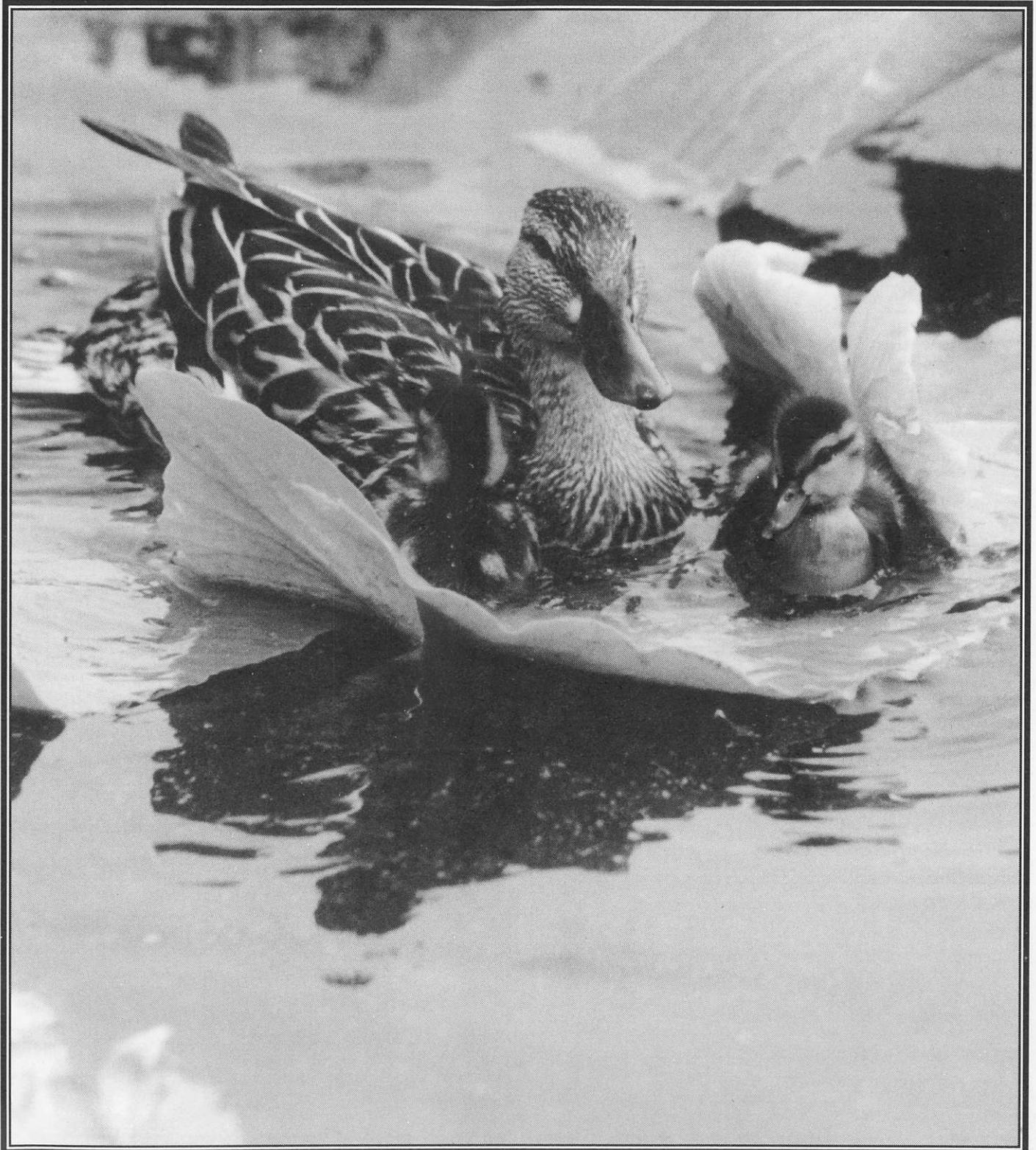




# The Victoria NATURALIST

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AUGUST  
2000  
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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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### Deadline for next issue: August 9, 2000

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 Fax: call to arrange  
 e-mail: rossarch@islandnet.com

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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 Editors, Marilyn and Ross Archibald, at 384-3063 (before 9:00 p.m.), 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 will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

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## COVER PHOTO

Spring Mallard family by  
 Marie O'Shaughnessy

## A NOTE FROM THE NEW EDITORS

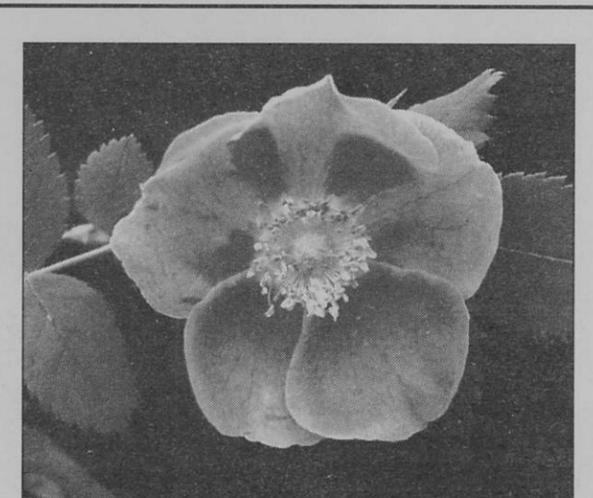
Here we are in our second issue. We would like to remind all you writers and aspiring writers that we hope to put out theme issues of the newsletter. Our first theme, for the September-October issue, revolves around the creatures and activities of Autumn. So, get those fingers flying across the keyboard or writing implements gliding across the page so we can fill the Autumn issue with your prose or poetry.

To get around the last minute scramble we seem to have to find photographs for the *Naturalist*, we would like to start a photo library. We would also like to see photos from a larger cross-section of the membership, so contact us about dropping off those photographic gems that no one else gets to see. We are interested in photos of all things natural. We would particularly like to have photos of VNHS members in action.

The deadline for submissions for the next issue is August 9, 2000. Also, please try to have your Calendar submissions for early November included for the September-October issue. We hope, this way, to ensure that events do not get missed if, for unforeseen reasons, the November-December issue is delayed a few days.

We look forward to hearing from you.

*Marilyn and Ross*



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## QUALITY PHOTOFINISHING

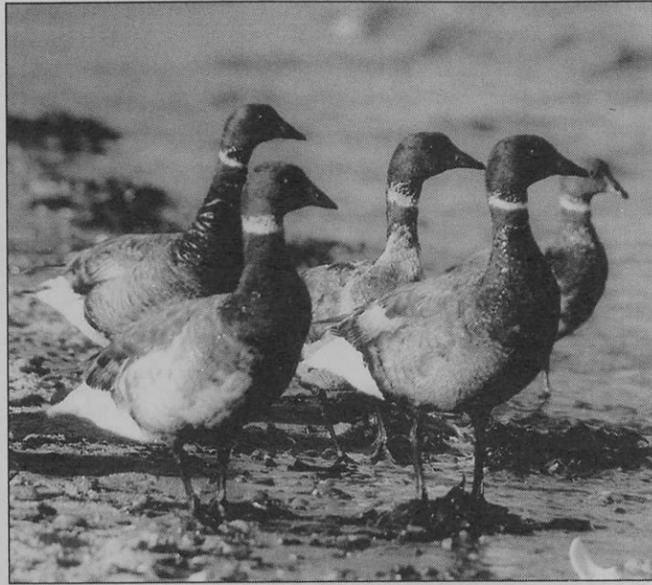
747 Discovery Street, Victoria, B.C. V8T 1H1  
 Phone: (250) 385-5512

# Enjoying the Brant Festival 2000

By Dannie Carsen

I wasn't planning to enter the Brant Festival Birding Big Day again. The best efforts of the many teams I had "led" had broken 100 only a few times. The Get-a-Lifers (GAL) team had a lock on the winning route and that didn't look likely to change.

Then I got a telephone call from Rick Schortinghuis. Rick persuaded me to take a new team to the Brant Festival. Eventually, there were nine of us. Rick led his "Surf Scopers" team of Marie O'Shaughnessy, Denise Gubersky, Cheryl Mackie, and Sue Ennis. I teamed up with Ann Nightingale and Barry and Jeremy Gatten. After several phone calls about logistics, we decided to meet at the Pay Less near Goldstream at 7:15 on Friday, April 7th. That worked out really well, except Marie slept in and Sue was sick! Jeremy and Barry showed up and our team, aptly named the "Hawk Owls", because we were good both day and night, was complete. Rick suggested we meet at Legacy Marsh, near Lantzville. I think we were all a little unclear about exactly which road Legacy Marsh was on, but we carried on. I had a bad feeling about travelling in three vehicles, one of them a vintage Volkswagen Van, over the Malahat.



Brant Geese. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy



The combined Hawk Owl and Surf Scopers teams. Missing, Marie O'Shaughnessy – who took the picture.

We didn't see Barry and Jeremy for the rest of the day. Luckily, we came alongside Denise and two of three vehicles made it to the rendezvous at Legacy Marsh. It looked "birdy", with lots of open water and a nice winding dirt road following the powerlines. We could hear some ducks murmuring, and the "kokerie" of Red-winged blackbirds. We added it on our list. During our day, we pulled into all the likely spots we might find Barry and Jeremy, but no luck. We even went to some art exhibits and the Brant Festival Office to leave a message, but still couldn't find them. Needless to say, we all went in one car per team the next day!!

When we arrived at our motel, I left a message at the main desk at Island Hall since Barry and I had discussed staying there. Barry phoned my wife Susan in Victoria, was directed to Island Hall, and found us just as we were warming up the potluck before we had drunk the sea of wine. Sue Ennis showed up with Marie just after that. Our teams were complete after a shaky start. The potluck was wonderful, and everyone dined royally on lasagne, chicken, roasted Italian vegetables, cous-cous, tabouli salad, and carrot cake.

After supper, we were all keen to go for a walk. Well, most of us. Rick suggested a visit to the Get-a-Lifers, presumably to glean some route information for the Big Day. The Lifers were supposed to be staying in the Parksville Flats trailer park. We walked along the Parksville beach to the Flats, enjoying the beautiful low light from the setting sun. On the beach, our teams got together for a few pictures. Then, we had to go waaaay up the avenue to go through the gates of the trailer park. We were really tired by the time Rick knocked on the door to their trailer.

"Come on in," said David Allinson when he saw Rick.

"There's nine of us," said Rick.

That brought a chuckle and an "oh sure" from the GAL team. They soon realized how small their trailer was! We had a lot of fun chatting back and forth. Some of us tried to get some help with winnowing down our birding spots. The Lifers were very helpful and quite funny. But, after a half-hour or so, the early rising Lifer's team decided that they weren't getting any sleep with our rowdy bunch. Luckily for our knackered crew, Darren kindly drove us all back to the Parksville Beach Motel in his pickup.

"Great!" we all said of our short trip back. But the night wasn't over yet! We settled in, or so we thought, but Rick had other ideas. "Gotta go owling, at least for an hour!"

"Oh man," I said, as a big yawn came over my slightly horizontal body. We did, however, enjoy "owling" the Nanoose area – mostly because we picked up a Western screech owl near the trail at "The Notch" park. Then we got a Northern saw-whet owl at Morella Pond! (A Northern pygmy owl rounded up our list of small owls at Legacy Marsh the next morning.) We drove sleepily back to our motel at 10 p.m. We were glad we wouldn't have to get up too early the next morning now that we had a few owls.

At 4:15 a.m., I knocked on everyone's door. The morning was clear and calm and our team was mostly sharp and alert (hah!). By 5:20 we stopped by Morella Pond and by 5:40 we were at Legacy Marsh. What a great place Legacy was for the dawn chorus. Marsh wrens sputtered while rails

said "ki deek" and towhees joined in. We decided to walk along the little dirt road to the powerlines and by 6:00 a.m. almost all the birds were calling. Varied thrush keened from the hillsides while Buffleheads cavorted with females in their spring ritual. As we walked along, we heard the sharp, quiet whistle of a Wood duck and eventually spotted six in a little pond. Many of us have passed a whole Brant Festival not finding a wood duck! We heard a Pileated woodpecker and the buzzing of Rufous hummingbirds was constant. We left before we picked up the Hairy woodpecker and a few other birds that were spotted by the "Surf Scopers" team led by Rick.

On to Nanoose Bay around 7:00 a.m., where there was a huge raft of scoters (5-10,000 of Black, Surf and White-winged scoters), on the western side of the bay. At the Bible Camp, we picked up the first of many Eurasian widgeon. Then we spotted a Merlin winging it over the estuary. At Morella pond in full daylight, we began to get edgy. We only got a Hutton's vireo and Red-breasted sapsucker there along with a Fox sparrow. The next five hours were a blur as we threaded our way around the waterfront from Nanoose to Plummer Road. Our usual spot for American kestrel near Walls Road yielded only a Cooper's hawk. It was almost 11:00 a.m. and we were stretching for more birds.

At the logging road crossing looking over Wall's Beach, we decided to drive up to Dawson Road on the other side of the highway. Dawson yielded a wonderful treat, even though we had not found a Barn owl there the night before. As we drove down towards the farm, we got this electric feeling. It was the Lifers, waving frantically at the side of the road. On a fence rail in the fields along Dawson was a male Mountain bluebird, which all of us enjoyed! Then we got a Cliff swallow in the barn up top.

Plummer Road contributed a Belted kingfisher and Black-bellied plover, but no yellowlegs were seen there this year. We were winding down. As the GAL team has observed, you have to hit a hundred by 10:00 a.m. and birding is pretty near over by then. We got only a Glaucous gull and a Western gull at French Creek, where we joined the Lifers for a frenzied gullfest on the far side of the marina. We made our final call at Hamilton Marsh, where we leaped from the car and strode up the trail, to see two or three species of swallows. We could not find much at Hamilton, and the Northern rough-winged and Bank swallows eluded us. Our final bird was a Cassin's vireo, which Ann identified on her approach to the platform.

Of course the Get-a-Lifers won again with 117 species. Never mind, there was great food at the Railway Station where volunteers helped to distribute a mountain of food. We gorged on prawns and a wonderful array of desserts and told our tales of birding highs and woes. All in all, the two teams did very well, with our Hawk Owl group finding 100 species and Rick's Surf Scopers turning up a very respectable 97 species. Our three owl species seemed impressive, since three owls was the maximum number seen by any other team! More importantly, we had a lot of fun and a great potluck. There is already talk about an expedition to the Brant Festival next year. Watch out, Get-a-Lifers!

# Dusky Flycatcher on Mount Tolmie: First Confirmed Record for Southern Vancouver Island

By Keith Taylor

**Whit, whit.** The Empid's call had been anticipated for some time. It was too early in May for Gray, Least, and Willow flycatchers, which express similar calls, so it must be a Dusky.

I plunged into the wet brush to confirm my conjecture. The small flycatcher flitted across the path and, upon landing, occasionally flicked its tail through a short arc. I could clearly see the structure and colour of the lower mandible as it had landed a few meters above my head in a short Garry Oak. The bill was narrow and dark from the tip, gradually fading into a paler base. At least two-thirds of the lower mandible was dark, with the base a dusky yellow. This bill colour eliminated Gray, Least, and Willow flycatchers which possess wider, almost entirely orange-yellow lower mandibles, or, in the Gray, a pinkish lower mandible. (Later observations of the short primary projection would eliminate Willow or Alder, which possess long projections).

Much of the bird was concealed in the dense foliage and was difficult to view as it sat directly overhead. Fortunately it issued the first note of its song – a medium pitched *chpit'*. This was all I needed to eliminate all other congruous species.

In the same area, the sharp *peep* calls of two Hammond's Flycatchers could be compared to the dry *whit* or *wit* of the Dusky. The Hammond's would occasionally emit their mellow *tew*, which, to my ear, sounds somewhat like a shortened version of the call of Western Wood-Pewee. A few low-pitched, rough *brrrrk* notes of a Hammond's partial song could also be heard.

As Hammond's Flycatchers can look very similar to Dusky's, I was anxious to compare the two species. Unfortunately the medium-sized Empidonax decided to elude me. Frustrated, I had to leave for an early appointment. As I was doing so, I relayed my find to an older gentleman birder with instructions to report the sighting to the hot line.

I returned around 1 p.m. under sunny skies and immediately heard the bird calling behind the private properties that flank the southern edge of the "jungle". I had ceaseless observations of the plumage and structure as the bird "fly-catched" low from a backyard willow. Compared to Hammond's it was rather drab. The breast band was faint and there was little contrast between the head and back. The throat was very pale gray appearing white in bright sunlight. The head and face were pale gray, and this, along with the bold, pale lores, obscured much of the eye-ring in front of the eye. (Hammond's can occasionally exhibit lores as pale as on Dusky). The posterior sector of the eye-ring was not as bold, nor as "teardrop" shaped as on Hammond's. The bill was

longer than on most Hammond's (there is overlap in length between the species) and the tail subjectively longer. The head appeared less peaked, more rounded even when the bird was excited. The primary projection was conclusive, however. The projection on the Dusky, when compared to the tertials, was just longer than the uppermost. The primary tip was also rounded (i.e. the primaries remained a constant width to the tip). On Hammond's the primary projection is about the same length as all three upper tertials combined. The primary tip is also pointed (i.e. the primaries narrow at the tip). The flycatcher never flicked its wings upon landing as Hammond's does.

## Records

The Dusky Flycatcher on Mount Tolmie was seen by numerous experienced birders on the 5th and 6th of May, 2000. It was not recorded past this date. Others have been suspected of occurring at this location on April 29, 2000 and early May of 1998 and 1999 but not heard well or seen. There is a specimen record from Comox May 12, 1934 and four sight records (including one bird banded) from Rocky Point Bird Banding Station: September 17, 1985, September 29, 1994 (banded), May 22, 1999, and April 29, 2000. There are no published descriptions of these records and none were photographed. Unfortunately, because of limited access, these records were not confirmed by a number of experienced birders. Another sighting from the Sooke Hills must remain hypothetical, as those who attempted to confirm the flycatchers found only Hammond's at the exact location of the observation.

## Conclusion

It appears that Dusky Flycatcher has a narrow window of occurrence on the coast from late April through late May with most records in the first two weeks of May. The flycatcher occurs with some regularity to May 28th in Vancouver. Coastal records are most likely the direct result of strong frontal systems. There are fewer fall records (September) with one specimen taken in Vancouver on September 4, 1932. The Dusky Flycatcher has also been recorded on the coast in summer.

Dusky Flycatchers most likely occur on Vancouver Island more often than recent records would indicate. Empidonax are usually identified by birders by song, and as most Empidonax do not sing their primary songs until they reach their breeding-grounds, are likely overlooked. Call notes can also sound similar to the untrained ear. Projected

future Vancouver Island records will bring the status of this flycatcher from accidental to rare.

## References

*The Empidonax Challenge: Part 1-5*, Bret Whitney and Ken

Kaufman, *Birding* Vol. XVII, Number 4 through Vol. XIX, Number 5.

*The Birds of British Columbia*, Vol 3, R. W. Campbell et al. *Checklist of British Columbia Birds 2000*, K. Taylor <http://www.visionfoundation.org>

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**Newcastle Pavilion**, near Nanaimo (Newcastle Island). Call 755-1132.

**Montague Harbour Floating Nature House**, Galiano Island (weekends). Call 478-9414.

*Present your VNHS membership card for a 5% discount on all books, other than sale items.*

# Green Spaces Project – Report to Sponsors

20 April 2000

By Tony Embleton, Chair

The Management Committee of the VNHS Green Spaces Project are very grateful for all the expenditure of time, effort, and skill that volunteers have contributed to survey and inventory the various remnants of natural ecology in and around Greater Victoria during 1999.

Much of importance, and we hope of lasting value, was accomplished. Here is a list of the tremendous amount of inventory work that has been done:

- 75 hectares of presently unused sites owned by the Department of National Defence (DND) and Parks Canada have been inventoried. These sites are adjacent to, and on both sides of Ocean Boulevard, from Sooke Road to Esquimalt Lagoon.
- 79 hectares on 10 sites of undeveloped land in Colwood, and the publication of a booklet by the Greenway Advisory Committee entitled City of Colwood Greenways Plan which will become a model for other communities.
- 8 hectares, comprising the entire western boundary of the DND property at Albert Head (a 75 m wide natural strip.)
- 50 hectares approximately, along 2 kilometres of shoreline within the DND Mary Hill Military reserve. This will be completed in the year 2000.
- 60 hectares of undeveloped lands laying between Thetis Lake and Mount Work Regional Parks. This has been done in cooperation with the CRD and the District of Highlands. A further 30 ha will be started in 2000.
- 138 Saanich Parks were reconnoitered to identify those that still had some remnants of their original ecosystems present. The majority of Saanich Parks are zoned P4 and designated for athletic purposes, or some other recreational use. As such, their remaining ecosystems are not protected. We believe that the community can make better informed decisions and, if appropriate, rezoning arrangements for their protection.
- 22 Saanich P4 Parks have been surveyed and the ecosystems inventoried and mapped during 1999. At present, 3 others are being examined.
- The inspection of 496 Discontinuances of Saanich Rights of Way that was started in 1998 was completed. As a result of these inspections, 272 Rights of Way were reported as possessing Greenway Potential as green spaces, corridors of connectors to other green spaces.

We continue to seek opportunities to better acquaint municipal councillors, officials, and community associations about the value of the ecosystem remnants and how they can serve as highly valuable components to a municipal greenways system.

Site specific detailed maps and reports documenting all of the findings, including recommendations, are shared with the local planning authorities, owners, and other important stakeholders. Copies of all the findings are at present being lodged in the office of the Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) office. They are accessible in paper format and eventually it is our aim to translate the data into an electronic format.

It is our aim to continue to seek new opportunities to pursue our conservation goals through the use of the data that volunteers have helped to collect.

Your financial help has been an essential and highly valued part of this project. We could not have accomplished this great accumulation of data without your donation, and the dedication, and commitment of time and effort of our volunteers.

We hope that your participation has been positive and a rewarding one for you, and that you are willing to contribute again during the year 2000.

## Thank You

23 May, 2000

Dear Bruce,

The management team of the Victoria Natural History Society Green Spaces Project wish to thank you for the support you have given and also to give you an update on our accomplishments.

The eleven members of the management team are:  
**Norm Mogensen** – Chair of the Inventory Committee with **Tom Burgess** and **Sonja Zupanec**.  
**Bernard Morrison** – Treasurer  
**Nitya Harris** – Chair of the Public Education Committee with **Cam Finlay**, **Rick Searle** and **Harvey Williams**  
**Louise McAndrew** – Chair of the Technology Committee with **Suzanne Caskenette**, and **Sonja Zupanec**  
**Tony Embleton** – Chair of the Management Team, and

Chair of the Liaison Committee with **Tom Burgess**, and **Dorothy Tupper**.

We have conducted plant inventories, and mapped many areas of undeveloped green spaces within greater Victoria. The accompanying letter will provide you with a summary of our activities.

Without your help, and that of about 200 volunteers, we would not have been able to accomplish the large variety of tasks that we have undertaken.

Our plan for this year is to convert our mountain of paper reports into an electronic format so that we may present the data to decision makers in a more powerful and interesting way.

We also hope to obtain a geo-positioning instrument,

and a G.I.S. Arc View system that will speed up our location finding and its conversion to electronic mapping.

We are working closely with the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Habitat Steward in the creation of an atlas of CRD green spaces and also with the Provincial Capital Commission.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call Tony Embleton at 595-6812, or Norm Mogensen at 477-9114.

Yours sincerely,

*Tony Embleton*  
Chair, Green Spaces Project

## VNHS Spring Bird Count – Report

Bright spring weather helped the 74 stalwarts who conducted the VNHS Spring Bird Count on Saturday May 6, 2000. I would like to thank each and every one of you. The data is valuable and contributes greatly to our understanding of trends that are taking place in our area, and also keeps a database of what should be in our area at this time of year. I would also like to pass on thanks to the staff at the Swan Lake Nature House who hosted the after-count get together, specially since there was a meeting of nature interpreters at Manning Park that weekend, and the Nature House should really have been closed. Having a place to get together after a count is always appreciated. Thank you very much.

Compared to last year, the species count is almost identical, but the total count of birds is considerably higher. Four areas were not covered at all:

Butchart Gardens/North Highlands  
Goldstream  
Oak Bay  
Elk Lake/Cordova Bay

This lack is reflected in the data – e.g. no count in Goldstream meant no American Dipper, or Red-Breasted Sapsucker, two species usually found there. Last year, the Elk Lake/Cordova Bay area provided us with most of the numbers for American Coot and Cliff Swallow. No Coot were found anywhere this year; this could be because of the warm sunny weather, but with no count we don't even know if they were there or not.

There were some highlights, however, the most noteworthy being the Dusky Flycatcher, a new species for the

area. I have a memory that about 4 or 5 years ago, there were some Dusky Flycatchers reported, but because they were only heard, the count was disallowed. Does anyone else have any memory of this?

Total species 146 (1999 - 147)

Total birds 22,284 (1999 - 17,562)

At the September Birder's Night, I shall be passing out some awards:

**Highest number of birds** (3,842)

#21 Oak Bay Islands  
David Stirling and Marilyn Lambert

**Highest number of species** (92)

#6 Albert Head/Triangle Mountain  
David Allinson and Denise Gubersky

**All Warblers counted**

#2 Central Highlands  
Warren Lee, leader

**Highest number of species per participant** (50)

#15 Gordon Head/Mt. Doug  
Al Wiseley

Once again, thank you to all those 74 people who gave up a lovely Saturday morning to take part. Special thanks to the leaders, for organising their areas.

Marilyn Miller,  
Co-ordinator  
658-1723  
saddle@uvvm.uvic.ca

# 2000 Victoria Spring Bird Count

Key:

- |  |                                  |                             |                                  |                     |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Butchart Gardens/Northern Highlands | 6. Albert Head/Triangle Mountain | 11. Beacon Hill             | 16. Swan Lake/Cedar Hill         | 21. Oak Bay Islands |
| 2. Central Highlands                   | 7. Esquimalt Lagoon              | 12. Oak Bay                 | 17. Blenkinsop/Panama Flats      |                     |
| 3. Goldstream                          | 8. Esquimalt Harbour             | 13. University/Cadboro Bay  | 18. Elk Lake/Cordova Bay         |                     |
| 4. Thetis Lake/ Hastings Flats         | 9. Portage Inlet                 | 14. Ten Mile Point          | 19. Prospect Lake/Quick's Bottom |                     |
| 5. Langford Lake                       | 10. Victoria Harbour             | 15. Gordon Head/Mt. Douglas | 20. Martindale/Bear Hill         |                     |

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total	
Pacific Loon						1														3		4	
Common Loon						3	3							1							6	13	
Red-throated Loon																				4		4	
Pied-billed Grebe																			1			1	
Horned Grebe														1								1	
Red-necked Grebe						3															1	4	
Western Grebe						1																1	
Double-crested Cormorant						3	31	28	7	2	3		2		2	11				1	320	410	
Brandt's Cormorant													31	3								68	102
Pelagic Cormorant										8	5		1	1	1					3	25	44	
Great Blue Heron				1	2	3	6	5	7	16	24		4		1	1	7		4	2	6	89	
Mute Swan						4	2															6	
Brant														10								10	
Canada Goose	41			49	27	12	19	20	49	19			5	4	1	15	13		50	130	16	470	
Snow Goose																				3		3	
Gtr White-fronted Goose																				1	70	71	
Wood Duck	11				2																	13	
Green-winged Teal				10		7			9							3	4		13			46	
Mallard	22			18	7	30	22	7	45	8	74		40	5	1	161	59		39	77	6	621	
Northern Pintail						15																15	
Blue-winged Teal																				1		1	
Cinnamon Teal																				1	4	5	
Northern Shoveler																				2		2	
Gadwall																	2			27		29	
American Wigeon						14					11									2		27	
Eurasian Wigeon											2											2	
Ring-necked Duck					1															25		26	
Greater Scaup																						10	
Lesser Scaup								10														10	
Harlequin Duck						3				9			1	4							8	25	
Oldsquaw																					8	8	
Surf Scoter						6	13							12						42	35	108	
White-winged Scoter											24									10	8	42	
Bufflehead	1					26	3	2	8		1		6			5			1	1		54	
Hooded merganser	2				1	3																6	

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total	
Common Merganser							3		4												6	13	
Red-breasted Merganser						1	8														20	29	
Ruddy Duck																			1			1	
Turkey Vulture	24			4	1	5	2	6								1	4		12	3		62	
Osprey							1		1													2	
Bald Eagle	3			2	2	13	1		1	3	4		1	5	1	1	2		4	3	3	49	
Sharp-shinned Hawk																							
Cooper's Hawk						1	1		1	1			2	4		1	1		2	1		15	
Red-tailed Hawk	4			1		3									1	1	1		1	5		17	
Golden Eagle																							
American Kestrel															1							1	
Merlin	1																					1	
Peregrine Falcon																	2					2	
Ring-necked Pheasant	1			10		1	1									1	3				3	20	
Blue Grouse																							
Ruffed Grouse	1			2		2														1		6	
California Quail	54			26	2	68	8		8		2		15		4	3	18				33	241	
Virginia Rail				1																		1	
American Coot																							
Killdeer	12			5	8	9		5	2	4			1		1		6		6	53	2	114	
Black Oystercatcher										5	3		1	4								5	18
Greater Yellowlegs				1																		1	
Lesser Yellowlegs																						1	
Solitary Sandpiper				1																		1	
Spotted Sandpiper					1																1	2	
Whimbrel																							
Surfbird																					1	1	
Black Turnstone																							
Western Sandpiper				2							6		9								17	2	36
Least Sandpiper																		1		12		13	
Rock Sandpiper																						4	4
Dunlin													3									3	
Common Snipe													1			3					1	5	
Bonaparte's Gull						1																1	
Mew Gull						12	1				6									9	200	228	
Thayer's Gull										2												2	
Western Gull																							
Glaucous-winged Gull				4	6	75	63	99	135	162	373		50	14	20	97	23		1	115	3000	4237	
Common Murre						8																8	
Pigeon Guillemot						1	20				11		4		14					4	25	79	

## Key:

- |  |                                  |                             |                                  |                     |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Butchart Gardens/Northern Highlands | 6. Albert Head/Triangle Mountain | 11. Beacon Hill             | 16. Swan Lake/Cedar Hill         | 21. Oak Bay Islands |
| 2. Central Highlands                   | 7. Esquimalt Lagoon              | 12. Oak Bay                 | 17. Blenkinsop/Panama Flats      |                     |
| 3. Goldstream                          | 8. Esquimalt Harbour             | 13. University/Cadboro Bay  | 18. Elk Lake/Cordova Bay         |                     |
| 4. Thetis Lake/ Hastings Flats         | 9. Portage Inlet                 | 14. Ten Mile Point          | 19. Prospect Lake/Quick's Bottom |                     |
| 5. Langford Lake                       | 10. Victoria Harbour             | 15. Gordon Head/Mt. Douglas | 20. Martindale/Bear Hill         |                     |

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total
Marbled Murrelet						30									2							32
Rhinoceros Auklet						2				5	3		7							30	4	51
Rock Dove					1		36		48	23	53		3			10			6			180
Band-tailed Pigeon		4		8		10							1	1		4						28
Mourning Dove																						
Great Horned Owl	2					4																6
Northern Pygmy Owl	1																					1
Barred Owl	1					2												2				5
Vaux's Swift						2																2
Anna's Hummingbird						2							9	7	1	9	3					31
Rufous Hummingbird	36			11	4	98	11	1	6	1	2				3	5	7		11	14		210
Belted Kingfisher					3	2	3										1		2	6		17
Red-breasted Sapsucker																						
Downy Woodpecker	7					1			4	3	6		1	1	1	2	4			2	4	36
Hairy Woodpecker	4			3		1																8
Northern Flicker	32			14	2	11	7		1	2				2	4		1		5	14		95
Pileated Woodpecker	5			3									1	1	1				2	2		15
Hammond's Flycatcher	1					1							3									5
Olive-sided Flycatcher	1					1							1						1	2		6
Dusky Flycatcher													1									1
Pacific Slope Flycatcher	45			43	3	19	6		1	2				7	2					1	12	141
Western Kingbird																					1	1
Eurasian Skylark																					1	1
Purple Martin																						
Tree Swallow																	2			11	55	68
Violet-green Swallow	55			44	21	41	17	36	57	41	16		22	8	7	151	53		100	175	4	848
Northern Rough-winged Swallow																	1		1	2		4
Cliff Swallow						3											6					9
Barn Swallow				5	1	15	10	1	13	17	4		5		1	48	26		24	182	5	357
Steller's Jay	11			2	4	2	1														1	21

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total
Northwestern Crow	9			37	6	21	34	14	136	146	92		16	25	18	112	25		11	186	15	903
Common Raven	34			10	1	9	9			1			2		1	11	2		8	12		100
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	82			31	3	96	17	2	21	13	11		15	30	16	2	14			16	43	412
Bushtit	14			10	1	17	17		25	14	34		21	22	2	48	9		2	29		265
Red-breasted Nuthatch	28			13		9	5		3	2	3		6	4	3	1			17	7		101
Brown Creeper	7			7		16			1		3		4	4	7	1			2	1		53
Bewick's Wren	25			28	3	9	2		29	16	7		33	14	3	16	11		4	36		236
House Wren	3			7	1	11	3						1			2			2	8		38
Winter Wren	15			17		7	3		6	3	2			1	8	2	1		2	13		80
Marsh Wren				1	2											11	9		16	2		41
American Dipper																						0
Golden-crowned Kinglet	33			12		28					2				5	3	1					84
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				4		1			5				2									12
Townsend's Solitaire							1						1			1						3
Swainson's Thrush					1	2															2	5
Hermit Thrush	3					2			3		2		7	2						2		21
American Robin	240			150	34	265	61	36	135	58	52		53	23	50	73	64		42	264		1600
Varied Thrush	3			1													1		1			6
American Pipit						1											14					15
Cedar Waxwing									3												2	5
European Starling	7			94	6	57	20	50	287	182	86		37	16	17	216	63		10	352		1500
Cassin's Vireo	18				1	2	1						1	1					1	1		26
Hutton's Vireo	2			1		1								1							2	7
Warbling Vireo	5			3		5			1				2		1		2					19
Red-eyed Vireo																						
Orange-crowned Warbler	79			38	9	78	19		34	17	24		28	10	16	23	10		3	51		439
Yellow Warbler	5								1	3						4	1				8	22
Yellow-rumped Warbler	10			13	4	19	6		8	5	11		9	5	2	33	1		2	23		151
Black-throated Gray Warbler	16			5		1	2						1	3		2						32
Townsend's Warbler	79			24	2	18	6				21		15	1		3	1				8	178
MacGillivray's Warbler	27			4									1								1	33
Common Yellowthroat	8			7	5	6					1					17	13		17	29		103
Wilson's Warbler	15			6	1	24	6		16	8	32		25	6	7	27	18				5	196
Black-headed Grosbeak					1												3					4
Spotted Towhee	81			34	2	37	7		11	1	16		13	11	13	37	15		22	55		355
Chipping Sparrow	11			3		14	39	1	7				3		2				2	19		101
Savannah Sparrow				4		25	44		12	7	12		6	12	1	9	22				88	242
Fox Sparrow									1							4					1	6
Song Sparrow	47			25	8	12	9		20	13	2		6	16	6	27	33		6	55	2	287
Lincoln's Sparrow	2					1	1						5			1	1		1			12

Key:

- 1. Butchart Gardens/Northern Highlands
- 2. Central Highlands
- 3. Goldstream
- 4. Thetis Lake/Hastings Flats
- 5. Langford Lake
- 6. Albert Head/Triangle Mountain
- 7. Esquamit Lagoon
- 8. Esquamit Harbour
- 9. Portage Inlet
- 10. Victoria Harbour
- 11. Beacon Hill
- 12. Oak Bay
- 13. University/Cadboro Bay
- 14. Ten Mile Point
- 15. Gordon Head/Mt. Douglas
- 16. Swan Lake/Cedar Hill
- 17. Blenkinsop/Panama Flats
- 18. Elk Lake/Cordova Bay
- 19. Prospect Lake/Quick's Bottom
- 20. Martindale/Bear Hill
- 21. Oak Bay Islands

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total
White-throated Sparrow	41	25	6	175	11	9	23	36	34	12	6	3	5	4	26	416						
Golden-crowned Sparrow	70	20	5	32	14	1	5	11		3	3	7	15	5	46	244						
White-crowned Sparrow	104	30	2	39	11	1	1	5		2	4	10	83	23	18	20	243					
Dark-eyed Junco	45	16	18	20	62	3	8	1		2	4	10	83	23	65	82	448					
Red-winged Blackbird																						
Western Meadowlark	10	4	4	16	5	5				1												1
Brewer's Blackbird	26	1	1	19	8	10	8	3		12	17	4	18	6	27	160						
Brown-headed Cowbird										8	1	3										14
Western Tanager																						1
Northern Oriole																						1
Purple Finch	21	4	4	15						1												50
House Finch	26	7	27	24						15	19	23	50	27	14	167	2					585
Red Crossbill	29	14	1	48	12	7				2	9	4		9	27	162						162
Pine Siskin	363	185	24	225	59	4	36	75	5	5	22	32	14	28	32	223						1332
American Goldfinch	23	2	3	9	1	2				2	2	15	4	6	5	72						72
Evening Grosbeak																						1
House Sparrow	98	1	24	79	3	247	239	56		23	26	19	179	69	78	1141						1141
TOTAL BIRDS	0	2022	0	1284	258	897	330	1583	1297	1176	0	630	409	376	1559	773	2	728	3093	3842	22284	22284
TOTAL SPECIES	0	66	0	65	49	92	60	53	42	50	0	67	49	50	55	57	1	65	88	26	146	146



# Hat Tricks

20 June 2000

By Andy MacKinnon, President

The spring of 2000 has been a busy one for Habitat Acquisition Trust. Several directors enjoyed a party to celebrate the successful completion of the Brooks Point property on South Pender Island. The Friends of Brooks Point hosted a wonderful afternoon celebration at Bedwell Harbour, with members of the Brooks family being special guests. A potluck dinner followed in the evening. And a visit to Brooks Point found it in the first flush of the spring bloom.

With the closing of The Field-Naturalist, HAT was forced to find new office space. We have now settled into suite 517 of the Central Building, at 620 View Street. An office opening was held on June 22nd.

Early in its history, HAT recognized the need to hire a full-time staff person to work with the Board in carrying out its activities. With funding in place, the decision was made to hire Bruce Whittington as Executive Director. Bruce is a founding director of HAT, and is well known to VNHS members as the Society's President.

Joanna Kafarowski managed HAT's office during the spring, but has moved on to travel with her family, and is enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Northern B.C. Clare Rumball has returned on a short-term basis to assist HAT with fundraising and administrative projects.

Through Human Resources Development Canada, HAT has hired Angela West for the summer. Angie is developing a protocol for establishing and monitoring conservation covenants. We have entered into a productive arrangement which sees Angie working closely on this project with Rebecca Best, another student working with Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Karen Hurley continues HAT's work with property owners in the Tod Creek/Prospect Lake watershed. An informal gathering on July 19th will provide information for residents who are interested in voluntary Environmental Stewardship Agreements. On September 16th, activities in the watershed will be highlighted at a Saanich Inlet event at the Institute of Ocean Sciences.

HAT lost long-time Director, and Treasurer, Colleen O'Brien, when she resigned. Colleen has seen HAT through its infancy, and has always been a committed advocate of conservation. She will be missed. Director Michael Mascall is our new Treasurer; Michael is an investment adviser, and has extensive experience in the land trust movement in B.C.

There was good news for all land trusts this spring.

Changes in the Income Tax Act have significantly reduced the capital gains tax payable on donations of ecologically sensitive land. This will make it much more attractive for landowners to make conservation donations. HAT can provide you with basic information if this may be of interest to you.

They say money makes the world go around. Well, it certainly helps land trusts do their work, too. We always welcome donations. Funds for operating expenses are especially welcome, but donations may be dedicated to specific purposes if desired. To make conservation giving simpler for donors, HAT can now process donations through VISA, and will soon be set up for Mastercard as well. Some donors choose to contribute on a monthly basis, with the amount being charged to a credit card automatically. HAT now also has an arrangement with Steve Housser of RBC Dominion Securities, to act as HAT's broker for donations of securities.

HAT continues to expand its membership. The good news for VNHS members is that a HAT membership is available for \$10.00, which is half the regular membership. While VNHS members can read about HAT in these pages, as HAT members they will receive *HAT Chat*, the HAT newsletter, with more extensive information about HAT and its projects. If you would like to join HAT, call the office at 995-2428. Better yet, drop in and see us in our new ..... habitat!

R.R. 3, Ladysmith, B.C. V0R 2E0  
(250) 245-7422

# Oaks in the Grassland Edge

By Yorke Edwards

A few years ago I was in a group of birders in Uplands Park counting birds for the Christmas Bird Count. Around us were brown grasses under large naked oaks. A university student was with us, enjoying new birds. Stopping in the middle of a sentence, she turned to look away, and said quietly, "This is like home." Following her gaze, I asked if her home was in Manitoba. She answered, "Yes".

Many times I have driven across Canada to Ontario. I enjoy the prairie with its big easy-to-see hawks, and if I keep watching, I get lucky. On most trips, there are pronghorn antelopes to see near the highway, but there is also a lot of prairie. Driving into Manitoba I soon begin hoping to see oaks. I have been seeing a few trees, but they are foreigners planted by farmers to tame the prairie winds and the summer heat.

Deep into Manitoba I finally see oaks, at first small ones. They seem to grow larger as I go east. They are the only native tree species to be seen at first. All are Bur Oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*), the only native tree I see that lives well into the prairie grassland. I am in the Tall Grass Prairie, moister than the drier prairies to the west.

The Bur Oaks and our island's Garry Oaks (*Quercus garryana*) choose about the same kinds of habitat, both invading the moister kinds of dry grassland and often doing it alone. No other trees are with them in many places.

In parts of Victoria, our oak trees are numerous. I live near many, most of them old, some dying of old age; none seem to be being replaced. Not far are specimens with one or more of their stems only about chest high. They are shrubs pruned by ocean winds. I often wonder if there are dwarf Bur Oaks pruned by prairie winds.

Through the years I have often wondered how much of a big Garry Oak is underground. Is there more of the tree in the soil than what we see above ground? How far deep are the roots? How far do the roots reach out from the trunk?

How large in diameter are the roots? No one seems to know, but I do know a lot about the roots of Bur Oaks, and the two kinds do seem to be rather similar.

John E. Weaver was an American botany professor who specialized in prairie plants. Over a span of about 50 years he wrote over 70 scientific papers and books about his observations. One describes his "excavation" of a large Bur Oak. (See the book detailing many of his discoveries, *Prairie Plants and Their Environment*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1991.)

The Bur Oak that he excavated was 37.5 feet tall, with a trunk 14 inches in diameter, and was 65 years old. A thick tap root below the trunk tapered down rapidly as it gave off about 30 main, rather horizontal branches, most of them leaving the taproot within the top two feet of soil. These branches ranged in diameter from one to seven inches, and they spread out 20 to 60 feet before turning downward. Neither the taproot, nor its branches, nor any of the networks of abundant rootlets from the branch roots had grown deeper than fifteen feet into the ground.

It was calculated that the weight of the roots was equal to that of the tree's parts above ground, and that the tree's root volume below ground was only ten percent less than the parts above ground.

In plants, as in animals, there is high mortality in the first year. Weaver shows that a one-year-old Bur Oak has grown roots reaching down about five feet. In contrast, its parts above ground are less than a foot tall.

Remember, however, that Bur Oaks and Garry Oaks are different species, in spite of their similarities. Their climates are different in winter, but the summers are somewhat similar. Also, many of our oaks are often on rocky ground quite unlike deep prairie soils. Still, when I look at a Garry Oak I now have a picture in my mind of roots going down fifteen feet in a circle 120 feet across.

Does anyone know about the excavation of a big Garry Oak?

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The Bur Oaks and our island's Garry Oaks (*Quercus garryana*) choose about the same kinds of habitat.

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Photo: Yorke Edwards

## The Plight of the Garry Oak

By Gayle Chapman

The gnarled, yet graceful Garry Oak, now almost extinct on Vancouver Island, once grew in profusion from Courtenay to Victoria, and around Yale and the Sumas Mountains on the British Columbia Mainland. This species, over 8,000 years old, is thought to be a variation of the red and white oaks found throughout Canada and the United States. Despite its tenaciousness, growing on both fertile and rocky ground, sometimes only a small twisted bush, hundreds of years old growing out of a rock cropping, this stately tree is now losing its battle with civilization, which has bulldozed and developed the verdant meadowlands that once nourished these stately trees.

Thousands of years ago before humans began encroaching on the meadowlands, the Garry Oak was being pushed from its habitat by the invasion of coniferous trees. These trees, not native to the Island before the waning of the last ice age 12,000 years ago, sprung up as the weather became cooler and damper along the coast and inland on the Island. The conifers claimed precious meadowlands, pushing the Garry Oak into smaller and smaller areas.

There were still large areas of untouched land, however, on which the oak could grow, providing habitat for various species of birds, butterflies, insects, mammals and amphibians and reptiles. The meadowlands were a complete ecosystem.

Today, birds such as the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

and Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are often seen inhabiting the remaining meadows, along with the Northwestern Crow (*Corvus caurinus*) and Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) and hundreds of other species including snakes, salamanders, butterflies shrews, rabbits, rats, squirrels, even bears and raccoons.

In only the last hundred years the meadowland has begun to disappear at an alarming rate. Settlement in the flat areas throughout the Island has destroyed millions of acres of fertile Garry Oak ecosystem. Pollution and insects play havoc with the resistance of remaining trees and many, some one or two hundred years old, are dying. Others are being cut down to make room for buildings and highways.

According to biologist, Carol W. Maier, the most common insects invading and damaging the oak are aphids and jumping gall wasps. Aphids build up huge colonies that deprive the tree of nutrients, causing the trees' leaves to dry and fall prematurely, creating leaf curl and yellow spots where the feeding sights are located. The insect lays eggs, which remain dormant in the cracks and crevices of the oak tree until May, when the first generation of eggs hatch. The larvae produced are the bulk of the population; they are very hungry and are responsible for the decimation of the tree. By July these larvae produce three other kinds of eggs, which

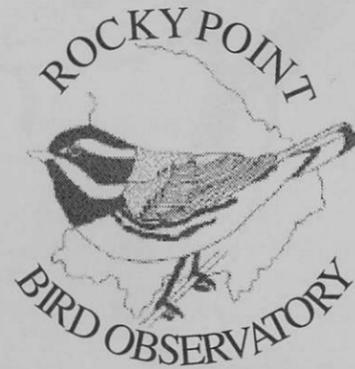
*Continued on page 20*

# Rocky Point Bird Observatory – an Update

By Colleen O'Brien

First and foremost, we would like to thank the Directors and members of the Victoria Natural History Society for their generous donation of \$2,000 to Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO). This is a much-appreciated boost to our coffers and enables us to purchase supplies in support of a successful field season.

We've recently received news that grants to RPBO are also forthcoming from the Bird Studies Canada – Millennium Fund, The Bailey Memorial Fund and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS). Although we are now an autonomous organization, CWS, continues to provide guidance through the work of Wendy Easton, and in-kind donations. Because of the generous support of our sponsors, we'll be starting the fall migration monitoring season with more financial backing than we've had in past years. It will still be a very thrifty operation though, since we've only met approximately 35%



of our ideal budgeted requirements (which doesn't include a sauna, unlike one banding station we know of in Ontario!).

Having a dedicated board of directors with energy, ideas and enthusiasm has made a big difference. We're organized! We now have a logo designed by Gabriel David (*see above*). Gabe has also entered mountains of banding data over the



Rocky Point. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

winter. Rod Mitchell secured a donation by Island Net AMT Solutions Group for our web site ([www.islandnet.com/~rpbo](http://www.islandnet.com/~rpbo)) and is working on continued development of the site. Tom Gillespie has opened an RPBO bank account and is distributing membership applications and cards. He also has an application for charitable status in the works. Claudia Riveros is designing a RPBO informational brochure that will soon be available. Mike Settington has prepared both our budget and successful grant proposals. Our fearless leader, David Allinson, has provided a cell-phone (phone number 888-RPBO), a necessity since outer Rocky Point is not wired. Bev Glover is keeping us on track with a work plan and is rounding-up volunteer field assistants. Suzanne Beauchesne, Rick Schortinghuis and Devon Anderson have contributed to other organizational efforts during the last 6 months.

It's likely that our mist nets will be mended *before* the season starts. And, we had an on-site work party on June 11th (involving 10 slightly wet, wind-blown but very game volunteers) well in advance of season start-up. We even had permission from Arthur Robinson of Forestry Canada (he is responsible for forest management on federal lands in B.C.) to do prescribed vegetation management in the areas around our net lanes. We now can officially steward the Garry Oak meadow adjacent to the banding site, instead of removing the Scotch broom surreptitiously.

For the third year in a row, Dan Derbyshire will be the bander-in-charge, or BIC as is the jargon. Dan is an accomplished bander, with a great sense of humour, a gentle manner and amazing patience. He started his training at the tender age of 14 at Long Point Bird Observatory and, in the intervening decade, has served stints at several banding stations in Ontario. Most recently, he was the BIC at Innis Point for their spring migration monitoring season. It's always a pleasure to work with Dan.

We are in need of specific items from our wish list in preparation for the field season. If you can help us please call Colleen at 388-4520 ([cob@home.com](mailto:cob@home.com)).

A small trailer or camper with basic sleeping and cooking facilities for use by volunteers would be helpful. We aim to move towards the 'working holiday model' provided by B.C.'s Mackenzie Nature Observatory where one volunteer is scheduled to be on-site for a week at a time to assist the BIC. We've noticed a large number of small, unused recreational units sitting in Victoria-area yards accumulating exterior green slimy stuff. Maybe you know someone who might be willing to make a donation or seasonal loan of one of them.

We need a small gas or propane generator or some other inexpensive means of providing the BIC's trailer with electricity. Because RPBO operates adjacent to an Ammunition Depot, the military has concerns about fire risks. Although the use of fossil fuels is not ideal and requires compliance with lots of regulations and procedures, it's something we're prepared to live with for the short-term. In the long-term, we would like to make the transition to

solar power, but this has proved to be too costly to pursue this year.

We are looking to purchase, rent, beg, borrow, or steal a second-hand laptop computer with a CD ROM and Windows '95 to enable us to do data entry on-site.

Donations of vegetation management tools (i.e. a shovel, a mattock, grass shears, tree pruners, loppers, a gas-powered weed-whacker, and a push lawn mower) would be greatly appreciated.

We need a bicycle with wide tires (i.e. not a narrow-tire road bike) for use on a gravel road.

We would make good use of a picnic table or two.

RPBO's field season is due to start in mid-July and will run until mid- to late- October. If you are interested in being a volunteer at RPBO, please see the article in the last edition of *The Victoria Naturalist* (Vol.56.6). Contact information is provided in the Bulletin Board section at the end of this issue.

COLLEEN O'BRIEN was involved with the Rocky Point migration monitoring project when the first net paths were cleared in August 1994. She is the current Vice-President of RPBO.

## Poems

By Hannah J. Main-van der Kamp

*"...and whatever Adam called every living thing, that was the name thereof."*

Pats of butter  
on a green twig shelf.  
Sun melts them open. *Broom*

New fronds unfurl,  
paws of shy animals  
coppery fur. *Bracken*

Geodesic silk eiderdown  
float on a bed of quills. *Dandelion*

Plain bridesmaids  
piled up giggly  
group glamour. *Saskatoons*

Green bulbous hearts shiny  
among brown flowerets  
crisp as dried flies. *Lilac*

[Hannah Main-van der Kamp is a local teacher and freelance writer. Her poems, articles and reviews have appeared in a variety of publications including *The Malahat Review* and *The Diocesan Post*.]

## The Plight of the Garry Oak. Continued from p.17.

develop into, male sexuales, female sexuales, or winged or wingless sexuparae. These sexuales do not eat and as the female sexuales move onto tree branches, the male sexuales mate with them. The female lays just one egg. Thus begins another cycle of egg laying.

The jumping gall wasp, according to biologist, Joanna L. Smith, is another predator of the Garry Oak that produces two generations of eggs each year, an asexual female that does not reproduce and a sexual female that does. The asexual female spends the winter months buried in the soil around the tree and in spring ascends to the tree's buds and lays her eggs, causing a blistering which does not do much damage to the oak. However from these eggs emerges a sexually active male and female gall wasp that, upon mating, lays her eggs under the leaves. Not until June or July do these eggs develop into larvae. These larvae cause the tree's leaves to dehydrate and fall to the ground. Without leaves, the tree no longer is able to produce food for its growth and development. After many years of repeated infestation, the tree will die.

In the Capital Regional District (CRD) of Victoria, B.C., many volunteers are attempting to save old Garry Oak trees (some older than 200 years old) by studying and finding ways to protect the trees from disease and population growth. These volunteers have also, over the past five years, attempted to grow and re-introduce seedlings sprouted in greenhouse conditions, from collections of thousands of

acorns from remaining, aging trees within the area. The seedlings, at two years old, are taken to various meadows around the CRD and planted. The success rate to date of seedlings surviving, however, is very low. The lack of success is due mainly to a high volume of people, unaware that they are trampling the seedlings as they pass through replanted meadows. No practical method has yet been developed to cordon off the replanted areas from public access. The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society of Victoria will not truly know for another five years, the time for seedlings to establish themselves with sufficient strength, how many seedlings will actually survive and grow into trees.

In the meantime, the remaining Garry Oak trees on the island are getting older and disease ridden. Others are being torn down to make way for buildings, parking lots and roads. The question is what can we do to prevent the total destruction of both the Garry Oak and the meadowlands they inhabit? The answer probably lies in both education of the public and ourselves of the value of these trees and their meadowland ecosystems and continuing to find ways to abort disease in the remaining trees and to step up replanting projects. Replanted areas must be protected from the unaware public destroying the seedlings and methods to stop this destruction must be found and put into place immediately. Our Garry Oaks linger on the edge of extinction. Will we stand helplessly by and watch them perish? Or will we demand the local government protect these gnarled and graceful trees? The decision is ours.

## Letters

As you might be aware, evidence is accumulating that the introduced Bullfrog has out-competed and displaced native amphibians from large areas of Washington, Oregon and California, and now here in British Columbia. Although the first records of bullfrogs are from Victoria in the mid 1930's, this introduced species is now rapidly expanding its range on Vancouver Island. Heightened conservation concern for native frog species makes it essential to map the extent and spread of bullfrogs in British Columbia.

I request your help in enlisting volunteers in your area who would be willing to survey for the presence of these bullfrogs. I have enclosed five copies of the methodology and data sheets; posters to help in identifying this frog, and a fact sheet explaining this ecological problem. More copies of these are available through my bullfrog website (<http://web.uvic.ca/bullfrogs>) or by contacting me directly. The data collected by this survey will be summarized and made available the website, as well as being integrated into the FrogWatch of BC program.

Thanking you for your assistance.

Purnima Govindarajulu

Department of Biology, University of Victoria

## The Bullfrog – Facts and Concerns

### Historical Distribution and Introductions

Bullfrogs are native to North America, their range extending all the way from southern Quebec and Ontario to the Gulf of Mexico. Since large hind legs are prized as food, farming of bullfrogs was widely advocated as a money making venture in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Failure of these ventures and subsequent release of the frogs has been the main reason for their introductions in western North America from California to southern British Columbia

### Super Frogs! Why Bullfrogs Are a Problem

#### Expanding range

In regions of introduction, bullfrog population increases have been associated with declines in native frogs. However, because many of these areas had also experienced drastic negative human impacts, it was believed that bullfrogs were successful only in disturbed habitats. However, we now know that bullfrogs invade and breed successfully in undisturbed habitats.

#### Reproduction

Bullfrogs can live up to 15 years and are prolific breeders. They start breeding at age 5, with females producing up to

20,000 eggs in a single spawn, which hatch out in 3 to 4 days. These tadpoles grow exceptionally large (15 cm) over a two year period before they metamorphose into frogs.

### Adult Predators

Bullfrogs become large (20 cm, 600 g) voracious predators. Their diet includes insects, snakes, small mammals, and birds, as well as smaller native frogs. Thus, while the Red-legged frog may serve as a main course, the Pacific treefrog is but a small snack for the bullfrog.

### Tadpole Competition

Recent studies indicate that even as tadpoles, bullfrogs have a large negative impact on native frogs. A study done in California showed that bullfrog tadpoles reduced the survival of Yellow-legged frog and Pacific treefrog tadpoles. Another study done at the University of Oregon showed that both bullfrog adults and tadpoles preyed upon the tadpoles of Red-legged frogs and caused them to move into unfavorable habitats.

### Ecological Concern and Conservation. What Can You Do to Help?

The biological facts of this *super-predator* suggest that it is important to map and monitor bullfrog populations in British Columbia and to take steps to prevent their spread into new areas.

1. Do not move frogs, tadpoles or frogs eggs from one wetland to another.
2. Increase public awareness of the bullfrog problem.
3. Participate in this survey for bullfrog populations in British Columbia

Contact: Purina Govindarajulu: phone (250)472-4684,

or e-mail [purnimap@uvic.ca](mailto:purnimap@uvic.ca)

Visit the project website at: <http://web.uvic.ca/bullfrogs>

Funded By: Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Natural Science and Engineering Research Council and UVic.

## To Thank our Special Volunteers

The Directors or the VNHS would like to extend a thank you to all the volunteers who give tirelessly of their time to help promote an awareness of the Society and the activities that we are associated with. Thank you to all of you.

At this time a special thank you goes to **Denise Gubersky** who has given many hours to interpreting and developing a folio that represents the members' views based on the response to the recent Membership Survey.

Well done Denise. Look for an upcoming article in the September/October issue of the *Naturalist*.

Marie O'Shaughnessy, Publicity Director.

## Welcome to New Members

### APRIL / MAY

#### Geoff Bennett

Seapoint Drive  
birds

#### Shelley and Barry Forrester

Camrose Crescent

#### Robert Gowan

Bank Street  
birding, travel, hiking, camping, and  
mountaineering

#### Elizabeth Sadler

Balmoral Road

#### Heidi Tonn and Rod Mitchell

Leeffield Road  
birds, plants, insects, rocks, animals,  
stars, sky, fish, kayaking, and so on and  
so on!

#### Mary Steel

Gait Lane

#### Anthony (Tony) Greaves

Songhees Road

# 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. **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

### Sunday, July 9

#### *Dragonflies for Beginners, by Beginners?*

As Dennis Paulson says in his new book, *Dragonflies of Washington*, "Perhaps even more than butterflies, dragonflies are birdwatchers' insects." Meet **Darren Copley** at the Beaver Lake Retriever Ponds at 10:00 a.m. (another advantage over birding) and we'll see what we can find. We'll look at what field guides are available, some tricks to catching dragonflies, and even how to key out the difficult ones. Bring binoculars, an insect net (if you have one), and hope for sunny weather.

### Saturday, July 15

#### *Life's a Beach Seine*

Special guest speakers will lead this exploration at the low tide in Bamberton Provincial Park on Saanich Inlet. Using a beach seine, we'll bring in an amazing assortment of marine life for a closer look. Learn a little about the natural history of these rarely seen creatures. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 10:00 a.m., or 10:30 a.m. at the change rooms in the park (down on the beach). Bamberton Park is located 35 km north of Victoria and was originally created as a recreational area for the employees of the now-closed Bamberton Cement Plant. Allow 2 hours for the program.

### Sunday, July 16

#### *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 can 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 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.*

### Monday, July 17

#### *Marvellous Mount Work (CRD Parks)*

Join a CRD Naturalist as you climb Mt. Work to enjoy the views over the Gulf Islands and Saanich Peninsula while scanning the skies for ravens, hawks, and vultures. Meet at the map kiosk in the

Mt. Work parking lot off Ross-Durrance Road, off Willis Point Road. 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Sturdy hiking shoes, a bag lunch, and water are a must. No registration fee.

### Sunday, July 23

#### *Hurricane Ridge*

This trip, a VNHS tradition, is timed to catch the peak of the spring alpine wildflowers on Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park. 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. (allow time to park) for the 6:10 sailing of the M.V. Coho. Ferry cost is \$14.00 (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 \$22.00 (CDN – please have cash). We'll return on the 5:15 p.m. sailing (90 minute crossing time). There is room for 22 participants plus the 2 leaders. If an extra bus is needed we can take 13 more. These trips always fill, so reserve your spot early by calling the Goldstream Nature house at 478-9414. *VNHS members will be given priority.*

## AUGUST

### Saturday, August 5

#### *Hurricane Ridge*

This trip, a VNHS tradition, is timed to catch the summer alpine wildflowers on Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park. 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. (allow time to park) for the 6:10 sailing of the M.V. Coho. Ferry cost is \$14.00 (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 \$22.00 (CDN – please have cash). We'll return on the 5:15 p.m. sailing (90 minute crossing time). There is room for 22 participants plus the 2 leaders. If an extra bus is needed we can take 13 more. 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 12

#### *Birding around Mandarte Island and on Sidney Island*

*See July 16 entry for details.*

### Sunday, August 13

#### *Birding Cowichan Bay*

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 start of the Cowichan Bay Dock Road at 8:30 a.m.

### Saturday, August 19

#### *The Trail Less Travelled (CRD Parks)*

Here's a trail you may not have explored yet! We'll start at Prior Lake, and walk the Mackenzie Creek trail to Mackenzie Lake and

back. Meet in the parking area near Prior Lake on Highland Road. 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Sturdy hiking shoes, a bag lunch, and water are a must. No registration fee.

### Saturday, August 26

#### *Birding Witty's Lagoons*

Need help sorting out all those returning shorebirds. Let **Bruce Whittington** guide you through the steps it takes to become a shorebird lover. What next, gulls? Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the main parking lot.

## BULLETIN BOARD

### 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.

### Share your interest in nature with school children

Join the volunteer naturalist team at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary and spend 2 to 3 hours each week conducting nature education programs. The Fall programs begin late September and training is provided. For more information call Joan at 479-0211.

### RPBO welcomes members and volunteers

Rocky Point Bird Observatory memberships (\$25 per year) are available by contacting **Tom Gillespie**, Treasurer, 361-1694 (thomasw.gillespie@telus.net). RPBO could not run without volunteer field assistants. If you are interested in volunteering some time during the upcoming field season (mid-July to midish-Oct.), or if you wish to attend one of the upcoming evening information sessions, please contact **Bev Glover**, Site Manager at 721-1476 (glov203@uvvm.uvic.ca).

### Plan ahead for Calendar and Bulletin Board Items

To ensure that your event does not suffer if there are unforeseen delays in getting the *Naturalist* to our readers, please send us your Calendar and Bulletin Board items early. For example, if you have an event between the 1st and 15th of November, please have your items to us before the deadline for the September-October issue.



**The Victoria  
NATURALIST**

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Expires: Dec-2000

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