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COVER PHOTO

Mulloch Mor by Joe Percival

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Toward the end of April, Habitat Acquisition Trust
 sponsored "Connecting for Conservation," an opportu-
 nity for diverse participants in the broad conservation
 community to come together to share information and
 experiences in working to conserve and restore natural
 spaces. Participants spanned all age ranges. Perhaps the
 most remarkable aspect of the event was the energy in
 the room, as like-minded people shared more than
 information.

In spite of what our western philosophical heritage
 tells us, we humans cannot exist in isolation. We need
 our natural surroundings and we need each other. Bird
 and butterfly counts are about more than gathering
 information. They are about camaraderie and sharing
 of common experiences in natural surroundings.

Looking at recent count results, we see upsetting
 results. In the 2000 Christmas Bird count included in
 this issue, numbers for more than 20% of the species
 were noted to be "near record low," "low for recent
 years," or "all time low." From a modern scientific
 perspective, these numbers are simply valueless
 information, but something tells us there is more.

Information provides us with knowledge, but
 knowledge by itself does not provide us with wisdom.
 Some writers say that wisdom requires the application
 of heart, or spirit, to knowledge.

The remarkable energy in the room, that
 special day in April, did not come from information;
 it came from the hearts of the participants. To preserve
 the biological diversity we need, to survive in our inter-
 connectedness, we need wisdom. We need to work
 from, and share with others, what we know in
 our hearts.

Marilyn and Ross

Homage to the Mountain Mother — *Mulloch Mor* An Irish Encounter with the "Great Rock"

By Joe Percival

An *Boireann* in Irish Gaelic (anglicized to "the Burren," meaning the Great Rock) is a strange land of vast limestone substrate; a karst ecosystem in northwest County Clare, Eire. Known internationally for its botanical uniqueness and geological mystery, *Mulloch Mor* (the Great Summit) ancient sacred mountain to the Gaels, is home of the Mother Goddess of the Land, and a symbol both of rich biodiversity, and the need to preserve the same, to the community of naturalists, ecologists, and local earth stewards who have struggled long to protect the Mountain Mother's deep and fragile beauty. *Cead Mile Beannachtaí Orthu!* (100,000 Blessings upon them!)

Tanka for a Mountain

*Soft rounded features
Grey mound of ancient sea floor
Rising to the sky
Amidst your fossil coral
A bouquet of golden joy!*

As I marvel at the patch of yellow Bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus* — *Crobh Ein*) covering the limestone at my feet, the stark contrast of wild vibrant plant and seemingly inhospitable gray rock leads me into ponderings long and complex. Noted Irish botanist and naturalist, Robert Praeger, often alluded in his writings to the strange



Mulloch Mor — the mountain mother. Photos: Joe Percival

quality of this Clare landscape that he had so fully experienced in his many years of exploration. This eerie essence I too sense, an awesome (in the truest meaning of the word) biological complexity enshrined in the roughly 345 square kilometers of *An Boireann*.

*Home to hazel scrub
Blue gentians and cranesbill
Orchids adorn you
Your lithic body nurtures
Green diversity galore*

"*Go leor*" (*galore*) is a Gaelic phrase meaning "a sufficiency, a lot" and is one of the relatively few adopted into common English usage. And how appropriate it is to describe this grand wave of intense colour before my eyes on *Mulloch Mor*'s flank, a surge of deep blues (Spring gentian — *Genti-ana verna*), yellow (Bird's-foot trefoil — *Lotus corniculatus*), creamy white (Burnet rose — *Rosa pimpinellifolia* and Whitethorn — *Crataegus oxyacantha*) and purple (Irish orchid — *Neotinea maculata*), interspersed with black boulders of fossil coral and grey limestone pavements. That I now stand on an ancient seabed upthrust into the light of an azure Irish sky and ablaze with terrestrial glory, that is my miracle, my covenant with the Source.

*Such myriad hues
Of wildflower majesty
Fill these eyes today
Before this beauty I bow
In deep humble gratitude*

Nestled beside one another I discover Dense Flowered Orchids (*Neotinea maculata*), a distinct Mediterranean species, and Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala-leathin*), a true arctic-alpine dwarf shrub. Due to unique lithic conditions in association with particular weather patterns, these two unlikely neighbors blossom here in harmony. As well the calcium-loving (calcicole) avens shares this blooming biome with calcium-hating (calcifuge) bell heather, all waving in the wild winds of exposed limestone hillsides. And to this day our theories for how and why are still so incomplete while the botanical magic dances ever on. As I stand observing the wondrous array haiku begin to sprout within this plant-infused consciousness of mine — haiku for the flowers:

*Oh so blue gentian
Growing with such flair and peace
'Twixt mountain avens*

*Whitethorn blaze captures
My already awestruck gaze
Leaving me amazed*

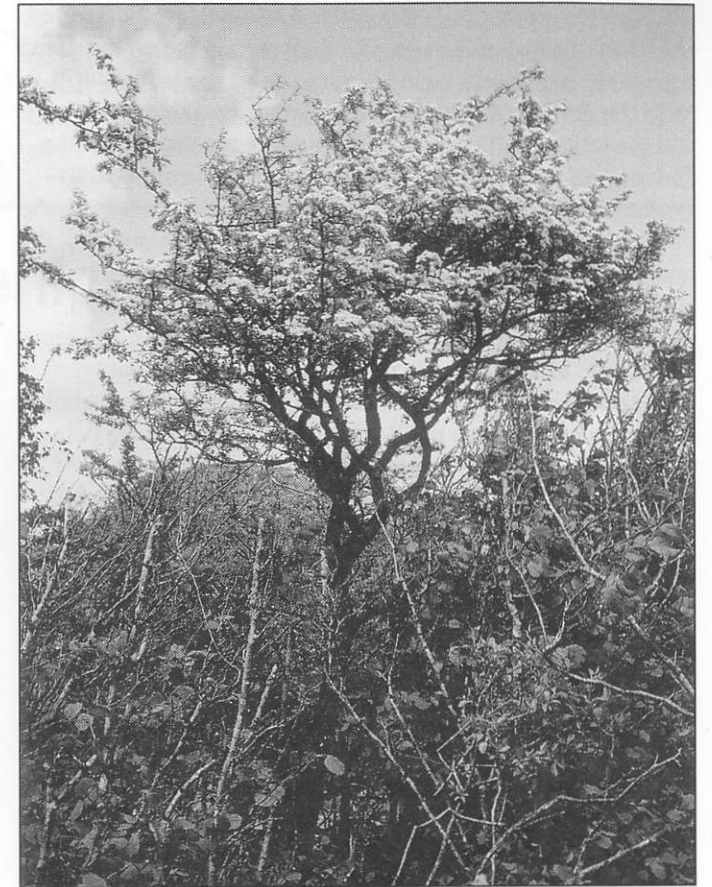
*Wildflower heaven
A splash of blood red greets me
Cranesbill on the Rock*

*Mingling with tall grass
Orchids weave fragrant magic
Hidden from the wind*

*Red listed they are
These high mountain leathin
Countless before me*

*Rare limestone flower
Blue intensity abounds
A Spring gentian's gift*

The *turlach* system (turlough in English; Gaelic for "dried up spot"), today an expanse of shallow clear water, spreads widely in front of me as I wander the grey pavements at the base of *Mulloch Mor*. A lone swan, perhaps one of the children of Lir (but that's another story), patrols these mercurial waters that rise and fall in accord with an underground hydrology mysterious and deep, far beyond the understandings and predictions of our surface-bound minds. Deep within the cavernous core of *An Boireann* lie the elusive secrets of the ever-changing *turlach* cycles that nourish cinquefoil and swans alike. And so especially vulnerable they are to a species too quick to claim the designation and authority of "expert" and in so doing possibly produce a consequence beyond imagining. I survey the partial buildings and



Whitethorn — *Crataegus oxyacantha*.

bulldozed parking lots of the once intended interpretation centre, now silent after long years of passionate action by lovers of this land, who rallied the world's voices against an ecological disaster in the making. To interpret (and sell) the natural wonder, they would have destroyed its fragile balance. And the courts finally ruled on the side of the Irish angels, camouflaged as they were as naturalists and feisty locals who knew the land and its needs far more profoundly than the Irish Office of Public Works. A victory indeed for shrubby cinquefoil and swans! And such a victory is bound to elicit poetry:

*Crystalline turlach
Now you see it, now you don't
Haven of raven*

*Blue-green waters rise
Out of riddled stony depths
Ephemeral seas*

*Turlach water spills
Over limestone into pools
Glistening with sun*

*Cinquefoil paradise
Flowing with phantom moisture
Bursting with green verve*

Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), an endangered, red listed species in Europe, I find all around me on this flood zone area, lapping up the *turlach* moisture needed to fulfill its green destiny. Above my head the raucous voice of raven and the telltale call of cuckoo, reminding me that not all the endangered inhabitants of this landscape are here to photosynthesize. The realm of numerous animal species (ainmhithe in the old tongue), *An Boireann* is home to Eire's rarest mammal, the pine marten (*Martes martes*), the omnivorous, cat-sized and weasel-shaped hunter. Though here in solid numbers, cavorting in the hazel scrub, this beautiful resident eludes me, as do the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and stoat (*Mustela erminea*), as I scan their likely hideouts throughout my meanderings upon the Rock. But I know that I am being watched by small mammal eyes, grown especially leery of humankind whose relentless incursion (cutting trees, extracting minerals, grazing livestock) to this very day has left non-humankind with a devastated habitat. May the present park status now begin to redress such a long history of contempt.

*A cuckoo calling
Across this mute stone silence
To awakened ears
Unmistakable urging
To deeper intimacy*

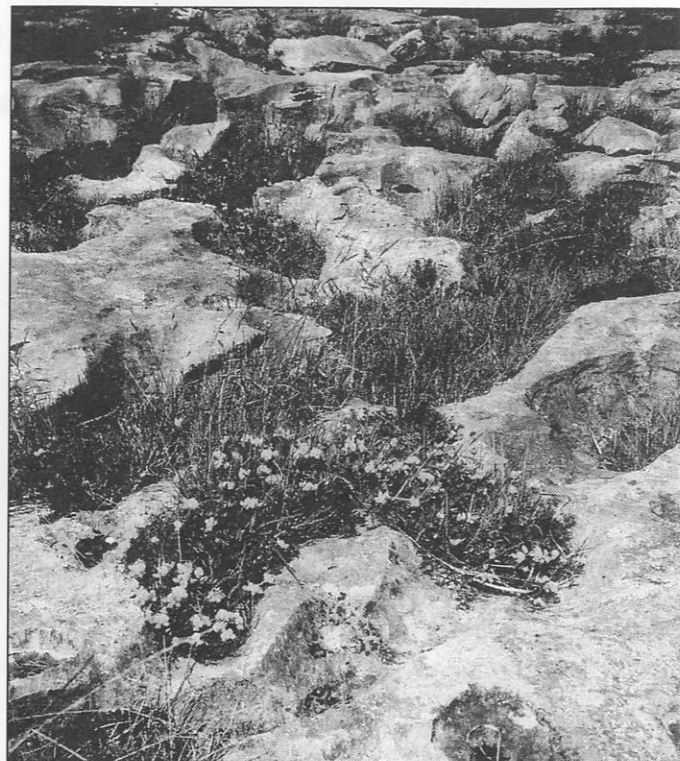
*Words to a red fox
"Sionnach, Sionnach, come
Grant me a good look
At your wild red-brown visage
That these eyes may share fox truth"*

And so my only sighting today of mammal presence is to be the few droppings found of the feral goats who also wander these rugged hills and have graced me with their greetings on an earlier occasion. Indeed *Capra hircus* bestows a certain primal essence to this Irish wilderness. True the goats are relatively recent arrivals here, survivors of domesticity, refugees from the human world who have filled in the space so sadly vacated by the large mammals known to have roamed the highlands in bygone days: brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*) and Irish deer (*Cervidae*).

*Embracing limestone
Invoking haunted presence
Of those now banished
Their wild calls still echoing
Throughout windswept rocky hills*

*Feral goats leaping
Over a jagged landscape
Offspring of freedom
Horns upthrust, sweeping skyward
Long beards swirling in the gusts*

After 9,000 years of human activity, evidenced by hundreds of stone forts, megalithic tombs and fairy mounds, *An Boireann* persists in its altered yet ever-vigorous



Bird's foot trefoil — a bouquet of golden joy.

evolution. *Mulloch Mor* and the surrounding area of proclaimed National Park will hopefully offer the non-human inhabitants, both floral and faunal, a chance to finally flourish on their own terms. Walking these hills I find myself extolling this profound beauty in prose and poem, breathing in the healing power of the Mountain Mother's pure air, contemplating the intricate web of life now preserved, and giving thanks for the wilderness ramble of a lifetime. *Sin an sceal e* — That's the story. *Cead Mile Buiochas* — 100,000 Thank-you's! To the ancient spirit of *An Boireann* — a final tanka of praise:

*Irish walkabout
In a wild fossil landscape
Of rock, wind and sky
Wrap me in a web of joy
Mountain avens at my feet*

Postscript: Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Burren Action Group (BAG) in association with An Taisce, the Irish Wildlife Federation, Plantlife and many other groups and individuals, the splendor of *Mulloch Mor* is now enshrined as part of the Burren National Park. However the ten year long struggle to preserve this fragile, fertile Rock has had devastating personal impact on numerous lives as court costs were not granted to BAG despite their winning of the lengthy court case to stop development of the area by the Irish government. Indeed we have many issues needing attention here in B.C., but if you feel just a wee bit of the Irish in your heart and can afford to support these Irish land stewards in some small way, they can be reached at this address: The Burren Action Group, c/o Ms. Phil Molony, 15 Lifford Road, Ennis, Co. Clare,

Ireland. In addition the BAG website is most informative: www.iol.ie/~burrenag/

For \$75 U.S. payable to the Burren Acre Company Limited, one can join the company and acquire a symbolic share certificate for one square yard of a local donated acre

of land known as the Field That Watches The Mountain. Also for further details I can be reached via e-mail at: joepercival@hotmail.com. As they say in the west of Eire, "Cead Mile Buiochas agus Beannachtai! 100,000 Thank-you's and Blessings Upon You !

Restoration of Upper Blenkinsop Creek

By Lehna Malmkvist

Upper Blenkinsop Creek presently flows through the Galey Bros. Farm, within a channelised ditch created many decades ago. The ditch was used to drain water from the surrounding farmlands and provide an outlet for water from Blenkinsop Lake. Unfortunately, in its present state, it provides poor quality habitat for birds, fish and wildlife in the area, provides little storm-water storage, and does not function to improve water quality or to provide food for downstream fish populations or other organisms. The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary and the District of Saanich have developed a collaborative funding program with Environment Canada (EcoAction 2000), South Island Aquatic Stewardship Society, MELP E-Team and NSERC/UVic to restore these upper reaches of the creek to their proper functioning condition.

Restoration of the creek will require relocating the creek channel to the edge of Galey Bros. field. A new channel will be constructed adjacent to the mature vegetation along the Lochside Regional Trail. The existing channel will be filled, once the new channel is functional and the water for Blenkinsop Creek has been diverted. The restoration will restore the sinuosity, floodplain and channel complexity of Upper Blenkinsop Creek and provide improved habitat for aquatic plants and animals. Following construction of the new channel, volunteers and school groups will conduct extensive riparian planting and invasive, non-native plant removal to improve the riparian habitat for birds and other wildlife and to protect the stream banks.

Construction of the new channel is expected to begin in May or June 2001, with non-native plant removal being undertaken throughout the summer, and riparian planting commencing in the fall. This project is part of a larger program of urban stream and wetland restoration, and outdoor education program being conducted in Saanich.

This project is the third phase of restoration in the Blenkinsop Creek-Swan Creek watershed. The first phase consisted of creating a new creek channel and ponds within the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, to prevent flooding of houses bordering on a small parcel of land on the eastern area of the Sanctuary. The second phase of the program was the restoration of a small portion of Swan Creek in conjunction with the creation of a new Saanich

municipal park and construction of stormwater treatment ponds for the new Willowbrook subdivision on McKenzie Ave. In the previous phases, school groups and community volunteers have been integral to the success of the projects, providing time and energy to plant native species, remove invasive non-native species and propagate some of the vegetation planted on the sites.

Future restoration modules will be planned within the watershed as opportunities arise for funding and partnerships.

Community members interested in the restoration project and/or interested in volunteering for the project are encouraged to contact the Swan Lake Nature Centre.

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Video Camera Installations on Vancouver Island

By Bob Chappell

Spring is here again, a time to get the nest boxes installed for a new season. At Goldstream Park, with the aid of a grant from BC Hydro, Darren and I have installed the Estuary and Bald Eagle nest cameras. The Estuary camera is mounted on a platform, 1000 feet out in the Estuary, in front of the Nature House. The camera is controlled from inside the Nature House, using an old computer Joystick. The camera tilts up and down by pushing or pulling the handle, while camera rotation is accomplished by tipping the handle left or right. Two buttons on the handle control the zoom lens from wide angle to 25X. (We hope to extend this to 50X.) A TV and VCR are permanently connected, to allow viewing and recording. Operation has been specifically tailored to allow "all" visitors, the opportunity to "fly" the camera. The younger generation find this to be like a real, live video game.

The Bald Eagle nest camera looks straight down into the nest, and is patiently awaiting the return of the eagles.

The Violet Green Swallow box should be installed on the side of the Nature House by April. This year I have installed a color video camera in the box. This video is recorded in the Nature House on a TV and VCR.

The underwater Salmon camera, was upgraded to color, and generated many hours of video footage in the Goldstream River. Unfortunately, the water level was extremely low this year. This severely reduced the numbers of fish that entered the river to spawn, and only provided two pools deep enough for recording.

The Purple Martin camera on Newcastle Island off Nanaimo, worked extremely well, and produced excellent footage. Tom Gillespie reported that by viewing the TV picture, they were able to read the band numbers on the birds in the nest box. There will be a color camera this year.

The Fresh Water ECO Center in Duncan has an under-



Bob Chappell with the Estuary camera.

water color camera in the trout pond. This has been in operation for a year, and is viewed in their Nature House.

New projects I foresee include: a Coopers Hawk nest, color video camera (with Andy Stewart), and a bat video camera in the attic of the Goldstream Nature House.

As I write this, I am preparing for my video presentation for April 10, 2001.

For those who attended, what I have said here was expanded to include pictures and sound; moments that cannot be felt from the page.

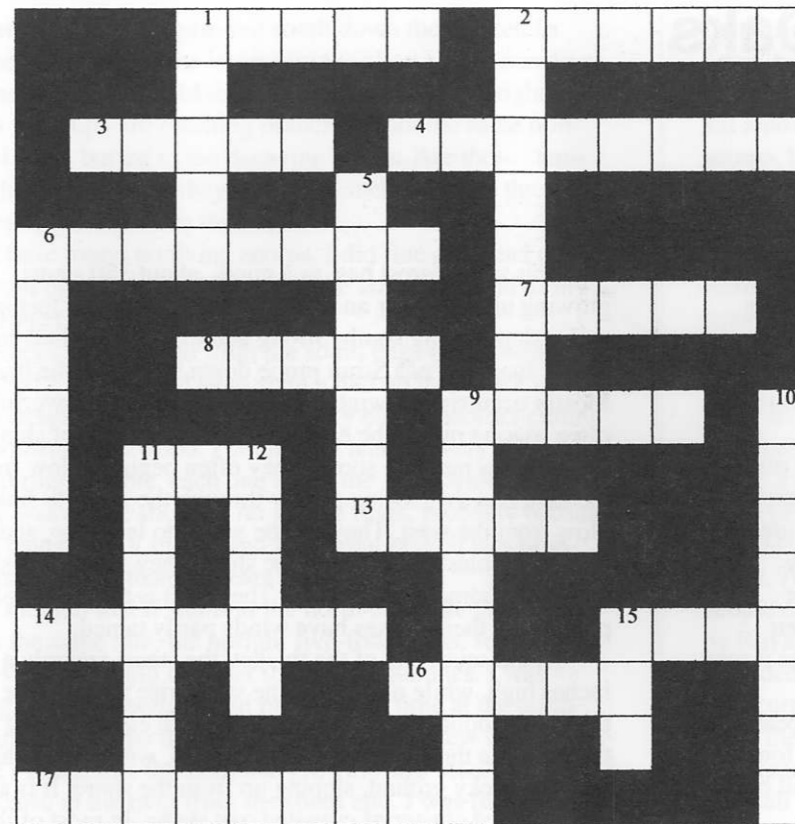
The Editors think that Bob should next get an internet hookup for his cameras, like these:

<http://birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/> ("Nest Box Cam" link)
Cornell University's Department of Ornithology has a number of amateur birdwatchers who put Webcams in the birdhouses of their small songbirds.

www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/features/birdcan2000/index.shtml. Kodak Corporation has trained three Webcams on a nest of peregrine falcons — right on their headquarters building in Rochester, New York. Click on "galleries" in the upper right corner. Last year, this Webcam site broke all Kodak site-visit records when it received 300,000 hits on a single day.

http://www.storchennest.de/index_e.html
http://www.wwf.at/stoerche/english/stork_live.html
Europeans are fond of their storks, and these German and Austrian nature centers provide fine Web cam views with English commentary of the big birds' open-air nests.

These sites were forwarded to us, originating from: Network Nuggets, a free service to educators provided by the Community Learning Network Website (<http://www.cln.org/>) and the Open Learning Agency of British Columbia (<http://www.openschool.bc.ca/>), with funding from the B.C. Ministry of Education (<http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>).



Across:

1. False wing
2. Most likely done for feather maintenance
3. Capable of breeding
4. Eaglelike
6. Gooselike
7. Auks, razorbills, murrets, puffins, & guillemots
8. Snail "smasher"
9. First vertebra
11. Concern for the welfare of birds lies at its core
13. Relating to birds
14. Ducklike
15. Pertaining to the wing
16. Similar to Bergman -- but applies to appendages
17. Goshawk, e.g.

Down:

1. Describes the bill of a warbler
2. Denoting species frequently sighted in a migration staging area, e.g.
5. Swamp bird that often swims with only its head exposed
6. _____ ratio compares length to breadth
9. See 1 Down
10. Different from others of its kind
11. Bonaparte's, Franklin's, & Thayer's fit this descriptive term
12. Can be up to 10 ft. across
15. Its bill can be grooved or smooth

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A Forest of Dwarf Oaks

By Yorke Edwards

Many people, those who know what they are looking at, admire our Garry Oaks, named for Nicholas Garry. As secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company Garry helped exploring English botanists like the famous David Douglas who first found the Douglas Fir, and dozens of other plants.

In many parts of the city, we enjoy the large and sturdy oaks that are most numerous on the thin soils of our rocky knolls and other stony outcrops. Others, along many area streets, and still in some gardens, once grew in grassy savannahs. They have thick trunks and heavy looking branches with twigs zigzagging as if unsure about their places in space. Most are mighty giants, but strange as it may seem our oaks can be dwarfed as well.

Strong winds can blow trees into unexpected appearances, especially on hills, mountains, and seashores, forcing them into unusual shapes. Such winds can dry and kill parts of tender new unsheltered twigs.

Not far from my home is a thicket of many thin oak stems crowded into an impenetrable little dwarf forest, its smallest stems hidden in short grass. It grows up the shore facing south across Juan de Fuca Strait. That thick oak patch is but a few yards from a sidewalk used by dozens of people daily, but only once have I heard passing words about "the little oaks". The patch is shaped far differently from the shape of most oaks.



Photo: Yorke Edwards

This small forest has, as a guess, about 350 stems growing upward over an area of roughly 30 by 30 feet on a rocky slope facing south. Strong and low south winds from across Juan de Fuca Strait prune down the top of the thicket. Mostly occurring in winter, those winds can be powerful, often roaring out of the east to sometimes peel roof shingles from houses near the shore. They often begin to blow from the east, and then swing slowly through the south to finally blow from the west. They can be winds to lean into, and while they blast houses near the shore, they somewhat shelter the inland homes and gardens. The result is that most inland people and their houses have winds partly tamed.

At the south end of the thicket, the stems are only a few inches high, while northward the stems rise taller up the thicket to about five feet high at the north end. Looking at the thicket from the east, it is wedge-shaped, with its base also tilted by rocky ground, sloping up from the shore. It is a wind-pruned cluster of crowded oak stems. In most of the thicket, there are no spaces for me to crawl into, but there is some room to enter among the large stems at the north end. The few largest and most northern upright trunks are about three inches in diameter, while those at the south end are just little wiry twigs in the grass.

In the little forest, I could follow some northerly stems into the leaf mould on the ground. Under the mat of old leaves, I found that one stem changed direction from vertical

to horizontal and disappeared south down the thicket. In another entry where the largest trunks allowed my crawling, I found in the leaf mold that three of the largest upright stems were upward reaching branches from the same horizontal stem, buried in the decaying leaves. Are those stems upright trunks, or are they upright branches? Is the thicket all one tree? Or, is it more than one?

I have found no living acorns. I did find one dead and withered one, and only about half the size of the end of my little finger still attached to a twig.

About a yard north from the south edge of the wedge I collected a bit of small dead stem a half an inch thick in cross section. Inside its thin and flaky bark, and after cutting and polishing the wood, I counted at least 30 very thin annual rings visible, each one about the same width. In the centre was a core showing no visible rings, probably because I was using only a small hand lens. That branch was probably much more than 30 years old.

I thought that if stems at the north end have grown at about the same rate, the upright five-foot stems, several inches thick, should be older than the small ones. I was wrong. I found another dead branch, this time at the north and high end of the thicket, and I broke off a few inches. At home I found that the stem had growth rings much wider than those in the twig from the south end. I was first puzzled, and then woke up. Were those tallest stems the youngest stems growing fat and faster because they are protected from the winds behind the stems down the wedge? If so, the south end may have both the oldest and smallest stems, while the sheltered northern stems are tallest and youngest. It seems that the stems have grown higher up the wedge because older windward stems protected them. Again, there is a mystery. I found no new stems growing at the north end.

Do beware, however, my understandings from limited searches, with limited equipment may have led me into error. More time and better equipment are needed.

I have also been wondering about how the little forest got there. The First Peoples (which I grew up calling "Indians" — silly because they were not from India) lived with oaks east of the Coast Mountains in the United States, and on a small part of southern Vancouver Island. Those Peoples lived in or near oak-grasslands from the tip of Vancouver Island to deep into California. Those dry grasslands are savannahs, grasses with scattered, often solitary trees. Dry climates rule the vegetation. The moist air masses from the western ocean rise eastward over hills and mountains, losing their moisture as they rise, then drop down onto the flatlands as dry thirsty winds. Grasses and scattered oaks flourish in such dry areas.

In that dryness, all the way from California to Vancouver Island, there are seven species of oaks. The northern half of California has all seven, three of them grow into Oregon, and only one reaches through Washington into British Columbia. Our few Garry Oaks live in a small area here, but they can be found growing down into California.

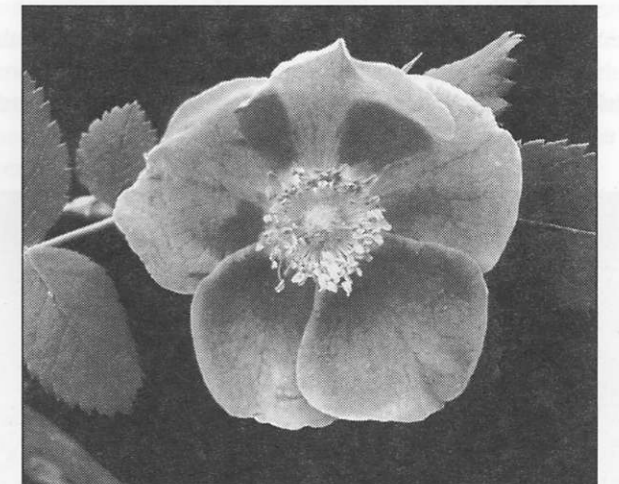
All down the savannah the First People ate acorns to some extent. They were an important food in California, but their use declined northward, probably with the loss of the

best kinds of acorns for food. Acorns contain tannin, which is bitter, but the bitterness was partly reduced by soaking them in water. The different kinds of acorns probably have different amounts of tannin. Oaks on Vancouver Island had edible acorns, but they were not a staple in the diet. They taste quite bitter.

All First Peoples, north to south in the savannah, used fire to burn grass and to kill both shrubs and young trees that were not wanted. This favoured the oaks. They burned, as someone said, because "they were tending their oak orchards". On Vancouver Island the People may have eaten acorns, and did use fire that improved the oak savannah. Their burning was a form of agriculture. In some areas fires were probably used for increasing the harvest of Camas bulbs, a staple food, but may also have been used to enhance acorn production.

Our seashore dwarf forest probably started from just one acorn. There are oak trees on a nearby hill, and Coast Salish people camped not far from the thicket. An excavation by Royal British Columbia Museum staff some years ago provided evidence of this. Perhaps a Salishan person dropped the acorn that started the thicket; or was it a Steller's Jay that hid it there?

Years ago someone told me that they had seen a thicket of small oaks near Victoria on one of our windswept rocky hills. Perhaps there are other little oak thickets in or near this windy city.



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The 2000 Season at Rocky Point Bird Observatory

By Dan Derbyshire and Michael Porter



While banding operations began at Rocky Point in 1994, the summer of 2000 saw the second year of complete coverage during the fall migration season at Rocky Point Bird Observatory. Located on Department of National Defense (DND) land opposite Race Rocks, the station was again looked after by Daniel Derbyshire, assisted by almost 40 volunteers. The banding operation ran from July 21st until October 18th on a daily basis except for two days totally lost due to rain and one day of the 91 planned days lost due to demolitions on Bentinck Island. Banding was also curtailed by rain on a number of days and during a five-day period (September 11th to 15th) when demolitions took place on the same island. For safety reasons, the banding location has to be vacated when DND demolitions are scheduled. While it is highly desirable for standardization and consistency objectives that there be no hiatus in coverage, the reality is that the work of DND takes precedence.

The objective of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) is to monitor populations of passerines migrating along the West Coast. The RPBO serves a broader purpose as a member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network managed by Bird Studies Canada. A principle aim is to gather quality, standardized data on West Coast migrating birds to obtain population indices for the various species found here. Of equal importance to catching and banding birds is the

regular daily census and completion of estimated totals of birds in the area. Many species that frequent the area are seen and heard, but rarely caught so assessing their presence and numbers is critically important to an overall understanding and documentation of migration patterns and numbers.

A total of 2723 birds of 57 species were banded at RPBO in 2000 compared to 2255 birds of 61 species in 1999. However, in 2000 a decision was reached to increase the number of nets from 10 to 13 to capture more birds and species not well represented by the original ten nets, so three additional nets were opened on alternative days. Situated in an area of good cover, the new nets proved to be productive catching 23% of the season's total with one net having a capture rate of 1.05 birds per net hour. Of particular interest, these new nets were responsible for 80% of the Black Throated Gray Warblers and 50% of Spotted Towhees banded in 2000. Comparing the original 10 net totals across the two years, the number of birds banded was similar, 2255 of 61 species in 1999 and 2107 of 56 species in 2000. Net configuration and net hours were consistent between the two years and the capture rate for the first 10 nets was identical over the two years at 0.48 birds per net hour.

Late July was a sparse period for migrants with only Rufous Hummingbirds and swallows in good numbers. An estimated 22 Rufous Hummingbirds were noted on July 21

while 125 were captured in the nets for the whole season, the last one on September 1st. Rufous Hummingbirds are not presently banded at the observatory. Late July and August featured a good concentration of juvenile and adult White-crowned and Chipping Sparrows but this tapered off and the migration of the more northern breeding populations was weak. The top migrants in August, Wilson's Warbler and Pacific-slope Flycatcher were less apparent than in 1999. August 27th saw the highest one-day total banded for the month and season's highs were observed for Yellow Warbler and Orange Crowned Warbler, few of which were captured.

September is usually the busiest migration period at Rocky Point and this was true in 2000 with 107 birds banded on September 3rd and 97 on September 16th. But the rest of the month was rather quiet with only about 30 birds a day being banded. Yellow-rumped Warbler migration was disappointing with an estimated total of 80 on September 27 compared with 270 on September 30th in 1999. American Robin, White-crowned, Golden-crowned and Savannah Sparrows reached their peaks two weeks earlier than in 1999. Overall, September was somewhat disappointing as sparrows and thrushes never materialized to the extent expected based on prior experience.

A heavy fallout occurred on Oct. 1st following the passing of a storm front. On that day 167 birds were banded made up of many Winter Wrens, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Fox Sparrows and Spotted Towhees. Between Oct. 1st and 3rd, 314 birds were banded at a rate of 1.5 captures per net hour, clearly the busiest days of the season. One of the features of the season was the unusually high number of Winter Wrens (265 total), the wriggling and entangled bane of the net extractor's life at Rocky Point. The timing of these "fallouts" do not necessarily follow expectations regarding changes in weather but seem to be subject to

more complex weather events. These may become more apparent as experience at Rocky Point accumulates.

The season saw some particularly interesting re-traps. A Fox Sparrow banded here on September 26 in 1996 provided an anniversary event by turning up in a net on September 26, 2000, four years and fifty-five minutes later. A Lincoln's Sparrow showed up one day later than last year and a Bushtit two years later although missing its anniversary by five days. A Pacific-slope Flycatcher banded in on July 25th 1999 was re-trapped on July 16th, 2000, an unusual event since this species is rarely re-trapped. The longevity record falls to a Red-shafted Flicker banded as an adult on May 8th 1995 and re-trapped July 26th, 2000. At six-plus years of age, this is an old Woodpecker!

During the banding season, daily observations are maintained through a daily census route and more general monitoring of hawks, sea birds and such species as Vaux's and Black Swifts. Lower numbers of raptors were seen in 2000 but with greater species diversity. On September 20th 350 Turkey Vultures were noted but this was much lower than the 1300 seen on one day in 1999. Common Terns were scarce this year with a high of 11 on August 18th. On September 3rd, 480 Red-necked Phalaropes passed by Rocky Point and Bonaparte's Gulls were seen in good numbers peaking at 1330 on October 8th, the same day that 390 Rhinoceros Auklets were seen.

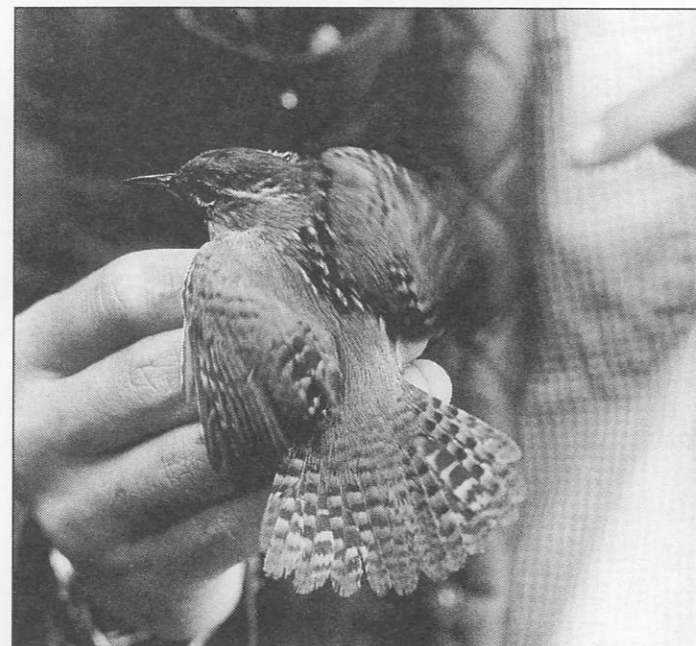
The main work of the observatory is its program of banding and observations using standardized methods. Catching and noting rarities is not its purpose but their appearance does add some excitement to the daily routine. Two new species were seen in 2000, a Glaucous Gull on October 15th and a Blackpoll Warbler on September 3rd. Among more unusual species caught were Northern Waterthrush, White-throated Sparrow and Dusky Flycatcher (the observatory's sixth record and second banded). A fly over of 1100 Greater White-fronted Geese on September 30th was impressive and on October 14th an Emperor Goose was seen flying with some Canada Geese past Bentinck Island. Two Swainson's Hawks were seen at different times and Golden Eagles noted on two occasions. A Short-eared Owl on October 6 is only the second record from the site. Other more unusual sightings included Rough-legged Hawk, Mourning Dove, Tree Swallow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, White-winged Crossbill and Lapland Longspur.

2000 was a good season and all involved are looking forward to an equally productive and interesting year at Rocky Point Bird Observatory.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory wishes to acknowledge the Department of National Defense's permission and cooperation in operating the observatory. The Rocky Point Bird Observatory gratefully acknowledges the support of Bird Studies Canada and the Canada Millennium Partnership Program whose funding provided helped with the purchase of supplies and equipment for operations at the station. The observatory also acknowledges the support and assistance of the Canadian Wildlife Service and Victoria Natural History Society.



Song sparrow. Photos: Michael Porter



Marsh wren.



Northern saw-whet owl

Birding Survey Planned for Viaduct Flats

By Ed Pellizzon

Viaduct Flats is the low-lying portion of the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (HCP) lease land in the Municipality of Saanich. The flats are flooded in the winter. For a number of years, water was pumped out in the early spring and agriculture crops were planted. In 1993, soon after an agriculture lease on the land expired, a beaver dammed the outlet creek about 100 metres below the agriculture field. This action produced a year-round body of water that significantly altered the habitat. An immediate change in bird populations, especially migratory waterfowl, was observed.

Michael Carson of the Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) supervised a bird survey of the area that was conducted from June 1994 until May 1995.¹ This survey played an important part in getting the area set aside in a covenant agreement, and provides a good baseline for observations of future changes in the area. Although birders continue to visit the area, their observations are not currently being formally recorded.

A number of significant actions are being planned for the HCP lands. These include:

- reforestation;
- construction of trails and viewing stations; and
- restricting human use in certain areas.

It is important to continue recording birding observations as one method of monitoring the effect of these actions.

The Survey

The principal use of the survey will be to monitor effects over long periods of time, i.e., decades. Since it is unlikely that funding can be obtained for this type of observation, it will be necessary to utilize volunteers. It is likely that the availability of volunteers will change from time to time, so the study will be set up to:

- provide core information that can be reasonably collected by a single volunteer; and
- be expanded for periods of time when more volunteers are available.


The procedure outlined by Carson in his article¹ is suitable, although it requires the participation of more qualified birders than is likely to be available on a regular basis. Therefore, the following procedure, which can be conducted by a single person staying in contact with other birders will be used.

- a bimonthly walk through of the Viaduct Flats and the surrounding forested lands; this method would take one person approximately 4-5 hours, done on days when conditions are comparable from a birders standpoint;

- to have master checklist available, with the 134 known species of birds which have been seen at the flats;
- a web link from the Birding B.C. web site, the VNHS web site, and from the HCP web site for all birders to report any sightings via email or telephone, with updated counts available, and the master list of species available for all that visit the site to check. It is important that all birders have the availability to contribute to this survey;
- communication with the VNHS regarding this survey; and updates for the HCP, The Viaduct Flats Committee, and the VNHS with any noticeable changes, concerns, and possible recommendations regarding birding populations and habits.

For more information please email or call Ed Pellizzon at 216-2789 or 881-1476, or edlps@telus.net.

¹ Carson, Michael. "Birding Observations around Viaduct Flats," *The Victoria Naturalist*, Vol. 53.1 (1996), pp. 7-15.



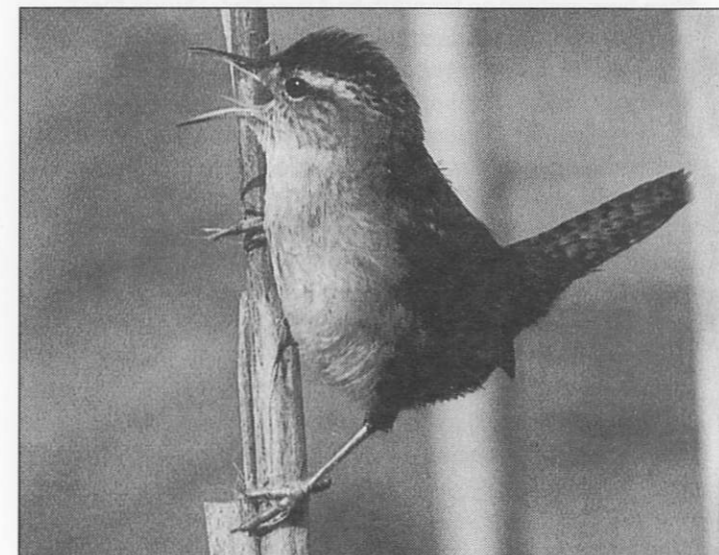
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Anna's Hummingbird Fledgling

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

This Anna's hummingbird fledgling was photographed by Marie O'Shaughnessy at Connie Hawley's garden on March 8th 2001. By the next day, this little bird had joined its fellow fledgling somewhere in Connie's avian-friendly garden in Fairfield, Victoria, B.C. Apparently, Connie's 'babies' are the earliest record for Anna's Hummingbird nesting and fledging for the Victoria checklist area. According to one of our local lovers of Anna's Hummingbirds, Cam Finlay, research in this area indicates that the hardy little females can raise two broods in one year. They have been seen to be incubating one brood while still feeding the fledged young of the previous brood. Congratulations Connie on your success!



Marsh Wren

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

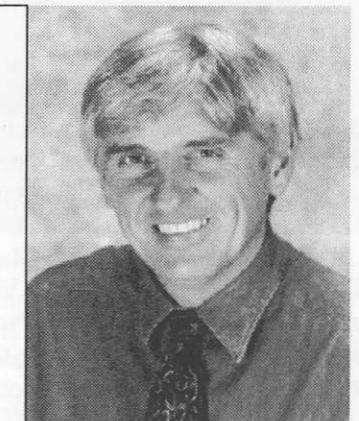
This little male Marsh Wren was photographed by Marie O'Shaughnessy at Rithet's Bog, March 30th, close to the chip trail along Chatterton Way. He was very actively adding moist grasses to his almost completed and substantial nest that was well camouflaged between last year's Sedge grass and Cattails. I observed that after every addition to his nest that he would proclaim at the top of his lungs how great he was at building "homes", for it is the male that entices a female to one of several structures that he has fashioned. These little wrens sing day and night during the breeding season. Rejoice, for it is indeed Spring!



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White-tailed Kites at Rocky Point Bird Observatory

By Michael Porter

Rocky Point Bird Observatory, located on Department of National Defense land opposite Race Rocks, was twice visited by a White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) during the summer of 1999 but despite a summer long vigil in 2000, the event was not repeated. Of course, that doesn't mean that a stray did not wander this way during the past summer but if it did, it did so incognito.

The first sighting at Rocky Point, on August 18, 1999, was made by several people. A casual glance at a group of circling gulls lead to the discovery. One of the white birds' flight pattern was completely different from that of the accompanying gulls and was marked by a light angled wing beat alternating with glides so characteristic of Kites. The gray upper parts, white face and tail and black upper-wing coverts, which gave rise to its original name, were unmistakable. Its identity was quickly established and the individual was watched for several minutes circling around over the open ground between the banding area and the sea until it flew out of sight. The moral of this first observation is always to look at gulls. A month later, on September 14, 1999, David Allinson and Daniel Derbyshire, bander-in-charge at Rocky Point, also observed a Kite at the same location.

In 1993 the taxonomists of the American Ornithologists Union separated the Eurasian Black-shouldered or Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) from the North American population of this widely distributed species. *Elanus caeruleus* is distributed throughout much of the world, being found in the Iberian Peninsula in Europe, throughout Africa, tropical and sub-tropical Asia and Australia where it has been separated as *Elanus notatus*. From a field ornithologist's point of view, the taxonomic distinction between *caeruleus* and *leucurus* makes little difference since, on either side of the continent, an ocean separates the ranges of the two species. Variations between the two are limited to slight size differences, variations in the shades of gray, the amount of white on the forehead, and under-wing patterns.

The Birds of British Columbia reports that no records of this species have ever been published, or the bird was only seen by one observer in British Columbia, insufficient to count as a record. Since the book's publication there have been seven confirmed (two or more observers) sightings of these birds in the Vancouver and Lower Mainland since 1990. Most of the records are for April. The Victoria Natural History Society now has a total of five accepted records for this species in the area, including the two records mentioned here.

These records and sightings should not be a surprise, since the species has been slowly extending its range northward through Oregon and more recently Washington State. Breeding is now established in parts of the latter. Almost extinct by 1930 in the United States, numbers have been gradually increasing. It was first discovered breeding in Oregon in 1975 near Corvallis, the same year it was first observed in Washington at the Nisqually River. The White-tailed Kite has been regarded as a rare and local breeder in Washington State since 1988, when the first nest was discovered at the Raymond Airport in Pacific County. Since then it has been recorded breeding in Wahkiakum as well as in Pacific County and possibly also Lewis County in the South-west part of the state, extending the range of the bird northward from the coastal population in Oregon. Wandering birds have been sighted as far north as Anacortes. During the winter of 1999/2000 there were reports of about twenty kites occupying winter territories in Thurston and Pacific counties favoring farmland and open areas.

Post-breeding dispersal northward in late summer occurs among several species and so it would now seem that to this list should be added the White-tailed Kite. Let us hope that the summer of 2001 sees some more of these delightful birds at the Southern tip of Vancouver Island and that with slow expansion northward it may eventually be found breeding. Given its habitat preference for open spaces, cropland and riparian areas, the Saanich peninsula seems the likeliest place to look. These kites are usually rather obvious — flying fairly low and perching on posts and telephone poles from which they search for their prey of small mammals, birds and insects.

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Fourth Annual Valentine's Day Couples Count February 11, 2001

By Dannie Carsen

The \$110 collected from this event was provided to the VNHS Parks and Conservation Committee for their Green Spaces project. I would like to thank the following donors for their fine prizes for the 2001 Valentine's Day Couples Bird Count:

- **Howie Siegel** (owner) gave a romantic dinner for two at **Pagliacci's**;
- **Jerry and Gladys Anderson** gave a romantic brunch at the **Canoe Cove Coffee Shop**;
- **Jean Hughes** (owner) donated the gift certificate for the **Canoe Cove Coffee Shop**; and
- **Andy and Marilyn Buhler** romantic lunch for two at the **Bird of Paradise Pub** plus two bottles of wine used for "spot" prizes.

The Valentine's Day Couples Count was a roaring romantic success this year! There were 11 couples that took part! They started (most of them) at 6:00 a.m. and birded energetically (except those who stopped for breakfast) to 12:00 noon. Both members of the team had to see all the birds and using only the romantic duet of the human voice and double pushing to call them in. This year, the rule requiring "one birder plus lover" was changed to "one birder plus companion" to allow some new "couples" to take part. Only two of the new form of "couples" took part, and a mild penance of providing entertainment of bird courtship behavior to the post count gathering was deemed reasonable by the judge. David Allinson and Colleen O'Brien did the most convincing bird courtship behavior (Barred owl calls) and Ann Nightingale and Rick Schortinghuis came a resonant second with courtship gifting behavior. In total, 118 species of birds were seen by the 22 participants.

1st prize of romantic dinner for two at Pagliacci's won by Jerry and Gladys Anderson with a species count of 81 (including a Northern harrier at the airport)! After winning the first prize *three times*, Jerry and Gladys decided to donate their prize to a non-winning couple. Names were put in a hat and Warren and Lisa Drinnan won the Romantic Pagliacci's dinner.

2nd prize of romantic brunch at the Canoe Cove Coffee Shop was won by first time participants Alan MacLeod and Janice Brown with a species count of 80! This was a valiant effort by an energetic couple but it proved tough to beat Jerry and Gladys Anderson who have such long experience birding together on the peninsula!

3rd prize of romantic lunch for two at the Bird of Paradise Pub was won by the mildly physically handicapped team of David Allinson and Colleen O'Brien. Colleen began

the day with knee problems from falling off her bike. David Allinson, in accidentally flying over a fence while chasing a bird, found he was also limping by the late morning. Never mind, they turned in a respectable species count of 77 to win third prize!

Spot prizes of wine were won by Kaye and Joan Rieken and Scott Black and Tracy Moss.

Honourable mentions for performance and interesting species to: Rick Schortinghuis and Ann Nightingale with 71 species; Andy and Marilyn Buhler with 66 species with a Northern mockingbird at Hunt Road; Warren Lee and Cathy Reader with a Northern shrike at Rithet's Bog; Scott Black and Tracy Moss with a Sharp-shinned hawk at UVic; Neil and Pat Boyle with a Surfbird at Cattle Point.



Raffle Winner. The recipient of the VNHS. 2001 Raffle framed print "Bulrushes" was **Joan Cowley** of Victoria. Congratulations Joan. Many thanks to our membership, family and friends who supported this endeavour to raise almost 1,000 dollars toward a conservation project. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*

President's Report

"Investing in the Future"

By Bruce Whittington

When we conducted the VNHS Members' Survey a while back, there was a universal feeling that the Society needs to reach out to new members. When asked about starting a program for junior naturalists, the respondents were unanimous in their support.

VNHS Director Sheila Mosher has volunteered to coordinate a new initiative for the Society. VNHS will be sponsoring a chapter of the fledgling Young Naturalist Club of BC. Sheila provides more information on this exciting new project in the next article.

The Society is also continuing its commitment to supporting post-secondary students in the environmental field, with its well-established program of scholarships and bursaries. We have been moved to reconsider our commitment recently, however, with a request from Royal Roads University.

In its short history as a public university, Royal Roads has developed a reputation for offering innovative and challenging programs, and the environmental field is no exception. VNHS has been asked to consider offering a scholarship to a student at RRU. It is an excellent opportunity for the Society to support a student who shares the goals

of the Society's members, and the Board has voted unanimously to support the request.

The matter does not end there, however. In order for a scholarship to be self-supporting, it must come from revenue generated by a fund established for the purpose. Our Treasurer, Gordon Hart, has recommended that the Society expand its current scholarship fund by \$5,000. This would provide sufficient revenue to begin offering a scholarship, which could be increased as finances permitted.

Now, it's your turn. We are asking all members to consider a donation to the VNHS Scholarship Fund, for the establishment of this new scholarship at Royal Roads University. It is an opportunity to further the Society's goals, and to help the Society leave an enduring legacy in the field of environmental studies. All donations over \$10 will qualify for income tax receipts, if requested.

We'll be reporting on the progress of this campaign. If members would like to organize fundraising events for this campaign, give us a call. If you have any questions about the Board's decision, or the Society's financial position, contact the Treasurer, or any other Director. We're listed in the front of every issue.

Young Naturalists Club of British Columbia

By Sheila Mosher

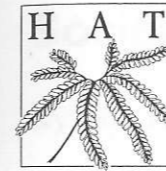
The Victoria Natural History Society has decided to sponsor a local branch of the Young Naturalists Club (YNC) of British Columbia. This club has been active in the Vancouver area for over a year. As well, a local branch has recently been organized in Nanaimo. In time it is hoped that it will become active throughout the province.

The YNC is aimed at children from six years to early teens. Membership in the club includes a magazine subscription to NatureWILD, the opportunity to participate in

monthly field trips, and to earn action awards. The purpose of the club is to encourage interest in nature and environmental issues in members and their families, and to inculcate basic conservation attitudes and ideas.

At present, a committee is working on organizing and planning for local activities. We hope to have our first field trips by April or May. We are also working to publicize the club to attract members.

The committee would welcome any suggestions about topics for field trips and any offers to assist in leading trips.



HAT Tricks

By Bruce Whittington

As humans, each of us grows and matures in a different way, and yet there are some patterns we all share. So it is with organizations like HAT. It sometimes feels as though HAT has entered those "awkward teenage years" that I remember all too well. We have not yet achieved the long-term security of a mature organization, yet we are flushed with the enthusiasm and vision of youth. HAT has grown tremendously in the past year. Our community projects have increased both in number and in scope, as we reach out to more and more people.

The campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake on Galiano Island received a healthy boost recently, with a \$20,000 grant from Mountain Equipment Coop, to one of our partners, Islands Trust Fund. If you would like to visit Laughlin Lake, look for the upcoming field trip in the Calendar.

HAT is also helping the Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society in their efforts to secure an addition to the existing park. Call the HAT office for information on how you can make a contribution to either of these projects.

In the Tod Creek Watershed Project, Meagan Christie is helping the community to build and place nestboxes for Purple Martins and Wood Ducks. The blue-listed martins have responded well to nestboxes in estuaries, and HAT hopes to attract them to freshwater habitats. Wood Ducks also respond well to nest boxes, and favour the woodland lakes in the watershed. Meagan would appreciate assistance from VNHS members who can help with nest box construction or placement.

Tara Todesco is just completing a project called "Connecting for Conservation in the CRD". A forum of conservation organizations was held on April 21st which saw a lively exchange of ideas, problem-solving, and visions for the future. Victoria-Hillside MLA Steve Orchardson was on hand to unveil a new website called the Conservation Connection (www.conservationconnection.bc.ca), which is a searchable source of information about conservation organizations and their activities in the CRD.

Clare Rumball, HAT's Coordinator of Programs, is developing new programs which will allow HAT to identify parks and green spaces which would benefit from buffers on adjacent land. Through landowner contact programs, HAT or other organizations can then undertake landowner contact

programs in those areas. Clare is also assembling a workbook of conservation and stewardship tools for municipal decision-makers in the CRD.

We are near the end of a very successful series of slide presentations to seniors groups, called "From Cockles to Cacti". The response has been very warm, and HAT has made many new friends in the community through this program.

All land trusts work to permanently protect natural areas, and so they also make a commitment to monitor those protected areas in perpetuity. This requires a secure financial foundation. HAT director Peter Heron is working on a fundraising strategy for HAT, which will address both short-term and long-term needs. We welcome input for this critical component of HAT's long-term operating plan from people who have had experience in fundraising.

HAT director Marilyn Lambert organized another successful "HAT's Off!" birding tour, to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. David Stirling again volunteered his services as leader, which means an important profit to fund HAT's activities.

It's time to think again about the fabulous "Nature of Island Artists" show this fall at Goldstream Park, an event which also supports HAT's work. There is more information about the art show elsewhere in this issue.

Land trusts are working in a field which is constantly changing. This year, for example, has seen significant changes in income tax regulations regarding conservation donations. On-going staff development is an important part of our jobs, and all of our staff attended the annual Land Trust Alliance of BC seminar in Nanaimo at the end of March. In addition to the sessions we attended to learn new ideas, HAT presented a protocol, developed jointly with Nature Conservancy of Canada, for conducting baseline inventories on properties with conservation covenants.

None of this work would be possible without the support of members and donors. Please consider joining HAT; you'll receive more news about our projects in our newsletter called *HAT Chat*. You can also visit our web site, www.hat.bc.ca, which has recently been improved and updated by Jeff Stone. And feel free to call us in the HAT office at any time — 995-2428.

Parks and Conservation Committee Report to the VNHS Annual General Meeting — March 2001

By Sheila Mosher

The Parks and Conservation Committee meets at 7:00 pm on the third Thursday of the month at the Swan Lake Nature House. The committee concerns itself primarily with protection of the local environment.

The important task of inventorying sensitive ecological areas and providing information about them to local governments continues to be carried out by the Greenspaces Committee which reports regularly to the Parks and Conservation Committee.

The committee also monitors local parks and protected

areas, when possible by securing representation on management boards. At present, VNHS has members on the Viaduct Flats Management Board and the Beacon Hill Park Management Planning Committee. A committee member has been working with other groups in an effort to establish no discharge zones to prevent sewage pollution in harbours. Recently, the committee has undertaken to conduct bird surveys of John Dean Park for the Friends of John Dean Park Society.

The Committee would welcome any new members interested in conservation issues.

Interested in Volunteering?

While most members of the Victoria Natural History Society are aware of the regular meetings and field trips outlined in the back of each issue of *The Victoria Naturalist*, many are not aware that there are many other events, activities and volunteer opportunities available to them. This year, we are going to develop an "interest" database to better share news about events with members.

You don't need to make a long-term commitment to become involved. Volunteer assignments can take as little as a couple of hours. There are also opportunities for members to chair committees or lead projects. We'll start by using the information on the membership forms, survey responses and other activity sign-up sheets, but will also be contacting members directly to find out their interests. The following is a partial list of opportunities available to VNHS members.

Natural history surveys and studies

- Bird, butterfly & plant surveys
- Nest monitoring programs
- Plant surveys
- Greenways inventory projects
- Butterfly counts

Public relations

- Newspaper, radio and TV public service announcements

- Staffing displays and information booths
- Fundraising or donation solicitation
- Speaking engagements

Computing support

- Web page design/maintenance
- Rare bird alert updates

Liaison with other groups

- Rocky Point Birding Observatory
- Goldstream Art Show (Sept.)
- Habitat Acquisition Trust
- Attendance at municipal council meeting
- Membership on various community organizations
- Young Naturalist program

Conservation projects

- Nest box building and stewardship
- Construction of bird blinds and information kiosks
- Habitat rehabilitation
- Invasive plant removal

Social Activities

- Preparing coffee and cookies for meetings
- Member communication including phone contact "trees" (phone lists of 4 or 5 members per participant)

If you would like to be contacted for these or other interests, please call Ann Nightingale at 652-6450 or contact Ann by email at motmot@home.com.

Welcome to New Members

FEBRUARY

Lois and Michael Becevel
Haslam Avenue

Don Demers

Drake Avenue
(birds)

Brian Fryer

Brooke Street

Bonnie Gallagher

Grant Street

Barbara Kennedy

Collinson Street

Edward L. Pellizzon

Shelbourne Street

MARCH

Louise Bradbury

May Street

(birds, botany)

Cecelia Henderson

Palmer Road
(birds)

Patricia Smith

Swift Street
(birding)

Ed and Gail Tupper

Lexington Avenue
(birds)

Shirley A. Wishart

Market Street
(birds)

Social Director's Report to the VNHS Annual General Meeting

By Ann Nightingale

The primary responsibilities of the Social Director for the VNHS include coffee at the Natural History and Birder's Nights, the post-Christmas Bird Count gathering and the banquet arrangements for the annual banquet. While none of these jobs is particularly onerous, they have been made easier with the help of other VNHS members.

This year, the coffee and cookies have added about \$50 per month to the coffers of VNHS. We have paid a little more for our coffee in order to buy more bird-friendly shade-grown products this year. I'd like to especially thank Rick Schortinghuis for making sure that coffee was available when I was unable to attend the meetings and Barbro Baker and others for bringing treats for the breaks.

The post-Christmas Bird Count gathering was held in a new location this year as our usual spot was unavailable due to a Christmas Concert. The turnout was a little lower than usual, mostly due to the incredible weather we had that day. Barbro Baker and Joan Gowan did a terrific job of setting

everything up and serving warm drinks and goodies for those who braved the weather.

The Annual Banquet was reasonably well attended, with about 85 guests. Music was provided by the Meere Minstrels during the "happy hour." It was a great evening for those who were there, but VNHS may have to make a decision soon about whether or not to continue this event. Although we broke even on the meal, when all costs were considered, we probably lost about \$50 to \$75 on the event. The guest speaker, Ian McTaggart-Cowan graciously donated his time, or our costs would have been even higher. There were several people who were concerned about the price of the banquet, so it's not likely we could get as many people out if we raised the fees. We will need to decide whether the Annual Banquet should be subsidized by members' dues, or if there is some other way to continue without costing the Society money. Thanks go to those who helped with the arrangements and by selling banquet tickets, including Stephen Baker, Dorothy Henderson, Bruce Whittington and Marilyn Lambert.

Letters to the Editors

Hi Folks,

Good news! Our HELP MELP Campaign successfully persuaded the government to increase the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks budget in Budget 2001. Figures are attached. You may wish to write and thank the government for listening to our requests.

Tom Burgess, myself and Bob Peart (CPAWS) and Bill Wareham (Sierra Club) also met with Liberal Environment Critic Murray Coell last Monday, and he believed that core funding for the Environment was necessary and would not be cut by a possible future Liberal government. However, he did say that candidates need to be educated on the issue and encouraged to adopt this attitude. Thanks to all who wrote letters for HELP MELP and spread the word.

Here are the final figures from the budget document itself. (We have been asking for a \$15 million per year increase for wildlife, habitat, fisheries and parks programs, for five years.)

MELP	
2000/01 budget estimate	197M
2000/01 revised budget	201M
2001/02 budget estimate	211M increase 6.9%

Last November's \$4.9 million was rolled over into the base budget. There was an additional \$5.6M added. The Grizzly bear money of \$2M/year for 3 three years is NEW

money. This is a total of \$14 million restored to MELP. The ministry will also be providing \$10 million to upgrade parks capital infrastructure.

Well done everyone!

Anne Murray

President, Federation of BC Naturalists

Dear Editor,

I was completely surprised and honoured to receive one of three distinguished service awards at the annual banquet this year. Unfortunately I was not able to attend and appreciated Claudia receiving it on my behalf. I later was presented with the beautiful plaque and a videotape of the banquet presentations, door prizes, and the speaker's talk, which I enjoyed. It was very interesting when rewinding the tape to see David and Rick take away all the door prize winners' presents from them.

I would like to thank the board and members of the VNHS for the award.

Sincerely,

Bev Glover

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary); **Natural History Presentations** (formally known as the General Members Meeting): the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Begbie 159, University of Victoria; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Parks and Conservation Committee Meeting:** the third Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Begbie 159, University of Victoria. **Marine Night:** the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

MAY

Saturday, May 5

Spring Bird Count

Midnight to noon. Post-count gathering at Swan Lake Nature House. If you need more information or want to take part, please phone **Marilyn Miller**, at 658-1723.

Saturday, May 5

Young Naturalist Club Opening Picnic

11:00 am - 2:00 pm, Elk Beaver Lake Regional Park. Join us for the start-up picnic for the new Young Naturalist Club. Meet Club organizers, new members and amazing creatures living in the nearby ponds. Call **Sheila Moser** 652-3502 or **Carolyn MacDonald** 544-2246 to register.

Sunday, May 6

Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. Possibilities include Caspian Tern, and Ruddy Turnstones. You should see a good variety of spring migrants. Meet at the bridge on Esquimalt Lagoon at 7:30 a.m. Call **Ann** at 652-6450 for more information. No pets please.

Friday, May 11

Discover Laughlin Lake

Join birder **Mike Hoebel** of the Galiano Conservancy Association to explore the habitat around Galiano's largest lake. The Conservancy is working with Habitat Acquisition Trust to purchase the lake, and this will be an opportunity for naturalists to make observations about Laughlin's flora and fauna. Time and weather permitting, we may visit other protected areas at nearby Bodega Ridge, Pebble Beach, or "Lot 55". Bring a picnic lunch. Walk on as foot passengers on the 10:20 a.m. sailing to Galiano. Transportation on Galiano will be arranged. We will return on the 4:20 p.m. sailing, which arrives in Swartz Bay at 6:45. Round-trip ferry fare is \$6.00. Please call the HAT office at 995-2428, so we know how many people we need to transport.

Saturday, May 12

Birding Blenkinsop Lake

Join **Kevin Slagboom** and **Rick Schortinghuis** in birding the new Blenkinsop Bridge and Lochside Trail. Meet at the south end of the bridge at the end of Lochside Drive at 7:00 am. Call **Kevin** at 658-0940 for more information. No pets please.

Sunday, May 13

Birding the Boardwalk at Langford Lake

Meet **Gordon Hart** for a birding walk on the new trail at the north

end of Langford Lake. You will also be birding the power lines behind the lake. This walk will take you to Hull's Wetland. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on Goldstream Avenue and the highway across from the entrance to the boardwalk. Call **Gordon** at 721-1264 for more information. No pets please.

Friday, May 18

Birding the Colquitz River Trail

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** in birding the trail between Marigold Avenue and Wilkinson Road (or on to Quick's Bottom). Meet at Marigold Park at 7:00 am. Call **Rick** at 642-3596 for more information. No pets please.

Saturday, May 19

Birding at Witty's Lagoon

Join **Dannie Carsen** in birding one of Victoria's spring hotspots. It's a peak weekend for migrant songbirds and the lagoon may produce a nice mix of waterfowl. Meet at the main parking lot on Metchosin Road at 7:00 am. If you need further information call **Dannie** at 595-2773. No pets please.

Sunday, May 20

A Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail

(Sooke Potholes to Leechtown)

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds and scenery along the way. Meet at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km up Sooke River Road at 8:00 am. Call **Rick** at 642-3596 for information. No pets please.

Friday, May 25

Birding Mount Newton

Join **Sheila Mosher** for a birding walk on Mount Newton's south slope. We should see Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Tanager as well as many other migrant and resident birds. Mount Newton is also one of the few remaining places you can see Mourning Dove near Victoria. Meet at the corner of Haldon road and Newton Heights at 7:00 am. Phone **Sheila** at 652-3502 if you have any questions. No pets please.

Saturday, May 26

Spring Migration at Rocky Point Bird Observatory

With an ever-growing list at 262+ species, the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) is a wonderful place to learn more about songbird migration. Join RPBO President **David Allinson** on the spring bi-weekly bird census route in search of migrants. May rarities have included Tennessee Warbler, Dusky Flycatcher, and Calliope Hummingbird. As the site is located on federal DND land, access is restricted. Registration is required and participants will be limited to 12 people. Preference will be given to those that have

not yet had a chance to visit the site or who have had limited experience there. You will also learn more about how you might become a volunteer for on-going activities at RPBO. Donations will be appreciated for the newly fledged RPBO society. For more details/to register, contact **David** at 478-0493 (EVENINGS ONLY).

Sunday, May 27

Birding Mount Newton

Join **Sheila Mosher** and **Cheryl Mackie** for a birding walk on Mount Newton's south slope. We should see Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Tanager as well as many other migrant and resident birds. Mount Newton is also one of the few remaining places you can see Mourning Dove near Victoria. Meet at the corner of Haldon road and Newton Heights at 7:00 am. Phone **Sheila** at 652-3502 if you have any questions. No pets please.

Sunday, May 27

Birding Elk Lake

Come for a wonderful stroll with **Tom Gillespie** (361-1694) through exceptional nesting habitat on the shore of a favourite recreational lake. Watch for breeding warblers, vireos, and waterfowl. Meet at 7:00 am at the parking lot on Jennings Lane on the west side of the Pat Bay Highway (just south of the rowing boathouse). No pets please.

JUNE

Saturday, June 2

Newcastle Island Provincial Park

Meet at the ferry before 11:00 am

A joint trip with the Victoria, Vancouver and Nanaimo YNC groups. A picnic lunch will be followed by a marine walk at 1:00 pm with **Linda Colbeck**. Bring a lunch. Call **Sheila Moser** 652-3502 or **Carolyn MacDonald** 544-2246 to register.

Saturday, June 2

Cowichan River Birding

Join **Dannie Carsen** and **Ann Nightingale** on an enjoyable fieldtrip along the Cowichan River Trail. The foliage is green and

lush and the river should be down by then so that there is lots of rocky shore for the dippers around Skutz Falls. We will cross the river and walk for an hour or two along the trail to Stoltz Meadows where we will stop for lunch. The trip will have views of Marie Canyon and varied habitat from young second growth to the mossy maples near Stoltz. Flycatchers, warblers, grosbeaks, and nesting woodpeckers should be easily heard on this hike. Bring hiking boots or shoes, a lunch and water and be prepared for a 2 hour hike each way. Meet at Helmcken Park 'n' Ride at 7:00 a.m. to carpool or at 8:25 a.m. at Skutz Falls. Contact **Dannie Carsen** at 595-2773 for more information.

Saturday, June 9

A Fossil Finding Trip to Muir Creek

Join **Thor Henrich** on a palaeontology trip to Muir Creek in search of 25 million-year-old fossils. Bring a hammer, chisel, eye-protection, gloves, and a lunch. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 am. This trip is limited to 30 participants so please register with **Rick** at 642-3596. No pets please.

Sunday, June 10

A Nature Walk in Somenos Marsh

Join **Derrick Marven** on a walk to view birds, flowers and butterflies. Meet at Somenos Marsh at 8:30 am. Call **Derrick** at (250) 748-8504 for more details. No pets please.

Saturday, June 23

Francis/ King Regional Park

1:00 pm. A walk through the forest to look for all kinds of creatures, many of whom we often pass by without even knowing they are there. We will also visit the nature house and its treasures. **Sheila Moser** 652-3502 or **Carolyn MacDonald** 544-2246 to register.

Saturday, June 30

A Nature Walk in Francis King Park

Join **David Stirling** on a walk through Francis King Park and the Power Line trails. We will be stopping to look at the flowering shrubs, butterflies and birds along the way. Bring a lunch and meet at the nature house at 8:30 am. Call **David** at 477-0625 for more information. No pets please.

BULLETIN BOARD

The Goldstream Art Show Request for Volunteers

Goldstream Provincial Park, the Habitat Acquisition Trust, and the Victoria Natural History Society are once again co-sponsoring a show of nature-inspired art from September 14 to October 8, 2001. 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, as well as help distribute posters to advertise the event. Please call **Johanna van Barneveld** at 474-3028 to get on the volunteer list. Volunteers will be invited to participate in the opening wine and cheese on September 14.

Rocky Point Bird Observatory Welcomes Members and Volunteers

RPBO memberships (\$25 per year) are available by contacting **Tom Gillespie**, Treasurer, 361-1694. RPBO could not run without volunteer field assistants. If you are interested in volunteering some time during the upcoming field season (mid-July to mid-October), or if you wish to attend one of the upcoming evening information sessions, please contact **Rick Shortinghuis**, site manager, 642-3596.



The Victoria NATURALIST

P.O. Box 5220, Stn. B.,
Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4

Expires: Dec-01

Philip and Marilyn Lambert
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