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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, Glen Moores, at 655-3772, 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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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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OUR COVER


This month's cover is a photo of a pair of young Northern Saw-whet Owls. The picture was taken by Ken Lozoway, a professional biologist with the B.C. Ministry of Environment. Ken also has a freelance photographic business, *Kodiak Photographic* and he will be presenting some of his slides in his presentation *Predators on Wing*, during Birders' Night on February 25.

Our New Editor

Glen Moores will be your new editor of *The Victoria Naturalist*. Glen has been a member of the Victoria Natural History Society for the last four years, with a general interest in nature and a special interest in birds. Glen was the treasurer for the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Long Point Bird Observatory before moving to Salt Spring Island.

Glen writes "The challenge for *The Victoria Naturalist* will be to continue the excellent publication including all the elements that our club represents. I will be looking forward to receiving articles and letters from all the members."



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Thank You

By Warren Drinnan

It is with considerable reluctance that I am announcing that this will be my last issue as editor of *The Victoria Naturalist*. New commitments, including a wonderful one-year old son, make it difficult for me to keep up with the demands of the magazine. And after nearly eight years and 46 issues, perhaps it is time to pass along the "quill" to new blood. Glen Moores has accepted this role (see Cover).

The business of producing *The Victoria Naturalist* has changed over the years. (Did you know that at nearly 55 years, *The Victoria Naturalist* is one of the longest continuously-running publications in the country?) We used to have a pool of typists, who would put onto a diskette the submissions to the magazine; these days most material comes via a computer disk or by E-mail. Gone are the days of driving across town to pick up or deliver computer disks, to have PMTs of photographs and artwork sized and produced, or to pick up proofs of the magazine. Now, with scanners, E-mail and fax machines, the editor can do most of his (or her) work without leaving the work space.

Forty-six issues means 46 covers. Sometimes it was easy to select the cover material, especially when our feature article had interesting photographs. Some issues are devoted to specific events, such as the Brant Festival in Parksville/Qualicum Beach (our March/April issue) or the Goldstream Park-VNHS Art Show, which is held every second year in September. Occasionally, we feature special events, such as the cover of our last issue, which highlighted the Habitat Acquisition Trust of the VNHS. Whenever possible, we have promoted works by local artists, featuring a wide range of media, including bird carvings, wildlife and underwater photography, and numerous painting styles ranging from pen and ink to watercolours to airbrush and gouache techniques.

It hasn't always been easy to find a cover. Once, I swiped a framed painting from Andrew Harcombe's living-room wall, a drawing of a Common Loon by his daughter Jessica. Another issue saw my wife, at the last minute, making a fish print of a Copper Rockfish that I had caught out at Bamfield. My favourite cover? That's easy. In our July/August, 1993 issue we had an article about the events that took place on Camas Day, the annual event held each

April at Beacon Hill Park. The cover was a picture of ten-month old Camas Clowater-Eriksson, in a field of Camas. She would now be nearly six years old — I hope she continues to be an enthusiastic naturalist.

I have enjoyed the role as editor and working with the many people who have been involved with the magazine over the years. I am indebted to Robert Allington, who was the first desktop publisher I worked with. Robert has been (and continues to be) editor of several magazines and books and his comments and advice during the early issues were invaluable. Our next editor will be fortunate to be working with Frances Hunter, our current desktop publisher.

She is a warm and knowledgeable person and I will miss working with her.

Many people contribute to the magazine in various ways. I would first like to thank the Board of Directors, past and present, who have supported *The Victoria Naturalist* and my role as editor. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the support of Dannie Carsen, who was the Publications Director when I started, past Presidents Mike Mcgreneere, Wally Macgregor and David Allinson, and our current President, Tom Gillespie.

I also appreciate the support of our Assistant Editors, including Linton Burger, who initiated our regular column, *The Pacific Octopus*, and Pamela Thuringer, our current contributor. For several issues, Dalia Hull picked up the load when I was away, and assisted with many other issues, doing a marvellous job throughout. I am grateful for all of her efforts. All of these people, and many others, contributed to making *The Victoria Naturalist* the respected magazine that it is.

However, most of the credit for the magazine must go to the contributors of the material. I have enjoyed all of it, from the scientific reports on bird surveys, such as those by Michael Carson and David Pearce, to the wonderful children's stories by Peggy Price, and the reports of birding and natural history trips, both near and afar (the record goes to Barbara Begg with her article on birding in China). Finally, thanks to you, the VNHS membership and readers, for your comments and support over the years — it made the job easier and worthwhile.



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OMEGA TRAVEL



Birding in Costa Rica

By Geoff Bate

"I wonder how they will find us?" I asked myself, as we disembarked from our flight in San Jose. Included in our travel package was ground transportation from the airport to Hotel Torremolinos. It was not necessary to be concerned. After we cleared customs and entered into the main airport area, we were met by smiling young tourist guides holding up crudely drawn cardboard signs with the names of incoming passengers. We soon found our guide and driver and, with other passengers, were whisked away to downtown San Jose.

This experience was just the first of many equally pleasant events that my wife, Lonny, and I encountered during our three week holiday in Costa Rica. During our vacation we saw most of this beautiful country on one of best birding trips ever.

Costa Rica (the Rich Coast) is bordered on the north by Nicaragua and on the southwest by Panama. It is 51,060 sq. km in size, slightly smaller than Vancouver Island at 31,284 sq. km. Costa Rica is extremely mountainous. As it is fairly close to the equator, temperatures are determined more by elevation than by seasons. Because Costa Rica is a narrow bridge between North and South America, and has such a wide variety of ecosystems, it is said to be the only country in the world to have so many bird species and habitats accessible within such a small area. The bird book, *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica* (F. Gary Stiles and Alexander F. Skutch) states that there are more than 830 species records, more than in all of North America north of Mexico.

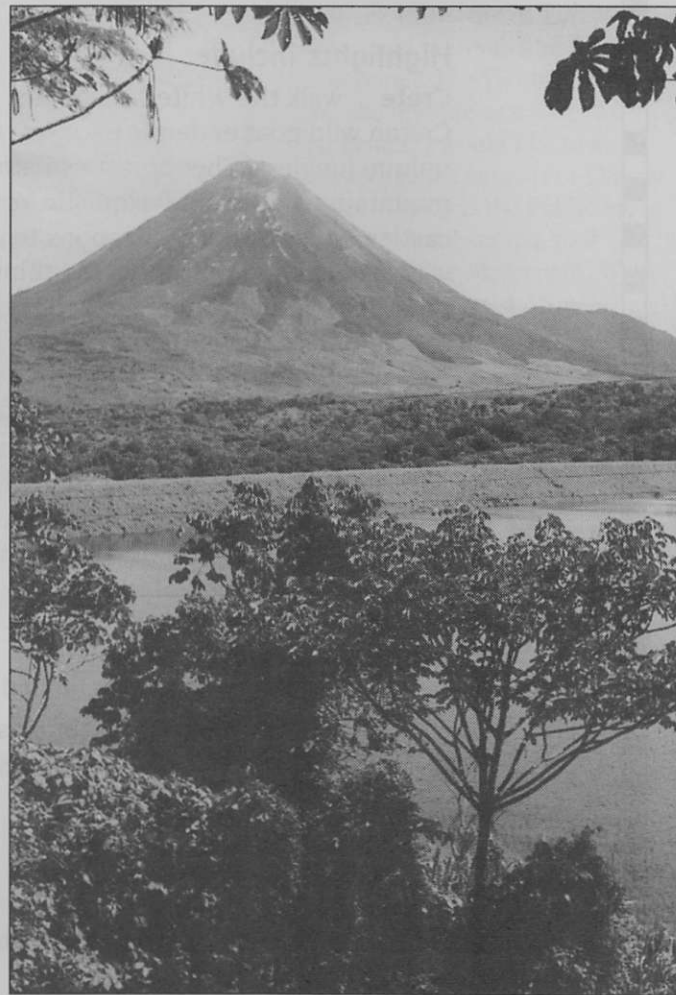
There are other factors which attract tourists. Costa Rica has the oldest democracy in Central America (1889) and there is no military. Political unrest, serious crime and corruption are almost non-existent. Petty theft is apparently a risk in specific parts of San Jose but we avoided those areas. We felt completely safe and encountered no problems during our entire stay. At night, we chose a hotel where there was a good chance that our rented car would not be broken into and this never occurred. Without exception, the people that we met in Costa Rica (they refer to themselves as Ticos) were friendly, courteous and helpful. We found the Tico food, while nutritious and quite palatable, to be somewhat bland. The exception was the Caribbean Coast where the influence of the Afro-Caribbean residents and their spices made dining a real event. It was not necessary to eat Tico food. All restaurants offered many food choices.

There is only one down side to visiting Costa Rica, the road conditions. Even the main, paved roads are in almost unimaginable condition. There are many reasons for this — a lack of gravel for ballast and drainage; earthquakes; clay soils; excessive amounts of rain; and budget restraints. We found that washouts, land slides and huge bumps were not marked as they would be here in B.C. Therefore we found it

appropriate to travel only in daylight hours. While our rented car served us well, we were concerned with the potential for scraping the bottom of the vehicle and, next time, we will rent a four-wheel drive, if only to have the advantage of increased clearance.

Our trip included the following:

- through the Central Valley and north on the Pan American Highway, then east to Monte Verde;
- north and west to Liberia (the Guanacaste), where we visited two National Parks, Santa Rosa and Rincon de la Vieja and the beaches of the Gulf of Papagayo;
- south and east to La Fortuna, Lake Arenal and the Arenal volcano, Los Chiles and the Cano Negro River. The Arenal volcano, which is constantly erupting, is glorious as well as awesome;
- east to Limon and south to the Caribbean Coast and the small village of Cahuita and Cahuita National Park;



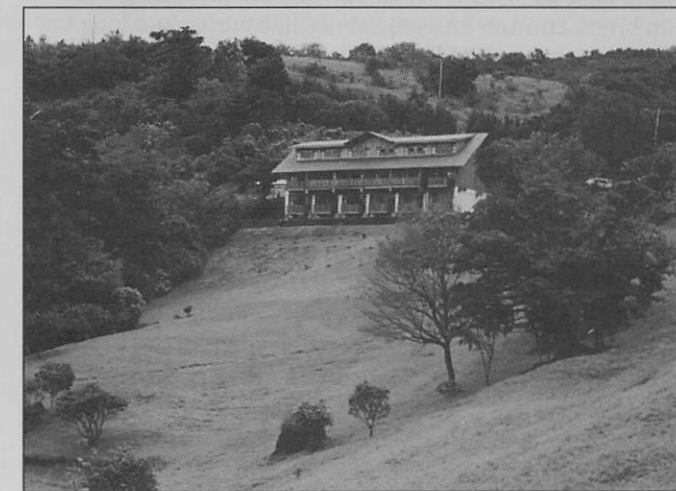
Arenal Volcano (Photos: Geoff Bate)

- back to San Jose through Cartago with a side trip to Monumento Nacional Guayabo (the most important archaeological site in Costa Rica);
- a bus and river boat tour of the north Caribbean Coast and the Tortuguero;
- San Gerardo de Dota, 89 km south of San Jose, exiting the highway a few kilometres before the 3,476 m (11,400 ft.) summit of Cerro de la Murte.

A must see to anyone visiting Costa Rica is a trip to view the Arenal volcano eruptions. However, in this article I will focus on three areas which will be of special interest to birders, Monte Verde, Cahuita and San Gerardo de Dota.

Monte Verde (Green Mountain)

The Monte Verde Biological Reserve is located about 165 km from San Jose. The last 38 km section is a dirt road that extends north-east from the Pan American Highway. It took us three hours to travel this road and worth every bumpy mile. The Reserve is perched high on a mountain ridge. Moist, warm air sweeping in off the Pacific is forced upward, where it cools, forming clouds. This Cloud Forest provides a constant level of moisture supporting an incredible diversity of life forms; every square inch of space has



Top: Monte Verde Cloud Forest
Below: Belmer Hotel, Monte Verde

some sort of plant growing on it. It is believed that over 2000 species of plants, 320 species of birds and 100 species of mammals exist in this relatively tiny area.

We spent 2-1/2 days in the Monte Verde area, two on our own, visiting various points of interest both in and outside of the reserve. As well, we visited the Hummingbird Gallery, the Monte Verde Butterfly Garden and the Ecological Farm of Monte Verde. On the second day we hired Kokai Porras, a local guide that we met at the reserve headquarters. A total of 57 birds were catalogued during our stay, only three of which we had seen previously. But those three were as big a thrill as any of the new species. Imagine seeing a Common Yellowthroat, a Wilson's Warbler or a Golden-crowned Warbler — birds that may have started their southern migration right here in B.C. Kokai (pronounced Cokkee) provided us with invaluable sightings and information not only of birds but also of Howler Monkeys and other mammals.

Two of the most striking birds were the Keel-billed and Chestnut-mandibled Toucan. Seen out in the open, the brilliant black feathers on their back and sides are in sharp contrast to their yellow throat and breasts, as well as their large, multi-coloured beaks. However, when perched high in the trees in the dark forests, which is their most common habitat, they become almost invisible. Even their brilliant yellow plumage can be mistaken for the yellow leaves which constantly fall to the forest floor.

Another highlight of our trip to Monte Verde was the incredible variety of hummingbirds, some of which are referred to as brilliants, emeralds, mountain gems, sabre wings, star-throats, violet-ears or woodstars. We saw a total of 19 different species of hummingbirds during our trip, 10 at Monte Verde.

We were a little disappointed that we were not able to see the Resplendent Quetzal. This was because the fruit they prefer is not ripe until later in the year and the birds had migrated to other areas.

Cahuita

On the Caribbean shore of Costa Rica is the city of Limon, a major port that provides loading facilities for ships that pick up bananas bound for the Eastern United States. About 42 km from Limon is the small town of Cahuita, gateway to Cahuita National Park. The village traces its roots to the English speaking Afro-Caribbean fishermen and railroad constructors, who settled here after the railroad from Limon to San Jose was completed.

We chose to stay at Aviaros del Caribe, a birders paradise located near the ocean on the Estrella River delta, about 5 km from Cahuita. This is the home of Luis and Judy Arroyo, who not only provide bed and breakfast facilities but also sanctuary for many birds, reptiles and mammals. Lifetime homes are provided for those unable to fend for themselves in the wild. Aviaros also provides accommodation for faculty and students of the University of Costa Rica as they conduct training and field research. More than 250 species of birds have been spotted on their property.

The major attraction at Aviaros is Buttercup, a female Three-toed Sloth who was rescued as a baby when her

mother was run over by a car. Living in a wicker chair suspended from the ceiling of the second floor veranda, she enjoys the company of all guests as they come and go. Buttercup is now in her late 'teens (in human terms). One night we heard the most sorrowful crying and discovered, in the morning, that the sounds came from Buttercup, apparently lamenting the fact that she did not have a boy friend. "Not that she couldn't have", said Judy, as she drew our attention to three male sloths that, after sunrise, were still visible in surrounding trees. Plans were being made for Buttercup to become the first sloth to give birth in captivity.

Aviarios also provided us with a river boat trip. Our guide Kallie, a native of the area and a skilled boatman, took us on an early morning trip down the Estrella River to the sea. There was a serious earthquake in the area in 1991 and consequently the river bed has been lifted over a metre. We found it interesting to compare the changes in habitat on the old and new river beds. We saw 22 new species of birds that morning, including Yellow-crowned, Boat-billed, Blue and Green-backed Herons as well as Spotted and White-rumped Sandpipers. A Scarlet-rumped Tanager was another first. Then, from across the river, came a small, mixed flock of Barn and Rough-winged Swallows, no doubt just arriving from Beaver Lake!

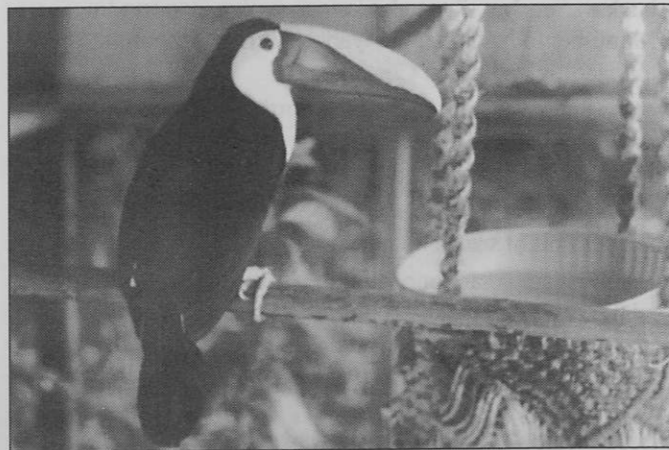
The next day we followed the trail that extends from Cahuita seven km into the Cahuita National Park. The sand is brilliant white, the ocean various shades of green and blue. We sat for over an hour observing Howler Monkeys. Birds of interest included a Black-cheeked Woodpecker, Orchard Oriole, Black-cowled Oriole, Striped-breasted Wren, Brown Pelican, Little Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher.

It was during one of many conversations with Luis that we mentioned that we regretted that we were unable to see a Resplendent Quetzal when we were in Monte Verde. He told us that the only place to find them year round was at San Gerardo de Dota.

San Gerardo de Dota

We had completed our bus and river boat tour of the Tortuguero and found we had three days left prior to our departure for Victoria. Still frustrated at not having seen a quetzal, we phoned the Chacon family at Cabinas Chacon at San Gerardo de Dota. It was determined that it would be most appropriate for us to be picked up at our hotel in San Jose by a member of the Chacon family for the journey to their resort and motel.

San Gerardo de Dota is located nine km off and below the Pan American highway at km 80, at an elevation of 2200 m (7200 ft.). The motel is part of a farm complex that was established by the Chacon family in 1957. The family soon realized that their method of agricultural development was destroying the environment and turned to other endeavours to earn a living. Presently their farm operation consists of an apple orchard and a commercial trout farm, supplemented by their tourist business consisting of cabins and a restaurant. The Quetzal Education Research Centre is also located



Top: Chestnut-mandibled Toucan
Below: Bed and Breakfast near Cahuita

on the Chacon property. By encouraging the growth of different species of the laurel tree (they refer to these as aguacatillos), and related species, they found that quetzals remain in the area year round. We were not at the farm for an hour when we saw our first quetzal in a tree no more than 15 m from our cabin.

To many people the male quetzal is the most beautiful bird in the New World. Their feathers are metallic green with bright crimson breasts, helmet-like crests, and long tail streamers with violet-blue highlights. The females are just as colourful except that they lack the long tail feathers. We were able to see quetzals every day that we were on the farm. Each member of the family, while carrying out their work, watches for the quetzal and report their location to the tourists.

Similar to Monte Verde (although higher), the mixed forests of this area, including the farmland, were teeming with birds. We identified 29 species the afternoon that we arrived. Birds of special interest included a Collard Trogon, an Emerald Toucanet, five species of warblers and two hummingbirds not previously seen. Then, to bring us back to reality, we spotted a Band-tailed Pigeon, similar to those that have come to our feeders at home. A bird, common in this area and fascinating to watch, was the Slaty Flowerpiercer. These tiny (4") grey (male) and sooty brown (female) birds flitted throughout the Chacon's flower beds, piercing the

corolla of long tubular flowers and extracting the nectar. They preferred flowers adjacent to bushes and other cover as they were under attack by the Green Violet-ear and the Magenta-throated Woodstar hummingbirds.

The following morning, by prior arrangement, Mario Chacon, took us on a half day birding tour. We travelled by four-wheel drive (ATV) up to the 8,500 ft. level, then followed trails through the cloud forest. Even though it rained incessantly that day, we recorded 39 birds. Included in this list was a Peregrine Falcon, another bird common to the Greater Victoria area.

We were not the only tourists at the Chacon's during our stay. There was a group of birders from the Los Angeles, California area who were on an extensive birding trip throughout the country. We found them to be extremely knowledgeable but had picked up a rather curious habit which we had noticed previously. Perhaps this is because of the difficulty of identifying birds when Spanish and English is spoken simultaneously with a wide variety of accents. People identify the birds by page and plate numbers from Costa Rica's best bird book, *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*. Imagine referring to a Spangled-cheeked Tanager as a "46-12"!

Another group of visitors was a party from Germany, comfortably travelling in several new four-wheel drive vehicles, in air-conditioned splendour, and led by a professional guide. Most of them were wondering what they were doing in this god-forsaken, steep, mucky, cold, rainy apple farm when they could, in a couple of hours, be enjoying themselves on the white sandy resort beaches of Golfito. In the morning, before returning to San Jose, I asked one of the group if he was interested in joining us for a short but steep walk to the day's quetzal spotting area. He agreed, more out of politeness and boredom than any genuine interest. There were three quetzals in the laurel trees, two males and a female. He took one look and ran to alert his friends, huffing and puffing in his haste, forgetting the lack of oxygen at this high elevation. In the next few minutes the Chacon's were helping us store our luggage into their vehicle to take us up to the Pan American Highway. From there we would catch a bus and return to San Jose. We looked back and saw the entire party from Germany admiring the quetzals. Now, they knew why they were brought to San Gerardo de Dota.

The next day we were on our way home, filled with happy thoughts of this beautiful, mountainous equatorial country, their friendly and obliging people and, above all, the birds.

Will we return? You bet! Not only to return to many places seen on this trip but also visit the southwest, to Carara National Park, the home of the rare Scarlet Macaw.

Tips

When to go

The peak tourist season is January through March, the so called dry season. It would be necessary to book vehicles and accommodation well in advance during this time. We intentionally chose the second to last week in November to avoid the crowds.

Where to stay

Other than booking one night in San Jose for both our arrival and departure we encountered no problems with excellent to good, relatively inexpensive accommodation. Because we travelled in November room rates were from \$10 to \$20 (US) less than those quoted in peak season.

Research

When travelling we prefer a variety of guide books. On this trip we took four books - Fodor's, Frommer's, the Lonely Planet and The Rough Guide. We find it is important to have several volumes in order to have all necessary of information.

Currency

We purchased traveller's checks in US funds prior to departure and were glad we did. Those Canadians that had only Canadian funds found the conversion to the Costa Rican colon prohibitive. Most businesses are reluctant to take Canadian funds as they are not familiar with its value.

Travel

There are bus services throughout all of Cost Rica. However, I would recommend that you rent a vehicle for ease and convenience. Rental rates are higher than here in B.C. but not excessive. You will be required to post a \$1000 US (an imprint of your credit card) in addition to vehicle insurance. This is required to cover dents and scrapes and potential damage to the trunk lid and lock or the undercarriage. We made sure that any damage to the car done previously was recorded. As our vehicle was not damaged we encountered no problems when we returned the car. This process did motivate us to drive with extra care.

What to Wear

We did not feel out of place in casual slacks, shirts and jackets wherever we travelled. A stout pair of running shoes or hiking boots are a must. We wish we had taken our gum boots and an inexpensive hooded poncho on those days when it was warm but raining heavily. However, on some days, on locations high in the mountains, a sweater under our Gortex was necessary. On both coasts the temperature will be 90 degrees Fahrenheit with 90 percent humidity, therefore light cotton clothing is a must.

GEOFF BATE lives in Saanichton with his wife Lonny. They have travelled extensively and have birded in western United States and Canada, including Alaska, B.C., Alberta and the Yukon, Kenya, Tanzania, Australia, Great Britain, Western Europe, Greece, Turkey, Egypt and Israel. Their life list consists of over 550 species. Anyone planning on a vacation in Costa Rica and need additional information can contact Lonny & Geoff at 250-652-5360.

Hat Tricks

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

By Jeff Stone

Yes or no? Will we be able to proceed with the purchase of Alum Creek? As I am writing this HAT Tricks in late November, we have about \$365,000 towards our goal of \$630,000 plus expenses. However, the Directors of HAT are very optimistic that a couple of major financial partners will be announcing their contributions in December and early January and that a flurry (remember the storm last year!) of pledges from individuals will put us over the top.

If you have not yet pledged your support, you can do so on the pledge form inserted in your issue of the *Victoria Naturalist*. Your form can be mailed (assuming a resolution of the postal strike) faxed (388-9236), E-mailed (field_naturalist@pacificcoast.com) or dropped off at the Field Naturalist at the corner of Blanshard and View. We will also record your pledges over the phone (995-2428). On Thursday, January 16, we will have our final tally and after tossing our hats in the air, we will be calling in pledges.

At this time HAT would like to acknowledge all those individuals who have so far contributed or helped raise \$100,000+. We are also grateful to the following organizations for their substantial contributions:

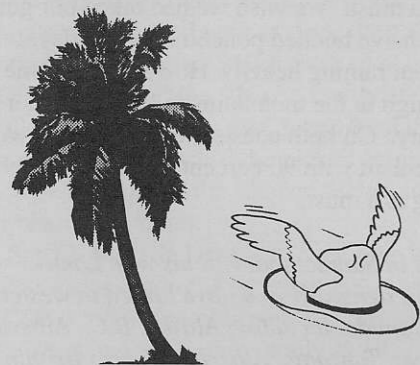
Capital Regional District:	\$150,000
SEAPARC	\$ 50,000
Mountain Equipment Coop	\$ 50,000
Canada Trust Friends of the Environment:	\$ 5,000
Sooke Harbour House:	\$ 10,000
(in kind, for fund raising).	

If there is no pledge form with your *Victoria Naturalist* please contact the HAT office at 995-2428 or pick up a form at the Field Naturalist.

Finally, we hope that this HAT Tricks is the last time that we have to mention fund raising for the Alum Creek property except to say a grateful thank you.

Ten reasons to support the purchase of Ayum Creek

10. Donations will receive a tax receipt.
9. To help with the purchase of a new CRD Park at a bargain price of \$120,000 below appraised value.
8. To support your VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation as a local land trust.
7. To ensure a Sea in the Sea-to-Sea Greenbelt. This is your chance to demonstrate your financial support for this natural legacy that is becoming a reality with the transfer of the Water District non-catchment lands to parkland.
6. To do your deed of the day for the earth.
5. To provide a natural area park that can be used for education by the residents of the CRD and particularly the children of Sooke.
4. To share with your children's children and future generations a piece of the natural beauty of Greater Victoria that we are privileged to still have.
3. To prevent loss of riparian habitat due to housing development.
2. To protect the spawning and rearing grounds of chum, coho and steelhead.
1. Because someone like you cares a whole awful lot.



EXPLORE HAWAII

MARCH 2 - 15, 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. Visiting the four main islands, his 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.

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

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

Parks and Conservation

By Michael Carson

This is the first of what will hopefully be a regular column on activities of the Parks and Conservation Committee of the Victoria Natural History Society. The Committee concerns itself primarily with the protection of threatened local habitat that is considered important for maintaining the flora and fauna of the Capital Regional District.

Our activities fall into three main categories: one is inventory and assessment of areas considered ecologically important; another is ongoing monitoring and evaluation of land use issues in the local area; the last is membership in various stakeholder groups.

In terms of inventory work, the Committee has undertaken bird surveys of areas such as Martindale Flats, Blenkinsop Lake, Rithet's Bog and Viaduct Flats. Currently, it is in the process of initiating a four-year inventory of sensitive areas through funding from the Provincial Capital Commission.

The Committee's role as "watchdog" on developments threatening important local habitat grows as development pressures on greenspace grow. We have continually lobbied Saanich Council regarding the importance of Lochside Trail and Blenkinsop Lake and have strived to provide Council with alternatives to the proposed bridge crossing. We visit sites whenever possible, and when they seem important, assess the impacts of rezoning applications. Along with these groups, we have taken the lead in trying to secure the composting pad on Willis Point Road as a central access site for parkland in the North Highlands area, once composting within the CRD becomes decentralized. Representation has been made to the CRD Environment Committee to have Victoria Harbour, Cadboro Bay and similar enclosed marine areas, designated sewage-free areas in terms of discharges from boats. We have petitioned the Environment Minister to increase deposits on beverage containers. The work is endless. Sometimes our views are accepted and implemented; at other times they are not. But the role of "watchdog" is vital to protection of local habitat.

Membership in stakeholder groups in the CRD can be very productive and rewarding. We have members representing the Society on the BC Parks Gowlland-Tod Trails Advisory Group, the CRD Parks Hartland Surplus Lands Trails Advisory Group, the Viaduct Flats Management Steering Committee, the Rithet's Bog Conservation Committee, the Regional Growth Strategy Public Advisory Committee and the Saanich Environmental Advisory Committee. We also made representations to the CRD Parks in the development of the Green/Blue Spaces Strategy and have a member on the new Regional Parks Plan Advisory Group.

Subsequent columns will deal with some these issues in greater depth. The Committee, with about ten active

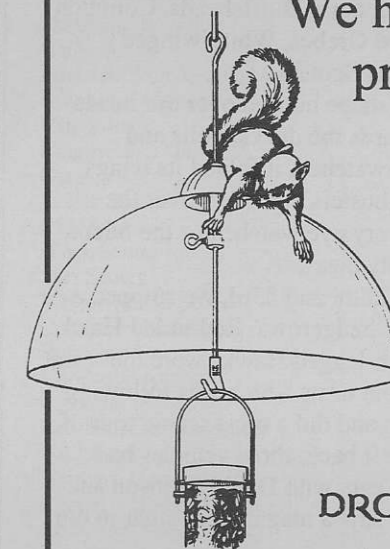
The Committee's role as "watchdog" on developments threatening important local habitat grows as development pressures on greenspace grow.

members, meets regularly on the third Wednesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., at the Swan Lake Nature Centre. Three or four times a year we have guest speakers at meetings. Prospective new members are always welcome. This is especially true of the Saanich Peninsula area: many farmland areas will experience increased development pressures in the next five to ten years.

There is a lot of work out there in the conservation field. It is often time-consuming (but more members help reduce the load), sometimes frustrating, but can be very rewarding. The task is helped by collaboration with like-minded groups such as the Garry Oak Meadows Preservation Society. A website is currently under development: the address will be posted in the next issue.

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Fifth Annual Snow Goose Field Trip to Reifel Waterfowl Refuge

By David Allinson and Dannie Carsen

Dannie: On Sunday, November 16, 1997 seven of us clambered into Louise's van and drove from Royal Oak to the ferry. There were seven vehicles and 26 people in the group. Nothing like a waning moon, warm red morning clouds, and good company to provide a backdrop to one of my favourite trips of the year, David Allinson's quest to Reifel for owls and snow geese.

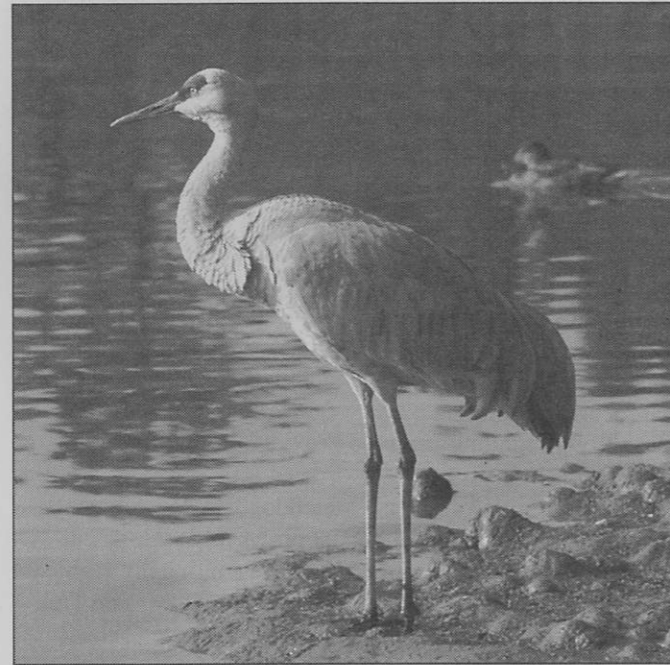
While a large group gorged in the breakfast buffet, the rest of us roamed the decks looking for birds. It was a warm, cloudy day with some bright spots, which was pretty good for November. In Active Pass, a group of keeners saw Bonaparte's Gulls and got close looks at small groups of Ancient Murrelets flying in little lines and floating in the water. There were also good numbers of Pacific Loons observed.

Once we arrived at Tsawassen terminal, the race was on. We drove down the gravel road that parallels the spit to search for the Willet that had been reported there. But first we had to identify a juvenile Peregrine Falcon perching in a tree and look for a Downy Woodpecker calling. Once we arrived at the log-strewn beach where the row of birders were, a bright pair of eyes had spotted the Willet. In winter it was a large, gray, hunched shorebird with a beak longer than its head and a slight eyestripe. As we looked out over a huge condominium project, we saw Common Goldeneye, Buffleheads, Common Loon, Northern Pintail, Horned Grebes, White-winged Scoters, Black Scoters, and Surf Scoters.

Peregrine! A dark falcon shape hurtled over our heads and headed like a missile towards the ducks, gulls and shorebirds on the beach. As I watched, it folded its wings slightly and came in like gangbusters eight feet over the driftwood. Birds froze and every eye watched as the falcon swooped up and winged rapidly away.

As we drove along 52nd, 28th, and 53rd, we stopped a few times to quickly scope the hedgerows. Red-tailed Hawk, Brewer's Blackbird and Rough-legged Hawks were the result. We followed the vehicle in front of us which was following another vehicle without a map and did a most scenic tour of Ladner. By the time we made it back, three vehicles had parted company with the lead cars with David Allinson and Bryan Gates. Of course, they saw a magnificent sight in our absence.

David: We pulled over to the side of River Road in Ladner at the "Mourning Dove spot" where we typically see a handful of doves. This year it soon became obvious that there were higher numbers of Mourning Doves than usual — we tallied at least 25 roosting in the line of cottonwoods along the Fraser River. Shortly after driving over the bridge from Ladner to Westham Island, we stopped to survey the farm fields. We soon heard and saw overhead large, mixed flocks



Sandhill Crane at Reifel. Photo: Warren Lee

of Dunlin, Killdeer, and Black-bellied Plover. As we observed one flock of Dunlin over the fields, a dark Merlin swooped into the wheeling shorebirds and struck and killed one of them. While we watched the Merlin feasting on the ground, an aggressive immature Northern Harrier arrived and scared off the Merlin, stealing the kill in turn.

Dannie: Finally, we arrived at Reifel. As we pulled into the parking lot, my favourite Sandhill Crane, the only one I've been able to get close to, walked by to welcome us. We decided to bird the roadside before the rest of the crew arrived. First, we looked up and spotted a Merlin only 30 feet up a tree. Near the parking lot, a crow mobbed a Short-eared Owl. The owl and crow circled higher and higher in a little dance with the crow bobbing and weaving and the steady wingbeats of the owl showing the distinct shoulder patches, flat face, and uneven flight that makes it so fun to watch. We kept company with kinglets, chickadees, bushtits and finches for the rest of our walk. When we returned, David Allinson pulled up and herded us towards the entry area. It was crowded and strange people with binoculars and scopes were wandering around.

Just inside, we watched a Black-crowned Night-heron with its head tucked underneath a wing. Later on, we saw another heron, but the highlight for most people was getting a good look at an American Bittern from the viewing tower. The bittern was very well camouflaged in the grasses of the

marsh. There were also 50 or 60 Long-billed Dowitchers feeding near the tower, a bird we rarely see in Victoria in winter.

This trip, we almost completed the possible grebe list (except for Clark's Grebe). An Eared Grebe was seen at close range on one of the ponds on the far side of the tower. We all managed a really good look at this bird and observed the squarish ear patch. A very obliging bird, it allowed itself to be viewed from about 75 feet.

David: This was the first year that we did not spy at least one roosting Northern Saw-whet Owl, but few had been seen this season according to Reifel staff. In spite of the lack of owls at Reifel, we were buoyed by the excellent weather conditions and the spectacle of large numbers of Snow Geese, the obliging American Bittern and Black-crowned Night-Herons, the Eared Grebe, and mixed waterfowl flocks. As we finished our loop around the Reifel Refuge, we stopped for lunch at the picnic area near the now very crowded parking lot. The refuge has become a popular destination in the fall not only for birders, but also for families and curious Vancouverites. Our day was only half-done and we still had time to tour nearby Delta birding hotspots — namely Brunswick Point and Roberts Bank.

Dannie: The long, flat dike trail at Brunswick Point provides views of excellent foreshore habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors. David Allinson's efforts to find a roosting Barn Owl or Great Horned Owl in the trees and shrubs near the start of the trail were unsuccessful, but we did enjoy good looks of a perched Northern Shrike. David had brought along a tape player to coax a call from a Virginia Rail. Brunswick Point has a remarkable winter density of Virginia Rails. Even before the tape started we heard a familiar "ka-dik". While the tape was playing, we heard at least 10 rails calling. Those birders with patience waited for a few minutes and were rewarded by the sight of a Virginia Rail. The rail's head popped up through the reeds, observed the group of birders, and left in disgust.

David: The group agreed to try and find the reported wintering Prairie Falcon at the south end of the dike trail. While we were unable to find the falcon, we were rewarded with sightings of more Short-eared Owls coursing over the foreshore with their rival Northern Harriers. As we rounded the corner, thousands of Snow Geese and Dunlin rose up in unison as a Bald Eagle flew nearby — a wonderful feast for our eyes and ears. With the receding tide, incredible numbers of Dunlin (perhaps as many as 60,000) were feeding on the mudflats before us. Wheeling about in grey clouds, the Dunlin flocks turned and twisted in wide ribbons before they settled back down.

By the time we made it to the Roberts Bank superport, the light was fading fast. However, very large numbers of Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Mallard, and Green-winged Teal blanketed the bay before us in loosely organized rafts of birds. A few of us continued to bird from the Tsawassen jetty as we waited for the ferry. We added Brant, Oldsquaw, and Western Gull to our daylist.

The final trip list tally was a record 103 species —

exceeding the 1995 record by three species. Considering that we missed such usual species such as Tundra Swan, American Kestrel, four owls, American Pipit, and Western Meadow-lark, our total could have been even higher! Our thanks to the combined efforts of our participants, especially David Pearce, Bryan Gates, Aziza Cooper, Jim Fliczuk, Gabriel Davies, and Devon Anderson. David Allinson enjoys sharing the birding wonders of the Reifel Refuge and other Delta hotspots in any weather, but this year's El Nino no doubt gave us our best trip conditions to date. Mark your calendars for next November if you haven't joined us yet. Every trip to Reifel Refuge holds a few surprises and special moments.

List of Birds Seen November 16, 1997

Pacific Loon	Spotted Sandpiper
Common Loon	Black Turnstone
Pied-billed Grebe	Dunlin (60,000)
Red-necked Grebe	Long-billed Dowitcher (60)
Eared Grebe (1)	Common Snipe
Western Grebe	Willet (new addition to trip list)
Double-crested Cormorant	Bonaparte's Gull
Brandt's Cormorant	Mew Gull
Pelagic Cormorant	Ring-billed Gull
American Bittern (1)	California Gull
Great Blue Heron	Thayer's Gull
Black-crowned Night Heron (2)	Western Gull
Trumpeter Swan (80)	Glaucous-winged Gull
Snow Goose (~ 10,000)	Common Murre
Brant (4)	Pigeon Guillemot
Canada Goose	Marbled Murrelet
Wood Duck (2)	Ancient Murrelet
Green-winged Teal	Rhinoceros Auklet
Mallard	Rock Dove
Northern Pintail	Mourning Dove (25)
Northern Shoveller	Short-eared Owl (6)
Gadwall	Belted Kingfisher
Eurasian Wigeon (10)	Downy Woodpecker
American Wigeon	Northern Flicker
Canvasback	Northwestern Crow
Ring-necked Duck	Common Raven
Greater Scaup	Black-capped Chickadee
Lesser Scaup	Bushtit
Oldsquaw	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Black Scoter	Bewick's Wren
Surf Scoter	Marsh Wren
White-winged Scoter	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Common Goldeneye	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Bufflehead	American Robin
Hooded Merganser	Cedar Waxwing
Common Merganser	Northern Shrike (2)
Red-breasted Merganser	European Starling
Bald Eagle	Spotted Towhee
Northern Harrier (~25)	Savannah Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk (1)	Fox Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk (4)	Song Sparrow
Rough-legged Hawk (2)	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Merlin (2)	White-crowned Sparrow
Peregrine Falcon (3)	Dark-eyed Junco
Ring-necked Pheasant	Red-winged Blackbird
Virginia Rail (~12)	Brewer's Blackbird
American Coot	Brown-headed Cowbird
Sandhill Crane (1 big, 1 small)	Purple Finch
Black-bellied Plover	House Finch
Killdeer	Pine Siskin
Greater Yellowlegs	American Goldfinch
	House Sparrow

Birding the Esquimalt Lagoon Migratory Bird Sanctuary

By Annette Moen

Birding the Esquimalt Lagoon one becomes immediately aware that this federally designated Migratory Bird Sanctuary is home to a diversity of treasures. Just 15 minutes from downtown Victoria this is an ideal location from which to make base camp for birding and Eco-touring the south-western shores of Vancouver Island from Victoria to Sooke. This salt water paradise is abundant in history and wildlife. The historic Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse, Royal Roads anchorage and Hatley Castle have all steeped this area in tales of yesteryear. The birds and marine wildlife encourage us to consider our course forward.

On the north shore of the lagoon you can meet the acquaintance of the resident peacocks who have free reign alongside the deer at Royal Roads University. A sharp eye could well spot the Bald Eagles in the surrounding forests occasionally leaving their perch to fish the lagoon. Belted Kingfishers, Turkey Vultures and Cooper's Hawk also grace the surrounding old growth forest. From late spring to early fall it is not uncommon to spot an Osprey or two in the taller trees. American Robins, Northern Flicker, Steller's Jay and the "Chicago" of a California Quail may also delight your sense of hearing. Along the grassy shoreline here you will discover Canada Geese, Great Blue Herons and yellowlegs.

Walking along the opposite shoreline — Ocean Blvd. along the Coburg Peninsula — you will likely, in season, sight Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, House Sparrow, House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Semipalmated Plovers and a variety of peeps. Several years ago a Mongolian Plover was sighted along this stretch.

A return trek along the ocean-side of the spit will serve up a rustic driftwood splattered beach with a magnificent view of downtown Victoria and the Olympic Mountain range in Washington State. Depending on the season, Common Loon, Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon, Pelagic Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Red-necked Grebe, Western Grebe, Common Murre, Marbled Murrelet, Pigeon Guillemot, Rhinoceros Auklet, Red-breasted Merganser, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Bufflehead, Barrow's Goldeneye, scaup, Oldsquaw, Brant and various gulls frequent this area.

Along the western shore of the Lagoon are two more — but obscure — access points. Both of these are off Portsmouth Drive (Lagoon Road to Heatherbell) with one being at the corner of Matilda and Portsmouth while the other is at 206 Portsmouth. The latter is also home to Birds of a Feather Oceanside Bed & Breakfast. A fresh water creek flows through the property and the mouth of the creek is a natural drinking and preening locale for the lagoon's residents including the graceful Trumpeter Swans.

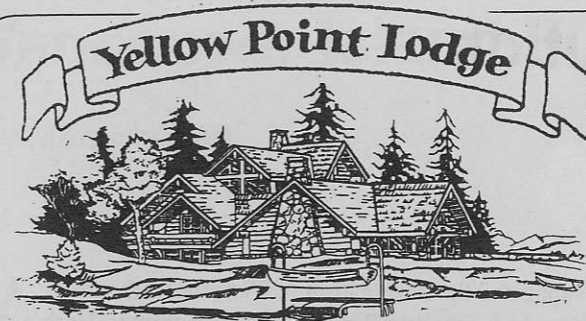
VNHS members are welcome to make use of the guest canoe, row boat or kayaks to get an even closer look at the shorelines, sand banks (abundant with blue herons this past summer) and the little island in the lagoon. This will certainly enhance a sighting of the Black Oystercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Western and Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, Black and Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, dowitchers, Semipalmated Plover, yellowlegs, Killdeer, Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Mergansers, Hooded Mergansers, Mallards, Northern Pintail, scaup, Bufflehead, Barrow's and Common Goldeneye, American Wigeon, Eurasian Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Pied-billed Grebe, feral Mute Swans, American Coot and Double-crested Cormorants. Don't be surprised if an otter or a seal swims alongside your boat.

There are also many nearby hiking trails, parks and other birding locales. Witty's Lagoon for example is another excellent area for bird watching, as are nearby East Sooke and Goldstream Parks. Brown Pelicans have recently been spotted here. With the El Nino phenomenon upon us we wait in eager anticipation as this migratory season unfolds for our birding enjoyment. I bet we'll have to add a species or two to this year's Christmas bird count.

ANNETTE MOEN is the owner of *Birds of a Feather Oceanside Bed & Breakfast*. You can check their web site, complete with birding page, at: www.surfport.com/nest. VNHS members who wish to borrow, at no cost, the various watercraft available should call ahead at 291-8889 and bring along a valid membership card.

NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATIONS

JANUARY 13 Kip Parker, who is Director of the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre in Metchosin, a 1996 Centennial Project of Victoria's SPCA, will talk about the Centre and the trials and tribulations related to wildlife rehabilitation.



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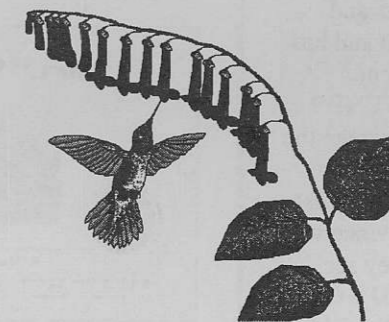
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Pleasure Craft Sewage Pollution Prevention Regulations

By Bev Bullen

The importance of conserving our sensitive marine ecosystem has been recognized by three levels of government. Legislation is presently being developed to establish and maintain a series of marine conservation areas in all of Canada's marine region. As part of this process the BC government is working with numerous stakeholders, including the three levels of government, First Nations, fishermen, scientists and academics to develop a strategy that would protect sensitive areas. It is a complicated process.

Pollution from sewage by pleasure craft and houseboats in areas of low tidal flushing was identified as one area of concern. In 1996, interested parties were requested to name sensitive marine or landlocked water bodies that were suffering because of such pollution.

In 1996, the Victoria Natural History Society identified the following areas for designation: Victoria Harbour, our focal point for Victoria; Esquimalt Harbour; and, Cadboro Bay. It was felt that these areas particularly have suffered from sewage discharged by houseboats and pleasure craft.

The CRD has recognized that the waters in Victoria and Esquimalt Harbours contain some of the greatest pollution along our coastline. An Environmental Management Strategy was set up to improve the environmental quality of these harbours. This was developed by VEHEAP (Victoria and Esquimalt Harbours Environmental Action Program) and has a five-year plan for harbour environment improvement.

On July 2, 1997, a presentation on behalf of the VNHS was made to the CRD, requesting that the capital city take the lead in the disposal of sewage by pleasure craft and houseboats and support the above designations. It is felt that most pleasure boaters and fishermen in the rest of the province will act wisely and do their part in pollution control if they see that a positive lead is taken by Victoria.

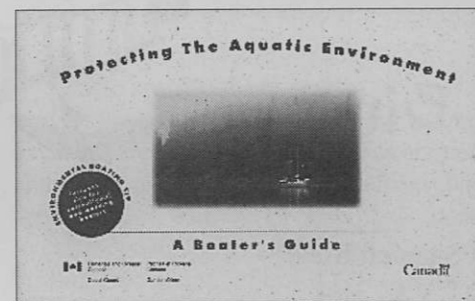
On September 10, 1997, the Capital Regional District

Board supported the designation of Victoria Harbour (including the Gorge and Portage Inlet); Esquimalt Harbour; and Saanich Inlet. These designations had gone through a consultative process. Cadboro Bay was not included.

However, on September 19, 1997 the Office of Boating Safety (Canadian Coast Guard) stated that the National Office feels that more information is needed on the proposed designation sites before they could be considered. And so the pollution by pleasure craft and houseboats continues. All the while, more agencies and stakeholders are becoming aware that our marine environments, which add greatly to our environmental, economic and social values, continue to suffer from pollution by sewage contamination. The need for approval of designations is ever more urgent.

If you support this initiative or have comments on the designation of water bodies under the Pleasure Craft Sewage Prevention Regulations, the person to contact is: Marc Pakenham, Canadian Coast Guard, 25 Huron Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 4Y9 (250) 480-2792.

BEV BULLEN is a member of the Victoria Natural History Society's Parks and Conservation Committee.



"Protecting the Aquatic Environment — A Boater's Guide" is available from the Coast Guard

B.C. MARINE AWARENESS SOCIETY

The purpose of the B.C. Marine Awareness Society is to instill respect of our waters through the sharing of knowledge and information based upon continuing research in the hopes of affecting long lasting conservation of our marine environment. We are a non-profit society that depends on the community to sustain our commitment to the future. Some of the most unique marine life in the world is in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of British Columbia. The Society's hope is that both adults and children will have a chance to discover these natural wonders and will realize the need to protect them.

With this in mind, the B.C. Marine Awareness Society has developed a program called Introduction to the Sea. This program, available to school children and the general public, begins with a presentation by Society divers. Next, the group is invited to attend an informal session with scuba divers on the shoreline. The divers collect local marine life from sea stars to sea cucumbers. Onlookers are encouraged to handle the sea life and to ask questions. The divers return all the animals to their natural surroundings.

We are currently working on expanding our society with new programs and a Discover the Sea library for our members and the public. If you are interested in our program, in becoming a member of our society, our volunteering your time please contact William Brennan-Smith at 744-5740 or Jennifer Feschuk at 361-3932.

Vancouver Island Bird Records

By Mike Shepard

After nine years of doing what was to be a one-time, one season summary, Dave Fraser has passed on the torch to me to summarize Vancouver Island bird records for *Field Notes* (formerly Audubon Field Notes and American Birds), now being published by the American Birding Association. A small volunteer committee will be involved in gathering and summarizing the records.

There is no need to feel bashful about sending in reports. Although we reserve the right to exclude sightings for which we feel supporting evidence is inadequate, our intention is to send in reports that are as accurate and complete as possible. New birders are encouraged to send in records, and all of you who have been involved in the past are invited to participate. With everyone's help, we hope to increase the presence of Vancouver Island records in *Field Notes*.

The best ways to communicate your data to me (in order of my preference) are:

1. E-mail: mgs@islandnet.com
2. Drop off at the field-naturalist.
3. Mail or courier to:

the field-naturalist:
1126 Blanshard Street,
Victoria, V8W 2H6.

4. Fax to the field-naturalist:
(250) 388-9236.
5. Phone in significant records to:
Victoria Rare Bird Alert:
(250) 592-3381.
6. Mail to my home address:
Michael G. Shepard,
306-825 Cook Street,
Victoria, V8V 3Z1

Jack Bowling (the B.C. editor for *Field Notes*) will whittle down our submissions to fit his space allotment. The full reports that we submit to Jack will be available (free of charge) by e-mail only. Please let us know your address. They will also appear on a website which should be operational shortly. For a nominal charge (to pay for photocopying, mailing, etc.), we will be able to send out the reports to those who do not have e-mail.



A lot of very useful data are collected for these reports but there is not room enough to include it all and much remains unpublished. Our aim is to use all acceptable data and make it available to everyone via the Internet. To this end, a non-profit organization called the VGI Vision Foundation has been set up to provide the hardware, software

and personnel necessary to collect and distribute the data. Within a month or so, we expect to have electronic systems available to facilitate easy entry and transmission of data.

As one of the major aims of the Foundation is to make data available to all who request it, please note that the information submitted will be considered in the public domain, and will be distributed as deemed appropriate to databanks (such as the Conservation Data Centre), rare bird committees, etc. This wider distribution will hopefully encourage sharing of bird-related information among various agencies, individual birders and conservation organizations. I strongly urge everyone to contribute information for the purpose of promoting bird conservation and the pleasures of birding!

If you have any questions, please send me an e-mail or call (250) 380-9195. I look forward to hearing from you.

MICHAEL SHEPARD is Program Director of the VGI Vision Foundation.

<p><i>Birds and Wine 1998</i></p>	<p>* Okanagan Wine Tasting & Trip Presentation. January 31, 1998 Call 727-0155 to register</p>
	<p>Join our trip to the sagebrush and antelope-brush landscape of "Canada's Pocket Desert". Visit scenic Douglas Lake country for birding near upland lakes. We travel by van to visit river riparian, grassland, and ponderosa pine woodlands to listen for the distinctive calls and songs of Okanagan specialties. See Sage Thrasher, Bobolink, Lazuli Bunting, Least and Gray Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Long-billed Curlew. Afternoon winery tours, tastings, & a gourmet winery lunch included.</p> <p>Dannie Carsen, 250-727-0155</p>
<p>South Okanagan & Douglas Lake</p> <p>May 23-30 1998</p> <p>\$800 Double Occupancy</p>	
	<p>Quesco Tours 801 Lily Avenue Victoria, B.C. V8X 3R7</p>

Board Talk

The Board of the Victoria Natural History Society would like members to know about their response to the fee increase by the Federation of BC Naturalists (FBCN).

First, the entire Board agrees that the FBCN is an organization that deserves support and we want to see it flourish. Our concern, however, is that a significant portion of our VNHS membership fees are submitted to it (under the new FBCN fee increase, about 44%) while our Society has little say in how the money — or how much money — is spent.

We had a committee, which included our Treasurer, look over the financial statements of the FBCN for the last five years and their tentative budget and strategic plan for 1998. Based on this, it appears possible for the FBCN to balance

income and expenses for the coming year *without* a fee increase and that expenses and income are in line, which is encouraging.

Because of this, we decided to “buy some time”. We voted to remain affiliated with the FBCN but to submit a fee of \$10.00 per member (not the proposed increase to \$12.00) and, over the coming year, to work out a method for clubs to have a greater say in the FBCN. We will be contacting the two other large Societies concerned about the fee increase — Nanaimo and Vancouver — to come up with a joint solution and present it at the next AGM of the Federation.

Thank you to all members to took the time to write or call.

Arlene Yaworsky, *on behalf of the VNHS Board*

Welcome to New Members

OCTOBER

Sue Ennis and family
of Green Mountain Road
enjoy birding.

Cheryl Gore
of Saanich Road
has interests in ecological reserves,
organic gardening, botany, birds and
habitat conservation.

Patricia Harris
of Nelson Street
likes birding.

Else Holzken
of Richview Road.

Tina Kelly
includes marine biology
(especially marine mammals) and wildlife
photography among her interests.

Richard and June MacDonald
of Grant Road.

Greg Mackenzie
of McKenzie Avenue.

Alan and Lola Mehlenbacher
of Topaz Avenue
enjoy birding and walking.

Elizabeth Metcalfe
of Quadra Street
has hiking and birding as interests.

Kip Parker
of Malloch Road
is involved in wildlife rehabilitation.

Carolyn Sadowska and John Dewhirst
of South Turner Street
like hiking, backpacking and mountain
trekking.

Graham Shuley
of Balmoral Road.

Joy Smith
of Peshurst Road
enjoys birds and flowers.

Sonja Zupanec and Jeff Fietkerk
of Evans Drive
are birders.

NOVEMBER

Louise and Robin Beinhauer
of Courtland Avenue
are birders.

Jay Dyke
of Pembroke Street
enjoys birding and park/seaside walks.

Suzanne Fleming
of Wavecrest Place
likes marine biology and birding.

Marilyn Fuchs
of May Street.

David Leach
of Niagara Street
is interested in hiking and
environmental education/writing.

Jean McClure
of McClure Street
enjoys birding.

Tracy Mellor
of Cook Street.

O. Olafson and L. Beare
of Emily Carr Drive
are interested in conservation,
rehabilitation and land trusts.

Jack Oswald
of Newton Street
lists saving old growth forests and
observing nature as his interests.

Caryl Schrack
of Lavender Avenue
is interested in flora.

Leitha Thomson
of Amelia Avenue
enjoys birding.

Debra Higgins Tully
of Windermere Place
enjoys birding sea life and native plants.

Dorothy Tupper
of Elk Lake Drive.

Watch for Colour Banded Cooper's Hawks

Over 100 Cooper's Hawks in the Greater Victoria area were banded with red or black coloured bands in 1997. This is the second year of this colour-banding program and is part of a study on the breeding ecology of Cooper's Hawks in the urban landscape of Greater Victoria. Naturalists can greatly assist this study by watching for, and reporting, these banded hawks.

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

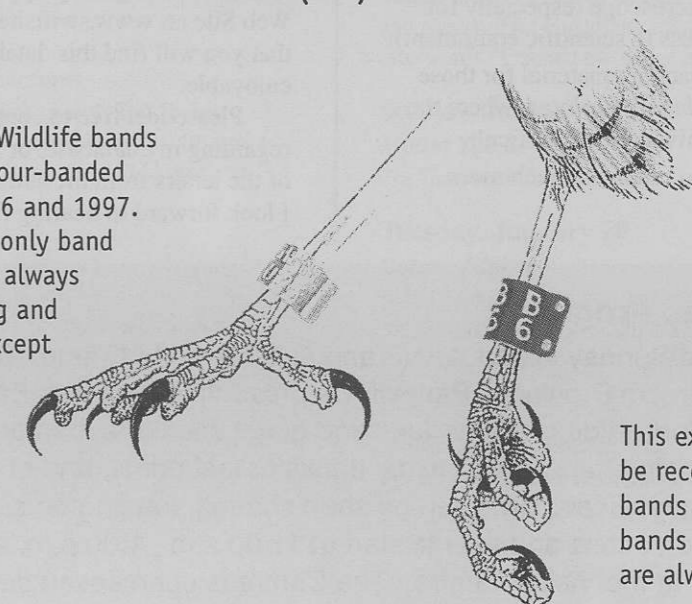
More than 60 sightings of colour-banded Cooper's Hawks were reported from the banding program in 1996. Most observations were made in the Greater Victoria area but several sightings were made from as far away as Chemainus on Vancouver Island and Boundary Bay on the mainland coast. Although the Cooper's Hawk is our most abundant year-round bird of prey in the Greater Victoria area, it is very secretive in behaviour and easy to miss. The Cooper's Hawk can be seen in highly urbanized areas of the city but is most frequently observed in suburban areas, especially near backyard bird feeders.

Please report banded Cooper's Hawks to:

Andy Stewart
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
780 Blanshard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Phone: (250) 387-9780

Standard US Fish and Wildlife bands were placed on all colour-banded Cooper's Hawks in 1996 and 1997. In 1995, this was the only band used. These bands are always placed on the right leg and are difficult to read except when in hand.



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

Electronic Herbarium

By Victoria Vancek

I am working on a project called the *Electronic Herbarium*. It is a computer database that contains a survey of wildflowers from the Pacific west coast of British Columbia, along with some garden plants. The database holds a collection of botanical, scientific illustrations created for educational purposes. This is not a field guide, but instead my Electronic Herbarium can be used as a reference tool by students, plant enthusiasts and botanists.

As new software continues to enter the market, I have noticed it is very difficult to find good, informative scientific computer programs. Therefore, I have created an educational program related to botany, increasing public awareness of plant identification and documentation. Environmental awareness is very important and continues to grow. For this reason, I took my skills as a scientific illustrator, and my knowledge of plants, to create a one-of-a-kind digital herbarium. This database is unique because the illustrations were not scanned but hand drawn directly on the computer by myself. In addition, I have included drawings of plant structures as seen through a dissecting microscope (i.e., transverse and longitudinal sections). You will not find a database anywhere similar to this one. This database (and the concept of a digital herbarium) can be a useful educational tool for these reasons:

1. It educates people about plant *structures* and plant *terminology*
2. Enhances one's knowledge about *individual* plant species.
3. Encourages people to recognize the computer as another form of *reference material* in acquiring information.
4. Gives one the opportunity to *envision* plant structures as seen through the dissecting microscope (especially for those who cannot find the access to scientific equipment).
5. Excellent form of scientific teaching material for those who find themselves *geographically isolated*, where the accessibility to schools and universities is difficult.
6. A *computer database* is able to retain so much more information than a book.

Eagle Extravaganza Programs

On each Saturday and Sunday in January (3 and 4; 10 and 11; 17 and 18; 24 and 25; 31 and Feb 1) the Goldstream Provincial Park will be presenting their free Eagle Extravaganza Programs. These include slide presentations and guest speakers, hands-on exhibits, including making your own wrapping paper with animal tracks or leaf prints, and of course the Eagle Watch, where these magnificent birds can be seen soaring, feeding on salmon and bathing in the estuary. Special presentations and events start at 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday at the Visitor Centre. The Centre is open seven days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. **For more information call 478-9414.**

7. Since these drawings were *not scanned*, converting them for the Internet is not difficult and *downloading* them is much faster than would be with scanned photos.
8. Conservationally, this database provides enough scientific detail and, hopefully, can discourage innocent, random collecting of plants by plant enthusiasts. *Random collecting* can increase the threat of extinction in plant populations.

I have already completed Volume I of the E-Herbarium. It consists of 5 floppy diskettes and over 150 illustrations. The files can be easily viewed using Windows 3.1 or Windows 95. At this moment, I am in the midst of creating Volume II. I am very serious about this project — I have taken the responsibility in obtaining copyrights for the Electronic Herbarium. Furthermore, I have contacted various botanical and educational authorities, seeking their opinions of my work. Also, I have created a Web Site to publicize my project. In all, I have received very positive comments regarding my database. In fact, the Electronic Herbarium site was featured, on November 13, 1997, as the "Link-of-the-Day" by authorities from the Florida Plants On-Line and the Botanical Society of America.

I am seeking sponsors so I can complete Volume II and so I am able to have both volumes professionally developed on a CD-ROM, have them programmed with a proper menu driven interface, and published. I would like to include photos of each plant species with the illustrations. I see this as a lifelong project and therefore, plan to create future volumes of the Electronic Herbarium.

To obtain an idea of what the Electronic Herbarium is about, I would greatly appreciate it if you would visit my Web Site at: www.swiftsite.com/florianus. I have confidence that you will find this database educationally useful and enjoyable.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding my database, or if you would like to receive copies of the letters from the authorities I mentioned in this letter. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time.

Derek Mannore

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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.

JANUARY EVENTS

Sunday, January 4

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.

Tuesday, January 6

Board of Directors' Meeting

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

Saturday, January 10

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

Pruning Rhododendrons and Azaleas — a workshop with **Ted Irving**. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Sunday, January 11

Birding Martindale Flats

Join **Brent Diakow** for a wonderful spring tour of Martindale Flats. Anything might turn up on this morning jaunt into wet farm fields. Bring your rubber boots and a lunch and meet at the Red Barn off Island View Road at 8:30 a.m. Phone Brent for details at 656-3190.

Sunday, January 11

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See January 4 for details.

Tuesday, January 13

VNHS Natural History Presentation

This month **Kip Parker**, Director of the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre in Metchosin, will talk about the Centre and the trials and tribulations related to wildlife rehabilitation. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome. Bring your coffee cup and a friend.

Saturday, January 17

Goldstream Park Eagle Extravaganza

Special events occurring during the day include Not all Raptors are Dinosaurs at 11:00 a.m., Raptors of B.C., by special guest speaker, Myke Chutter at 1:00 p.m. and the Eagle Watch at 3:00 p.m. Come and join the eagles at the Goldstream Provincial Park Visitor Centre.

Saturday, January 17

Owling with Darren

Come out in the evening with **Darren Copley** to search for elusive Great Horned, Barred, Northern Pygmy and Western Screech Owls around Victoria. Meet at 9:00 p.m. at a place to be announced. Please register with Darren at 479-6622 to keep the group under 15 people.

Sunday, January 18

Swan Lake Broom Bash

The Swan Lake Nature Centre will be sponsoring their final public Broom Bash of the season between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Volunteers are asked to meet in the parking lot and to bring gloves and shears. Hot chocolate, treats and conversation are planned for afterwards. Contact the office at 479-0211 for more details.

Sunday, January 18

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See January 4 for details.

Tuesday, January 20

Botany Night

Adolf and Oluna Ceska: *Plants of Bulgaria, from the Black Sea to the Mountains*. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and the Native Plant Society of British Columbia.

Wednesday, January 21

Parks and Conservation Committee

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

Saturday, January 24

Goldstream Park Eagle Extravaganza

Visit the Visitor Centre at the Goldstream River estuary at 11:00 a.m. for the Eagle Watch. At 1:00 p.m., special guest speaker, Walt Punnett, will talk about Turkey Vultures and at 3:00 p.m. there will be a slide show on the yearly hawk migration, Soaring Free.

Sunday, January 25

Billings and Whiffin Spit

Join Roy Prior on a trip to Billings Spit (Kaltasin Road) and Whiffin Spit in Sooke. Our quest is for wintering shorebirds, ravenous raptors, and wandering waterfowl. This is a great opportunity to get out of the house and enjoy the warm spring weather. Bring a lunch, a warm drink, and appropriate clothing. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Helmcken Park 'n' Ride or 9:00 a.m. at Billings Spit.

Sunday, January 25

Swan Lake Slide Show

James Clowater, graduate student at Simon Fraser University, will present a slide-illustrated talk on *The Western Grebe: Dancing Nocturnal Predator of Saanich Inlet*. James will talk about his up-to-date research on this unique nocturnal foraging species which may use bioluminescence as a mechanism to capture fish. Join us for refreshments afterwards, so bring your coffee cup and a guest. 1:30 p.m. at the Swan Lake Nature Centre. For details contact Ann Scarfe at 479-0211.

Sunday, January 25

Mount Tolmie Broom Bash

See January 4 for details.

Monday, January 26

Marine Night

Roderick Forbes from the Institute of Ocean Sciences will speak on *Red Tides in B.C. and Around the Pacific — a Growing Problem?* Rod will discuss what it is, what causes it and whether its occurrence is increasing globally. Mark this on your calendar as a Red Letter day and join us at Swan Lake Nature Centre. 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, January 28

Birders' Night

Join David Allinson for a slide-illustrated bird tour of the coast of northern and central California during the fall migration of 1996. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Saturday, January 31

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

Conifers for your garden — with Dave Whitehead of Gardenworks. 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, January 31

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Walk

Discover the Winter Garden — a guided walk. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Sunday, February 1

Mount Tolmie Wildflower Walk

Join Eric Redekop on a relaxed walk from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. through Mount Tolmie to look at the emerging spring flowers. Meet at the Summit Viewpoint. People are requested to leave pets at home, if possible, in consideration of the park and others on the walk. For more information contact Eric at 595-7270.

Tuesday, February 3

Board of Directors' Meeting

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

Saturday, February 7

Birding at Island View Beach

Join Hank VanderPol for an early morning walk at Island View Beach. We will be looking for alcids, Red-throated Loons, Black Scoters and other waterfowl. There are usually a variety of passerines in the open fields and hedgerows. With luck we'll see Northern Harrier or other raptors. Meet at the end of the far parking lot on Homathko Drive off Island View Road at 8:30 a.m. Phone Hank for details at 658-3482.

Saturday, February 7

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

House plants — a workshop with Andrea Stempski (HCP gardener). Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Tuesday, February 10

VNHS Annual Banquet

This highlight of the VNHS year will take place in the downstairs ballroom of the Princess Mary Vessel Restaurant, 358 Harbour Road (where there is ample parking). Happy hour begins at 6:00 p.m. with dinner starting at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$24.00 each and must be purchased in advance so that we may give the restaurant accurate numbers. No cash will be handled at the door.

The really big news is that our speaker will be Wayne Campbell, Senior Research Scientist, British Columbia Wildlife Branch and premier author of the three volume, *Birds of British Columbia*. Do come and bring your wife, husband, or significant other and enjoy this very outstanding occasion.

Tickets available from Beth Chatwin at 592-5346; Audrey Copping at 477-6742, or Tom Gillespie at 361-1694.

Saturday, February 14

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Walk

Winter Garden Walk and Valentine tea. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Tuesday, February 17

Botany Night

Summary of 1997 season. Bring your slides (5, 10, or more) and show them to the others. Swan Lake Nature Centre, 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and the Native Plant Society of British Columbia.

Wednesday, February 18

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, February 14

Valentine's Day Couples Count

Join Dannie and Susan Carsen for a mini-big day around Victoria. In the checklist area, both partners need to see or hear all the birds to add to a total species count between 7:00 a.m. and 12 noon. No mechanical devices or voice calling for birds, please. After the count is over, meet at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary by 12:30 p.m. to tally the results. The grand prize for the highest count will be a dinner for two at Pagliacci's. The second and third prizes will also be appropriately romantic. Please register with Dannie by February 13th at 727-0155. The cost for this Valentine's Day event will be \$10 per couple, and any funds raised will be contributed to the Parks and Conservation Committee.

Saturday, February 21

Boundary Bay and Raptors

Join up with David Allinson for a trip to Boundary Bay and Tsawassen Jetty. We expect to see flocks of waterfowl and shorebirds and visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in Western Canada. Car pooling will reduce your cost to around \$35 per person. Meet on Elk Lake Drive near the turnoff to Beaver Lake to carpool at 5:45 a.m. To register, call David at 478-0493.

Sunday, February 22

Mount Tolmie Wildflower Walk

Join Eric Redekop on a relaxed walk from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. through Mount Tolmie to look at the emerging spring flowers. Meet

BULLETIN BOARD

Birding Victoria, B.C. Web Site

Come and experience Southern Vancouver Island Birding on the Internet. Try your luck at the bird song quizzes. Print out the Victoria checklist. Post a message about a birding trip or tell everyone about your great birding experience. There's lots to do and lots explore. <http://www.islandnet.com/~boom/birding/>

VNHS Parabolic Microphone

Bob Chappell has recently designed and constructed an amplifier system for the parabolic microphone that is owned by the VNHS. This unit allows independent adjustment of the headphone and tape recorder outputs. The complete system has recently been used by several Society members. There is NO tape recorder with the system but some arrangements may be made with Bob. There will be a nominal fee of \$1.00 for daily use and some realistic fee for weekly use to cover the cost of batteries and maintenance. People interested in trying out this system should contact Bob at home (388-4696) or at the Field Naturalist (3884174; E-mail - fieldnat@pacificcoast.net).

at the Summit Viewpoint. People are requested to leave pets at home, if possible, in consideration of the park and others on the walk. For more information contact Eric at 595-7270.

Monday, February 23

Marine Night

What effect does sewage or mine tailings have on the organisms that live on the bottom of the ocean? Dr. Derek Ellis, Professor Emeritus, University of Victoria, has spent much of his research career investigating these questions in B.C. and other parts of the world. Tonight's talk is entitled: *The biology of the Seabed: from Environmental Impact to Recovery*. Join your fellow Marine Groupies to hear this talk at Swan Lake Nature Centre. 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday, February 25

Birders' Night

Ken Lozoway will present a slide-illustrated talk on outdoor photography entitled *Predators on Wing*. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend and your coffee cup.

Saturday, February 28

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Lecture

Winter Flowering Shrubs with Brian Russell of Brentwood Farms Nursery. 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, February 28

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Walk

Discover the Winter Garden in February — a guided walk. Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, 1:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m. For further information telephone Ann Widdowson at 469-6162.

Request for Volunteers

Volunteer Naturalists are needed at Swan Lake-Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary for school programs. 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.

On-line Listing of Events in Geography and Natural History

The Geography Department at the University of Victoria has a web site calendar where university and community events in geography, land-use and natural history are listed. The address is: <http://office.geog.uvic.ca>. For more information, or to list your events, contact John Newcomb (jnewcomb@office.geog.uvic.ca) or telephone 721-7346.

VNHS Annual Banquet
Tuesday, February 10

Princess Mary Vessel Restaurant
358 Harbour Road



Happy hour begins at 6:00 p.m.
and dinner starts at 7:00 p.m.



Speaker will be Wayne Campbell,
Senior Research Scientist, British
Columbia Wildlife Branch and
premier author of the three volume,
"Birds of British Columbia".

Tickets are \$24.00 each and must be purchased in advance
from Beth Chatwin, 592-5346, Audrey Copping, 477-6742,
or Tom Gillespie, 361-1694.