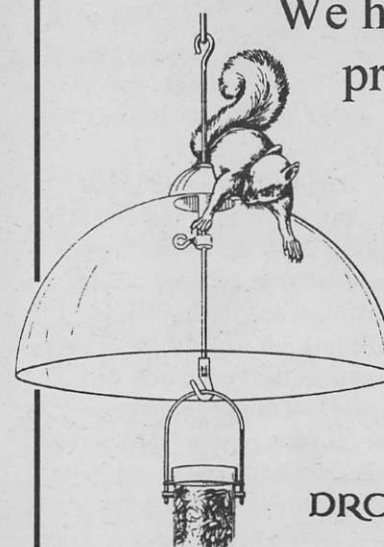
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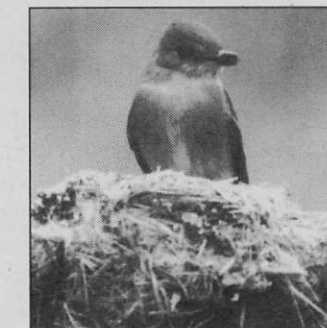
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Concerns about the FBCN Affiliation Fee Increase

By David Pearce and Tom Gillespie

An issue has arisen regarding our automatic membership of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists (FBCN). At their Spring 1997 Annual General Meeting, at which we were not represented, the FBCN agreed to increase fees from the constituent natural history societies by an additional \$2, from \$10 to \$12 per member. We give this money to the FBCN annually in January out of the \$25 we charge per member. As we now charge our renewals based on when people join the Society, we have to guess our forthcoming membership numbers. In 1997, this resulted in an overpayment of about \$800 as we did not get as many renewals in our membership as we expected.

The arbitrary increase in FBCN charges is to cover their increased costs, which have risen as result of employing a full time manager instead of a part time or voluntary manager. In 1991, our cost was only \$4 per member. Now they are wanting them increased by 300%! To restore our earnings to 1991 levels we would need to increase our dues by \$5 per member which, with our current declining enrolment, we feel the membership would not appreciate. Both the Vancouver and Nanaimo Natural History Societies are

considering rejecting the increase and opting out of automatic membership for their people. Instead, we are considering donating \$100 on behalf of our societies and urging our members join the FBCN as individuals on their own initiative. This has also happened with the Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan equivalents of the FBCN.

One of the purposes of the FBCN is to protect land for nature, which we are now doing ourselves through the Habitat Acquisition Trust Fund (H.A.T.). If we were to donate only \$100 to the FBCN, and take responsibility for land for nature for Southern Vancouver Island ourselves, the FBCN would not need a full time manager. Instead they could operate voluntarily as they used to, to produce the *BC Naturalist* magazine.

As this is a contentious issue we would appreciate some feedback from our members. You can either mail your comments to David Pearce at 4781 Timber Place, Victoria, B.C., V8Y 2L6 or e-mail to "dpearce@pacificcoast.net".

DAVID PEARCE is Vice-President and TOM GILLESPIE is President of the Victoria Natural History Society.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Fellow FBCN Members:

I have heard that your Society is considering leaving the Federation of B.C. Naturalists. I am writing to you to ask that you urge your Board of Directors to reconsider this drastic action.

Your Society is a very important member of the Federation. It was one of the groups that founded the FBCN when it was formed in 1969. As one of the two largest naturalist societies in British Columbia, you have amongst your membership many highly qualified and knowledgeable people who contribute to the available information on the natural world. Your members also have many government contacts that are not possible in other parts of the province.

Many of you travel to other parts of British Columbia to visit the special natural sites such as birdwatching areas, places to view wildlife and the many scenic wonders of our province. The small clubs scattered around the province are constantly fighting to protect these special areas from destruction by industry or development. It is through your membership in the FBCN that you provide support for these clubs.

As you are probably aware, the FBCN is an umbrella organization of the forty-some clubs in the province and acts in a coordinating and informational capacity. By having one organization representing all naturalists in the province we have a stronger voice at the provincial and federal levels.

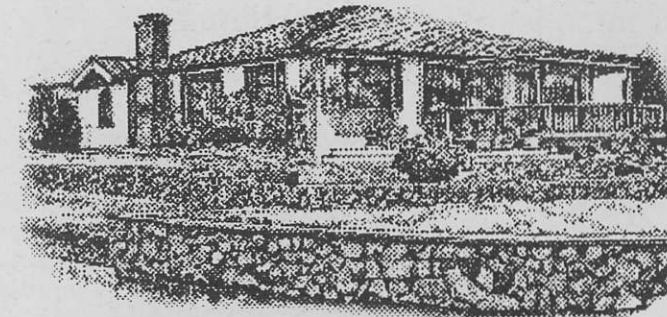
If your Society leaves the Federation, and the Vancouver Natural History Society follows suite, the Federation will probably have to fold up. Then we will no longer have a provincial voice. We will no longer have representatives on the various provincial committees, councils and boards. The voice of the naturalist in British Columbia will be gone. Please stay! We need you!

Sincerely,

Audrey Hoeg
President, Federation of B.C. Naturalists

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Welcome to New Members

AUGUST

Isabel Clemson
of Simcoe Street
has a particular interest in birding.

Gabriel David
of Shelbourne Street
enjoys birding, wildlife and hiking.

Ruth and Dick Keogh
of Towner Park Road
are interested in birds, flowers and the Naturescape Program.

Pauline McDowall
of Yorkshire Place
enjoys wildflowers.

Samuel Lightman and Maureen Milburn
of Andrew Place.

Rick and Alisen Reeve
of Senanus Drive.

Juliet Simon
of Oakwood Street
likes learning about B.C., birds and plants.

Chris Stieda and family
of Kathleen Street
enjoy hiking and botany.

Marilyn and Ronald Welch
of Superior Street
include photography, native plants and ethnobotany among their interests.

SEPTEMBER

Bob Maher and family
of Sooke Road
enjoy botany and ecology.

Georgina McMath
of Brotherstone Road
likes birding and painting.

Ronald Rodgers
of View Street.

Gary Schaan and family
of Mitchell Street
are interested in botany and land-use planning.

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATIONS

The diversity of life forms is the greatest wonder of the planet. By saving our wildlife, we may be saving ourselves. Bearing in mind David Fraser's warnings about the loss of habitat and endangered species, together with Bill Merilees' excellent photographic demonstration of what human visitation has brought about in the islands of the South Atlantic, we are continuing our theme of nature and natural habitat during the next few months.

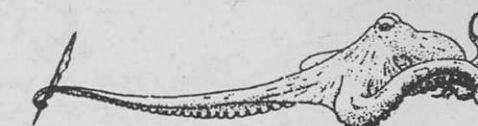
NOVEMBER 11, our own **David Stirling**, who has just returned from a visit and tour of Greenland and Baffin Island, will give us the benefit of this *Arctic Moments*.

DECEMBER 9, we are fortunate to have **Andrew Bryant** to tell us about his research and attempts to protect the unique Vancouver Island Marmot. There are now only 130 of these animals left, 65% having been lost in the past decade. He has recently returned from Russia where they have enthusiastically agreed to engage in captive breeding of this very endangered animal. As well, Andrew has been very successful in obtaining corporate support for captive breeding on Vancouver Island. Hot apple cider and goodies will be featured at this meeting!

JANUARY 9 will bring us **Kip Parker**, a recently retired naturalist who is Director of the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre in Metchosin, a 1996 Centennial Project of Victoria's SPCA.

Pacific Octopus

By Pamela Thuringer



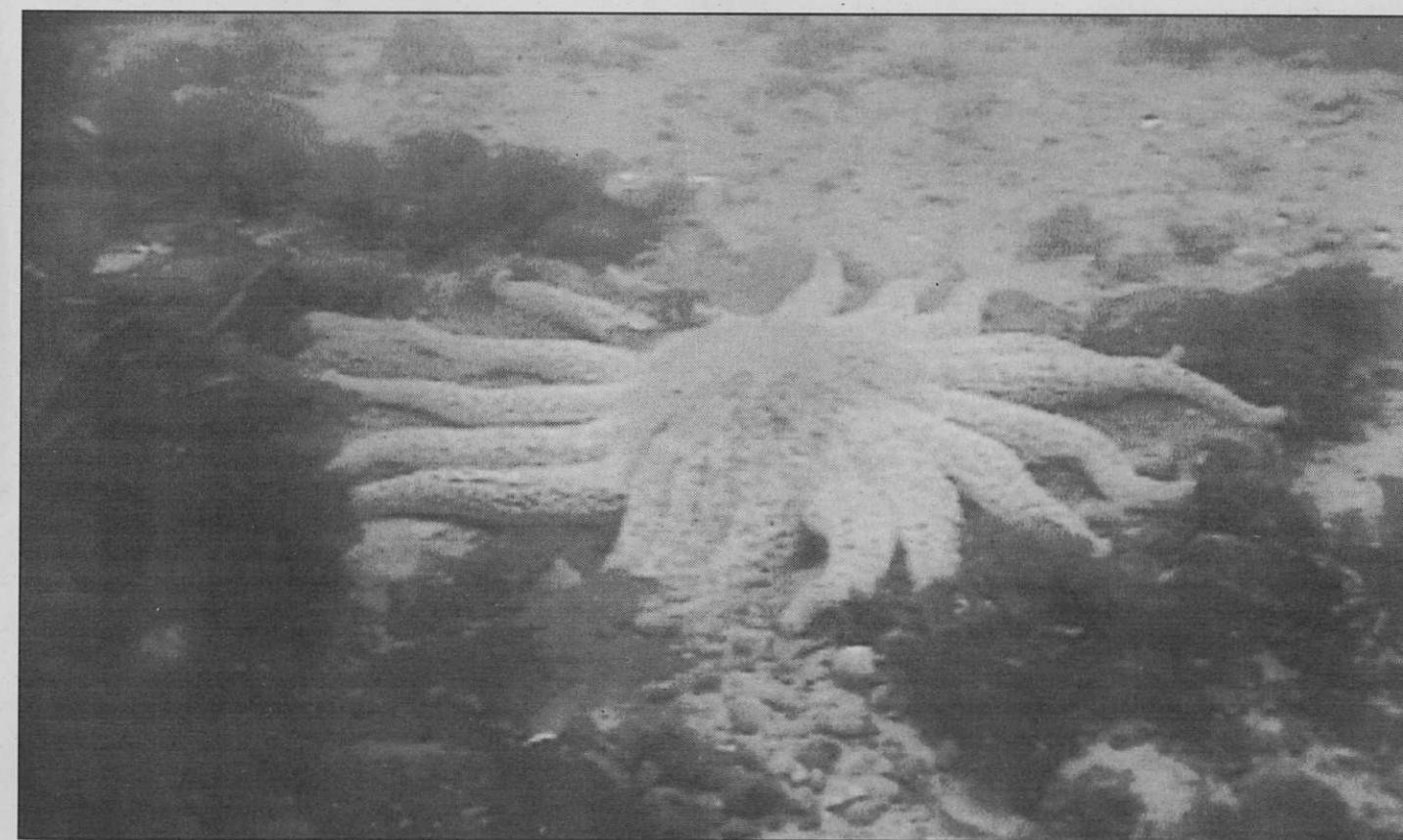
Floating over an eelgrass meadow in a greater than 1 knot current, watching marine life such as Dungeness crabs (*Cancer magister*) and an array of nearshore fish scatter and take cover, makes me wonder what it would be like from an invertebrate or fishes perspective during our invasions of the deep disguised as SCUBA diving. If I was a 15 to 24 legged Sunflower Star, *Pycnopodia helianthoides*, about to consume a scrumptious Butter Clam (*Saxidomus giganteus*) after painstakingly excavating my prey from beneath the sand and gravel substrate, piece by piece, and along comes this odd looking blob with many dangling bits, leaking bubbles, I would certainly think a thing or two.

Living as a *Pycnopodia*, I would feel quite safe existing in my marine environment, mostly sticking to sand or gravel substrate from the intertidal zone to depths of 100 feet but also crawling around on rocky bottoms. Food stuffs are usually quite plentiful for a voracious predator such as I, with bivalve mollusks (clams) the favourite, although I will consume urchins, sea cucumbers, sand dollars and other sea stars. My full grown, just under 1.0 metre, frame is capable of outrunning most prey at a top speed of 160 cm/min on better days. It's no wonder most of my intended meals contort, wriggle or snap shut at my approach. Once I get my

numerous tube feet with suckers a hold of something, look out. If I find myself in an awkward position, where perhaps I need to break free as a defence mechanism, I will simply detach one or many of my arms and grow them back, provided I don't lose my central disc in the process. Such is the beauty of regeneration.

So, quite the surprise to me that while in the act of digging up my dinner, I am interrupted by a gurgling specimen with bulging eyes pointing some object at me that I can see my reflection in. Obviously, due to sheer size and all the gadgets attached to this underwater visitor, I could be in serious trouble. After hovering in one spot for some time, and showing no signs of aggression, I am confident that whatever mission this unusual sea creature is on, my destruction and or captivity is not part of the goal. Or so I thought, until with one great movement water propulsion, as a result of kicking the two extensions on the end of what appear to be limbs, almost topple me over. A parting gesture to let me know what could have been or simply inconsideration. I will never know but do intend to keep alert next time one of those kind approach.

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



Sunflower Star (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*). Photo: 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; **Parks and Conservation Committee Meeting:** the third Wednesday 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 and we should all show our appreciation by coming to as many as possible.

Also note that there is no Botany Night, Birders' Night or Marine Night scheduled for December but there will be a Natural History Presentation on Tuesday, December 9.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Saturday, November 1

Cowichan Bay Ecocentre and Duncan Sewage Lagoon

Come along with **Dave Fraser** to a wonderful world of marine life at the Ecocentre located on Drinkwater Road (turn right from the highway onto Trunk Road, then right on Drinkwater Road). If the weather is good, the group will visit the Duncan Sewage Lagoons and Fishgut Alley for a different side of birding. Meet at Helmcken Park 'n' Ride at 8:00 a.m. or at the Ecocentre at 9:00 a.m. and bring rain gear, rubber boots and a lunch. Call Dave at 479-0016 for details.

Saturday, November 1

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

Richard Hebda will present a talk on *Bulbs*. Dr. Hebda is a botanist and is Curator of Botany and Earth History at the Royal B.C. Museum. He has been collecting bulbs and growing plants from bulbs for the past 15 years. Richard has lectured and written about raising bulbs and bulbous plants, and has made frequent contributions to the Coastal Grower and the Lily Handbook of the Royal Horticultural Society. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Saturday, November 1

Birds of the Night

An evening devoted to our night hunters of the bird world during this slide show and owl search. Francis King Regional Park, 7:00 p.m. Pre-registration and fee (\$5.00) required. Contact CRD Parks at 478-3344. CRD Parks family event.

Saturday, November 1

Central Saanich Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. to noon. Call **Bob Thompson** at 652-4691 for information.

Sunday, November 2 ****

NOTICE: The Pelagic Birding trip from the MV Coho was listed for this day in the last issue of the *Victoria Naturalist*. Please note it will be held on **November 30th**.

Sunday, November 2

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

Help remove the invasive broom plant on Mount Tolmie, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Follow the pink flagging tape from Mayfair Drive to the work areas. The Garry Oak Meadow Invasive Plant Removal Program is a project of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, with funding by the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks Habitat Conservation Trust Fund. For further information contact **Eric Redekop** at 595-7270.

Sunday, November 2

Telling Tales, Walking Trails

Join a CRD naturalist on this entertaining family walk through East Sooke Regional Park. Meet at 1:00 p.m. at the Pike Road parking lot off East Sooke Road. CRD family event.

Tuesday, November 4

Board of Directors' Meeting

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

Saturday, November 8

Esquimalt Lagoon

Roy Prior will lead this fall survey of Esquimalt Lagoon looking for wintering waterfowl, shorebirds and visiting raptors. Meet at Helmcken Park 'n' Ride at 8:30 a.m. or at the Bridge at Esquimalt Lagoon at 9:00 a.m. Call Roy at 385-1951 for details.

Saturday, November 8

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

What you should know about plant viruses. **Dr. Dick Stace-Smith** is a plant pathologist who worked for Agriculture Canada for 40 years in the Vancouver area. He is recognized as a world authority on the viruses of horticultural crops, including berries, vegetables and ornamentals. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Saturday, November 8

Mount Douglas Park Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. to noon. Call **Ken Rankin** at 477-8007 for information.

Saturday, November 8

View Royal Park Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Call **Andria Tetlow** at 658-8993 for information.

Sunday, November 9

Victoria Waterfront Tour

Ron Bates leads this fall tour of the Victoria Waterfront which has had many surprises this year. We start at the Breakwater at 8:00 a.m. and visit Clover Point, McMicking Point, Oak Bay Marina and Willows Beach. We finish up at Cattle Point for a longer stop to observe gulls, wintering waterfowl and anything interesting that flies or swims by. Call Ron at 386-1264 for details.

Sunday, November 9

Mysteries of the Midden

What is a midden and why the mystery? Find out with a CRD Parks naturalist on a visit to a midden. Meet at the Witty's Lagoon Information Centre off Metchosin Road at 1:00 p.m. A CRD family event.

Sunday, November 9

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See November 2 for details.

Sunday, November 9

Wildflower Lane Broom Bash

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Call **Linda Beare** at 658-8993 for information.

Monday, November 10

Highrock/Cairn Park Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. - 12 noon. Call **Ron Steel** at 386-7886 for information.

Tuesday, November 11

VNHS Natural History Presentation

David Stirling has recently returned from a tour of Greenland and Baffin Island and will give us the benefit of his *Arctic Moments*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Bring your coffee cup and a friend.

Tuesday, November 11

Cordwood to Livewood

Joint a guest naturalist for a walk into our local past. See how nature has reclaimed the tracks of the former Sidney Railway Company. Meet at the Information kiosk in the Hamsterley Beach parking off Brookleigh Road (Elk/Beaver Lake Park) at 1:00 p.m. A CRD Parks family event.

Thursday, November 13

Owl Prowl

Join a guest naturalist in a forest walk in search of these elusive night hunters. Pre-registration and a fee (\$5.00/person) is required. Thetis Lake Regional Park. A CRD Parks adult and kids over 12 event.

Saturday, November 15

Owl Prowl

Join **Darren Copley** prowling for owls around Victoria. Meet at 9:00 p.m. at a place to be announced. Warm jackets and a thermos of hot liquid are always a good idea. Please register with Darren at 479-6622 in order to keep the group to under 15 people.

Saturday, November 15

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

Your lawn in fall and winter. **Gordon Smith** is the Supervisor of Horticulture and Nurseries for the City of Victoria. He received his early training and experience in Halifax, N.S. and has participated in the construction of sports fields and industrial parks. At present, Gordon is responsible for a number of turf areas in the City of Victoria, including some of the city parks as well as the nurseries and greenhouses in the City. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Saturday, November 15

Forest Fantasy

Discover the fascinating natural world and learn how to share it with others. Pre-registration and a fee (\$6.00 per adult/child pair; \$4.00 per additional child). Francis/King Regional Park. A CRD family event.

Saturday, November 15

Thetis Lake Park Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Call **Elizabeth McMillan** at 479-7694 for information.

Sunday, November 16

Snow Geese of the Reifel Range and Fraser River Delta

Join **David Allinson** on an expedition to Reifel Refuge and Brunswick Point to see wintering waterfowl of the Fraser Delta. We'll see huge flocks of Snow Geese, a variety of shorebirds, and raptors. Car pooling should result in travel costs of around \$35 per person. Call David Allinson at 478-0493 after 7:00 p.m. for details.

Sunday, November 16

Christmas Hill Broom Bash

Now is the time to "Bash the Broom" on Christmas Hill, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.. The wildflowers are dormant and the soil is damp, making conditions ideal for pulling Scotch Broom. Willing volunteers are needed to help pull and remove the Broom which is crowding out the native vegetation on the hill. Give one or two hours, or the entire afternoon, and then be treated to hot chocolate and donuts back at the Nature House on Swan Lake. Meet in the parking lot at the Nature House and walk or car pool to the hill. Wear sturdy foot gear and bring gloves and clippers, if possible. For further information call the Swan Lake Nature Centre at 479-0122.

Sunday, November 16

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See November 2 for details.

Tuesday, November 18

Botany Night

Dr. David Blundon will talk on *Plants of a Subalpine meadow, Granby Provincial Park*. His slide show will be combined with a demonstration of herbarium specimens from the study area. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and the Native Plant Society of British Columbia.

Wednesday, November 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. Contact **Jeff Stone** at 370-2449 for further information.

Saturday, November 22

Cowichan Bay Birding

Meet **Alan MacLeod** at the Helmcken Park'n'Ride at 8:00 a.m. or Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 9:00 a.m. for a late fall expedition to Cowichan Bay for shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors. Bring the appropriate raingear, rubber boots and lunch plus a hot drink. If you are lucky, you may spot Short-eared Owls working the fields or Peregrine Falcons stooping on winter ducks. Call Alan at 382-3854 for details.

Saturday, November 22

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

Your greenhouse in fall and winter. **Dr. Dave Ballantyne** is a greenhouse grower and plant physiologist. He began working in commercial greenhouses 50 years ago, and has carried out research on greenhouse problems in B.C., Ontario, Washington and Maryland. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Saturday, November 22

Mount Douglas Park Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. - 12 noon. Call **Ken Rankin** at 477-8007 for information.

Sunday, November 23

Winter Birds at Witty's Lagoon

Join a naturalist for an engaging walk to look at the birds in Witty's Lagoon Regional Park. Meet at the Information Centre off Metchosin Road at 10:00 a.m. A CRD Parks family event.

Sunday, November 23

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See November 2 for details.

Monday, November 24

Marine Night

Multimedia Meets Seashore. Naturalist and filmmaker **Dave Denning** will talk about how multimedia can educate people about seashore life. Dave will show excerpts from his CD ROM. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, November 26

Birders' Night

Join **Bob and Mary Hooper** for a slide-illustrated talk on *Birding in Australia's Paradise*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Saturday, November 29

Nocturnal Nature

This program will look at the fascinating world of the night. Check out what goes on in the park after the people go home. Francis/King Regional Park, 7:00 p.m. A CRD Parks family event.

Saturday, November 29

Blue Heron Park (Sidney) Broom Bash

9:00 a.m. - 12 noon. Call **Pat Bastone** at 656-6594 for information.

Sunday, November 30

Pelagic Birding from the MV Coho

Join **Hank VanderPol** in search of pelagic species in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The warming effect of El Nino could bring some surprises. This is the last trip of the year and leaves the Black Ball ferry terminal at the Inner Harbour at 10:30 a.m. and returns from the other side at 2:00 p.m. Please meet at the ferry terminal *at 10:00 a.m.* Birds seen on previous trips include Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Northern Fulmars, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Cassin's Auklets, Ancient Murrelets, a Brown Pelican, and others. Call Hank at 658-3482 for further details.

Sunday, November 30

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See November 2 for details.

DECEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday, December 2

Board of Directors' Meeting

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

Sunday, December 7

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See November 2 for details.

Tuesday, December 9

VNHS Natural History Presentation

Andrew Bryant, with the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, will tell us about his research and attempts to protect the unique Vancouver Island Marmot. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Hot apple cider and goodies will be featured at this meeting! Bring your cup and a friend.

Sunday, December 14

Gull and Waterfowl Trip to Goldstream Park

Jim Fliczuk has been coming on birding trips and identifying rarities so well that he was convinced to lead a trip of his own. Join him and keen birders getting ready for the Christmas Count for a workshop on identifying winter gulls and waterfowl. Meet at Goldstream Park car park at 8:00 a.m. and bring adequate winter clothing and boots plus a lunch. Phone Jim at 477-2004 for details.

Sunday, December 14

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See November 2 for details.

Victoria Birding Online

Come and experience this new Internet site using Netscape Navigator 3.0 or Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0. Catch up on the latest Victoria birding reports right from home. The address is: <http://www.islandnet.com/~boom/birding/>

CRD Parks Natural History Events

CRD Parks offers a multitude of natural history hikes, lectures and other activities at Witty's Lagoon, Elk/Beaver Lake, Matheson Lake, Francis King, Thetis Lake and Island View Beach Parks. Brochures are available at these parks and many other locations, including the Swan Lake Nature Centre, recreation centres, libraries and CRD offices on Yates Street or telephone CRD Parks at 478-3344.

Request for Volunteers

Volunteer Naturalists are needed at Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary for school programs beginning in September. All that is required is an understanding of local natural history and an interest in working with children. Training is provided. Contact **Joan** at 479-0211.

Reminder!

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

Photographers!

Photographers, your best photos are needed. A feature wall in the new library at Juan de Fuca will showcase Garry Oak Meadow beauties. Especially sought is a photo of the Garry Oak Butterfly, Propertius Duskywing. Nan Archibold has started the display collection by donating a set of four photographs depicting the acorn to seedling for a Garry Oak. For further information and donations, call **Joyce** at 479-8944.

For Sale

National Geographic's *Field Guide to Birds*; the *Naturalist Guide to the Victoria Region*; *Birds of Victoria*; the Victoria Area Bird Checklist; and, the Victoria Natural History Society's Window Decals are for sale, contact **Lyndis Davis** at 744-5750.

Saturday, December 20

Victoria Christmas Bird Count

Join your respective leaders to help maintain Victoria's record as the best CBC location in Canada! Our current Canadian record is 152 species, so let's make a real effort to do better this year! See article on page 10 or call **David Pearce** at 658-0295 to be assigned an area.

Thursday, December 25

Christmas Flyby

Watch for stocky, red and white "bird" over Victoria. Merry Christmas all!!

BULLETIN BOARD

Back Issues of the Victoria Naturalist

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

New Children's Naturalist Magazine

IN SYNC (the Sunflower Young Naturalists Club), is a magazine targeted at younger children (6-10 yrs). Its aim is to interest and educate children in the natural world we all share. The format is a cheerful one, including: crosswords, an art gallery, front cover contests, poems, puzzles, a creature feature, a science experiment, and articles/stories relating to the environment (both local and global) Subscription is \$20 annually (12 issues). For further information, call **Carol Ann Shaw** at (250) 743-9375, or write to: IN SYNC, c/o Wildwood Creative Services, 2951 Coleman Road RR #1, Cobble Hill, BC V0R 1L0. E-mail: wildwood@islandnet.com.

More Birding OnLine

Bruce Bennett from Whitehorse, Yukon sent in the address for the Yukon Bird Club's home page, which is: "<http://www.yukonweb.wis.net/community/ybc/>".

Announcement!

BEN — Botanical Electronic News — is an electronic botanical newsletter distributed on Internet by **Adolf Ceska** in about bi-weekly intervals. To subscribe to BEN send a message to: [<aceska@freenet.victoria.bc.ca>](mailto:aceska@freenet.victoria.bc.ca).

Garry Oak Meadow Society Membership

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

Gorge Waterway Action Society

The Gorge Waterway Action Society is a non-profit society dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the Gorge Waterway. Help us to ensure the water quality and wildlife habitat of the Gorge is preserved and that the Waterway is developed as a scenic area for the use and pleasure of everyone. New members are welcome. For membership information, please contact **Norman Clark** at 383-7190.

 **The Victoria
NATURALIST**

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Publications Mail Reg. 6428

Claudia and Darren Copley
657 Beaver Lake Road
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