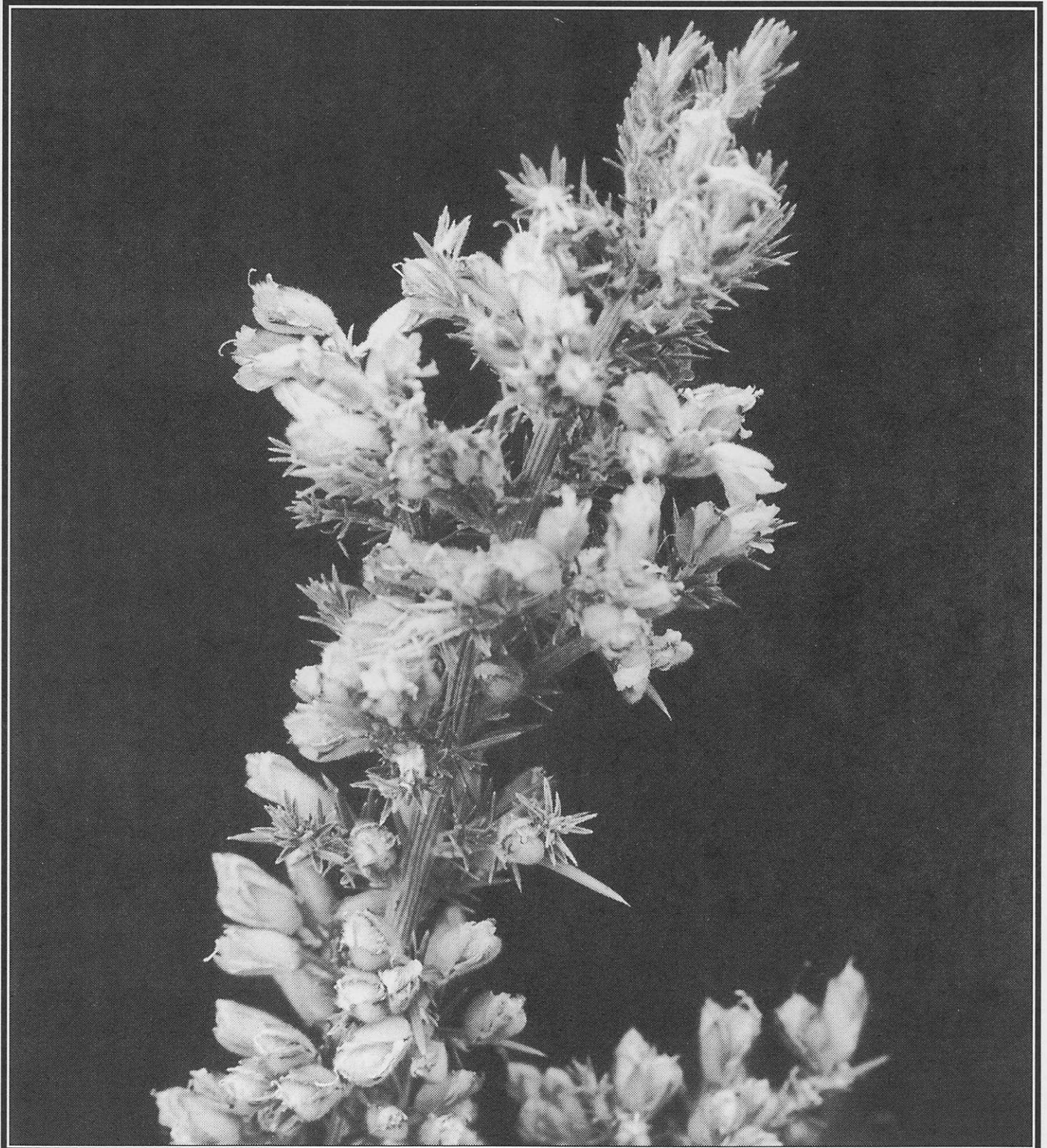




# The Victoria NATURALIST

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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, birding and botany notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We will accept and use copy in almost any legible form but we encourage submission of typed, double-spaced copy or an IBM compatible word processing file on any size diskette, plus printed output. Having copy submitted on diskette saves a lot of time and work for the publications group and we really appreciate the help. If you have an obscure or very old word processing program, call the Editor, 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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## OUR COVER

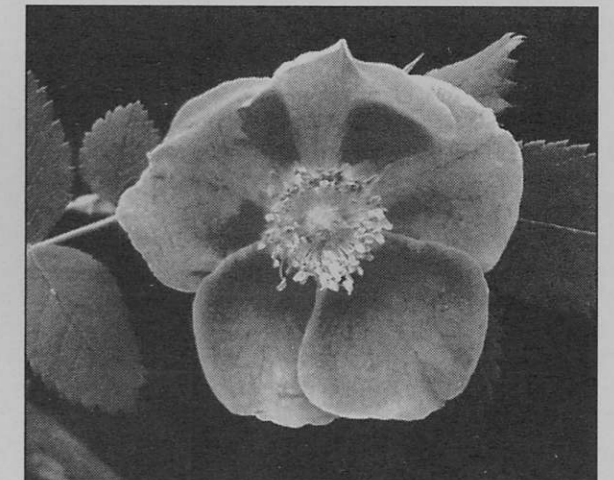
The main article is on the invasive weed gorse that is appearing through out our region. The article explains how you can help identify the invasive plant and assist in recording its presence. The cover photo is taken by Glen Moores.

## Editorial

This is the start of the fifty-sixth year of publishing your magazine. We would like to thank all the contributors and readers of *The Victoria Naturalist* over the years and encourage your continuing support.

This issue of *The Victoria Naturalist* tries to combine the diverse interests in our club from those interested in predator birds, insects, saving our wildlife, invasive plants and criticism of our governments. The directors of the Victoria Natural History Society encourage our members to express their thoughts but do not as a society endorse all members' opinions on all matters that effect our environment.

We are grateful to all our participants for the articles submitted and the efforts done by all our writers, poets, photographers, and illustrators. Articles are needed for the next issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*. We do encourage that articles (by email or by disk) with photographs or illustrations should be submitted by the third week of July for our next issue.



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# Gorse: the Spiny Competitor Is Moving In

By Colleen O'Brien

## Some Background Information

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) is native to the Mediterranean region of west Europe, has been naturalized in the British Isles for centuries and in Australia and New Zealand for over 150 years. It was first introduced to the west coast of North America prior to 1894 in south coastal Oregon. By 1955 it covered an estimated 25,000 acres (10,125 ha.) in south-western Oregon and was widespread in western Washington and northern California. Today it can be found, to varying extent, in every coastal county between San Diego and the Olympic Peninsula.

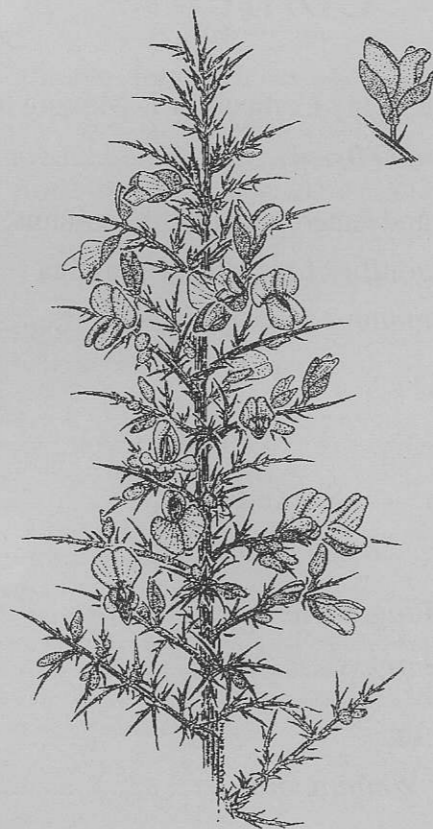
Unlike Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) whose introduction to B.C. can be attributed to one person in a specific year to a given locality, a cursory search provided no information about where or when gorse first made its appearance in this province. It is mentioned in the 1915 publication *Flora of Southern British Columbia & Vancouver Island* by J.K. Henry, with no specific information other than "introduced to Victoria and Vancouver" (Adolph Ceska, pers. comm.) and a 1992 B.C. Ministry of Forests pamphlet, *Gorse: the Spiny Competitor*, says "it is thought that it arrived in B.C. 20-40 years ago". It is likely that gorse was brought here intentionally as a garden ornamental which then escaped, or that seeds were imported accidentally somehow, perhaps carried in the wool of sheep.

## Distribution in B.C.

Today gorse is found in B.C. at lower elevations on sites with mild maritime climates and seasonal, but not severe summer droughts. In an effort to determine its potential range in the province, Dr. Raj Prasad and Arthur Robinson of the Pacific Forest Research Centre are collecting information regarding outlier sightings. So far they have reports of small isolated sites in the Queen Charlottes, on Savory, Hornby, Galiano and Saturna Islands, Sechart, and the Upper Levels Highway in North Vancouver. Larger areas of gorse occur on Saltspring and South Pender Islands. Reports for Vancouver Island include Cape Scott, Sproat Lake, Port Alberni, Ucluelet, Nanoose, and numerous sites on southern Vancouver Island stretching from Jordan River to Sidney. Although it was thought that gorse was confined to southern Vancouver Island near the coast and to the southern Gulf Islands, there are concerns that further expansion of its range is possible.

## Gorse in the Greater Victoria Area

I have been aware of gorse, in a peripheral way, since I was about 12 years old. In the intervening 35 years or so, it has become very visible in a couple of areas in the Western



Sketch used with permission of Raj Prasad, Pacific Forestry Centre

Communities where it didn't exist when I was a teenager. But I didn't keep notes or otherwise document its spread. About 10 years ago, I was a frequent visitor to the Oak Bay shoreline in search of shorebirds during spring migration and it was my impression then, possibly mistaken, that gorse was mostly confined to the Gonzales Point area with a couple of plants at McMicking Point. This is no longer the case. And, in recent years, I've had first-hand encounters with large impenetrable thickets of gorse at Rocky Point.

I became concerned about its spread near the end of this spring's bloom when I noticed isolated plants and small patches growing along Millstream Road, some of them adjacent to Lone Tree Hill Park in the Highlands. Investigating further, I found several small plants along the edges of the parking lot for Gowlland-Tod Park. Over the next ten days, I drove many kilometres, mostly in the Western Communities, and mapped the incidence of gorse largely through drive-by-sightings from paved public roads. Once Scotch Broom started to flower I quit surveying because it was impossible to differentiate between the two species quickly, at a distance.

I started to collect second-hand reports and spoke with botanists, foresters, vegetation management and weed specialists and others to determine if they were concerned.

It turns out that Ministry of Forest personnel had monitored gorse within their jurisdiction when there was staff in the Duncan Forest District to do so (Pat Hayes, pers. comm.) and that staff with the CRD Water District had done likewise for their lands (Gordon Joyce, pers. comm.). In both cases, gorse appears in small isolated patches in disturbed areas, mostly along roadsides. Department of National Defence lands are currently being inventoried by personnel from the Pacific Forestry Research Centre (Arthur Robinson, pers. comm.) with the aim of forming a strategy to keep gorse from spreading on Federal lands. The Conservation Data Centre (CDC) has a partial inventory of ecologically-significant terrestrial ecosystems remaining in our region, some of which include gorse (Jan Kirkby, pers. comm.).

Any vegetation management specialist will tell you that the key to controlling the spread of an invasive species is: Early identification and early intervention. Within the settled lands of the Unincorporated Electoral Areas and municipalities this 'rule' is not being followed. Although many people are familiar with the plant and know of locations where gorse can be found, I could find no one whose responsibility or interest it is to compile this information into an inventory in order to determine the extent of the problem locally. This, it seems to me, should be a first step before solutions can even be contemplated. This is my attempt to initiate such an inventory.

The information I collected would not conform to the scale of a one-page map to accompany this article. So, it's presented here as written descriptions.

The Department of National Defence property at Rocky

Point harbours the largest local infestation of gorse with an estimated coverage of 150 hectares. It occurs in areas which, prior to the early 1950s, were agricultural lands. To my amateur, naturalist eye there are several other outbreaks which could be called 'infestations' depending on the definition used. The largest of these is adjacent to the Sooke Road corridor between Happy Valley and Gillespie Roads. Other infestations occur in the Jordan River area; along East Sooke Road between Tideview and Pike Roads; in Metchosin mostly on pasture lands in the west but also as a substantial patch on Neild Road on Mt. Helmcken; in the gravel deposits at the north end of Langford Lake; the Dallas Road waterfront in Victoria between Holland and Cattle Points with a few plants now on the lower south slope of Signal Hill in Beacon Hill Park; and in southeastern Oak Bay including Walbran, Trafalgar, Anderson Hill and Uplands Parks. It is likely that large patches of gorse occur on industrial sites adjacent to Esquimalt Harbour but, without a boat, this area could not be surveyed adequately. I did, however, find a vacant lot near the corner of Admirals and Hallowell Roads in View Royal which was totally engulfed.

I have numerous records for isolated plants and small patches of gorse spotted throughout Metchosin and Langford, and for parts of Colwood, View Royal and Esquimalt. I found one plant on the spit at Witty's Lagoon which Capital Regional District Parks staff will remove. CDC records for parks in these areas include Hatley, the NE corner of Thetis Lake and Saxe Point.

I did not do surveys for Saanich and the rest of the Peninsula. However, in Saanich I have observed a few

## Wanted: more information

Do you know if gorse occurs either as individual plants or in patches in the following areas:

- in Saanich, Central and North Saanich, and Sidney in places other than those mentioned above?
- along the coast between Mill Bay and 10-Mile Point including Saanich Inlet?
- along the coast between Becher Bay and Port Renfrew (excluding Jordan River)?
- within the boundaries of these parks: East Sooke, Goldstream, Mill Hill, Lone Tree Hill, Gowlland-Tod (excluding the parking lot), Mt. Work, Bear Hill, Island View Beach, John Dean, Horth Hill?
- along the powerlines in west Saanich and the Highlands?
- in Sooke west of Gillespie Road?
- along the Galloping Goose Trail between Victoria and Leachtown (excluding the section between Jacklin and Luxton Roads in Langford)?
- along the E&N right-of-way (excluding the section between Jacklin and Humpback Roads)?

Do you have slides or pictures from the past which could be used to make comparisons about gorse in a particular site today?

Do you have records (written or anecdotal) to indicate when gorse first appeared in any one area in this region?

**Please contact Colleen at [cob@islandnet.com](mailto:cob@islandnet.com) or 388-4520 if you can provide further information.**

widely-separated plants on roadsides and have reports about isolated plants along the waterfront at Cadboro Bay and 10-Mile Point, and a patch or two in the powerline right-of-way which crosses Prospect Lake Road. In addition, gorse has been reported along the waterfront in Gorge Park and the CDC lists gorse as occurring in Mt. Doug and Knockan Hill Parks. For the upper Saanich Peninsula, there are a total of four records: at the corner of West Saanich and Old West Saanich Roads, at the east end of Mills Road along the bike path which parallels the Pat Bay Highway, and two appearances in the Madrona Drive area of Deep Cove.

## Dispersal Mechanisms

Like Scotch Broom, the seed production of gorse is prolific. It too is a 'seed-banking' species whose seeds can remain dormant for several decades. Gorse seed can be ejected from seed pods to a distance of two metres away from its parent plant. Add a stiff wind and this distance can increase somewhat. A seed clinging to wet fur, feathers, clothing or muddy boots can travel further still. Together, these dispersal mechanisms account for the spread and 'filling in' of gorse within a localized area.

Now add running water. Because gorse seeds have a very hard outer shell they can survive the abrasion of stream bed travel and new sites can become established which are far-removed from their parent plants. It may be that new sites are established along ocean shorelines in this manner also.

Now add mechanical transport. Muddy tires and vehicle undercarriages can carry gorse seeds far from their original source. This probably accounts for the introduction of gorse to many new sites along roadsides and driveways. Movement of fill from an infected site, such as a gravel pit, to another can introduce seed to a new location. This appears to account for the several young plants near the parking lot of Gowlland-Tod Park and no doubt accounts for other introductions to areas disturbed during road or building construction. Brush-cutting, done at a time when seeds are mature but not yet dispersed from their pods, can lead to further distribution along roadsides. Movement of livestock from one location to another can also lead to dispersal. For example, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest a connection between Rocky Point and one infestation on pasture lands in Metchosin which became the home of a family whose land was expropriated in the early 1950s for the ammunition depot.

There is no evidence to suggest that seed is being dispersed by traveling in the digestive tracts of birds or animals. If this were the case it is likely gorse would be much more widely distributed and would be found in locations where other dispersal mechanisms could not account for its presence.

## It's Not Too Late

A couple of people have said to me "Gorse is everywhere!". Well, it is not 'everywhere'. Yet. It's a problem in some localized areas and is becoming a problem in others. My observations of habitat lead me to believe there is great

potential for gorse to become a much thornier problem throughout this region. What concerns me most is the number of small patches and individual plants that have sprung up in new locations far from current areas of infestation. This does not bode well for the future unless intervention measures are implemented. In talking with the experts, I sense some optimism that proactive measures to halt the spread of gorse would be effective if we don't wait too long to initiate them. All that's needed is the public and political will to do so.

At the urging of Ministry of Forests staff, gorse was recently declared to be a 'noxious weed' and added to Schedule A of the *Weed Control Act of B.C.* (Roy Cranston, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, pers. comm.). This is proactive legislation which enables local governments to initiate measures to control noxious weeds within their jurisdictions. Knowledge of the inclusion of gorse under this Act is not yet widespread, so I've asked that information packages be sent to all local governments in this region.

Experiences in Oregon and New Zealand, where there have been concentrated research and control efforts, prove that once gorse is out of control it is difficult and costly to try to stop its spread. To date, there has been no public show of concern about the spread of gorse in this region so consequently very little has been done to keep it in check. It would be prudent to start looking seriously at the situation *now* since the expense of trying to do something later can only increase. Or do we wait until more of the coastline is engulfed, more natural areas are threatened, or our own backyards are invaded? Then, it might be too late.

## References and further reading

There is a lot of information posted on the Web about the biology and control of gorse. One of the best background papers is "Element Stewardship Abstract for *Ulex europaeus*" published by The Nature Conservancy (USA). (<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/ulexeur.html>)

"Broom and Gorse in British Columbia: a Forestry Perspective Problem Analysis" B.C. Ministry of Forests, Silviculture Branch, published in 1992. This should be available in libraries.

## Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the persons cited in this article for willingly sharing information: Adolph Ceska, Arthur Robinson, Pat Hayes, Gordon Joyce, Jan Kirkby and Roy Cranston. In addition, my thanks to both Joel Ussery, CRD Parks, and Jacob Boateng, Silviculture Branch, for pointing me in the right direction and offering encouragement and to Mike Edgell, for reviewing this paper.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN is a director of the Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation.

# Damsels and Emeralds in the Mountains: New Dragonflies for British Columbia

By Syd Cannings and Leah Ramsay

For the past eight summers, the CDC zoologists have gone out in the field for at least a short time every summer on a variety of surveys, looking for everything from sand dune invertebrates to Spotted Owls. But we've always been plagued with bad weather, and we were coming dangerously close to becoming eternal whiners. Last summer, however, our luck changed and the sun shone on our dragonfly survey of the upper Columbia Basin. (Actually — to whine one last time — June was wet and cold, but the second phase of the survey was incredibly warm and sunny.) Dragonflies need hot sunshine to fly, and they didn't disappoint us in July and August!

Funded by Parks Canada and the Columbia Basin Trust (through the Royal BC Museum's Living Landscapes project), and joined by our colleagues from the Museum and by enthusiastic volunteers, we splashed our way around the mountain National Parks and intervening valleys, swinging our nets and dipping our pH meters.

We had a number of goals in going to the mountains in search of dragonflies, but my personal dream was to find the Forcipate Emerald (*Somatochlora forcipata*) in British Columbia. This species had been collected about 3 km from the B.C.-Alberta border in Banff National Park back in the 1920s, and this ancient collection remained the only record of this species west of Manitoba. Surely it had to live in "small spring runs" following "devious courses" (as described by Edmund Walker, the 1920s collector) west of the Continental Divide as well!

After a couple of weeks of exploring the wetlands of Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Yoho National Parks, we found ourselves in a fascinating hillside peatland only 300m from Alberta and just around the corner from Lake Louise. We spent a great morning discovering the diverse fauna (including several species of Emeralds) flying about this quaking fen (and falling through holes in the peat up to our waists when we became to focused on the sky above!). We were about to leave when we noticed small Emeralds patrolling tiny, shaded, spring-fed pools at the edge of the fen... *Somatochlora forcipata*!! Once we knew the habitat, we visited another likely spot the next day near Emerald Lake, also in Yoho Park — and there they were again! The next week, Larry Halverson, the Chief Naturalist for Kootenay National Park, took our English volunteers to a similar site in the headwater drainage of the Vermilion River,

just over the hill from the site where Edmund Walker had found them so many decades ago — and they were there, too. But even though we were successful beyond all our expectations, this dragonfly is still obviously a very sparsely distributed member of the Rocky Mountain dragonfly community and an inhabitant of an apparently rare habitat as well.

The other major find of the survey was the Sweetflag Spreadwing, *Lestes forcipatus*, a primarily eastern damselfly that had been found recently in Washington State. This is a good example of an uncommon species that had been overlooked simply because it wasn't expected and because it looks very much like the widespread Common Spreadwing, *L. disjunctus*. Leah Ramsay's sharp eyes spotted this species at a wetland north of Donald, in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

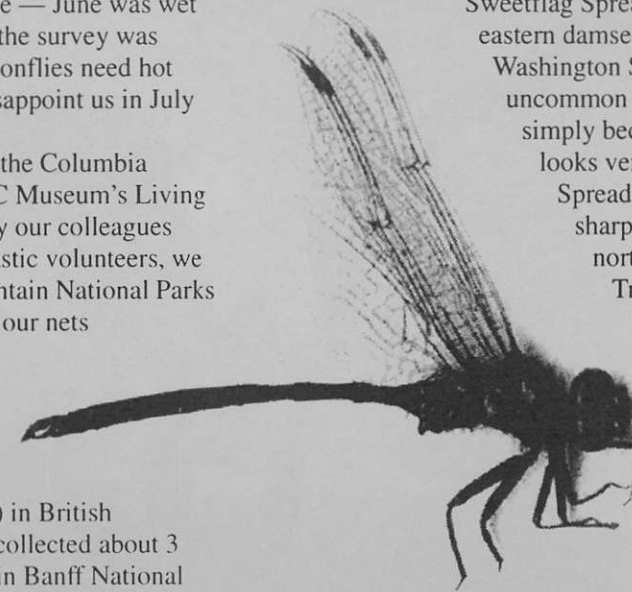
At the end of the survey, we'd visited over 130 sites and looked at over 2000 dragonflies! The Kootenay dragonfly list had grown from 56 species to 61.

Other interesting discoveries included one made by volunteer Dean Nicholson in Cranbrook — Dean discovered one of our red-listed dragonflies, the Pronghorn Clubtail (*Gomphus graslinellus*) at Wasa Lake. This species was previously thought to be restricted to the sandy beaches of a few lakes in the Okanagan and Boundary regions.

In 1999, funding permitting, we hope to repeat the whole process in the Kootenays, but concentrate our efforts this time south of Invermere and in the Creston area. But wherever you are in British Columbia, if you would like to get involved with dragonfly surveys, we'd be happy to help you get started. If you have access to the Internet, you can begin by visiting the fabulous web pages put up by Dennis Paulson in Seattle: his URL is <http://www.ups.edu/biology/museum/UPSdragonflies.html>.

Happy dragonflying!

Excerpted from BC Conservation Data Centre Newsletter No.7 February 1999



*Somatochlora forcipata*

# Plucked Duck

By Tina Kelly

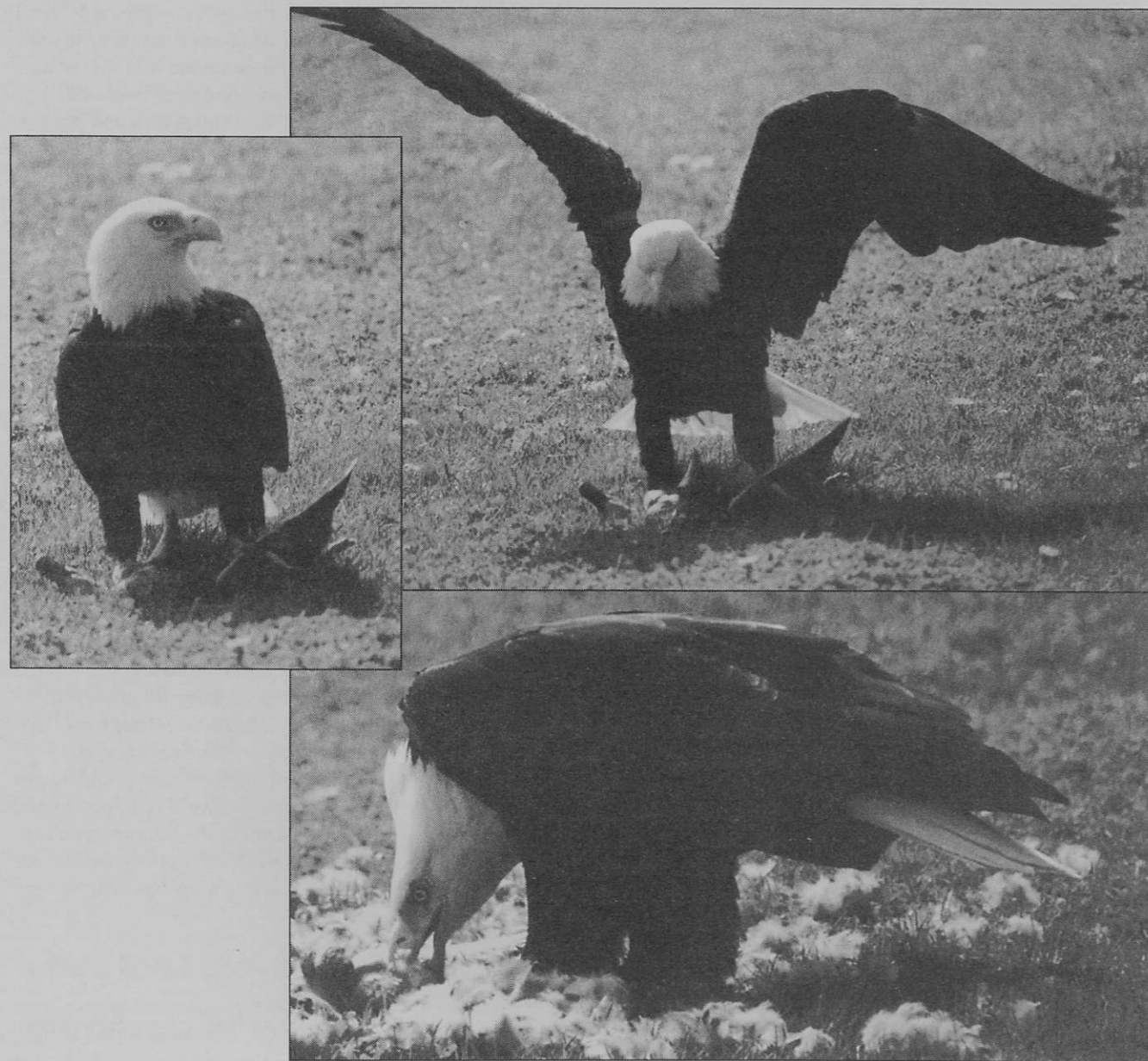
With the dead Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*, laying on the lawn and frequent visits of Bald Eagles, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, to his yard, my dad, Mike Kelly, set up his tripods, 35 mm camera and video camera.

Within minutes, an adult eagle flew in and landed on the duck. Instead of flying off with the duck, as expected, the eagle began to pluck his meal. Before long the grass was a

mess of feathers and the eagle was enjoying the food. In the end, the eagle took what remained intact of the duck and flew off towards Cadboro Bay.

The whole sight was amazing and allowed my dad to take some good photos and a very interesting home video.

Photos: Mike Kelly



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1999-2000

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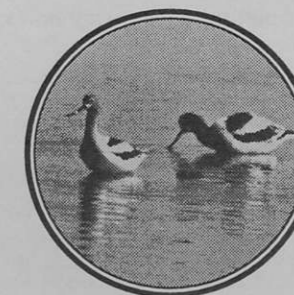
This mid-winter natural history excursion is a sure fire cure for hibernation! Trip highlights include visits to the Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, the Anza-Borrego Desert and its Natural History Museum and the Laguna Mountains. The Salton Sea is a wintering refuge for thousands of migratory waterfowl and known as one of the ten birding hot spots in North America. Join ornithologist and naturalist, Dr. Nancy Ricker. February 22 - 27, 2000



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# Our Home and Native Bee

By Andrew MacDonald

The Blue Orchard Bee (*Osiné liganaria*) is one of the unsung heroes of our naturoscapes. Gentle, solitary and native to western North America, this dark metallic blue bee is finally receiving the attention it deserves.

Its efficiency as a pollinator has been enjoyed by fruit and vegetable growers for years. One estimate puts their efficiency rating at 95% of blossoms visited while introduced honey bees average 5% successful pollination. Their smaller size and the fact that they have evolved along side the small-flowered native plants we cherish make them ideal pollinators in our naturoscapes. With recent concerns about crashes in honey bee populations we can help our plants and our native bees by providing the habitat they need.

The Blue Orchard Bee is very particular when looking for nesting site. Because they cannot excavate their own nests, they search for naturally occurring holes in trees left

behind by woodpeckers and wood-boring insects. Hollow stems are also used. In our urban areas many of the dead and dying trees with suitable habitat have been removed. In response, the Blue Orchard has found holes in our houses left by other insects or by our construction practices. They are often found in the spaces between shingles provided for expansion and for water drainage. The female prefers an 8 mm (5/16") hole, which is a little larger than the width of her body. Smaller holes will often limit the cell to producing smaller males. She collects pollen, mixes it with nectar, then lays a 3 to 3.5 mm elongated, white egg on top of the food source for the larvae. She then seals off the cell with a thin wall of mud to protect her young from parasites and predators. This is why they are also known as Mason Bees. A female may lay one to two eggs a day and up to 35 in a season.

The season for Blue Orchard Bees usually begins around the time when plum and cherry trees start in blossom

or when daytime temperatures reach 14 degrees Celsius. The larvae over-winter in these holes. Males emerge first and mate with the later emerging females, both having chewed through their cocoons and mud plugs. The emergence may take one to two weeks during cool weather. Females, with short antennae and slightly smaller than a honey bee, can live four to six weeks as they busily go about passing on the line. Males are slightly smaller than the female, have larger antennae and a tuft of light coloured hair on their head. The males will visit flowers but are not as efficient pollinators. Short-lived, they fall into the alarmingly large group of male creatures that are good for only one thing. Most Orchard Bee activity in southwestern British Columbia is over by June 14.

To increase the numbers of solitary bees in your naturoscape, the habitat we can provide comes in the form of a bee condo. Choose untreated wood for this and many of the other projects you may take on for wildlife. Holes should be drilled with about a centimeter between them

Condos should be faced to the east to take advantage of the early warmth of the sun. Five to six feet up on the side of your house is fine; under the eaves to keep the weather away is better. Nesting holes or straws should always be perpendicular to the wall. If the weather is dry, a nearby source of mud is necessary.

Nests can be left outside to over winter if the temperature does not go below -18 degrees Celsius. If you do want to bring them in, put them in a dry, unheated garage or shed, but don't disturb them before July 1st (some sources suggest the blocks can be left until October). To avoid the problem of new bees nesting in old blocks before you can clean them, provide a new block beside the old one. Then, attach a piece of wood over the front of the filled block, leaving just enough room for the bees to emerge.

For those of you who have made it all the way through this article despite a fear of bee stings, you don't have to worry much about the Blue Orchard Bee. Only the females can sting, and they rarely do unless they are trapped or stuck under your clothes. Providing a home for these gentle bees is just one of the many ways we can provide habitat for wildlife in our naturoscapes.

## For further reading

*The Orchard Mason Bees* by Brian Griffin, 1993, Knox Cellars Publishing, Bellingham, Washington  
*The Forgotten Pollinators* by Buchman and Nabhan, 1996, Island Press.

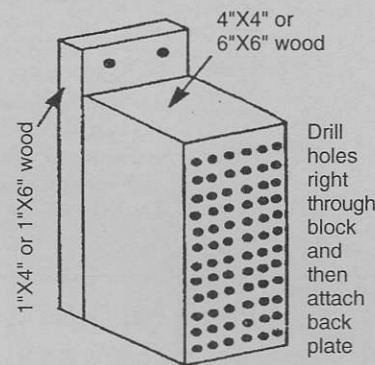
"Our Home and Native Bee" Appeared firstly in *Naturoscape News Volume 3 Issue 2 Summer 1998.*

## Blue Orchard Bee Condos

Nestboxes courtesy of the B.C. Fruit Testers Association  
 P.O. Box 48123, 3575 Douglas Street, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 7H5

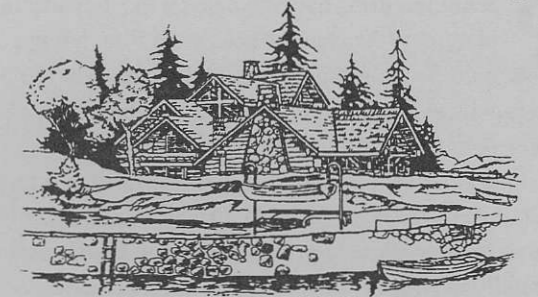
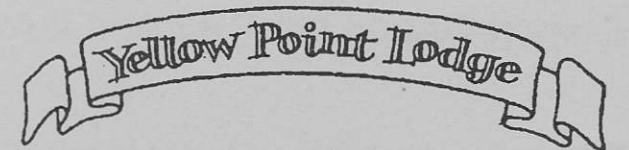
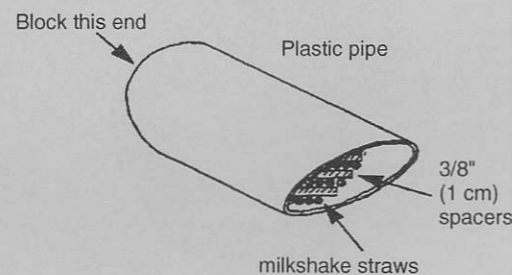
### Block Condo

This nest consists of a block with 5/16" (8 mm) holes drilled right through. A 1/2" (12 mm) or 3/4" (18 mm) piece of material is fastened to the back to cover the holes. Some sort of cover (e.g., roof overhang) should be provided to shelter the nest from the weather. This nest is simple to construct and easy to clean when the back is removed.



### Tube Condo

Fill a piece of plastic drain pipe alternately with layers of plastic milkshake straws and plywood separators as shown. Cover the holes at the back. Small rolled newspaper tubes or cardboard tubes can also be used in place of the plastic straws. This condo is easy to construct and the tubes can be replaced with new ones as a method of cleaning this nest.



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# Wildlife Program in Crisis

By Tom Burgess

Recent inquiries have revealed a most disturbing picture of the state of B.C.'s wildlife, habitat and wildlife program. Government cuts over the past five years have already reduced staff numbers by 40%, and another 10% cut is anticipated. With budgets covering little more than salaries, all travel has been seriously curtailed. Base budgets no longer provide for any inventory or research, and previously provided outside funding sources are rapidly drying up. In spite of this, the demands to undertake new tasks have never been greater (i.e., threatened and endangered species, Forest Practices Code provisions, Native land claims and treaties). Nor has there ever been a time when public expectations for effective management of wildlife have been higher. We have reached the point where staff can no longer adequately address many of the most pressing wildlife needs.

Threatened and endangered species are not being adequately addressed. One half time position in Victoria attempts to cover T&E issues. In regions, the rare and endangered species biologists (RES's) have primary responsibility. But, the Kootenay position has been cut, and all other RES's are in jeopardy. Government provides totally inadequate resources. Results? No effective legislation, policy or programs; no biodiversity strategy; no species recovery plans for more than 65 vertebrates and many more plants; no T&E inventory or research.

Our still rapidly developing urban areas — source of most red-listed species problems — have no cohesive program to address wildlife habitat issues. Results? Continued losses of wetlands, riparian areas, and special habitats on private lands. And, continuing unhappiness by many municipal governments who would like to cooperate, but have no-one to deal with, and no procedures or program to fall back on.

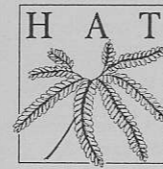
With the current implementation of the Forest Practices Code and Jobs and Timber Accord, valuable wildlife habitat is falling under the axe at an even faster rate than before. Virtual "Right to Log" legislation, combined with Forest Ministry and industry intransigence creates such an immense

workload for shrinking staff levels, that only the most critical issues are being addressed, leaving much unprotected. Historical winter ranges are no longer safe. Managing ungulates for harvestable surpluses is no longer supported by Ministry of Forests staff. Neither the recently announced Managing Identified Wildlife Strategy, nor the Landscape Unit Planning provisions — still held up by industry and government — have any provision for added Wildlife staff or resources in the coming year.

In a larger context, several other initiatives have been seriously curtailed. Wildlife Management Area designation and management is largely stalled, due to a combination of staff and budget shortages, and bureaucratic resistance from other government agencies. (In some areas, critically valuable wildlife Crown lands are being offered for sale, to increase government revenues). The B.C. Wildlife Watch Program, which promises to deliver economic values in the hundreds of millions of dollars, is reduced to mere project level, in two regions. The Strategic Plan process, useful in guiding the program, with input from the public, languishes, and is used only for cutting staff and budgets. A \$100,000 report recommending ways to reduce problems with black and grizzly bears, is not acted upon, and B.C. experiences its worst year on record, costing the Conservation Officer Service nearly one million dollars, and the lives of 1,654 bears, many of which might have been saved.

Wildlife staff indicate that they have lost all control of the program. Many field staff have little or no idea what is happening with most of their wildlife populations.

What are we to do? We need to become better informed, and much more involved. Governments usually do what they think the public will support. We need to tell them: 1. stop the cutting 2. replace the losses to the wildlife program 3. find new sources of revenue to ensure that our wildlife gets the resources required — even when fiscal times are tough! And we need to demonstrate a willingness to work with government to make this happen. Over to you, folks!



## Hat Tricks

A Report on the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation

By Bruce Whittington

The Tod Creek/Prospect Lake Stewardship Enhancement Program (STEP) is now off the ground, and receiving very favourable response in the watershed. Director Colleen O'Brien and project coordinator Ken Floe have put together what promises to be a landmark stewardship project for the Capital Region. Two community open houses were required to allow enough time for all the residents' questions to be answered, and HAT is already in discussions with some of the Prospect Lake residents who are interested in putting conservation covenants on their properties.

HAT has also taken on another acquisition project. After taking a breather following the success of the Ayum Creek estuary purchase, we are joining the campaign to purchase Brooks Point on South Pender Island. The project, spearheaded by the Friends of Brooks Point, and the Islands Trust Fund, is better than two thirds complete. The property owners, well known up-island naturalists Alan and Betty Brooks, have donated one of the three lots, and CRD Parks has pledged \$200,000 to the project. With the many other donations, a balance of some \$195,000 remains to be raised.

Brooks Point lies on the southeast end of South Pender. The property, about ten acres in total, is mostly forested, with a beautiful waterfront promontory, which overlooks Boundary Pass to Mount Baker in Washington State. In addition to its interesting terrestrial ecosystems, there is a significant diversity of marine life around its shores.

HAT has recently completed two successful fundraising events. Director Marilyn Lambert has just returned from the third HAT birding tour, which this year headed east to the birding Mecca of Point Pelee. The group enjoyed almost 30 species of warblers, and also recorded the first-ever sighting of Ross' Gull for the park. These trips represent excellent value for the participants, and yet also raise money for HAT's work. This year's tour showed a profit of about \$5,000. Thanks to Marilyn for all her work, and to volunteer tour leader David Stirling.

Hard on the heels of Marilyn's return, HAT hosted two nights of music and fun called HAT's Off for Habitat. The coffee-house style evenings featured the talents of some of the HAT directors, and other naturalists like Dave Fraser, Leah Ramsay, Rick Kool, and Mike Fenger. Local recording artists Robert and Susan, and Holly Arntzen, donated their time as well, to round out two wonderful evenings. Many thanks to the many people who donated raffle prizes, food, drinks, and their time, in an effort which has raised about \$5,000 for HAT. The Prospect Lake Community Association played a special role in donating not one, but two, nights' free use of their hall.

Some of the proceeds from both of these fundraisers will

go to the STEP program, and some will be directed to the Brooks Point project. If you would like to make a donation to HAT, you may contact the HAT office at 995-2428, or bring your donation in to the office, which is above The Field-Naturalist, Blanshard at View. Normal office hours are 12-4, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. If you wish to make a donation specifically to Brooks Point, HAT can take your pledge, which will be called when all the funding is in place.

HAT's efforts will receive another boost in the fall with the support of the Goldstream Art Show in September; watch for more details coming up.

After many months of negotiating bylaw adjustments through the provincial powers-that-be, HAT can now officially welcome people to join us as members. Forms and information are available at the HAT office, and will be available at upcoming VNHS functions. Thanks to all of you who have supported HAT; together we can make a difference!



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# The Dry Tortugas, Florida

By Keith Taylor

As the Yankee Freedom II berthed we could see that Fort Jefferson actually covered most of the small coral island where we would camp during the next four days. We had just sailed 68 miles across the sparkling waters of the Gulf to the southernmost point of land within the United States, the Dry Tortugas. Pelagics are generally scarce crossing the Gulf to the islands; today was not atypical with only an Audubon's Shearwater, several immature Northern Gannets and four Bridled terns. To break the monotony, a sub-adult Masked Booby made several passes over the speedy craft before disappearing over the horizon. Nearing the fort we passed Hospital Key, the nesting site of North America's only breeding Masked Boobies.

Menacing Magnificent Frigatebirds drifted slowly overhead awaiting the opportunity to rob Laughing Gulls of their skimpy meals as we lugged our gear, food and water to our guaranteed campsite. As fresh water is nonexistent at sixteen-acre Garden Key, liquid refreshment must be carried in. The islet provides the camper with only primitive amenities, clean flush toilets, picnic tables, barbecue grills, and a secluded sand beach for bathing.

Warm trade winds blew as we pitched our shelter in the shade of swaying palms. As dusk fell, the old fort took on a most magical atmosphere — the epitome of history. The Coleman lamp cast long shadows over the fort's eight-foot thick, fifty-foot high walls as we prepared the simple evening meals which consisted of instant coffee, corned beef sandwiches and a can of peaches. As it seldom rains and is very warm on the Tortugas, a small tent, air mattress and light bedding was all we required for our comfortable nights sleep.

We packed an inexpensive inflatable dingy to row around the perimeter of tiny Bush Key. Deafening guttural kark and ker-wacky-wack calls of thousands of nesting Sooty terns and Brown Noddies greeted us. Several Brown Boobies perched on offshore buoys. We had come to see these specialties of Bush Key — as well as the rare but regular Black Noddy. The very rare Red-footed Booby is most often found perched among the nesting frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans in the larger trees at Bush Key. It was essential for us to row to this isolated colony, too distant to examine with a scope. Black Noddies are most often discovered in the afternoon perched on the coaling dock's pilings beside the fort. From here we could scope the dead trees on Bush Key, another of their favorite roost sites. As we scoped Hospital Key from the dock we could barely identify the Masked Bobbies in the distant haze. We watched for the dark secondaries and tail as they took flight.

The Tortugas act as a magnet for migrating shorebirds

and passerines with many warblers, thrushes and sparrows. Inside the huge, hexagonal fortress we sought resting spring migrants anticipating a wayward vagrant. Although such West Indian strays as Zenaida Dove, LaSagra's and Variegated Flycatchers, Bahama Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo, Yellow-faced Grassquit and Shiny Cowbird have occurred, we knew the change of one appearing during our stay was extremely remote (we knew we had a better chance in the Miami area). We observed Gray and Eastern Kingbirds, Gray Catbird, Wood and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, (bicknell's Thrush is possible in early May), black-whiskered Vireo, Prothonotary, Blue-winged, Tennessee, Black-and-white, Cape May, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll, Palm, Hooded, Worm-eating and Swainson's Warblers, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo and Painted buntings, Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and Summer Tanagers. The Cuban race of Short-eared Owl (a probable split) with its eerie black-encircled eyes roosted in one of the fort's trees. Around noon, a long White-tailed Tropicbird (now very rare) soared effortlessly over the fort while a Roseate Tern rested on the pilings.

By far the best way to the Dry Tortugas is aboard the new National Park's 100' catamaran Yankee Freedom II (toll-free 1-877-327-8228) or (305) 294-7009. Cruising at over 30 miles an hour, the air-conditioned craft covers the 68 miles in only two hours each way. There is an observation deck, snack bar, three washrooms and fresh water showers. It departs daily at 8 a.m. (7:30 boarding) from Lands End Marina (Key West Bight) at 240 Margaret Street, P.O. Box 5903, Key West, Florida 33040. Those not remaining to camp will spend 4 1/2 hours at the fort, returning to Key West at 5:30 p.m. Reservations are credit cards accepted. Adults \$495; camping over \$109, which includes breakfast and lunch. If you are just interested in ticking the Black Noddy, wait until there is a sighing and take the boat over for a day or so. The park ferry should not be taken specifically to observe the pelagics seen in crossing to the fort as these species are observed more easily and in greater numbers off the Carolina's. The speed of the catamaran will not hinder your observations of the few pelagic species you will see crossing to the fort. In some ways the speed is an advantage, keeping up to the retreating birds. During a birding tour, of course, you would be able to slow and stop to observe birds resting on the water, but this seldom happens. Reservations are not accepted for camping. You will not be turned away if the campground is full as there is an overflow section; fee \$3US nightly. Late April through early May is the best season to visit.

If you would prefer to take a birding tour to the Tortugas, the clean and comfortable 100' Yankee Captains and its sister ship Yankee Freedom I sails from Oceanside Marina at Stock Island, Key West (1-800-634-0939) USA only or (508)878-1914. The dawdling cruise takes 7 hours each way and will not produce better views of pelagics than the Yankee Freedom II. As well as major birding companies, several Florida organizations advertise trips on the Miami Bird Hotline. These tours offer a slight advantage as they can get you to offshore Loggerhead and Hospital Keys (which

very seldom offer species that cannot be seen at or from the fort). A 22' passenger boat is motored to Bush Key. Currently Wings has three scheduled three-day shuttles during mid-to-late April at \$395US — or \$260US with all boat privileges if you camp on the Tortugas, tel: (520) 320-9373. Your overnight accommodations are onboard this less-than-luxurious vessel equipped with cramped bunks which sleep 48 guests (camping preferred), showers and air conditioning; delicious food is served by a first-rate crew, (extra \$3.50 per meal) by Captain's Grey Mercurio and Pete Maiuri.

## Poems

By Eileen Curteis

### *Snowdrops*

Will they believe me  
if I say:

“Forget the fertilizer  
snowdrops  
are in the torn sprout  
of your forgotten potato.”

Or will they with their shovels to the earth  
reply”

“Stick dirt  
nobody can make us grow.  
We did with our roots up.”

And they are right.  
They do die  
Resurrection  
is a plant of the future  
a worm with a flower in it.

Where they are  
you have been  
groveling  
one foot  
on the metallic chain of a pedal  
going nowhere with the seasons  
the other  
reviving underground  
in the clay of an unknown climate  
extinct, perhaps,  
to those who have no dug far enough.

By Devon Anderson

### *The Never-ending Cycle*

Today I am a chartreuse  
hummingbird.  
I crouch,  
like a grasshopper  
on a never-ending arm  
in the spotlight  
of darkness.

I wait,  
watching shadow  
figures shuffle past.  
My hunger starts my  
wings and carries me  
to the red fountain.

I stick my tongue into  
a gigantic gizmo.  
The sweet nectar  
flows down my throat.  
Bzzzzzzzz.....  
I flutter away, only to return  
again soon.

*Born and raised in Victoria, British Columbia, EILEEN CURTEIS entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann in 1961. Sister Eileen has been in the field of education for twenty-seven years. The last six years she has been involved in a healing ministry at Queenswood, a retreat, growth, and renewal centre in Victoria, administrated by the Sister of St. Ann. Sister Eileen is also the author of Sojourner, Know Yourself, Moving On and Wind Daughter.*

*DEVON ANDERSON is a high school student (age 16) living in Victoria. He has had a keen interest in birding and bird behaviour since he was seven years old.*



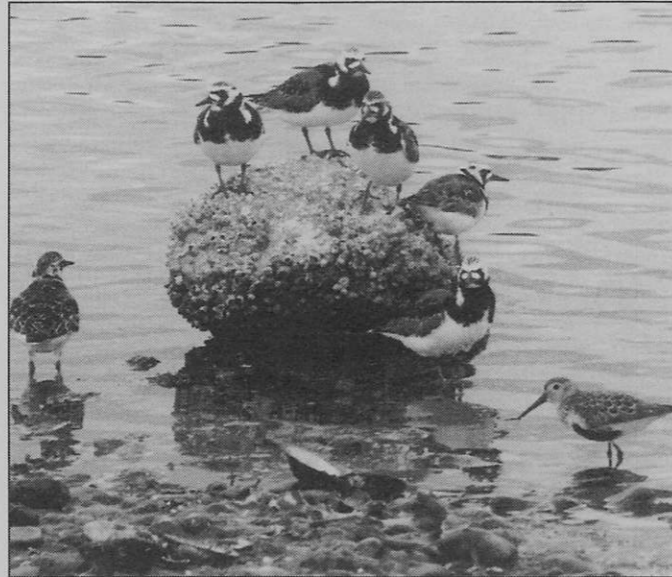
# Birds in our Area

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

## Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) an uncommon bird for our area

May 9th, 1999 was reported as the first day on which 3 Ruddy Turnstones were sighted at Esquimalt Lagoon. Over the next 5 days their numbers increased to a total of 10 birds at this location.

These plump, harlequin-patterned shorebirds are members of the worldwide family of sandpipers (*Scolopacidae*). When seen in our area in spring, they are in alternate or breeding plumage of rust, black and white, and are feeding to fatten-up for a long migration to their breeding grounds in the high Arctic. Post-breeding birds migrate to wintering grounds along coastal beaches and mud flats to as far south as Argentina, but many remain on the coasts of California and Texas. Winter birds lose the chestnut colouration and are generally more grey overall, with the head smudged brown. Their legs remain a distinct orange-red and in flight their dark and white patterning is very distinctive. Turnstones use their slightly bent, wedge-shaped, almost total black bill to flip stones and shells in search of invertebrate food, hence their name. On the Atlantic coast they also dig holes in the sand to forage for buried Horseshoe crab eggs. Ruddy Turnstones are seen in small numbers in our area most years.



Ruddy Turnstones, with Dunlin in foreground.  
Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

## Treasurer's Notes

By Gordon Hart

The Society's finances remain in good shape with cash balances similar to last year, thanks to our members' generosity and the hard work of our many volunteers. Over the past year or two, our invested funds have been earning generally lower interest rates as bonds and term deposits come up for renewal. This has been offset to some extent by increases in various other sources of revenue. One notable increase in revenue over last year has been member donations. We would like to thank those who added a bit to

their renewals, and would like to remind members that they will receive a tax receipt for any donation over \$10. Our hard-working Publicity Committee has also raised more money this year, with the donation box at birders' night, raffles, and displays to attract new members at various community events. All these things help further the aims of the Society. For example, the proceeds of the binocular raffle were rounded up to \$1000 and donated to Francis King Park for their trail upgrading project.

## Welcome to New Members

### MARCH

**Gladys Forsberg**  
of Wyndeatt Avenue  
is interested in birding and geology

**Pamela Williams**  
of Cowichan Bay  
likes the great outdoors

**Dr. Mark Deutschlander**  
of Olympia Avenue  
lists as interests birding, hiking, fishing and studying migration in animals at UVic

**Tania Tripp**  
of Old Lake Cowichan Road  
is interested in ornithology and biology in general

**Pam Sinclair**  
of Judge Place

**Brian and Pam Allen**  
of Bank Street  
are interested in flowers, birds, trees and marine life

**Lavana Zrnoh**  
of Craigflower Road  
is interested in helping indigenous species of wild birds survive/thrive

**Tom Gore**  
of Shelley Street

### APRIL

**Bruce and Nikki Mackenzie**  
of Lamont Road

### MAY

**Olwyn Morinski and Martin Hykin**  
of Brookleigh Road  
list nature journalling and native plant gardening as interests

**Sylvia and Bruce Beacom**  
of Arbutus Place

**Burl Jantzen**  
of Agnes Street

**Kathleen McIsaac**  
of Douglas Street

## Free South Africa Trip Report

This comprehensive 35 page report (based on personal October 1998 trip) gives precise directions to find all of this wonderful country's endemics in a month-long circuit that begins and ends from the international airport in Johannesburg. The format is that of an itinerary, a day-to-day account of what sites to visit, the species you should expect to see and the nights accommodations. There are ten pages of maps including detailed airport layouts and a Cape Town map with the location of your accommodation and "hub" sites around the city. The introduction lists reference materials such as birdfinding guides and bird tapes, etc. There are taxonomic notes and notes on how to identify some difficult species. More importantly is the logistics page which gives addresses, phone numbers and prices of noteworthy accommodations, car rental, boat rental for a pelagic trip, international and domestic air, and access information to Sani Pass. There is even a page of colour photographs of many of the circuits accommodations (extra \$2.00 cost if you wish it xeroxed in colour). During my visit I recorded 500 species and saw all but two of the endemics. Although free (I will not be making a profit on this service, I do expect to be compensated for my costs of photocopying and mailing. Please send \$5.00 along with your address to **Keith Taylor, 406-3363 Glasgow Avenue, Victoria, B.C. V8X 1M5.**

## From the VNHS Mailbox

*Letter to the Editor*

Dear Christopher and Heather,

Your "Slithering Sings of Spring" article in the May/June issue of The Victoria Naturalist was ever so enjoyable and exceedingly interesting.

I remember on one of my many travels northward, when I stopped at Egmont to hike into the fascinating whirlpools of Shookumchuck on my return to where I parked by van, a female garter snake and her many male friends were exhibiting just what you so described. Nature's way is ever so exciting. Dealing with nature as you do can be so rewarding. Nature is also my priority even though I am just a layman.

Now that I am 85 on this day my venturing days are dwindling, but I'll be looking forward to reading more of your knowledgeable articles.

And congratulations on winning the Swarovski binocular raffle.

Yours truly,

J. Colton Haggarty

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**REMINDER:** most of the regular meetings of the VNHS are not held during the summer months. The Natural History Presentations are now finished but will continue again in September.

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days (except July and August). **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.

### JULY EVENTS

Please note: no regular meetings in July

#### Sunday, July 18

##### *Birding Mandarte and Sidney Islands*

We'll travel by chartered boat to the large seabird nesting colony on Mandarte Island. Gulls, Pigeon Guillemots, and three species of cormorants will all be seen there, and there is a slim chance of seeing one of the few Tufted Puffins that hang on in these waters. The boat drops us at Sidney Island to take in the first southbound shorebirds. You can return on any scheduled Sidney Island Ferry sailing. Bring a lunch and something to drink. Water on Sidney Island is safe but not great! Meet at the ferry dock at the foot of Beacon Avenue in Sidney by 8:00 a.m. sharp. There is easy parking at Second and Bevan. Cost is \$15.00 per person (includes the \$4.50 return ferry fare from Sidney Island). Space on the boat is limited, so please reserve your place by calling Goldstream Park at 478-9414. Priority to VNHS members.

#### Sunday, July 25

##### *Aliens — the Phantom Menace*

Join biologist **Dave Fraser** for a field trip on the Saanich Peninsula searching for alien species. Wall lizards, Bullfrogs, and a variety of other species of plants and animals will be searched for. Bring your binoculars and set your phasers on stunned! Meet at the lower *Filter Beds* parking lot at Beaver Lake Park (by the group picnic shelter) at 9:00 a.m. Please call the Goldstream Nature House 478-9414 if you have any questions.



### AUGUST EVENTS

Please note: no regular meetings in August.

#### Sunday, August 1

##### *Botanical Beach*

You never know what the receding tide will reveal at beautiful Botanical Beach. Sea urchins, anemones, chitons and barnacles galore are just a few of the marine organisms that call this area home. It isn't only the beach that provides the unexpected though. Look offshore and watch for marine mammals and pelagic birds. A seal, orcas, or a gray whale could pass by at any minute! Join BC Park Naturalist **Susanna Solecki** for a day on the west coast. Please arrange car-pooling with Susanna by calling the Goldstream Nature House at 478-9414. We will meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:45 a.m.

#### Saturday and Sunday, August 7 and 8

##### *Hurricane Ridge*

This trip, a VNHS tradition, is timed to catch the peak of the alpine wildflowers on Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park. The trip is much later this year due to record snowfall. Bird from the ferry, and look for high elevation species in the mountains. There are facilities in the park, but a lunch and something to drink is suggested. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour before 6:00 a.m. for the 6:10 sailing of the M.V. Coho. Ferry cost is \$13.50 (US) return, and it is a good idea to have some ID with you for customs. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is about \$20.00 (CDN). We'll return on the 5:15 p.m. sailing.



VNHS Sidney Island trip. Photos: Glen Moores

**Darren Copley** and **Sharon Godkin** are leading on Saturday, and on Sunday it's **Andrew McDonald** and **Marilyn Lambert**. These trips always fill, so reserve your spot early by calling the Goldstream Nature house at 478-9414. *VNHS members will be given priority.*

#### Saturday, August 14

*Birding around Mandarte Island and on Sidney Island*  
See July 18 entry for details.

#### Sunday, August 15

##### *Birding Cowichan Bay with Derrick Marven*

The shorebirds should be on the move, and Cowichan Bay is one of the better spots on southern Vancouver Island. This is also an opportunity to check on the breeding success of the local population of threatened Purple Martins. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:45 a.m., or the Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 8:30 a.m.

#### Saturday, August 21

##### *Iona island Shorebird Migration*

Venture with **David Allinson** to Iona Island near the Vancouver

International Airport for a shorebird migration spectacle. Iona Island's bird checklist stands at a remarkable 306 species, including a whopping 49 shorebird species. Last year's trip tallied 75 species, including a locally rare Clay-colored Sparrow. This will be a full-day trip to one of British Columbia's premier birding locations and we will be catching the 7:00 a.m. ferry. If we car-pool effectively, our expenses will be under \$40. For more information and to register, contact David (evenings only) at 478-0493.

#### Sunday, August 29

##### *Birding Esquimault Lagoon*

Need help sorting out all those returning shorebirds. Leader **Rick Schortinghuis** will guide you through the steps it takes to become a shorebird lover. What next, gulls? In previous years birders have had great looks at both species of Golden Plovers. Meet at 8:00 a.m. by the main bridge.

### SEPTEMBER EVENTS

*Regular meetings recommence.*

## BULLETIN BOARD

#### The Goldstream Art Show Request for Volunteers

Goldstream Provincial Park and the Victoria Natural History Society are, once again, co-sponsoring (with the Habitat Acquisition Trust) a show of nature-inspired art from September 18 to October 11, 1999. The Nature of Island Artists will be held at the Freeman King Visitor Centre (Goldstream Provincial Park) and will showcase artists from Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. To successfully operate this show and raise money for the Habitat Acquisition Trust and Goldstream's Eagle Extravaganza, we need volunteers to help staff the centre during the day. Please call **Susanna** at Goldstream (478-9414) to get on the volunteer list.

#### BC Parks Summer Visitor Programs

Free programming is available in many of the Provincial Parks on Southern Vancouver Island; including special Jerry's Rangers

Programs, designed especially for children. The summer program schedule for BC Parks is available at Goldstream Park and other BC Parks offices. Call 478-9414 for information on how you can get one. Read about our up-coming special events in the calendars and especially some of our exciting new workshops.

#### Wanted

The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) is looking for donations of quality items, books, records etc. for a Giant Garage Sale to be held in late September. Please phone 386-4792 or email [camassia@bc.sympatico.ca](mailto:camassia@bc.sympatico.ca) for drop-off information.

#### Young birder needing funds to attend a birding camp

Looking for summer work (yard work, moving, etc.) Please contact **Devon Anderson** at 384-9292.

