



The Victoria NATURALIST

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
1988

VOL. 44.4

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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Annual Dues, including The Victoria Naturalist: Junior \$2.50, Regular \$14.00, Golden Age \$13.00, Family \$19.00, Sustaining \$30.00

Published every two months by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
Contents Copyright ©1987 as credited
ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada

The Victoria Naturalist Layout & Lasersetting by
DESKTOP PUBLISHING LTD., Victoria, B.C.

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

Cover Photo

Steller's Jay by David F. Fraser

Our B.C. Bird, the Steller's Jay, as described by the Ministry of Environment and Parks, is a lively clown with an inquisitive mischievous nature and noisy call. Rumour has it that the reaffirmation of these qualities by the ministry has convinced the Steller's Jay to join politics.

In Memoriam

Sheila Mary Calvert, 1911-1987, who loved all people and things and was loved by many.



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Editorial

It was recently brought to my attention that another wild area is about to be destroyed. This time it is one of Canada's best birding spots, the CWS property at the north-east corner of Vaseux Lake. I'm sure many of our members know this spot well. At the moment the plan is an interpretation center, similar to the one at Creston, to be built right smack in the middle of this fine piece of habitat.

Personally, this is one of my favourite birding spots and I have made special trips to the area every year since 1981. Checking my notes, I see that the nests I have found here number in the hundreds. Nesting regulars include the Gray Catbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Northern Oriole, Song Sparrow and Yellow Warbler along with many others. Besides nests, nearly every species of bird found in the Okanagan can be seen at, or from this spot.

In September a portion of the area was levelled and a park-

ing lot was constructed. Construction of the center will surely result in even more destruction. I also expect that further undergrowth will have to be cleared when tourists complain of the tremendous abundance of mosquitos during June through to August. The development could begin again as early as April.

The FBCN has been notified and is looking into the matter. I hope members will write the CWS and voice their objections to this plan. The area really should be saved and an alternate site found.

Finally a short note. Many thanks to the unknown person who was picking up 6 pack connectors at Esquimalt Lagoon, Sunday Dec. 13 (during the onslaught to see the Emperor Goose). Her haul was an amazing twelve. We should all be as conscientious as she.

Just remember the picture on page 16 of the last "Naturalist".

Best wishes for the holiday season and 1988.

Mark Nyhof



Gray Catbirds at Vaseux Lake

Mark Nyhof

From the Treasurer

By John Hunter

As you are aware, it is the policy of the Society to try to meet all general expenses from general revenue.

During the month of September, the Finance Committee met to see where we will be at December 31, 1987, in comparison to the budget presented at the last annual general meeting. We thought it would be appropriate for us to share it with you.

In the table, we have outlined the budget figures (for general income and expense), the anticipated position at the end of this fiscal year, and the projections for 1988. As can be seen, our budget forecast a small income excess of \$200. In fact, we will have a deficit position of \$1,400 both for 1987 and, it is anticipated, for 1988.

It has been stated at the general meetings on several occasions that our magazine, The Victoria Naturalist, has become a very professional publication. This is not without its cost, which is reflected in the increased expenditure. Some of these costs are "one time" for the new layout and also for a promotional printing to attract new members. On the

General Expenses & Income Categories	1987 Budget		Anticipated Actual Dec. 31, 1987		1988 Budget	
	Inc.	Exp.	Inc.	Exp.	Inc.	Exp.
Membership Fees	5620		5800		6800*	
Bank Interest	450		450		450	
Victoria Naturalist Advertising	950	4000	1500	5600	1800	6000
Meetings		620		600		600
Postage, Stationery & Typing		500		1100		1200
Miscellaneous		600		800		800
Audit & Accounting		100		100		100
Affiliation Fees		1000		1100		2100*
Publications (e.g. N.G.F.G. Xmas Cards, Decals etc.)			150		300	
Excess	7020	6820	7900	9300	9350	10800
*Includes Fee Increase for F.B.C.N.		200	1400		1450	

positive side, our advertising revenue was budgeted at \$950, whereas we anticipate receipt of approximately \$1500 by year end. It is obvious therefore, that advertising must continue, as was approved at the October General meeting.

Increased production runs of The Victoria Naturalist, increased membership, and postal rate hikes will see the budgeted figure of \$500 for the year more than doubled for this year. We have allowed for a similar expenditure in 1988.

We did carry into the year a small surplus in our general account, which will be severely depleted by both this year's deficit and the projected deficit for 1988. We cannot offset the deficit with increased 1988 fees, approved at the last A.G.M., as these are earmarked solely for contribution to the F.B.C.M.

Obviously all this leads up to the fact that at the next A.G.M. your board will be seeking approval for a further increase in fees, anticipated at \$2.00 per category, for 1989.

Hopefully, we will then be back on an even keel.

From the Board

The V.N.H.S. provides funds annually for several awards.

- (1) The Barbara Chapman Prize of \$100, won by Stephen Joly (winner chosen by the F.B.C.N.).
- (2) The V.N.H.S. Scholarship of \$400, won by Norman Olsen.
- (3) The Samuel Simca Bursaries of \$400, won by Tracey Covy and Marcel Gijssen.

The winners of these last two awards are chosen by the University of Victoria. In addition, the Freeman King Scholarship of \$650 was established at UVic and is endowed.

University fees have increased rapidly (they are approximately \$1400 now) over the past few years since these awards were established, and your board feels that we should increase each of the above amounts. Our funds are fully committed for the next two years, so we have decided to ask for donations for the scholarship fund. We are a registered charity, so we will give a receipt for income tax purposes for any donation. If you wish, you can direct your donation for a specific award. Please be generous.

Edited, with Contributions, by

Jim Weston & David Stirling

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THE
NATURALIST'S
GUIDE TO THE
VICTORIA
REGION

Botany of Island View Beach Park

A. In General

By Wilf Medd

All aspects of Island View Beach Regional Park have been, and are being, under discussion relative to a forthcoming master plan, and the botany of the park has been given particular attention. Many will remember the beautiful wild flowers growing in the sand areas to the west of the berm. It's fascinating the way the plants keep the sand from drifting and the sand somehow provides nourishment for the plants.

There is, however, serious concern, because these plants can easily be subject to abuse. Some things manage to hang together for long periods of time (algae and fungus in lichens, stars in the Big Dipper), but no great effort is required to separate this park sand from these park flowers. It's done quite easily by a bit of kicking around, after which the plants could be gone and nothing remain but large areas

of sand. Motorized vehicles, horses, dogs, inconsiderate tramping around by mankind and womankind - all this must be controlled. It means, as a minimum, fences being built around the park, walkways, foot traffic confined to the lower and middle intertidal zone or to specific trails across these areas, all sorts of signs to help gain public cooperation, and strict regulations. No vehicles, of course. If horses continue to be allowed in the park, they must be kept out of these critical areas and confined to the upper pasture area on the west side.

Precisely what are the areas concerned? They include, besides the stabilized sand flats to the west of the berm, the upper sands of the beach, the sand dunes, and the berm itself.

I had a vague notion that I was once told that some of the flowers in this park could be listed as rare, so I finally decided to go and make sure about it. And are there some rare ones? Indeed there are (see Section B). This of course makes it all the more important that these regions of the park be treated with particular care. Some of the plants listed in B we will recognize as old friends and perhaps learn to appreciate all the more. Some may be known only to the professional botanist but are no less important, and it may be interesting for the amateur to find them out.



Convolvulus soldanella

Bob Ogilvie



Abronia latifolia

Bob Ogilvie

B. The Rare Vascular Plants of Island View Beach Park

By R.T. Ogilvie, Curator of Botany, Royal British Columbia Museum

Prior to the public meeting on the master plan for Island View Beach Regional Park, I compiled a list of the rare plants of the area. The list is based on specimens in the Herbarium of the B.C. Provincial Museum. Many of the early botanists and naturalists collected in the area: C.F. and W.A. Newcombe in 1924 and 1928, G.V. Copley in 1926, V.E.L. Goddard in 1927 and 1934, J.W. Eastham in 1940, G.A. Hardy in 1950 and 1951, M.H. Melburn in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1960 and 1966, and A.S. Harrison in 1966 and 1967. A few of the collections from Island View Beach are listed in "The Flora of the Saanich Peninsula", by A.F. Szczawinski and A.S. Harrison, 1972, B.C.P.M. Occasional Paper No. 16. Most useful have been the collection records of M.H. Melburn, which are kept at the Museum.

The species included here are those listed as rare in "The Rare Vascular Plants of British Columbia", by G.B. Straley, R.L. Taylor, and G.W. Douglas, 1985, National Museum of Canada, Syllogeus No. 59, Ottawa.

Yellow sand-verbena - *Abronia latifolia*

Taper-tip onion - *Allium acuminatum*

Thrift, Sea pink - *Armeria maritima*

Harvest brodiaea - *Brodiaea coronaria*

Beach morning-glory - *Calystegia (Convolvulus) soldanella*

Twisted-pod evening-primrose - *Camissonia (Oenothera) contorta*

Big-head sedge - *Carex macrocephala*

Farewell-to-spring - *Clarkia amoena*

Saltmarsh dodder - *Cuscuta salina beach silvertop - Glehnia littoralis ssp. leiocarpa*

Fleshy jaumea - *Jaumea carnosa*

Gray beach peavine - *Lathyrus littoralis*

Howell's montia - *Montia howellii*

Least mouse-tail - *Myosurus minimus*

Dune bluegrass - *Poa confinis*

Seashore bluegrass - *Poa douglasii ssp. macrantha*

Beach knotweed - *Polygonum paronychia*

Beach sand-spurrey - *Sergularia macrotheca*

Eighteen rare species in the park is a large number for such a small area. Many of these species belong to the southern floristic element which Adolf Ceska wrote about in the March-April 1986 issue of The Victoria Naturalist. These rare plants are of special botanical importance for several reasons.

Southwestern British Columbia is the only place in Canada where many of these species are to be found. Most of them grow on the loose sands and sand-dunes of the sea-shore, a relatively restricted habitat in the province. Such habitats are also easily eroded and highly susceptible to human disturbance. Indeed, there are very few such habitats remaining that have not been disturbed by human activity.

We are fortunate indeed that these rare plants are included in Island View Beach Regional Park. The Capital Regional District management plan for the park will have a major role in the protection and preservation of these rare plants.

CRD Parks - A Report from the Conservation Committee

In Brief

The Capital Regional District parks (some 16 or 17) are being investigated in turn, presently, by the Lombard North Group (B.C.) Inc., with the objective of defining a "master plan" for each one. Presumably, definite decisions, regulations, bylaws and so on will follow, which may establish the nature of these parks for many years to come. As we go to press, Island View Beach Regional Park is under consideration. The next two will be the CNR right-of-way linear park (from a spot near Thetis Lake Park to Leachtown) and Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.

Make your considerations known. There will be opportunities for public input, but do not leave it all up to the conservation committee. The committee will make submissions, but wishes to speak for the whole society and needs your input. In the use of parks, many private interest groups or societies may speak on behalf of their own private groups, but does anyone speak for the parks -- just for the parks? At least the Victoria Natural History Society must do so.

A More Detailed Summary

In 1986 the CRD Parks Committee hired the consulting company of PRP Parks: Research and Planning to investigate all aspects of the complete CRD Parks system of the region, present and future, and make recommendations. This company published three consecutive newsletters outlining tentative plans and considerations, and invited input from the public on each one.

The Victoria Natural History Society responded in each instance, and indeed there were aspects of the contents of these newsletters that did not appear clear to us, some aspects that we disagreed with, and some that caused us serious concern.

In December 1986, after public input, things were incorporated into a Capital Regional District Regional Park System Plan, which has become Bylaw 1492. It covers each of

the CRD parks, plus further proposals, etc., and has been printed in four volumes. However, this is a draft plan, not a final one.

Now each park is being studied in turn by the Lombard North Group (B.C.) Inc. to come up with a master plan for each one, which presumably will be final. Island View Beach park has been the first one considered, and our society has made submissions by letter and at a public meeting.

The next two parks to be considered are Elk/Beaver Lake and the CNR linear park. It is important that we give this matter serious attention - particularly with respect to Elk/Beaver park - refresh our memories, check things out again first-hand if possible, collect our thoughts, and prepare to make them known. When these parks come up for consideration, the public will be informed, and any individual may of course make an individual presentation. However, the conservation committee would in any case appreciate hearing from you, as we will later be making submissions on behalf of the society.

The CNR linear park (all 26 miles of it) will of course be greeted enthusiastically by all and sundry. It seems that what has so far been seriously considered, or simply accepted as obvious, is that there should be a trail or trails for (a) walkers, hikers and joggers, (b) horses and (c) perhaps trail bicycles, which sometimes get mentioned. It may be that there are no issues to concern us as naturalists, but references have been made to "sensitive areas." We had better check it out.

There are several concerns with respect to Elk/Beaver Lake park. Decisions must be made about the future use of the park in various respects: bridle paths, dog training, possible golf course, motor boats on the lake, and so on. Are there sensitive areas? Although we are not concerned directly with beaches and picnic areas, etc., are there not natural areas that should be carefully delineated and protected?

All of the past literature referred to here about the CRD parks has been duly filed in a large cardboard box, and copies of any or all of it are available on request.

Notice to Contributors

Please submit your articles typed and double-spaced. Although we try to check all articles for grammar and spelling, responsibility for the correctness of names, dates and other data is yours, so please double-check the spelling of bird, animal and plant names, geographical names, book authors and titles, and so on. Provide captions for photos, and titles for graphs, tables, etc. Since the staff of *The Victoria Naturalist* is volunteer, we appreciate everything you can do to have your submissions ready to typeset.

Deadline for submissions: January 29

Send articles to:

Mark Nyhof
220 Beechwood Ave.
Victoria, BC
V8S 3W7

Can Sea Lions "See" Killer Whales?

By Robin William Baird

On October 12, 1987, while on a Sea Coast Expedition's trip to view sea lions and other marine wildlife at the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve, we witnessed an event which led us to pose many questions concerning the way predators see their prey, and vice versa. A single lone killer whale, X10 (see photo) was foraging in the Race Rocks area. This individual is a transient killer whale, and transients feed primarily on marine mammals - especially harbor seals, but also sea lions, porpoises and even other whales. However, as you can see from the photo, X10 is a slightly abnormal-looking individual. The dorsal fin is collapsed over the left side of the body, with the tip trailing far into the water when he surfaces. The resulting profile is so strange that when we saw him from a distance, we were not able to even see that he was a killer whale. To us, his profile, especially with the backlighting of a strong sun, was more like a gray whale or humpback whale. As we soon found out, others that day also thought he did not look like a killer whale.

When seals and sea lions see killer whales, they normally panic. On other occasions this summer we observed transients foraging at Race Rocks and elsewhere, and observed the reaction of seals and sea lions to their presence. Seals would immediately haul out onto any available reef or island once they had noticed any whales, even if that reef was ten feet away from a boat, something they would normally never do. We also observed sea lions swimming very quickly away from killer whales, porpoising through the water, and stopping in a kelp bed, alertly scanning the water.

To avoid detection by potential prey, transient killer whales

remain silent when foraging, because seals and sea lions are intelligent enough to recognize the calls of a killer whale. From observing the presence of the whale X10 at Race Rocks that day, it also appears that sea lions may have a "search image" for potential predators. That is, similar to the keenly tuned eye or ear of a birdwatcher, they can pick out an object of special interest to them from the surrounding background, such as the profile of a killer whale, and know it is a threat. They obviously are not too worried about gray whales, because they ignored X10, as if they too did not recognize him as a killer whale.

Although we only observed X10 at Race Rocks for a few minutes, we don't think he caught any prey during that time or previously, because of the lack of interest by the sea lions. Killer whales can take up to four hours just to kill an adult male sea lion, some of which reach up to 2200 pounds, twice the weight of a grizzly bear.

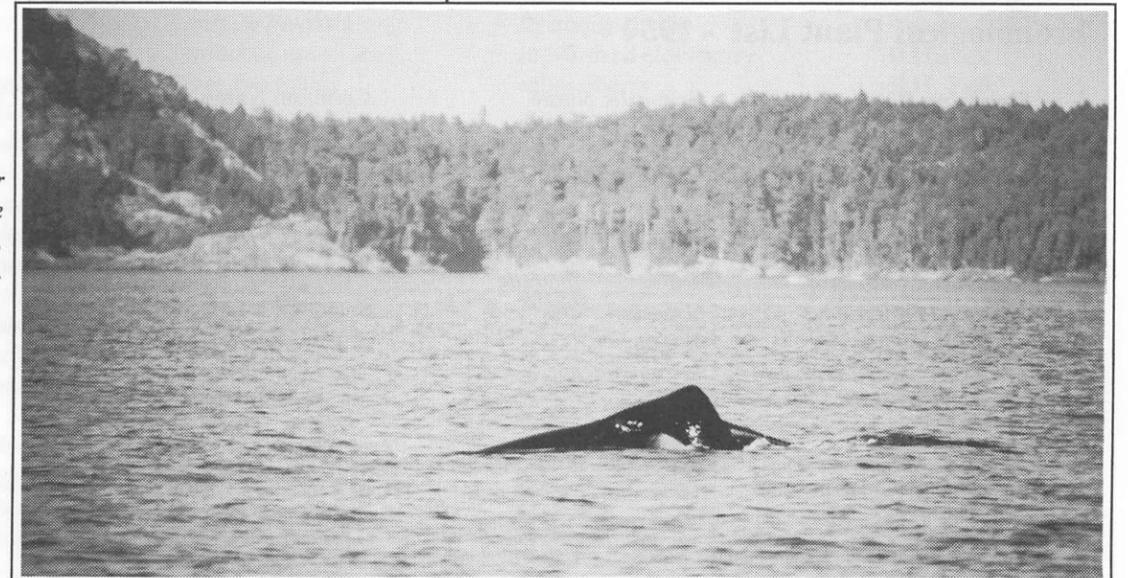
We know X10's fin has been bent over for at least a year, because when he was first seen it was like that. Some whales in captivity have bent dorsal fins, which usually come about when they are first captured, due to a lack of food or other stress. Although X10's affliction may give him a selective advantage when approaching potential prey, we couldn't help wondering if it affected his ability to manoeuvre and swim quickly. One other wild killer whale, a northern resident, has a similar dorsal fin, and is doing just fine, but he lives in a large pod whose members might assist him in food capture if needed.

X10 has only been observed a few times in B.C. and has always been by himself. Some other adult male transient whales are almost always seen by themselves, as if they have no close relatives in this area, or perhaps were kicked out of a pod.

The next time killer whales head towards a sea lion haulout, we'll have to pay careful attention to see how sea lions see killer whales.

Transient killer whale X10 at Race Rocks, October 12, 1987.

Photo by Pam J. Stacey.



Chronological Plant List

The following is a chronological list of the flowering dates of Victoria's plants, trees and shrubs. It was compiled by the late M.C.Melburn and appeared in the "Victoria

Naturalist" during 1954-55. As was done back then, the list will be featured in parts over the next 3-4 issues of the "Naturalist".

Miss Melburn did her undergraduate work at, and received her masters degree in biology from the University of Saskatchewan.



Trillium

Mark Nyhof

Chronological Plant List - 1954

Flowering Date	Family	Scientific Name	Common Name	Location
Jan. 1	Leguminosae	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	broom	Uplands
Jan. 1	Laguminosae	<i>Ulex europoeus</i>	gorse	Uplands
Jan. 1	Compositae	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	perennial daisy	Uplands Golf Course
Jan. 1	Compositae	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	cat's ear	Uplands
Jan. 15	Compositae	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	dandelion	City lawn
Feb. 2	Salicaceae	<i>Salix scouleriana</i>	scouler's willow	Uplands
Feb. 11	Salicaceae	<i>Salix sitchensis</i>	silken willow	Blenkinsop
Feb. 18	<i>Stellaria media</i> (?)	Caryophyllaceae	common chickweed	Garden
Feb. 24	Rosaceae	<i>Osmaronia cerasiformis</i>	Indian plum or bird cherry	Beach Drive at Humber
Mar. 6	Cruciferae	<i>Capsella bursapastoris</i>	shepherd's purse	Garden
Mar. 9	Betulaceae	<i>Alder rubra</i> (or <i>oregonum</i>)	red alder	Uplands Golf Cr.
Mar. 14	Iridaceae	<i>Olsynium grandiflorum</i>	satin flower	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 14	Umbelliferae	<i>Lomatium utriculatum</i>	spring gold or hog fennel	Mt. Douglas

Mar. 14	Cruciferae	<i>Cardamine oligosperma</i>	bitter cress	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 14	Saxifragaceae	<i>Saxifraga intergrifolia</i>	early saxifrage	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 14	Portulacaceae	<i>Montia linearis</i>	linear-leaf montia	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 14	Scrophulariaceae	<i>Collinsia grandiflora</i>	blue-eyed Mary	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 20	Araceae	<i>Lysichiton kamtschatcense</i>	skunk cabbage	Esquimalt Lagoon
Mar. 20	Saxifragaceae	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	red-flowered currant	Queenswood
Mar. 20	Cruciferae	<i>Brassica rapa</i>	turnip	Lansdowne Road
Mar. 21	Primulaceae	<i>Dodecatheon latifolium</i>	shooting-star	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 21	Berberidaceae	<i>Berberis aquifolium</i>	tall oregon grape	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 21	Ranunculaceae	<i>Ranunculus occidentalis</i>	western buttercup	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 21	Scrophulariaceae	<i>Mimulus alsinoides</i>	monkey flower	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 21	Liliaceae	<i>Erythronium oregonum</i>	easter lily	Mt. Douglas
Mar. 22	Geraniaceae	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	storksbill	Uplands
Mar. 24	Compositae	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	groundsel	garden weed
Mar. 28	Cruciferae	<i>draba verna</i>	vernal whitlow grass	Humber Rd.
Mar. 28	Umbelliferae	<i>Sanicula Menziesii</i>	sanicle	Humber Rd.
Mar. 28	Portulacaceae	<i>Montia perfoliata</i>	miner's lettuce	Humber Rd.
Mar. 28	Valerianaceae	<i>Valerianella congesta</i>	sea blush	Humber Rd.
Apr. 1	Liliaceae	<i>Trillium ovatum</i>	white trillium	Killarney Rd.
Apr. 1	Saxifragaceae	<i>Tellima parviflora</i>	fringe-cup	Mt. Douglas
Apr. 1	Rubiaceae	<i>Galium trifidum</i>	bed-straw	Mt. Douglas
Apr. 1	Portulacaceae	<i>Montia parviflora</i>	miner's lettuce	Mt. Douglas
Apr. 1	Juncaceae	<i>Luzula campestris</i>	wood rush	Mt. Douglas
Apr. 2	Fumariaceae	<i>Dicentra formosa</i>	bleeding heart	garden weed
Apr. 3	Cruciferae	<i>Dentaria tenella</i>	toothwort	Humber Rd.
Apr. 3	Orchidaceae	<i>Calypso bulbosa</i>	false lady's slipper	Humber Rd.
Apr. 3	Liliaceae	<i>Camassia quamash</i>	camas	Cattle Pt.
Apr. 3	Apocynaceae	<i>Vinca minor</i>	periwinkle (garden escape)	Ten Mile Pt.
Apr. 3	Portulacaceae	<i>Montia sibirica</i>	miner's lettuce	Cadboro Bay
Apr. 3	Aceraceae	<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>	broad-leaved maple	Beach Drive
Apr. 3	Hydrophyllaceae	<i>Nemophila pedunculata</i>	grove lover	Ten Mile Pt.
Apr. 7	Berberidaceae	<i>Berberis nervosa</i>	oregon grape	Queenswood
Apr. 7	Ericaceae	<i>Arbutus Menziessi</i>	arbutus	Queenswood
Apr. 7	Caryophyllaceae	<i>Arenaria macrophylla</i>	large-leaved sandwort	Queenswood
Apr. 7	Celastraceae	<i>Pachystima myrsinites</i>	false box	Queenswood
Apr. 7	Eleagnaceae	<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i>	Canadian buffalo-berry or soopolallie	Queenswood
Apr. 7	Ranunculaceae	<i>Ranunculus Bongardi</i>	small-flowered butter-cup	Humber Rd.
Apr. 11	Violaceae	<i>Viola glabella</i>	yellow violet	Humber Rd.
Apr. 11	Caprifoliaceae	<i>Lonicera involucrata</i>	fly honey-suckle	Beacon Hill Park
Apr. 11	Caprifoliaceae	<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	red-fruited elderberry	B.H.Park
Apr. 11	Rosaceae	<i>Ribes spectabilis</i>	salmonberry	B.H. Park
Apr. 11	Labiatae	<i>Nepeta hederacea</i>	ground-ivy (escape)	B.H. Park
Apr. 11	Coniferae	<i>Thuja plicata</i>	red cedar	City lawn
Apr. 11	Coniferae	<i>Pseudotsuga mucronata</i>	Douglas fir	C.H. X Road
Apr. 11	Taxaceae	yew	<i>Taxus brevifolia</i>	C.H. X Road
Apr. 11	Violaceae	<i>Viola sp.</i>	white violet	Beach Drive
Apr. 11	Caryophyllaceae	<i>Cerastium semidecandrum</i>	chickweed sp.	C.H. X Road
Apr. 11	Caryophyllaceae	<i>Spergula arvensis</i>	corn spurrey	Dallas Rd.
Apr. 16	Leguminosae	<i>Lupinus bicolor</i>	lupine sp.	Ten Mile Pt.
Apr. 16	Cruciferae	<i>Barbarea vulgaris</i>	yellow rocket	Ten Mile Pt.
Apr. 16	Primulaceae	<i>Dodecatheon latifolium</i>	shooting-star (a white sport)	Ten Mile Pt.
Apr. 16	Violaceae	<i>Viola praemosa</i>	upland yellow violet	Uplands
Apr. 17	Polygonaceae	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	common sorrel	Uplands
Apr. 17	Plantaganaceae	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	rib grass	Uplands
Apr. 18	Liliaceae	<i>Fritillaria lanceolata</i>	chocolate lily	Uplands

Wing Clipping - A Poor Solution to Domestication

By Vicki Ryland

As a haven for injured and orphaned animals, the Wildlife Reserve of Western Canada in Sidney has seen birds and mammals brought in with a variety of injuries, but recently one particular type of injury has been brought to our attention. This is the clipping of wings of various water fowl such as geese and ducks in order to domesticate them. Far too often, large parts of the wing are removed unnecessarily, causing irreparable damage. Clipping used to be a common practice for domesticating park and farm birds, but today this practice is considered inhumane by many, and better ways of attracting and domesticating water fowl have been employed with great success. Places such as game farms will grow specific grasses to induce certain birds to stay, and a constant food supply of any kind is usually enough to persuade most geese, ducks and swans to remain in a particular area.

People who live near lakes or other ideal water-bird habitats often clip birds in order to keep them around as novelty pets. Unfortunately, what most people do not understand is that there is a right way and a wrong way to clip, and if done the wrong way it can be devastating to the bird. The difference between a proper clipping and a permanently damaging one lies in which feathers are clipped and how far down on the shaft they are clipped. The ideal way to trim feathers is to clip just the top of the flight feathers of one wing. The flight feathers are the long, outermost feathers on the wing that are used for flight control as well as actual flight. Removing the tips prevents the bird from becoming air-borne. Because flight feathers are moulted once a year, this type of clipping allows the bird to regain its flying ability as soon as the new flight feathers grow in. The Wildlife Reserve has on occasion used this method in various situations such as toxic poisoning to ensure that the poisoned birds do not obtain flight. By the time the flight feathers have grown back, the bird hopefully will have reached a healthier state and can be released back to the wild.

Any clipping beyond the tops of the flight feathers usually leads to permanent damage to the wing. The most damaging act of clipping is snipping the feathers too far down on the shaft. As in human hair, the nerves of the feather are located at the base under the skin. If feathers are clipped too close to the skin, this will expose the nerves to the cold environment and, especially in the winter, the nerves will quickly die. Clipping may lead not only to a permanent loss of flight, but also to reproductive problems, particularly in males. Clipping causes a loss of balance in the bird, making it hard for the males to copulate.

In November 1987 we witnessed first-hand the problems that can occur from clipping. A resident of Mayne Island

had phoned the reserve about three Canada Geese and one Snow Goose that had appeared on the shore of her waterfront property. We were told that their wings had been clipped and the geese were unable to fly. Though bread and grain had been put out for them, they were feeding mainly off intertidal plants. Since geese are grazers, their main diet is grass, and they would probably not survive long on this new diet. In addition, their location along the shore of a high tide made them prime targets for predators such as other birds. Initially, we were surprised at the extent of the clipping and realized the damage would be irreparable. And on closer examination we discovered in all four of the geese that the wings had been cut to such a degree that parts of the bone were missing. The worst of the four was the Snow Goose, with almost half of its right wing gone. The act of removing actual bone is known as pinioning and causes far more extensive damage than just careless clipping.

The four geese are now permanent residents of the Wildlife Reserve of Western Canada. It should be noted that both the Canada Goose and the Snow Goose are a protected species, and it is illegal to maim or disable them in any way. Since new methods of domestication have been developed, clipping should only be used as a last resort by someone who is knowledgeable in the procedure. For the average person who likes the idea of having tamed ducks in their backyard, we suggest a good food supply and a little common sense.

The Wildlife Reserve of Western Canada dedicates itself to the rehabilitation of injured and/or orphaned local wildlife, and is proud to be the only privately owned wildlife reserve on Vancouver Island.



The Little Gull of Vancouver Island

By K. Taylor

The Little Gull was first recorded on Vancouver Island at the Ogden Point breakwall, Victoria, on October 24 to November 1, 1972 - a winter adult. Since that first sighting of this beautiful gull, there have been 27 more sightings, with a gradual increase until the present. In the past 5 years it has been found reliably on the Victoria waterfront, concentrated during the July-September period. One observer has had 6 to 8 observations per year in the last 3 years. The Little Gull has been observed on southern Vancouver Island in 1972, 1974, 1976, 1979 and from 1982 to 1987.

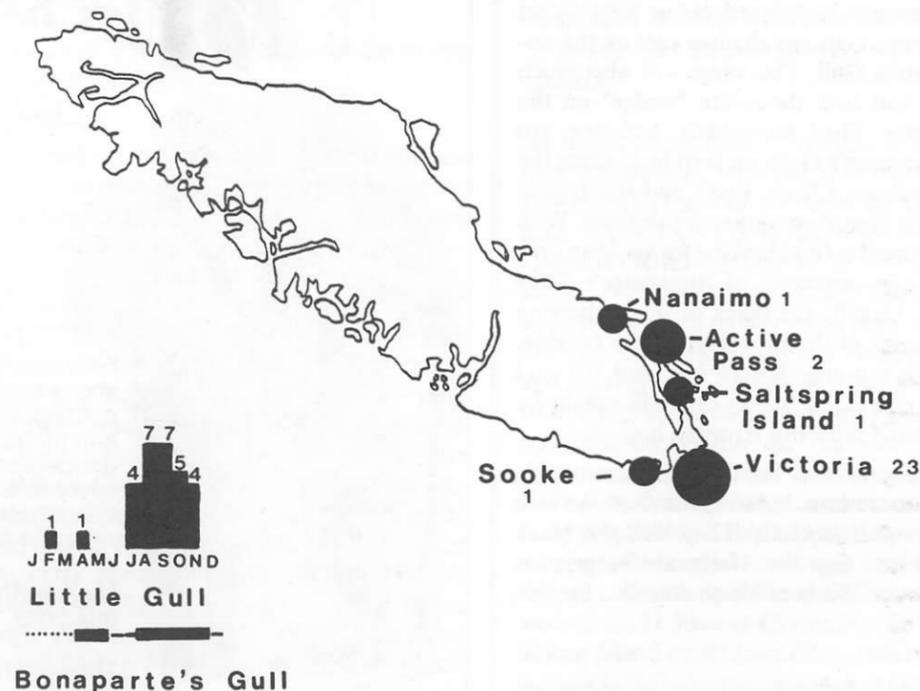
It is very difficult to determine just how many different individuals are involved in these sightings, as one bird may be recorded often over a period of time (because of staging in

this area). Over a one-week period in the month of August, 1987, three adults were recorded within the Victoria checklist area, one breeding-plumaged adult and two distinctly marked winter adults. At other times, one adult and one first-winter bird have been seen within the same week.

Little Gulls are seen feeding and resting with the similar Bonaparte's Gull (the Victoria waterfront being a staging area for Bonaparte's Gulls in the fall). The first individuals begin to gather in late June or early July (a few individuals through June), and numbers build through mid-December. However, the largest numbers become somewhat pelagic, leaving the foreshore in October through mid-December to move out into deeper water off the William Head area, forming an immense flock containing 10,000 to 30,000 birds. At this season, most can only be seen by boat or when blown in by storms. This isolation tends to drop the number of observations of Little Gulls, although individuals have been seen by boat in this flock. Little Gulls are most frequently seen when the largest populations of Bonaparte's Gulls

continued on page 14

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LITTLE GULL ON VANCOUVER ISLAND



continued from page 13

inhabit the Victoria shoreline in July through September and can more easily be checked thoroughly for Little Gulls. The graphs represent this.

In the spring most Bonaparte's Gulls in the checklist area gather at Active Pass. In fact, if this local gathering area were not known, the birds would appear to be somewhat uncommon in spring, since relatively few are seen to stop at the Victoria waterfront at this season (late March through May), although small groups are seen flying past. Because of this isolation, only one Little Gull has been recorded in spring - at Active Pass on April 5, 1983.

There is only one winter record, an adult in winter plumage, at Victoria on February 27, 1976. Bonaparte's Gulls are rare or infrequent through the winter season (mid-December to late March).

Most records of the Little Gull come from the Victoria waterfront (July 19 to November 17), with Ten Mile Point, Witty's Lagoon, William Head, Race Rocks and Colwood records. Additional records have been received from Sooke (1 record), Active Pass (2), Nanaimo (1) and Saltspring Island (1). Adults first appear in July in breeding plumage (black heads), and most adults acquire winter plumage by mid-August. All age groups have been encountered: sub-adult (1), August 30 to September 23; first-winter (3), September 17 to October 18; juvenile (1), August 29, 1982 (this and an adult in the Peace River area in summer may indicate possible breeding within the province).

Finding Little Gulls

Flying adults at any season are unmistakable, with their jet black underwings. They may be "picked up" at long range; the colour is more intense than any shadow cast on the underwing of a Bonaparte's Gull. The wings are also much shorter and rounder, and lack the white "wedge" on the forewing of that species. Most individuals, however, are found resting with Bonaparte's Gulls on kelp beds along the Victoria waterfront between Clover Point and the Ogden Point breakwall, making their discovery more difficult. With a scope, go over the primaries first, looking for uniform grey (some white) colour; the primaries of Bonaparte's Gulls show black and white. Usually the black of the underwing will show on the underside of the primaries on the far side. Other features to look for are shorter legs and bill and smaller size. In winter plumage a "dusky cap" will usually be detected first (not all birds show this strongly, however).

First-winter birds and juveniles are very dark on wing coverts and head, with more rounded wings and smaller size than similar aged Bonaparte's Gulls. They lack the black underwing of the adults. See the National Geographic Society's Field Guide to the Birds of North America for further details.

Errata

Vol.44.2: Rusty Blackbird, p.13: Female Rusty having yellow eyes and Female Brewer's having dark.

Vol.44.3: P.24, Additions: 3. Black-necked Stilt, May 2, 1987, should read May 5, 1987.

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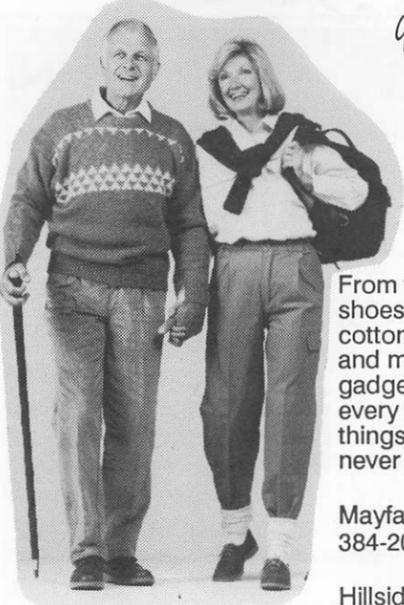
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Summary - Summer Bird Report Vancouver Island June 1 to July 31, 1987

By David F. Fraser

This is a brief summary of the 1987 Summer Bird Report (the nesting season) for Vancouver Island. The report has been compiled by several people: Loons thru Ducks (Jerry and Gladys Anderson, Mike Edgell); Vultures thru Cranes (Bruce Whittington); Plovers thru Puffins (David F. Fraser); Doves thru Vireos (David F. Fraser and Leah Ramsay); Catbird thru Finches (Lyndis Davis and Dorothy Henderson). The original report is filed at the Provincial Museum the V.N.H.S. library, and a copy is sent to the regional editor of *American Birds*.

The data for the report is extracted from sighting cards submitted from Vancouver Island birders. The report is only as complete as the information received, and birders are urged to submit sighting cards by the end of each month. Sighting cards can either be brought to Victoria Natural History Society general meetings or Birders Nights, or dropped off/mailed to Swiftsure Tours office, 119 - 645 Fort St., Victoria, B.C. V8W 1G2, or in the mailbox at 5836 Old West Saanich Rd. All cards are forwarded to the Royal B.C. Museum and used in their records.

NOTE: CSNHS = Comox-Strathcona Natural History Society newsletter.

Loons Thru Pelicans

There was one report of a BROWN PELICAN on 24 July off Whiffin's Spit, Sooke (D.Hurn).

Hérons Thru Waterfowl

Alice Elstone reported an American Bittern at Buttertubs Marsh in Nanaimo on 1 June, for an unusual summer record of this species. Two dead, newly hatched young Green-backed Herons were found under a maple tree at Cowichan Bay and were turned into the Biology Dept., UVIC (Gail Mitchell, fide DFF). Reports of BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS continued to come in from Somenos Lake, near Duncan, throughout June and July (J&GA, fide Mary and Bob Hooper), with up to 3 birds seen. A Tundra Swan was reported on 4 and 5 June at Colquitz Creek, for the first summer record for southern Vancouver Island (see Gaskin, J. 1987. *Victoria Naturalist* 44.2:1-2). A single Trumpeter Swan was reported from the Cowichan Estuary on 25 July (Barbara Begg). Two Brant lingered on into early June, with sightings at Esquimalt Lagoon on 6,7 and 8 June (Keith Taylor, J. & R. Satterfield and J&GA). Single American Black Ducks were reported on 8 June and 1 and 18 July on Esquimalt Lagoon (J&RS) and on 22 June at Witty's Lagoon, Metchosin (H.van der Pol). There were no reports this year of breeding Northern Shovellers.

Raptors Thru Cranes

A single report of a Northern Harrier was received near Week's Lake on 4 July (Gail Mitchell). There was a single sighting of a Golden Eagle perched on ledges on Mt. Finlayson and then in flight on 30 June. An adult male Merlin on 18 June at the Goldstream River estuary provided an unusual summer record (DFF). American Coots are unusual in the Victoria area in summer, so two on 6 June and one on 19 June at Elk Lake were noteworthy (J&RS).

Shorebirds Thru Terns

The earliest report of a Semipalmated Plover during this reporting period was of 2 birds on 12 July at Island View Beach, Saanich (J&GA). Lesser Yellowlegs were first reported on 5 July at the Cowichan Estuary (BW). A handful of Wandering Tattler records came in from Victoria and Oak Bay waterfront locations, with the earliest on 16 July at Gonzalez Pt. (RS). One was reported from Race Rocks on 18 July (Dave Aldcroft). Whimbrels were seen on Sidney Island, with 3 on 2 June (J&RS), 1 at the Sooke River Estuary on 6 June (KT et al.), 2 at Clover Pt on 7 June (RS), and 1 on Chatham Island off Oak Bay on 27 July (David Stirling). Several Ruddy Turnstone reports came in, 1 at Holland Pt on 23 July, 30 on 27 July on Chatham Island (DS), and 5 on Sidney Spit on 30 July (RS). Baird's Sandpipers were reported, with one bird at Esquimalt Lagoon on 16 July (Vic Goodwill), 2 on Coburg Peninsula on 18 July (RS), and 1 at Witty's Lagoon on 29 July (RS).

Terek Sandpiper

The first Canadian record of a Terek Sandpiper was reported from the Goodridge Peninsula near Sooke on 26 July (M&VG, m. obs.). Well seen and photographed (Tim Zurowski, *Victoria Naturalist* 44.2:1) by many people. This bird was reported throughout the remainder of this reporting period.

As usual, Short-billed Dowitchers arrived slightly earlier than Long-billed, with the first report of the former on 6 July (G&GA) and of the latter on 11 July (RS). Two adult male WILSON'S PHALAROPES were reported from the Cowichan River Estuary on 25 July (Barbara Begg, Gail & Stephen Mitchell). Two LONG-TAILED JAEGER reports were received - a pair of birds were seen on 10 June in Porlier Pass by Glen Smith (any Jaegers in June are unusual) and another seen by BB, Marilyn Lambert and DS off the M.V. Coho south of Victoria on 1 July. An adult Little Gull was seen on 26 July on Ten-mile Pt, Saanich, by Bryan Gates and RS. As usual for the last few years, Ring-billed Gulls were found in large numbers only at the Cowichan Estuary (e.g., 12 on 1 July reported by A&M Elstone). Several other reports came in on single birds from widely scattered lagoon and estuary locations. Three Caspian Tern reports were: 5 on 21 June at Clover Pt. (RS), 2 at Sidney Lagoon, Sidney Island on 22 June (RS), and 1 at Cordova Spit on 30 July (JG, KT). Four were seen at Trent River on 24 June, and 1 on Mitlenatch Is. (B. Brooks, fide CSNHS). The first

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Common Tern report was 1 bird on 2 June at Clover Pt. (L.G. Roberts). A single Cassin's Auklet was seen on Pedder Bay on 18 July (Robin Baird). Single Tufted Puffins were sighted from Clover Pt. and Race Rocks throughout the reporting periods (RS, RB, DA).

Doves Thru Woodpeckers

Two Common Barn-owls were seen over grass and shrubland at Island View Beach, Saanich on 30 July (DS). Common Barn-owl reports from the Gulf Islands are very uncommon, so a bird responding to a tape recording on Galiano Island on 19 July (DFF, Galiano Naturalists), and another bird seen nearly nightly all June and July at Ruckle Provincial Park on Salt Spring Island (Doug Penhale, Gwen Ruckle, DFF), were noteworthy. A Northern Pygmy-owl responded to a tape at Ruckle Provincial Park on 17 July (DFF). Barred Owls were reported during this period from 5 locations, including the first pair for Galiano Island (Dawn Christian). Two Black Swift reports were turned in, one over Cowichan Bay on 25 July (BB), and a flock of 15 over Mayne Island on 27 July (DFF).

Flycatchers Thru Vireos

J&RS reported a Western Kingbird on Sidney Island on 2 June. An Eastern Kingbird was seen at Island View Beach (J&GA). Purple Martins were reported from the Cowichan Bay nest boxes, and one was seen over Quick's Bottom on 4 July (JG KT). A Northern Mockingbird was reported this July from 2399 Dalhousie Street (M&C. Guiget).

Warblers Thru Finches

Three reports of Northern Orioles were received, 1 on June 8 at Martindale Rd., Central Saanich (LGR), 3 there on 4 July (JG,KT), and one on 14 July, Airport Rd., North Saanich (BB). Only two reports of Evening Grosbeaks were received.

Addenda & Corrigenda

The peak count of Black-necked Stilts at the old Courtenay sewage lagoons was 9 birds on May 4 1987 (CSNHS). A GREAT EGRET was at the old Courtenay Sewage Pond May 21, 1987, and for several days (CSNHS). The Fork-tailed Flycatcher in the summary of the 1987 Spring Bird Report should read Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Ruddy Turnstones in the 1987 Spring Bird Report, 1 on 9 May should read 25+ on that date.

Victoria Natural History Society Spring Field Trip Oregon Natural History - May 7 to 18, 1988

by David F. Fraser.

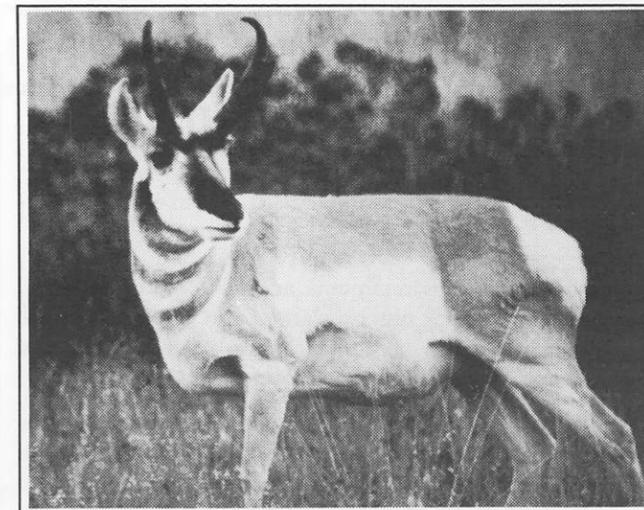
For those members and their friends who are planning to take part in the spring natural history trip to Oregon, here are some of the sights we are hoping to see.

From Victoria we'll travel through the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound to Seattle, watching for seabirds and Dall's Porpoise along the way. From here we'll travel down to Ocean Shores, a famous migration watching spot on the Washington Coast. From Aberdeen we'll head south, past the Raymond Airport, home of the northern-most breeding locale for Black-shouldered Kite. We'll then head along the shore to Astoria, Oregon, then down the coast towards Honeymoon State Park in the Oregon Dune National Recreation Area, to look at some of the unusual dune vegetation flowering at this time of year. We'll explore Pilot Rock State Park, Lava River Caves State Park and Crater Lake National Park. At these locations we'll look at evidence of the past volcanic activity of Mount Mazama, the force that created Crater Lake.

Lower Klamath and Tule Lake N.W.R. and the Lava Beds National Monument are also on our places-to-see list. Some of the birds we expect are Western and Clark's Grebes, American Avocet, Willet and Tricoloured Blackbirds. We'll travel through the Great Basin Desert proper, looking for Sage Thrasher, Sage Sparrows, Pronghorn and Black-tailed Jackrabbits.

Malheur Wildlife Refuge, here in the middle of the Great Basin Desert, is the fastest growing Lake in the Pacific Northwest - an ideal stopover spot for migrating warblers, sparrows, shorebirds and waterfowl. The checklist for the refuge reads like a checklist for western North America! Owling here can be very good, and we'll look for Great Horned, Burrowing, and Short-eared Owls. White-faced Ibis, Black-crowned Night Herons and Great Egrets are all likely species. After a supper in the historic Frenchglen Hotel, we'll night-cruise for Kangaroo mice, coyotes, mule deer and rubber boas. One of the highlights for naturalists in the Great Basin of Oregon is the driving tour of the Malheur Refuge, keeping our eyes open for prairie falcons, golden eagles and sage grouse. Some of the great basin's shrubs should be in bloom and many of its spring annuals and perennials.

At the southern end of Oregon lies the Steen Mountains and the Alverez Desert. The Steens are a picturesque and remote mountain range, one of the few places left in the lower United States that still is home to wolverines. The Alverez Desert is one of the driest places in Oregon, and is



Pronghorn

David Fraser

really more like the Sonoran deserts of California in habitat and wildlife. Here we'll look for horned lizards, black-throated sparrows and cactus. En route we'll check alkali salt flats for Snowy Plovers.

From the Alverez Desert we'll head west through the Great Basin sagebrush and creosote bush up into juniper country. This unique vegetation type is a delight to stroll through, and provided that there has been a little winter rain, should have lots of wildflowers. Here we'll keep an eye open for Plain Titmice and Pinyon Jays. As we climb in elevation and head into Ponderosa Pine stands we'll stop and look for Pygmy Nuthatches, White-headed Woodpeckers and Williamson's Sapsuckers. Time and energy permitting, we'll try looking for Poor-wills, Flammulated, Saw-whet and Great-horned Owls. We will spend time looking around the Sisters area, birding the Indian Ford Rd. and campground. Here we will look for Hermit Warblers, all three western nuthatches and Green-tailed Towhees. We'll head north to spend time birding at the Ridgefield National wildlife refuge and look for the once-nearly-extinct Columbia White-tailed Deer at the National Wildlife Refuge near Cathlamet. And these are just some of the highlights! All in all it should be an exciting trip through some of the best natural history areas in the western United States!

Want to do some homework before we go? Here is a short recommended reading list:

- Baldwin, E.M. 1964. Geology of Oregon. Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, Michigan. 165 p.
- Ferguson D. and N. Ferguson. 1978. Oregon's Great Basin Country. Gail Graphics. Burns, Oregon. 178 p.
- Jackson, D.D. 1975. Sagebrush Country. Time-life Books. New York, New York. 184 p.
- Ramsey, F. 1978. Birding Oregon. Audubon Society of Corvallis. O.S.U. Book Stores, Corvallis, Oregon. 176 p.
- Taylor R. J. and R.W. Valum. 1974. Wildflowers 2: Sagebrush Country. Touchstone Press, Beaverton, Oregon. 143 p.

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Growing Native - Garry Oak (*Quercus garryana*) in the Garden

By David F. Fraser

As houses and condominiums are built in the Greater Victoria area, rock outcrops and open field areas - and their associated flora - disappear. Rarely are Garry Oaks planted back after development is over.

This is a pity, for the great trunks and ornate branch patterns of Garry Oaks are worthy of reestablishment. Garry Oak is reportedly easily grown from seed - on those years when the insects leave some undamaged acorns (Kruckeberg 1982). This oak appears, from time to time, in our local nurseries. Dry poor soils tend to be the best sites for Garry Oak establishment, and after the initial year or two they are remarkably drought tolerant. In poorer sites, Garry Oak grows in an attractive twisted manner.

Young trees grow slowly, and forms from the Siskiyou Mountains of Oregon are especially shrubby in form (Kruckenberg 1982), as are some of the trees that grow in the rocky headlands of the San Juans and the Gulf Islands.

Acorns are not produced in large numbers every year; there is usually a two-or three-year interval between crops (Silen 1965). People intending on growing their own are advised to collect a number of acorns when a good year comes along. If you are going to store the acorns, store them in a sealed container in the freezer, as they lose their viability quickly if stored dry at room temperatures (Hartmann and Kester 1975).

Usually Garry Oak acorns will germinate almost immediately if given the proper conditions of moisture. There are no embryo dormancy or stratification problems with this species.

Garry Oak is a favourite tree with wildlife species - acorns are well liked by Band-tailed Pigeons, Steller's Jays and Red Squirrels. The corrugated bark seems to provide lots of interesting nooks and crannies for foraging Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and a variety of warblers.

In addition, natural cavities formed by the decay of old branches provide nesting and roosting sites for a variety of birds.

Literature Cited.

- Hartmann, H.T. and D. E. Kester. 1975. Plant Propagation -principles and practices. Prentice - Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. 662 p.
Kruckberg, A. R. Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest - an illustrated guide. Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver, B.C. 252 p.
Silen, R.R. 1965. Oregon White Oak (*Quercus garryana*). In *Silvics of forest trees of the United States*. U.S. Dep. Agric. Agriculture Handbook 271. p 596-599.



Bewick's Wren at nest cavity

Mark Nyhof

A Previously Unrecorded Prey Item For The Western Screech Owl (*Otus Kennicottii*)

By Robin William Baird, Screech Owl Research Institute, Victoria, B.C.

On November 9, 1987, a captive western screech owl (*Otus Kennicottii*) was observed preying on a previously unrecorded species of prey item. The owl, a male of unknown age, was observed to stalk the prey, pouncing when six inches away. The prey was grasped in the talons, and the beak was used to tear portions off. After four minutes the owl carried the prey along a horizontal perch, holding it in its beak. It then stopped and held the prey item in its talons, occasionally taking a peck. After ten minutes it was apparently satiated and dropped the prey. Upon recovery, the prey was identified as a man's wool glove. No previous records of screech owls preying on men's wool gloves have been reported. Other species of owls, including the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and barred owl (*Strix varia*) have been reported preying on men's wool gloves (Baird 1989). As the abundance of this potential prey item increases within the range of the western screech owl, such predation may become a common occurrence.

Literature Cited

- Baird, R.W. 1989. Aberrant predation in owls. *The Victoria Naturalist*. Vol 49:2

Winter and Spring Lecture Series

Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12: An illustrated talk with Rod Burns from C to C Tours. "A Mainlander's View - the Natural History of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula." Come and hear Rod talk about his experiences on the Avalon Peninsula and some of the issues of concern to naturalists there. Newcombe Auditorium, Royal British Columbia Museum. 8:00 p.m.

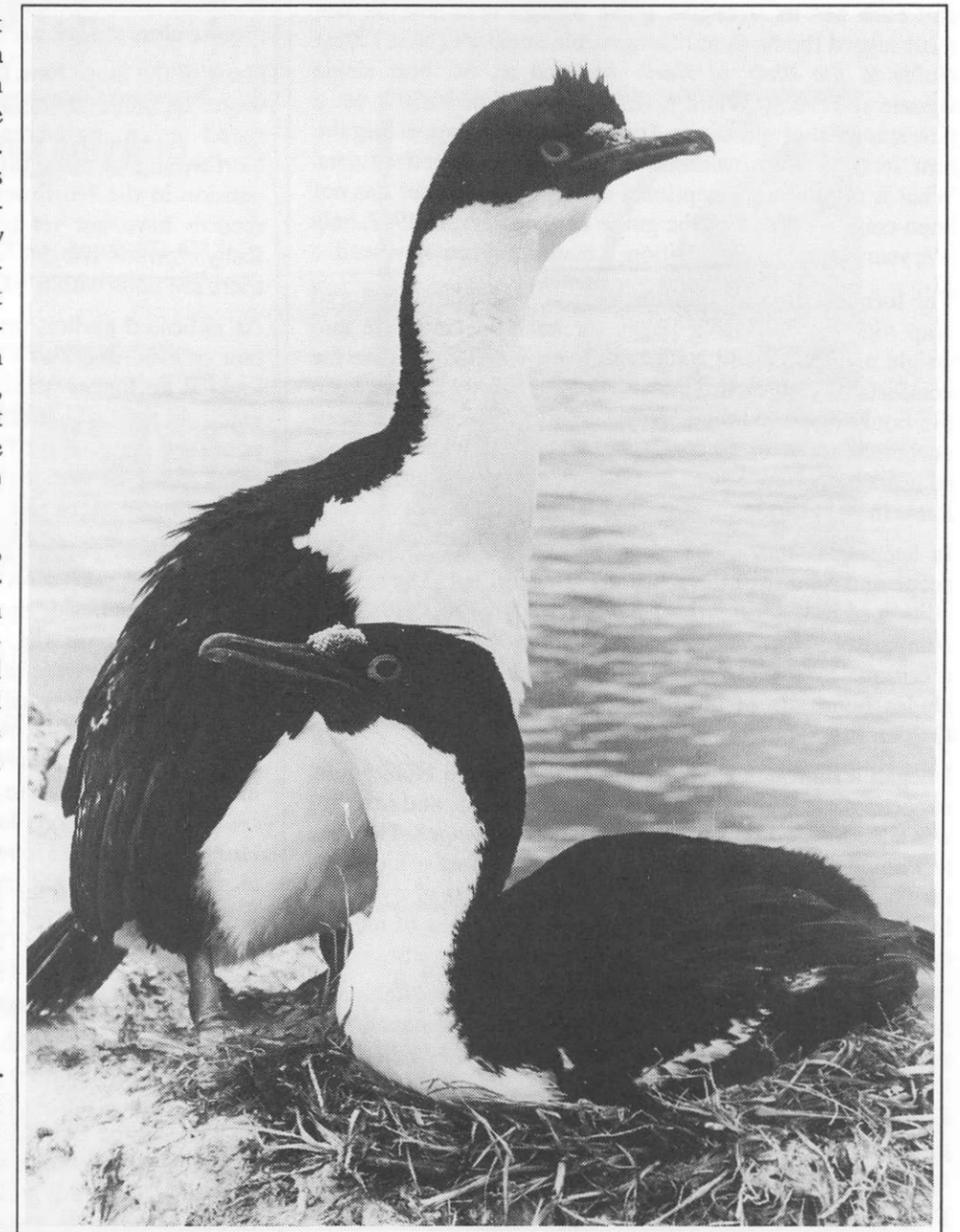
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9: Annual Banquet - 6:00 P.M. at Ming's Restaurant, 1321 Quadra St. Guest Speaker is Dr. Alan Burger, Assistant Director of the Bamfield Marine Station. Dr. Burger is an ornithologist who has worked on seabirds in both hemispheres. "Seabird Biology - a New Look at a Watery World," an illustrated talk, will deal with what we can learn about the ocean environment by studying such species as Albatross, Penguins, Cormorants and Alcids. Banquet tickets at \$15.50 are available from Connie Hawley (385-2535) or any other board member.

TUESDAY MARCH 9: "Birds, Bugs and Beasts - Natural History of Queensland, Australia", an illustrated talk with Dave Denning. Dave Denning is a well known Vancouver Island naturalist, familiar to many people as the education programmer with the Bamfield Marine Station. Dave has since moved on to film-making and video display material. With the help of slides and tape recordings, Dave will recount some encounters with fauna in Australia's Queensland area. 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium, R.B.C.M.

TUESDAY, APRIL 12: "Aphids - Tickle Them and They Sprout Wings, and Other Bizarre Facts" with Michelle Gorman. Familiar and fascinating, aphids are all around us - but how much do you

really know about them? Dr. Gorman, an entomologist with the research branch of Safer's Ltd., will talk on the bizarre natural history of these common insects. 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium, R.B.C.M.

TUESDAY, MAY 10: "The Eight-armed Giants of British Columbia" with Jim Cosgrove, from the Royal British Columbia Museum. Octopus are among the most fascinating marine animals, and Jim will be talking about some of his research on these enormous, intelligent molluscs found in our local waters. 8:00 p.m. Newcombe Auditorium, R.B.C.M.



Imperial Cormorants Marion Island Sub-Antarctic

Alan Burger

Book Review

By Bruce Whittington

Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Second Edition

Jon L. Dunn and Eirik A.T. Blom, Chief Consultants National Geographic Society, Washington, 1987

Available only from the Society and other non-profit organizations, including (usually) the V.N.H.S.

North American birders are extremely fortunate for the number, variety and quality of available field guides. There are no fewer than eight which are generally available, and each has its strengths; most birders own several. But most regard the National Geographic Society's (NGS) *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* as the best single volume reference. When it first appeared in 1983, it set a new standard of quality and convenience, incorporating the best features and avoiding the flaws of its predecessors. What is even more exceptional is that the publisher has not been content to reprint the guide as necessary; in 1987, only 3½ years after the first edition, a major revision appeared.

The format of the book is unchanged, with plates, text and map together on facing pages for each species. Size and weight are unchanged, with both being a little excessive for comfortable field use. The stitched signatures help to keep the book together under hard use. The changes have been accomplished without altering the pagination of the book, so users of different editions can refer to page numbers and know that they are looking at the same species.

In keeping with the standards set by the first edition, the scope and quality of the revisions are excellent. The revised edition of *Birds of North America* (Golden Press, 1983), by comparison, has not changed greatly, and in fact prompted a critique by Rich Stallcup (*Birds for Real*). This book includes hundreds of improvements solicited, ironically, by Golden Press, but not used in the revised edition!

I began a thorough examination of the revised NGS guide, expecting a few improvements in plates, maps, and text, but was soon bogged down by the number of changes. They are too numerous to cover completely, and in fact a high percentage of textual changes are basically matters of style. The following, then, is a potpourri of bigger changes of interest on the West Coast:

Taxonomy has been updated to include Clark's Grebe as a separate species from Western Grebe, and Red-naped Sapsucker shares full specific status with Yellow-bellied and Red-breasted Sapsuckers. Recent additions to our lists have been added, such as Eurasian Jackdaw (though most of the group which arrived on the East Coast were quickly and quietly dispatched as undesirable aliens).

Four plates have been significantly revised or redone completely. Winter plumaged loons are much better now. Both

swallow plates have been completely changed and are much more useful now in showing more birds perched; I particularly like the additional Barn Swallow variants. The cuckoo plate is also new, but will not be of immediate interest to westerners, nor will the fact that "Bigfoot", the Connecticut Warbler, now has his size 12 right foot modestly hidden behind a leaf.

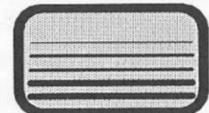
There are minor changes also, and they indicate the publisher's willingness to make corrections and improvements based on reader input. The Western Flycatcher's eyering has been made less obvious, while retaining the distinctive almond shape. The Tropical Kingbird has more prominent bill, apparently reflecting new identification information for this and the very similar Couch's Kingbird. Careful attention has also been given to the dowitchers, and the many minor changes in plumage colour and pattern will require close study.

Some of the maps have been revised as well. Virginia Rail's winter range has been expanded, and Brown Pelican is now noted as a post-breeding dispersant to the Pacific Northwest. But while the map for Barred Owl indicates expansion in the Northwest, the Vancouver Island breeding records have not yet been recognized. And the map for Ruby-crowned Kinglet would have us believe that in winter there are none within 500 miles of Victoria!

As indicated earlier, many textual changes are not important or even necessary. The Ancient Murrelet's "ancient look" is no longer "distinctive", for example. But there are many changes which reflect input from readers and recent published material (i.e.: bill shape and not bill length is now emphasized as one of the distinguishing features used in separating Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers).

With all these changes, are there any improvements left to be made? A few errors have been mentioned here. The musical notes beside species accounts which indicated that the song was on the accompanying records have been deleted (as they were in the second printing of the first edition). This is presumably because the recordings are no longer available, but owners of the first edition would still find the cross-reference useful, and at any rate the recordings should continue to be made available. I would like to see the small falcons looking less robust, and the Rufous Hummingbird and House Finch are a little garish. But we're nitpicking here; what we have is a book which has pleased almost everybody and has already been improved more quickly and completely than was asked for or expected. I'm still trying to catch up!

The bottom line with revised editions, though, is whether or not a birder can do without it. If you can afford it, you can't go wrong. If you have a good memory, you can probably get by with mental notes of the important changes, and there is no law against pencilling in new material in your present copy. If you don't have the first edition, by all means get the revised edition; it is still the best field guide in my opinion. But then again, I wonder how Peterson is doing on his revised *Western Field Guide*?



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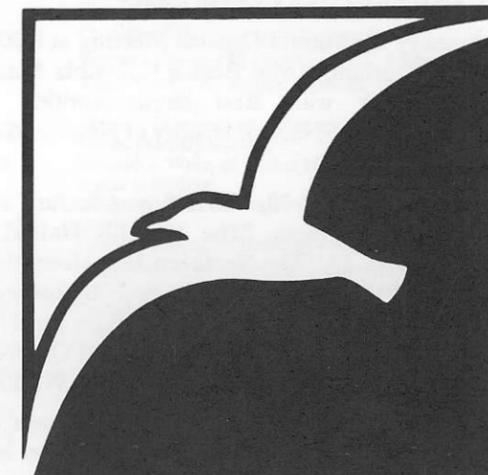
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BIRDS

of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia

by ROBERT A. CANNINGS, RICHARD J. CANNINGS,
and SYDNEY G. CANNINGS

Published by the Royal British Columbia Museum,
Victoria, B.C., Canada

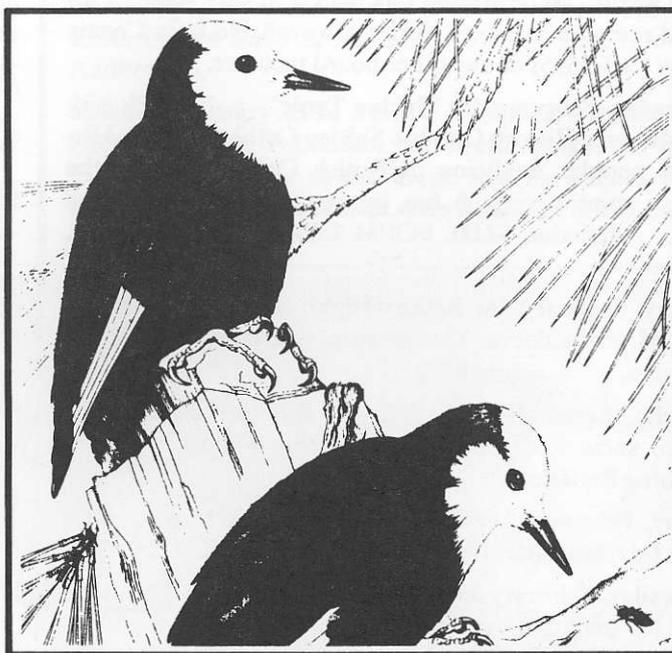
The Okanagan Valley is famous in Canada and further afield for its varied bird fauna, especially the rich mixture of northern and southern species. Seldom does a regional bird book appear with the scope and detailed analysis found in the *Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia*.

Seasonal status, habitat preferences, migration patterns, breeding biology, and feeding behaviour are discussed for the 307 species (194 breeding) recorded. The authors examined over 126,000 records from both historical and modern sources. Introductory chapters outline the Okanagan as an environment for birds, stressing the historical changes that have affected them. Included are dozens of tables and graphs, black-and-white photographs of birds and their habitats, and sketches by the well-known Okanagan ornithologist and bird artist, Allan Brooks.

Robert A. Cannings is Chief of Biology at the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, B.C. In the Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Richard J. Cannings is curator of the Cowan Vertebrate Museum, and Sydney G. Cannings is curator of the Spencer Entomological Museum.

"*Birds of the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia* is a remarkable book," says Ian McTaggart Cowan, former Head of the Zoology Department and Dean of Graduate Studies, University of British Columbia.

"The delight that the authors derive from the extraordinary variety of birds and their comings and goings with the seasons shines through in memory-stirring prose... For every bird enthusiast... this book is a must."



White-headed Woodpecker pair
(female above, male below) on Ponderosa Pine.

Robert A. Cannings 1987

420 pages + xix, illustrated, 8½" x 11",
paperback - \$27.50 CAN (ISBN 0-7718-8601-2);
clothbound - \$37.50 CAN (ISBN 0-7718-8593-8).

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