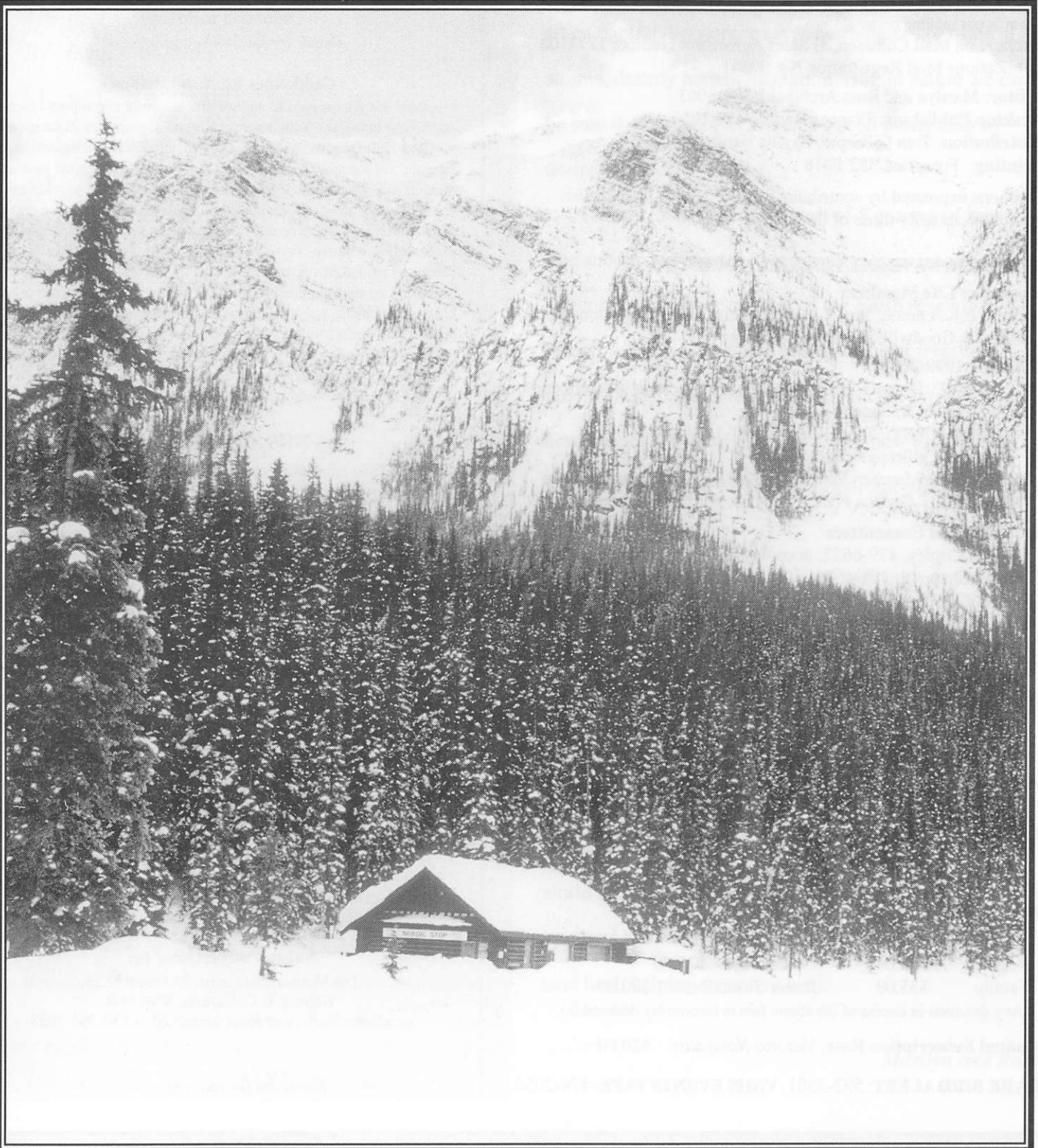




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COVER PHOTO

Winter scene by Marie O'Shaughnessy

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

There is soothing comfort in the constancy of nature;
we are, after all, creatures of the earth.

It is true that nature at times seems a violent home,
as we watch predators successfully capturing prey, or
when natural disasters, such as earthquakes or tropical
storms, destroy human habitation. But, in nature we can
be sure that violence is driven by need rather than by
desire, fuelled by ideology.

Natural disturbances are part of a process of renewal.
The subduction zone earthquakes we experience here on
Vancouver Island are a result of the Earth renewing its
aging crust. Violent storms lay down older trees to
provide sustenance and space for younger growth, and
new species. Predatory attacks feed a new generation.
In nature disruptive force is an important part of the
cycle of life.

Nature's constancy is perhaps why now, more
than ever, we need not only to think about restoring our
relationship with the rest of the biosphere; we need to
act out of self-preservation. Locally, people with mental
challenges are helped to deal with their personal
disturbances by enabling them to participate in the
restoration of degraded ecosystems. In light of recent
world disturbances, we now all need to become actively
involved in restoring balance in the world — helping the
land heal, helping ourselves heal.

Marilyn and Ross

An Introduction to Restoration Ecology in British Columbia

By Patty Thomas

Habitat loss and degradation are the casualties of economic development and human population growth. The over-exploitation of the natural world has led to great losses in biodiversity, both locally and globally. David Suzuki has stated that in order to save the earth, we must give it "CPR" (Suzuki 1997). He believes that human survival depended on practising "Conservation, Preservation and Restoration."

As early as the turn of the 20th century naturalists such as John Muir sounded the alarm and instigated the introduction of the National Parks system in the US. In 1918, conservation and the preservation of nature were key objectives. The move to conserve wildlife was continued with the inspiration of the popular works of conservation biologists such as Aldo Leopold. However, in spite of the efforts of many key individuals and other environmental organizations, we now face even greater losses of biodiversity and productive forest, and even greater declines in the integrity of our parks system, than we did in 1918. There is a growing urgency both in BC and worldwide to restore degraded ecosystems.

Traditionally, habitat restoration was the domain of biologists and engineers. Armed with our limited knowledge of nature and natural systems, we tried to recreate the habitats we destroyed. Conservation Biology/Ecology made great progress in taking a systems approach to ecological restoration. Eventually, after several decades of projects and programs under the old paradigm of Conservation Biology/Ecology, a new synthesis of science and environmentalism emerged — "ecological restoration". Much like modern day medicine, which treats the body more like a living system than an inanimate machine as was the case in the past, restoration ecology treats natural systems in such a way that they can repair themselves. Historically, it was marked by the formation of the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) in 1988. It differs from the traditional approach by including non-professionals at all levels of the process of conserving natural systems, broadening the definition to include sustainability issues, and recognizing that ultimately human and natural systems must restore themselves.

Restoration ecology's ultimate goal is to "help nature



Patricia Edmonds and Louise Ditmars, Upper Blenkinsop Creek restoration project. Photos: Ross Archibald

heal." Restoration is undertaken for one or more of the following reasons (Hobbs and Norton 1996):

1. To restore highly degraded but localized sites such as mines, usually ameliorating physical and chemical characteristics of the substrate and ensuring the return of vegetative cover;
2. To improve productive capability in degraded production lands such as forest, range and agricultural lands by, for example, reversing or ameliorating soil erosion or salinization problems in agricultural or range lands;
3. To enhance conservation values in protected landscapes by reducing the effects of introduced stock, invasive species (plant, animal, or pathogen), pollution or fragmentation. For example, an introduced herbivore can be removed from a protected landscape; and/or
4. To enhance conservation values in productive landscapes. There is an increasing recognition that protected areas alone will not conserve biodiversity in the long term, and that methods of integrating conservation and productive use must be achieved.

In British Columbia, restoration is happening everywhere, and hopefully in your own backyard. At a provincial level, Forest Renewal BC (www.forestrenewal.bc.ca) and Fisheries Renewal BC (www.fosjremewa/bc/ca) are two main initiatives aimed at restoring the productivity of our natural resources.

Island Copper, outside Port Hardy, is an open-cast mine that was reclaimed into a lake with the surrounding vegetation replanted. Invasive cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) is



being removed from the Osoyoos desert. At a more local level, members of the Vancouver Natural History Society remove purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) from valuable wetlands and marshes and take steps to restore Camosun Bog (*Discovery* 28, 1). In the Blenkinsop Valley an agricultural drainage ditch is being restored to a proper functioning stream. The "Naturescape" program of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks' Habitat Conservation Trust Fund promotes the restoration of natural vegetation in your backyard. Douglas College offers its Habitat Restoration Program, and the University of Victoria offers a diploma or certificate in Restoration of Natural Systems.

"Helping the Land Heal" was the first major conference for ecological restoration held in BC. It was held in Victoria in November 1998. This sold out event brought practitioners together to talk and learn about the field of restoration. Presentations included "Fire in the Dry Interior Forests of British Columbia", "Working Together to Heal Mother Earth", and "Daylighting Hastings Creek". These presentations and many others are available in the proceedings referenced below.

The key issues identified at this conference were:

1. Ecological degradation continues at a rapid pace due to poor management;
2. There is a lack of public awareness and support for ecological restoration;
3. There is a lack of communication among restoration practitioners;
4. There is a lack of adequate funding for restoration; and
5. There is a lack of knowledge of restoration techniques.

It was partly as a result of the success of "Helping the Land Heal" that a decision was made to form a BC chapter of SER. The first meeting of the BC Chapter of SER took place at Cowichan Lake on April 8 and 9, 2000. Board members were chosen and future plans were discussed. SER (www.ser.org), now based in Tucson, Arizona, publishes two journals and has branches around the world. The Society held its 2001 international conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Restoration Ecology is a growing movement in BC and around the world. Participation in activities to "help nature heal" helps the human spirit to heal and creates hope for the future. We invite all Victoria Natural History Society members to become more involved in restoration activities.

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- Egan, B. 1999. *Helping the Land Heal: Ecological Restoration in British Columbia*. Conference Proceedings. Vancouver: BC Environmental Network.
- Hobbs, R. and Norton, D. 1996. Towards a conceptual framework for restoration ecology. *Restoration Ecology*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 93-110.
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The School in the Boondocks

By Harvey Williams

A segment of the View Royal-Saanich boundary is the base of a two-hectare triangle, the apex of which is formed by the intersection of Burnside Road and Watkiss Way. In 1998, aside from two homes, the triangle enclosed a mosaic of wetlands, some abandoned fields and meadows, a healthy stand of 100-year old Douglas fir, and a Garry Oak-arbutus-Douglas fir woodland. It must have come as a surprise to many local residents, when it was announced that Eagle Vista Elementary School, designed for 250 students, expandable to 350, was to be built in the Burnside-Watkiss triangle. The sparse population in the area was clearly insufficient to support a school: was this a case of "Build and they will come"?

The mystery of "the school in the boondocks" was soon solved, however. The municipality had approved a subdivision in the Burnside-Watkiss triangle, and on the land south of Watkiss Way. The school was built in advance of residential development, to be prepared for the students when they

did eventually arrive. Bulldozers and backhoes were soon at work along Watkiss Road, digging holes for basements. The scene was not unlike that of a shell-pitted WWI no-man's land. Much of the Douglas Fir and Garry Oak inside the triangle was replaced by asphalt lanes. The previously unmarked boundary between Saanich and View Royal was now clearly marked by an abrupt transition from a rural and peaceful patchwork of wetlands, forests and fields on the Saanich side to cheek-to-jowl urban sprawl on the View Royal side.

The tiny park in the northeast corner of the triangle, which protected a Garry oak/Douglas fir "woodland ecosystem", rock outcrops, and remnants of wetland and meadow was not to be spared. It was exchanged for a small parcel of wetland behind the school. The park is now scheduled for subdivision. The exchanged wetland has since been filled and graded; apparently to augment the already large play area for the school.



Burnside Meadows subdivision in the Burnside-Watkiss Triangle. Photos: Harvey Williams

In the summer of 1998, a Green Spaces Project team under the leadership of Norm Mogensen conducted an ecological inventory of the Burnside-Watkiss triangle and concluded that:

1. There were several remnant natural habitats on the site that are highly valuable from an ecological standpoint.
2. Some of the abandoned fields and meadows, as well as the recently logged area would be good candidates for ecological restoration.

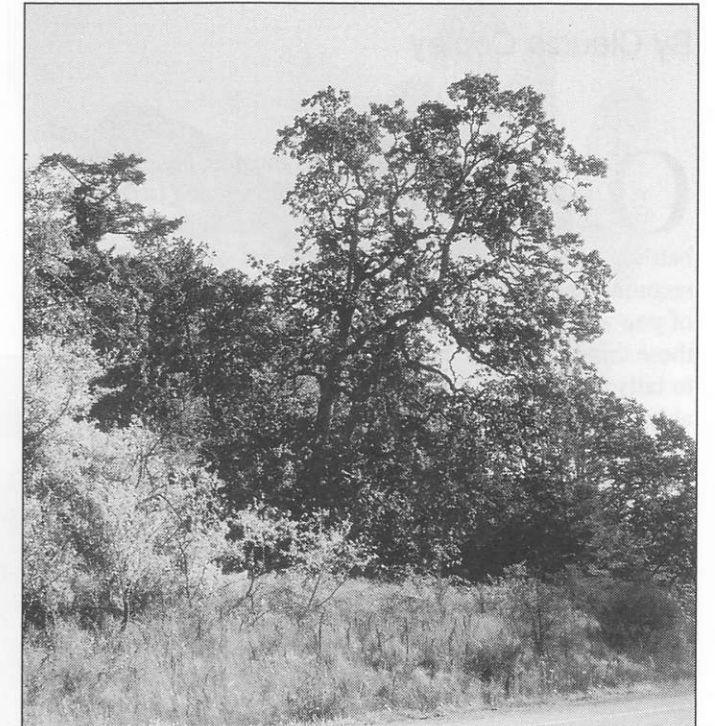
A stand of exceptionally large and majestic Garry oaks occupies the last remaining undeveloped land in the triangle. So far, there has been no proposal to develop that parcel. When a development proposal is submitted, the fate of those Garry oaks will hang in the balance as municipal officials consider its merits. There is likely to be tremendous pressure to approve development in spite of the Garry oaks.

There was nothing illegal about this subdivision, it's on private land within View Royal's urban containment boundaries and the developers seem to have met all the legal requirements. So what's the problem? The problem is that the legal requirements there, and in most other municipalities, are inadequate to protect natural habitat.

What occurred in the Burnside-Watkiss Triangle development happens several times each year at different places throughout the Greater Victoria area. The cumulative effect of such developments is that natural habitat is suffering a death of a thousand cuts.

The Green Spaces Project is endeavouring to reverse the trend toward loss of natural habitat by identifying and inventorying the ecological values of Greater Victoria's remnant natural areas. In so doing, it fulfills the VNHS mandate to study and protect flora and fauna and their habitats. It also supports a purpose of the Federation of BC Naturalists, with which the VNHS is affiliated: To encourage the establishment of protected natural areas, as represented in parks, ecological reserves, wilderness areas, wildlife management areas, wild and scenic rivers, and other such protected areas."

The VNHS Green Spaces Project steering committee is chaired by Tony Embleton. Norm Mogensen has trained hundreds of volunteers, including university students and young retirees in ecology inventory methods, and supervises the field work. The technical committee, chaired by Louise McAndrew, is preparing the data collected for entry into a GIS.



Mature Garry oaks that will be lost if this part of the Burnside-Watkiss triangle is subdivided.

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I Have Lost a Friend

By Claudia Copley

Our society has lost one of its most active members and ardent promoters, and I have lost a friend. Bev Glover passed away this past September after battling cancer for many months. I'm not writing this to recount the myriad of ways Bev benefited the society; those of you who knew her know these things, and any effort to tally them would invariably fall short. I'm writing this because I knew I couldn't have kept my poise at her memorial, and there are some things I wanted to say. After the service, her father welcomed all the guests and asked if we knew Bev through "biology (her work at the University) or birding". I had the pleasure of knowing Bev through both, and I miss her dearly.

I first met Bev in 1989, when I was an undergraduate student. She was my lab instructor for "Non-vascular Plants" and I appreciated her helpfulness and enthusiasm so much, I made sure I took "Vascular Plants" with her the following semester. It was a few semesters later that I encountered Bev again as a student; this time she was voluntarily leading field trips for a vertebrate biology class. We would go birding every Friday morning to various locations and the leaders would offer their knowledge and optics to us novices.

Coincidentally, this is how I met my husband Darren (he was also a volunteer trip leader), and Bev took some of the credit for being a matchmaker! It was at Swan Lake, birding with the class, that I first learned the song of the Song Sparrow. Bev patiently pointed it out to a group of us and provided the

memory aides necessary to retain it. It is no surprise to me that she was voted "Best Lab Instructor in the department" by the undergraduate students; she put her whole heart into it.

I have since become a lab instructor for that selfsame course and over the years Bev still voluntarily organized all the carpooling for the trips, kept track of what we saw, and chose each week's destination. Eventually she became the senior lab instructor for the ecology course I also taught, and so was then my boss. I also "worked the nets" with Bev on many occasions out at Rocky Point and participated in other outings with her. She was always sweet and ever helpful, she was a natural teacher. It gave me great pleasure to be the one to acknowledge her artistic talents by inviting her to be a participant in the art show at Goldstream. Over the years she was a generous contributor and we have some of her works on the walls of our home.

I can feel something missing in the Biology department now. All the little things that Bev took care of that no one else ever thinks about, all the extra time and effort she put in. She was always willing to give up her own time to others, constantly accommodating other's needs and undervaluing

her own. I wish now that we could give her back that time, it turns out she gave too much of it away. It was a little bird with a large presence that prompted me to write all of this: a Song Sparrow has been practicing with dedication outside our window each day.



Bev at Vaseux Lake, Okanagan, BC, August, 1998.

A Few Words About Bev

By Dannie Carsen

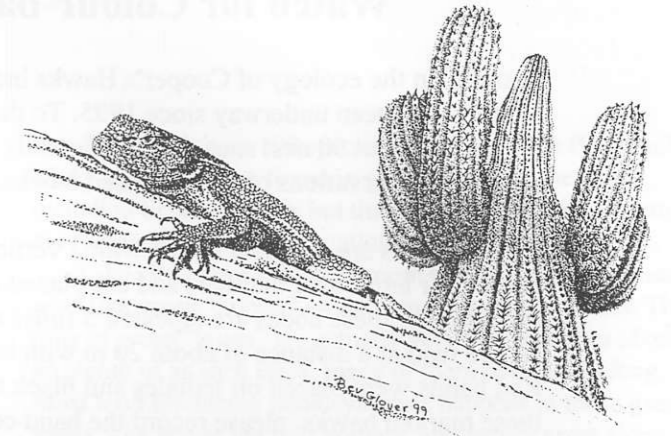
My friend Bev Glover passed away on September 12, 2001. She will be greatly missed. Bev gave time to all of us while we learned about the natural world. UVIC students, VNHS members, and Rocky Point volunteers all had the pleasure of her patience and expertise. Bev enjoyed leading field trips for flower and bird identification and was a regular participant in Camas Day, the Victoria Christmas Bird Count and the Brant Festival Big Day Birding competition.

I first met Bev while joining David Pearce on the Christmas Count at Thetis Lake. For several years we explored new routes, counted waterfowl and rails at the marshes, and enjoyed the chase.

Reintroducing Peregrine Falcons was one of the first presentations I remember Bev giving. Bev lit up with her enthusiasm and hope for the young falcons that were reared and reintroduced in Guelph. The audience quickly developed compassion for the young birds as they careened around the city, trying to survive.

Bev and I went on many a fine field trip together in the pursuit of spring warblers, summer shorebirds, fall hawks, and winter visitors. She was the type of person who made these trips enjoyable with her lightness of spirit and ability to explain bird behavior. Bev's only weakness as a birder was the amount of time she spent with flowers and interesting plants! You could travel a very short distance and learn so very much. With botany and with life, Bev took her time and enjoyed the moment, sharing it with others.

It was at the Brant Festival birding competition where I really got to know Bev. In the process of chasing birds and



Bev's 1999 Christmas card illustrates saguaro cacti (*Carnegiea gigantea*) and sagebrush lizard (*Sceloporus* sp.) from an Arizona trip.

finding new places to see them all around the Parksville countryside, we became friends. Bev was always up for a field trip, from finding the best owling location to determining if Deep Bay really had the shorebirds.

Hart Mountain and Arizona were some of the ad hoc holidays that Bev enjoyed. I was always pleased to attend her slide presentations when she returned. Because of Bev, I want to visit Hart Mountain and chase *California condor* through the Grand Canyon.

The last thread of conversation I remember from Bev's time at work was her description of a moonlit Clover Point intertidal fieldtrip. I can still imagine her down on her knees in the moonlight, face lit up with pleasure, explaining how to identify limpets and starfish in the tide pools. For Bev, these moments in the natural environment were her fuel of life. I wish she were still here to inspire us.



Distinguished Service Award

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is granted to a member who has contributed in some outstanding way to the aims and objectives of the Society. Awards are made at the annual banquet in February. Any member of the Society can nominate any other member who, in their opinion, merits the honour.

Nominations should be forwarded by January 15, 2002 to: Tom Gillespie, Awards Committee Chairperson at Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC, V8R 6N4

All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards. **For more information, contact Tom Gillespie at 361-1694.**

Watch for Colour-banded Cooper's Hawks

A study on the ecology of Cooper's Hawks breeding in the urban environment of Greater Victoria has been underway since 1995. To date over 600 of these hawks have been colour-banded at about 50 nest sites. You can greatly assist this research project by watching for and reporting observations of these banded hawks.

Colour-bands are uniquely coded with 2 vertical alphanumeric characters (i.e. number over number or letter over number) and are placed on the left leg (see illustration). To provide ease of visibility, these codes are repeated 3 times around the circumference of the band. Bands can be read at a distance of about 20 m with binoculars or up to 75 m using a spotting scope. Red bands were placed on females and black bands were put on males. If you observe one of these marked hawks, please record the band colour and code, date and time, whether it was in adult or juvenile plumage, as well as the location. **Please report all sightings, even if you were unable to determine the band code.** Band colour in itself provides very useful data.

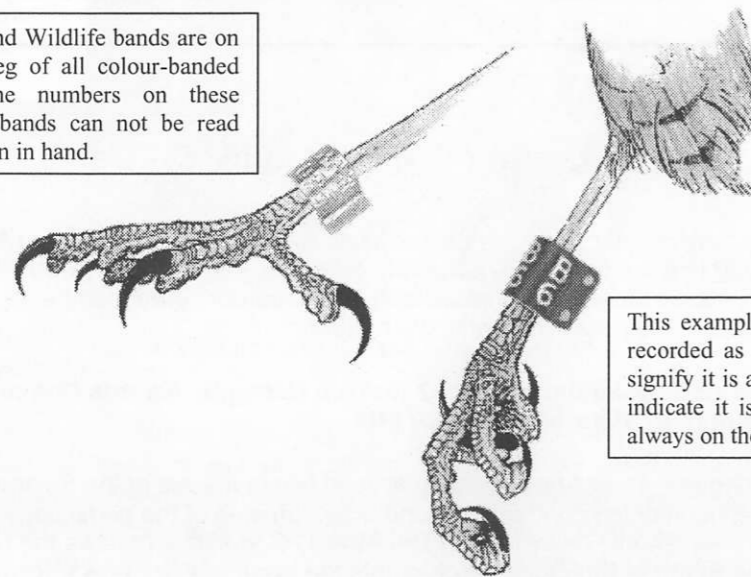
To date we have received over 400 observations of these marked birds, from as far away as Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, and at Delta and Boundary Bay on the mainland coast. We have also received band recoveries from Washington, western Nevada and southern California. However, over 90% of year-round sightings come from the Greater Victoria and Saanich Peninsula areas. A great many were observed in the vicinity of backyard bird feeders.

Please report Cooper's Hawk observations to:

Andy Stewart
Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management
PO Box 9344, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9M1

Phone: (250) 387-9780 or Fax: (250) 387-2733
E-mail: andy.stewart@gems6.gov.bc.ca

U.S Fish and Wildlife bands are on the right leg of all colour-banded hawks. The numbers on these aluminum bands can not be read except when in hand.



This example colour-band would be recorded as **B over 6**. Red bands signify it is a female and black bands indicate it is male. These bands are always on the left leg.

Broom

By Yorke Edwards

We should be sure to properly call the invasive species of broom we find in the wild on Southern Vancouver Island, Scotch broom, to distinguish it from other more "civilized" species, for it has given the broom family a bad name. Aggressively it has spread as a crowded, shrubby weed over thousands of hectares of grasslands and open forests from Vancouver Island south into California. It thrives in open unattended or disturbed places in regions with cool summers and warm winters, and has invaded the warm parts of both northern and southern hemispheres of the world. In New Zealand's November springtime I saw miles upon miles of distant yellow hills. It was Scotch broom in full flower.

The wild type of broom, *Cystisus scoparius*, is the black sheep of the many broom species around the world, both wild and in attended gardens. Listed in our regional garden book are 22 species of brooms suitable for gardens from southwestern British Columbia, down the warm coast into California. They originated from parts of Eurasia and Africa surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, where the summers are cool, and winters relatively warm.

There are about 100 species of broom in the Pea family. Many species can be found in gardens around the world, including Scotch broom; but that particular species becomes the "black sheep" once it is allowed to go wild.

Like all brooms, Scotch Broom has tufts of long, linear wire-like green "leaves" — that are not actually leaves. The tufts of green "wires" are actually very thin branches about an eighth of an inch thick, many of them over a foot long. Most food producing photosynthesis happens in those green stems. The leaves are tiny, solitary, and inches apart along the wiry branches.

Scotch broom is disliked for its aggressiveness, crowding out native plants. Seeing the plant as the culprit, rather than the human disturbance of ecosystems that creates the ideal conditions for its spread, many people remove broom that has spread into the wild, as can be seen in the frequent gatherings of volunteers in Victoria working to save native plants from being shaded or crowded out by broom shrubs.

But, as with all things there is also a good side to Broom. What is left behind when Broom is removed is unusually rich soil. Scotch Broom is a member of the Leguminosae (the Pea



Broom seed pods — having catapulted their seeds. Photo: Ross Archibald

family), a huge family of about 12,000 known species scattered around much of the world. Legumes enrich soils by fixing nitrogen with the aid of certain bacteria, as well as providing direct food for our health.

Red alder trees (*Alnus rubra*) were once thought by the forest industry to be "weeds," growing where more commercial tree species should be growing. How wrong they were. Like all alders, Red alder roots also collect bacteria, which in turn collect relatively large amounts of nitrogen which enrich the soil.

The roots of both alders and brooms gather nitrogen. Nitrogen is essential to life. Although the air we breathe is about 24 percent oxygen and 75 percent nitrogen we are unable to extract nitrogen from the air; the nitrogen we take in, we at once breathe out. The necessary nitrogen we require, we obtain from eating plants that have collected it, or from eating the meat of animals that have eaten plants that have collected it. The Pea Family is a major nitrogen fixing plant family, although other plants species, ranging from the small and tender to the large and tough, collect nitrogen as

well. Strangely, like many things, nitrogen fixation is a process not well understood. It is an interesting thought though: without bacteria to provide us with necessary nitrogen, we could not survive.

In our garden we have two brooms, both of them trees that glow from countless yellow flowers in midsummer. Among the many species of brooms, ours are the Mount Etna variety. Some specimens of this species grow over 20 feet high. They originated in Italy, named after a mountain in the northeast part of Sicily. Our "Etnas" have grown into large plants, although their wood is weak. Strong winds blowing off Juan de Fuca Strait have caused the larger one to grow more sideways than upright. The smaller one manages to grow upright because it is partly sheltered from the strong east winds over our seashore.

We have noticed that the only times strangers have appeared at our door wanting to buy our house, have been times when the Etna by the lane was in full, yellow flower.

Even plants can be outstanding in spite of some troublesome relatives.

Sooke Christmas Bird Count

December 23, 2000

By Jack McLeod

With 40 participants, two groups out on the chuck, and at least one owling sortie, the Sooke Christmas Bird count registered 118 species and 23,032 birds for 2000.

In 1999, nearly 40 per cent of the total of 25,811 birds counted were Common Murres and Mew Gulls. In 2000, it was passerines; Pine Siskins alone (7693 were seen), comprised 33 per cent of the total. In addition to the Siskins, all-time high counts were registered for: Winter Wrens, Marsh Wrens Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Cedar Waxwings, White-crowned Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, Brewer's Blackbirds, House Finches, and House Sparrows.

Also noteworthy were sandpipers — Killdeer, Black Turnstone, and Sanderling; geese and ducks — Canada Goose and Oldsquaw; gulls — Herring Gull & Thayer's Gull; and of the rest — Virginia Rail, Rock Dove, Pileated Woodpecker and Merlin — all time high counts. I'll leave it to the experts to decide whether it's effort or actual numeric increase. However, local resident tell us there were lots of birds at feeders over Christmas.

And if I were a Merlin, guess where I'd be doing my hunting? Donna Ross saw a Merlin dive into a flock of Siskins in flight, pluck one out of the air, and the flock seemed not at all disturbed by the event!

Unusual birds? David Stirling saw a Red Phalarope off Sooke Bluffs, which is a first for the count. In past years, these Phalaropes have been seen off Whiffin Spit as late as December 18. Jeremy Kimm saw a House Wren north of Camp Barnard. Others of interest included: Black Scoter

(David Stirling), Ruffed Grouse, Greater Yellowlegs, Ancient Murrelet, Savannah Sparrow, Northern Shrike (Allan McLeod's group), Virginia Rail and Lincoln's Sparrow (Colleen O'Brien), Spotted Sandpiper (Bob Chappell's group), and Hutton's Vireo (Mike Shepard). Donna Ross was lucky to spot the only Red-breasted Sapsucker of the day. Mike McGrenere flushed a Western Meadowlark at Whiffin Spit meadows and spotted a Brown Cowbird in a big flock of Brewer's Blackbirds. Please forgive if I've missed any — there were just so many interesting ones.

Finally, thanks to all the participants (40 is a record, I think) who made this a great count, and the Area Leaders, Jeremy Kimm, Mike McGrenere, Robert Chappell, Muriel Carlson, Alan McLeod, Colleen O'Brien, Mike and Cynthia Shepard, Barbara Begg, and David Stirling for all their hard work, to Jeremy and Jason Kimm for owling, to Gary Fletcher of Pearson College, and Glenn Varney, President of the Sooke Salmon Enhancement Society and Moody Blue Fishing Charters for volunteering their boats and their time, to Shirley Connor who organized the first ever Sooke Feeder Count and will be up and ready for 2001, to Jean McLeod and Shirley Connor for providing hot beverages and snacks over the noon hour, and to the wonderful ladies of Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Margaret Flett, Maureen Flett, Karen Longland and Jean McLeod who volunteered their time and talents for a great Chili supper at the Post-Count Gathering there. So, see you all this year and, who knows, we may yet beat Victoria. Because, as you all know, *every bird must count!*

Sooke Christmas Bird Count, December 23/2000 — Summary Sheet

Species	Number Observed									TOTAL
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	
Red-throated loon							1		1	2
Pacific loon	4	4	1	1	6				3	19
Common loon		7			1	5	2		6	21
Yellow-billed loon										
Pied-billed grebe	2	4	1					1		8
Horned grebe		11				1	5			17
Red-necked grebe				1	4	3	1		26	35
Eared grebe (*)										
Western grebe						1			3	4
Clarke's grebe (*)										
Brown pelican (*)										
Double-crested cormorant	18	49	34	29	85	56	13	17	50	351
Brandt's cormorant					6		1		15	22
Pelagic cormorant	5	9	12	3	14	5			21	69
Great blue heron	3	5	9		3	1	1		2	24
Cattle egret (*)										
Trumpeter swan					3	6	3			12
Mute swan		dup 5	5				2			7
Greater white fronted goose			15							15
Snow goose (*)										
Canada goose	195	339	179	6	2		138			859 HC
Wood duck										
Green-winged teal		2	12							14
Mallard	2	81	124	74	6	2	35	35		359
Northern pintail			2							2
Northern shoveller			2							2
Gadwall	8		8							16
Eurasian wigeon		2	5					1		8
American wigeon		656	449		2			34	5	1146
Canvasback										
Ring-necked duck	2	4			8	1	23	3		41
Greater scaup		15	137	2						154
Lesser scaup		3		30						33
Scaup sp.										
Harlequin duck		9			9					18
Long-tailed duck		20							101	121 HC
Black scoter									1	1
Surf scoter	7	53	500		9		16		131	716
White-winged scoter	5	4				5			6	20
Common goldeneye	16	17	13	2	2	3		5		58
Barrow's goldeneye			49	1				4		54
Bufflehead	19	459	179	59	123	62	50	13		964
Hooded merganser	9	11	4	2	21	13	16	2		78
Common merganser	13	6	9	2	6			5		41

Sooke Christmas Bird Count, December 23/2000 — Summary Sheet

Species	Number Observed									TOTAL
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	
Red breasted merganser	2	169	5	5	1	12	4			198
Ruddy duck (*)										
Duck species									4	4
Turkey vulture					6					6
Bald eagle	4	4	3	2	16	3	2	5	4	43
Northern harrier										
Sharp-shinned hawk	3	1		1	3		1			9
Cooper's hawk			1			1				2
Red-tailed hawk	1	2		1	2		2	3		11
American kestrel						1	1			2
Merlin		3	3		1	1		1		9 HC
Gyrfalcon (*)										
Peregrine falcon	1									1
Pheasant										
Blue grouse (*)										
Ruffed grouse					1					1
California quail		6	16		6	13	9	10		60
Virginia rail						4				4 HC
American coot	1		6							7
Sandhill crane										
Red phalarope (N)*									1	1 US
Black-bellied plover					1					1
Killdeer	20	4	28		2	1	3	2		60 HC
Black oystercatcher		2	1		25	2				30
Greater yellowlegs					1					1
Spotted sandpiper			1							1
Black turnstone		58			51	3	31			143 HC
Surfbird					3					3
Sanderling							9			9 HC
Rock sandpiper					8					8
Dunlin										
Long-billed dowitcher (*)										
Common snipe	1				1	1				3
Bonaparte's gull			3							3
Mew gull	15	185	21	5	89	4	197	50	61	627
Herring gull		1		3	3				3	10 HC
Thayer's gull	7		4		220	2				233 HC
Western gull		2			2					4
Glaucous-winged gull	193	227	71	33	61	34	109	123	74	925
Glaucous gull (*)										
Glaucous w./Western hybrid		2								2
Unidentified gull	30									30
Common murre					19				2	21
Pigeon guillemot					6	1			2	9

Sooke Christmas Bird Count, December 23/2000 — Summary Sheet

Species	Number Observed									TOTAL
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	
Marbled murrelet					8	5				13
Ancient murrelet					3					3
Rhinoceros auklet										
Rock dove			28				42			70 HC
Band-tailed pigeon								1		1
Mourning dove (*)										
Barn owl (*)										
Western screech owl										
Great horned owl			1		2	2	1			6
Snowy owl										
Northern pygmy owl (*)										
Barred owl (*)		1	2							3
Short-eared owl (*)										
Northern saw-whet owl										
Anna's hummingbird										
Belted kingfisher	1	2	8	1	2	2	2	1		19
Red-breasted sapsucker		1								1
Downy woodpecker	1	2	2		3	1	5	2		16
Hairy woodpecker		1			2			1		4
Northern flicker	8	4	18	5	14	14	14	17		94
Pileated woodpecker	5				1	2		4		12 HC
Eurasian skylark (*)										
Gray jay (*)										
Steller's jay	32	4	24	10	7	8	11	49		145
Northwestern crow	31	150	205	4	10		28	53		481
Common raven	11	6	14	9	11	4	4	48		107
Chestnut-backed chickadee	76	44	53	27	30	80	35	54		399
Bushtit	37	12					20	12		81
Red breasted nuthatch	11	6	6	9	5	5	2	25		69
Brown creeper	2		11	2	2	9	10	2		38
Bewick's wren	3		9		5	2	5	7		31
House wren (*)	1									1 US
Winter wren	35	28	31	9	29	41	15	28		216 HC
Marsh wren		1			2		1			4 HC
American dipper		1	1							2
Golden-crowned kinglet	84	131	92	29	84	110	50	207		787
Ruby-crowned kinglet	20	9	49	2	8	7	5	16		116 HC
Western bluebird (*)										
Hermit thrush	1		1				1			3
American robin	15	149	59	33	65	19	109	59		508
Varied thrush	6	2	2	9	22	2	7	16		66
American pipit										
Cedar waxwing	36	1	5	2						44 HC
Northern shrike					1					1

Sooke Christmas Bird Count, December 23/2000 — Summary Sheet

Species	Number Observed									TOTAL
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6	Area 7	Area 8	Area 9	
European starling	142	221	58	1	83		360	46		911
Hutton's vireo (*)							1			1
Orange-crowned warbler (*)										
Yellow-rumped warbler										
Townsend's warbler (*)										
Spotted towhee	19	15	28	8	6	10	18	21		125
Savannah sparrow (*)					2					2
Fox sparrow	32	29	28	5	2	10	16	19		141
Song sparrow	71	32	36	4	17	29	29	28		246
Swamp sparrow										
Lincoln's sparrow (*)						1				1
White-throated sparrow										
Golden-crowned sparrow		23	25		4	8	18	9		87
White-crowned sparrow	6	15	3	6			15			45 HC
Harris' sparrow (*)										
Dark-eyed junco	218	146	187	94	43	126	107	188		1109
Red-winged blackbird	259	100			19	76	191	1		646 HC
Western meadowlark		1								1
Brewer's blackbird		134					120			254 HC
Brown-headed cowbird		1								1
Purple finch	6	1	9		1		4			21
House finch	63	27	27		17	19	23	7		183 HC
Red crossbill	113	49	59	2	2	25	1	28		279
Pine siskin	963	1183	939	572	2750	656	176	454		7693 HC
American goldfinch										
Evening grosbeak			1							1
House sparrow	25	76	15	2			34			152 HC
COUNT TOTALS	2919	5044	3948	1107	4100	1520	2155	1717	522	23032
SPECIES TOTALS	58	72	69	43	75	56	61	47	21	118

* = Field description required

dup = duplicate record

US = unusual species

HC = high count for circle

Area 1 = Otter Point/Young Lake
 Area 2 = Sooke Townsite/Whiffin Spit
 Area 3 = Billings Spit/Sooke R./Sooke Basin (north)
 Area 4 = E. Sooke Pk./Sooke Basin (south)
 Area 5 = Rocky Point/Race Rocks
 Area 6 = Beecher Bay, Matheson Lk. Pk.
 Area 7 = Metchosin/Pedder Bay
 Area 8 = Roche Cove/North Metchosin
 Area 9 = Pelagic - Beecher Bay to Otter Point

NOTE:

Sooke Count High Counts (1984-2000) = 21
Sooke Count Unusual Species (2000) = 2

My First Banded Bird

By Ed Pellizzon and Mary Steel

Mary came home after a long day at the college exclaiming, "Michelle saw a dead Red Tailed Hawk when we were at Viaduct Flats doing some soil sampling this afternoon, she told me after we had gotten back to the classroom, do you want to see if we can find it".

I said "yes" and off we went.

After arriving at the Flats and spending a few minutes following the trail to the soil-sampling pit, we split up and within about a minute Mary found the Hawk. It had probably been dead for a few months because all that was left was the feathers and skeleton. We left some strands of hair as a thank you to the bird spirits, and took the Hawk home.

I wrapped it and put it in the freezer, and after a few days I took it to the B.C. Wildlife Branch to have it inspected (to make sure it was not shot) and to obtain a permit to possess the feathers.

A few months later Mary decided it was time to remove the feathers and diligently got to work. She came to me about an hour later with zip lock bags full of feathers — such beautiful wing and tail feathers. She also said that she had buried the rest of the carcass in the compost except for a band on one of it's legs, which she had removed. The band was quite a surprise, since neither of us had noticed it before, and being birders for only a few years we did not realize the importance of checking for a band.

I decided that evening to find out what I should do with the band and got on my computer and within a few minutes found the USGS (United States Geological Survey) web site, (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/default.htm>). I went through the procedure for "reporting a found band" and completed the electronic form in about ten minutes; the USGS promised to send a Certificate of Appreciation. Within about a month I received the certificate and information about the Hawk.

It hatched in 1992, its sex was unknown, and it was banded on November 4, 1993 near San Francisco California. The bander was a woman working as a volunteer for the Golden Gate Recreation Area. I found this information absolutely fascinating.

Not content with the amount of information I received, I sent an email to the Golden Gate Recreation Area telling them who I was, the Hawk that I had found and reported, and asked for more information. This was the reply I received:

Dear Mr. Pellizzon,

The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory is a project of the National Park Service (US). We have been studying raptors during their fall movement through this area since 1983. Our projects include a count of passing raptors, a banding program, and a radio-tracking program. The Red Tailed Hawk that you inquired about was a wild bird; about a year and a half old at the time we banded it. We caught the bird

twice during the same day (November 4, 1993) at two different banding stations here in the Marin Headlands, just at the north end of the Golden Gate Bridge. We have often speculated that raptors that we catch more than once are desperately hungry, and that their chance of survival is not good. So it is really interesting for us to learn that not only did this bird survive for several years after the captures, but that it had made the long journey to British Columbia at least once since then. The fact that you encountered the bird in July suggests that the bird was part of the breeding population of the area in which you found it, it is the only hawk banded by the GGRO that has been found on Vancouver Island, we have had four other recoveries in B.C. within the last couple of years, an American Kestrel recovered near Prince Rupert, a Coopers Hawk found in the Vancouver area, a Red Tail Hawk found on Bowen Island and a Merlin found in Lillooet, these five are our only Canadian recoveries after 18 seasons of banding raptors at the GGRO, since 1983 we have banded 15,697 raptors, of 15 different species.

Sincerely,

Buzz Hull,

Research Director, Golden Gate Raptor Observatory
 Building, 1064, Fort Cronkhite Sausalito, CA 94965

Thrilled with the information I received, I shared it with Mary, and asked her to pass on the information to Michelle, and thank her.

Because this hawk was so special, I decided that something special should be done with the band. I took it to The Silver Smith on Johnson Street and asked him what he thought could be done with it. I don't wear any type of jewelry, so I decided to turn it into a key chain. He designed a small silver frame to mount it in, and this is where this special band hangs.

One of the outcomes of finding this Hawk is realizing the importance of banding birds. Bird banding data are useful in both research and management projects. Individual identification of birds makes possible studies of dispersal, migration, behavior, social structure, life-span, survival rate, reproductive success and population growth.

On one of the birding trips that the VNHS offered, I met the person responsible for organizing the volunteers for the Rocky Point Bird Observatory (Rick Shortinghuis) and realized an opportunity to assist with the operation of banding birds. I volunteered at the RPBO five times during the three months that they were operating and found the experience absolutely thrilling. I will be back to volunteer my time again next year.

I have also planned some trips to some of the other banding stations along the west coast of North America especially one to the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory during their banding season. I now look at birds and birding in a different light; always looking at birds in the moment, noticing only their colors, beauty, and calls. I now think about how far they have migrated, the times of year that they migrate, and I always look to see if they are banded.

Christmas Bird Count

December 15, 2001

By Dannie Carsen

We welcome new birders to the Christmas Count! If you would like more information how and where you could take part, please call me at 595-2773.

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on Saturday, December 15, 2001. Come out and enjoy this Christmas tradition! The purpose of the CBC is to count birds observed within a 15-mile diameter circle in the Greater Victoria area. The count circle is centred on the intersection of Grange Road and Jasmine Avenue in the Marigold area. Area leaders are designated for each of the following 20 land areas and 3 ocean areas.

The area leaders below will phone participants who have taken part in the last few counts. Feel free to call your area leader if you have not had a phone call at least one week before the count.

Victoria Natural History Society members are encouraged to take part in the Christmas count as "bush beaters" or as home based "feeder watchers". Cam Finlay and Lyndis Davis will be organizing the efforts for the feeder watch again this year. For more information about taking part in the feeder watch, please call Lyndis at 744-5750. Lyndis would appreciate your help to tally the feeder watch results at Swan Lake on Saturday, December 15 and Sunday, December 16.

For more information on how CBC information is used, please go to the Bird Studies Canada website at: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/cbcmain.html>.

For a complete list of 2000 species on the Victoria CBC: <http://birdsourc.tc.cornell.edu/CBCOutput%20review.html?speciesByState=false&yr=101&circle=S739004>.

Area leaders may pick up their packages at November Birder's Night. I have contacted Dick Cannings, who is coordinating BC Christmas Counts for Bird Studies Canada, to suggest including the contact lists within the regular Victoria CBC tally sheets to reduce the amount of paperwork. If area or sub-area leaders have suggestions for improvements to the revised Christmas Count tally sheets, please telephone me, email me, or send comments printed on the 2000 forms to the address below (**before the 15th of November**).

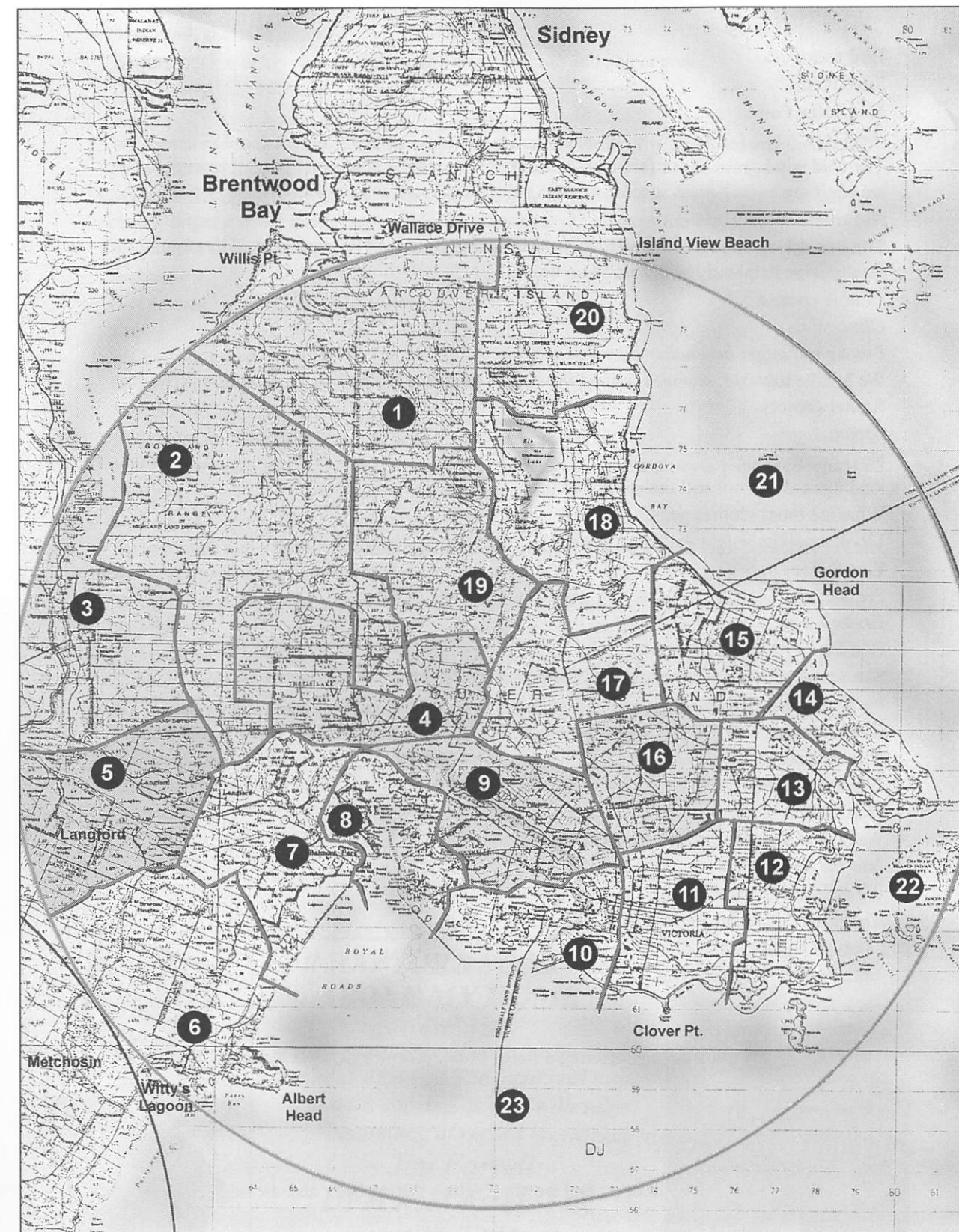
Dannie Carsen
3332 Doncaster Dr., Victoria, B.C. V8P 3V8
Email: dcarsen@home.com **Phone:** 595-2773 **Fax:** 356-1873

The post-count gathering will be at another new location this year. Please come to the St Luke's Church Hall, 3821 Cedar Hill Cross (X) Road, time: 7:00 p.m., with your count area reports and enjoy the tall tales, desserts and beverages that are part of the wrap-up to the Christmas Bird Count.

Don't forget the Sooke Christmas Bird Count the week after Victoria's count.

#	Area Name	Leaders	Tel.	Email
1	Butchart's Gardens - N. Highlands	Jerry & Gladys Anderson	656-9599	ganderson@coastnet.com
2	Central Highlands	Rick Schortinghuis	642-3596	robertennis75@hotmail.com
3	Goldstream - Finlayson Arm	Alan Burger	479-2446	aburger@uvic.ca
4	Thetis Lake - Hastings Flats	Ann Nightingale	652-6450	motmot@home.com
5	Langford Lake	Glen Moores	655-3772	gmoores@islandnet.com
6	Albert Head - Triangle Mountain	David Allinson	480-9433	goshawk@telus.net
7	Esquimalt Lagoon - Mill Hill	Derrick Marven	748-8504	marven@home.com
8	Esquimalt Harbour	Camilla Smith	479-4950	CamillaS_@hotmail.com
9	Portage Inlet - The Gorge	Jeff Gaskin	381-7248	
10	Victoria Harbour	Robert Chappell	388-4696	rwchappell@home.com
11	Beacon Hill Park	Tom Gillespie	361-1694	thomasw._Gillespie@telus.net
12	Oak Bay	Michael Tripp	477-4407	mtripp@pacificcoast.net
13	University - Cadboro Bay	Dannie Carsen	595-2773	dcarsen@home.com
14	Ten Mile Point - Arbutus Road	Bryan Gates	598-7789	bgates@pacificcoast.net
15	Gordon Head - Mt. Douglas	Allen Wisely	472-1490	awiseley@islandnet.com
16	Swan Lake - Cedar Hill	Marie O'Shaughnessy	598-9680	mossaugh@pacificcoast.net
17	Blenkinsop Lake - Panama Flats	Gordon Hart	721-1264	gordh19@telus.net
18	Elk Lake - Cordova Bay	Colleen O'Brien	388-4520	cob@home.com
19	Prospect Lake - Quick's Bottom	David Fraser	479-0016	leah.ramsay@gems4.gov.bc.ca
20	Martindale - Bear Hill	Brent Diakow	656-3190	brent@oceanusplastics.com
21	Zero Rock (ocean)	Bruce Whittington	477-6957	fieldnat@pacificcoast.net
22	Chain Islets (ocean)	Marilyn Lambert	477-5922	plambert@pacificcoast.net
23	Juan de Fuca (ocean)	Ron Bates	386-1264	rbates@bc1.com

Victoria Bird Count area



Are We Not Birders?

By Jacquelyn Nelson

Bird count.

Saxe Point.

MacAuley Point.

West Bay.

The cold wind grabs at our faces, pulls the skin with ragged talons and the salt tears come and we can't see but we must because what is it double crested or pelagic.

Not sure.

The rain drives through our layers of protection and we squint through spotted lenses and finally wipe helplessly with shredding tissue.

Double crested.

Oh.

I thought it might be smaller than that.

We huddle together, strangers joined for a short time, and we'll walk away, barely promising further contact.

Spring.

Next count.

And there is sun but still the wind, this time whipping dry and sharp.

What are those clothes pegs?

I look up at the wire, two lumps, backlit, close but obscure.

Pine Siskin.

Pie Sie.

House Finch.

Hoe Fie.

She wonders at the wisdom of these codes, stubbornly writes the full name.

Perhaps she is right.

Clothes pegs.

He scans the water.

Pigeon guillemot.

That's all.

Waves too high too wild too restless for birds.

Into the forest, then.

We turn back once, unsure.

Not even a stonechucker, she says.

I stare.

And think.

Turnstone?

That's it. And we laugh.

The forest yields immediately, offering a fierce brow, yellow legs, eyes that angrily drill us down.

Don't scare her, he says.

We shut our car doors slowly, quietly.

But she's not afraid.

Our eyes move behind the scopes, and we are Cyclops staring back and she never wavers.

Rounded tail. Coopers hawk.

She will challenge us as long as she needs to.

But a song is behind us and we look.

Winter wren.

Disgusted, she sails away.

We turn back quickly as her wings blend into branches and she is gone.

The forest yields little else.

My legs are bloodless, my lungs struggle for power, the harbour is protected and the rocks grow warm in the sun.

My back fits into a hollow. I will hear them as they walk by, I will rest my eyes and the clouds linger a while inside my eyelids then I wonder if I've been too long.

We thought we had lost you.

Just resting.

Will he make us walk to the very end?

Yes.

We both sit down.

We can look for pigeons here.

And we snicker at our joke.

The leaves are lacey and the grey water is calmer now. A bit.

And then we sigh and pull ourselves up but he's walking toward us, eyes pale, face wind-red.

That's it.

Let's go.

We turn, and make the final stretch back our steps lighter on deadened legs, he offers to carry the scope but I know I can and I should and I do.

He begins collapsing his tripod before the truck is in sight and we walk more quickly.

No pigeons.

No mallards.

Disaster, he says.

But I think no there were swallows cowbirds oystercatchers cormorants eagles herons purple finches winter wrens Bewick wrens bushtits California quail and

Clothes pegs.

No stonechuckers.

Forty-one.



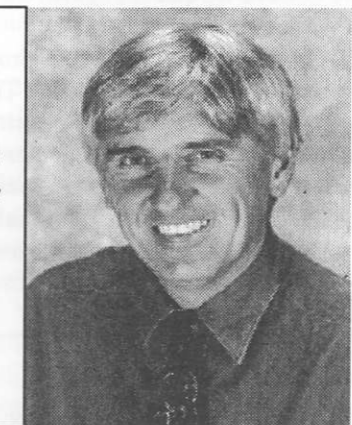
!! RAPTORS SOARING ABOVE MY HOME !!

What a great time of year for birding in beautiful Victoria! The local real estate market is soaring as well with sales continuing at record levels.

Jim Farrell

DFH Real Estate Ltd.

477-7291





HAT Tricks

Healthy Habitats Need Good Neighbours

Habitat Acquisition Trust works in many ways to protect natural ecosystems in the Capital Region. We have succeeded in purchasing regionally significant properties at Ayum Creek in Sooke, and Brooks Point on South Pender Island. The campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake, on Galiano Island, has passed the halfway mark, thanks to a generous contribution of \$5,000 from the Kaatza Foundation in Vancouver. But purchasing land in the CRD is extremely costly.

We continue to be involved with a number of property owners who have committed to placing conservation covenants on their properties. These voluntary legal agreements place permanent restrictions on the land that protect the natural values in perpetuity, while the owners retain title to the land.

It is a well-known fact that the integrity and biodiversity of an ecosystem increases with its area. While we have seen many ecosystems protected, many of them are small, and, worse yet, isolated. They become islands in a sea of development, recreation, or resource extraction. But it is possible to enhance the integrity of these ecosystems.

By protecting the land around the perimeter of a protected area, we can effectively increase the size of that habitat. Since, in the CRD, more than 90% of the land is in private hands, that means working with private landowners who live adjacent to protected areas. By encouraging these landowners to be "Good Neighbours" to the protected areas next to them, we believe we can strengthen the integrity of the ecosystems in these protected areas.

This fall, HAT has begun an ambitious project called "Good Neighbours", to carry out this vision. The first step is a collaborative process of establishing a priority list of areas that are most in need of a protective perimeter buffer. HAT is working with parks agencies at all levels, community conservation groups, other land trusts, and multi-party initiatives like the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team.

In 2002, the list will be used as a basis for conducting

By Andy MacKinnon

landowner contact programs around the targeted areas. This will be done by HAT, and other agencies that are interested in being involved. And just what is landowner contact?

The name says it all. Willing landowners are approached, with several goals in mind. The first level is education. We hope to introduce landowners to the special values in the protected areas next to them. We will encourage them to be better stewards of their own properties, by, for example, reducing chemical use, controlling pets, and avoiding dumping garden waste into the protected area.

An interested property owner may wish to sign a voluntary stewardship agreement, a commitment to good environmental practices. Finally, some property owners may wish to consider placing conservation covenants on their properties.

Under the E-Team program, HAT has hired Krista Brownell to work on the Good Neighbours project. Meagan Christie, who has been tireless in our Tod Creek Watershed project, will stay on to supervise the Good Neighbours project, thanks to a Provincial Capital Commission Greenways Grant.

Nature of Island Artists

The doors have closed on the 2001 "Nature of Island Artists" show at Goldstream Provincial Park. It was an exceptional display of talent, yes, but also of a shared passion for our wild places.

The profits will be split, supporting both the Eagle Extravaganza program at Goldstream, and HAT's conservation projects. A portion will go to the campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake.

HAT could not do its work without events like this. On behalf of the directors and staff of Habitat Acquisition Trust, I extend our heartfelt thanks to Arenaria Research and Interpretation (and in particular Claudia and Darren Copley), and BC Parks. And we save our biggest thanks to you, the members of VNHS, who volunteered your time in support of this event. In this, the Year of the Volunteer, you did a splendid job.

In the VNHS mailbox

A card, with a sweet chipmunk on the front, sent in by Virginia Miller, thanking the VNHS for the two "well organized" bird courses! She learned a lot and wanted to especially thank the volunteer leaders.

Young Naturalists' Club — Victoria Branch

The Victoria branch of the Young Naturalists' Club has had a successful first summer. Membership continues to grow with 34 families enrolled at the present time.

In June Carolyn MacDonald led our first field trip introducing young naturalists to the forest creatures at Francis King Park. The July trip was an exploration of life on the sandy beach at Sidney Spit, led by Susanna Solecki. It proved very popular. So popular, in fact, that some participants had to travel over to the island on an earlier ferry as the 11:00 sailing was full. In August, Darren Copley provided a

fascinating programme about dragonflies, at Elk Lake. Parents accompanying their children on these trips have expressed their appreciation of the fine quality of the presentations by the trip leaders.

The fall programme is already underway with opportunities to learn about birds, bats, and the biodiversity in Mt. Douglas Park.

Anyone interested in learning more about The Young Naturalists Club or willing to lead a field trip, should contact **Sheila Mosher at 652-3502.**



You Can Help

The Board of Directors of VNHS are keen to make this the very best year ever for our organization. Thanks to the work of many of our volunteers, we are well on the way to succeeding. We are on the verge of having a brand new website, through the contributions of John Taylor and several students at Mt. Doug High School. Michael Dyson and Chery Mackie have joined the ranks of Rare Bird Alert transcribers, keeping us up to date on the worldwide network of rare bird alerts. Sheila Mosher has made major strides in getting our Young Naturalists Club off the ground. Many of our members have spent hours volunteering for the Goldstream Art Show or at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory this fall. Members of the Green Spaces Committee have been busy mapping the plant life in a number of Victoria locations. Ann Scarfe keeps the Event Tape (479-2054) up to date for those of us who misplace our *Naturalist* magazine. The contributions of all involved are greatly appreciated.

There is still much more to be done! We have an ongoing need for people who can give a few hours or more to some of our projects. Still to come is the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists' Annual General Meeting to be hosted by VNHS in May 2002. We will be looking for a number of volunteers to help out with this major project a little closer to the date. **We have an immediate need, though, for a few volunteer positions:** Volunteers to make coffee at Natural History Nights and Birders' nights. You don't need to commit for the whole year. If you would be willing to do this once or twice, you could be a great help (and you get to eat the leftover cookies!). Volunteers to update media bulletin boards (newspapers, TV spots, etc.) Normally, this can be done once a month by email, fax or letter. A representative from VNHS for the Important Birds Areas Project (<http://www.ibacanada.com/main.htm>). If you can help, please contact **Ann Nightingale at 652-6450** or by email: **motmot@shaw.ca**

President's Message

By Bruce Whittington

The Saturday morning dawned bright and calm, and the sandy sweep of Whiffen Spit in Sooke lay before us. September had brought the first of the returning scoters, in time to check in with the last of the Heerman's Gulls. The grasses and wild roses beckoned to migrant songbirds in need of rest and refuelling.

Jack McLeod knows the spit well, but even Jack was as excited as a kid with a new bike. Leading our group along the path, he marvelled at the mix of summer residents, winter visitors, and passage migrants, all here, and all cooperating to give us good looks.

Pectoral Sandpipers fed in the beach wrack, joined at times by a little flock of nervous peeps. A little pishing quickly turned a hawthorne bush into a page from nature's field guide, as half a dozen species of sparrows showed off their wingbars and superciliary lines and unstreaked breasts and rump patches.

Along the spit, we searched the dune grasses and beach logs for longspurs and meadowlarks. We found no such migrants on this day, but instead enjoyed a pair of American Golden-plovers resting on the beach.

Autumn had truly descended, with the deciduous trees showing some colour, and the grasses in their final glory. But there, on the ground, was a mat of green and pink. Fall knotweed, we learned, blooming as is its habit this late in the season.

The following day Rick Schortinghuis led a VNHS group up Jocelyn Hill in the Highlands. Things could not be more different. A grey overcast lay threatening over the ridge. The forest of mature conifers yielded small gangs of birds, kinglets and chickadees mostly. A Townsend's Warbler added a modicum of diversity to one of these flocks, which drifted through the woods, stopping to feed as they went. Varied Thrushes and American Robins fed in the arbutus trees.

In the open areas, the conifers gave way to hairy manzanita, which seems to love these austere heights. The overcast sky was high enough that Jocelyn's views were as spectacular as ever. Like Whiffen Spit, Jocelyn Hill can be unwelcoming at times, but also is something of a magnet for migrant songbirds. Here, we were scanning the snags around the bare hilltop for Townsend's Solitaires. Sharp eyes found one, true to its name, quite alone. It dropped to a perch below us on the rocks, and its pearly mantle was exquisite in the damp air.

As we prepared to make our way back, our attention was drawn to the rocks at our feet, where a mat of tiny pink flowers brightened the greys and browns. Rick pointed out that it was fall knotweed, the same late-blooming polygonum we had seen at Whiffen Spit.

In a short 24 hours, we had been from sea level to the highest point on the Saanich Peninsula. The two areas are at once similar, with their austerity and robins and fall knotweed, and yet ecologically utterly different.

It was to me a compelling reminder of the diversity of this part of the world, which as naturalists we appreciate so much. It made me aware, too, that things could be very different. Whiffen Spit and Jocelyn Hill and all the other special places might be covered with houses, were it not for the foresight and commitment of those who brought protection to them.

We can honour those people by continuing to support conservation initiatives. And we also continue to make a major contribution with our excellent program of field trips. It is a big part of the Society's mandate, to educate naturalists of all ages about this amazing place we call home. So thank you, Rick and Jack, and to all of our volunteer field trip leaders — you really do make a difference.

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 Murray and Anne Fraser 159 (formerly Begbie), 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., Murray and Anne Fraser 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.

OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER

Glorious Goldstream

Offers World-Class Salmon-Viewing

Goldstream is a world-class salmon-spawning stream with thousands of chum salmon returning between October and December. These chum salmon have traveled thousands of kilometres in their four-year lifetime and are at Goldstream to continue their life cycle by spawning in the river. Good years have seen as many as 50,000 salmon return home to the Goldstream River. The Visitor Centre is open daily this fall/winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Weekend activities at the Centre include fish printing, salmon slide shows, videos, and interpretive programs on the hour from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Hot coffee and baked goods are available at the book/gift store and the fire is usually lit to warm you after a walk along the river to see the spawning salmon.

NOVEMBER

Saturday, November 3

Identifying Mushrooms

Join mycologist **Rob Countess** for this intensive eight hour mushroom workshop. Starting with a one hour slide show in the Nature House, the group will then carpool to a nearby area for field study and collection. Upon returning to the Nature House, Rob will conduct an identification workshop. Handouts to aid in the identification of common edible mushrooms and their poisonous lookalikes will be provided. **Pre-registration required.** Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.. \$50. (Friends members \$45). Contact **Ann Scarfe**, 479-0211.

Sunday, November 4

Mushroom Foray

Learn to identify mushrooms in the field, with a focus on edible mushrooms. There will be the opportunity to sample edible mushrooms cooked by your instructor, **Rob Countess**, M.Sc. This full day mushroom workshop will be in the Shawnigan Lake area. It is planned that transportation will be by carpool. Pre-registration required. Handouts to aid in the identification of edible mushrooms and their poisonous look-alikes will be provided. 8:00 a.m. to about 5 p.m. Meet at Helmcken Park and Ride at 8:00 a.m., \$50.00 (Friends members \$45). Contact **Ann Scarfe**, 479-0211.

Sunday, November 4

Birding the Pumpkin Patch

Late migrants, winter arrivals and raptors should make for some great birding with **Brent Diakow** (656-3190). Meet at the farm market at the corner of the Pat Bay Highway and Island View Rd. at 8:30 a.m. Gumboots are highly recommended!

Sunday, November 4

(Unless weather and other factors prohibit)

The Green Spaces Project Walk About

The Green Spaces Project of VNHS would like to show the values that have been found on the Royal Roads property. The tour will basically follow Cottonwood Creek down towards Esquimalt Lagoon and take about 2 hours. Assume dry conditions, but wear adequate footwear and dress accordingly for that afternoon. You may wish to bring a Field Guide to Plants, Trees and Shrubs (e.g. Pojar & Mackinnon *Plants of Coastal B.C.*). Friends and partners are welcome. Meet at 1:30 p.m. at the Galloping Goose Trail adjacent to the Main Gate into Royal Roads. Park cars at the Park & Ride at the north side of Sooke Rd. opposite the Main Gate into Royal Roads University, then walk over to the Galloping Goose Trail nearest to the same Main Gate.

Sunday, November 4

Phantoms and Damsels

Join biologist **Hans Boerger** to explore life in the water and bottom mud of Swan Lake. Sampling will be done from the boardwalk, so dress for the weather. Binoculars, 4-litre Ice cream pails, and glass jars will be useful. Suitable for ages 8 and up. **Pre-registration.** Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Rd., 1-4 p.m. Donations appreciated. Contact **Ann Scarfe**, 479-0211.

Friday, November 9

Owling with Darren Copley

Go on an evening excursion around Victoria searching for these elusive birds. You must **pre-register** for this program, as there is room for only 20 participants. Please call Goldstream at 478-9414 to reserve your space. We'll start at 9 p.m.

Saturday, November 10 or Sunday November 11

Mushroom identification workshop at Wildwood

Have you ever wanted to eat wild mushrooms but been worried about poisoning yourself? Learn to identify the common edible and poisonous mushrooms of Vancouver Island with mycologist **Rob Countess**. This one day workshop will take place at Wildwood, a 32 hectare forest where **Merve Wilkinson** has practiced ecoforestry for 63 years. A checklist of Vancouver Island mushroom species and handouts with photographs of some common edible and poisonous mushrooms and their key identifying features will be provided. After this workshop you will be able to harvest and eat wild mushrooms with confidence. **Pre-registration required.** Bring a bag lunch, bucket or basket, a knife, and dress for the weather. Available Saturday, November 10 and Sunday November 11, 2001. Limit 15 people/day, minimum 8 people/day 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. \$50/person (25% will be donated to the Ecoforestry Institute) Contact: **Rob Countess** (250) 902-0562, countess@island.net

Welcome to New Members

Matt & Beth Austin

Marifield Avenue
(birds, botany, all of nature)

Maureen Becker

Sequoia Place

Dorothy Coombes

View Street

Daphne Dunbar

Maynard Street

Brett Ferguson

Fifth Street (birds)

Theresa Fingler

View Street

David Gaunt

Torquay Drive (birds)

Gary Kaiser

Glasgow Avenue
(seabirds, conservation)

Dave & Agnes Lynn

Woodhaven Terrace

Nathalie McBain

Bethune Avenue

Karen MacDowell

Seabrook Road

Darren & Gini McKellar

Mary Street
(birds)

Joanna Smith

Yates Street
(seabirds, habitat,
education)

Gwen Taylor

Selkirk Avenue

Julie & Myles Thomson

Pearce Crescent

Tuesday, November 13

VNHS Natural History Presentation Backpacking Costa Rica

Join **Todd Carnahan** as he relives the sights and sounds of Costa Rica's tropical diversity. A nature photographer and park planner, Todd spent two months in coastal rainforest, coral reefs, shark-infested rivers and cloud forest canopies. This interactive multimedia show includes flora and fauna, habitats, environmental issues, and organic farming in the small Central American nation. We'll see you at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, Murray and Anne Fraser Building (formerly Begbie), UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

Saturday, November 17

9th Annual Day Trip to Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Delta

David Allinson has arranged a group rate at Reifel for VNHS members for this annual outing. Participants will carpool from in front of the Elk-Beaver Regional Park sign on Elk Lake Drive at 5:30 a.m. for the 7:00 a.m. sailing. With carpooling, costs will be about \$40.00 per person for this all-day birding bonanza. Pack your lunch and a thermos. Call David (480-9433 evenings) to confirm, as the trip will be limited to 20 participants.

Sunday, November 18

Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho

Mike McGrenere will lead this trip on the M.V. Coho on its usual sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. The crossing takes 1-1/2 hours and this is the best opportunity to see bird species such as Shearwaters, Fulmars, and Phalaropes, which are usually found further out to sea. We will be birding from the bow of the boat so **dress warmly**. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 sailing of the M.V. Coho (allow plenty of time for parking). Ferry cost is \$14.00 (US) return (~\$22.00 Can), and it is essential to have **2 pieces of ID** with you for customs, one with a photograph. We'll return on the 2:00 p.m. sailing.

Sunday, November 18

Operation Birdfeeder

Learn about feeders and bird food, bring your hammer to make your own birdfeeder, join Operation Feederwatch, and learn how you can participate in the Christmas Bird count. A special day jointly sponsored by Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary and CRD Parks. 11 - 4 p.m. Morning birdwalk at 9 am. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road. Donations appreciated. Contact **Ann Scarfe**, 479-0211.

Tuesday, November 20

Botany Night

Ted Lee will talk on the history of vegetation mapping in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m. **Adolf Ceska**, 250-477-1211

Sunday, November 25

Exotic Wreaths

A drop-in program to introduce you to some introduced (non-native) plants and ways to incorporate them into your own Christmas wreath. Bring your mug for warming refreshments. 1-3 p.m. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road. By donation. Contact **Ann Scarfe**, 479-0211.

Wednesday, November 28

Birders' Night

Around the World in 80 Slides

Join **Sue Ennis** on a slide illustrated presentation of her around the world trip. Locations highlighted will include: Cook Islands, New Zealand, Australia, Bali, Malaysia and Thailand. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend, a novice birder, and/or a coffee cup.

DECEMBER THROUGH FEBRUARY

The Eagles Have Landed!

Visit the Nature House on the estuary at Goldstream Provincial Park during this year's Eagle Extravaganza. There are excellent viewing opportunities as hundreds of Bald Eagles feed on spawned-out salmon carcasses. The Nature House is open daily all winter from 9:00a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There will be birds of prey exhibits and great eagle viewing through spotting scopes and video cameras. Call 478-9414 for information on special programs and guest speakers happening most weekends!

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 1

Orchard Mason Bee Cleaning

Orchard Mason Bees (OMBO) are native bees that are superb pollinators. They can be infected with mites, and this greatly affects their mortality. This hands-on workshop will teach you how to clean your OMB cocoons and condos. Participants will also learn about improved condo design, installation and placement. Be prepared to get dirty! **Pre-registration required**. Bring your lunch, tea and coffee will be provided. 11 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, 3873 Swan Lake Road. \$30 (Friends members \$27). Contact: **Ann Scarfe**, 479-0211.

Saturday, December 1

Gull Identification Workshop at Goldstream

Learn more than you ever thought possible about the gulls that winter on Vancouver Island. Some come from as far away as the prairies to take advantage of the winter abundance of salmon. Don't be afraid of gulls. ... Use this as an opportunity to practice for the Christmas bird count. Meet at the Goldstream Picnic Area parking lot by the Finlayson Road bridge at 9:00 a.m. and bring adequate winter clothing and boots. **Bruce Whittington** leads this trip.

Saturday, December 8

Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Helmcken Rd. and Burnside Rd. W. for a chance to tune-up your winter bird-spotting and identification skills. This trip will cover Knockan Hill Park and Hastings Flats and the roadsides in-between, so bring your walking shoes, field guide and a notepad. Special interest for novice or near-novice CBCers. For more info, call **Ann Nightingale**, 652-6450.

Sunday, December 9

Birding Cole's Bay Regional Park

Join **Barbara Begg** (656-5296) to check out this small park. Barb will be looking for birds in the hedgerows, woodlands, and waterfront. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot off Inverness Ave. (off the south access of Ardmore Dr.)

Tuesday, December 11

VNHS Natural History Presentation

It's A Bug's World

Sip hot apple cider and meet with friends for an evening of slides and a fascinating discussion on the group of organisms that really rule the world: the *insects*! No one can even come close to covering this enormous topic but **David Semple** is going to give it a valiant effort. Combined with his own up close and personal photographs, it would be impossible for you *not* to learn something new! He will also have his extensive collection available for viewing. Meet at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, Murray and Anne Fraser Building (formerly Begbie), Uvic. Bring a mug & a friend; non-members are welcome.

Saturday, December 15

Victoria Christmas Bird Count

Phone **Dannie Carsen** (595-2773) if you would like to be involved in this annual, North America-wide event. He will hook you up with a group, regardless of your birding level. Don't be nervous about getting involved! This year's post count is at a new, bigger,

and better-lit venue: St. Luke's Hall on corner of Cedar Hill and Cedar Hill X Road. The fun starts at 7 p.m. and sweet treats are a hit with everyone. Come and regale the gang with your crazy tales of the day's events.

Saturday, December 22

Sooke Christmas Bird Count

Phone **Jack McLeod** (642-5369) to be involved in this smaller, but just as exciting, version of the Victoria count. Help is always appreciated and it gives you a good excuse to explore new areas. Besides, what a terrific way to avoid the crazed lunatics at the malls!

JANUARY, 2002

Tuesday, January 1

Birding in the New Year

Join **Kevin Slagboom** for a birding walk in the Layritz, Glendale, Quicks Bottom, Viaduct Flats area. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Layritz Park.

BULLETIN BOARD

Habitat Acquisition Trust has been putting up nestboxes for Purple Martins and Wood Ducks in the Tod Creek Watershed. We have a few remaining nestboxes that would be appropriate for Screech Owls or Wood Ducks. If you have property suitable for these birds, we would be happy to provide you with a nestbox. Also, we are still looking for volunteers to monitor nestboxes on and around Prospect Lake next spring. Monitors must make several visits to the nestbox sites and record the use of the boxes. To request a nestbox or become a monitoring volunteer, please call the HAT office at 995-2428.

Volunteer Naturalists Needed

CRD Parks is looking for several volunteer naturalists to staff the Nature Houses at Francis/King and Witty's Lagoon Regional Parks. The commitment is for at least one year. If you are interested please call **Laesha** or **Jenny** at 478-3344.

CARPOOLING

We have decided to start a new section of *The Naturalist* providing space for members to post requests for rides to Society events, or to offer rides to those who might not otherwise be able to attend. We will not be coordinating any carpools, but if you can offer a ride or need one, contact the editors before the deadline for the next issue. The first request is from a:

Senior lady who would appreciate a ride to Birder's Nights from the Thetis Lake/ Juan de Fuca Rec Centre area. Will pay for gas. Marg at: 391-0440.

Helping this member out is one sure way to volunteer with the Society and to feel good about it.



The Victoria NATURALIST

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Waterfront birding field trip, September, 2001. *Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy*