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### Guidelines for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, natural history notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We request submission of typed, double-spaced copy in an IBM compatible word processing file on diskette, or by e-mail. Having copy submitted digitally saves a lot of time and work for the publications group and we really appreciate the help. If you have an obscure or very old word processing program, call the Editor, Claudia Copley, at 479-6622, or save the text in ASCII format. Photos and slides, and diskettes submitted will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material. Digital images are welcome, but they need to be a very high resolution.

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For membership information and renewal, please contact Darren Copley, 479-6622, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4. A copy of our membership form is available on our website www.vicnhs.bc.ca.

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### COVER PHOTO:

*First Frost* by Bob Hooper won third prize in the "habitat" category of the VNHS' 60th Anniversary Photo Contest.

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

It doesn't require the beginning of a new year to make changes, but it does provide a convenient point of reference. As an endnote to the wrap-up of our 60th anniversary, I'd like to think in terms of how each of us can impact the next sixty. There are some very simple actions, amplified throughout our community, that will help protect the natural world we cherish. Below are just a few, in no particular order.

- Take a child or a "non-naturalist" on a nature walk.
- Buy shade-grown coffee.
- Volunteer for a non-profit organization.
- Car-pool.
- Landscape with native plants.
- Choose locally-grown and organic.
- Learn something new about nature.
- Keep your cat indoors.
- Write a letter to a politician about an issue that matters to you.
- Replace incandescents with compact fluorescents.
- Let your lawn go blonde.

These are not new ideas, nor are they original. But they are effective.

Claudia

P.S. Last month's cover photo of a mushroom was identified by Sharon Godkin and the Ceskas as *Clitocybe atroviridis* (= *Omphalina chlorocyanea*?), p.162 of *Mushrooms Demystified*. I "googled" the name and the first "hit" was the New York Botanical Garden's holdings: they have three specimens, two of which were collected in Victoria, including one from Uplands Park. And this is where the story circled right back to the Victoria Natural History Society: Miss M.C. Melburn, famous for her flowering phenology, collected both of them!

## President's Message

Whew! Our 60th anniversary year is over, but what a year it was! Thanks to the energy and commitment of the VNHS Board and especially that of the 60th Anniversary Steering Committee (Phil and Marilyn Lambert, Adolf and Oluna Ceska, Marie O'Shaughnessy, Donna Ross, Rick Schortinghuis, Bruce Whittington, Isobel Dawson and myself), VNHS achieved a lot in 2004. Highlights included Andrew Bryant as our feature speaker at the banquet (arranged by Claudia Copley), the picnic (coordinated by Donna Ross and Marilyn Lambert), a photo contest (led by Marie O'Shaughnessy, Donna Ross, Marilyn Lambert, and Veronica Druce), an interclub field trip (organized by John Henigman), a year of special botany field trips (led by Adolf and Oluna Ceska), a literary retrospective of the last six decades of the *Victoria Naturalist* (thanks to Bruce Whittington and Claudia Copley), reenactments of historical field trips, and a special goal for our final event of the year, the Christmas Bird Count. (At press time, we still don't know

if we reached our target, but the results will be posted on the VNHS website.) There is still one 60th anniversary project nearing completion, and word will be out soon on the viewing platform at Viaduct Flats (led by Claudia Copley and Blake Waters). Claudia has to be the best hoop-jumper on the VNHS Board! And all of this was on top of our regular offerings of four presentations and numerous field trips every month. Whew, indeed!

So what now? I truly hope that we can build on the momentum we have gained during this past year. A nice round number like 60 reminds us that despite the negative news we hear about what is happening in the environment, there is still much to celebrate. And there is still much to do. (This is where YOU come in!) It's to the credit of all VNHS members that this organization still thrives after 60 years. Here's to the next 60 – may they shine even brighter than the first.

Ann Nightingale



Picnicking under the tent at Island View Beach: part of our 60th anniversary celebrations. Photo: Ann Nightingale

## VNHS Awards Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways. Some write articles for the *Naturalist*, some lead field trips, others serve on the board or on other committees. There are some who go out of their way just to make sure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities, by visiting shut-ins, or driving others to Society functions.

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is meant to honour those members who have given freely of their time in a variety of ways for the Society, over a long period. All members of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication. The Society may also bestow Honorary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors. **Nominations should be forwarded by January 31 2005.**

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.

### VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

- 1989 Lyndis Davis, David Stirling, Katherine Sherman
- 1990 Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter, Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1991 Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
- 1992 David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
- 1993 Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
- 1994 Kaye Suttill
- 1995 Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
- 1996 Gordon Devey
- 1997 Michael Carson
- 1998 No recipients
- 1999 Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
- 2000 Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
- 2001 David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vanderpol
- 2002 Norm Mogensen
- 2003 Bob Chappell
- 2004 Oluna and Adolf Ceska

### VNHS Honorary Life Members

Mrs. Ruth Chambers, Mrs. Lyndis Davis, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling, Mr. Bruce Whittington

## Eleanore Davidson

Sadly, Eleanore Davidson, a long-time member of the Victoria Natural History Society, passed away this fall. She will be remembered as the indefatigable companion of 'Davey' Davidson, on their many local field trips and their annual spring birding jaunts to the Okanagan. In later years, her role extended to being the 'ears' and the driver on these outings.

In the VNHS, Eleanore usually kept out of the limelight but was ready to support Davey whenever necessary. The two of them graciously stored the VNHS library in their home for many years and she co-authored and authored several articles about birds for the *Naturalist* magazine. After Davey's death, she no longer attended VNHS meetings or field trips.

Eleanore also had close connections to the Royal BC Museum. She had very good rapport with original museum staff: director Dr. Clifford Carl, biologist Charles Guiguet, and illustrator Frank Beebe.

Eleanore was younger than Davey, and he had been a bachelor for quite a while before they connected. Her charms really won him over though: he gave up some of his less popular habits, such as smoking a pipe and having an occasional nip of wine, in deference to her. Her good influence on others will be remembered fondly.



## 2005 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 members 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!).

### 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 evening lecture on Thursday February 24, 2005, and 6 Saturday morning field trips from Feb. 26th to April 2nd. The cost will be \$75 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 car and the identifying field marks of those difficult groups and species. This course includes 8 diverse field sessions around Victoria led by 8 different leaders. Sessions run on Thursday or Sunday mornings beginning on April 14, 2005. 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, please call the Goldstream Nature House: 478-9414. More detailed brochures will be available in the new year.



Victoria Natural  
History Society



# First Records of *Dosidicus gigas*, the Humboldt Squid, in the Temperate North-eastern Pacific

By James C. Cosgrove

**D***osidicus gigas*, commonly known as the Humboldt Squid or Jumbo Flying Squid, are large cephalopods; some specimens have been known to reach more than three metres, with almost half of that length consisting of arms and tentacles. A pelagic species, they rise to the surface at night to aggressively feed on small fish. Easily identified by size, broad fins, and hole-saw like rims (each with approximately 20 gripping teeth) on its suckers, the Humboldt squid is capable of swimming more than 30 kilometres-per-hour. All these features combine to make this species a formidable predator of the high seas (Norman, 2000).

Normally this species ranges from California south to Tierra del Fuego in South America (Norman, 2000; Roper *et al.*, 1984). It has been documented as far north as Oregon and extends west into the central Pacific, but has not been documented near shore north of Oregon. In late August of 2004, Albacore Tuna fishers off the coast of Washington State reported catching unknown squids on the surface, and that the school of squid were interspersed with the school of tuna (Anderson, pers. comm. from Bargmann). The squids, found 48 to 160 km from shore, were caught on both bait and jig. They were reported to be strong fighters, and between 1 and 1.5 m in length.

At approximately the same time, a Canadian boat, fishing for Albacore Tuna off the entrance to Juan de Fuca Strait on the border between Washington State and British Columbia, also encountered *D. gigas*. For 3 to 4 weeks, from late July to mid-August, this vessel encountered large numbers of live squids, as many as several hundred, lying on the surface. This identification is supported by videotape. One evening a *D. gigas* was hooked and landed using a squid jig. This animal was estimated at 1 to 1.5 m in total length and weighing approximately 7 kg. The squid was videotaped and then butchered and eaten by the crew.

The first specimen retained in British Columbia was captured in the afternoon of October 2, when a salmon sport fisher hooked and landed a *D. gigas*. The capture depth was 50 m below the surface and the collection location was about 20 km southwest of Carmanah Point and 7 km south of Swiftsure Bank near Vancouver Island. One hook was in the beak of the squid while a second hook had become embedded in the left eye. Due to the squid having lost an eye and suffering other cuts from the line, the specimen was retained and kept on ice until being donated to the Royal BC Museum.

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In August of 2003 at Mitchell Inlet (50 km southwest of Sandspit, B.C.), approximately 200-300 squid were washed ashore that ranged in length from 60 cm to 2 m.

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Because of media interest in the occurrence of *D. gigas* near the shores of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska, a number of new reports (7 from Alaska, 2 from Washington State and 9 from British Columbia) were submitted and more specimens retained by museum collections such as the Royal BC Museum, which received seven more. Some of the sightings date back several years, indicating that *D. gigas* had been in near-shore northern waters previous to 2004.

In 1997, a year of extremely warm ocean temperatures, an Alaskan commercial fisher tentatively identified Humboldt Squid in the waters off Yakutat. He also reported similar sightings off Yakutat over nearly twenty years by friends and acquaintances in the fishing industry. Although no photos are available to confirm these sightings it is likely that the majority of the squids seen were *Ommastrephes bartrami*, the Neon Flying Squid; *Moroteuthis robusta*, the Pacific Giant Squid or *Architeuthis dux*, the Giant Squid. However, a Canadian Coast Guard crew report catching large squid fitting the Humboldt Squid's description between 1994 and 1998, helping to confirm the 1997 identification.

In August of 2003 at Mitchell Inlet (50 km southwest of Sandspit, B.C.), approximately 200-300 squid were washed ashore that ranged in length from 60 cm to 2 m. Photographs were taken but the author has not seen the photos, so the identification cannot be confirmed. However, the size indicates the specimens are too large to be the more commonly reported Neon Flying Squid.

Regular sightings of this squid began in August 2004, when a *D. gigas* was taken as incidental catch by a foreign vessel operating in Canadian waters. The specimen was

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The captain of the *F/V Rose-Lynn* reported that a *D. gigas*, caught while drifting south of Sitka, spit water onto the crew and began hissing and changing colour rapidly once aboard.

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frozen and retained and then deposited with the Royal BC Museum. Tissue samples were taken and sent for DNA analysis. In mid-September, a professional oceanographer working in Alaskan waters aboard a research vessel reported encountering approximately 100 individuals of *D. gigas*. While recovering sediment cores at night, the lights used attracted an enormous school of baitfish, likely candlefish. Pairs or trios of squid were observed passing through intermittently and harassing the baitfish. They would disappear for 10-15 minutes and then return. Soon a large school of squid appeared, perhaps a hundred in number and each 1-1.5 m in length, and initiated a feeding frenzy upon the baitfish. The water was literally churning as the squid chased the baitfish, their tentacles reaching up above the surface of the water. Some of the crewmembers managed to spear a couple of the squid and bring them aboard. The dressed mantles from these squid weighed an average of 5 kg apiece. After the cruise was over, while strolling on the beach at Fort Abercrombie on Kodiak Island, a dead squid of similar size that had washed up along the high tide line was observed.

For the rest of September and into October, there were eleven more encounters off of Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska. In many of these cases squid were captured, some were photographed and a few were deposited in museums. Often the squid appeared at night, lured in by the presence of smaller fish attracted to the vessel lights. Sometimes schools numbered in the hundreds, perhaps thousands. Stomach contents, when examined, ranged from euphausiids, to Pacific Saury, to salmon. There were also mass strandings, estimated in the thousands of animals, of Humboldt squid in Oregon and Washington.

An interesting anecdote came from the captain of the *F/V Rose-Lynn*. He reported that a *D. gigas*, caught while drifting south of Sitka, spit water onto the crew and began hissing and changing colour rapidly once aboard. He also described the odd behaviour of the remaining squid in the water: "Once the first squid was thrown onto the hatch, the remaining squid in the water appeared to back to the edge of the light and watch in the direction of the boat. After a period of time they began feeding again, we caught a second squid and once again the squid in the water appeared to back to the edge of the light and look in the direction of the boat." Both these descriptions highlight other fascinating characteristics of cephalopods in general. Octopus and squid have incredible colour-changing abilities and are renowned for their intelli-



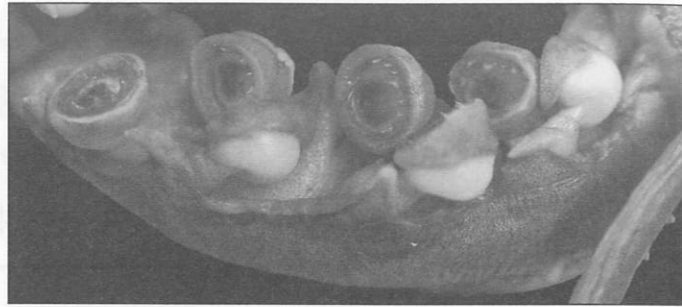
Kelly Sendall, Senior Collections Manager at the Royal BC Museum, holding a specimen of Humboldt Squid. Photo: courtesy of RBCM.

gence (Hanlon & Messenger, 1996).

While the reason for this dramatic influx of *D. gigas* into the northeastern Pacific waters is unproven, there does appear, superficially at least, to be a relationship between increased water temperatures and the presence of the Humboldt Squid. Data from the Ocean Chemistry Branch of the Institute of Ocean Sciences documents the temperatures for the 1996 – 1998 period as well as in 2004. The warmest water temperatures ever observed in our region were August of this year, with a maximum temperature recorded of 18.9°C. It will be interesting to see if this year's predicted El Nino will see a return of these animals.

#### Literature Cited

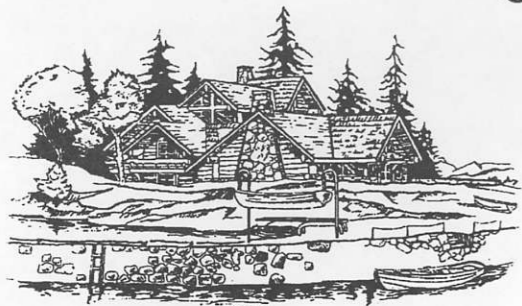
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The hole-saw-like rims of Humboldt Squid suckers – great for gripping! Photo: courtesy of RBCM

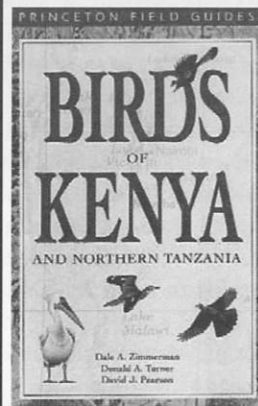
JAMES COSGROVE is the Manager of the Natural History Section at the Royal BC Museum. He will be speaking for our April Natural History Night about “Long-Ago-Person-Found” or Kwaday Dan Sinchi, the Iceman found in British Columbia.

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# The River of Raptors and Storks

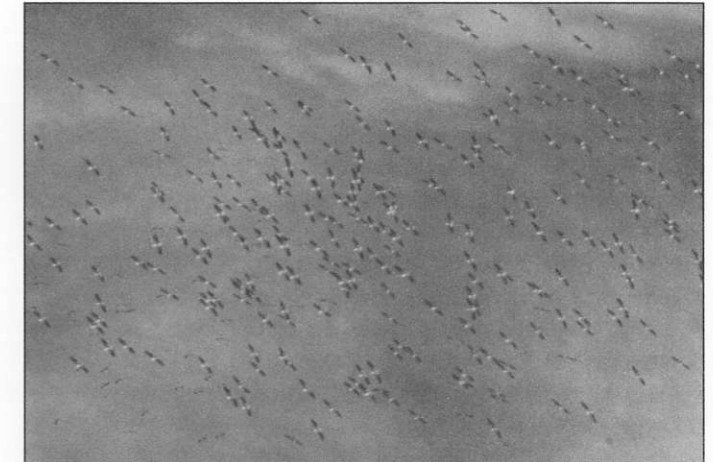
By David Stirling

“There are kettles everywhere!” No, we are not in the home appliance department of Wal-Mart. This is an exclamation from a birder, one of several from the U.S.A., Canada, and Holland, who are with keen eyed Mexican *Pronatura* raptor counters on the roof of the Bienvenido Hotel in Cardel, Mexico. Raptors are rising in thick vortices from the distant foothills. The warm air bubbles carry the birds up until the highest hawks glide off south, creating a wide stream that fills the sky overhead: the “River of Raptors”. Broad-winged Hawks from eastern North America form the highest layer, Turkey Vultures from wherever and Swainson’s Hawks from the Great Plains are slightly lower. There are solo Ospreys, Peregrines and Kestrels at the edges of the main stream. In the river are a few Zone-tailed Hawks, Short-tailed Hawks, Mississippi Kites (forty thousand went through in early September), Hook-billed Kites, Grey Hawks, Cooper’s Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Hawks are not the only birds on the move. A well-organised semi-circle of large birds is approaching. It is a gliding flock of twelve hundred Wood Storks. Another group, less organised, is a flock of five hundred American White Pelicans; later, a dozen Anhingas. They pause to kettle directly overhead with a gnat-like swarm of Broad-wings. A spectacular sight. Just above the roof top a thin but steady stream of swallows, martins, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and large sulphur butterflies stream past. Resident Black Vultures form their own kettles. Pugnacious Penelope, the local Peregrine and her mate, Leander, guardians of the communication towers and the terrors of the town’s Rock Pigeons, amuse themselves by accelerating the migrant falcons southward.

Some numbers (October 6): Broad-wings – 119,300; Turkey Vultures – 53,440; Swainson’s Hawks – 2,000; American White Pelicans – 800; Wood Storks – 3,000; and good numbers of all the other species already noted. All this against a tropical rainy season sky of patches of deep blue, towering cumulus and wispy mare’s tails. In the distance, I can see Pica de Orizaba an 18,000-foot snow-capped volcano, the highest mountain in Mexico. An awesome day; to use an over used word in its original meaning.

Cardel, a small, green Mexican country town just north of Vera Cruz is a migration watcher’s dream. In the fall season the north half of the Bienvenido Hotel’s roof is reserved for hawkwatchers; the south half is the laundry. There are plenty of plastic chairs and, if wind permits, a temporary tent awning can be erected to temper the heat of the tropical sun. The restaurant, featuring American and Mexican dishes, is clean and staffed by friendly, competent people. Birders wanting to hit the swamps and forests before dawn and return at 10:00 am, when the big ones begin to fill the sky, can have a hearty breakfast at 5:45. You can have snacks, lunch, and



Top: A sky full of American White Pelicans. Below: The hotel roof looking north. Photos: David Stirling

drinks brought to you on the roof if you don’t want to miss a bird.

Cardel is situated on the coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico with major wetlands and rivers in the vicinity. An hour’s drive takes you to majestic forest clad ravines and pine forests reminiscent of the Okanagan. There is a huge migration of White-winged Doves through the lowlands. One soggy evening I stood beside a hole in a cornfield watching a million Davy’s Naked-back Bats emerging. Just inside their home, they circled like a thick mass of tiny fans, their actions generating a current of noxious air.

I have seen some spectacular bird gatherings and migrations in many places in the world, but for sheer volume nothing can eclipse the *Rio de Rapaces*. *Pronatura*’s slogan is “5,000,000 and counting.” I returned home well boiled from the heat and humidity, with reduced eyesight from staring into the glare and my neck crying out for the nearest chiropractor. It was worth it!

If you want to go with a group, check the ads in *Winging It* and *Birding*. If you want to go solo, try Robert Straub at [www.pronaturaveracruz.org](http://www.pronaturaveracruz.org).

# The Western Canada Wilderness Committee

## Canada's Largest Wilderness Protection Group Keeps Growing

By Ken Wu

Despite the Western Canada Wilderness Committee's (WCWC) long and tedious name (which only a committee could have come up with), many people here in Victoria are aware of the organization and its work. Over the past 24 years, the WCWC has grown from a handful of activists to Canada's largest membership-based wilderness protection organization, with almost 60,000 members and donors, primarily in B.C. This makes the WCWC Canada's second largest membership-based environmental organization, after Greenpeace. In Victoria and the Gulf Islands, the membership has been steadily growing, currently with close to 11,000 members and donors.

Many British Columbians are also familiar with the Wilderness Committee through our beautiful "Endangered Wilderness Calendars" and "Endangered Species Calendars", posters, and postcards, all available in our downtown store, and often through our door-to-door canvassers.

The WCWC's mandate falls into two basic categories:

1. **To protect all types of endangered ecosystems and species in parks and protected areas.** We want a minimum of 40% of B.C.'s land base in every ecosystem type to be protected.

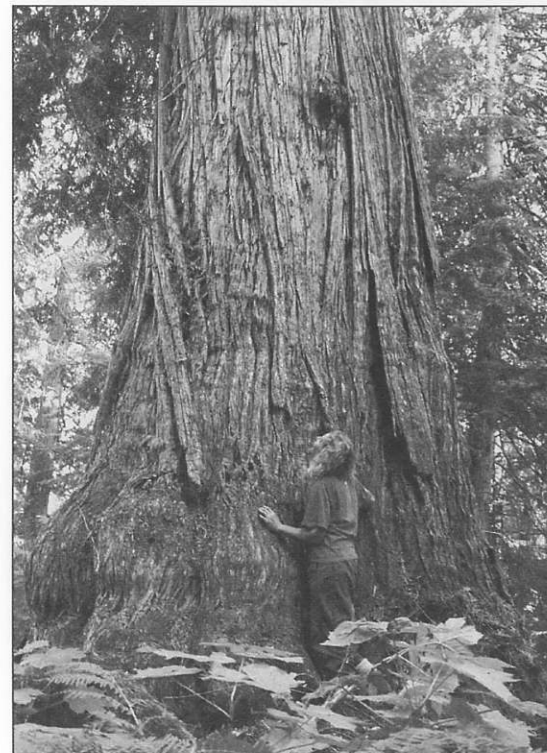
2. **To establish the environmentally sustainable use (e.g. ecosystem-based forestry or eco-forestry) of non-protected areas.**

The reasons for wilderness protection range from bio-centric (i.e. nature and all species have their own intrinsic value – they exist for their own sake – regardless of their utility to humanity) to anthropocentric (for tourism dollars, recreation, clean drinking water, scientific research, and human survival).

The WCWC's campaigns over the years reads like a Who's Who of high profile wilderness areas, now entrenched in B.C.'s very identity: the Stein Valley, South Moresby (Gwaii Haanas), Carmanah Valley, Sooke Hills, Clayoquot Sound, Burke Mountain, Tatshenshini-Alsek Valleys, and Khutzeymateen Valley. With the exception of Clayoquot Sound, which involves an even distribution of protected, off-limits-to-logging, and open-for-logging areas, all of these areas have been fully protected.

The WCWC is still best known to many naturalists in Victoria for its "Sea to Sea Green Belt" campaign, originally spearheaded by Alison Spriggs (now with The Land Conservancy) since the mid-1990's. Dozens of other local organizations were also involved in the efforts to establish this connected chain of protected areas stretching from the Sooke Basin to the Saanich Inlet. The protection of all five valleys in the Sooke Hills – the Ayum, Charters, Niagara, Veitch, and Waugh Valleys, are among the greatest accomplishments of the campaign.

Perhaps not as high profile are the WCWC's campaigns to achieve sustainable, community-based forestry in areas not proposed for full protection. These efforts are important



Photos: Courtesy of Western Canada Wilderness Committee



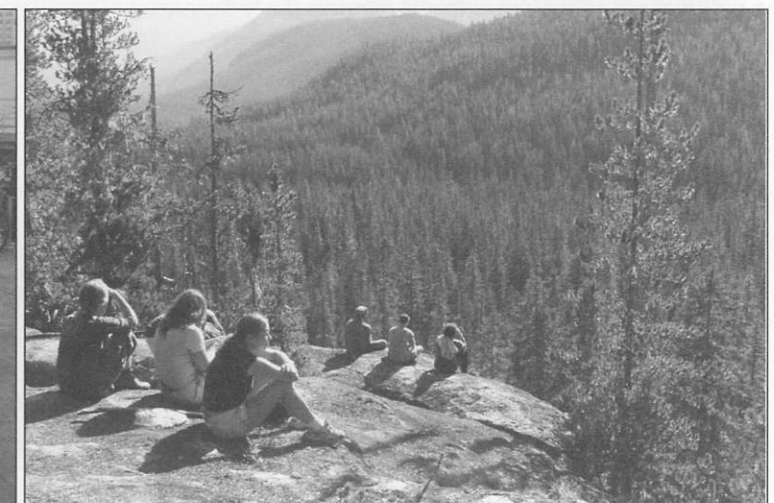
because, if we are going to reduce the grossly unsustainable rate of logging in B.C., but retain forestry jobs in rural communities, we must do more with the trees we cut down. Examples of how to do this include increasing the value-added manufacturing of our logs into items like furniture, rather than simply as pulp, lumber, or raw logs.

We are working with forestry workers to oppose raw log exports in order to protect B.C. milling jobs from going to the U.S.A. or Asia. We're also advocating an expansion of community forests in the place of the corporate logging tenures that currently dominate B.C. And we're advocating the establishment of regional log markets where wood cut from public lands must be put up for auction so that value-added manufacturers (e.g. furniture makers) can have ready access to wood which is normally tied-up by the large corporate tenure holders on our public lands.

### Why not selectively log everywhere instead of creating parks?

The question sometimes arises even within environmental circles as to why we need protected areas, rather than selection logging and community forestry everywhere. There are several reasons for this:

1. Because the commercial activities of industrial society, including road building and selection logging, are still different in the type and the scale compared to natural disturbances like wind-throw, beetle kill, or wild fires. We simply don't mimic nature with our activities.
2. Because we don't know enough to manage nature everywhere. Not only is nature more complex than we know, it is more complex than we'll ever know. For example, University of Victoria scientist Dr. Neville Winchester discovered over 70 species of arthropods completely new to science from the canopy of only six old-growth Sitka spruce trees in Carmanah Valley in the mid-1990's – a part of the ecosystem which scientists previously didn't believe would yield so many new organisms. Thus, we need non-managed areas to maintain a baseline of what the world is like without commercial resource extraction



The new discipline of conservation biology shows that we need much larger, interconnected protected areas in order to sustain the full range of our biodiversity over the long run.

in order to compare the ecological effects of our activities in other areas.

3. Because we don't have the right (biocentric argument) to manage and manipulate nature everywhere, at least not for industrial commercial purposes. Nature has its own right to exist, at least in significant areas on the planet, without the detrimental impacts of industrial resource extraction.

### Why protect so much?

OK, most people accept there is a need for some protected areas. But why so much protection, since the WCWC advocates at least 40% in each ecosystem type in B.C. be protected? Currently 12% of our land base is within our parks and protected areas system. Only 7% of our productive forests is represented: much of our parks are alpine areas that protect rocks and ice.

The new discipline of conservation biology shows that we need much larger, interconnected protected areas in order to sustain the full range of our biodiversity over the long run. Small, isolated protected areas like many of B.C.'s parks will, over time, lose species as clearcuts, roads, tree plantations, agriculture, and suburban sprawl increasingly surround them. In particular, wide-ranging species like wolves, grizzlies, wolverine, Spotted Owls, and mountain caribou are sensitive to the fragmentation of their wilderness habitats

The ancient forests of the Upper Walbran Valley on Vancouver Island will still be logged-out within the next five years, even if another million Canadians buy recycled or tree-free paper. Legislated protection is needed immediately.

into smaller pockets or "islands of extinction". Small parks support small populations of these species, which inbreed and lose genetic diversity, eventually dying out even within our parks. The history of parks in the United States and many in southern Canada bear out this fact.

In addition, small parks are also unable to maintain the full range of successional stages or forest age classes with their different associated species. In a large wilderness area, forest age classes are patchy, with some younger forests having grown back after forest fires or insect infestations, while other forest patches exist in mature and old-growth stands. In a small old-growth park such as MacMillan Provincial Park where Cathedral Grove stands, a windstorm, forest fire, or disease could destroy its only old-growth patch, and there will be no other existing old-growth stands or other older stands "coming on line" to sustain old-growth dependent species. In contrast, large protected wilderness areas encompass a "shifting mosaic" of different forest age classes – as some stands burn or blow down, other non-affected stands are aging at the same time to provide the same old-growth habitat.

### The WCWC's Strategy

Enough about the WCWC's goals – on to the organization's strategies. How does the Wilderness Committee succeed in protecting wilderness? It's not always apparent to everyone how calendars, posters, educational newspapers, rallies, letter-writing campaigns, and petitions actually help protect wilderness. How do all these tactics contribute to environmental protection?

The first thing to note is that virtually all of our goals, whether new parks or better forestry practices, require legislation. Therefore, environmental activism is necessarily a political act, in the sense that it requires the government to step in and restrict the activities of corporations on where and how much they can log.

Private lifestyle reforms, like consuming less and recycling paper, while useful to help slow down the demand for old-growth wood products, is too indirect and slow to achieve the concrete gains needed to protect specific areas within their limited time spans. The ancient forests of the Upper Walbran Valley on Vancouver Island will still be logged-out within the next five years, even if another million Canadians buy recycled or tree-free paper. Legislated protection is needed immediately. Even organized markets pressure (i.e. boycotts) that forces companies to vacate logging operations in particular valleys must eventually be followed up by government legislation, so the battle is not waged again, as other companies move in to log.

So if our goals entail achieving legislation, the question then is "What motivates politicians?" How do we influence their decisions? We believe politicians are largely motivated by *power* – getting into power and staying in power. They get power from people who vote them into power – or who can vote them out of power. That's why public opinion matters to them. This is why if there are enough letters, petitions, phone calls to their offices, and people rallying – if it is indicative of a shift in the direction or depth of public opinion on the issue – there comes a point when the decision-makers *must* listen or else lose power. So the WCWC never lobbies the government. We educate and mobilize thousands of people to speak their opinions to the decision-makers.

**"An educated citizenry exerts the ultimate pressure on government."** Paul George, WCWC Co-Founder

The attitudes "the government will just throw your letters away", "they won't listen", "petitions are useless," "rallies don't work" are simply wrong. History bears this out – hundreds of protected areas in B.C. came about due to public education, combined with letter writing, petitions, rallies, and protests. The recent defeat last July of the B.C. government's "Working Forest Initiative" – an effort to legally obstruct new protected areas by zoning almost all of B.C.'s public forests as a permanent logging zone – was achieved precisely by a massive outreach campaign organized by the WCWC's Victoria chapter. The maximum involvement of the maximum number of people is the winning recipe.

So have faith! What you do will make a difference in protecting more of beautiful B.C. Right now we are building campaigns to

- protect Vancouver Island's ancient forests: East Creek, Upper Walbran and Nahmint Valley,
- ban offshore oil and gas development from B.C.'s coast,
- defend our parks from logging, mining, and privatization.

Please consider becoming a member, donating, and/or volunteering with our campaigns, and together we'll see more of our wildlands safe for future generations.

KEN WU has been the Campaign Director at the Victoria chapter of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee since 1999. The WCWC's Victoria office and Rainforest Store is located at 651 Johnson St. They can be reached at (250) 388-9292 or at [wc2vic@island.net](mailto:wc2vic@island.net). Their website is [www.wildernesscommitteevictoria.org](http://www.wildernesscommitteevictoria.org).

## The Victoria Natural History Society A Reflection on Our 60th Anniversary Year

By Donna Ross and Marilyn Lambert

Few clubs can boast a 60-year history of active and enthusiastic members engaged in pursuing their passion for nature. Generations of Victoria naturalists have contributed endless hours volunteering and have had lots of fun in the process. Our 60th Anniversary has commemorated and honored these wonderful people and we are determined to make membership to our society a beloved activity for many more people in the next 60 years.

Celebrating our 60th year gave us a great opportunity to do things that were fun, and it highlighted some of our greatest interests. We had all bases covered, from monthly botany walks with Adolf and Oluna Ceska, to larger events like our picnic at Island View Beach. A multi-field trip day at Aylard Farm coordinated by John Henigman, with help from CRD Parks, had hundreds of people from the community come out to learn about the raptors, marine life, geology and botany of the local area. Members participated in our "first ever" natural history photo contest that illustrated their passion for photography and the natural world. We were amazed at the hidden talents lurking out there awaiting an opportunity to shine. Goldstream Nature House hosted the exhibition of these fabulous photographs and we look forward to seeing

the photos in upcoming issues of *The Victoria Naturalist*. We are planning to have a similar photo event in the future. Speaking of hidden talents, Donna arranged a field-book drawing course for members who wanted to develop their drawing skills to illustrate their nature observations. Thirteen members spent a weekend laughing and drawing and had so much fun we are planning to start up an "artist's subgroup" of the VNHS.

To give our newer members a glimpse into our club's past, Bruce Whittington reviewed all the issues of *The Victoria Naturalist* from the past 60 years and wrote a synopsis of each decade for us, which were published in each of the six issues. We thank Bruce for the hours of time this would have taken and are delighted with the insight into the past this has given us. Claudia Copley also reviewed past issues of the *Naturalist* and pulled out articles of special interest from each decade for us to read. Knowing some of the historical efforts at conservation and how our local environment has changed over the past 60 years highlights how important it is for individuals and groups to become involved in protecting and restoring natural habitat.

The final event of our Anniversary year will be the Christmas Bird Count, which will occur after the writing of this article. Ann Nightingale, our president, has done a tremendous job of organizing the count and encouraging novice and experienced birders to come out and participate. With

an ambitious goal of 160 species, among other strategies, Ann went to local shops that sell bird-seed and placed a sticker with her phone number on every bag of seed, to encourage those with an interest in birds to participate in the count.

Looking back on the events of this year, we had a lot of fun, met a lot of enthusiastic members that we wouldn't have met otherwise, and look forward to the enthusiasm continuing into the next decades. All these events were made possible by the efforts of the anniversary planning committee: Ann Nightingale, Rick Schorringhuis, Adolf and Oluna Ceska, Isobel Dawson, Bruce Whittington, and Marie O'Shaughnessy.

Thank you to all.

DONNA ROSS and MARILYN LAMBERT co-chaired the 60th Anniversary Planning Committee.



Beach seine at Island View Beach. Photos: Ann Nightingale



# Stewards Needed to Monitor Western Bluebird Nestboxes

By Naira Johnston

It is not long ago that Western Bluebirds nested on southeastern Vancouver Island. In fact, they used to be seen year-round in the 1960's, over-wintering in places such as Rocky Point Military Base (Trotter, 1985). The Victoria Christmas Bird Count reported 59 individual Western Bluebirds in 1964. Between 1966 and 1979, these birds were noted to be quickly disappearing. Probable factors involved in this coastal population's decline were the widespread removal of dead trees and the arrival of the European Starling, which increased competition for nesting spaces (Beauchesne *et al.*, 2002). The use of pesticides for farming may have altered the amount of prey items available for feeding their young, contributing to nest failure.

By the time that it was brought to people's attention that the Western Bluebird was on a decline, it was too late. The last Western Bluebird population was located on Mount Tuam of Salt Spring Island (Palmateer, 2004 pers. comm.). Despite the huge effort by dedicated naturalists such as Harold Pollock, Calvin Trotter, and Calvor Palmateer, all of whom provided nestboxes for them throughout the 80's, the last of the coastal population of Western Bluebirds dwindled from 16 pairs to 1-2 pairs by the early 1990's. The last few pairs had nest failure due to a cold and wet spring and have since disappeared from breeding around Vancouver Island (Pollock, 2004 pers. comm.).

It is hypothesized that the once abundant population dropped to a level too low to support a viable population (Pollock, 1986). Despite the effort to support them through a nestbox program, it is believed that too few individuals remained from this resident population to be able to withstand any amount of mortality (Pollock and Altman, 2004 pers. comm.).

The coastal population to the south has made a rebound with the help of a nestbox program. At Fort Lewis, just south of Seattle, Washington, the dwindling population made a rebound from one pair in 1981 to 160-175 pairs in the 1990's (Beauchesne *et al.*, 2002). This example of population recovery provides optimism for an expansion to Vancouver Island as the population expands, and a need for nestboxes to be in place to welcome migrants. There was a sighting of a male Western Bluebird around Mount Tuam on Saltspring Island reported to the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre this past April. It is our hope that, with the support of a network of nestboxes accompanied by monitoring stewards, enough birds return to the Island to re-establish a healthy population. An attractive feature of the Western Bluebird, besides their brilliant plumage, is that they take readily to nestboxes (Altman, 2004 pers. comm.).



Western Bluebird. Photo: Mike Yip

Sixty nestboxes will be put up at eight historical Western Bluebird sites around southern Vancouver Island. In some places, nestboxes that were used in the past will be assessed and used if they are still in good shape. The sites outside of the Victoria area are: Mount Tuam on Salt Spring Island, Matthews Point Park on Galiano Island, Nanoose Canadian Forces Experimental and Test Ranges and Mount Tzuhalem near Duncan. Stewards are being organized for these sites through local naturalist groups.

Stewards are needed for the sites located around Victoria. These sites are: Mount Finlayson, Mount Wells, Mill Hill and Lone Tree Hill Regional Park. Stewardship involves checking nestboxes once a week from the months of early February to early September. Groups of stewards could share the task of visiting nestboxes at a site. A stewardship package containing a map of the site, the monitoring protocol, and contact information, will be provided to all stewards. Stewards will also be needed from members of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory to monitor nestboxes located in the west meadow at Rocky Point in Metchosin. Anyone interested in becoming a steward please contact Rick Shortinghuis at 652-3326.

It is our hope that enough birds return to the Island so that a healthy population re-establishes. However, multi-year pilot studies are currently being done around the Fort Lewis population in the hopes of reintroducing Western Bluebirds back to Vancouver Island in two to five years time if birds do

not migrate here on their own. Bob Altman from the American Bird Conservancy has been working closely with Washington and Oregon's coastal Western Bluebird populations and is organizing funding for the possibility of this international project down the road. We hope that the creation of a nestbox project in conjunction with the USA. will support a northerly Western Bluebird migration.

Support for this project comes from the University of Victoria Student Learning Internship (SLIP) Grant, the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT), the Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT), the Vertebrates Implementation Recovery Group, and from Trudy Chatwin, Rare and Endangered Species Biologist from the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.

## Cruising and the Environment

By John Defayette

There is no better joy than that of travel, unless it is enjoying our natural environment. If you are on a cruise that has a clean ship with a program for preserving the environment, so much the better! Living in Victoria, we are conscious of the possibility of an oil spill or dumping of waste in our off-shore water. However, we tend to forget how we dispose of our waste.

My wife Eloise and I have cruised a little over 300 days to most parts of the world, and have noticed the changes that the cruise industry has taken to protect the environment. When we first boarded the *MS Prinsendam*, we noticed the blue recycle box in our cabin, and the sign "Water is Precious - Please conserve it" and on deck, the three recycle containers. Passengers are encouraged to place their soft drink cans and other recyclables in the appropriate container. These containers are then placed in the hold for disposal to recycling companies on shore.

One of the biggest challenges on a large ship is wastewater management. Grey water, which comes from the galley, laundry, sinks and showers. Holland America's policy is to discharge the filtered water at least 4 miles from shore while sailing at 6 knots. The filtered grey water is also clean enough to be used for hosing down decks. Black water comes from toilets and drains. It is actually legal to discharge black water beyond a 12 mile limit, however Holland America Lines uses an advanced water purification system. The water is collected in a holding tank and then transferred into a bioreactor where the solids are separated, so that live bacteria can convert it to cellulose and gas.

Typically, bilge water will go to a holding tank and be treated before discharge. Ballast water will be discharged as required. The problem with ballast water is that it may contain organisms foreign to local waters. Several solutions are

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Palmateer, Calvor. September 2004. Former Western Bluebird Trail Coordinator, Victoria, BC.  
Pollock, Harold. April 2004. Former Western Bluebird Trail Coordinator, Victoria, BC.



Photo: John Defayette

being studied such as ultraviolet light, ultra filtration, chemical treatment, and disposal ashore.

Concern for the environment is not limited to the operation of the ship. We have also seen notices on board ships: "Please do not feed the birds" and "Please do not throw anything overboard". If only the passengers would heed, then the waters that we cruise will remain clean and beautiful.

Jim Farrell 477-7291



# Birding with Hank

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Flying to Calgary from Victoria takes less time than it does to get to Vancouver via BC Ferries. So when an opportunity arises to get away, I take flight. Not a hard choice to make, especially when I know there is a good opportunity to renew old acquaintances at my destination. I always try to include one or two days of birding when I travel to an unfamiliar city. That way, it allows new additions to be added to my out-of-province bird list. Many of my friends that live elsewhere share a love of birds, so it was timely for me to link with a good friend from Victoria, Hank Vanderpol. He and I share a love of birds but, unlike me, he is the real expert. He and his family now call Calgary home. Hank has adjusted to the big skies of Alberta, and thoroughly enjoys the opportunity to take visitors from the west coast out birding.

My travels in late September brought me to the sprawling city of Calgary. With its wide-open spaces and splendid views of the distant foothills and Rocky Mountains, I was able to settle quickly and enjoy my daughter's new home on the prairies. My 8-day visit included several days of rest, an outing to Lake Louise, a connection with friends from nurse-training days, and a wonderful day of nature exploration with Hank.

Weather wise, Alberta can be unpredictable in the fall months. It is somewhat more challenging than coping with the moist, misty, persistent grey skies that blanket Victoria at this time of the year. During my visit to Calgary, I was to experience a wide range of temperatures that would include a balmy 22 degrees Celsius one day and then a drop overnight to minus five. Fortunately,

the sun graced Calgary with its presence most days. It bathed many of the gentle, rolling prairie fields with harvest gold. The trembling aspens by now had also turned a rich yellow, creating pockets of sunshine throughout the city. Many of the farmer's fields remained green from the substantial rain that Calgary had received this past year. Definitely not the usual dusty brown, end of season appearance, that I have experienced in the past when visiting Calgary's rival city, Edmonton. Hank and I decided to bird-watch on a day that proved to be reflective of Alberta's unpredictability. The weather changes on that day were not going to endear me to the open prairies! The variety of birds and the opportunity to see rarities more than made up for the wind, rain and bone chilling cold.

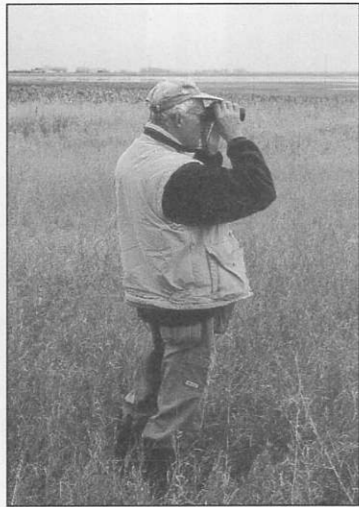
Hank, like many birders, starts his mornings early and

dedicates the entire daylight hours to his indulgence of birds. He was kind enough to pick me up just as the light of the new day was coming up, and we headed toward our first destination travelling with all the rush hour traffic. Our first stop, Inglewood, is an inner city nature/bird sanctuary. Here it had been reported recently that a Cape May Warbler and a Green Heron had been visiting the sanctuary. We spent 90 minutes wandering the pathways that meandered around the various habitats. It was not until we had almost circumnavigated the nature sanctuary that we saw the Cape May Warbler. It flitted with other small birds in an almost leafless tree. The Green Heron was nowhere to be seen, but it may well have been hiding in the tall marsh greenery. We did find 23 species of bird including three warblers. A busy White-breasted Nuthatch gave me clear looks at the differences between it and the smaller Red-breasted Nuthatch.

At one point, both Hank and I held our binocular skyward to watch a particularly distinct 'V' formation of Canada Geese honking their way across the sky, when a jet flew across our vision. It looked as though these two would surely collide. We both held our breath for a moment and then realized it was just an optical illusion. Certainly a stunning shot from a photographer's point of view and what a relief, no collision!

We headed out of town after a warm up at the local coffee shop. I was still cold; under five layers of clothing. Only the day before, in short sleeves I had basked in 22 degree Celsius weather while walking along the pathway that rounded Lake Louise. It was one of those incredibly beautiful days of fall. Lake Louise looked stunning, spiritual and

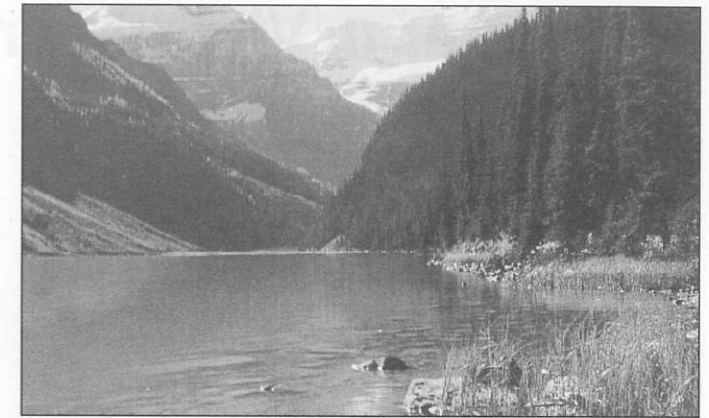
peaceful. Lunch with friends at the Chateau made the whole experience a memorable occasion. Ah! That Alberta weather! Along the small subsidiary highways that crossed the prairie landscape, we found several sloughs that afforded ducks a place to feed, sleep and dabble. Obviously, their migration had not started. Here a Western Meadowlark was calling from a farm post while a Swainson's Hawk took to the air. All the common ducks were identified. Nothing unusual presented itself, so we drove on to Langdon Reservoir. This property is protected by Ducks Unlimited. A possible Merlin had been dispatched by a larger predator, as feathers were scattered at our feet. This reservoir is a sizable body of water when flooded, however, this day the level was quite low and sand bars and small islands were evident. We were able to traverse the muddy perimeter and arrive



Hank Vanderpol

close to a large group of shorebirds on one of the sand bars. Here we found Golden and Black-bellied Plovers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Baird's, Stilt, and Pectoral Sandpipers. Long-billed Dowitchers, Killdeer and Sanderling were busy feeding. Off in the distance we found Ruddy Ducks and Tundra Swans. A low flying Northern Harrier worried the smaller birds. We studied the little 'peeps' carefully because the Rare Bird Alert in this area had reported a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and a Sabine's Gull "hanging-out" at this location. It took a great deal of scoping and intense scrutiny to finally find the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Despite the frigid wind and rain-threatening clouds above, we rambled farther around the reservoir. It wasn't long before I spotted the Sabine's Gull. It just appeared out of nowhere and alighted on the small, protected body of water close by. This was so exciting, for we had now seen three of the four rarities that had been reported over the previous two days. Feeling the cold wind penetrate at this time, we decided we should head back to the car. A hot drink was definitely something we both required. Trudging back to the car with ample mud on my shoes was hard going, but we made it before the heavens opened. The dark storm clouds had really moved in.

It took a little while before we found just the right way-side cafe. The scent of different coffees met our approval as our chilled nostrils inhaled the aroma. Ample sized couches and armchairs scattered around the room greeted us as we settled down to get warm. The hot beverage and snack we chose were the very thing to power up the next leg of our adventure. It wasn't long before we were driving down those prairie roads again. A few more duck species and raptors were spotted out in the fields. Eventually, two small sloughs on either side of the country road caught our interest. At the precise location that Hank idled his car I noticed from my side of the car a large bird, an American Bittern, sauntering slowly up the far side of the roadside ditch. I was so excited that I could barely get the words out to catch the attention of Hank who was looking the other way. This bird stood



Lake Louise. Photos: Marie O'Shaughnessy

posturing as Bitterns generally do. I believe it was as surprised to see us as we were of finding it. We had great looks as it flew slowly up over the wire fencing and into some marsh plants that provided cover. In the late afternoon light, its bright greenish-yellow legs trailed behind its languid body. Hank and I hooted in glee as we drove away. The Bittern was Hank's first for the year, and mine too.

A last look at a relatively large slough on our way back to the city gave us glimpses of Eared Grebes, Lesser Scaup, Barrow's and Common Goldeneye, Buffleheads and Redheads. This body of water was teeming with activity. The daylight was disappearing fast. We needed to be heading back to Calgary. Of the duck species we had expected to find, we missed the Canvasback and Ring-necked Duck. Our wrap-up encounter with birds included a jostling between a light coloured Merlin and Harrier over the prairie fields. The Merlin wasn't going to be intimidated by the larger raptor. Eventually both flew off in separate directions. Hank and I recounted our experience of the day. Fifty-three species wasn't bad for a cold September day in Alberta. We smiled all the way back to the city, finally warm in Hank's car.

## Welcome to New Members

**Trudie Fellner**  
Newport Avenue  
*birds, botany*

**Oriane Lee Johnston and Brian Fryer**  
Brooke Street  
*birds*

**Patricia Ty and Ian Graeme**  
Dean Avenue  
*greenways, conservation in urban design*

**David Greer**  
Windsor Road

**Frances Gundry**  
Niagara Street  
*birding, botany*

**Jane Hunter**  
Resthaven Drive

**Suzanne Huot**  
Cloake Hill Road  
*birds, photography*

**Denise Kendall**  
Erskine Lane  
*anthropology and marine*

**Mike and Wynne Miles**  
Island Highway

**Lani Royce**  
Wordsworth Street  
*birds, marine life*

**Bayla Schecter**  
Taylor Street  
*birds, marine tide pools*

**Robert and Margaret Shepherd**  
Parkside Crescent

**Juliet Simon**  
McKenzie Avenue  
*birds, hiking, botany*

**Mitchell Temkin and Sarah Weber**  
Hewlett Place  
*birds*

**Ken Gibbard**  
Narvaez Crescent  
*marine, conservation*

**Sherry Kirkvold**  
Gladstone Avenue

# John Muir in Victoria and Alaska

By Bruce Whittington

In May of 1879, the ardent and irrepressible naturalist John Muir arrived in the young colonial town of Victoria. He wrote admiringly of the English charm, and the profusion of bloom in the gardens he encountered. But Muir was not in Victoria to stay; he was on a voyage to Alaska.

Muir had become fascinated with the rounded and gouged landscapes of his beloved Yosemite, in his home state of California. He was intrigued by a new and controversial theory that these landforms in sunny California might have been carved by the actions of glaciers. Many scientists ridiculed the idea, claiming that rivers of ice could in no way have shaped the rocky ramparts of Yosemite.

Muir was convinced though, and he decided he must see the glaciers at work, and so he booked the first of several voyages to the glaciers and icefields of Alaska.

On his short stay in Victoria, Muir noted the "wild roses, blooming in wonderful luxuriance along the woodland paths, with corollas two and three inches wide." But the eyes of the naturalist were also drawn inexorably to Victoria's landscape:

*The Victoria Harbor is plainly glacial in origin, eroded from the solid; and the rock islets that rise here and there*

*in it are unchanged to any appreciable extent by all the waves that have broken over them since first they came to light toward the close of the glacial period. The shores also of the harbour are strikingly grooved and scratched and in every way as glacial in all their characteristics as those of new-born glacial lakes.*

A naturalist walking the shores of Victoria today can see the same evidence of the glaciers that stirred Muir in 1879. Across Menzies Street from the Parliament Buildings, magnificent grooves still give mute proof of the grinding and polishing force of the continental ice sheet. Along Dallas Road, there are many exposed outcrops that bear the same glacial striations. On the rocky beach in the Chinese Cemetery, a huge boulder, anomalous perched atop the local bedrock, lies where it was dropped by the melting ice that had carried it, who knows how many kilometers.

The continental ice sheets left southern Vancouver Island about 13,000 years ago, but as Muir noted, some of the effects on the landscape have endured almost unchanged. Other elements have changed of course, like the profusion of plants Muir also took note of.



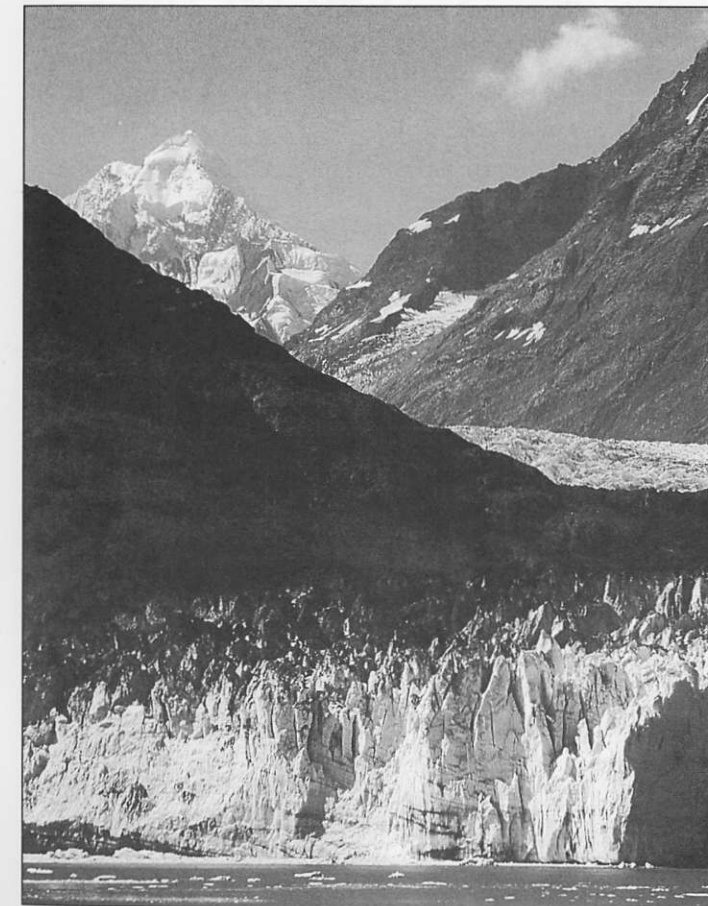
The Johns Hopkins Glacier is named for the university where some of the theories about glacial landscapes were proposed. It is born among the peaks of the Fairweather Range, and is one of the few glaciers in Alaska which is currently advancing. Photos: Bruce Whittington

Alaska is famous for its glaciers but, like the ancient ice sheets, the glaciers are almost all receding, melting back from landscapes they covered in the past. A visit to the glaciers of Alaska is an opportunity to see what a glaciated landscape looks like when the ice has recently receded.

Adjacent to the glaciers, the rock is bare, with scatterings of gravel left by the melting ice. In some places, the deposits of gravel are deeper, sometimes carried into the alluvial fans created by streams of meltwater. What is remarkable, though, is the rapid succession of plant communities following the retreat of the ice. At the Mendenhall Glacier near Juneau, forests of cottonwood trees stand on gravel beds that were covered by ice only 75 years ago.

Glacier Bay National Park provides one of the most compelling pictures of the rapid and recent change. When it was visited by Capt. George Vancouver in 1794, Glacier Bay was not a bay at all, but a very large glacier. By the time John Muir visited some 85 years later, the glacier had receded about 80 kilometers from the point where Vancouver had so carefully charted its looming face. The retreat of the glaciers continues today.

The effects of these valley glaciers may vary by degree from the effects of the more massive continental ice sheets,



When John Muir visited Glacier Bay, the Margerie Glacier was only a tributary of the Grand Pacific Glacier that filled the bay. As the Grand Pacific receded, the Margerie became separate and now reaches tidewater on its own. Mount Salisbury is in the distance.

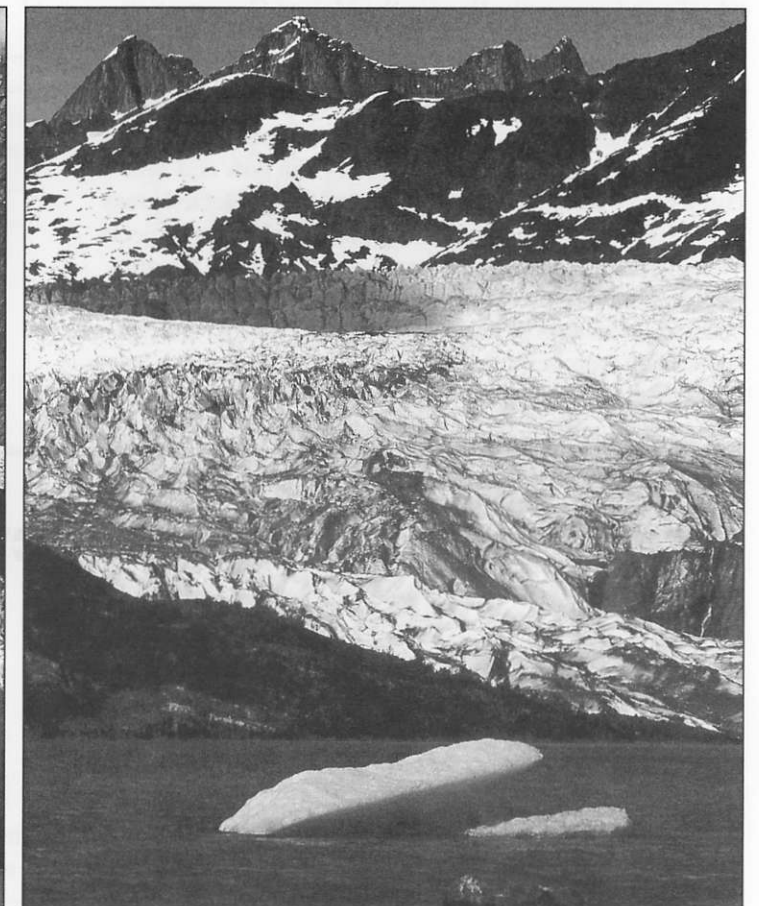
but still the results are the same. The polished and rounded rocks of Glacier Bay look strikingly familiar to a visitor who has spent time in Beacon Hill Park. The gravel outwash plains are similar to those of our coastal rivers. The difference is that in Alaska, it is still possible to feel the chill air that rolls off the glaciers, to see the Black-legged Kittiwakes foraging along the glaciers' faces, and to hear the rumblings and grumbings of the ice that never sleeps. And sometimes, a visitor can watch as a pinnacle of ice breaks free from the mother glacier, and falls with a thundering crash into the sea.

These are things we cannot see in Victoria today, but we can come close to understanding what our landscape was like before our species settled again on these shores, by following in the wake of John Muir's steamship and dugout canoe, following him back in time to the glaciers of Alaska.

## Reference

Muir, John. 1998. *Travels in Alaska*. Mariner Books, Boston.

Join Bruce Whittington for a slide-illustrated talk about the glaciated landscapes of Alaska and Victoria at the VNHS Natural History Night, Tuesday Feb. 8 at 7:30 in Room 159 of the Fraser Building at UVic.



The Mendenhall Glacier descends from the massive Juneau Icefield, but in recent years it has receded several kilometers. Today its face is stranded on the shores of Mendenhall Lake.

# HAT Tricks

By Todd Carnahan, HAT Stewardship Co-ordinator

It has been another great year for Habitat Acquisition Trust! We scored another HAT Trick in 2004 with three outstanding projects: The Matson lands acquisition, the Mill Hill Good Neighbours project, and another season of the Goldstream Chums program.

The Matson lands, located on Victoria Harbour, feature the last stand of Garry oaks visible from ships entering the protected waters. HAT will own and manage the Conservation Area as the result of a visionary partnership agreement involving HAT, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Mandalay Developments Ltd., and the Township of Esquimalt. We are planning restoration activities there with the goal of creating a high profile ecological stewardship demonstration site. HAT's Acting Executive Director Jennifer Eliason is optimistic about the educational opportunities that this site presents: "Visitors will soon be able to enjoy the spring wildflower display from an accessible walkway with interpretive displays". Contact HAT (see below) if you would like to participate in this winter's weed whacks and native plantings in the Matson Conservation Area.

HAT's Good Neighbours Project at Mill Hill Regional Park is the third in a series of projects promoting private land stewardship around sensitive natural areas. Thanks to our partnership with CRD Parks, HAT can now add Mill Hill's Garry oak meadows to its list of five protected areas in the CRD benefiting from our Good Neighbours projects. We delivered fifty-seven property assessments in the area, focusing on naturesscaping, water efficiency, composting, pesticide elimination, and weed control. "Many residents we spoke with were relieved to find solutions to their landscaping headaches", said Andrew Uhlman, HAT's stewardship

officer. The new Crystalview Elementary School has also joined our growing list of stewards, with naturesscaping plans for this winter.

Finally, we have enjoyed working with the staff at the Goldstream Nature House during another inspiring salmon run at Goldstream Provincial Park. Goldstream Chums is a fundraising program to subsidize salmon run school programs through sponsorship by local businesses. This year, Goldstream Chums provided more than 5000 school children the opportunity to witness this annual spectacle of life and death. With no provincial government funding, local businesses and participating schools shared the interpretive program costs equally.

Volunteering once a week at Goldstream, I was amazed by the students' curiosity and excitement. They were fascinated to discover that the young salmon fry depended on the adult salmon's crucial sacrifice to complete their life cycle.

After writing fervent and fruitful funding proposals this fall, HAT is gearing up for a series of exciting stewardship projects in the coming year. In 2005 we'll be at Victoria elementary schools planting Garry oak meadows with students. We'll also meet with dozens of landowners to encourage stewardship activities at home and in local parks. Volunteers form the backbone of our organization. If you are interested, please call 995-2428, or visit our website to find out more: www.hat.bc.ca.

Finally HAT would like to thank all of our supporters who have endorsed our work by renewing their annual memberships. Members are now establishing monthly contributions to provide vital continuity in this challenging financial climate. Thank you! Your donations are changing minds and protecting habitat in the CRD.

## More Re: "Facing Extinction: The B.C. Bellybird"

By David Stirling

The B.C. Bellybird, officially the Garbage Gobbler, was created by C.P. Lyons, BC Parks, way back in the late 1950's. Perhaps few people are aware that the Bellybird had a child, the Junior Gobbler, pictured here. This was a neat, paper, litter bag, designed to hang on the inside door handle of your car. Quantities of the Junior Gobbler were obtainable free with a free B.C. road map from Tourist and parks offices, and even your local garage. Since the sedentary Garbage Gobbler, alias Bellybird, is now endangered and the Junior Gobbler is extinct, only a massive recovery program by the provincial government can save the old fossil.



# Letters

Dear Members of the VNHS,

I recently received notification from the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Victoria that I have been awarded the Alice M. Hay Scholarship for 2004/05. I am writing to thank the Victoria Natural History Society for this scholarship. As tuition fees have increased in recent years, this scholarship is greatly appreciated to help me meet these rising costs.

I am a graduate student working on my second year of my MSc. degree in Biology. Working with Dr. Alan Burger, I have been studying aspects of Marbled Murrelet habitat and conservation on southwestern Vancouver Island. The primary objective of my research is to identify the habitat requirements of Murrelets at-sea and relate these to inland/forest habitat requirements of this species. In 2004 I conducted field research on issues surrounding Murrelet marine

habitat in Pacific Rim National Park. 1) I studied the foraging behaviours of Murrelets at 12 locations in the Park. 2) I used surveying equipment to map out fine-scale distributions of Murrelets at-sea. 3) Boat surveys were conducted to look at Murrelets associations with schooling fish which were surveyed with depth sounders.

My field season was a great success and I have begun to compile and analyze these data. I recently presented some preliminary results at a Canadian Wildlife Service meeting in Victoria and a symposium at the University of Victoria. In the future, I would be more than happy to present my research to VNHS members at one of the natural history nights.

Thanks again for your scholarship support.  
Sincerely,  
Rob Ronconi, MSc. Candidate, Dept. of Biology

The VNHS contributed financially to the Salmon Run school programs held at Goldstream this past fall. Below are some letters from Millstream School students thanking us for the support. They have not been edited!

Dear Sir  
Thank you for giving money  
to Goldstream Park. My favorite  
part was when we saw the fish spawn.  
Sincerely yours,  
Christina T.

Dear sir,  
I liked seeing inside of the  
salmon. I liked the swim bladder,  
the brain, and the heart. Thank you for  
donating money so we could go.  
Paul's Hully,  
Hayne's

Dear Sir or Madam,  
I liked the Salmon program.  
I really liked the dissection.  
Thanks a lot. You should  
go with your family's some time.  
Sincerely,  
Anna P.

Dear sir or Madam  
I had fun at Goldstream  
I would love to go back  
Thank you for donating  
money for us to go  
there. I liked seeing  
the salmon.  
yours truly  
Brooke M.

Dear Sir or Madam,  
I had a fun time at  
Goldstream. I liked the  
dissection. Thanks for giving  
money to the park.  
Yours truly  
Devon K.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held September-April on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.); **Natural History Presentations:** 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; **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

**Saturday, January 1**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### *Happy New Year! First Birding Trip of the New Year.*

A great excuse to start a new bird list. Join **Bill Dancer** for a birding walk in the Layritz Park, Broadcast Hill, Viaduct Flats, and Quick's Bottom areas. Wear good hiking boots and bring a lunch. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Layritz Park, which is off of Wilkinson Avenue via Glyn Road. Call Bill Dancer at 721-5273 if you need more information.

**Tuesday, January 11**

#### NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

##### *"Keeping Our Community Green"*

Several parcels of land in Greater Victoria have been considered surplus to the needs of the Federal government, and are under threat of being sold for possible development. These lands represent some of the unique ecosystems on southern Vancouver Island and are worth preserving. Members of the VNHS Green Spaces Project and the Coalition for the Preservation of Federal Lands in Colwood and Metchosin will be talking about these lands and what we can do to help preserve them. Everyone welcome. Bring your coffee cup and a friend. 7:30 p.m., Fraser 159, University of Victoria.

**Sunday, January 16**

#### FIELD TRIP *Birding Island View Beach*

This is a great spot in the Victoria area to see Black Scoters, Red-throated Loons and Long-tailed Ducks, among the many species of seabirds here. A good variety of passerines can be seen in the different habitats away from the waterfront, maybe even a Northern Shrike. Wear your woolies because the breeze can be brisk. Drive all the way to the end parking lot for a 9:00 a.m. start. Leader TBA.

**Tuesday, January 18**

#### BOTANY NIGHT *\*\*Note location change\*\**

##### *"Andy's Adventures in the Argentinean Andes"*

Andy McKinnon, co-author of our well-worn copies of "Plants of Coastal BC" books, will present on his recent journey to the southern hemisphere. Everyone welcome and, even though the room holds many people, you'd better get there early for the best seats! 7:30 p.m., Elliott 167, University of Victoria.

**Saturday January 22**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### *Birding Oak Bay-Victoria Waterfront by Bicycle*

Discover the joy of birding by bicycle. No traffic jams. No time

wasted stuck in noisy vehicles. No greenhouse gas emissions. Burn calories rather than fossil fuel. Join **Jan Brown** and **Alan MacLeod** for a morning of bicycle birding from Cattle Point to Ogden Point. We'll find many of Victoria's winter seabirds along the route in addition to whatever landbirds happen to cross our paths. We'll finish at the Ogden Point breakwater, then – for those who are interested – stop for coffee and muffins at the Ogden Point Cafe. Remember your helmet and bicycle lock. One-way distance is approximately 12 km and you are on your own for the return trip. Phone Alan or Jan at 382-3854 to sign up or for more details. Meet at Cattle Point at 9 a.m. Rainout date: Sunday Jan 23.

**Wednesday, January 26**

#### BIRDERS' NIGHT *"Reading the Arctic Land"*

**Page Burt**, a long time resident of the north, will present a slide-illustrated program about her home. Birds, mammals and colourful flowering plants will be featured, as we enjoy the brief summer in the Arctic landscape. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and your coffee cup. 7:30 p.m., Fraser 159, University of Victoria.

**Saturday, January 29**

#### FIELD TRIP

##### *Natural History Field Trip to East Sooke Regional Park*

Visit East Sooke Park, Alyard Farm location, for a walk through the forest and along the seashore. We will have a leisurely look at the trees, other plants and animals of the coastal Douglas fir and western hemlock forest, and then we will amble along the coast to view the ocean and geology of the park. A variety of forest and hedgerow birds should be seen, and sea birds should be easily seen because of the high tide. Rocks along the shore show some interesting geology. Please meet at the Alyard Farm parking lot in East Sooke Park (at the end of Becher Bay Rd.) at 10:00 a.m. We will spend up to 4 hours at the Park. Bring warm clothing, good walking shoes, water and a snack. Contact **John Henigman** (598-6326) if you need additional information or to arrange car-pooling.

**Monday, January 31**

#### MARINE NIGHT

##### *"Structure and Ecology of Coral Reefs: Rasdhoo Atoll, an Example from the Indian Ocean"*

**Matt Stoeckle** is a passionate diver and underwater photographer who has worked in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and dived in the Caribbean and Red Sea extensively. His illustrated talk will cover aspects of what coral reefs are made of, how they arise, and what lives in them. Matt has a Masters in marine biology and is presently working at the University of Victoria toward his PhD on how deep-sea invertebrates disperse. Join us at 7:30 p.m. at Swan Lake Nature Centre.

### FEBRUARY

**Sunday, February 6**

#### FIELD TRIP *Boundary Bay and Raptors*

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** and **Jeremy Gatten** for a trip to Boundary Bay. We can expect to see large flocks of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. Highlights will be Snowy Owls, Barn Owls, and maybe a Gyrfalcon and a Short-eared Owl. Car-pooling will reduce costs to approximately \$35-\$40 per person. Meet on Elk Lake Drive opposite the entrance to Beaver Lake Park at 6:00 a.m., we will return on the 5:00 p.m. ferry, dress warmly and bring a lunch. To register call Rick at 652-3326.

**Tuesday, February 8**

#### NATURAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

##### *"Why Are Icebergs Blue?"*

The glacial landscapes of Southeast Alaska offer spectacular insights into water in all its manifestations, and intriguing clues about what southern Vancouver Island looked like long ago. Join Holland America Lines naturalist **Bruce Whittington** for a slide-illustrated visit to one of the largest contiguous protected areas on the planet: Glacier Bay. Everyone welcome. Bring your coffee cup and a friend. 7:30 p.m. Fraser 159, University of Victoria.

**Sunday, February 13**

#### FIELD TRIP *Birding Cole's Bay on the Saanich Peninsula*

Join **Barbara Begg** in birding this CRD Park on the Saanich Inlet. There will be a variety of seabirds on the water, along with passerines in the forest and hedgerows away from the waterfront. Meet in the parking lot at 9:00 a.m. To get there, take West Saanich Road north of McTavish Road, turn left on Ardmore Drive, and a second left on Inverness Road. Call Barbara at 656-5296 if you need more information.

**Tuesday, February 15**

#### BOTANY NIGHT *"Members' Night"*

Here is your chance to get identifications on some mystery plants, showcase your talents, and brag about your botanical adventures. Please let **Adolf Ceska** know ahead of time that you're interested in

presenting: 477-1211. It all starts at 7:30 p.m. at the Swan Lake Nature House. Everyone welcome.

**Saturday, February 19**

#### FIELD TRIP *Birding Rithet's Bog*

Join **David Allinson** for a birding walk around Rithet's Bog. There should be a good diversity of wintering and local passerines and waterfowl. Meet at the information kiosk on Dalewood Lane at Chatterton Way at 9:00 a.m. Call David at 391-1786 if you need more information.

**Sunday, February 20**

#### FIELD TRIP *Birding Elk Lake and Beaver Lake*

Join **David Kelly** for a leisurely 10 km stroll around the loop trail at Elk Lake/Beaver Lake Regional Park. This is a great location to find wintering and local passerines and waterfowl. 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 chose footwear that can take the conditions as well as the distance. Call David at 658-8669 if you need more information.

**Wednesday February 23**

#### BIRDERS' NIGHT *"Rocky Point Banding Project Update"*

It has been 10 years since the first birds were banded at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory in Metchosin. Many of our VNHS members have contributed time and effort to the banding program and will want to know what we are learning from the program. **Katie Christie** of the University of Victoria will present an analysis of the banding results to date, including early indications of trends in migratory bird numbers passing through southern Vancouver Island. Are things looking good? Everyone is welcome. Bring your coffee cup and a friend. 7:30 p.m. Fraser 159, University of Victoria.

**Monday, February 28**

#### MARINE NIGHT *"Underwater Adventures"*

**Dale Sanders** is a professional underwater photographer who has travelled the world to get those perfect shots. Due to his unpredictable schedule, his presentation was tentative at press time. Please consult the Marine Night web site <http://pacificcoast.net/~plambert/page2.html> for an update closer to the date. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend. 7:30 p.m. at the Swan Lake Nature Centre.

## BULLETIN BOARD

**What's that in your freezer?** Rocky Point Bird Observatory is accepting bird specimens for educational purposes as permitted under their federal salvage permit. Ideally, specimens should be labelled with the date and location they were obtained, but we can still use them even with this information missing. Please contact **Rick Schortinghuis**: 652-3326 or [shylo@islandnet.com](mailto:shylo@islandnet.com).

#### **Are you going on one of the VNHS field trips?**

Willing to pick up a VNHS member in James Bay? If yes, then please telephone 384-7553. Thank you for your consideration.

**Field trips every weekend:** The Capital Regional District (CRD) Parks winter nature programs calendar is available by calling 478-3344 or visiting [www.crd.bc.ca/parks/brochure2.htm](http://www.crd.bc.ca/parks/brochure2.htm).

**Marine Birds Course at Swan Lake:** The is a series of slide and video illustrated talks that is ideal for birders and naturalists interested in learning more about marine birds and bird behaviour. Discover fascinating secrets about how marine birds live and feed. The emphasis will be on unique and interesting biological and behavioural 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 24, 2005, meeting Thursdays 7 - 9 pm at Swan Lake Nature House. Cost is \$79.00 for five - 2 hr. sessions. Two shoreline fieldtrips are included. For details visit <http://webs.ii.ca/clowater/mbirds.htm>. Call Swan Lake to pre-register (250) 479-0211.



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