

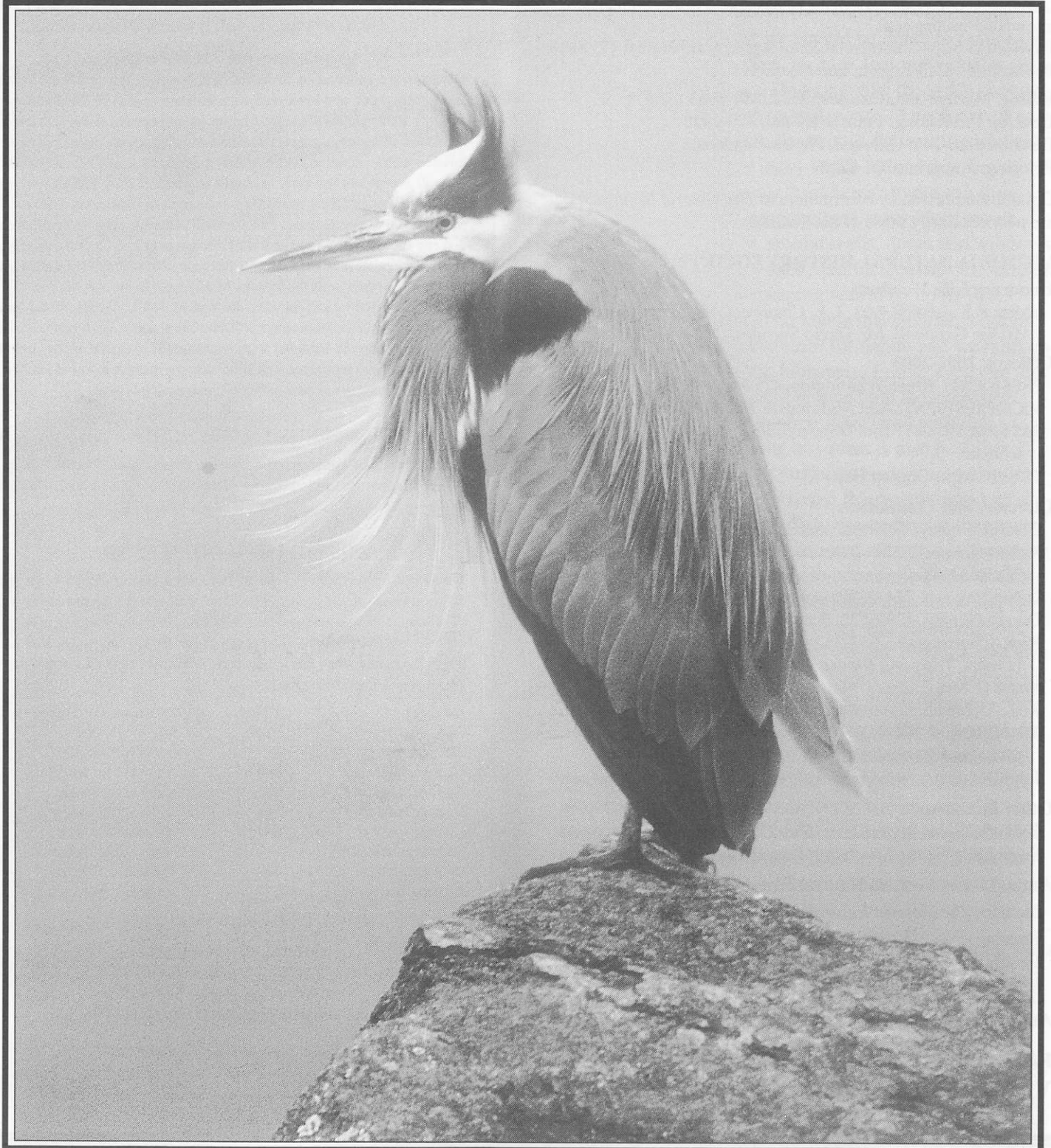


The Victoria NATURALIST

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
2003
VOL 59.4

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FEES ARE
DUE



Membership Renewal

Your membership in the Victoria Natural History Society for the previous year has been valued.

I hope that you have taken advantage of our many field trips and slide show presentations, at the University of Victoria and at Swan Lake Nature Centre.

To continue membership for another year please submit your renewal fees within the time period of this issue of the "Victoria Naturalist"



VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC, V8R 6N4

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ANNUAL DUES: Membership is valid for 12 months from date of first joining our Society.

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Guidelines for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, birding
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Thank you for your patronage.

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COVER PHOTO:

Great Blue Heron on a cold and
 windy day at Oak Bay marina
 by Marie O'Shaughnessy

We Took the Nature Challenge!

We recently heard a psychologist talking on the radio
 about the reasons that individuals do not get involved in
 serious situations. One of the three reasons he discussed
 was the common thought that "someone else" would take
 care of it.

It is easy in the face of the volume of conflicting
 information about what we should be doing to reduce the
 human footprint on nature, to think that individually we
 can have no real impact. However, like the small change
 that adds up in our pockets and purses, if each one of us
 took a few small actions, the sum of those actions would
 soon add up. There are many small actions that we can
 individually do to add our "two cents" to the solution.

For example, reducing the heat energy loss in our
 homes by sealing drafts around walls, doors and windows
 could reduce the energy used, and incidentally the amount
 of money we spend on keeping warm, by up to 10%.
 Choosing garden plants and lawns that flourish without
 chemical pesticides is healthier for nature and we humans
 who are also a part of the biosphere. Eating even one less
 meat portion a week would reduce both the excessive
 energy and water consumption associated with the
 production of meat. Eating less meat is also healthier.
 According to the Nature Challenge backgrounder, an
 Oxford University study showed that vegetarians had a
 24% reduction in mortality from heart disease than meat
 eaters. The Oxford study accounted for other factors such
 as smoking, exercise, and socio-economic class. Walking
 and cycling are cheaper and healthier than travelling by
 car, in addition to using less energy and producing less
 greenhouse gases. Buying local organic produce provides
 you with food that tastes better, is not likely to be contam-
 inated by chemical treatments, supports local producers
 (helping to guarantee food security), and uses less energy.

And finally, each one of us can become involved in
 spreading the word about the importance of protecting
 nature. A healthier environment for humans and the other
 creatures we love to observe as naturalists is not possible
 unless each one of us takes whatever small steps we can
 now. How, in 2003, are you going to add your "two
 cents?"

Marilyn and Ross

Note: To take the Nature Challenge and add to the numbers
 of people doing so, visit the following website (at the site
 you can also send a fax to Federal politicians challenging
 them to also take the Challenge): [http://www.davidsuzuki.org/
 WOL/Challenge/](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/WOL/Challenge/)

Hazards of Nesting in Tall Trees in Beacon Hill Park

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

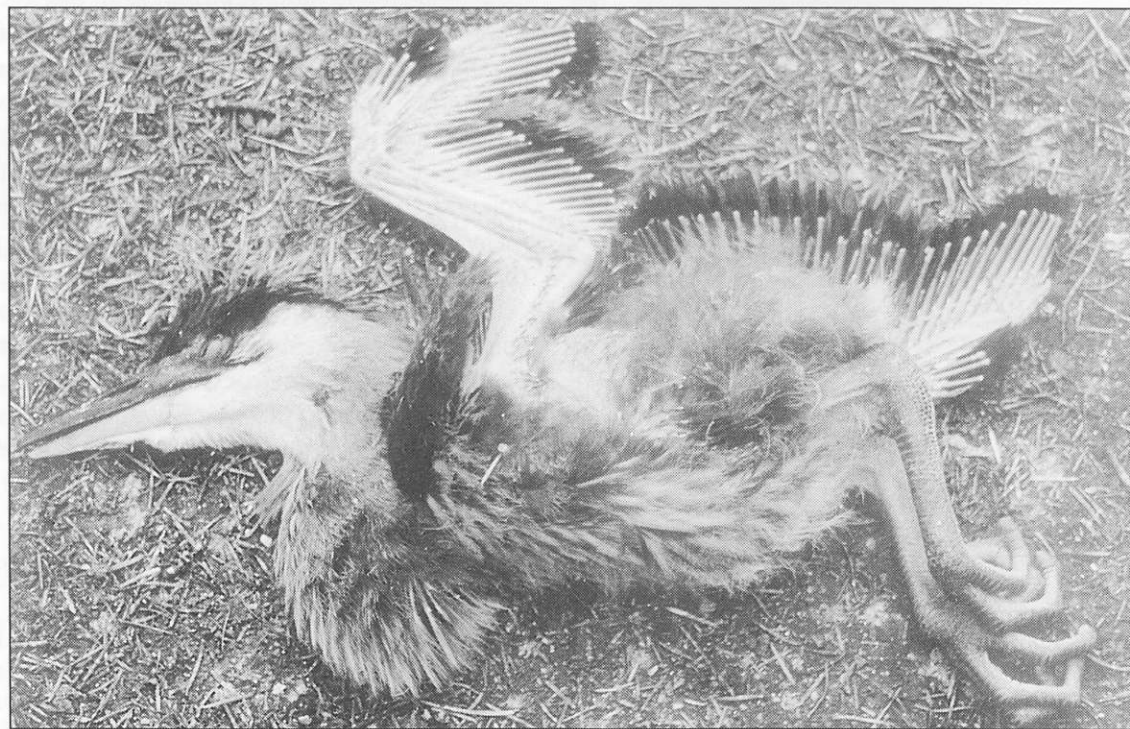
Beacon Hill Park is one of Victoria's beauty spots. Within walking distance of downtown, this lush and picturesque park invites not only visitors but local residents all year round. Those of us that live in this fair city know of the park's colorful and sweet smelling borders that direct one along shady walks either to small lakes or quiet benches where one can sit, relax, and view the scene. During the year as the seasons change, there is always something to marvel at.

In spring, wild flowers nod their tiny heads in the morning breeze as pink and white blossoms hang delicately from ornamental fruit trees. As the days lengthen, fragrant roses tantalize the senses in summer gardens, while annual blooms burst forth in a riot of color in their manicured beds. With fall replacing summer, the leaves of the Maple trees turn crimson, adding their special touch to the changing hues of autumn. When those clear, crisp days of winter arrive, a short walk to the top of the 'Hill' can be most rewarding for the view is filled with the majestic Olympic Mountains and the blue waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The Lakes within the park are a gathering place for over-wintering ducks where on lazy Sunday afternoons; families can watch and feed these feathered creatures. Even the ubiquitous

squirrel that runs freely looks for handouts from human friends. This beautiful Park can provide a setting of tranquility to those who spend just a little time seeking peace.

However, peace does not always reign supreme in Beacon Hill Park as the park is home to several species of bird that nest there each spring. A host of small passerines find cover and protection for their nestlings within bushes and tree cavities. Ravens, Cooper's Hawks, Great Blue Herons and the top predator, the Bald Eagle choose also to nest and rear their young in this prize piece of real estate. Their nests occupy the canopy of several tall trees scattered around the park. The existence of these bigger birds creates, during the spring and early summer months, a drama that few witness, but only hear as the cries of terrorized young birds fill the air.

The 'heron' colony at the Dallas Road section of the park, close to Good Acre Lake, is where much culling by the Eagles occurs. Over the past several years, a number of adult Herons have built their platform, stick nests in coniferous trees attracting the Park's nesting pair of Eagles to relocate their nest from the band-shell site. Their relatively huge nest sits high in a Cottonwood tree approximately 200 meters down from the colony. There they have a clear view of those



Young Great Blue Heron fallen from the nest in Beacon Hill Park. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

noisy, young, defenceless Herons. The colonial nesting of the 'Heronry' with the abundant heron chicks in each nest becomes a drawing card for 'dinner on the fly' as the Eagles swoop in. They too must feed their young. Nature does have her unpleasant side.

Earlier this year I was saddened to find a flightless immature Heron lying flat out upon the ground beneath its nest tree. It was certainly dead as I took its picture for the record! Whether it had been pushed out by an older and stronger sibling, or had moved too close to the edge of the nest in terror as the predator of the sky flew in, one can only speculate. Life for a young Heron has certainly many hazards. If death does not take it in the nest, the Heron then has to learn to fish once it has mastered the leap/flight to the ground from its early beginnings high in the trees. Fishing is a learned behaviour and the young Heron's survival depends on it. In the post-fledging period, one can see large numbers of young learning to fish with mature Herons feeding in shallow waters especially at Esquimalt Lagoon, Sydney Spit Lagoon and the Tsawwassen Ferry terminal tidal flats.

How long the drama in the tree tops in Beacon Hill Park will go on remains to be seen for the small 'Heronry' at Government House vacated their lovely surroundings a number of years ago due to predation by Eagles. Surely the Herons of the Park are not that stupid that they will continue to frequent this site. Perhaps they will find a new location where they can tend to the challenges of nesting and rearing

young without threats from above. It is well documented that Ravens, Raccoons and Gulls prey upon Herons.

The Great Blue Heron is one of my favorite birds. Its tall elegant posture and blue/grey coloration with selective black, white and rust markings give it a somewhat regal appearance. Averaging a height of four feet and wingspan of seven feet, its graceful movements and slow flight give it a distinct silhouette. The ample plumes of spring that adorn this graceful wader advertise its appeal for any mate. Its lonely stance epitomizes patience, self-sufficiency, stealth and aloofness. And what of its call...you have all heard it! The guttural sound that is uttered as it flies off, if anything or anyone dares to interrupt its concentration whilst fishing, can spook one on a quiet evening walk. This sound seems to resonate from a distant past sending shivers through me. It is as though it still retains the sound, as I imagine, of a Pterosaurs, its ancestral connection from the Jurassic period of evolution.

Hopefully the Great Blue Heron will continue to do well here on the coast and grace our shoreline with its familiar form standing motionless upon a bed of bull-kelp or rocky outcrop. In the inclement weather, it can also be observed hunkered down as it folds its long neck within its grey cloak. On my daily walk I will continue to stop and admire the Heron's slow, graceful wade as it waits patiently for its unsuspecting dinner-to-be. Life on the coast is always interesting when one stops to listen and look at Nature.

Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands All Inclusive Naturalist Tour Packages May 2003

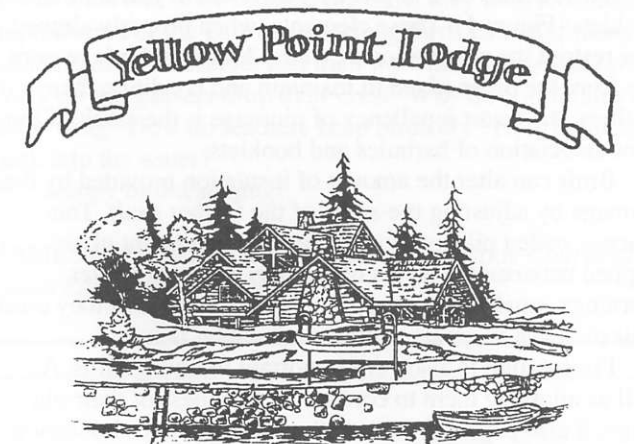
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Watching Diving Birds — The Pull of Buoyancy

By James Clowater

Think of birds, and you think of flight. Birds have evolved to be at home in the air and to soar the sky. Some birds, however, have returned to the sea to exploit the abundance of prey beneath the waves. Think of birds and you also think of light feathers and light bones; just the things that make it difficult to dive beneath the waves.

Try to hold a balloon under water and you will have some idea of the work a bird must do to stay submerged. As much as 95% of the work performed by the hind limbs of some diving ducks is required to resist the pull of buoyancy. Diving birds have to deal with two major sources of buoyancy. The first is the air trapped in their plumage and the second is the air stored in the air sacs of their respiratory system. Air cavities create huge buoyant forces and make it harder for diving birds to stay submerged. Oxygen, however, is essential for a bird's metabolism and trapped air in plumage provides insulation against the cold water. How then, do diving birds find a balance between these opposing constraints? How can they take the air they need while reducing buoyancy?

The feathers of diving birds perform the same function as the feathers of other birds. They provide insulation, repel wind and water, allow flight, and provide differences in colour and form. Feathers insulate by trapping air within a layered structure held in place by a system of barbules and hooklets (Figure 1). These elements, when properly aligned, also restrict the penetration of water. Although birds require oils from the preen gland to maintain and condition their feathers, the water repellency of plumage is the result of the tight association of barbules and hooklets.

Birds can alter the amount of insulation provided by their plumage by adjusting the angle of the feather shaft. This process, called piloerection, increases the amount of air trapped between the layers of feathers. On cold winter mornings, small birds can look almost spherical as they erect their plumage to create a thicker insulation layer.

Piloerection is also very important to diving birds. As well as allowing them to control the thickness of their plumage, it also provides them with a way to reduce buoyancy. Diving birds adjust their buoyancy by compressing their plumage before they dive.

It is common to see cormorants and loons adjust their buoyancy, sometimes sinking so that their backs hardly show above the surface, but other species of diving birds do this as well. By using digital video, I have recorded sequences showing that many other diving birds compress their feathers and adjust their buoyancy before diving. Hooded Mergansers not only compress their crest feathers, but they also compress their body plumage and settle deeper into the water (Figure 2 & 3). At Swan Lake, careful observation of Pied-billed grebes will show the same behaviour.

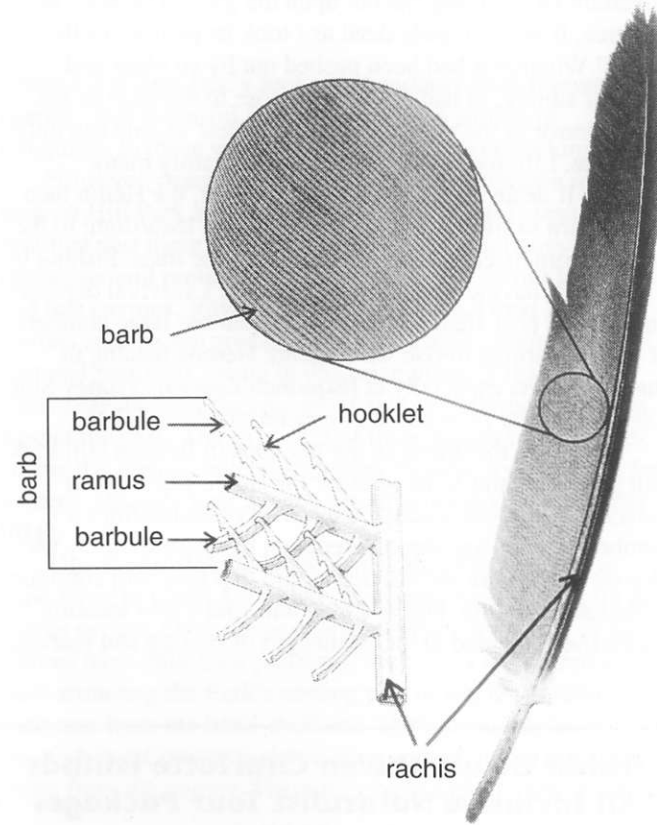


Figure 1. Feather vanes consist of parallel rows of barbs that can be pulled apart and re-zipped together again due to their interlocking system of barbules with hooklets. Each barb consists of a ramus (shaft) and barbules extending to each side. The barbules are of two types, on one side are proximal barbules that have an edge that is curved into a flange, and the other are distal barbules where the under surface forms long hooked appendages or hooklets. Hooklets catch onto the flange of adjacent barbules (redrawn in part from Burton, 1990).

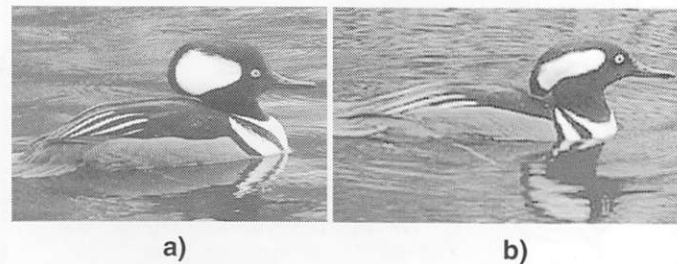


Figure 2. A Hooded Merganser videotaped at Swan Lake, a) at rest and b) with feathers compressed before diving.

“...Unnoticed, the magic power of anything is gone...” (Al Purdy, 1972)

Cormorants and Anhingas have gone one step further than most diving birds. They have specially adapted wettable plumage that allows water to penetrate, thus reducing air-induced buoyancy. We often see cormorants perched with wings spread while drying their plumage. It was once thought that the wettable plumage was due to a lack of oil from the preen gland, however, it is now known to result from a structural characteristic of the feathers rather than a lack of oil.

Cormorant and Anhinga wing and body feathers are unique because their structure differs from other birds. In these feathers, some of the barbules are lacking hooklets so they are not as tightly bound to adjacent barbules. This structural feature is what allows water to penetrate the plumage. Near the base of the feathers, next to the body, the hooklets are again present and create a water resistant layer of insulation. Cormorants and Anhingas benefit by having wettable plumage that reduces buoyancy while diving, but they suffer the cost of needing to dry their feathers afterwards.

The second major source of buoyancy results from a birds' need to carry oxygen to power metabolism. Birds have an efficient respiratory system that includes lungs and 7 to 9 air sacs, some extending into hollow chambers in their bones. These air sacs, if filled to capacity, have the potential of creating large buoyant forces. They cannot dive without oxygen, but they need to mitigate the effect of buoyancy caused by storing oxygen in air spaces.

To solve this problem, diving birds store oxygen within the blood, bound to the haemoglobin molecule, and also within the muscle cells, bound to the myoglobin molecule. Before diving, birds can hyperventilate to saturate their blood and tissues with oxygen and then exhale to reduce the volume of the air sacs. Alcids often display a “pre-dive posture” in which they hunch forward and sit for a moment with their bills open before they dive (Figure 4). It is thought

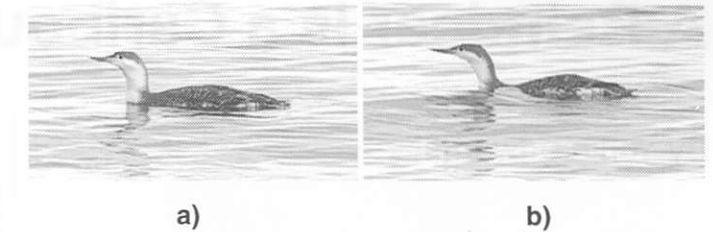


Figure 3. A Red-throated Loon at Island View Beach showing difference in buoyancy between the birds a) at rest and b) with feathers compressed before a dive.



Figure 4. The pre-dive-posture of a Common Murre in winter plumage. Redrawn from a video sequence taken off Victoria waterfront.

that these birds are hyperventilating to load oxygen stores and then exhaling to reduce air sac volume before diving. When they plunge below the surface, these birds have reduced their air sac volume and compressed their plumage in an effort to reduce buoyancy, while maintaining optimal oxygen stores and sufficient insulation from the cold water.

Watching birds is an enjoyable pastime well rewarded with sights of beautiful or rare species. For those interested in behaviour, birds can provide glimpses of fascinating behaviours that offer insights into how they live, feed, and reproduce. For the curious, watching birds can offer many challenges. We observe, and then we wonder why and how. Why do mergansers drop their crest? Why do cormorants dry their wing? How do feathers keep birds dry? How do loons sink into the water?

Happy bird watching!

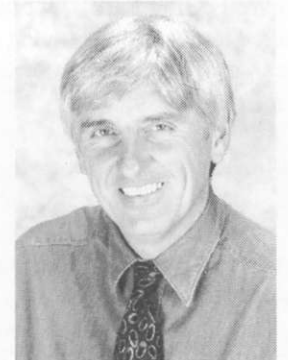
JAMES CLOWATER teaches the *Marine Birds Course* at *Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary*.



PEACE ON EARTH

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A Reindeer Is a Caribou

By Yorke Edwards

Santa Claus must have collected his reindeer from northern Europe. The same species of deer living in North America is called a caribou. Long ago, Eurasia and North America were combined as one continental landmass, eventually becoming separated into two large landmasses. After the separation, those living on the Eurasian continent became known as reindeer; those on the North American continent were called caribou. Not many Canadians have seen wild caribou, but they have lived with this animal — the fine caribou head is found on the reverse of older quarters. Seeing the real thing, however, is much more exciting.

Early one summer I climbed the forests to the high rock and alpine meadows of Battle Mountain, now part of Wells Gray Park. Early the next morning, I rolled out of my canvas cocoon from under a dwarf spruce tree, surprising a coyote nearby. It quickly darted away. Then I saw in the distance a group of caribou. I slowly moved toward them, but they were soon away on the run; fortunately in the direction we were to go after our standup breakfast.

My friend Ralph Ritcey led the way toward Murtle Lake. We saw the caribou again, but they soon ran out of sight over the rough ground. We were in full view as there were no trees to hide us. The group had been on a patch of snow, most of them standing, and when we came to the edge of the slope we saw one caribou lying on its belly on the snow, its rear toward us, its nose into the snow. It soon became aware of us and was up and away in panic.

Where the caribou had been lying, I caught sight of a hole in the snow. On close examination, I noticed that the one downward hole became two smaller, icy holes; all together at least a foot deep. The holes narrowed downward. For years I wondered why the sleeping caribou had made those two holes. It must have been breathing in very cold air.

The next time I saw caribou was again above timberline, this time near Wells Gray Peak in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park, south of Ootsa Lake. (Yes, Wells Gray Peak is far away from Wells Gray Park). Our horses, and perhaps we too, attracted a few curious young caribou that wandered very close to us. Horses and people seemed to be something new and interesting to them.

A mile or two ahead, we saw quite a show high up a large and steep snow covered slope. Twenty or thirty caribou were standing scattered on the slope, most of them still and facing downward. Periodically one would buck and dance down the slope, head swinging side to side. Such exuberance. Or was it something else?

Years later the mystery was solved as I was reading a book about caribou. Caribou are harassed in the summer by nostril flies (*Cephenemyia trompe*), a bee-like fly that



Photo: Yorke Edwards

deposits its eggs inside caribou nostrils. The eggs develop into nasty larvae. The caribou high on the slope were there for the cold air that probably slowed down insect activities. The insects that did get into an animal's nose made it run zigzag down the slope, throwing its head from side to side, trying to remove the larval flies from their noses.

But what about those two holes in the snow on Battle Mountain? The caribou had made them while keeping its nose hidden, free from the annoying nose flies.

In the southern half of British Columbia caribou are disappearing. Forest logging is erasing lowland forests the caribou need for winter range. Above the forests in high country, they are harassed by snowmobiles in the months when their food supply is scarce. The last time I saw caribou, it was truly a sorry sight. I was driving east on the Crownsnest Highway and just east of Yahk had reached a very long, steep up slope. At the top we were in a large patch of wild country that straddles the Canada-United States boundary. On top, there were many parked cars north of the road, and on the south side a large gravel pit with a large, ugly bulldozer parked in it. For an instant, I wondered, "Were there caribou in that pit?" An unbelievable thought. But I drove back, and found that there were indeed caribou.

These three caribou were living near the southern extreme of their range in North America, which extends from southern Canada south into the northwest corner of Montana near the northeastern corner of Idaho. The caribou I saw near Yahk were truly a sorry sight, surrounded by people, pavement, and speeding cars, in a big ugly gravel pit containing an even uglier machine. They were living too far south to remain healthy. I wonder if caribou still live in that area.

A Haida Gwaii Journal

By George Baker

In the spring of 2002, my wife and I joined a Vancouver Natural History Society aboard the *Island Roamer* on a trip to South Moresby led by Nanaimo Naturalist Bill Merilees. This was the third trip we had taken with this popular leader. The Vancouver.N.H.S chartered the *Island Roamer*.

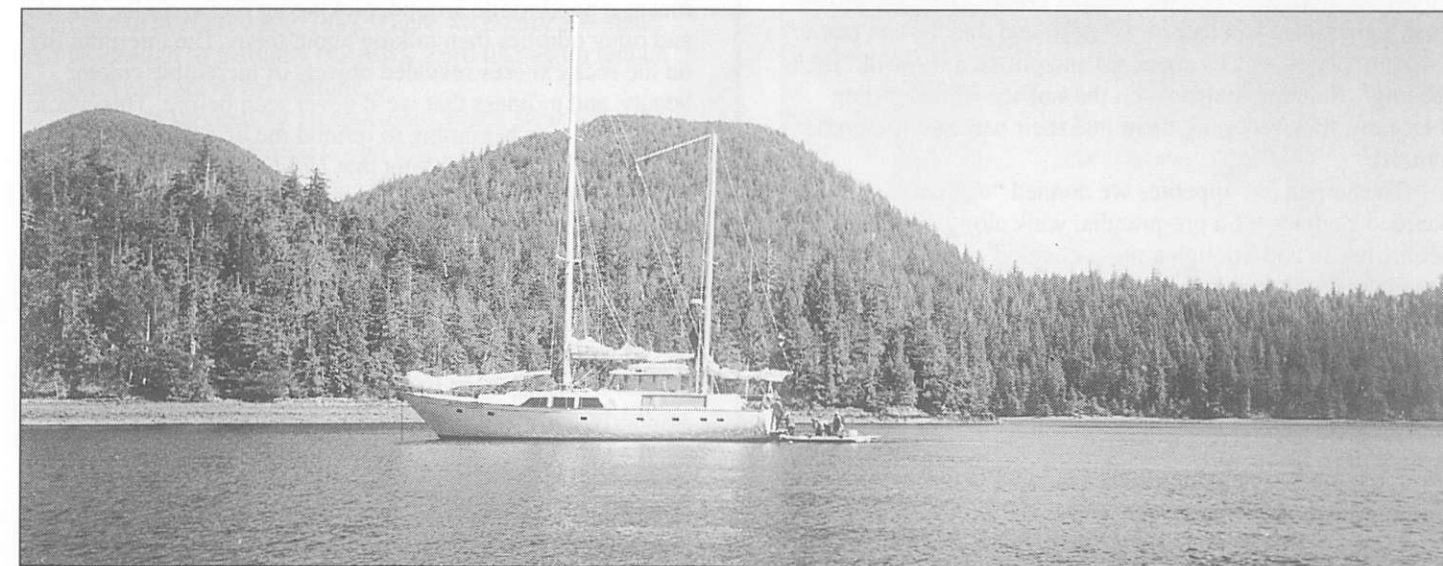
An edited version of my journal tells the story of our adventure.

Saturday, April 27, 2002

Joined leader Bill Merilees and 14 fellow adventurers at Vancouver Airport: easy to spot them: almost all were sporting Gortex outerwear and Tilley hats; laden down with heavy duffle bags, rubber boots and sleeping bags.

The two-hour Tango flight to Sandspit turned into a magic carpet ride. Thanks to brilliant sunshine, our captain descended to about 1,000', and then hugged the eastern coast of South Moresby from its tip at Cape St. James to Sandspit. With maps on our laps we enjoyed sneak previews of the islands, narrows, and coves we would be exploring in the days to come. Since the weather we were experiencing is relatively rare on the North Coast, even our normally blasé captain, waxed rhapsodic as he pointed out landmarks.

Walking from our hotel to dinner at the Sandspit Golf Club we admired a huge flock of Brant Geese, feeding on eelgrass at low tide ... probably recovering from the Brant Festival in Courtenay. Since most of us on this trip had been on separate Graham Island trips with Bill Merilees the year before, we all bonded like "Crazy Glue."



Island Roamer. Photos: George Baker

Our itinerary this year was to sail through *Gwaii Haanas*. Much of this area was set aside in 1987 as the *Gwaii Haanas* National Park Reserve and *Haida* Heritage Site.

Sunday, April 28

We woke to brilliant sunshine. In small groups we shuttled down by floatplane to our awaiting *Island Roamer*, a 70' ketch, broad beamed and beautiful, operated by Bluewater Adventures of Vancouver. Our Beaver aircraft, I discovered, was built in the mid forties, making it almost as old as I am! Showering questions on Werner our pilot, we eagle-eyed our way south; the single engine roaring, the cabin shaking and our eyes almost popping out of their sockets. The joy of being an adult is now being able to be shamelessly childish about such things.

Skimming closely over the trees we splashed gently onto Poole Inlet where *Island Roamer* lay anchored, awaiting us. We unloaded our gear and ourselves into two Zodiacs and motored over to our vessel. Once aboard we explored our new home, which consisted of eight compact, yet comfortable cabins, a roomy lounge amidships, three heads, complete with sinks and showers, and topsides, a covered wheelhouse/observation area where we would be spending a lot of time. Culinary miracles appeared at regular intervals from a small galley.

Our crew: South African-born Skipper Neil Shearer, First Mate and Naturalist Ian Jones from Vancouver and Third Mate and Cook Kate Riddell from Nelson. Following life jacket drill, and head pumping instructions (15 time with



Leader, Bill Merilees describes the intertidal life picked up on a "sticky beak."

the lid down), we weighed anchor and motored east towards infamous Hecate Strait, before heading south to our first night's anchorage at *Kunghit* Island. For two hours we wallowed our way through heavy swells. Not much fun, but no lunches were lost, despite Hecate Strait living up to its reputation as one of the roughest bodies of water off the North Coast, the result of its extreme shallowness. We soon forgot our troubles when the skipper cried "Thar' she blows". I can't guarantee whether he actually said that, but no matter. Two humpback whales appeared and put on a show of "flick-feeding", flapping their fins on the surface while herding their prey, then scooping them into their baleen-equipped mouths.

To sharpen our appetites we donned "wellies" and boarded Zodiacs for a pre-prandial walk along a nearby pebble beach and through a moss-covered cedar forest. We soon realized then that the seventeen of us were the only human creatures around these parts. It was still early in the season. With the exception of a couple of fish boats we were not to see a soul for the next five days. How often can one claim that in this day and age?

Our first dinner was a sumptuous affair. We had heard about the quality of food aboard the *Island Roamer*, and it certainly lived up to its billing, meal after delicious meal. After dinner we gathered in the lounge for a briefing on the next day's events and a general "Hello my name is, and this is what I hope to enjoy on this trip". Not a bad first day.

Monday, April 29

We had a good night, albeit a chilly one even with sleeping bags and blankets. After breakfast we all pitched in with washing up. Then proceeded to the Gordon Islands arriving there at a zero tide. The tide range in this area is 24 feet.

Gordon Islands was the first of many "sticky beaks", a term our leader Bill Merilees learned in Australia, which means a good rootle around, picking up rocks, shells, sea life and other oddities then talking about them. The intertidal life on the rocky shores revealed objects of incredible colour, beauty, and ugliness that we'd never seen before. This whole experience was beginning to remind me of a Galapagos trip in 1997. It is not for nothing that *Haida Gwaii* is known as "Canada's Galapagos." We spent our day, in and out of small boats, and on and off small islands, each with something new to offer. The only difference between *Haida Gwaii* and the Galapagos being, no swimming in these waters and Canadian dollars at par!

Our next port of call was *Sgaang Gwaii* (Anthony Island) a Unesco World Heritage Site that sits at the southerly, and Pacific side of South Moresby. It's home to what's left of *Nan Sdins* (Ninstints), a Haida Village of 500 which, 100 years or so ago, succumbed to smallpox which wiped out all its residents. Most of the mortuary poles, ceremonial, entrance poles and longhouses, which are not displayed now in museums around the world, are today covered in thick moss and returning to their primordial past.

Some of them are nursery logs for future giants. Ninstints is an eerie place, ghosts are everywhere, we creep about talking in hushed voices as in a cathedral. A few of the poles are propped up. Even among the *Haida* there is debate about this, should one preserve these tangible symbols of a people or let them do what comes naturally: return to nature? The jury remains out on this one.

The day was not over yet. Back on the *Island Roamer* we headed east towards Hecate Strait before turning north for Ikeda Cove. Calm seas now Back in whale territory, all hands were on deck, eyes glued to binoculars. I spotted him first; he was close. Quickly Neil killed the motor. A forty-foot Humpback in an inquisitive mood swam over; we sat drifting while our new friend spent the next hour entertaining us. He circled closely, often corkscrewing to give us the "eye"; flipping his flukes; waving his long side fins; venting right by us, covering us in mist and whale breath (ugh) and passing directly under us; some swore he scratched his back along the keel. He appeared to be enjoying himself.

After the whale grew bored and left, dinner was announced. Just as well, we were hungry and a bank of fog had just rolled in. Before we could start, however, a roar from the group topside: more whales! What could we do but take our plate upstairs to see what all the fuss was about. The fuss this time was six more humpbacks in a feeding frenzy around the boat, a noisy, smelly, fluke-flapping performance.

Before closing this day, I must add that today we also saw tufted puffins, a rocky island crowded with barking Steller Sealions, a yellow billed loon and to top it off, against the setting sun, a huge V of white fronted geese migrating North.

Following our nightly ritual of debriefing the day and reviewing tomorrow's plans, Ian read us our bedtime story: one of Bill Reid's bloodcurdling and raunchy "Legends of the Raven".

Tuesday, April 30

We departed Ikeda Cove into the chop of Hecate Strait for the short run to sheltered Bag Inlet. There we boarded Zodiacs and proceeded to Burnaby Narrows. Zero tide again had us frequently scraping the bottom.

We were ignored by an enormous Black Bear foraging on the beach. These *Haida Gwaii* bears are long-limbed and huge, a local sub-species. They use their awesome strength to up-end large beach boulders looking for tasty morsels.

We hung glass bottomed-containers over the side through which we admired a vibrant marine ecosystem; well fed by the strong tidal action in the narrows. We observed an encyclopedia of sea life: starfish, shellfish, bat stars, limpets, sea urchins and red rock crabs; a glorious "sticky beak". A *Haida* saying came to mind: "When the tide is out, the table is set".

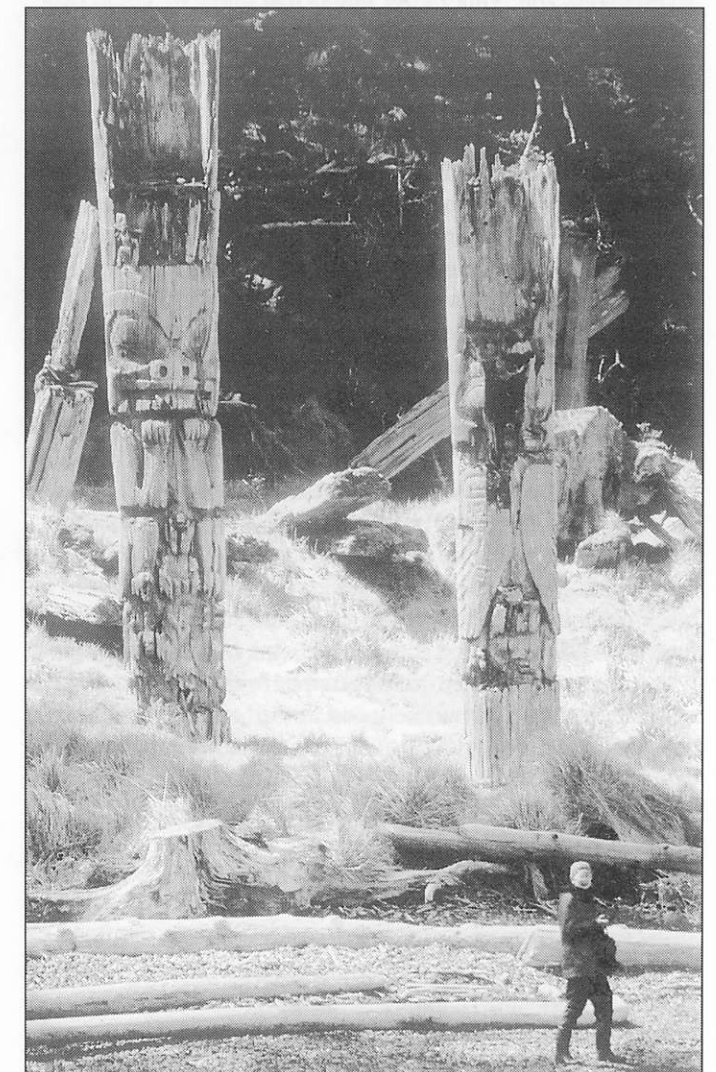
We stretched our legs on a nearby island, where Ian led us to one of his earlier discoveries: a superb example of a "culturally modified tree." It was a towering red cedar, bearing a 4 x 4' test bore hole to its centre. The *Haida* used such boreholes to test trees for soundness before cutting them

down for use as totems or canoes. This scar was 100 years old, the tree still very much alive. In some cases whole beams or planks had been cut out of a living tree with no ill-effect.

Back on the *Island Roamer*, we hoisted sails for the first time. Unfortunately it only lasted an hour. The winds were either too strong or not strong enough to make sailing practical and worthwhile. No one minded really. We motored carefully through a very narrow gap to "No Name Lagoon" where we anchored for the night; the surface was mirror-smooth. There was nary a wave to bobble the boat that night.

Wednesday, May 1

Five of us took a pre-breakfast paddle in the kayaks; ideal conditions, another sunny day. Short crossing to our next destination: *Gandla K'in*, an 8-hectare island, home to several of hot springs. Pool temperatures range from 52°C to 76°C. We packed towels and bathing suits and boarded our trusty Zodiacs. Parks Canada built the facility, consisting of change rooms, hot showers (piped in from the springs) and a self-composting toilet. A Haida "Watchman", who was away that day, usually ran the facility. Yet again we had the whole place



Mortuary poles at *Ninstints*

to ourselves. Normally one would radio ahead to get in line. We soaked our cares away, enjoying in the view of *Island Roamer* at anchor in the bay; behind her the snow capped peaks of the Queen Charlotte Mountains glinting in the noon sun.

Sailing north we encountered six bald eagles fishing: swooping down, talons stretched out, lancing their dinner, before winging home. A veritable "Battle of Britain" — eagle style. We were soon joined by a happy herd of white-sided dolphins weaving and leaping through our bow waves.

Lectures that evening were on meteorology from the skipper, and intertidal zonation from Bill. An added note, *Island Roamer* is equipped with the largest floating library of natural and native history on the West Coast, most of the books autographed!

The weather forecast in the evening called for gale-force winds from the northwest. Not a problem for us, as we were on the lee of the archipelago. But lying in our bunks that night we could hear the wind whistling through the higher trees and the rigging.

Thursday, May 2

Our first port of call this morning was *T'anu*. Many hundred *Haida* made this spot their home before being wiped out by smallpox. In some respects this site is more moving than Ninstints, because absolutely nothing remains standing here. Everything now lies on the ground; poles beneath an eiderdown of moss, former longhouses merely green cavities. Beds of pebbles cover mass graves. Nearby stands a shining new marble memorial stone to the late carver, artist and author Bill Reid. His *Haida* name, *Iljuwas Yalth-Sgwansang* appears on the stone. Since his mother came from *T'anu* he asked that his ashes be scattered here. That night I re-read Emily Carr's account of this island in *Klee Wick*.

The next village we visited was called *K'una* (Skedans). As we approached this deserted *Haida* village, Ian explained how we should behave should we encounter one of the many black bears living there: stay in groups no smaller than three or four, look large, yell and if that fails, bonk him on the nose with a stick. Our leaders were equipped with bear spray. We armed ourselves appropriately and tiptoed around the remains of the village, talking loudly. One group did encounter a bear in bouncy retreat. Fresh looking bear scat kept our adrenaline at a rolling boil. Some totems and corner house beams still remained standing, albeit covered in thick moss.

We anchored at *Cumshewa* Inlet for the night. After dinner we grouped in the saloon for our farewell debriefing, an *Island Roamer* tradition. A "talking eagle feather" was passed around. When in our hands, each of us tried to put into words what the last five days had meant to us. As you can imagine it was heart-felt and "lump-in-throatish" but never maudlin; words such as "magical" and "unforgettable" cropped up frequently.



Ninstints corner beams.

Shortly afterwards, our skipper called us up onto the aft deck. Silently he pointed up to a brilliant canopy of stars hanging over our heads. He then swished around a long pole in the water stirring up underwater fireworks created by phosphorescence. Somewhat Hollywood perhaps, but we were in the mood to be wowed.

Friday, May 3

Our last port of call was Moresby Camp. We bid fond farewells to the crew, many hugs and thank yous followed by a ride on a rickety bus to the ferry to Queen Charlotte City for our final night. Although the ground under our feet still rocked and rolled, the seemingly king-sized washrooms and roomy beds were welcomed. The farewell dinner at a local restaurant was not up to Kate's standards; we would have to find a four star establishment to equal that.

Saturday, May 4

We breakfasted at Margaret's Restaurant, (Pierre Trudeau had eaten here). Before boarding the ferry back to Sandspit for our flight home, some of us walked to Skidegate to revisit a Bill Reid Totem and to see the newly raised totems outside the *Haida* Museum.

Looking back at the experience, we all agreed that our *Haida Gwaii* trip will be hard to duplicate — anywhere in the world: stunning scenery, obliging wildlife, convivial mates, glorious weather, fascinating new experiences ...and all this without leaving British Columbia

Normally the "Roamer" sails an extended version of our trip throughout the summer months with cruises around the Gulf Islands and Northern Vancouver Island region during the shoulder period. For further information on *Island Roamer* check their web page at www.bluewateradventures.ca or contact the Vancouver N.H.S.

Trials of a Single Parent Swallow

By Cam Finlay

Bluebirds nesting in the Greater Victoria region had fallen in number over the years. Harold Pollock, determined to bring them back, made several hundred bird-nesting boxes which were placed at many sites in the region including Salt Spring Island where the last pair was known to have nested. Unfortunately the effort failed, and now no Bluebirds nest here. Because Joy and I had been involved in Bluebird Trails in Edmonton (Joy established the first one in Alberta), Harold phoned to ask if we could use a few boxes, the last of his supply. I mounted them on tops of the deer proof fence around our garden. Each year we have at least one nest of Violet Green swallows in the boxes. This year two nests of chickadees also fledged from the boxes.

Since our property is set deep in the woods, the swallows come to these boxes after most of the others have found nest sites. This year was no exception. In mid May, I noted an adult Violet Green male in all his blue green splendor circling the birdhouses. A brownish bird, a one year old female, accompanied him. I watched them interact and saw the female bring a couple of pieces of dried grass into a box. No further activity was noted and I assumed they had left for a better site. I was wrong. About two weeks later I heard the soft chirping of baby birds. Shortly thereafter the brownish yearling female shot out of one of these boxes. No male was around to help. For the next three weeks this mother worked from first light to darkness bringing food. After several days a head appeared at the entrance and the begging calls became louder. A few days later, a second head tried to peak out. A couple of days after that a third head appeared in the background. A few more days and then the biggest head was gone, presumably fledged. Then, a day later, the second head disappeared, presumably also fledging.

The female bird continued her many trips and then on July 4, 2002, late in the afternoon I spotted a nestling on the ground, and no sound from the nest box. Since swallows will not feed nestlings on the ground, I picked it up, placing it in a nearby bush. After a few minutes the young bird flew weakly across the road, slammed into the neighbors' wire gate and grasped onto a cross wire just above the ground. I felt that this too would not do. I again picked it up and tossed it towards another bush where again it slowly tumbled to the ground through the dense foliage. Still no sign of mother swallow.

Since two or three swallows regularly hawked insects above a pond at the end of our cul-de-sac, I moved the fledgling to bushes at this pond. When I got there, cheeping

of another fledgling came from a young bird perched on the hydro line overhead. I carefully placed the smaller bird on a park sign near the overhead cheeping bird. Both birds then called and called. I watched at least three adult swallows hawk insects over the pond. Every once in awhile one of them would whiz by the upper fledgling on the wire. Suddenly the upper fledgling took off with an adult in hot pursuit. The adult appeared to be pushing the young bird down at times, and then upward at other times. It appeared to be trying to assist the fledgling in some way. Purple martin adults behave similarly when a newly fledged nestling leaves a box and tries to reach a perch in a nearby tree. Peering by the adult continued whenever the fledgling left various perches to fly around. Meanwhile the smaller fledgling just sat on the sign and chirped, not receiving any interest from an adult.

After the larger fledgling had made at least four or five flights, each time harassed by an adult, there was a swish as a large hawk zoomed by to pick this young bird out of the air and carry it away to the northwest. As the hawk attacked, the adult swallow pulled up and gave the danger call. Below, the smaller fledgling became silent. I was not certain, but thought the predator was an adult Cooper's hawk as there is at least one Cooper's hawk nest to the southeast of us and possibly another to the northwest of our property. About 10 metres away a red squirrel sounded an alarm call immediately after the attack.

I returned to the house to tell Joy about my experience. Almost immediately, something made me go back to the smaller fledgling. Sure enough, it was back on the ground. I picked it up, placing it again on the sign and continued on my exercise walk down and around the bend. Coming back 10 minutes later the young bird was again on the ground. As I came close, an adult swallow swooped down. The fledgling opened its mouth to be fed, but the adult swept on by. I placed the fledgling back on top of the sign where it cheeped incessantly. Sure enough, along came an adult and fed it a mouthful of insects. I thought that now the other young had become hawk food. Maybe the mother would bring this one on for the next couple of days so that it would fly much better. As I stood watching about 10 metres away, there was another swoosh as again a large hawk, this time for sure a female Cooper's, swept in, did a right angle turn and plucked the fledgling off its perch to then return to the northwest.

After spending nearly two months to raise her brood as a single parent, this yearling swallow was left with no more than the oldest fledgling, if it had survived.

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that the Society has learned of the recent passing of Mary Richmond, a Past President of the Society.

Richmond earned a nursing degree at McGill and an MA at Columbia University. In the 1950s, she was director of nursing education at Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital where she initiated programs in tuberculosis, public health and psychiatric nursing. She later taught at McGill and, as director of nursing at Vancouver General Hospital, was a moving force on the 1967 committee that recommended that the training of nurses be part of the university system.

She returned to Victoria in 1974 as director of education resources at Royal Jubilee and joined UVic's new School of Nursing, first as an adjunct professor and, later, as acting director in 1979-80. UVic conferred her with an honorary degree in 1991.

Welcome to New Members

Michael Davis
Nicholas Road, Saanichton
Birds, gardening, hiking

Pam Friend
Beach Drive

Ruth Pogson
Fifth Street, Sidney

Jon Schalke
Chalister Court
Plants for healing

Anne Duncan
Amphion Street

Peter Hawker
St. Andrews Street
Birds, photography

June Pretzer
Croft Street
Birds

Karen Wood
Readings Drive, Sidney

Dee Heston
Knight Avenue
Flowers, birds

C. B. Kleiman
Yates Street

**Caspar Davis and
Lorena Mowers**
Pemberton Road
*Birds, conservation
writing and editing*

Larry Talarico
Cochrane Street
All natural history

Naira Johnston
Grant Street
Birds, field trips

Letters

Dear Tom Gillespie and all VNHS members,

I write to thank the VNHS very much for your continued generosity. I feel fortunate to have received the Alice M. Hay Scholarship for the second year running. The scholarship provides an important contribution to my financial resources, allowing me to focus on research and conservation-related activities.

The Rainforest Wolf Project, of which I am a part, continues to gain important knowledge regarding coastal wolves, their prey, and their habitat. We continue to share findings with diverse groups, from government land-use planners to schoolchildren of local coastal villages. Last week, I gave two talks to children from kindergarten to grade seven in Bella Bella.

The opportunity to present at a VNHS meeting last March was an honour. Thank-you again for helping make it possible.

Sincerely,
Chris Darimont

Dear Victoria Natural History Society

Heartfelt thanks for the honour of being selected to receive the Bev Glover Memorial Scholarship. Your recognition and support are much appreciated.

Sincerely,
Nathan Pelletier

Standing Room Only for Botany Night

It was standing room only for **Michael Vaninsberghe's** presentation at the November Botany night. **Adolf Ceska** introduced the 15 year old who he and **Oluna** had assisted in his study of Mount Douglas Park.

Biodiversity 2000 was 3 years in preparation and the result is a credit to this young man. Michael wants to build a bridge between the public and the scientists, which would contribute to an overall Biodiversity awareness in our community. Students from Michael's school took field trips to identify and map some of the flora and fauna.



HAT Tricks

Bruce Whittington is well known to VNHS members. He has been our president for the past 3 years and has been actively involved in the society for many more. For the past two and a half years, Bruce has also been the Executive Director of the Habitat Acquisition Trust.

In 1995, Bruce and Jan Garnett presented their vision of a local land trust to protect natural areas within the Capital Regional District to the Board of the Victoria Natural History Society. The board was very supportive of this wonderful idea and Habitat Acquisition Trust was born. In the beginning, HAT ran out of the back of Bruce's shop, the late, lamented Field-Naturalist. Bruce has served the Trust in many ways and in many positions. Many of HAT's most significant accomplishments are due to his hard work and dedication. Since 1995 HAT has acquired and protected 20.7 hectares of land and has contributed to projects that have protected an additional 16 hectares. We also co-hold covenanted lands totalling 685 hectares.

It was through Bruce's early experiences as a coffee house manager that our very popular *Musical Hats* fundraising evenings evolved.

Over the years, many VNHS members have enjoyed searching for birds through the Sonoran desert in Arizona, along the south Texas coast, in the mangrove lagoons of Mexico and the grasslands of Southwest Saskatchewan, with Bruce, on our successful HATS OFF tours.

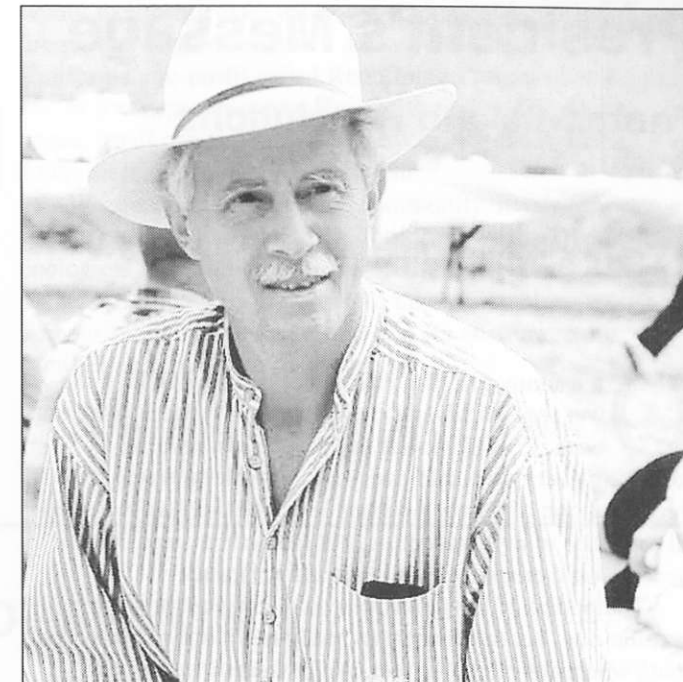


Photo: Bob Chappell

Bruce has been an avid writer for years. Many of you will remember his *Island Birds* column in the *Times-Colonist*. He always expected to find time to write, but as HAT's activities grew he couldn't find that time. So, he has chosen to follow his bliss, and is leaving HAT to spend more time pursuing writing projects.

Bruce has been the heart and soul — and perhaps more importantly, the face — of HAT since it was established in 1996. We will miss him tremendously but wish him all the best as he pursues other passions in his life.

We all take our *Hats Off* to you Bruce.



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. All members of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

**Nominations should be forwarded by January 31, 2003 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.**

President's Message

Footprints and Resolutions

By Bruce Whittington

On a sunny gift of a day in November, I walked the wet sand of Mystic Beach west of Victoria. Walking back, I could retrace my progress in reverse, following every step, and every stop I made to watch a Red-throated Loon offshore. An hour later, the tide had removed all evidence of my passage, and at the next change, Mystic Beach would emerge again in unsullied beauty.

The notion of footprints marking our presence is a familiar one, but our footprints really mark only the physical spots where we plant our feet. We have another sort of footprint, a measure of our physical impact on this planet as we live our lives. It has been called our "ecological footprint". And this one does not wash away so easily as footprints in the sand.

At the University of British Columbia, William Rees and graduate student Mathis Wackernagel developed the concept of ecological footprint to explain how much space was needed to allow for everything that an individual would need to exist. That would include living space, the space needed to grow food, forests to produce paper, highways to get to the mall, the land needed to dispose of garbage, and forests to process carbon dioxide, and many more factors. They determined that they could calculate how much of our planet an individual needed in order to exist, and they called this the ecological footprint.

Rees and Wackernagel developed several ways of calculating the size of the ecological footprint for a country, or a community, or an individual. Using these models, they showed that Canadians, on average, need about 7 or 8 hectares of land each to sustain their lifestyle. Compare this with the average Brazilian, who needs 2.6 hectares, or a Nigerian, whose ecological footprint is about 1.3 hectares. Our American neighbours lay claim, on average, to 12.2 hectares each.

The ecological footprint for the planet has been calculated at 2.3 hectares for every human being. It has also been calculated that the amount of biologically productive land (and ocean) that is available to support life is about 1.9 hectares per person. The shortfall is called the ecological deficit. This means one of two things: Either we are using too many resources per person, or there are too many people. When we consider that as Canadians, each of us is using more than three times as much space as the average human

on the planet, we come face to face with the matter of responsibility. If we also allow for the ecological footprints of the other 30 million species we share the planet with, we have to realize that our poor old planet is a mite overworked.

Does it sound like there's a real problem here? Yes, there is a problem, but there are also solutions. One hopeful sign is that the growth rate of the world's population is slowing down. The population of the world has grown from about 1 billion in 1800 to 6.1 billion in 2000. At the present rate of growth, in 2100 the population will be 22.2 billion. However, if each family raised only two children, the population in 2100 would be 8.7 billion – not quite so daunting. And there is real hope in even smaller families: If each family raised only one child, the world's population by 2100 would have fallen to 1.4 billion. Perhaps the goal lies somewhere in the middle, but sustainability can be a realistic goal.

Another solution is for those people whose ecological footprint is unsustainable (and that means almost all North Americans) to reduce their ecological footprint, by using fewer resources.

Think of all the things that increase the size of your ecological footprint. If you don't turn down your electric heaters at night, you are using more electricity, and that means a larger water reservoir to supply the generators. If you only use one side of a piece of paper, you will need twice the area of forests to supply your paper needs. If you buy imported tomatoes, you will be using more fuel for transportation, and creating more greenhouse gas in the process.

We can all reduce our consumption of resources simply by buying less. We can also reuse goods that are still serviceable, and repair goods rather than throwing them away.

Canadians produce more garbage per person than any other people in the world, and more than twice as much as each Swede. Recycling now seems like second nature to most of us, but we should not forget just how important it is. The production of aluminum from recycled pop cans, for example, uses only 5% as much energy as virgin aluminum. Composting is another important form of recycling.

Did you go into the supermarket for a litre of milk? If

you took the milk home without a grocery bag, you saved precious resources. What if you purchased five items – too much to carry? You could use a grocery bag, or you could use your own cloth bag, or take last week's grocery bag back to the store, for this week's groceries.

What about the carrots you purchased? Did the store buy them from a local farmer, or did they travel hundreds of miles in a delivery truck? Did the farmer use pesticides or fertilizers that might taint the stream next to him? Or did she grow them organically?

When you had to fly to Winnipeg for a meeting, did you take the time to visit your cousins, too? Or did you make a second trip, using even more jet fuel?

Do you think you are living responsibly now? If you

would like to calculate your own ecological footprint, there are several websites that will allow you to do so. A California non-profit called Redefining Progress has a good one at www.rprogress.org. Even with my modest living space, small car, and efforts to recycle, my ecological footprint is no small embarrassment.

We are all part of a global community. Every time we reduce our personal ecological footprint, we also reduce the ecological footprint of our community, our country, and our planet. So it really is important to take personal responsibility, and to make sure that we encourage our families and friends to do it too.

And *that* brings me to New Year's Resolutions . . .

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, 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. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: <http://www.vicNHS.bc.ca>.

JANUARY THROUGH FEBRUARY

The Eagles Have Landed (over 200!)

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 estuary is also a great viewing area for the occasional Golden Eagle. The Nature House is open daily all winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. On exhibit is the **Royal B.C. Museum's Birds of Prey exhibit** and great eagle viewing through spotting scopes and video cameras. Call 478-9414 for more information.

JANUARY

Wednesday, January 1, 2003

First Birding Trip of the New Year

Get the New Year off to a good start! A great excuse to start a new year list. Join **Kevin Slagboom** for a birding walk on the Lochside Trail in the Blenkinsop Lake area. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the end of Lochside Drive, at the south end of Blenkinsop Lake. Afterwards we will go to Tim Horton's for our first fix of coffee and donuts for the year. Call Kevin at 658-0940 for more information.

Tuesday, January 8

VNHS Natural History Presentation

"Sensitive Ecosystems: You Too Can Protect this Living Legacy"

By 1997, less than 7.9% of east Vancouver Island and adjacent Gulf Islands was left in a relatively natural state. More recent information shows that we continue to lose even these remnant sensitive ecosystems, one by one. The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection has stated that if the present rate of disturbance continues, most of the remaining sensitive ecosystems could be impacted within the next few decades. These are the findings of the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) — a federal-provincial initiative that mapped rare and fragile ecosystems in this region. However, the news is not all bleak. There are success stories from communities that have been able to protect sensitive ecosystems. There are steps that can be taken to protect them. Come and learn about sensitive ecosystems – what they are, why they are important, what is happening to them, and what you can do to help protect sensitive ecosystems in your community. Our presenter will be Judith Cullington, the SEI Project Coordinator. We will 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.

Sunday, January 12

Birding Pat Bay

Join **Barbara Begg** for a birding walk around Pat Bay. This can be a great spot to see all three scoter species, both goldeneye species plus many other seabirds. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the small park on the water just north of the Coast Guard jetty on West Saanich Road. Call Barb at 656-5296 if you need more information.

Saturday, January 18

Jordan River Area Birding

Join **David Allinson** for a trip out to the southwest coast for birding around Jordan River. In particular we will look for area specialties such as Black-Legged Kittiwake, Hutton's Vireo, and Northern Pigmy-Owl. Meet at Helmcken Park'n Ride at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch. Call David at 391-1786 if you need more information.

Sunday, January 19

Winter Botany Walk At Saxe Point Park

Join **Adolf and Oluna Cheska** in search for the elusive Macoun's meadowfoam. This plant is a typical winter-annual; it germinates in the fall, flowers in early spring and dies by the beginning of May. It is most obvious this time of year, since its competitors are still asleep. Bear's-foot sanicle is another plant that enjoys this type of weather. You will also be able to see how an arborist transfers his ecological vision [or lack of it] onto an urban forest. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Saxe Point in Esquimalt. Park at the closest parking lot to the ocean. Call 477-1211 if you need more info.

Thursday, January 23 - May 4

(Preview January 15 - 22)

Birds on the Bay II — Boundary Bay Important Bird Area

Exhibit presented by the White Rock Museum & Archives and Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society. Featuring photographs by David Blevins, <http://www.blevinsphoto.com/prints.htm>

Boundary Bay together with Roberts Bank and Sturgeon Bank make up the Fraser River Estuary, the top rated of 647 Important Bird Area sites in Canada. Boundary Bay is a major migration staging area for as many as 1 million water birds using the Pacific Flyway Corridor and an important wintering area for large numbers of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls and hawks. More birds of prey winter in Boundary Bay than anywhere else in Canada. Three major Great Blue Heron nesting colonies are located in Boundary Bay's watershed.

A full program of events for all ages and interest levels are planned for January 23 – May 4, 2003. Contact the White Rock Museum & Archives, 604-541-2222, for event schedule details and watch for announcements in your local paper. **Registration is required** for presentations and field trips.

Thursday, January 23

Dusk on the Bay — Birds on the Bay II, Boundary Bay Important Bird Area

3:30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.: Birding walk along the waterfront at White Rock, followed by a talk on basic bird identification in the museum. (Registration required)

Friday, January 24

Dusk on the Bay — Birds on the Bay II, Boundary Bay Important Bird Area

3:30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.: Birding walk along the waterfront at White Rock, followed by bird identification level 2 in the museum. Leaders: **Jude and Al Grass** (Registration required)

Saturday, January 25

Opening Day — Birds on the Bay II, Boundary Bay Important Bird Area

8:00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. **Dawn on the Estuary.** Early morning birding on the Estuary (Registration required)

9:00 a.m. **Early morning Birding.** Early morning bird walk along the Bay (registration required). Leader: **Jude & Al Grass**

9:00 a.m. **Birds in Close Up** — Telescopes set up outside the museum & volunteers on hand to help with bird identification.)

Warm up refreshments. (Registration not required/ donations welcome)

9:30 a.m. **Birds on the Bay** — interactive program for youth

10:30 a.m. **Opening Ceremony — Boundary Bay and the Fraser River Estuary — the top Important Bird Area in Canada.** Slide show and talk by **Anne Murray, Mary Taitt**; Important Bird Area Gallery Tour, also steward displays, refreshments.

Saturday, January 25

Birding Island View Beach

Join **David Stirling** (477-0625) to check out the bird life at Island View Beach. There will be a variety of seabirds and passerines, depending on which direction you face! Wear your woolies 'cause the breeze could be brisk. Drive all the way in to the end parking lot for a 9:00 a.m. start.

Sunday, January 26

Lunch & Linger on the Bay — Birds on the Bay II, Boundary Bay Important Bird Area

Enjoy a leisurely lunch then attend the afternoon bird talk at the Museum. (Registration required)

1:30 p.m. **Celebrate the Great Blue Heron** — Illustrated talk on the Boundary Bay Great Blue Heron colonies by **Ross Vennesland**, research biologist and heron specialist (Registration required)

2:30 p.m. **Guided walk** to observe great blue herons in the wild and visit one of their colonies (Registration required).

FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 2

Birding the Duncan area

Join **Jan Brown** and **Alan MacLeod** in a field trip to the birding hotspots in the Duncan area. It may include Cowichan Bay Somenos Marsh and the Duncan sewage lagoons. Meet at Helmcken park'n ride at 7:30 a.m. to car pool, bring a lunch. Call Alan or Jan at 382-3854 if you need more info.

Sunday, February 9

Boundary Bay and Raptors

Join **David Allinson** for a trip to Boundary Bay and also to the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. We can expect to see large flocks of

waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. Car-pooling will reduce costs to approximately \$35-\$40 per person. Meet at Elk Lake Drive at the entrance to Beaver Lake Park at 5:45 a.m.; we will return on the 5:00 p.m. ferry, bring a lunch. To register call David at 391-1786.

Tuesday, February 11

VNHS Annual Banquet

“Culture and Communication in Killer Whale Societies”

Treat yourself to a sumptuous buffet courtesy of the University Club at UVic (formerly referred to as the Faculty Club) and food for your brain courtesy of our special guest **Dr. John Ford** from the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo. Currently a marine mammal scientist with Fisheries and Oceans and responsible for the assessment of marine mammal species-at-risk for the Pacific Region, Dr. Ford is also an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia. His research interests centre around studies of the behaviour, life history, and ecology of whales, with particular emphasis on underwater acoustic behaviour. Much of his work since the mid-1970s has focused on killer whales in coastal waters of the north-eastern Pacific Ocean, particularly with respect to

group-specific vocal dialects and their role in social organization and mating systems. Dr. Ford worked at the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre for many years and he is regularly interviewed regarding issues related to endangered marine mammals, including right whales, blue whales, killer whales, sea otters, and humpbacks. Happy hour at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$35 and must be purchased in advance, at Natural History Presentations, Birder's Nights, or at the Habitat Acquisition Office (316-620 View) (995-2428). There will be door prizes as well as an extensive selection of raffle prizes. We will see you there!

Saturday, February 22

Birding Elk Lake

Join **David Kelly** for a leisurely 10 km stroll around the loop trail at Elk Lake/Beaver Lake Regional Park. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Brookleigh Road parking lot at the north end of Elk Lake, just off Hamsterly Road. No hills but it might be muddy in places, so choose foot wear that can take the weather as well as the distance. For those who want a shorter walk, transport back to the cars from the half way point can be arranged (Call David at 658-8669 a day or two beforehand).

BULLETIN BOARD

Volunteer for the Esquimalt Lagoon Open House

In partnership with the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, HAT will be co-hosting an Open House on Saturday February 8 from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. at the Pacific Centre Family Services Association at 3221 Heatherbell Road. We are looking for people to help with set up and take down of displays and tables, and to help serve lunch. If you are able to help out please contact Jennifer or Pauline at Habitat Acquisition Trust at 995-2428.

Raffle Items Needed

We are looking for items suitable for raffle prizes at our annual banquet being held February 11 at the University of Victoria's "University Club". If you have something you wish to donate or would like to help with soliciting prizes from some local businesses, then please call Claudia Copley at 479-6622. Proceeds go to important conservation work undertaken by the society.

Young Naturalists Volunteers

Susanna Solecki is looking for assistance in organizing the Young Naturalists Club. If you enjoy inspiring young minds and have some time to help coordinate field trips and other adventures, then please call or email Susanna at 598-8722, vicync@hotmail.com

Marine Birds Course at Swan Lake

Marine Birds is a course for naturalists and enthusiasts. Learn where to find and how to identify marine birds. Discover fascinating secrets about how they live and feed. The emphasis will be on unique and interesting biological and behavioral information that will capture the imagination of both amateurs and professionals. **James Clowater**, an ornithologist who specializes in the behavioural ecology of marine birds, instructs the course.

Sessions begin on February 27, meeting Thursdays 7- 9 p.m. at Swan Lake Nature House. Cost is \$75 for 5 2-hour sessions. Shore-line field trips are included in the cost and an optional 3-hour field trip will be included for an additional cost depending on participation and charter fees. For details visit <http://webs.ii.ca/clowater/mbirds.htm>. Call Swan Lake to pre-register, 479-0211.

Follow Up on Your New Year's Resolution to Volunteer

If you have made a new year's resolution to start volunteering, check out the opportunities at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. Weekend nature house receptionists; trail builders, and nature interpreters for school programs are now being recruited. For more details contact Joan at 479-0211, or check out the web site at www.swanlake.bc.ca.

Renewal Date: Dec-02 X

Claudia and Darren Copley
675 Beaver Lake Road
VICTORIA BC V8Z 5N9

FEES ARE
DUE



2003 Natural History Courses



Here's a chance to support the society while learning a bit more about natural history. These programs will be taught by experienced VNHS trip leaders who have volunteered their time. The proceeds will support VNHS conservation and education activities. Please note the lower prices for members (yet another reason to join!). We are interested in offering other courses but require more leaders to come forward. Please call Claudia or Darren Copley at 479-6622 if you have any suggestions.

Beginning Birding



An easy introduction to the pursuit of birding for those with little or no previous experience. The emphasis will be on bird identification in the field. We will start with an illustrated lecture on March 6, 2003 and 6 Saturday morning field trips from March 8th to April 12th. The cost will be \$65 for non-members and \$45 for members.

Take the next step beyond the basics of identification. Our group of local VNHS experts places an emphasis on birding by ear and the identifying field marks of those difficult groups and species. This course includes 8 very diverse field sessions around Victoria led by 8 different leaders. Sessions run on Thursday or Sunday mornings beginning on April 3rd, 2003. The cost is \$95.00 for non-members and \$65.00 for members. Each session is limited to fifteen.

Beyond Beginning Birding



If you have any questions, or would like to register, call Darren Copley at 4796622. More detailed brochures will be available in the new year.



**Victoria Natural
History Society**

