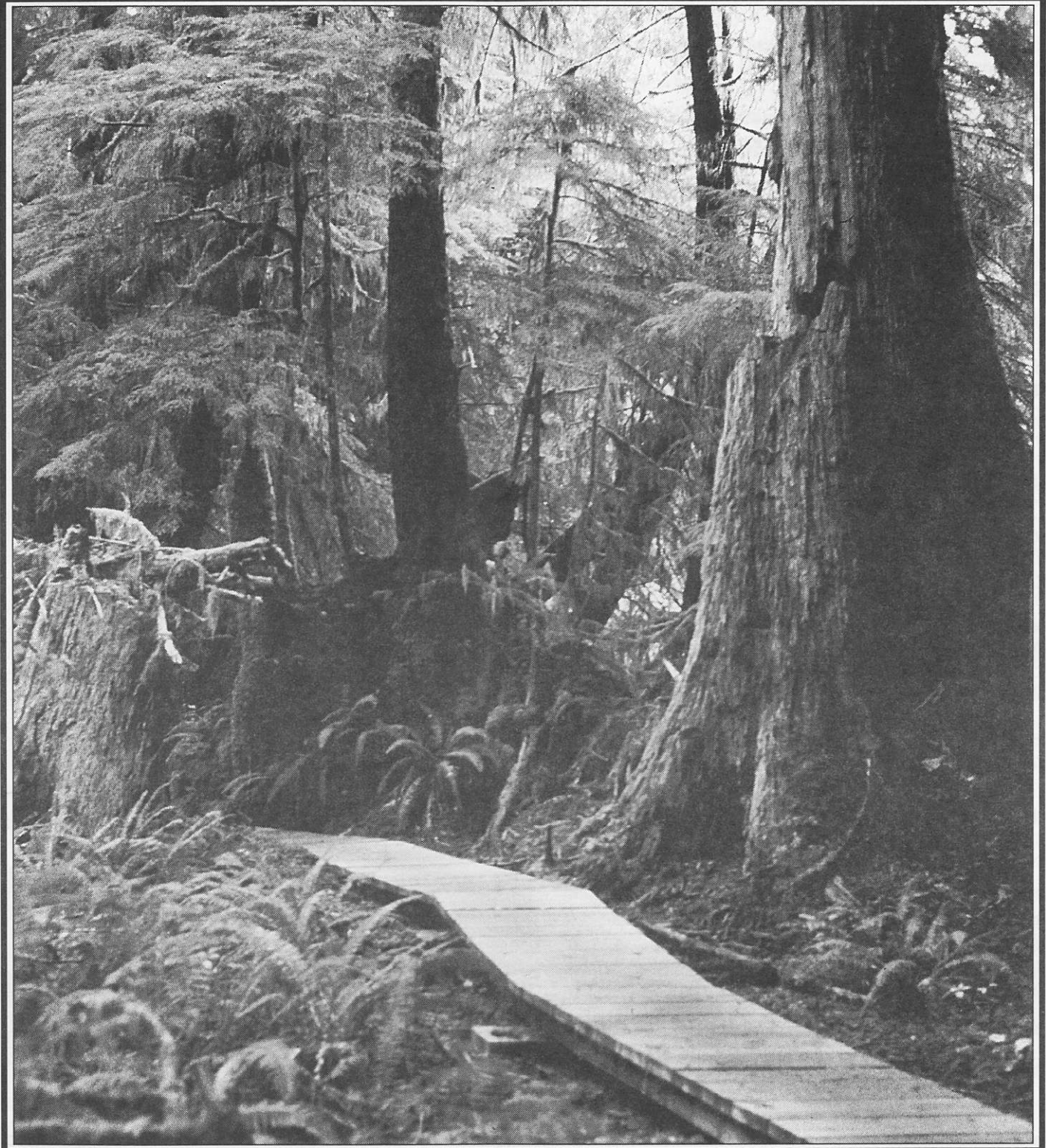


# The Victoria NATURALIST

JULY  
AUGUST  
2002  
VOL 59.1

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





Published six times a year by the  
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,  
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4  
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ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada

*The Victoria Naturalist* acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program towards our mailing costs.

Publication Mail Commercial Sales Agreement Number 1273108

Publications Mail Registration No. 09841

**Editor:** Marilyn and Ross Archibald, 384-3063

**Desktop Publishing:** Frances Hunter, 479-1956

**Distribution:** Tom Gillespie, Phyllis Henderson

**Printing:** Fotoprint, 382-8218

Opinions expressed by contributors to *The Victoria Naturalist* are not necessarily those of the Society.

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**Annual Subscription Rate, Victoria Naturalist** \$20.00

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**Deadline for next issue: August 1, 2002**

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## COVER ILLUSTRATION

Carmanah (file photo)

"We don't own this land."

The words leapt from the television speakers as if they had a life of their own. What made the words more powerful was that they were spoken, not by an aboriginal elder whose traditional culture spoke of stewardship, but by a third generation, twentieth century cattle rancher on the grasslands of southern Saskatchewan.

Don Gillespie, whose family ranches on land bordering Grasslands National Park, continued, "We are only given the opportunity to take care of this land until we die, and then someone else takes over."

Another ranch, the McIntyre Ranch in southern Alberta, was established one hundred years or more ago with the philosophy, based on experience in the overgrazed U.S. prairies, that the grasslands needed to be carefully stewarded if the ranching operation was to be sustainable. The present owners continue to forego quick profits in favour of a sustainable ranch by calculating how many cattle could be raised in harmony with the natural world, and grazing one third less animals to ensure sustainability.

It is an amazing experience to walk in the native grasslands of the McIntyre Ranch and see native grasses as far as the eye can see and such a profusion of spring flowers blooming that we had to be careful where we walked.

Coming home from HAT's recent trip to the grasslands of Alberta and Saskatchewan with memories of such remarkable nature experiences leads me to wonder: *What is it we need to do to help our politicians and resource industries in British Columbia see that we do not own the land; we are only here to take care of it until another generation takes over our stewardship?*

Ross

# FBCN AGM a Great Success

By Ann Nightingale

If anyone wondered if we could squeeze 32 field trips, 10 natural history presentations, two casual social evenings, two half-day meetings and a banquet, complete with a fascinating guest speaker into about three and a half days, you need not wonder any more — WE DID IT!

From May 9 to May 12, VNHS hosted the Federation of BC Naturalists Annual General Meeting. About 140 people participated in at least one event, and over 100 attended the full conference. There was a pre-conference field trip to the Walbran Valley, which provided an opportunity for many who had never seen a west coast rainforest to experience it firsthand, and ended with several field trips for delegates on their way home on Sunday afternoon. In between, a wide variety of guest experts presented their research and knowledge to participants, while other delegates took advantage of spectacular weather to dabble in birding, botany, habitat restoration, and marine field trips.

An event of this proportion could not have happened

without hundreds of hours of volunteer effort, from the planning and organization to staffing the registration desk, soliciting door prizes, publishing the program and maintaining the website. Over 60 VNHS members and 15 sponsors/donors contributed to the great success of the AGM. Thanks go out to all volunteers and supporters, especially to Rick Schortinghuis, Claudia Copley, and Maureen Funk, who made sure that field trips, guest speakers, and registration were all well taken care of. The donation of several sets of "Species at Risk" books for auctioning to delegates resulted in several hundred dollars being raised for the FBCN and VNHS.

This was the first AGM for many VNHS members, both as organizers and as participants. We learned a lot, and are very satisfied with the outcomes. Feedback was very positive, and at the end of the day, the AGM will also result in a significant financial contribution to VNHS and FBCN to support other projects. Next year, the AGM will be held in the Interior, and members of VNHS are encouraged to attend.



Lunch stop at Danikin Lake. Photo: Ann Nightingale

# Humbled by Nature's Grandeur

By Eloise Defayette

At the recent Federation of BC Naturalists' Annual General Meeting, we had the opportunity to participate in a full day field trip to the Carmanah-Walbran Provincial Park. What a day it was!

We gathered at a very early morning hour waiting for the buses. What else is new? The buses finally arrived and we were on our way, making a few stops, especially at the Duncan market for a 'rest' break. Unfortunately only one rest room meant long line ups.

The trip west was on a paved road and we slowly woke up to enjoy the scenery. Then it happened! We hit the dusty, gravel, bumpy, potholed roads. Fortunately, we had brought along the suggested pillows to sit on.

As we traveled on timber company roads, we noticed that there were "call in" signs posted. Two-way radios are used to communicate to others using the road.

The maps that we had taken off the internet, and others, showed our location only as Mainline, N-10, W 30; nothing that we could relate to. As a result, our driver got lost. Not to worry though. Out came the cell phones — only to find that we were out of range!

What to do? Enjoy the view. It was spectacular.

Eventually, the other vehicle that we had been following, until we took the wrong turn, came back, and we re-joined the caravan once again.

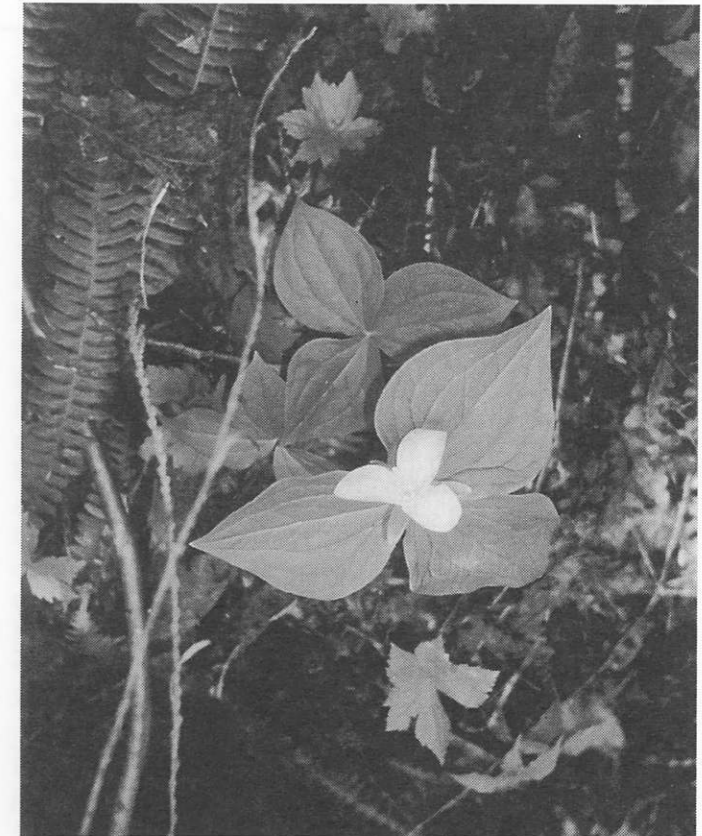
One stop was in the midst of mountains where we looked out towards the Pacific Ocean; too far to see well. But the clearcuts were all too visible and spoiled the picture.

At another location we all disembarked at the top of hill, where it was suggested that we walk down the trail. The buses would pick us up at the bottom. The hikers came prepared. Out came their personal walking sticks; others of us picked up ours from the surrounding brush. How to explain the steep grade; it seemed to be 75%. Nonetheless, it was not easy for a 70+, slightly overweight woman to manoeuvre. But, with help and patience of others, we managed to make it. It was difficult to watch where you were going and look at the large trees, but we did manage to get a good view of the lower flora.

The next stop was at Hadikin Lake, which is very small, but pristine. After lunch we proceeded to explore a selective logging site of Sitka giant spruce. Then it was back on the bus to our final destination (almost) — the park itself.

Many of the group could hardly wait to hike through the remarkable variety of forest types including: Western Red Cedars, Balsam, Sitka Spruce and Hemlock.

The footing was very 'iffy' with the result that some of us did not walk the full 1-2 hours on the tricky, slippery, muddy trails. "Photo ops" were in order. As one example, we saw and photographed what we were told is the largest trillium west of Ontario.



Trillium. Photo: Eloise Defayette

Those that did do the full hike reported that they traversed through different 'climate' zones displaying complete diversity.

The return bus trip by way of Nitnat Lake included a welcome restroom break. Then, on to Youbou, Lake Cowichan, and home to Victoria.

The trip was a truly humbling experience, worthwhile and not to be missed!

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# Love Them or Hate Them, They Are Here to Stay

By Yorke Edwards

Anyone who can name even a few birds will usually be able to identify a Crow. Crows are birds that many people hate, but I fall at the other extreme. I like crows. Through my boyhood years in Ontario, I knew that each long, grey winter was over when the first noisy gang of American Crows straggled northward over the city, somehow knowing that fields ahead had patches free of snow.

The large crow family, the *Corvidae*, is considered to be unusually inventive (Angell 1978; Goodwin 1986). The family's numerous species live over much of the world and include: crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws, magpies and jays. When not nesting, many in the family are social, gathering together by night and scattering in daylight to feed alone or in small groups.

When I began living with Northwestern Crows by Juan de Fuca Strait, the species received my full admiration when I watched one carry half a slice of hard dry bread to a puddle of water, dunk it, and then eat it. I have since seen the same behaviour on two other occasions, years and miles apart. After each dunking the dried bread was soft for easier eating.

Another admirable behaviour is often seen along our rocky shore, especially on days of low tides. Crows forage in the exposed intertidal zones between high tides, hunting in the rich communities of small seashore animals exposed among the rocks and seaweed. The lower the tide, the bigger the crows' dinner table. Most little animals living in the

intertidal areas at the edge of the sea are invertebrate animals dwelling in protective shells. Sea snails, such as whelks (*Ahais lamellosa*), frequently fall prey to crows in spite of its heavy armour. Crows break open whelk shells by carrying them twenty or thirty feet up into the air to drop them onto rocks below. Several drops may be needed before the shell breaks to expose the whelk for eating. At other times, instead of dropping them onto rocks, a nearby paved road is used; the broken shells accumulating in the gutters as proof of past dining.

This behaviour is not confined to seashores. At two non-native walnut trees I am aware of, crows drop walnuts onto nearby roads to break the hard shells. Walnut trees are not native to British Columbia, and the nuts are not like any similar kind of native food. Clearly we have here a brainy bird that learns unusual behaviour.

In contrast with my admiration for crows, most urban people dislike them, have no feelings about them, or never even notice them. Some hate them because they destroy the eggs and young of more popular birds; others are angry because a crowd of crows roosting nearby at night makes an uproar that carries far. Much the same reaction during the day can be caused by a noisy gang at an open garbage dumpster.

Farmers and gardeners often dislike crows because of their destruction of crops, although what sometimes looks like a gang of black thieves in the corn patch can actually be



Left: Young crow just out of the nest. Right: Northwestern crow. Photos: Marie O'Shaughnessy

In Victoria's busy tourist centre near the harbour...small trees are planted only yards apart in front of the busy shops. In these trees one can find crow nests mere yards above the heads of thousands of people who walk by daily.

a cleanup crew eating destructive insects. At one time across the prairies, bounties were paid for their heads; some were shot in organized "crow shoots". The supreme destruction was using dynamite to kill hundreds in their favoured trees (Bent 1946). Efforts to destroy them have been considerable, but they remain numerous across most of northern North America wherever there is open country with scattered trees.

The Northwestern Crow's main territory is the narrow strip of shore between the ocean and deep forests, including islands offshore. Their range extends from southern Alaska, along the ocean shores of British Columbia, to the northwest corner of Washington State. Northwestern Crows are not found southward on the unglaciated, wave-pounded shores of Washington facing the open sea. Northwestern Crow habitat ends where forests no longer line the Alaskan coast.

They appear to prefer habitat sheltered from oceanic winds. Our island-studded coast is a drowned landscape. Its many sheltered shores were scraped and shaped by moving glaciers polishing rock and digging channels. This made today's numerous islands that now tame the energy of the open ocean's waves. The mix of land and calmed sheltered sea is the realm of the Northwestern Crow.

Crows are usually found where tides flow in, then ebb to offer abundant seafoods. An occasional Northwestern Crow will make short excursions up river valleys for seasonal food such as spawned out salmon. Humans of European descent have changed the coastal landscape, enlarging crow habitat. Fields by trees and forest clearings, towns and cities; all give crows new foraging areas. But, seashores always remain attractive.

Through the year, the crows' shoreline habitat changes dramatically from season to season. When the tide is out, the crow's dinner table is set, but the size of that table changes daily, in tune with the phases of the moon. This presents crows with their biggest problem in winter. The gravitational pull of the moon exposes the sub-tidal zone at night. Daytime flooded shores in winter mean seafood is hard for crows to obtain.

Northwestern Crow habitat usually includes living with people. Early European travellers on the west coast noted that crows were a part of the First People's villages (Hoffman 1927). Shores were attractive to people who also gathered much of their food from the sea, and their large houses of cedar were placed in line along sheltered beaches that were also crow hunting grounds. People and crows lived in much the same habitat. In those villages, crows were tolerated, and they lived nearby to find food just as they do now in towns and cities on the same sheltered coasts.

Today, Victoria's miles of rocky shoreline, with large

trees scattered throughout, attracts hundreds of crows. An added benefit for the crows is that the shore is not far from cultivated fields providing alternative food supplies. Nearby patches of older forest are used by many to roost at night.

The annual social cycle of a crow's life is easily seen. Small family groups are the rule through summer, but in fall and winter the families join together in flocks of dozens to hundreds to hunt at various forage sites. Through winter the daily routine, as day wanes, is for hundreds of crows to straggle noisily over the city bound for distant trees in some favoured night time roosting place. There, the sky over the roost may become crowded with their impressive abundance, both those arriving and the ones swarming out of the trees for some reason, only to disappear again into the trees. Their favoured roosts are located where there is little or no human disturbance, perhaps on a quiet island with dense clumps of trees, or in a bit of rural forest remote from traffic and housing. In mornings, the noisy gang flies back across the city; the crowd decreasing as groups peel away to daily forage grounds.

In late February, the winter crowd begins to forage in pairs within the group, and later move completely away from others except that one or two of last year's young may tag along. Nesting soon begins. Nests are found in trees throughout the city, mostly high up. When trees are leafless in winter, old crow nests are easily seen along tree-lined streets; most numerous at a short distance from the sea. Forever adaptable, however, they are also known to nest in bushes, on treeless islands near seabird colonies where they build them in bushes or even on rock ledges.

In Victoria's busy tourist centre near the harbour, along the busiest street, small trees are planted only yards apart in front of the busy shops. In these trees one can find crow nests mere yards above the heads of thousands of people who walk by daily. This urban crow habitat is used throughout the year; the experienced birds living easily in traffic on both road and sidewalks.

Crows are thought to be unusually inventive; at the same time, some people seem to have what is called intelligence and resourcefulness.

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## Helping Nature Help Itself (Climate Change and You)

Suggestions from Richard Hebda

Some time ago now, I gave a Noon-hour Talk about how we were using Museum collections to understand climate change and what these changes may mean to us collectively. The important messages from that talk were:

- The study of pollen and spores and larger plant remains provides us with important insight into how climate has changed in the past and the way plant species reflect these climatic changes;
- Climate has changed in the past — and sometimes rather suddenly, over an interval as short as a few decades;
- Four thousand years ago, there was a relatively small climate change (a cooling of about 1 to 2 Celsius degrees) that resulted in the changes that brought about our modern forests, and these changes may have taken place over a short interval (a few years to two or three decades);
- This change, in part, led to the expansion of Western Red cedar (*Thuja plicata*); and
- Today, cedars are dying in dry sites throughout southern BC, a possible sign that the climate has already warmed and is becoming drier in the summer.

After my talk, several people in the audience asked what they, as individuals, could do about climate change. The most important point to understand is that climate change is likely underway and will continue to some extent despite whatever we may do in the coming years.

Certainly, we collectively must reduce our greenhouse-gas emissions by using our cars less and through other similar actions. I think it is equally important that we work toward sustaining normal ecological processes.

For a start, look at your own property and imagine its ecological role before your house or apartment disturbed the

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For a start, look at your own property and imagine its ecological role before your house or apartment disturbed the site.

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site. One thing for sure, your plot would be making native soil. Organic matter would have accumulated year after year under trees, shrubs and herbaceous vegetation. The soil would be porous, well aerated, and hold moisture well. It would be full of nutrients released at a rate and in a form appropriate for our native species.

Are you making native soil on your property? Or are you having your branches, lawn clippings, etc. trucked away to the dump or somewhere else — and using fuel to do so?

My first suggestion for what you as an individual can do: find a corner for nature to make soil on your property. Turn some of that high-maintenance lawn into a mini-wilderness and put your plant debris back to work. You may be surprised how soon native species such as Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) will appear. Perhaps you can speed the process along by planting a native shrub or tree and piling twigs and clippings around it.

RICHARD HEBDA is Curator of Botany and Earth History at the RBCM.

Reprinted, with minor changes, from Discovery newsletter, courtesy of Richard Hebda, Curator of Botany and Earth History at the Royal BC Museum, and the Friends of the RBCM.

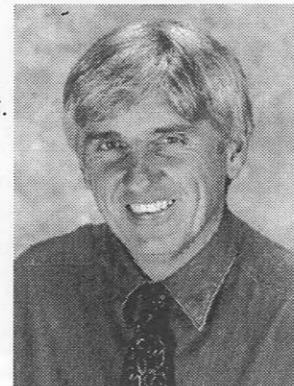


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## Seemingly Elusive Redmaids (*Calandrinia ciliata*)

By Tannis Warburton

About 37 years ago, I started to monitor and list the indigenous flowers and plants in Falaise Park. Then about 3 years ago I found Red Maids there for the first time. That really puzzled me. Occasionally I would take a relative or friend over to the park to see them and although I knew exactly where they should be, I could not find them. On those occasions when I could not find them, I noticed that the sky was overcast. It occurred to me that these tiny flowers only opened in bright sunshine.

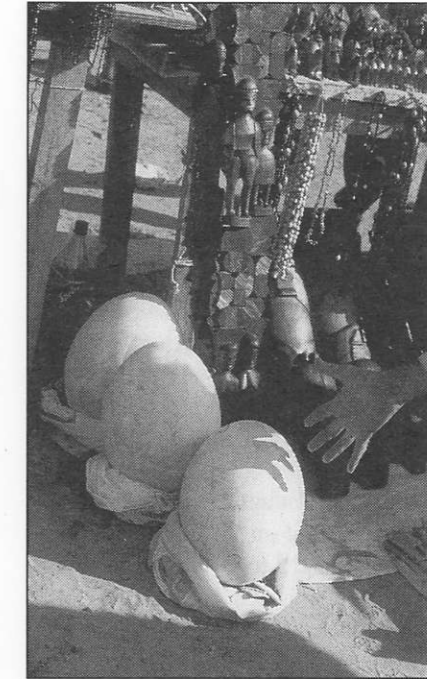
Following that assumption, I looked for them only on sunny days but found them only sometimes. This made me wonder if they were like some other flowers that closed up for part of the day even when the sun was bright. I decided to check them on April 29 every hour from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. DST. That day provided very bright sunshine all day long. I found the results interesting:

9:00 a.m.	no flowers visible
10:00 a.m.	no flowers visible
11:00 a.m.	about a dozen flowers visible
12:00 noon	more than 50 flowers visible
2:00 p.m.	more than 130 flowers visible
3:00 p.m.	more than 130 flowers visible
4:00 p.m.	only 20 flowers visible including flowers closing up

This was just a one day observation, but along with previous checks, it seems to indicate that *Calandrinia ciliata* opens its flowers only around noon Standard time, and only in bright sunshine.

## The World's Largest Egg

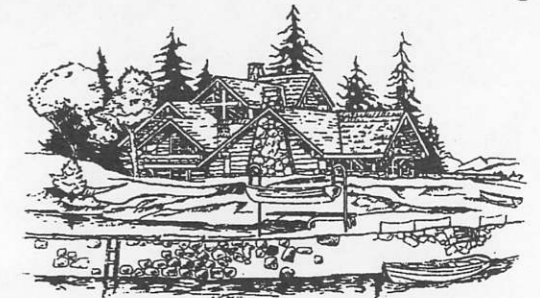
By David Stirling



It has a volume of eight litres; seven times that of an Ostrich. It belongs to the Elephant Bird, largest member of the genus, *Aepyornis*, a group of huge flightless birds of Madagascar. The first colonists to the Island ate the Elephant Bird, with other members of its family, to extinction. A few might have survived up to five hundred years ago.

Photo: David Stirling

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# First Flight

By Ruth Chudley

Ever wonder what goes on at a hummingbird's nest when it is time for the young to fledge? In June 2000, I was fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time to have my curiosity satisfied.

The nest was located on a bough of a Grand Fir tree at the east end of Swan Lake, perilously close to walkers passing by. On May 24th, I was with a group of birdwatchers when Geoff pointed the nest out to us. After that, I observed the nest every day for two weeks, sometimes twice a day. I had noted the progress of the young from two mounds of fluff, to beaks protruding like needles from a pincushion, to bright eyes peering out, and the stretching and flapping of wings.

On June 12th, in the evening, 21 days after hatching, I observed one of the nestlings perched on the edge of the nest. On June 13, Tuesday, I arrived at 0915 to find only one bird in the nest. Presumably, the one I had seen perched the previous evening had flown between the time I had left or when I had arrived in the morning. On my evening visit on June 13, the remaining bird was still in the nest. The mother came once with food.

On Wednesday, June 14, I arrived at 0930, to find the young bird still in the nest. At 0932, the mother arrived and fed it. She hovered for a few seconds and then flew to a tree across the trail from the nest. She perched there for about a minute before flying off. Around 0933, the fledgling hopped

out of the nest and along the branch to a distance of about ten inches, where it perched. After flapping its wings a few times, it sat quite still for several minutes, moving only its head to look at its surroundings.

At 0944 the fledgling took its first flight, which lasted a couple of seconds, in a downward direction. Returning to the same place on the branch, the fledgling twice repeated this flight within the next few minutes. Landing on a twig about two feet from the previous branch, it sat preening its breast and wing feathers. After a minute or two, the mother reappeared. She did not bring food, but began to vigorously prod the young bird's back with her beak, and with equal vigor to flap her wings about its back. This went on for several seconds. Then she flew away. The fledgling resumed its preening.

The mother returned at 0958, hovered near the young bird for a few seconds, then flew off. During the next few minutes, the fledgling made several flights — for distances of one to two feet, away from the twig and back again. It then took flight into the leafy space of the maple tree above my head. I moved to see if it had perched but it was nowhere to be seen.

Ah, the freedom of flight! As I stepped over the rocks and tree roots on the trail, I contemplated, not only my earthbound state, but, with wonder, the event I had just witnessed. I felt privileged beyond measure.



Anna's hummingbird. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

# Avian Drama in the Blenkinsop Valley

By Garry Schrader

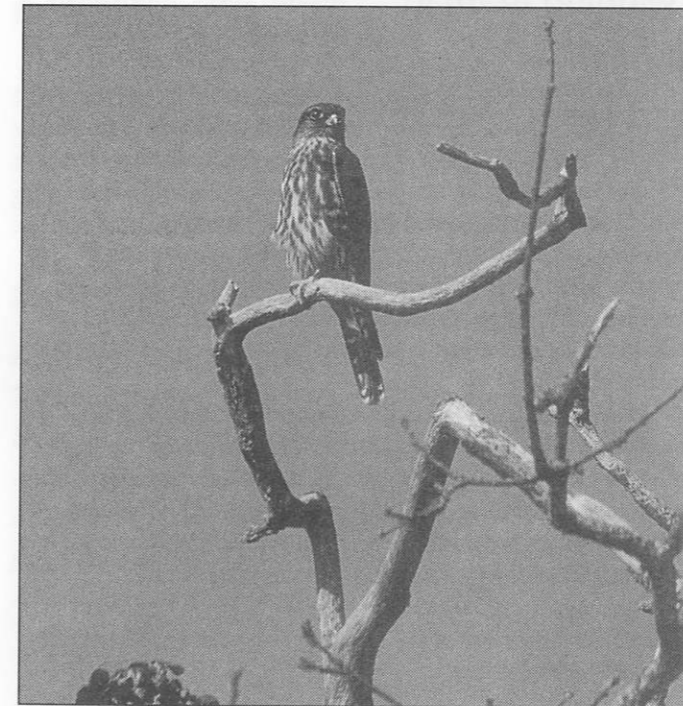
It was one of those days in the Blenkinsop Valley, when the signs of spring are in your face, a brilliant sun shining from the bluest sky.

A flash caught the corner of my eye and I turned my gaze upward. Three black objects circled, swooped, and finally collided mid-air. One fell like a brick downward hitting the ground with a thump. Further inspection revealed it to be a Flicker with its neck broken.

A screech alerted me to the action above my head. Two hawks were circling, planning their next move. As I backed away, one landed on a nearby tree, one on the ground about 20 ft. from the fallen bird.

It watched me warily as it strutted over to the flicker, jumped onto it and attempted to get a claw hold. Was it a Sharpshin? A Cooper's Hawk? The colours were right. Or, a Merlin? The markings on the bird's breast were consistent with those of a Merlin, and the wing tips pointed rather than spread.

The hawk struggled to get its prey, half the hawk's own size, off the ground. It managed to hold on, became airborne, and disappear into the trees. The second bird swooped by me within a few feet, and with a whoosh of wings, followed its mate in hot pursuit.



Merlin. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

## Flight of the Least Sandpipers

*Streaked sparrows-of-shores,  
yellowish legs puckered as seaweed,  
chest-deep in pebbles. Least Sandpipers totter  
right on the shifting demarcation  
between land and not-land.*

*Alighting with one accord,  
these rickety birds encompass  
the swift spirit of change. The air is enriched  
with their grace. They teach easy lessons  
in effortless group endeavour.*

*Easy for them. I recall episodes  
when my neighbour with the lawn-mowing obsession  
tunes up just as I go to meditate,  
just as the radio news comes on about  
some showdown between loggers and protesters.*

*Sun and rain united in one body,  
sandpipers ascend, switch places and the places  
are in flux. But they are never safer  
than in this moment of flight,  
quicken by unhurried harmony.*

*Not tossed to and fro but carried by every sleight  
of microsecond change, without cunning.  
A grey/white double-sided bond, covenant in satin.  
The wide airborne ribbon loops,  
ties bows without knots and pull them loose again.*

*I turn the tense radio off,  
go to meditate just as the noisy grass-shearer  
resumes next door. Somewhere on the bay's periphery,  
sandpipers practice  
holding me up.*

Hannah Main-van der Kamp

# Greenways and Green Spaces

## Nature's Anti-Extinction Team

By Harvey Williams

In his best-selling autobiography, *Naturalist*, the renowned Harvard biologist, E.O. Wilson describes his research on loss of species from island ecosystems. Using the Florida Keys as a natural laboratory, Wilson found that smaller, more isolated islands lost arthropod species faster than larger, less isolated islands. Smaller islands lose species because they have smaller populations of each species making it easier for a population to be lost. Moreover small islands are less likely to be repopulated by the same or new species.

But what does it matter if a few species are lost here and there? According to the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, it matters a lot. "Our Common Future", better known as the Brundtland Report, lists the world-wide loss of species and genetic resources (biodiversity) among the top five threats to a sustainable future for humankind and cites loss of habitat as the major cause of species extinction. Habitat fragmentation has been shown to be one of the major forces driving species extinction

Ignoring species extinction due to loss of habitat places future generations at risk. The original Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy set a target of protecting 80% of the unprotected core green spaces. In the proposed Regional Growth Strategy bylaw, the 80% target has been replaced with a vague commitment to protect "as much as possible". If the CRD were "thinking globally and acting locally" it would make the protection of green spaces a priority, not something it would do "if possible".

Fragmented natural habitat in urban areas is similar to Wilson's islands in the Florida Keys. And like Wilson's islands, the fragments lose species; the smaller and more isolated fragments losing more species faster. However, using green corridors to connect green spaces can mitigate the effects of habitat fragmentation caused by urban development.

Development plans can provide for green networks with a minimum sacrifice of land for development. When green corridors connect green spaces, they are no longer islands but nodes in a network of natural habitat. Genes can flow through the green corridors from one green space to another replenishing and enriching local gene pools. Species can repopulate where they have disappeared. Green spaces connected by greenways can be a winning team in the fight against extinction. Because they are such valuable habitat, stream courses and riparian areas should be given the highest priority for protection.

Networking green spaces in highly urbanized areas such as Greater Victoria is particularly challenging. Existing green spaces and greenways must be mapped and their ecological values determined. The VNHS Green Spaces Project is presently engaged in this task. Then potential green corridors to connect the green spaces must be identified with special attention to waterways and riparian zones. Strips along the edges of golf courses, playground and school grounds could be converted to green corridors. Some streets could even be torn up

and converted to green corridors. Needless to say, these could meet with some resistance. But by making green corridors wide enough to accommodate walkways and bicycle paths, they could serve multiple purposes thereby gaining public support. Such greenways would connect communities as well as green spaces, encouraging bicycle transportation.

The Brundtland Report's assertion that loss of global biodiversity is a threat to a sustainable future is a consensus of the world's leading biologists hence is the best information we have to go on. By supporting green networks, urban dwellers are thinking globally and acting locally to protect global biodiversity and a sustainable future.

*Harvey is a member of the steering committee of the VNHS Green Spaces Project*

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Using green corridors to connect green spaces can mitigate the effects of habitat fragmentation caused by urban development...Green spaces connected by greenways can be a winning team in the fight against extinction.

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# President's Report

By Bruce Whittington

## Partnerships in the Community

As naturalists, we learn very early that plants and animals do not exist in isolation. They live as individuals, yes, but they all benefit mutually from each other, in what we know as communities.

We have adapted the notion of communities from our own way of life. We are all individuals, but we in turn are members of a community. So too, are other of society's institutions members of this community, and VNHS is one of these.

Since 1944, our Society has made significant contributions in our community. And in the way that individuals work together in a community, VNHS is establishing new partnerships within the community.

VNHS is working with a broad coalition of community stakeholders in the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative. This important project has brought together representatives of Colwood, the province, Environment Canada, First Nations, conservation groups, the Esquimalt Lagoon Enhancement Association, Royal Roads University, and more.

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## If Shakespeare Were a Birder

By Bob Kensett

I am presently putting together a collection of pieces in which I have taken a well-known classical writing and adapted it to birding. Hopefully one day I will find a publisher. This is my version of King Richard's last words in Shakespeare's play, King Richard the Third.

### MY KINGDOM FOR A SCOPE

*A scope! A scope! My kingdom for a scope!  
Withdraw my lord; I'll help you to binoculars.  
Slave, I have set my life upon a quest  
and I will stand the hazard of the die.  
I think there be six hawks in the tree;  
five have I seen today but not the sixth.  
A scope! A scope! My kingdom for a scope!*

VICTORIA  FOUNDATION

As part of its contribution to this initiative, VNHS is spearheading an effort to provide interpretive signage to highlight the natural heritage of the Lagoon, which is a federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary.

Through the efforts of our Vice-President, Ann Nightingale, VNHS has been awarded a grant of \$5000 towards this project, by the Victoria Foundation, which drew on the Hugh and Helen Mogensen Fund, and the ALACS Fund. The Foundation has become one of the most established community foundations in Canada, and supports many community initiatives in a variety of sectors. The Victoria Foundation also supported the production of the VNHS Bird Checklist in 2001.

We are very grateful for the support of the Victoria Foundation. As members of the same community, we can work together towards a common goal of making Victoria a vibrant city, rich with a balance of cultural and natural resources.

As a Society, we can be proud of our accomplishments, and proud of the partnerships we have made. But no resting on our laurels; there is still much to be done. The good news is, we know we can do it.

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### Heartwoods – Island Nature Retreat

Cute, quiet cottage on sunny Lasqueti Island is available weekends this summer. Six-sided bright cottage has upstairs bedroom, downstairs living room with pullout couch and kitchenette, and bathroom with hot water. Valley setting has garden, huge trees, and nearby beaches, bike roads and bird habitats. Extra options include kayaking, fishing, riding, massage, tours, dances and workshops. 2 – 3 day weekend packages only (1-3 adults only, no pets). Low rates include pickup at small ferry from Parksville.  
Call Laurel for details: 250-333-8665

# Bird Studies Canada Launches Project NestWatch

Québec, 15 May 2002 — Bird Studies Canada, a not-for-profit organization that coordinates numerous conservation programs regarding wild birds and their habitat, is launching a new Canadian program called Project NestWatch. This Project's goal is to collect valuable data on birds nesting in Canadian backyards.

Citizen scientists participating in Project NestWatch search for active bird nests, follow them through the nesting season and then report their observations. Although it is possible to report the nests of any bird species, Bird Studies Canada is particularly interested in common species like the American Robin. The robin is well known to most Canadians, the nests are relatively easy to find, and the robin often nests in urban areas like backyards and parks. Because the American Robin is so abundant, this species may also be a good indicator of the state of the environment. "I am confident that Project NestWatch participants will enjoy their close contact with the birds and will feel good about contributing to bird conservation", says Bird Studies Canada's Executive Director, Michael Bradstreet.

Becoming a nest watcher is both easy and fun! Once you find a nest, you only need to visit it a few times during

the nesting period. During each visit, you are asked to record the date, time and nest contents (number of eggs and/or young). Participants are also encouraged to indicate the geographic location of each nest and to give information about the nesting habitat. All information must be submitted online at Bird Studies Canada's web site ([www.bsc-eoc.org/national/nestwatch.html](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/nestwatch.html)).

Data collected through Project NestWatch will be used by several people, including scientists who monitor the health of bird populations across Canada. If you would like to take part in the project, please visit the Project's web site ([www.bsc-eoc.org/national/nestwatch.html](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/nestwatch.html)) or contact Catherine Poussart (1-418-649-6062, [catherine.poussart@ec.gc.ca](mailto:catherine.poussart@ec.gc.ca)). There is no fee to participate in Project NestWatch, which is being launched by Bird Studies Canada with support from The George Cedric Metcalf Foundation, and in collaboration with provincial and regional Nest Records Schemes across Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada.

For more information, please contact: Catherine Poussart, Project NestWatch Coordinator, 418-649-6062, [catherine.poussart@ec.gc.ca](mailto:catherine.poussart@ec.gc.ca).

Bird Studies Canada is looking for volunteers to participate in a new program: the **British Columbia Beached Bird Survey**. If you already spend time walking a beach in BC, or would like to start, we hope you'll consider volunteering for this program.

Beached Bird Surveys were formerly conducted in BC from 1990-1994 in the wake of the Nestucca oil spill which killed 56,000 birds off the BC and Washington coast. The purpose of the 2002-2004 surveys is to collect two more years of baseline data. If you would like to volunteer, you will be asked to walk a stretch of beach once every month from August to April, keeping an eye out for beached birds. You will also be asked to note various physical characteristics of the beach (wrack thickness, amount of driftwood), along with weather conditions. The time it takes to survey a beach section depends on the length of beach you wish to survey. The weather will not always be pleasant (!) and you will probably not find beached birds on every survey. However, by participating in beached bird surveys you would be making a significant contribution to environmental stewardship by helping to develop a baseline index of oiled birds in British Columbia.

If you are a keen birder or beachcomber who would like to get involved with this project, or if you would like to learn more about it, please contact:



Jeanne Roy  
BC Program Manager-Bird Studies Canada  
5421 Robertson Road, RR1, Delta, BC V4K 3N2  
phone: 604-940-4696/fax: 604-946-7022  
toll-free: 1-877-349-2473 (BIRD)  
e-mail: [jeanne.roy@ec.gc.ca](mailto:jeanne.roy@ec.gc.ca)



Thank-you!



## HAT Tricks

By Bruce Whittington

Spring is the busiest season of the year, and it should be no surprise that things are busier than ever at Habitat Acquisition Trust.

With the provincial government withdrawing all funding for interpretive programming in our provincial parks, BC joins Mississippi as the only two jurisdictions north of Panama with no such programming. On southern Vancouver Island, these programs have been provided under contract by Arenaria Research and Interpretation, and managed by VNHS Director Darren Copley.

In an exciting move, HAT and Arenaria have struck a partnership to endeavour to continue the excellent programs of the past. Arenaria brings a successful track record and business plan to the partnership, while HAT, as a charitable organization, can access other funding sources, and can issue tax receipts for donations which are directed to the support of these programs. It will be a challenge, but VNHS members have already come forward with donations and volunteer assistance in a very encouraging way. Donations for this and other HAT initiatives may be made through HAT, or at the Visitor Centre at Goldstream. For more information, HAT's office number is 995-2428, and Goldstream is 478-9414.

We are planning to celebrate the new partnership on August 11th, on "Ice Cream Sunday." Come down to Victoria's favourite park, sample some summertime goodness, and enjoy this wonderful streamside setting. Watch for more details!

HAT has assisted Coastal Enterprise and Resource Centre (CERCA) with a proposal to fund the construction of a fishway on the lower reaches of Tod Creek. The proposal

was successful, with Pacific Salmon Foundation granting \$7,800 for the project. It is an important step in returning the historical distribution of salmon to Tod Creek.

Also in this watershed, The Friends of Tod Creek Watershed has launched its new publication, *Watershed Connections*, with design and layout by Frances Hunter, whose creative touch is also evident in the *Naturalist*, and in the new VNHS brochure. The Friends are a very committed and active group and we congratulate them on their success.

HAT's annual birding tour, HATs Off!, was organized again this year by HAT director Marilyn Lambert. This year's tour, which raises funds for HAT's conservation work, explored the badlands and grasslands of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. The spring was very late, and very windy, but birders were treated to thousands of American Avocets, hundreds of Pronghorn, and enough Ferruginous Hawks to bring "lifer" smiles to everyone. Thanks to everyone who supported HAT by joining the tour, and to *Naturalist* editor Ross Archibald, who assisted as driver and guide. Our fundraising projects are an important part of our work. Watch for Musical HATs coming again this fall, for an evening of music and laughter, and tempting food and raffle prizes.

In the coming weeks, we will be starting our "Good Neighbours" project, and continuing with our other stewardship and land acquisition projects. We welcome your ongoing support, and we are happy to answer questions about HAT or its activities. Give Bruce or Claudia a call at the HAT office (995-2428) any time.

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## Welcome to New Members

**Michael Bentley**  
Ivor Road  
*birds, mammals, botany, insects*

**Chris and Alice Gardiner**  
Mann Avenue  
*conservation*

**Muriel Guiguet**  
Dalhousie Street

**James W. Hamilton**  
Boyd Street  
*birds, botany, photography*

**Gayle Quin and Bill,  
Gillian and Wendy Huot**  
Douglas Street

**Elior and Leah Kinarthy**  
MacDonald Drive West  
*birds and conservation*

**Linda Maasch**  
Robertson Street  
*marketing/publicity*

**Corey Miller**  
The Rise  
*conservation, birds, botany*

**J. Douglas Porteous**  
Faircliff Lane  
*birds*

**Chris Spratt**  
St. Patrick Street  
*birds, astronomy*

**Dr. Jamie Taylor**  
Brighton Avenue  
*birding*

**Doreen and Dale Thayer**  
Marsett Place

**Yvette Thomas**  
Bow Road  
*birds and marine life*

**Elizabeth Rogers and  
Brad Anholt**  
Casa Marcia Crescent

**Joe Boucher**  
Pechanga Close, Cobble Hill  
*birds, botany, grasslands  
restoration*

**Margaret Guy-Jones**  
Victoria  
*hiking*

**Aldyth Hunter**  
Gonzales Avenue

**Doreen Shore**  
Southgate Street  
*conservation and marine life*

**Esther Wilson**  
Westing Road

**Jacque Bradbury**  
Victoria

**Donna Field**  
Cranmore Road

**David McLean and  
Kelly Ridley**  
Goward Road

**Nikko Snow**  
Leighton Road  
*conservation and  
natural history*

**Annette Van Niejenhuis**  
Saanichton  
*birds, botany*

**Keith A. Williams**  
Jeffries Road, Duncan

## Birds of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland

Review by John Defayette

An apparent greater interest in bird watching has resulted in more field guides being published or updated. Robin Bovey, Wayne Campbell and Andy Bezener author one such updated book, *Birds of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland*. The book now contains 126 species with new beautiful full colour illustrations by Ewa Pluciennik.

Wayne Campbell is well known to British Columbian birders, having spent many hours providing wonderful insights into the hundreds of bird species in our province. A one time curator at the Royal British Columbia Museum, he has conducted wildlife inventories in remote areas and has completed the first census of breeding seabird colonies. Wayne Campbell probably is best known as one of the co-authors of *Birds of British Columbia*, which had input from about 5,000 bird watchers and naturalists.

The updated Vancouver field guide provides full descriptions of each bird species, with seasonal charts that show the best times of the year to view each particular bird. An entire page is devoted to the explanation of abundance charts, which show on a monthly basis the usual nesting period. Each page includes a chart and a Quick I.D. for the bird. Another useful feature is the use of icons for each bird to

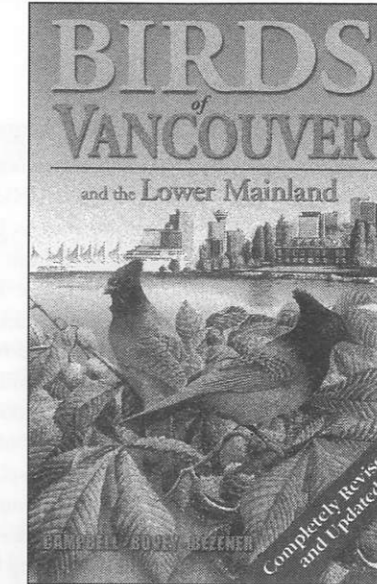
illustrate their usual habitat such as: Coast, Forest, River, Urban, and Wetland.

The index includes common and scientific bird names and there are two maps of bird watching locations in the Vancouver area, with a legend that is easy to understand and useful in locating the best viewing areas. This second edition is organized to assist the novice birder in identifying the species by family and physical groupings. A novice could quickly look up a black crow sized bird with a long carrot bill, red eye ring and yellow legs and feet.

A Checklist at the back of the book aids you in recording the birds that you have seen at your feeder, in the parks, or in the wilderness. Many of the species illustrated are also found in the Victoria area. Since the *Birder's Guide Vancouver Island* is out of print, this book would be a useful addition for a beginner birder. In addition there is a reference list of books and bird societies that you can join to further your knowledge of birding. Don't

forget to bring your binocular and this field guide.

*Birds of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland* is published by Lone Pine Publishing.



## Erratum

In the May-June issue of *The Victoria Naturalist* we wrongly credited a photograph by Michael Dyson to Marie O'Shaughnessy. Our apologies to Michael for the error and to Marie for her having to point out the error to us.

*The Editors*

  
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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days. (NOTE: meetings resume in September.) **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., 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.

### Saturday, July 13

#### *Hurricane Ridge*

**Leaders: Marilyn Lambert and Rick Schortinghuis**

This trip, a VNHS tradition, is timed to catch the peak of the *spring* alpine wildflowers on Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park. Bird from the ferry, and look for high elevation species in the mountains. There are facilities in the park, but a lunch and something to drink is suggested. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour before 6:00 a.m. (allow time to park) for the 6:10 sailing of the M.V. Coho. Ferry cost is \$25.00 (CDN) return. You should have a photo ID plus one other piece of ID for customs. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is about \$28.00 (CDN-please have cash). We'll return on the 5:15 p.m. sailing (90 minute crossing time). There is room for 21 participants plus the 2 leaders. These trips always fill, so reserve your spot early by calling Claudia at the HAT office at 995-2428. VNHS members will be given priority.

### Sunday, July 14

#### *Birding Witty's Lagoons*

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

### Saturday, July 20 and Sunday, July 21

#### *Victoria Butterfly Count*

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guide! **Jeff Gaskin** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 381-7248.

### Sunday, July 21

#### *Birding Mandarte and Sidney Islands*

Join **Bruce Whittington** on this boat trip to the large seabird-nesting colony that can be seen there. There is a slim chance of seeing one of the few Tufted Puffins that hang out on these waters. The boat drops us off at Sidney Island to take in the first southbound shorebirds. You can return on any scheduled Sidney Island Ferry sailing. Bring a lunch and something to drink. Meet at the ferry dock at the foot of Beacon Avenue in Sidney at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Cost is \$19.00 per person (includes the return ferry fare from Sidney Island). Space on the boat is limited, so please reserve your place by calling Claudia at the HAT office at 995-2428.

## AUGUST

### Sunday, August 4

#### *Hurricane Ridge*

This trip, a VNHS tradition, is timed to catch the *summer* alpine wildflowers on Hurricane Ridge in Washington's Olympic National Park. Bird from the ferry, and look for high elevation species in the mountains. There are facilities in the park, but a lunch and something to drink is suggested. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour before 6:00 a.m. (allow time to park) for the 6:10 sailing of the M.V. Coho. Ferry cost is \$25.00 (CDN) return; you should have a photo ID and one other piece of ID for customs. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the park is about \$28.00 (CDN-please have cash). We'll return on the 5:15 p.m. sailing (90 minute crossing time). There is room for 21 participants plus the 2 leaders. These trips always fill, so reserve your spot early by calling Claudia at the HAT office at 995-2428. *VNHS members will be given priority.*

### Sunday, August 11

#### *Ice Cream Sunday*

A fun filled afternoon at the Goldstream Provincial Park Visitor Centre to serve as the official launch of HAT's involvement in helping to keep the visitor centre open. Locally produced ice cream that comes in a fabulous selection of flavours will be available as part of this fundraising effort. This will be a family event so join us, beginning at 1:00 pm, and bring the kids! Call the HAT office (995-2428) or the visitor centre (478-9414) for more details.

### Saturday, August 17 and Sunday, August 18

#### *Victoria Butterfly Count*

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guide! **Jeff Gaskin** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 381-7248.

### Sunday, August 18

#### *Sea Otters, Puffins, and First Nations Museum*

**Leaders: Darren and Claudia Copley**

Join us for a field trip on the Olympic Peninsula to Cape Flattery and the Makah Cultural and Research Center. Cape Flattery is the most northern point in the continental United States and is one of the closest locations where you might see puffins or sea otters. Islands off the point are also home to thousands of seabirds

throughout the year. In 1970 tidal erosion uncovered an ancient whaling village at Ozette, parts of which had been covered by a mud slide hundreds of years ago. The subsequent artifacts that were found have now classified Ozette as one of the most significant archaeological discoveries ever made in North America! In 1979 the Makah Cultural and Research Center opened to the public in order to share this great find. Meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour before 6:00 a.m. (allow time to park) for the

6:10 sailing of the M.V. Coho. Ferry cost is \$25.00 (US) return; you should have a photo ID and one other piece of ID for customs. Cost of the charter bus and entry to the museum is about \$32.00 (CDN- this will vary with number of participants). We'll return on the 9:30 p.m. sailing (90 minute crossing time). There is room for 21 participants. Reserve your spot early by calling Claudia at the HAT office at 995-2428. Bring a lunch!

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Come and Be Part of a "Wild Garden Party"

The Victoria Flower and Garden Show hold an annual flower and garden competition each July at Royal Roads University in Victoria. For this year's show "The Wild Garden Party" presents a cutting-edge, richly productive landscape. It is an easily maintained organic home garden that uses little water. It welcomes songbirds, hummingbirds, ladybugs and butterflies — and you, your family and friends.

The Wild Garden Party represents a natural partnership of a variety of groups including: The Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre; Capital Regional District, Water Management Branch; City Green; The Native Plant Study Group of the Victoria Horticultural Society; The Native Plant Society of British

Columbia; Naturescape British Columbia; Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary; Lifecycles and the South Island Organic Producers Association.

Come and be part of our garden display. We would love to have your help with a wide range of volunteer tasks before, during and immediately after the show which runs from July 12-14, 2002. You don't have to be an expert or be affiliated with any of these groups to be involved. If you are even remotely curious and want to find out more about the garden please contact Linda at halcyon@telus.net or Susan at 361-3122.

We promise good company and much appreciation for any time you can volunteer.



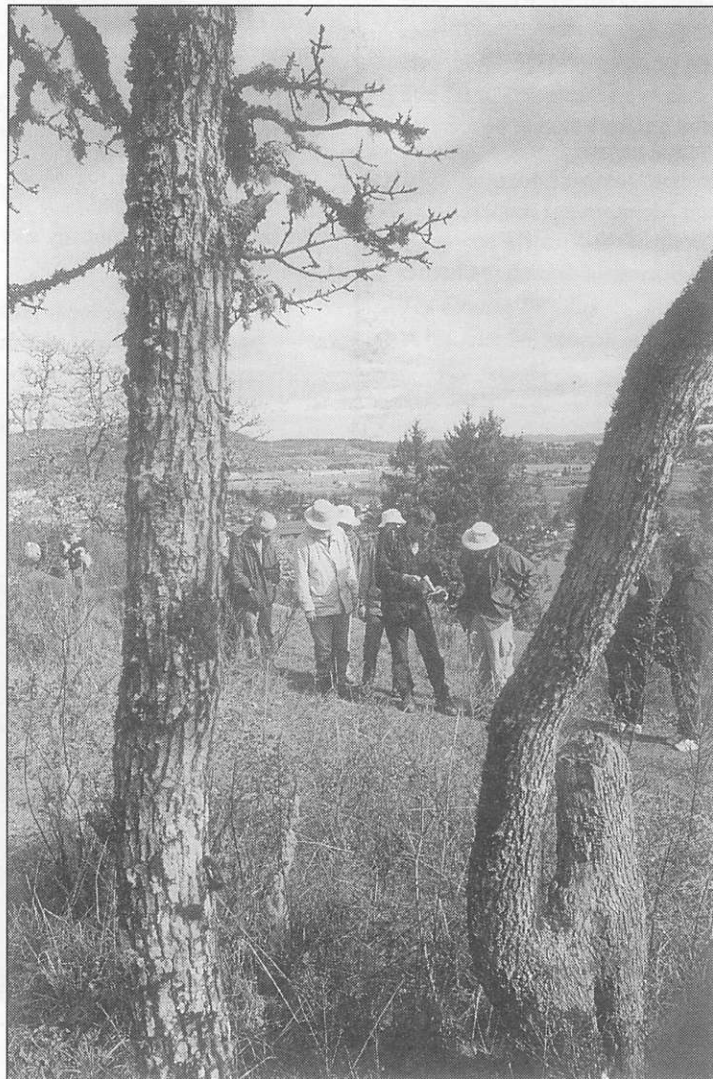
Grasslands at McIntyre Ranch. Photo: Ross Archibald

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VICTORIA BC V8N 2P3



Rick Shortinghuis consulting Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon on the Oak Haven field trip. *Photo:* Bruce Whittington.