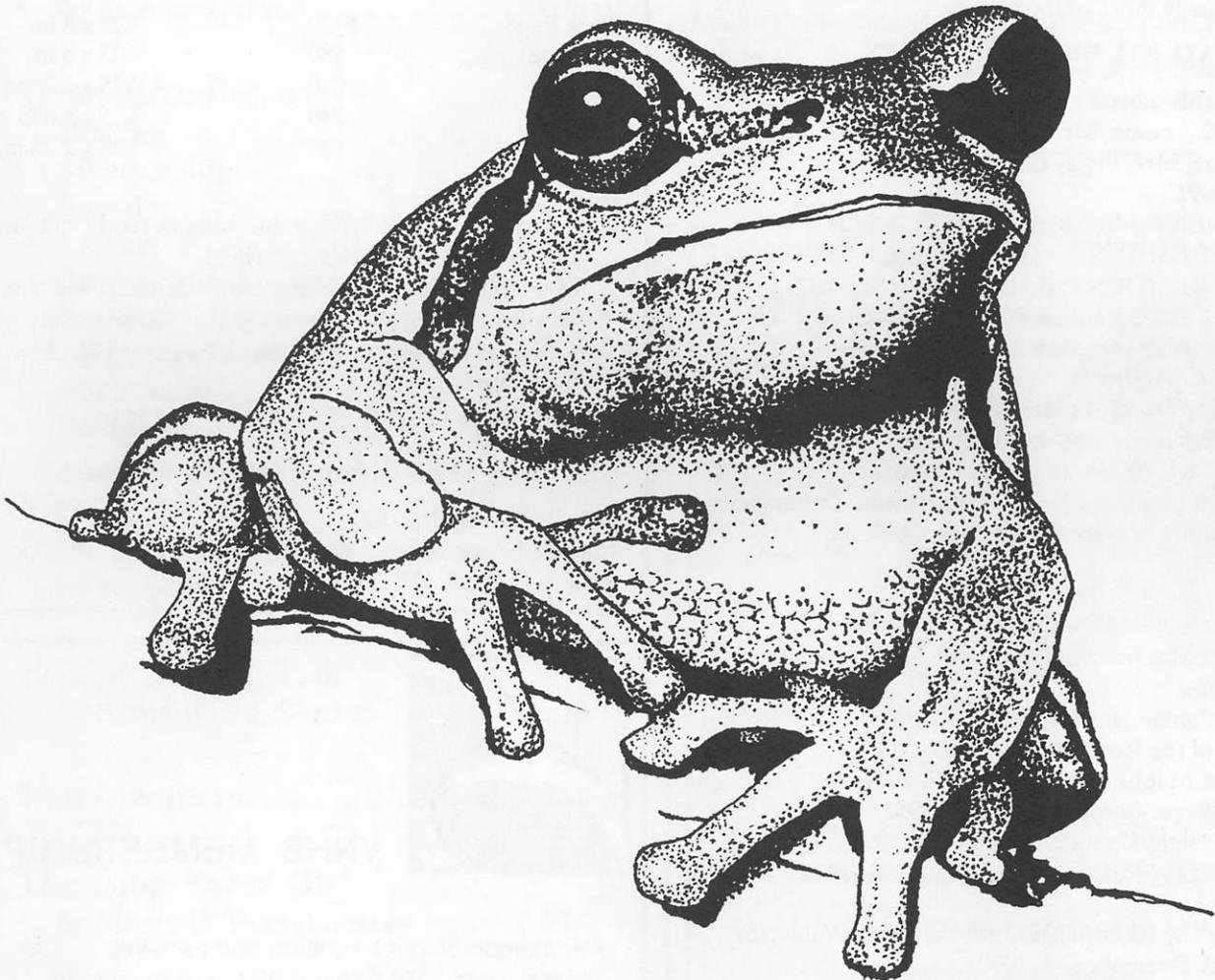




# The Victoria NATURALIST

MAY  
JUNE  
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VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



# The Victoria NATURALIST

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## Our Cover Illustration

KEITH TAYLOR is the artist of the spritely portrayal of  
 the Pacific Treefrog, *Hyla regilla*, featured on our cover. Keith  
 works as a freelance artist and author and is probably best  
 known to us for his work on the *Checklist of Birds* and various  
 birder's guides. Keith's favorite media is watercolour, and  
 some examples of his work are a Rosy Thrushed Tanager, a  
 Western Sandpiper and an American Robin. A print of his  
 Steller's Jay is available at the Leafhill Gallery or directly from  
 the artist.

The Pacific Treefrog is a common small frog of the Pacific  
 Coast ranging from the Queen Charlotte Islands to the tip of  
 Baja California. The call of this frog, often heard during warm,  
 rainy periods, is a low two-part kreck-ek (the last syllable with  
 rising inflection). Look for this illustration and several others  
 of Keith's in the *Wildlife Habitat Handbook for the Southern  
 Interior Ecoprovince*, Volume 4, "Species Notes for Am-  
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## A unique species numbering only about 300

BY RICHARD WATTS

**Stewardship for one the rarest animals in the world—the Vancouver Island Marmot—has been dropped in the laps of British Columbians. Only about 300 of the animals exist, all of them on Vancouver Island. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, the group in charge of determining the status of Canadian wildlife, lists the Vancouver Island Marmot as Endangered, the most serious designation it assigns to a living animal.**

After Endangered, an animal may be classified as Extirpated, that is wiped out in Canada in a particular area but living elsewhere, or Extinct. Unfortunately the V.I. Marmot lives mainly in one small area in Nanaimo concentrated in the Cowichan Lake area—so for this animal Extirpation will also mean Extinction.

The small specific area inhabited by the V.I. Marmot which makes his survival precarious also accounts for the animal's uniqueness. He is the result of evolution taking place in isolation. It is believed the animal is descended from a group of marmots which was cut off from the mainland about 12,000 years ago during the ice age. The animal was first discovered in 1910 although a 1985 discovery of bones in a cave in the Clayoquot area shows the animal was known to man as long as 2,500 years ago. Those bones, however, bear nicks and scrapes indicating the V.I. Marmot was known back then as a dinner item and not a conservation problem.

His large size, up to 6.5 kilograms, his distinctive chocolate brown to nearly-black colouring, and several unique features of his skull, the likes of which only a naturalist could be bothered to note, separate the V.I. Marmot from his closest relative, the Hoary Marmot whose ancestors were left on the

mainland during the ice age split.

The V.I. Marmot is a burrowing animal which lives in colonies of between two to 16 animals in alpine meadows located near mountain tops. The number of burrows in any one colony can reach 50, about three for each member. At this time it is believed about 30 colonies are in existence.

The colonies are quite small in area, about eight to 12 acres. Adults mark out a colony's boundaries around the perimeter by applying scent from a gland located in their cheeks. The V.I. Marmot defends his colony from intrusion by other marmots who may try to move in from a neighboring colony which can be located as close as 500 metres. Nevertheless it is believed enough breeding occurs between members of different colonies to keep the genetics of the population from becoming inbred.

A typical colony consists of one adult male at least three-years-old, one or two adult females, some young adults of one or two years of age and some infants. The colonies increase in size during the summer as young are born. Deaths during hibernation, of mostly the young and the old, is believed to be the biggest single check on a colony's population.

The animals first come out of their burrows in late April or early May after eight months of hibernation. The long sleep, with no food, can reduce the V.I. Marmots weight by over 50 per cent so they have little strength to do much in the early spring besides basking in the sun and eating the newly-emerging shoots of the grasses they favor. Mating takes place a few weeks after the initial emergence. The young are born in late June in litters that average three babies and the little ones make their first emergence into the open in late July.

Little is known about the animal's breeding biology although it is believed only adults, (at least three years old) mate. Also, based on studies of other marmot species it is believed that females usually give birth to litters in alternate years.

Colony life consists of little else beyond eating and resting. The animals are most active in the morning and dusk and tend to siesta at midday. The most common interactions between colony members are greeting and play-fighting. When two V.I. Marmots come face to face they usually touch noses or one may sniff the other's cheek, ear or flank. In a play-fight two V.I. Marmots will stand up on their hind-legs and push and shove each other on the chest and shoulder with their front legs. In an unfriendly encounter one marmot will lunge at another and give chase if the intimidation succeeds. The V.I. Marmot also gathers during restful periods to engage in



**Marmota vancouverensis: The Vancouver Island Marmot at Butler Peak, by David Nagorsen, Mammal Curator of the Royal British Columbia Museum.**

## Short whistles given at sight of a bird of prey

social grooming which may indicate a dominance hierarchy.

A variety of sounds are produced by the V.I. Marmot including hisses, rapid chirps, growls, screams and one two-syllable call which has been described as "kee-aw". Short whistles are given at the sight of a bird of prey, like the golden eagle. A long whistle means a mammalian predator, like a cougar, has been spotted. The kee-aw call is believed to represent a general state of uneasiness, probably created by the naturalist with a parabolic microphone recording the calls on tape.

One of the most interesting behaviors in the V.I. Marmot may also hold the key to his eventual survival. Shortly after emerging from hibernation two-year-old animals frequently take off on a trek in a behavior which is called dispersal. The young adults travel many kilometers, sometimes descending one mountain and scaling another, in the search of new meadows where they can settle down, breed and start a new colony.

These new meadows are created by fire, logging or other human activity like road building, or are naturally occurring alpine meadows kept clean of trees by avalanches. But low-altitude meadows particularly those created by logging slash may not be suitable as long-term habitat for a new colony. These slash areas may be acting as a sink into which the animals set up home only to die shortly after dispersal.

Bill Munro, an endangered species specialist with the B.C. Ministry of Environment has been appointed chairman of the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Team. Munro said plans are being made to study this dispersal behavior by radio-tracking the young adults as they leave the colony of their birth.

Unique problems exist, however, in radio tracking a burrowing animal like the V.I. Marmot. The transmitters cannot be attached with collars or harnesses because they could snag on an underground root or stone and trap the study animal in its burrow. In dealing with a population of only 300 individuals care must be taken to guard the safety of every animal. So transmitters must be surgically implanted under the skin and that means a veterinary surgeon and a portable operating theatre will have to be transported into the animals' home meadows. Such problems account, in part, for some of the high cost of the study plans.

In addition to research the team has worked out a recovery plan which calls for another population to be established elsewhere. A detailed inventory scheduled for the summer of 1990 may locate other naturally-occurring populations. If a decision is made to establish a new population, all of the work must be done in the field, trapping animals and transporting them, probably by helicopter, to other alpine areas. A captive breeding program is not being considered at this time because the committee fears that captives might pick up a disease or parasite which they have never encountered in the alpine ecosystem. If the wild population were to become infected by reintroduced captive-bred individuals the consequences could be tragic.

Munro estimates that the research and recovery plans will cost about \$300,000 over the first five years. Some of the re-

search which was planned for this summer has already been scaled back because of lack of money. Some hope, however, exists in the creation of a trust fund to which public can contribute. If money for the research and recovery program is provided Munro is confident the animal can be taken off the endangered list and upgraded to Threatened and eventually to the more comfortable listing of Vulnerable.

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Special thanks to Bill Munro, B.C. Ministry of Environment, Victoria.

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## It's the little things that count . . . .

BY SAMANTHA J. STATTON

**Did you know that we, as Canadians, have one of the highest per capita productions of waste in the World. Everything is "disposable" nowadays with no thought to where the items we throw away go to. "Out of sight, out of mind" is the attitude of most. Garbage has to go somewhere and in Victoria's case it is the Hartland Landfill.**

After spending 12 hours one day at the landfill conducting a gull survey, I soon saw the magnitude of things that were being thrown out. Garbage truck after garbage truck filed in, dumped their load and then left to go get more. The line of trucks seemed endless. They dumped a variety of items including plywood, hot water heaters, washers, dryers, and household garbage (organic and otherwise). I thought to myself, "what a waste, there must be something that can be done with all these items".

Recycling isn't a new invention of the 1980's and 1990's. My grandmother and her mother and even her grandmother before her, used to recycle. Everything was saved and made use of. I have reduced my weekly garbage to a brown bag twice the size of a munch bag. How might I do that you ask? One idea

would be to build your own compost heap using kitchen organics. It will do wonders for your garden, not to mention the landfill. Try and recycle garden clippings by putting them in your compost heap, as well, and thus avoid sending them to the landfill or worse yet, burning them. The act of burning contributes to the CO2 in the atmosphere which doesn't help our fight against the "Greenhouse Effect".

I recycle all of my paper, glass, and tin using the curbside blue boxes or drop-off bins. I buy bottled milk, eggs in a cardboard carton, and bulk items. When that's not possible, I buy large jars, tins, or bags of goods rather than the so-called "convenient size". This saves money in the long run and reduces unnecessary waste. If the only "alternative" is a plastic container (eg. shampoo), I think ahead as to what purpose the container may serve me later (or someone else). I always look for alternatives to plastics (eg. buy margarine in blocks rather than in plastic tubs). Some plastics are recycled such as the plastic 2-litre pop bottles. These are sent to various companies which shred them for later use as filler in car seats and down jackets. Plastics, on the whole are not recycled, as yet, in Victoria. Your last resort should be to send plastics to the landfill.

Another helpful hint is to buy your meat from a butcher to avoid the styrofoam plate that seems to automatically be included with every meat product. Speaking of styrofoam, another dilemma I regularly face occurs when I attend various functions (eg. V.N.H.S. meetings, birder's night) where coffee and tea are served in styrofoam cups. I think that a lot of people forget that even though the new styrofoam cups of the 1990's are CFC-free, they still take thousands of years (if that) to break down. I simply refuse to add to the problem. The way I get around that problem is by bringing my own cup (a plastic travel mug, complete with lid). I take this cup with me whenever I go out. This excellent little item can be purchased at any Mac's convenience store for only \$2.99. I hope our members will make the move away from styrofoam and bring their own mugs to future events and besides, it will save the society the cost of the styrofoam cups.

For small purchases, I take with me a canvas shopping bag. Many stores such as the Field-Naturalist (1241 Broad St.) sell some very attractive ones. For larger grocery orders I always ask for paper, never plastic bags. If, by chance, they have already packed my items in plastic bags, I always make them change them. If they do not offer paper bags then I tell them how annoyed I am and that I will not shop there again until their policy changes. I always take back plastic vegetable bags to reuse until they are no longer serviceable and avoid using bags for items like bananas or cucumbers. A word to look out for is "disposable". Try and avoid disposable items like razors (use an electric shaver), pens (use refillable ones), and paper towels/napkins (use a cloth or towel).

Everybody buys magazines and then after we have read them the question is what to do with them? I take magazines to hospitals and doctors' offices giving others the benefit from reading them. Most paper is recyclable.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Quack, quack, everywhere a quack-quack

BY ANNE ALGARD

**Ordinarily I obey laws. We are not supposed to feed birds in our townhouse complex. Nevertheless, early one morning when I slipped out of the house to fetch my paper, three mallard ducks rushed up the hill delighted to find somebody up and hopefully willing to relieve their hunger. Who could resist those soft quacking sounds? I dashed into the house for bread while they, to my surprise and theirs, dashed into the livingroom.**

My reappearance caused a great stir; they slammed repeatedly into the closed sliding doors to the terrace. Excited animals of any species are inclined to drop ballast. Ducks are no exception. Hoping to spare my carpet I herded them away from the door so it could be opened. They chose to bolt into the studio, landed on my desk, and tried to exit through the plate glass window above it. Crashes of falling items mingled with the sounds of mighty pinions and irate quacking. I had to get them off that desk for on it was an antique study lamp, long in the family.

—CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

### Little things

—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

The University of Victoria has drop-off places in the Cunningham building for lined, coloured, and blank paper (including computer paper) that are picked up weekly. Phone books can also be recycled, here in the Capital Regional District.

I take things like small boxes, aluminum pie plates, toilet rolls, and coloured foil paper (used to wrap margarine) to schools for kids' crafts. I use the inside waxed lining of cereal and potato chip boxes for wrapping sandwiches in; therefor eliminating the need for saran wrap and other products of that nature.

I don't buy bleached products that leach deadly dioxins into the soil (not to mention your own body) like coffee filters (use unbleached) and milk cartons (use bottled). I use a long line of biodegradable products from shampoos, dishwashing liquid, dishwasher liquid, washing powder, liquid fabric softener, and hand soap to Buckerfields disposable kitty litter (paper, not gravel). Locally run V.I.P. (Vancouver Island Products) have numerous biodegradable items that are very good. For household cleaning I use baking soda (bought in bulk of course), vinegar, and lemon juice as an environmentally safe alternative.

Nowadays almost everyone owns a car and we are all faced with the problem of what to do with the oil once it has been changed. Well there is a solution: Mohawk gas stations accept used oil which they recycle.

In my travels I have found some really good shops that sell excellent products that are environmentally safe. If there aren't any products that are safe for the environment where you presently shop then don't be shy to ask for them and you will be surprised at how quickly items are put on the shelf when there is a demand. If that fails then change stores. For example, the Body Shop (Hillside Mall) has a long line of wonderful products that are made from natural ingredients and have not been tested on animals. Another good store is Nature's Fare Natural Foods (6-1516 Fairfield) which offers items such as organic vegetables and biodegradable conditioners.

It seem all fine and good to recycle but we must all remember to buy recycled goods, otherwise there isn't much

point to recycling. By creating the demand for recycled products, more industries will get involved and thus, more items will be recycled.

If you haven't already purchased your copy of The Canadian GREEN Consumer Guide, I would highly recommend it. The guide offers hundreds more ideas on what you can do to help the environment. It is well worth the \$14.95 and every household should have a copy.

You may think that one person cannot make a difference but when 26 million other Canadians have the same view it does make a considerable difference. Now's a time for a change in our habits, in this, the "turn-around decade".



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# Sustainable development and the completion of the National Parks System

BY DANNIE CARSEN

**A** letter was received from Jim Fulton, Member of Parliament for Skeena, regarding the debate about completing our National Parks System. The recipient of the letter, Wilf Mead, passed it on to the editor for comment. The letter itself is very long, but it will be condensed below to provide our readers with a short outline.

As a result of the Brundtland Report, the Endangered Spaces campaign was initiated with the goal of preserving at least 12 percent of the representative ecosystems across Canada by the year 2000. The means suggested for preserving 12 percent of the land was completing the network of our national park system. At present, only 2.6 percent of Canada is fully protected and 6.3 percent has some sort of park designation. In a park system that is admired the world over, Canada's National Parks have only 18 of 39 natural bioregions represented. With all the scientific evidence suggesting that preserving at least 12 percent of the earth's wild land in its natural state is essential to sustaining the earth itself as well as preserving biological diversity and providing examples of the natural systems to study, why is this not being done?

On February 1, 1990 a historic debate took place in the House of Commons. Jim Fulton had moved:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the government should move to complete the national park system (land and marine) by the year 2000 and should implement the recommendation of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Report) that Canada protect at least 12 percent of land and marine zones."

The debate was long and meandering but by February 5 when the vote was taken, it did not pass—122 were opposed and only 77 in favour. It seems odd that our own federal government which seems to have an environmentally friendly outlook would vote down a motion to finish the National Parks system by the year 2000. Perhaps we should examine the underlying forces against such a motion.

To start with, the cabinet was generally against a 12 percent parks objective due to the effects that such a federal initiative would have on employment in the mines, forests, and related service sectors. Since his cabinet colleagues were obviously against a promise to complete such a parks system, the Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment) argued for the development of our parks "because today's generation is ever more concerned over economic issues, development, jobs, as well as ready and practically unlimited access to our parks". He goes on to say that "our policy in Canada is to go

ahead and develop our parks, in so far as this will create jobs and attract tourists, of course, but never to the detriment of future generations". The Hon. Bouchard promises that Parks Canada is committed to completing the network of parks by the year 2000, but refuses to agree to a figure of 12 percent. Why? His reasons include the idea of the Brundtland Report as a general

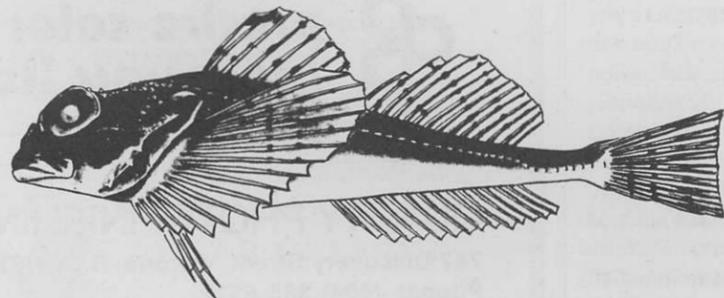
proposal making no distinction between very small countries which are completely developed and a big country like Canada which has wide open spaces (and thus does not need 12 percent).

Our own Minister of Environment does not argue in favor of 12 percent, but rather concentrates on the idea of completing the parks system in the 39 ecological regions of the country. He points out, "What percentage will this give us? We will find out as we go along. But I do not think it would be wise to set a figure like 12 per cent—that would lack the required flexibility."

—CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

**The debate was long and meandering but by February 5 when the vote was taken, it did not pass—122 were opposed and only 77 in favour.**

## Scientific Illustration & Graphic Art



Karen Uldall-Ekman, (B.Sc.)  
Victoria, B.C.

385-8131

# "... hard to believe that the required 39 ecological regions will be protected"

—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

It appears that this last statement is a way of avoiding the pursuit of a goal. The Minister of Environment refuses to set absolute standards but promises to finish the preservation of areas in the 39 ecological regions of Canada. What size would these parks be? Will they preserve the necessary wild areas important for biodiversity (and ensure survival of species such as the grizzly at the top of the food chain)? Will the preservation accomplished by the year 2000 provide scientific researchers and the general public assurances that some of our wild heritage is being saved for our children's children to enjoy? Or, are the Minister of Environment's promises of completion of the parks system just token promises that may be carefully explained when they are not realized in the year 2000? Due to the increasing inability of Parks Canada to get new parks proposed and gazetted in the last 10 years, it is hard to believe that the required 39 ecological regions will be protected or that the

**Where is the careful, rational planning that ensures the Brundtland Commission report is at least considered**

Government of Canada has much interest in ensuring our future in ecological terms.

Perhaps development, jobs, tourism and public use of parks are more important to our federal government than the public pledge they have made to preserve our national park heritage for future generations with all ecological regions represented.

Where is the careful, rational planning that ensures the Brundtland Commission report is at least considered in Parks Canada's dual mandate for preservation and opportunity for public enjoyment? In order to reach the goal of sustainable development, planning

must commence now to earmark some of the few remaining lands in many of our developed provinces so that the National Parks system will become as we have envisioned it: containing examples of our beautiful, distinctive, and protected wilderness heritage that we and future generations may enjoy—even just knowing they are there.

## Ducks admirably designed for skating on what they excrete

—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

The female was coaxed to the floor for a few bills full of Orowheat but got right back up onto a "nest" of rolled up art papers. I prayed that she might maintain control of herself. Speaking in dulcet tones, I was able to guide them off the desk and away from a work table full of paints and art in progress. They eventually found the front door but not before another reconnaissance of the living room.

Quickly assessing the damage, I grabbed my carpet cleaning kit with its various solutions and instruction for any eventuality. Duck attack was not on the list. I settled for Pet Excretions, Methods C or E. The latter suggested the damaged parts be replaced by a professional. Well, it wasn't *that* terminal so I went with C which had 5 steps to employ.

Actually most of the calling cards were on a washable scatter rug and the hard surface floor of the studio. Ducks have feet admirably designed for skating on what they excrete. They also must spit or sweat because the window had to be sluiced down.

Paper clips, rubber bands had been flung about. Plants had been tossed from the window sill and pruned in the bargain. Correspondence, bills, and receipts had been decorated, then tossed over the side. Even the Victoria Natural History Magazine was hit dead centre—one drake, one duck, and a hybrid in such a flap only lost one tiny breast feather, beautifully patterned

with a zig-zag line.

I've always entertained the idea of having a house into which one could invite wild creatures. Well, maybe a house with a drain in the floor. Until now, my house has been known as Anne's Eyrie. Change that to Duck Inn.

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### Birding Committee Report—

## Birding activities included 25 birding field trips this year

The birding committee is responsible for the birding-related activities of the Society. These activities include the Christmas bird count, birder's night meetings, birding field trips, the rare bird alert phone message, and the quarterly bird report for American Birds.

The committee is comprised of seven members - six elected at birder's night and one member who is appointed by the Board. The seven members for this past year have been Mike McGrenere (Board Member), Lyndis Davis, Dave Fraser, Bryan Gates, Ken Morgan, Hank Van der Pol, and Harrold Pollock.

*The following are some of the highlights of this year's birding activities:*

- 25 birding field trips to various areas;

### Membership Committee Report—

## "Sustaining membership" is not a membership for life

There has been some confusion over the category of "Sustaining Membership". "Sustaining" does not mean "Life" and some "Sustaining Members" have been surprised at receiving annual notices of the expiration of their membership. "Life Membership" is used only as a special service award to a few long-time members.

According to the Society By-Laws, "Sustaining" applies to members making an income-tax-deductible donation to the Society, the total payment being at least three times the Regular Membership fee.

A second point of confusion results from the Board of Directors' failure to raise the Sustaining Membership fee to correspond with the increases since December 1985 in the Regular Membership fee. This means that when the Regular Membership fee is \$17.00, the sustaining fee must be a mini-

### Social Committee Report—

## 160 people, from around the province, attended General Meeting

At the 1988 General Meeting of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists in Williams Lake, I invited, on behalf of our President Betty Kennedy, the Federation to Victoria for the 1989 meeting. The invitation was accepted and the meetings were held at the University of Victoria, May 4-7, culminating with a banquet at Dunsmuir Lodge.

The committee and other members worked very hard for many months to make the meeting a success. Local municipalities and the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary cooperated by providing maps of the area. I wish to thank *Beautiful B.C. Magazine* for providing folders for the conference and the B.C. Automobile Association for providing pens. Approximately 160 people, from throughout the province, attended the meetings.

Due to increased interest in the Christmas Count, a larger hall was needed for the "post-count" party, which was held on December 16 this year. We were lucky to be able to use

- birder's night meetings moved from UVic's Cornett Building to the larger and more comfortable Room 159 in the Begbie Building;

- excellent attendance at birder's night, including almost 120 people at the October meeting for a talk by Wayne Campbell;

- 1989 Christmas bird count with 218 participants, including 191 field observers.

The committee would like to thank all of the volunteers who led field trips, assisted in the preparation of reports and who helped with other birding functions of the Society.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Mike McGrenere*

mum of \$51.00.

How many members do we have now? On December 31, 1989, the total number stood at an all-time high of 817, up from 678 at the end of 1988. We have added about 34 new members during the first three months of 1990. But, because of the resistance to renewal, the number of paid members at mid-March totals only 687. This means that there are about 130 delinquent members, a bit better than last year's mid-March figure of 168.

To save postage, individual renewal reminders have been mainly by telephone, rather than by mail.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Ed Coffin, assisted by Connie Hawley*

the Gordon Head United Church Hall, which has a seating capacity of 150 along with a large kitchen. Kay Goodall must be congratulated for organizing the pot-luck meal and the beautiful table decorations.

This year's annual banquet was held at the Princess Mary restaurant. The 120 tickets went very quickly. The choice of entre seemed popular, and Bryan Gates gave a fascinating talk about Namibia. I would like to thank Dorothy McCann and Connie Hawley for their help in selling tickets. Thanks also to Ann Adamson and Bertha Gow for once more doing the flower baskets for the tables.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I have enjoyed my first year on the Board.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve*

### Library Committee Report—

## Volunteer help will be needed to sort and catalogue periodicals

During the past year there was a gradual development of the libraries of the Victoria Natural History Society and the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. The libraries occupy space on the ground level of the Nature House at Swan Lake.

Books and periodicals were received from a number of donors. Under the guidance of Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, decisions were made regarding the scope of holdings of this type of library. Some books were identified as more suitable for a historical collection, some remained in the collection, and others were set aside for "discards". Thanks are due to the Wells group who evaluated the "discards". The Board decided that these latter would be auctioned at the 1990 Annual General Meeting. A list of some of the books to be auctioned was published in the *Victoria Naturalist*, and members who felt these should be retained in the Library were asked to contact a Board member.

### Awards and Recognition Committee Report—

## Distinguished Service Awards presented at annual banquet

Committee recommendations for 1989/1990 Distinguished Service Awards were accepted and the following awards were made at the annual banquet on 13 February, 1990.

#### Charles Trotter

Charlie's contributions to the Society are varied and extend over many years. He has served as a member of the Board, as Chairman of the Program Committee, and as an area leader for the Christmas Bird Count. Over the years he led many field trips, including society trips to Point Pelee in 1979 and Washington and Oregon in 1981. He has made a contribution to nature recreation in his role in the construction of the bird blinds at Blenkinsop Lake and Quick's Bottom. With all of this, his most significant achievement has been his leadership in the bluebird box project. In this, he pioneered the restoration of a species that had suffered serious decline in the Victoria region.

#### Anne Adamson

For 10 years Anne was instrumental in organizing the Audubon Lecture Series. Her work in arranging the coffee and cookies at regular monthly meetings and in organizing the Christmas Bird Count dinners has gained her the appreciation of all. In her coordination of the caretakers for the 1988 Nature Art Show at the Goldstream Park Nature House, she contributed to one of the Society's most successful events ever.

#### Robb Mackenzie-Grieve

Robb is one of the longest standing members of the Society. He was a longtime leader of one of the areas in the Christmas Bird Count. Indeed, through

A computerized list of the remaining books has been completed by Swan Lake staff and volunteers, using the Library of Congress classification. Thanks are expressed to Diana Priestly, June Thompson, and the library staff at the Pacific Forestry Centre and the University of Victoria, for their help and suggestions regarding cataloguing.

When labeling is completed, many of the books will be moved to the main floor library, where all members are encouraged to enjoy reading-room privileges.

The next project for the committee is the sorting, disposition and cataloguing of the numerous boxes of old and current periodicals. Volunteer help will be needed in this undertaking. We hope to begin in early April.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Mary Richmond  
Ann Scarfe*

his assistance and support to Count pioneers Elton Anderson and Freeman King, he played a role in establishing the Christmas Bird count in the Victoria region. Over the years Robb led many field trips and was especially keen on the trips to the Cowichan estuary. But Robb is probably best known to many of us for his dedication over many years in providing security, facilities, and custodial services for meetings and other Society events at the Newcombe Auditorium. Robb was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. Every organization needs such dedicated members.

The Committee recommended to the Board of Directors that no awards for Life Membership be made until By-law revisions make it possible for the board to present awards without a general election at the Annual General Meeting. This recommendation was accepted and incorporated into the By-laws approved at the AGM on 13 March, 1990.

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## Parks and Conservation Committee Report—

### “Friends” and “watchdogs” needed to preserve flora and fauna

At a meeting held on March 8, 1989 we decided that we should concentrate our energies on five areas of concern out of the twenty-four brought to our attention. The five areas and their leaders are:

- 1) Martindale Flats - Jerry and Gladys Anderson
- 2) Esquimalt Lagoon - Tony Embleton
- 3) Blenkinsop Valley - Henry Niezen
- 4) Tod Creek Flats - Lyndis Davis
- 5) Quicks Bottom - Art McPhalen

The object of this exercise will be to gather all possible information about these properties, including taking inventories of flora and fauna and developing a plan to preserve these areas before they become targets of developers. We ask your help in joining a group of interested persons to become knowledgeable and act as “friends” and “watchdogs”.

We also ask the Board to consider making a list of members with expertise in the various sciences who are willing to give advice and information that will assist us in preparing

## Program Committee Report—

### Specialists capable of leading spring field trips are needed

I hope the membership found the programs for 1989 varied and interesting. Richard Ring and I had a difficult time taking over from that master of program coordination, Dave Fraser. We decided to try and broaden the scope of the monthly meeting programs and the field trips. Suggestions were made to encourage a wider variety of presentations and these topics have included “The Natural History of south Georgia, Antarctica, “The Natural History of the Queen Charlottes—A Kayaker’s Perspective”, “A Natural History of Undersea Life Around Victoria”, “Planning for Provincial Parks in B.C.” and “The Natural History and Peoples of Namibia”. We tried to encourage a broader range of field trips to include natural history of all sorts and the identification of marine invertebrates, insects, and mammals. More work is needed on the field trips, as getting specialists to agree to lead

information on the five areas. We would also like to offer field trips so Society members can see for themselves the intrinsic value of these habitats.

Mary Morrison needs some help immediately from birders and botanists to help bring the Uplands Park Project to a conclusion. Any volunteers?

The Parks and Conservation Committee discussed the Elk/Beaver Lake Management Plan Alternatives put forward by the Capital Regional District Parks Department. One of the options, the use of motorized craft on the lakes, was unanimously opposed by the committee.

The Committee is exploring the possibility of involving students from the Secondary Schools and the University of Victoria in our projects.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jerry Anderson*

a field trip is a difficult task. We would like to have programs and field trips that allow members to broaden their horizons since the greatest number of people in the VNHS seem to be coming out for birding and botany.

I would appreciate help from anyone who knows of specialists who are capable of leading spring field trips in:

- mammal identification (perhaps live trapping)
- geomorphology of Victoria landscape
- biogeoclimatic zones in and around Victoria
- animal behavior

Another suggestion was made to encourage multi-faceted field trips by inviting specialists in birding, botany, and mammals. The coordination of such trips is time-consuming, but we believe the benefits would be great. The logistics of combined trips usually results in groups splitting up and travelling in different routes, meeting again at the end of the trip. We welcome any suggestions or assistance with this type of field trip.

Beverly Glover has joined the Program Committee to help with publicity. Bev has experience with publicity from her association with the Guelph Field Naturalists and has been doing a terrific job for the VNHS. The programs are better attended as a result. Our thanks to Sue Cummings and Connie Hawley, who distributed program information to all the likely places downtown.

We look forward to a successful and informative series of programs for 1990.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Dannie Carsen*

## Publications Committee Report—

### Many recent covers have featured the artistic talents of members

1989 was a busy year for the Publications Committee. The Committee has two main areas of responsibility; the production of the Society’s magazine, The Victoria Naturalist, and the sale of other Society publications.

The Naturalist continues to be well-received by the membership, and it is a credit to the many volunteers who are involved in its production. This year has been an unsteady one for the staff with changes in the Editor’s position, but all worked together to keep the standard of excellence high.

Brenda Robson, who has edited the magazine through this difficult time, is stepping down. Her artistic eye and attention to detail will be missed. Brenda’s contribution in computerizing the production of the Naturalist has paved the way for a more efficient process in the future.

We are pleased to welcome new members to the Naturalist staff; their names appear on the inside front cover. A new Editor will likely be chosen from this group.

Articles were submitted by an encouraging number of members, but there are many more whose writing and photographs would add to the scope of the magazine. Adver-

tising revenue continues to offset publication costs considerably, enabling us to produce a more attractive publication.

Many of our recent covers have featured the artistic talents of our members; are there others we have not approached yet?

The other side of the Publications Committee involves an assortment of bits and pieces. The Naturalist’s Guide to the Victoria Region continues to sell well; present stock is expected to last two to three years. The bird checklist, released in May by the Birding Committee, is moving well. National Geographic Society Field Guides and Canadian Nature Federation cards and calendars also continue to put money in the bank for us.

All of the aforementioned are handled by Lyndis Davis, who singlehandedly must generate more revenue than any other individual in the Society.

Congratulations and thanks to all those who have worked on the Publications Committee. Your contributions have helped to keep members informed, entertained, and educated, and that is what the Society is all about.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Bruce Whittington*

## Scholarship Committee Report—

### 1989/1990 awards presented

The Victoria Natural History Society sponsors three scholarships at the University of Victoria which are awarded by the University’s Senate Committee on Awards. The awards for the 1989/1990 school year are presented below.

#### 1. Victoria Natural History Society Scholarship (\$500)

Catherine Haywood, Victoria, B.C.  
Catherine is a 3rd year student in Biology, who is interested in physiology and developmental biology.

#### 2. Freeman F. King Scholarship (\$650)

Karen Meikle, Victoria.  
Karen is majoring in biology with a minor in environmental studies. She is especially interested in botany.

#### 3. Samuel Simcoe Bursary Awards (two of \$500 each)

- i) Holly Clermont, Saanichton, B.C.  
Holly is a 4th year student in biology, specializing in wildlife ecology.
- ii) Karen Miekke, Victoria, B.C.

#### 4. Barbara Chapman Award

The Barbara Chapman Award provides a \$100 prize for a promising young naturalist who has indicated a strong interest in nature and accomplished some noteworthy achievement. This year’s recipient is Tessa Campbell of Victoria.

The Scholarship Committee and the Victoria Natural History Society congratulates all of the winners.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Reuben Ware*

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## Parasitic flowering plants in B.C.

BY JOB KUIJT

**W**e are so used to thinking of parasites in a negative way that it comes as a surprise to find that such apparently normal and attractive wildflowers as the Indian Paintbrushes are, nevertheless, parasites. The same is true for a large number of their immediate relatives in the Figwort Family (Scrophulariaceae). One very large subfamily, the Rhinanthoideae, consists of nothing but parasites.

In the New World members of the Figwort family are hemiparasites only (that is, they are also capable of manufacturing their own food). However, two European species are completely parasitic, without any trace of chlorophyll left in their tissues, rendering them completely dependent upon their hosts. In the remainder of the Figwort Family, among such plants as the Penstemons and Veronicas, there is no sign of parasitism.

The roots and other underground parts of the non-parasites are perfectly normal and never show any sign of parasitic tendencies. The hemiparasites were also difficult to identify. In fact, it was not until 1847 that it was discovered that difficulties in transplantation of some members of the family were due to the need for a parasitic connection to a host.

It is not always easy to document parasitism in these plants, for the haustoria (the specialized structure used by the plant to penetrate living host tissue) tend to be extremely small, with very delicate root systems. But, armed with a gentle jet of water and some patience, all the soil can be removed from a root clump dug up around the base of the plant, to find the haustorial connections; a mature plant has scores of them.

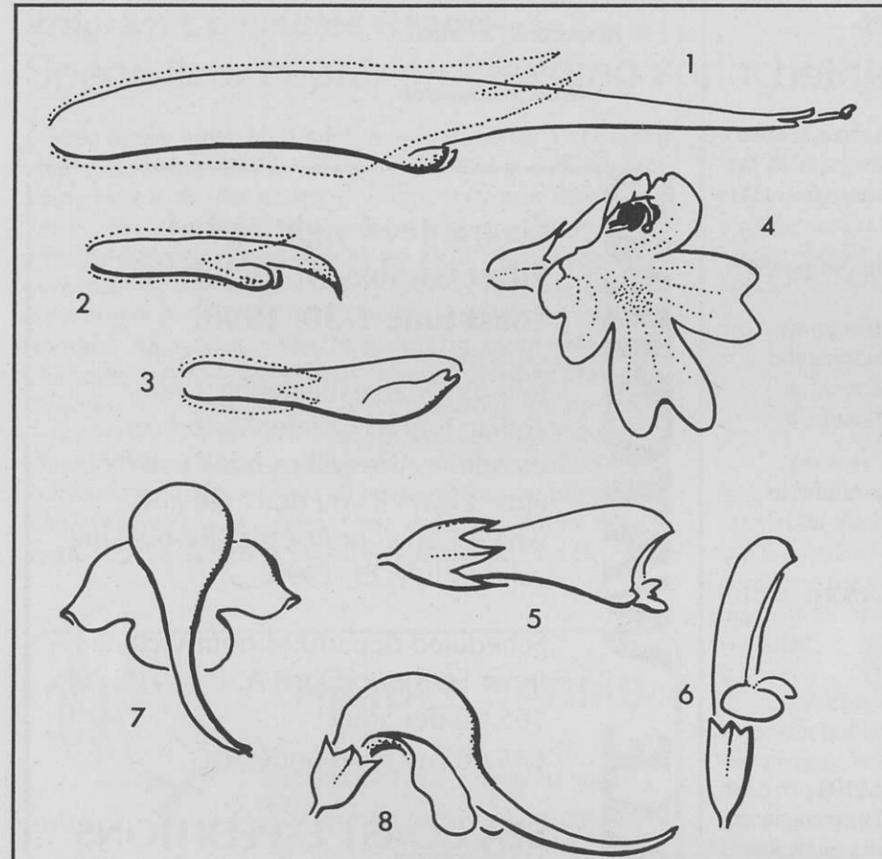
It is believed that the majority of species cannot be cultivated without their hosts, although one or two California species have been brought to flower. However without hosts, they were small and fragile plants. Clearly, parasitism for these

plants represents an enormous competitive advantage, if not an absolute necessity for survival. Flower structure is extremely variable among parasitic figworts, leading to questions regarding pollination. Most genera are insect-pollinated, but bird-pollination occurs in our Paintbrushes and in some California *Pedicularis* species.

Probably the best known group among the parasitic figworts in North America is the Indian Paintbrush (*G. Castilleja*), which occurs mostly in the West. The colour of B.C. species ranges all the way from pink and brilliant red through nearly purple and cream-color. Further south at least one alpine species is a pure, snowy white. We have to be careful in speaking of flower color in Paintbrushes, however, for most of the color tends to be concentrated in the leafy bract just below the flower, the latter which is frequently greenish. Taxonomically, the Paintbrushes are often very difficult to identify, and many natural hybrids occur.

A closely related genus, found mostly in North America, is *Orthocarpus* (Owl's Clover), of which half a dozen or so species occur in B.C. These annuals are always smaller than the perennial Paintbrushes. A common species found on grassy headlands in the Victoria area (including Beacon Hill Park), the Ant Plant (*O. pusillus*) is one of the more inconspicuous species, and frequently overlooked.

—CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



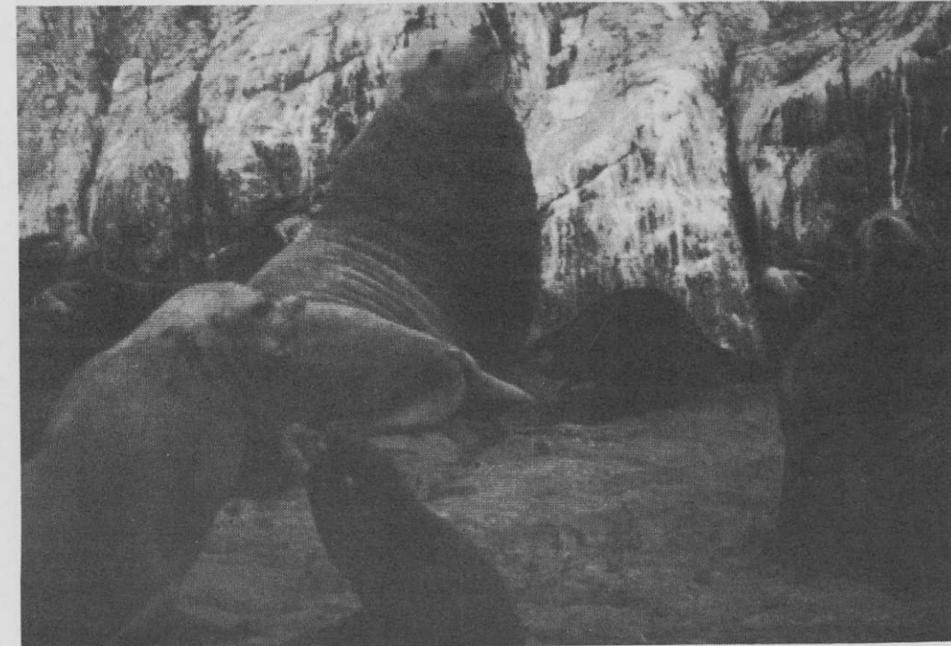
**Legend: Flower types in parasitic figworts (magnifications various; sepals stippled in 1-3).** 1. An Indian Paintbrush, *Castilleja miniata*. 2. The Antplant, *Orthocarpus pusillus*. 3. Yellow Owl's Clover, *Orthocarpus luteus*. 4. Eyebright, *Euphrasia arctica*. 5. Cow Wheat, *Melampyrum lineare*. 6. A Lousewort, *Pedicularis oederi*. 7 & 8. Elephant's Head, *Pedicularis groenlandica*.

## Many bird species plus sea lions spotted

BY SAMANTHA J. STATTON

**I**t was an excellent turn-out for the March 11, 1990 pelagic birding trip aboard the *Bastion City*, a 66-foot motor yacht, out of Nanaimo. Members of the Victoria Natural History Society were prepared for a day on the ocean. When we arrived in Nanaimo, it was raining and it appeared that our trip would be a cold and wet one. However, once we were under way, our luck took a turn for the better, and it was a very pleasant day after all.

Upon boarding, we were greeted with a steaming cup of coffee and a "welcome aboard" treat from our delightful hos-



The sight and sound of sea lions roaring and barking provided an action-packed ending the Pelagic Birding Trip aboard the 66-foot motor yacht, *Bastion City*.

tes, Mrs. Littlejohn. Captain Bob Littlejohn provided us with a very interesting commentary on the many delightful sights we were witnessing once the vessel was under way. One such feature was the amazing sandstone cliffs of Gabriola Island. Captain Littlejohn managed to manoeuvre us so close that, at times, you could almost reach out and touch them. Other points of interest included Elephant Rock and the Dragon's Mouth. These landmarks were appropriately named since they looked exactly as their names would suggest. Of course, many interesting birds were spotted along the way. These included both double-crested and pelagic cormorants, surf scoters, buffleheads, red-breasted mergansers, 75 bald eagles, and over 20

great blue herons out of the approximately 27 species observed during our cruise. We were told that the herring that normally congregate in Dodd Narrows were deeper than normal. As a result, the large numbers of birds which usually feed upon them were noticeably absent.

As we approached the Northumberland Mill (Harmac) you could hear the loud sounds of the sea lions, both Steller and California. There must have been over 2,000 hauled out on the log booms, frantically roaring and barking as we approached. They provided us with an action-packed end to our delightful cruise. It was a trip well worth taking.

An extended thanks to Captain Bob Littlejohn and his family for their warm and friendly hospitality. Lyndis Davis should also be commended for the time that she spent organizing the trip in order to make it such a success.

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## Welcome to New Members

- Jan. 23 Mrs. Anne Grandsen, of Qualicum Beach. Interested in nature photography. Gift membership from present member Nancy Lovett.
- Jan. 24 Dr. and Mrs. Norman L. Bailey, of Arbutus Road.
- Jan. 24 Merrilee Hoen and John Holland, of Buckingham Place. Interests: birds; native plants.
- Jan. 24 Jan Broome, of Tracksell Avenue. Interested in birding, hiking, marine biology.
- Jan. 24 Paul Ross, of Maywood Road.
- Jan. 31 Don and Sharon Lassey, and Merna Fleming, of Sooke. Welcome back! Don is a park ranger, interested in birds, plants and marine life. All three have a general interest in nature.
- Jan. 31 Dorothy Zarski, of Brentwood Bay.
- Feb. 4 Patricia Barton, of McClure Street. She would like to be introduced to birding and is very conservationist oriented.
- Feb. 6 John Azar and Yvonne Van Ruskenveld, of Moss Street. Interests are general.
- Feb. 7 Frances Noone, of Sidney. Particular interests: geology, birds, botany.
- Feb. 14 Melissa Brandy, of Newton Street. Interest: botany.
- Feb. 14 Capt. Wayne Coward, of Saanichton. Gift membership from present member Peter Axhorn.
- Feb. 14 Valerie Siemens, of Richmond Avenue. Interests: birdwatching, photography, canoeing, conservation.
- Feb. 15 Chico Stevens, of Victoria. A gift membership.
- Feb. 20 Moe Banae, of Garnet Road. Interested in birding.
- Feb. 20 George S. Floyd, of Ralph Street. Coordinator for Junior Naturalist Program at Swan Lake. Interests: marine biology and natural history.
- Feb. 21 Judith A. Scott, of Runnymede Avenue.
- Feb. 21 Richard Martin, of Hornby Island. Particular interests: botany; conservation; biological, geological, geographical, and spiritual context of plants.
- Mar. 1 Steve Snider, of Atlin. Particular interests: birds, nature photography.
- Mar. 1 Kathleen Robertson, of Humboldt Street. Interested in birding.
- Mar. 2 Trudy Chatwin, of Thompson Avenue. Interests: conservation; botany; birding; marine biology.
- Mar. 6 Dr. Terence and Dorothy Stout, of Norfolk Road.
- Mar. 7 Mary-Anne Montgomery, of Government Street. Particular interests: birds, plants, rocks - outdoors.
- Mar. 9 Rose Leonard, of Sooke. Rose enjoys birding as a hobby, and carves birds as her livelihood.
- Mar. 10 Kate Stevens, of Lorne Terrace. Interest: birds.
- Mar. 12 Ken Avio, of Toronto Street.
- Mar. 20 Darren Copley, of Beaverdale Road. A biology Major at UVic. Bird watching, particularly owls, conservation, and environmental concerns, are his interests.
- Mar. 21 Peter Mordy, of Avalon Road. Particular interests: birds; nature hikes.
- Mar. 22 Mary Kingsley, of Fairfield Road. Interests: birds; geology; flowers and trees. Enjoys drawing.

### PARASITIC FIGWORTS

## Damage to nearby hosts rarely obvious

—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

The genus *Pedicularis* (Lousewort) includes about a dozen species found in B.C. One of the more common species is *P. groenlandica*, is circumboreal, inhabiting marshy ground. The flowers of this plant look remarkably like small, pink elephant heads, with long, curved "trunks" hanging down from between two pink, ear-like petals. All *Pedicularis* species, which are perennial, have fern-like, dissected leaves. Our tallest one is sometimes called Indian Warrior (*P. bracteosa*), standing erect to well over a foot in many cases. Most of the other species are alpine dwarfs.

The remaining four B.C. genera are also circumboreal. Eyebright (*G. Euphrasia*) is not very common. It once grew along the grassy berms on one of the boulevards leading to

U.B.C. many years ago, but the area appears to have been paved. Its vernacular name reminds us that, in the Middle ages, it was thought to provide a cure against eye ailments. Cow Wheat (*G. Melampyrum*) has a single species, found in the Interior. The name is baffling, for it has probably never been

associated with cattle; the connection to wheat is even more puzzling. The genus is unique in that the seed includes a small food-body (elaiosome). Ants feeding on this food-body tend to also disperse the seeds.

The genus *Rhinanthus*, an annual, yellow-flowered meadow species, is often parasitic on grasses. The plant is called Yellow Rattle because of the noise the seeds make in the dry capsule. The introduced species, *Parentucellia viscosa* may be found in moist ditches in the Sidney area. It looks similar to a soft Yellow Rattle.

**The introduced species, *Parentucellia viscosa* may be found in moist ditches in the Sidney area. It looks similar to a soft Yellow Rattle.**

None of these plants give any obvious hints that they are parasites and, even when present in great numbers, rarely to the plants seem to do the sort of damage to their nearby hosts that is ob-

vious to our eyes. In most genera the haustoria tend to be quite small, and unlike many other parasitic groups, the rest of the plant shows no adaptations to the parasitic mode of life. It may be that parasitic figworts represent a rather recent evolutionary experiment.

## The Long-Eared Owl, a master of camouflage

BY MARIE O'SHAUGHNESSY

**Owls are found on all continents except Antarctica. The oldest known fossil records, *Protostrix mimica*, indicate that the species existed over 60 million years ago. Today, there are approximately 133 species extant worldwide.**

Owls are typically soft-plumaged, short-tailed, broad-winged, big-headed raptors with large frontal eyes surrounded by a facial disc. Like other birds of prey, they have hooked bills and sharp talons. These predators possess specialized vision and hearing and the ability to fly silently at night. Over time such characteristics have lent the owl an air of mystery and caused man to fear him. In some species of owls vision in low light is 100 times more sensitive than that of humans. This is due to frontally placed, short, tapered, cylindrical eyes that allow for a wide field of binocular vision. An owl's hearing is 10 times more acute than a man's. For long-eared owls, hearing is most sensitive to sound in the range of 2000-6000 hertz (vibrations per second). The external ear canals of the long-eared owl are positioned asymmetrically which gives them the ability to precisely locate the rustling sounds that their prey makes. Silent navigation is achieved by their broad, fine-fringed, velvet smooth wing structure. The fine fringing to the edges of their feathers minimizes noise created when air moves over their wings. The evolutionary success of the owl stems from its design; a close match between form and function which has evolved over time and allows it the ability to hunt in the dark.

A long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) was recently discovered at the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary during the 1989 Christmas Bird Count. Although dead, and considered a "vagrant", it was in excellent condition. It has since been mounted and donated to the Sanctuary for teaching purposes.

The long-eared owl is strictly a nocturnal predator. It is a slender, medium sized owl, 13-15 inches in height, brownish-grey buff and tan in colour. The upper parts are barred and mottled. It is a master in the art of camouflage. Its bark-coloured plumage renders it invisible when it is roosting in dense cover. It has yellow-orange eyes, a rusty-coloured face and long ear tufts. Individual feathers of different hues comprise the ear tufts, but the actual ear canals are hidden behind the facial disc. These ear tufts are depressed in flight but erect at times when the owl is disturbed. Similar species with ear tufts are the great horned owl and the screech owl. Depending on the availability of food supply, adult owls can weigh 245-400 grams.

The call of a long-eared owl is a low, moaning "hoooo". They can be found roosting communally in woods, live oaks, mountain and coniferous forests. Nesting activity normally

begins in March. They commonly use abandoned crow, magpie or hawk nests, but some pairs are known to nest in open spaces. The female, the larger of the two, chooses the nest site which is usually 7-12 metres above the ground. Courtship flight and feeding is part of the breeding ritual. The reproductive success of long-eared owls is dependent on food supply, and if prey numbers are adequate, 3-8 spherical white eggs are laid. The young hatch asynchronously and the hatchlings fall into the semi-altricial two category of development. This means the young are immobile, downy, have closed eyes, and are fed by the parent birds. Their diet is mainly rodents but some small birds may be taken. Owls have no crop so they bolt their prey whole. This gives rise to their habit of regurgitating pellets.

An aggressive threat display is common to both long-eared and short-eared owls should an intruder enter their breeding territory. These nocturnal predators are often feared due to their appearance and ghostlike call. The "wisdom" of the owl is limited due to their specialization in acute

hearing and sight, which does not leave much room for brains. We can, however, find virtue from the many folk tales recounted over the centuries. Such virtue is retold in the anonymous proverb:

A wise old owl sat in an oak  
The more he saw, the less he spoke  
The less he spoke, the more he heard  
Why can't we all be like the wise old bird?



This stuffed and mounted Long-Eared Owl was found dead during the Christmas bird count.

### REPORT MARINE MAMMAL SIGHTINGS AND STRANDINGS TO:

380-1925 in the Victoria area

On the water: VHF channel 68 to the vessel *Sundiver*

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All sightings, no matter how old, are useful for research purposes, and are put into a computer data base. Records are available to all researchers. When current local sightings of killer whales, or any unusual species, are reported promptly, researchers will try to respond to them. Please report date, time, location, a description of the animals, and number and direction of travel, as well as your name and phone number in case further information is required.

## CALENDAR

**REGULAR MEETINGS** are held as follows: Board of Directors meetings the first Tuesday of each Month; Botany Night the third Tuesday and Birders' Night the fourth Wednesday of each month. Locations are given in the calendar listings.

**FIELD TRIPS.** Please meet at the location indicated for each trip and **BRING A LUNCH.** Be equipped for changes in the weather, with hat, rain gear and boots, if necessary. **Always phone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 before a trip** to get further details or find out about changes in plans. On VNHS trips, participants usually pool vehicles to reduce parking problems and costs. The Board suggests that fuel costs be shared with the driver.

### MAY EVENTS

**Sunday, May 6. Cowichan Bay Birding Trip.** Bryan Gates will be leading a birding trip to the Cowichan Bay area. This will be a good opportunity to see and learn about migrants, including the purple martins which have been nesting in the area. This is birding at its easiest with a knowledgeable leader and with little walking involved. Meet at 7:30 am at Helmcken P&R or 8:15 on the Dock Road, Cowichan Bay.

**Tuesday, May 8. Natural History Workshop at Swan Lake.** Come to the Swan Lake Nature Centre and participate in an interactive workshop where you learn more about life forms in the lake and the history of eutrophication. Ann Scarfe will be your guide, sampling lake water for typical pond life and using microscopes to examine the results. **This event takes the**



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place of the May General Meeting and begins at 7:00 pm. at the Swan Lake Nature Centre.

**Sunday, May 13. Mandarte Island.** Join Hank Vander Pol on the Sidney Island Ferry to go around Mandarte Island to view the birds that nest there. A walk on Sidney Spit may also be possible. Meet at the main wharf in Sidney, at the end of Beacon Avenue at 9:00 am. Note that parking restrictions do not apply in Sidney on Sundays. **DO NOT PARK** on the paved area of the Sidney Hotel. Registration for this trip is necessary. Please call Maxine Smith at 595-4555. The charge for the ferry is \$10.00.

**Saturday, May 19. Carmanah Valley Trip.** This trip is now fully booked. Please check with the VNHS Bulletin for details.

**Saturday, May 27. Newcastle Island, Nanaimo.** Newcastle is a wooded island which has been set aside as a city park. Join Bill Merilees on a trip to view the marine life, botany and birds that reside in the area. Participants will catch the 10:00 am ferry to the island. Parking is available behind the Civic Arena. Turn right at the lights in the centre of Nanaimo (Bowen Road, a few blocks past the fountain) then immediately turn left into the arena parking lot. Walk to the waterfront to meet Bill at the ferry wharf. Bring a lunch and good walking boots. For those who want to join a carpool, meet at the Helmcken P&R at 8:15 am.

### JUNE EVENTS

**Saturday, June 2. Birding at Francis King Park.** Join Alan McLeod to enjoy a day of birding by ear and by eye. Meet at 7 am at the Nature House.

**Sunday, June 10. Cowichan River Foot Path Natural History Trip.** Join Dannie Carsen on a birding, aquatic habitat and botany trip along the river-side trail. The walk will last for three hours and is suitable for youngsters who are good walkers. Wear hiking boots and bring a lunch. Call Dannie at 384-4924 for further details. Meet at the Helmcken P&R at 8:00 am or at the shopping centre just before the bridge at the south end of Duncan at 9:00 am.

**Wednesday, June 20. 5th Annual Birders Night Picnic.** Bryan and Sharon Gates have invited members of the VNHS to their home again. Come at 6:00 pm to 3085 Uplands Road. Bring something to BBQ, plates, cutlery, mug and a chair. If you have not already signed up to bring a salad or desert, phone Jesse McEachern, 383-0467. *Please* contribute something so that we do not run short of food - everyone comes with a big appetite.

**Saturday/Sunday, July 7 and 8. Olympic Mountains, Washington.** See the wild flowers on the Olympic Mountains. Choose either Deer Park on Saturday or Hurricane Ridge on Sunday. Gentle hiking in the sub-alpine meadows with incredible photographic opportunities. The area is also excellent for bird and mammal

viewing. Cost is \$50.00 per person for each trip, with a discount for VNHS members. Call Swiftsure Tours at 388-4227 for details.

## BULLETIN BOARD

**CARMANAH VALLEY TRIP - May 19-21, 1990.** This trip is now fully booked. For those who are going, please confirm your reservation with Dannie Carsen (384-4924). You should also have received an itinerary. The group will meet on May 19 at the Town and Country Mall at 6:00 a.m.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor, The Victoria Naturalist  
The article on Parasitism in the Flowering Plants by Job Kuijt, published in the March-April, 1990 issue of The Victoria Naturalist prompted me to dig out this charming piece of botanical doggerel by the late Jim Grant of the late Forest Biology and Pathology Laboratory, Vernon, B.C.

Ode to Dwarf Mistletoe,  
or  
"Feed Blindly, Blight, Amidst the Encircling Broom"

The dwarf mistletoes  
As everyone knows  
Of conifer forests are dangerous foes.  
These parasites boast  
Full many a host  
From dry Okanagan to soggy wet coast.

No thallophytes these  
That live on our trees,  
Nor Phyco-, nor Asco-, nor Myxomycetes;  
In botanical terms  
They are Angiosperms  
With symptom suggestive and sign that confirms.

When ready to propagate,  
These parasites obligate  
By population explosion find many a substrate.  
.... And I don't want to bore ya  
But when their *haustoria*  
Sink into a tree, it is *sic transit gloria!*

By Jim Grant, circa 1960.

P.S. If you are not cognizant with the above botanical terms please refer to the March-April issue.

David Stirling



**Announcement:** 10% off all Natural History books to VNHS members. Large selection: birding, plants, etc. Wells Used Books, 1505 Fell (off Oak Bay), 592-8376.

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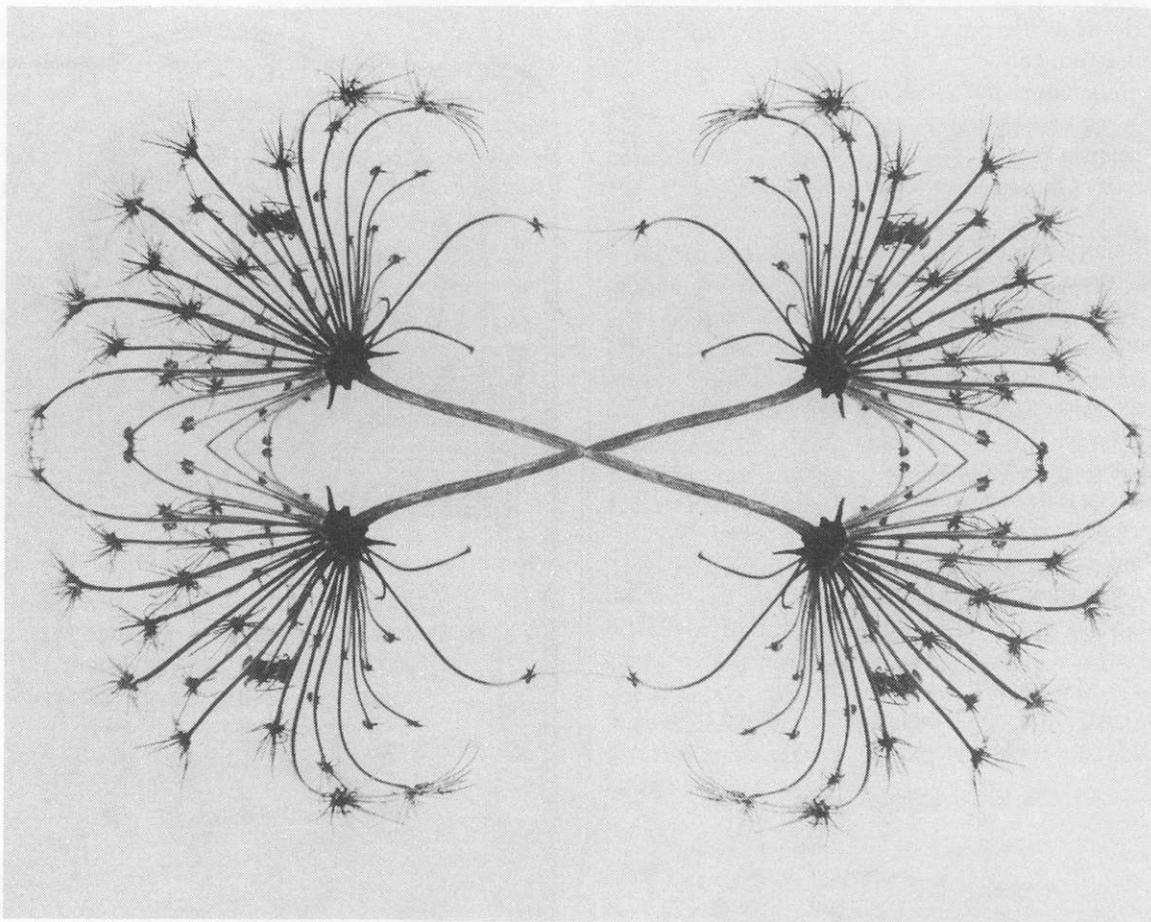
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—Image by Frank Fish, Victoria B.C.