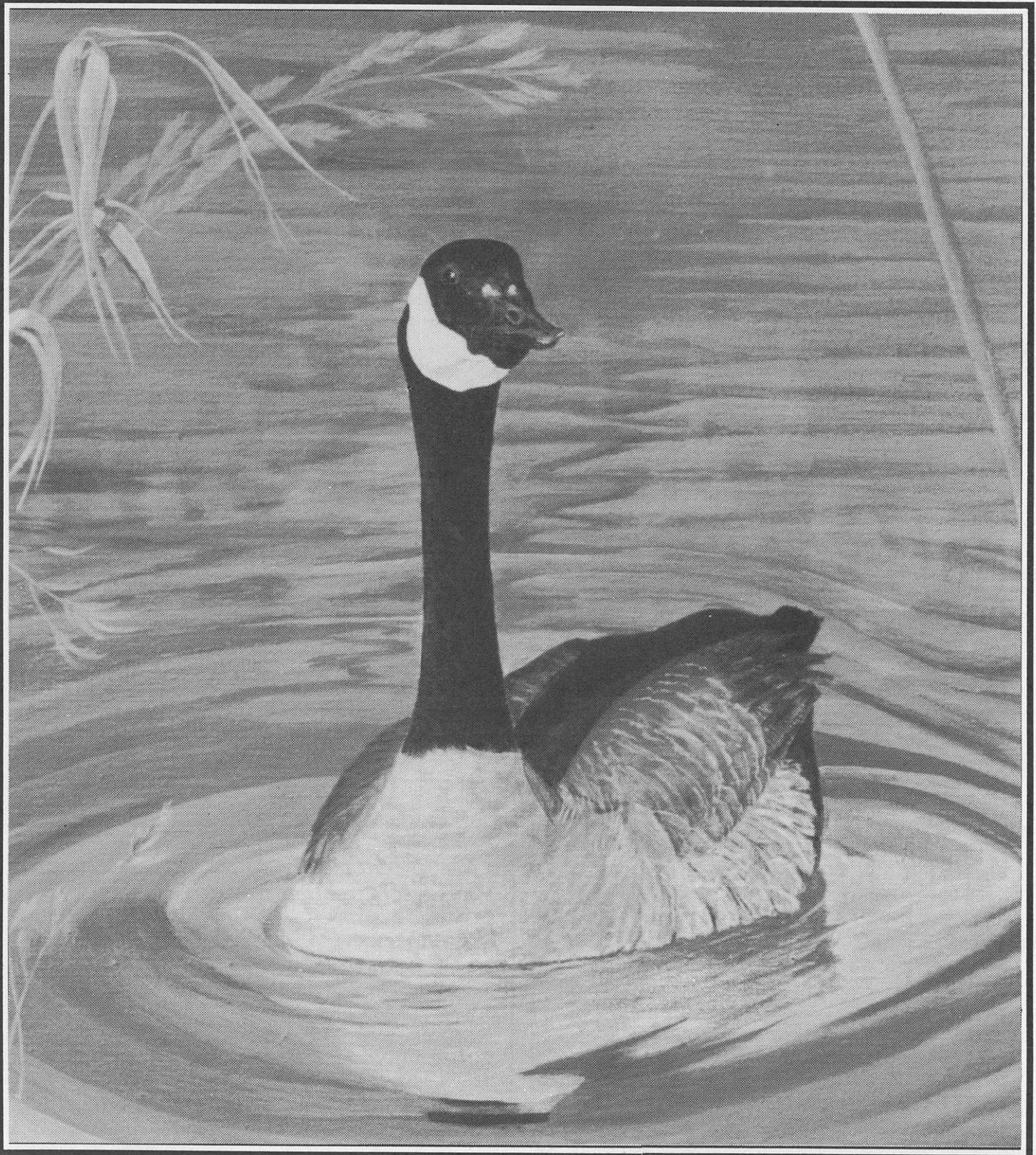




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OUR COVER

The cover of this issue is a painting of a Canada Goose by Jim Mason. Jim joined the Victoria Natural History Society last year but has been an avid naturalist for many years. He took up painting as a hobby about three years and "... just loves 'tramping about' and painting what I see and feel". Another example of his work appears below.



Bald Eagle. (Painting by Jim Mason)



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"Red" and Friends

By Robert W. Maule

We never thought that we could ever miss him, but this summer we caught ourselves asking, "Red, where have you gone?" That pesky tree squirrel that we so loved to curse had abandoned us and, wonders never cease, we missed the little pest.

I say "him", but we have no way to know whether our beloved tormentor was male or female. Perhaps I assumed he was male because of his pugnacious, fearless behaviour. Although that may be a bit of sexism that crept into my observations, I will continue to call our friend a boy, for linguistic simplicity if for no other reason. Our name for him, however, was purified of any sexist overtones—he became known simply as "Red".

The chipper little fellow was a beautiful representative of his species, *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*, commonly known as a Red Squirrel. From our very first encounter with Red, I wondered about the very existence of this lovely little creature on Vancouver Island. The coast of the lower mainland opposite the Island is the exclusive domain of a cousin species, the Chickaree or Douglas Squirrel, *Tamiasciurus douglasi*, completely isolating the Island's squirrels from their mainland range. My guess is that the intrusion of the Chickaree from its otherwise more southerly range occurred after Red's ancestors had made the trip from the Mainland, which I assume must have happened as the last ice age sheet withdrew.

We first met Red two years ago shortly after we moved into our holiday house near the mouth of John Muir Creek, midway between Otter Point and Sheringham Point. Actually, we were never formally introduced. We saw little or nothing of Red that first summer. But heard him we did! Such a loud voice for such a diminutive creature. Red's characteristic ratchet-like call echoed around us. His serenade came from various concealed locations in the tall spruce beside the house. We could have coexisted well enough if Red presented only that minor irritation. It was Red's accurate bombardment that irked. Red loved to cut loose his cherished spruce cones and drop them on the house. Our attic-less house reverberated under the bombardment—especially when Red's bomb site was accurate enough to land cones on the skylights. We came to believe that Red did in fact aim for the house—given the high percentage of his cones that hit the target. Perhaps he just liked the sound. More likely, each resounding drumbeat may have assured him that a cone had made it through the thick forest cover and would be available to him when he came down to eat—which we assume he did even if we were never able to see him away from the shelter of his tree.

We returned a year later to find that Red had mellowed. Rarely did he resume his bombing. Instead he specialized in bringing his cones to his newly found eating station—atop the wooden frame that protects the glass windbreak on our deck. The minor irritation of sweeping the bushels of cone fragments off the deck was more than offset by the pleasure of watching Red, now a much more friendly and fearless visitor,



"Red" enjoys a spruce cone while sitting atop the deck windscreen. (Photograph by author)

methodically remove cone scale after cone scale, consuming the seeds and dropping the fragments to the deck.

I cannot even guess why Red had become so much less shy. He now tolerated my close approach, as demonstrated by the close up photograph that accompanies this article. Obviously he would not have tolerated any attempt to touch him, if I were to be so rash as to try, but he showed little or no alarm when I came within five or six feet.

We looked forward to another summer of amusement with Red but for many months it seemed that it was not to be. Our appetite for another season with Red had already been whetted by his cousins in Alaska who provided us with an engaging preview of Red Squirrel behaviour. During our early summer visit to our daughter's home near Anchorage, a female, just as noisy as Red, held forth just outside the window. She too was a beautiful specimen, although noticeably different from her more southern relative. The diagnostic black strip dividing the russet brown of the back from the lighter belly was much darker and more distinct. We knew she was a female as she produced two handsome children who were too fearless for their own good. On those first rare warm days of Alaskan summer the two would sun themselves on a log just outside the window. Perfect miniatures of their mother, they appeared to be but three or four inches long.

Fortunately for these youngsters' survival chances, their first encounter with a large animal was not fatal, although undoubtedly traumatic. We had been worried that the family cat, who fancies herself a great hunter, would soon end the fearless twosomes' short lives. But fate intervened in the persona of the family dog—a docile creature whose maternal instincts always outweigh any tendency towards predation. She mothers anything that will tolerate her ministrations, often grooming the cat and carrying her about the house in gentle jaws. Obviously, squirrel babies needed mothering too, at least in the mind of the dog. One fine day we were startled to see the dog trot into the house with a baby squirrel held delicately in her teeth. Released within the house, the squirrel had quite enough of this attention, thank you, and led the whole household a merry chase. At last cornered, the youngster was safely in a gloved hand and held long enough

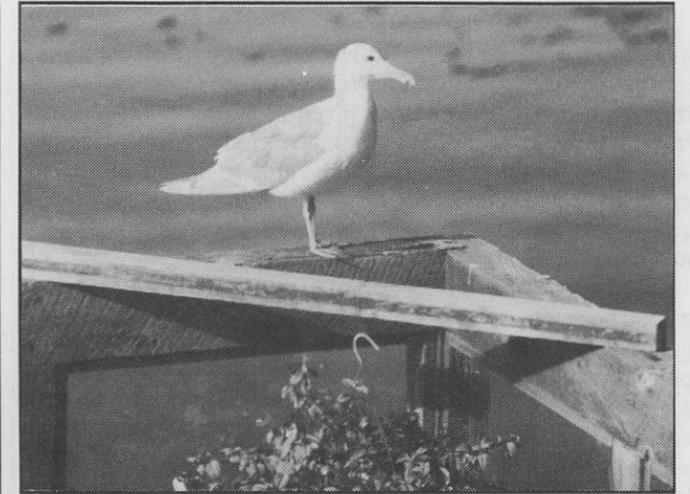
to be admired at close range by the grandchildren. Released outside, young squirrel seemed none the worse for the wear, but we hope wiser and warier.

With that preview, we returned to Vancouver Island anticipating further adventures with our Red. But he was nowhere to be seen, or heard. For much of the summer the woods seemed strangely quiet—our amusing friend of the deck railing had disappeared. If he were alive, he should be close by—a Red Squirrel's range is reported to be less than 200 yards across. We hoped that his careless indifference to close approach had not played a role in his demise. What could have happened to him? His life expectancy should have been about ten years. Perhaps he was already an old man when first we met.

We were soon distracted as other guests arrived—animals that share Red's friendly demeanour and fearlessness. Perhaps Red, in departing, passed the word that we were harmless, and good for the occasional handout. First came another of early summer's rituals, the return of the Rufous Hummingbirds. This year their return was marked by an imperious demand. I had seen a few females about the garden but had been lazy enough to postpone getting out the feeder and cooking up the first batch of sugar water. One pugnacious specimen let me know precisely what she thought of my lassitude. Flying directly to where my wife and I stood in the garden, she hovered for a few seconds within a foot of our faces, then flew directly to where the feeder had hung for many summers. Sufficiently chastised, I hastened to my duties and soon our demanding friend and many of her colleagues were swarming about the feeder.

Another friendly species we receive each year with mixed emotions. Yes, the deer make themselves very much at home in our garden. The neighbours told us that during the winter one or more used our woodshed as a place of permanent abode. So our return to the house probably was not welcome news to the deer population. But adjustments were soon made. We gave up trying to keep the deer away from the roses and the deer decided to tolerate us as well. One yearling, who acquired the name Sugar, knows no fear. She strolls casually across our wooden deck and continues to dine on the Salal even when I approach within four or five feet. An even closer approach never panics her—she just nonchalantly moves over a foot or too and continues grazing. We've reached a compromise—we've given up on growing roses and Sugar continues to provide us the delight of watching such a gentle, elegant creature.

Soon we had reason to be thankful that at least some of our flowers were not to a deer's taste. Sugar's friends and relatives descended in force having decided that our garden is prime, gourmet-land. Three or four at a time seem a bit much, but what can one do? There was one delightful evening that made it all worthwhile. A doe and her fawn appeared near dusk—a pair much less fearless than Sugar. It was the fawn that gave us the show of the season. Perhaps this was the first time the young deer had been in a cleared area away from the confining forest. Having discovered the joys of open space the fawn behaved much like a colt on its first day in pasture. He would dash at full speed from one end of our large lawn and pasture to the other, sometimes stopping short midway, only to rush off in the opposite



"Jonathan" entreats a handout, perched near "Red's" former favourite feeding station. (Photograph by author)

direction. Sometimes unable to decide which way to bolt, he would leap exuberantly straight up, landing stiff legged ready for another mad dash across the grass. The doe looked on, seemingly bemused. We had never before, or since, seen such uninhibited, joyful behaviour by any wild creature.

Red must have passed the word to the avian community as well. We've had more than our usual share of adventures with bird visitors this year. Resident Bald Eagles continue to patrol the coast, eyeing us casually as they cruise the draft welling up from the Straits. There was not, however, an encore to the spectacle of last summer when we watched with mixed emotions as an Eagle attempted to dine on a sea bird chick, probably a grebe, that had been separated from its family and was swimming helplessly in the kelp bed just off our shore. The Eagle would circle and dive but just as talons came within mere inches, the young bird would dive out of harm's way. Eagle would wheel quickly, gain altitude, and repeat the attack as soon as the chick broke surface. The contest remained indecisive. The Eagle made about a dozen attempts, each unsuccessful. We watched in fascination, not knowing quite which side to root for. Fortunately, the end result was a draw—our neighbours' approach in a canoe drove off the Eagle which headed down the coast, undoubtedly deciding to return to more traditional fish fare.

Another old friend and tormentor returned. At least we think it was the same Glaucous-winged Gull that had been our guest two years before. This handsome specimen, soon to be named Jonathan, enjoyed sitting on the deck windscreen making it quite clear that he would relish some of the food he could observe on our dining table. Unable to resist temptation, we would from time to time yield to his pleading looks and throw him bread crusts. Once, as an experiment, I tried a chicken leg bone, expecting to enjoy watching Jonathan take the time to pick off the remaining meat. To my surprise, the bone disappeared in one gull gulp. I tried another bone which immediately followed the first. Jonathan then tried to bolt down a third bone, but could not

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quite complete the task. He flew off with part of the bone still protruding from his bill. We saw him no more, and I had lived with the fear that I had given him a terminal case of indigestion. Intellectually I knew that gulls, efficient scavengers that they are, should be able to handle bones of any sort—I had seen entire Coho skeletons disappear down gull gullets. But I still worried that the chicken bone banquet had been too much for Jonathan.

It was a relief to observe that Jonathan was back this year. There was good reason to assume that it was the same gull, as he settled down to his old ways—perching at the same place and watching us at meal times. Jonathan had learned a new trick, however - one that we greeted less enthusiastically. He soon flew down to the deck, deliberately walked to the sliding door to the dining room and pecked loudly on the glass to demand our attention. He frequently duplicated this feat on an upstairs window, sometimes when we were still in bed. Obviously, this limited his appeal to the household! Nevertheless, it was fascinating behaviour. How could this habit have been acquired? We observed that his beak was usually, if not always, open as it struck the glass. I theorized that he might be pecking at the red spot of his reflected bill, a begging/feeding behaviour remembered from his days in the nest. We started an experiment to see if he would continue this behaviour if we could eliminate the reflection but the results were inconclusive by the time we were called away from the Island. Neighbours tell us that Jonathan continued to haunt our house for several days, peering into one window after the next, seemingly perplexed by the absence of his benefactors. By the time we returned, however, he had given up and once again moved on, perhaps to bemuse another household.

We shared in another avian phenomena of the summer, the invasion of the Steller's Jays. For several summers I had filled a tube bird feeder with the best available sunflower seeds, but could never attract customers. Although Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, assorted Finches and other common feeder birds were abundant, none could be enticed to the feeder. I concluded that our garden offered too many natural delicacies for the birds to bother with a feeder. This summer, the Jays changed our luck. A flock of some eight Jays soon found ways to gorge on the sunflower seeds. They are, of course, badly adapted to a tube feeder with its short perches designed for much smaller birds. Pioneer Jays soon found ingenious ways to feed. At first they partly hovered while seizing a seed or two. Gradually their techniques improved. At times we thought they fancied themselves as overgrown chickadees, doing their best to hang upside down from the perches. To feed they would flutter wings, and balance by thrusting a long tail upward. By now, most have left us but the remaining few have become experts at the feeder. By placing one foot on a lower perch, one on an upper, and bracing against the feeder with a tail, they feed gluttonously in a relatively upright position. In this posture the Jays are about as graceful as three hundred pound ballerinas, but the size of my sunflower seed bill shows that they are eminently successful!

As summer neared end, we were grateful for all the

friends that Red had invited to share our garden, but feared that our principal entertainer had gone for good. Then, as I sat at the keyboard drafting this story, what should I hear but familiar thunderous thumps upon the roof just overhead. Obviously, a red squirrel had returned. It was several weeks before we saw the newcomer. He acts much like Red did during his first summer, rarely letting himself be seen, and never returns to Red's favourite feeding station atop the wind screen. We reluctantly concluded that Red had indeed met an unfortunate end and that our new guest claimed his vacant territory. Without any reason to support our conclusion, we would like to think that Red Jr. is the son of our original guest.

We are delighted that Red's original invitation to his four-legged and two-winged friends remains valid. Our latest observations show that unusual events continue to take place in and above our garden. We are near the area where Turkey Vultures prepare enmass for their flight south. Until this year that phenomena has been limited to the East Sooke area - we saw only a few isolated individuals, and those several miles from home. This year has been different. The 'TVs' were upon us in force. Not long ago a mass flight of 30 vultures wheeled and soared above the house, taking advantage of that updraft from our waterfront bank.

Other delights continue to arrive to seaward. There have been few Orcas this year, but for the first time we observed a half-dozen Northern Sea Lions feeding voraciously just off our kelp bed. Our old friends, the River Otter family, patrol by the house from time to time. Sea birds, common enough further out in the Straits, have moved in to close observation distance. For the first time two immature Cormorants (Double Crested?) have joined the usual Great Blue Heron perched upon the kelp. A Common Murre graced us with his presence just 15 feet off our shore. Then, just the other day, we were delighted with a massed raft of Alcids, just too far away to be identified positively. There must have been 200 or more of the birds, diving and surfacing simultaneously. I say simultaneously, but that is in error. Birds at one end of the raft would dive, then the others would follow in order - giving an avian impression of a football stadium giant wave! A recent delight was a group of fifteen Western Grebes, moving swan-like a few hundred feet off shore. Then, as a *grande finale*, rafts of Surf Scoters, at least 300 strong, rest and feed some 500 meters off shore.

Thank you, Red, for providing such pleasure and amusement. We forgive you for the minor irritations you caused us. Most of all, thank you for that invitation to your friends who have so capably bemused and amazed us. Perhaps next summer Red Jr. will follow your example and delight us with a repetition of your confiding confidence as you eyed us from your feeding perch upon the deck. We will certainly welcome back Red Jr. but I hope we will see more of him and hear much less!

Reference:

William H. Burt and Richard P. Grossenheider. *Mammals*. Peterson Field Guide Series, Third Edition.

Robert Maule is a member of the Victoria Natural History Society living in the wilds of Sooke, B.C.

Going Squirrely: Vancouver Island's Increasing Grey Squirrel Population

By Bruce Bennett

According to Woods (1980), southern Ontario is the northern extremity of the Eastern Grey Squirrel's (*Sciurus carolinensis*) natural range, coinciding with the eastern deciduous forests. It has since spread into the southern portion of New Brunswick, Quebec and Manitoba. Populations have been introduced to Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia and many U.S. states.

Woods also mentions an introduced population in the Nanaimo region, yet if a population exists, they are rare. I have contacted Karen Morrison with the Nanaimo Fish and Wildlife Branch (Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks), Bill Merilees of B.C. Parks and Dr. Ken Langelier of the Island Veterinary Clinic in Nanaimo, none of whom have seen the Grey Squirrel in the Nanaimo area. The better known Vancouver population of squirrels arose from three or four pairs released in Stanley Park, Vancouver, B.C., shortly before 1914 (Robinson and Cowan, 1954). They were prevented from spreading by the park's location; surrounded by water on three sides and a densely populated urban area on the fourth. In recent years, with human assistance, they have begun to spread throughout the lower mainland (Merilees, 1992).

In the fall of 1966, the Vandermeer Game Farm in Metchosin acquired two females and one male Grey Squirrel from Ontario. They were placed on an island surrounded by a moat but they accidentally escaped shortly thereafter (Guiget, 1975). Their progeny no doubt account for the early sightings throughout Metchosin and East Sooke where the population remained concentrated for many years after.

In the last few years, with few natural barriers to overcome, the Grey Squirrel's range has expanded. Park staff first recorded sightings in Goldstream Provincial Park in the summer of 1985 (Fraser, 1987) presumably travelling from Metchosin by way of Humpback Road. This group is of particular interest as Fraser (1987) reported a black-phase individual there, a colour phase that had previously been unreported on southern Vancouver Island (Nagorsen, 1986).

The Grey Squirrel ranges in colour from grey, dark brown or black to red-brown or pure white. The black and grey phases are common in the Stanley Park population and the lack of polymorphic colour variations on southern Vancouver Island may be attributed to the "Founder Effect," that occurs when a population arises out of a small gene pool.

The squirrels have since spread along the Saanich Peninsula almost to the B.C. Ferry terminal, into Saanich,

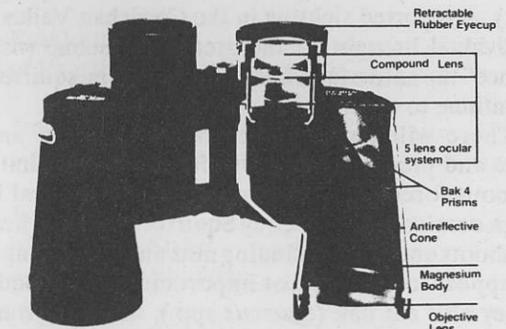
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Oak Bay, Esquimalt and Victoria. A few individuals have been found in Beacon Hill Park over the last two years. The average litter size for the Grey Squirrel is three (Woods, 1980), and they commonly have two litters born in May and July. Park employees reported 13 offspring were raised this year (pers. comm.). The young did not have an uneventful childhood, however, as they were attacked by gulls and crows; even a bald eagle tried catching a pup.

The squirrels are still thriving in Sooke and Metchosin. During the recent Christmas Bird Count I found individuals at Witty's Lagoon and along the southern shore of the Sooke River. A road-killed Grey Squirrel was found near Bamberton Provincial Park on the Malahat in 1990 (Fraser, D.F. pers. comm.) although Angela Beltane of the Royal B.C. Museum has said that they are not yet found in the Mill Bay area (pers. comm.). A reported sighting in the Cowichan Valley may be an individual brought to the area by someone wishing to "enhance" the native fauna. It appears that the squirrels range will continue to expand.

There will be limits to their expansion and food sources and predation will contribute to these limitations. Deciduous forests comprise most of their natural habitat. Though omnivorous, the Grey Squirrel still relies heavily on buds, shoots and fruits including nuts and seeds. Maple (*Acer* spp.) appear to be the most important natural food source but they also eat oak (*Quercus* spp.), including our native Garry Oak (*Quercus garryana*), Cherry (*Prunus* spp.), Hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.) and many other deciduous shrubs and small trees. Robinson and Cowan (1954) present a list of native foods utilized, by season. This dependency on mixed woodland may limit the Grey Squirrels' expansion as they may not be able to compete with the native Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus lanuginosus*) that lives in the coniferous forests (D.Nagorsen, pers. comm., 1992).

Robinson and Cowan (1954) reported that in Stanley Park, where the Grey Squirrel has reached its maximum population densities, they were practically absent in pure stands of coniferous trees. The few that did occur were either transients or dependent upon some abnormal food supply such as scraps of human food. The loss of the smaller native Red Squirrel in the Victoria area is probably due to the loss of habitat and to the introduction of the domestic cat and not necessarily due to competition with the Grey Squirrel. The Grey Squirrel may therefore occupy this vacant niche. Their expansion could therefore continue up the east coast of the island as far as Courtenay or Campbell River.

Grey Squirrels have discovered bird feeders, which they frequent much to the dismay of local birders. Friends living on Triangle mountain are regularly visited by a Grey Squirrel that will boldly enter their home in pursuit of nutty treats. Precautions, such as metal collars around trees, and a little ingenuity can make most bird feeders squirrel-proof.

Several authors cited by Robinson and Cowan (1954) report that the Grey Squirrel in its native range, and in its introduced range in England, consumes a considerable quantity of animal matter such as insect larvae, eggs and young of birds, and small mammals. This behaviour has led some local birders to persecute the squirrels, yet little evidence of predation on nesting birds was discovered in

their Stanley Park study.

Studies of the cause of nest destruction in Stanley Park revealed that the Grey Squirrels were responsible in two instances (one Swainson's thrush and one American robin) and the Douglas Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*) in one instance (American Robin). Six other nests were lost to other causes.

Bird nests were not sought after by the squirrels but if a bird places its nest on or close to a frequented travelway it was subjected to loss. The Grey Squirrel can then be classed as a chance predator in this region (Stanley Park) (Robinson and Cowan, 1954).

This does not necessarily mean that the introduction of the Grey Squirrel to southern Vancouver Island will not have an effect on the breeding bird population. Many neighbourhoods may now have a new predator other than the Red Squirrel and the domestic cat. Further studies are required to determine the local impact of the Grey Squirrel on the native bird population and relocation of squirrels must be discouraged.

A similar but slightly larger species, the Western Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*) occurs naturally in California, Oregon and Washington, where it is common in the Sierra Nevada but it is rare in the Cascades of Washington and Oregon (Booth, 1961). Whether this species will find its way to British Columbia has yet to be determined but at present only the Eastern Grey Squirrel is found on Vancouver Island (D.Nagorsen, pers. comm., 1992).

Further reports on the Grey Squirrel expansion outside the Greater Victoria area or on the discovery of colour phases other than grey, would be appreciated and can be reported by calling 598-7726 or writing to Bruce Bennett, 2470 Bowker Ave., Victoria, V8R 2G1.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank David Fraser for his support and input.

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Bruce Bennett was a Naturalist for several years at Manning Provincial Park. He is currently with the Biological Collections Program, Botany Division, of the Royal British Columbia Museum.

Welcome To New Members

- Nov. 25 Beverly March, of Pandora Avenue: is interested in conservation: a gift from Jackie Wrinch.
- Nov. 25 Sven and Cathy Rasmussen, of West Saanich Road: a gift from Rosemary Walters.
- Nov. 25 Barbara and Bob Lake, of Central Saanich Road.
- Nov. 25 J. Ray Brown, of Rithetwood Drive.
- Nov. 25 Pat Atkinson, of Prospect Lake Road.
- Nov. 25 Diana Morgan, of Cordova Bay Road: enjoys birding.
- Nov. 26 Jane de Faye, of Foul Bay Road: is interested in birds, mushrooms and the Swan Lake Nature Centre.
- Dec. 10 Andrew and Jennifer Harley, of Newton Street: enjoy bird watching and hiking.
- Dec. 21 Mr. and Mrs. D. Pender, of Ambassador Avenue.
- Dec. 21 Heather Page, of Salisbury Way.
- Dec. 24 Elaine Vincent, of Quadra Street.

Notice To Members

The Board of Directors will be presenting the following proposal for approval at the Annual General meeting to be held March 9, 1993, commencing at 7:30 p.m. in Begbie 159, at the University of Victoria.

FEE INCREASE—An increase of \$2.00 per membership category is being proposed to take effect as of May, 1993. This is required in order to cover the increased fee that the VNHS must pay to the Federation of B.C. Naturalists beginning in January, 1994.

- Dec. 24 Geoff and Lonny Bate, of Skyline Crescent: are birdwatchers and interested in all natural history.
- Dec. 30 Ismed Sawir, of McKenzie Avenue: studies birds, whales, conservation and ecology management.
- Jan. 4 Nola Erhardt, of Newport Avenue: studies marine life and mammals.
- Jan. 5 Hans J. Schneider, of Forest Park Drive: is a bird-carver and artist.
- Jan. 5 Kathleen Calvert of Fourth Street in Sidney.
- Jan. 7 Ian Baird, in Thailand: a gift from Wanda Crawford.
- Jan. 7 Jacquie Lee, of Chapman Street: enjoys marine biology.
- Jan. 7 John R. Brodie, of Shelbourne Street.
- Jan. 7 Gerry Nixon and Jane Baigent, of Joseph Street: are birdwatchers.
- Jan. 12 Alma Keenan, of Greenlands Road: is interested in conservation.
- Jan. 12 Garry Mierzuak, of Longacre Drive: likes hiking, nature photography, and birdwatching.
- Jan. 17 Mrs. M. Akre, of Elna Road: enjoys birds.
- Jan. 17 K. R. Beckett, of Esquimalt Road.
- Jan. 24 Duane Sept, of Port Clements on the Queen Charlotte Is.
- Jan. 25 Olga and Ken Richardson, of Anndon Place.
- Jan. 25 Marilyn Ferguson, of Oakland Avenue: is interested in all flora and fauna, birds and preservation of Rainforests.

Consider Yourself Blessed, Victoria!

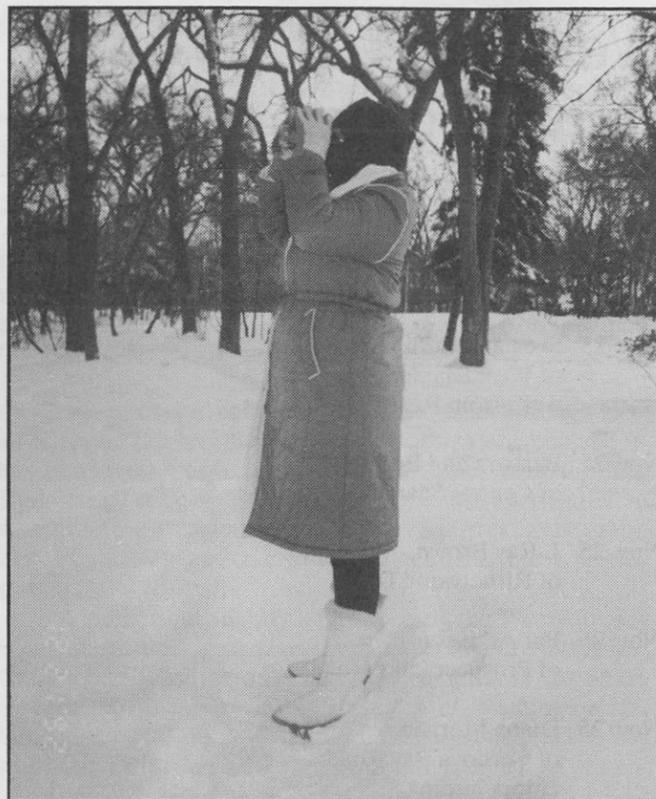
By Warren Drinnan

For reasons that probably could only be explained through extended therapy, we decided to spend this past Christmas with family in Winnipeg. Arrangements to meet with some friends in Winnipeg (prior to their departure for Florida!) meant that we would have to leave before Victoria's Christmas Bird Count, a regular event for me. Feeling a little guilty about this I contacted the Manitoba Natural History Society to find out when they conducted their Christmas count.

This was not as simple as I expected. Phone calls to the Society, Oak-Hammond Bird Refuge, the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature and Fort Whyte (a nature sanctuary) either connected with an answering machine or a complete blank tinged with amusement. ("You mean you want to go and COUNT birds? In THIS weather?"). Finally, an acquaintance of my mother's suggested someone who, according to him, was "one of those bird types".

The person suggested was a good one, however. Wayne Neily was co-ordinator of the Winnipeg Christmas Bird Count and has been compiler of the data for the past ten years. I was to become a member of the SWAT Team (Special Winter Avian Targets) whose mission was to track down all the rarities that had been recently reported to the Rare Bird Hot Line.

We started at 6:00 a.m. to go owling. The temperature



Birding in Winnipeg. (Photo R.W. Drinnan)

was minus 29°C with a brisk wind bringing the wind chill factor to some number close to 2000. We followed the Assiboine River stopping at likely spots to play our tape hoping for an Eastern Screech Owl or a Great Horned Owl. NOT! The only moving creatures were three joggers and it was hard to determine who was the more surprised, us or them. I suspect both groups thought the other was completely nuts.

It got light at about 8:30 a.m. and we still had not seen a single bird. We now started cruising along streets known to have bird feeders hoping to locate something - anything. At 9:15 a.m. we recorded our first observation—a Black-capped Chickadee. Yes, yes, yes! We were on a roll.

The Winnipeg Christmas Bird Count has been going since 1925, although there are ten years during the 1930s and 1940s with no data. Over the 56 years prior to this winter's count Winnipeg has had a cumulative total of 98 species. Single year records include a total of 47 species (1981) and 39,000 for total individuals (1989). The number of observers is about 100 with another 120 or so stationary observers (feeder-watchers). The most common species are, in descending order, the House Sparrow, Rock Dove, European Starling and Bohemian Waxwing (which we didn't see).

A big difference between Victoria and Winnipeg is the fact that the count area for Winnipeg is entirely within the city. This means there is very little open space other than parks compared to the large rural and undeveloped regions within the Victoria count circle. This limits Winnipeg's habitat diversity and the potential number of species. (Three feet of snow and temperatures in the minus 20s aren't exactly assets either.)

After the chickadee we started to hunt for some of the hot line birds. One feeder had a Harris Sparrow, another a

Common Grackle; we missed the Robin that had been present for several weeks at a third feeder. Driving along one city street we saw a Merlin; another one was spotted on top of a downtown building. We spent over an hour wandering along Portage Avenue, near Main Street, looking (unsuccessfully) for a Peregrine that was reported living in the Delta Hotel. Two men with binoculars staring up at the tops of buildings generated more than one comment from the few passersby that dared to be outdoors.

Other species that we saw included a Kestrel, American Crow, Blue Jay, Raven, European Starling and White-breasted Nuthatch. Rock Doves were the most common species, especially near the grain terminals and rail yards, estimated to number between four and five thousand birds. And at the very end of our day, we saw a Great Horned Owl, roosting by the skating rink of St. Vital Park. We were unable to find Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Bohemian Waxwings, Snow Buntings, Pine Grosbeaks, Redpolls or Evening Grosbeaks, all of which are fairly common winter residents.

We birded non-stop until dark, pausing only to pick up fast food and coffee. (The picture of my colleague trying to eat chili while driving downtown streets looking up for Peregrines is forever etched in my mind.) In 12 hours of birding we had recorded a total of 13 species, roughly the same number that can be found most days in my own backyard.

It was a long cold day and we saw nothing out of the ordinary but the event had its moments and I was feeling satisfied. It didn't last. While discussing our respective days my wife Lisa mentioned that they had gone out for a short walk to the nearby park. She described a woodpecker which she recognized as different from any she had seen previously. It had a black and white checkered back and sides ("ladder-back") and dark wings. When shown the field guide she immediately picked out the Three-toed Woodpecker. This bird was not on the historical list for the Christmas count. In one 20-minute venture she saw the rarest bird of the day and one which had not been reported in 56 years of Christmas count observations. It isn't fair.

Lisa and Warren have since thawed out and are hoping to take part in the spring bird count on May 8.

ADVANCE NOTICES

The 22nd Canadian Nature Federation's Annual Conference. On July 22 to 25, 1993 the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club is hosting *From Desert Sands to Alpine Slopes* at the Silver Star Mountain Resort as part of celebrating their 42nd anniversary. Explore the famous Okanagan Valley, from the desert in the south to the alpine slopes in the north. Registration kits will be available January 15, 1993. For more information, write to the Secretary, North Okanagan Naturalists Club, P.O. Box 473, Vernon, B.C., V1T 6M4.

Northwest Aquatic and Marine Educators Regional Conference. "An Aquatic Affair" is the theme of this meeting which will be held at the Cowichan Lake Education Centre from July 2 to 5, 1993. To receive a registration package contact **Kathryn Behrisch** at the Vancouver Aquarium, P.O. Box 3232, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3X8 (685-3364)

Christmas Bird Count, 1992

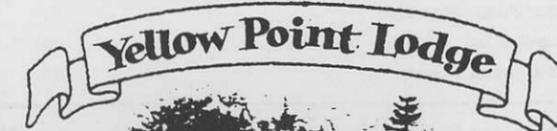
By Mike Shepard and David Pearce

On December 19 one hundred and fifty participants turned out for a cloudy count. The weather ranged from fairly pleasant in downtown Victoria to a steady rain in the northern section. Large numbers of birds had been present throughout the fall and, as expected, we did very well on many species. A total of 140 species were reported, which is down slightly from last year's record of 152.

Our count ended up with 18 all-time highs for total numbers, the most significant being (previous highs are in parentheses): Canada Goose—2656 (1612); Mallard—10,336 (8920); Steller's Jay—659 (324); Fox Sparrow—417 (296); and, Lincoln's Sparrow—30 (17). Three species were very low in numbers: American Wigeon—3466 (second lowest); White-winged Scoter—31 (previous low was 71); and, Ring-necked Pheasant—5 (previous low was 13).

The one rarity found on count day was a Short-tailed Shearwater, seen off Island View Beach.

A compilation of the data, done by David Pearce, is presented in the following pages.



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- ~ Fine home cooking.
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- ~ Tennis courts, volleyball, badminton, canoes, row boats, ping-pong.
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Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Red-throated Loon							17					3
Pacific Loon							6	8		2	47	3
Common Loon						3	18	1		2	3	2
Pied-billed Grebe	1	6		4	25		6		6			
Horned Grebe							24			16	15	3
Red-necked Grebe						15	26	7		25	38	42
Eared Grebe												
Western Grebe						4	1,521			6	5	
Short-tailed Albatross												
Double-crested Cormorant		4		2	41	16	54	7	23	93	23	5
Brandt's Cormorant							157			983	15	116
Pelagic Cormorant						21	6			110	5	91
Great Blue Heron	5		4		3	9	14	13	16	13	1	5
Trumpeter Swan	53			1								
Mute Swan			2			3	12		4		2	
Greater White-fronted Goose							7					
Snow Goose												
Canada Goose	146	5		85			253		206			
Green-winged Teal	26		25	181		20	6	31	8			
Mallard	791	6	27	45	39	199	278	5	215	81	550	33
Northern Pintail	80	1		2		13	35		4			
Northern Shoveler				3				2		4	10	
Gadwall				3			9					
Eurasian Wigeon									3	1	4	1
American Wigeon	199		38	150	1	352	418	1	299	145	400	144
Canvasback										57		
Ring-necked Duck	6	5		13	31		12					
Greater Scaup							5	1	4			4
Lesser Scaup		2			1	9	42		180	2	2	9
Harlequin Duck						2	4	7		18	18	28
Oldsquaw							16			17	4	15
Black Scoter												
Surf Scoter							194	3		361	140	24
White-winged Scoter						1				1	5	3
Common Goldeneye	1					20	78	17	1	57	81	63
Barrow's Goldeneye	3		4									
Bufflehead	23	4	36	2	15	112	371	54	189	156	110	232
Hooded Merganser	2	8	2	38	17	20	9	25	26	85	12	12
Common Merganser	1		20	11	29	7		18	4	1	2	1
Red-breasted Merganser	5					15	59	32	2	149	85	54

Area 1: Butchart's Gardens—Northern Highlands
 Area 2: Central Highlands
 Area 3: Goldstream—Finlayson Arm
 Area 4: Thetis Lake—Hastings Flats
 Area 5: Langford Lake
 Area 6: Albert Head—Triangle Mountain

Area 7: Esquimalt Lagoon—Mill Hill
 Area 8: Esquimalt Harbour
 Area 9: Portage Inlet—The Gorge
 Area 10: Victoria Harbour
 Area 11: Beacon Hill Park

Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
		1	4					7	1	33	all time high (previous high 267 in 1967)
	2	3	400			1		4	12	488	
	1		11					8	1	50	
		1	3	8	1	18	5			84	
	1	13	116			56		18		262	well below average of 530
	2	14	6			2		12	2	191	
			5							5	
						3				1,539	
								1		1	second record
	1	15	12	2	1	28	3	2	2	334	
		17	34			1		4	4	1,331	
	22	23	1			2		6	27	314	
	4	2		4	1	5	3	9		111	
					1	7	10	113		185	high
				1						24	
										7	
								2		2	
				28	358	229	159	1,187		2,656	all time high (previous high 1612 in 1990)
						4	115	272		688	
	414	20	22	265	1,058	867	59	5,362		10,336	all time high (previous high 8920 in 1988)
	1				161		23	200		520	
	2			8		3	42	5		79	
				3	23	39	23			100	all time high (previous high 69 in 1991)
	1				1			1		12	
	91	19		302	20	54		833		3,466	second lowest
						18				75	
	1			9	68	243	49	20		457	
			81			47		2		144	
						7				254	
	2	21	4			1		1	2	108	low
	52	2	21			3		133	75	338	
		1						1		2	
	48	17	30			81		109	2	1,009	
	7	3	3			2		2	4	31	all time low (previous low 71)
	1	8	60			8		55		450	
										7	
	19	21	65	8		146	16	190		1,769	
	19	50	17	4	18	151	8	23		546	all time high (previous high 486 in 1991)
			5		4	243	23	3		372	
	2	8	20			47		45		523	

Area 12: Oak Bay
 Area 13: University—Cadboro Bay
 Area 14: Ten Mile Point—Arbutus Road
 Area 15: Gordon Head—Mount Douglas
 Area 16: Swan Lake—Cedar Hill
 Area 17: Blenkinsop Lake—Panama Flats

Area 18: Elk Lake—Cordova Bay
 Area 19: Prospect Lake—Quick's Bottom
 Area 20: Martindale—Bear Hill
 Area 21: Ocean (Zero Rock, Chain Islets, Juan de Fuca)

Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ruddy Duck												
Bald Eagle	1		10	2	3	4	3			1	1	1
Northern Harrier												
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	5		1	3				3		1	
Cooper's Hawk	1	2				3			3	2		1
Northern Goshawk		1										
Red-tailed Hawk	6	2	1	1	4	3	2		1			
Golden Eagle												1
American Kestrel										1		
Merlin	2	1	1	1	2	1	1		2	2		1
Pergrine Falcon						1						
Ring-necked Pheasant		1		1								
Blue Grouse		1			1							
California Quail	58	55	15	6	48	54	15		88	2		3
Virginia Rail	1											
American Coot		2			2		29		1	2		23
Black-bellied Plover											10	10
Killdeer	11		3			2	29			25		6
Black Oystercatcher										10	2	8
Spotted Sandpiper			1									
Black Turnstone							28	1		42	18	2
Surfbird										25	9	3
Sanderling						1	2			13	7	
Rock Sandpiper										3	1	1
Dunlin							35				1	
Common Snipe	3			1		1	1					
Bonaparte's Gull						1						
Mew Gull	3		13	6	2	165	389	27	58	189	750	25
Ring-billed Gull										1		
California Gull			3							1		1
Herring Gull	2		1				1				1	
Thayer's Gull	45		15			4	4	3	688	25	12	1,536
Western Gull	1		1							1	2	3
Glacous-winged Gull	1,549	57	400	71	144	370	224	563	551	430	1,500	158
Common Murre						3	66	1		50	285	4
Pigeon Guillemot						1	2			2	22	1
Marbled Murrelet						4		1		6	3	7
Ancient Murrelet							1			6	15	5
Rhinoceros Auklet										1		3
Rock Dove	1		22	29	10		42		152	149	306	58
Band-tailed Pigeon				1			5			1		

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- Area 11: Beacon Hill Park

Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
				3		14				17	
	3	3	1	1	1	7	2	5	1	50	
				1				1		2	
	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1		30	all time high (previous high 28 in 1990)
	4	2			3	4	6	3		34	
										1	
				2	4	2	6	4		38	
										1	
	1									2	
						1	2			17	
	1	1			1		1	1		6	
					1		1	1		5	all time low (previous low 13)
							1			3	
	10	14				5	56	20		449	
	1					2	2			6	
				37	3	504	8	1		612	
								23		43	
			5		23		4	116		224	
										20	
										1	
										91	
										37	
										23	
										5	
								139		175	
				4	1	1	4	5		21	
										1	
	37	16	60	82	51	134	5	256	126	2,394	
										1	
										5	
						1				6	
				7	5			2		2,346	all time high (previous high 1962 in 1986)
										8	
	54	65	83	114	422	623	284	278	8	7,948	
	2		7						22	440	
										3	
	3	4	1						2	38	
	1	5							1	28	
			70						100	198	
		1							1	6	
		25	39	27	13	5	49	59		986	
						6	1			14	

- Area 12: Oak Bay
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- Area 19: Prospect Lake—Quick's Bottom
- Area 20: Martindale—Bear Hill
- Area 21: Ocean (Zero Rock, Chain Islets, Juan de Fuca)

Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Mourning Dove					2					1		
Western Screech-Owl	2					1						
Great Horned Owl	3					2						
Snowy Owl												
Barred Owl					1							
Northern Saw-whet Owl												
Anna's Hummingbird					1	2						
Belted Kingfisher	2		1	1		7	3	4	6	8		
Red-breasted Sapsucker		1										
Downy Woodpecker				3	9	2	3			3	12	2
Hairy Woodpecker					3	1				1		
Northern Flicker	15	20	4	21	28	25	38	35	20	13	23	11
Pileated Woodpecker		2		4				1	1			
Eurasian Skylark												
Steller's Jay	30	45	7	36	99	56	17	14	43	2	10	20
Northwestern Crow	694	47	20	468	294	109	130	61	247	71	209	37
Common Raven	55	86	8	13	6	13	5	2	9	2	4	1
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	89	56	43	130	119	160	65	74	72	16	75	44
Bushtit	12	15	12			29	33	52	142	60	128	82
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	9		13	9	26	7	12	8	2	17	2
Brown Creeper	2	5	1	13	6	16	4	1	5	2	13	2
Bewick's Wren	1	5	1	2	12	3	2	3	12	1	8	6
Winter Wren	20	27	47	20	21	13	7	16	21	3	22	7
Marsh Wren					1							
American Dipper			4									
Golden-crowned Kinglet	180	196	142	367	257	147	191	68	176	6	268	35
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	2	5	3	19	26	9		6	2	13	4
Hermit Thrush		1		1		1		1	1			
American Robin	115	836	118	916	457	128	106	33	330	60	355	91
Varied Thrush	6	35	65	11	42	2	4	4	3		19	3
American Pipit												
Cedar Waxwing		16								21	2	
Northern Shrike												
European Starling	611	1,550	14	586	796	105	42	21	334	422	1,177	99
Hutton's Vireo				1	1							
Orange-crowned Warbler									1			
Yellow-rumped Warbler												
Rufous-sided Towhee	34	21	7	19	67	38	24	10	28	8	33	20
American Tree Sparrow												
Savannah Sparrow										1		

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Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
										3	
						2	4			9	
					1			3		9	
				1						1	
										1	
							3			3	
	9	8	4	1		1				26	
	3	1	3		2	1	2	1		45	
	1	6	5	15	10	2	11	3		87	
			1				3	1		10	
	20	19	8	6	16	27	44	9		402	high
	1						2			11	
								34		34	
	89	27	17	16	27	31	43	30		659	all time high (previous high 324 in 1987)
	130	17	673	101	241	226	855	294		4,924	
	6		4	4	2	13	29	8		270	
	30	47	66	32	42	132	280	89		1,661	
	57	58	69	55	105	36	137	76		1,158	all time high (previous high 1095 in 1989)
	4	3	4	1	6	6	28			159	
	2	3	9	3	6	7	5	3		108	
	17	14	5	6	11	10	13	22		154	
	1	15	31	2	14	12	29	46		374	
				1	1		32	2		37	
										4	
	31	73	216	25	113	98	589	159		3,337	all time high (previous high 2907 in 1990)
	1	6	8	9	29	20	5	24		193	
	1	2						1		9	
	153	46	61	86	80	235	396	205		4,807	
	6	3	24	3	3	10	26	14		283	
								69		69	
								14		53	
							1			1	
	18	5	597	104	194	272	166	2,025		9,138	
										2	
						1		1		3	
							18	1		19	all time high (previous high 17 in 1988)
	35	28	23	25	27	23	66	42		578	
								2		2	all time high (tied)
								11		12	

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Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Fox Sparrow	17	23	5	8	27	14	12	9	34	12	19	5
Song Sparrow	41	11	15	5	103	79	32	7	38	32	93	28
Lincoln's Sparrow	1						3					1
Swamp Sparrow									1			
White-throated Sparrow					1					1		
Golden-crowned Sparrow	101	16	4	27	97	46	35	8	40	51	6	22
White-crowned Sparrow				6	4		10			1		5
Dark-eyed Junco	367	48	28	97	480	260	108	57	365	56	163	61
Red-winged Blackbird	100			17	18		1				20	13
Western Meadowlark	14									1		
Brewer's Blackbird	201			102	68	2	52				10	
Pine Grosbeak		2										
Purple Finch	14	7		3	15	29	10		1	7	10	5
House Finch	38	2		38	11	101	28	11	84	56	36	27
Red Crossbill		9		2		22	12	12			15	
Pine Siskin	83	105	1	3	105	245	85		117	63	75	47
American Goldfinch					10				1	3	6	42
Evening Grosbeak			1								1	
House Sparrow	49		1	57	34	14	39	34	286	186	341	41
TOTAL BIRDS	5,931	3,366	1,198	3,653	3,644	3,183	5,653	1,378	5,228	4,490	7,706	3,517
TOTAL SPECIES	61	48	46	57	55	68	79	48	60	79	74	75

Area 1: Butchart's Gardens—Northern Highlands
 Area 2: Central Highlands
 Area 3: Goldstream—Finlayson Arm
 Area 4: Thetis Lake—Hastings Flats
 Area 5: Langford Lake
 Area 6: Albert Head—Triangle Mountain

Area 7: Esquimalt Lagoon—Mill Hill
 Area 8: Esquimalt Harbour
 Area 9: Portage Inlet—The Gorge
 Area 10: Victoria Harbour
 Area 11: Beacon Hill Park

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Victoria Christmas Bird Count—1992

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
	18	10	40	15	25	6	69	49		417	all time high (previous high 296 in 1987)
	23	12	14	43	41	19	72	106		814	all time high (previous high 788 in 1991)
					8		12	5		30	all time high (previous high 17 in 1991)
				2						3	all time high (previous high 1 on 3 counts)
	3									5	all time high (tied)
	53	20	12	100	47	48	123	129		985	all time high (previous high 937 in 1991)
	9		3	10	15	10		31		104	
	197	101	95	72	183	131	470	358		3,697	
			1	19	74	2	301	59		625	
								23		38	
					3			49	83	570	
										2	
	1			3	8	20	15	5		153	
	48	36	96	86	51	20	94	138		1,001	all time high (previous high 977 in 1991)
		35	16			8	41	2		174	
	22	36	13	66	157	69	144	32		1,468	
	2	3								67	
							1	2		5	
	54	39	115	55	98	28	54	114		1,639	all time high (previous high 1280 in 1989)
	1,857	1,070	3,422	1,886	3,885	5,154	5,155	13,836	476	85,688	
	65	60	61	53	58	76	68	91	20	140	

Area 12: Oak Bay
 Area 13: University—Cadbore Bay
 Area 14: Ten Mile Point—Arbutus Road
 Area 15: Gordon Head—Mount Douglas
 Area 16: Swan Lake—Cedar Hill
 Area 17: Blenkinsop Lake—Panama Flats

Area 18: Elk Lake—Cordova Bay
 Area 19: Prospect Lake—Quick's Bottom
 Area 20: Martindale—Bear Hill
 Area 21: Ocean (Zero Rock, Chain Islets, Juan de Fuca)

Skylark Update

By Barbara Begg

Eurasian Skylarks appear to have increased in numbers on the Saanich Peninsula in 1992. To most minds, this is a welcome trend, an anomaly with introduced species.

Flocking activities, not common in recent years, were noted by myself and other observers long before the cold and snowy weather began in late December. Groups of 15 to 50 birds were seen regularly after the breeding season. During the last ten years, at least, these large flocks were seldom seen unless their usual feeding areas were snow-covered or frozen. An increase in birds, or a shrinking of suitable habitat, or both, might account for this change in behaviour.

Snow began falling in the Victoria area on December 27th and the fields frequented by Skylarks were covered to varying degrees until mid-January. Near the end of December I noted a flock of about 75

Skylarks at Vantreight's bulb and brassica fields in the Central Saanich Road/Wallace Drive area.

On January 1st I checked the four locations in Saanich Peninsula where Skylarks are normally found. At the Victoria International Airport there was very little vegetation showing above the snow. After encircling the perimeter, I determined that there were no Skylarks present. There was a flock of about 75 Skylarks at Vantreight's between 9:30 and 10:15 a.m. I walked Maber's Flats, between Wallace Drive and Keating Cross Road, from 10:30 to 11:15 a.m., without seeing any Skylarks. About 90 were present in the area of Island View Road and Lockside Trail between 11:35 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. and another 19 were south of Martindale Road at 12:15 p.m. However, the Martindale group may have been part of the Island View flock, which was restlessly dividing and regrouping, so I didn't include them in the total. From the Martindale area, I headed directly back to Vantreight's to make sure the original flock was still there. It was, and I was able to get an exact count of 83 individuals, for a conservative total count of 173 Skylarks on the Saanich Peninsula, a doubling of the annual population estimates

—continued following page

for the last ten years. (Skylark numbers had peaked in 1966 at over 1,000 birds.)

Some observations made by others, all at Vantreight's, during this cold period in December, included:

December 30, a.m.—30 (in three flocks), by Keith Taylor;

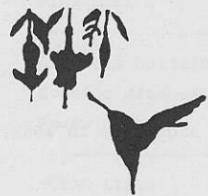
December 30, p.m.—78 (in two flocks), by David Stirling;

December 31, a.m.—ca. 75, by Richard Thomas of Alberta;

End of December—ca. 120, by Brent Diakow.

The spring and summer of 1992 were dryer and warmer than usual, which likely resulted in a very successful breeding season, especially for ground nesters like the Skylark. Hopefully, these encouraging numbers are the beginning of a recovery period for our alien songster.

Barbara Begg regularly monitors the status of Skylarks in the Victoria area and has written previously in the *Victoria Naturalist* on Skylarks. See the May/June, 1991 issue.



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The Year Round Feeder

By Grace Cockburn

Back in the January cold snap, a downy woodpecker showed up at the suet ball slung from our young cherry tree and brought our backyard bird count to 24. That is the number of species which we can routinely expect to see at one of our feeders, or, in the case of bald eagles and blue herons, flying over the house between nesting sights in the tall Douglas firs behind us and fishing grounds a few miles away. It wasn't always so.

A very few years ago, our backyard bird population was limited to the "usual" mix of sparrows, chickadees, juncos, and robins, with starlings and crows thrown in. Even these were seen in large numbers only during the occasional cold snap, when we would put out food. But like many people, come spring we would close down the feeders, except the red one for hummingbirds, and our yard reverted to being, at most, a place for short stops en route to better grub elsewhere.

Then came a couple of rough winters, with prolonged cold spells. We kept our feeders going. We added black sunflower seeds to the commercial mix; we drilled holes in a log and filled them with bird cake. And suddenly, we were keeping the bird book handy for quick reference checks because every day seemed to bring a new visitor. The binoculars revealed that we did not have "just sparrows" (meaning all-small-brownish-birds/generic), but Pine Siskins flashing yellow, and House Finches, the males an all-over rosy blush as spring approached. And wrens, and bushtits, and sparrows who had names: House, Fox, and Song.

Then one magical day a merlin materialized in the cherry tree; a steel-blue presence brooding in the shadows. When it stiffened and hunched its shoulders slightly forward, I tried to follow its gaze to see what it was after. An unsuspecting junco was on the neighbors' lawn, pecking in the sunshine. "Nature in action" is all very well in theory; in practice it makes me somewhat queasy. Just when my own tension levels were at maximum, the whole scene deteriorated to slapstick.

The neighbor's Siamese cat, hunkered under a shrub, was also intent on the junco. The Merlin (a much more fitting name than its old one: Pigeon Hawk) launched, hung, and swooped, a merciless acrobat. And in mid-swoop was abruptly intercepted by the Siamese, who had trampolined out from the shrub, switched targets, clawed upwards for the merlin, thought better of it, swivelled in mid-air once more, landed, and run for cover. The Merlin raked sideways, tumbled, stalled, recovered, and soared off, screaming. The cat emerged again, trying to look nonchalant, as if he had planned this all along, and stalked off with all hairs and tail erect. And the junco? He escaped.

With drama like that, we kept the feeder going. And our species count continued to climb. It seems there is an efficient avian grapevine out there, that quickly gets the word out: good grub here! Warblers and Kinglets came, and some Varied Thrush. The next spring we had Evening Grosbeaks.

We have a small covey of quail show up once in a while, including one male who fancies himself to be a high-flyer, and surprises me by loud laborious flights to our sundeck railing

or the neighbor's roof. As one nine-year old on the block said, after watching it struggle upwards, "Sure flies wierd."

The seed-eaters don't bother the garden rows at all. Why should they? Dinner is ready and waiting, with none of the hard work of looking and scratching involved. And the insect-eaters show up too, drawn perhaps by the throng at the feeder, so the garden benefits and we are able to garden successfully with almost no chemical sprays. And, surprisingly, we are not plagued by swarms of starlings, except in winter, when we put out suet or birdcake. Adding a source of water in hot weather helps to prevent birds from pecking at fruit such as apples and peaches.

But the feeders must be maintained without a break. This was proven this summer, when for a variety of reasons, we let our feeders lapse for a few weeks in July and August. Very quickly the variety of birds dropped back to the "usual" half-dozen we had started with. Once we resumed regular meal-times, the number of species picked up again.

We use a wild-bird mix with as little millet as possible, since millet is ignored by most birds and simply kicked out of the feeder. In fact, we have a very spongy carpet of millet srouths under our feeder to attest to the number of intact seeds which land there and go uneaten. We add lots of black sunflower seeds because they are the seed of choice for most birds and, especially in winter, provide the much needed calories so critical to survival. Expensive in small quantities, they are much more affordable by the fifty-pound sack.

As to where to place a feeder, the most important things are that you can see and enjoy the feeder from your house and that the feeder be in a place which does not allow cats to sneak up on the birds unannounced. Having several feeders helps to prevent squabbles and keeps larger birds from driving off the smaller ones.

Cleanliness is important, especially in our typically rainy winter weather. Seed can quickly become mouldy, and therefore toxic to birds. Make sure old seed is cleaned out of corners every few days, and occasionally take the feeder down for a more thorough scraping and soap and water scrubbing.

We make our own bird-cake (see recipe at end of article). Here on the coast we must be careful about the kind of suet mixtures we use. With brief exceptions, our mild winter temperatures mean that suet, peanut butter and the like remain soft and thus can smear onto feathers. Bird feathers insulate only when they are meticulously clean. Oily or greasy feathers will cause a bird to freeze to death. This cooked cake recipe is recommended for the coastal regions. We make a big batch and freeze it in small chunks, just the right size to push into the holes drilled in our "suet log".

In winter, we also put out apples (we keep the wormy ones from our backyard apple tree and add any that are softening in storage). Robins, thrushes and other insect-eaters will enjoy these, as well as the birdcake, and all birds will peck at them for moisture when other water sources are frozen.

We also became successful at attracting hummers. For years we would puzzle over the fact that neighbors on both sides had hummers at their feeders but we didn't. The trick, we discovered, is to put up your feeder EARLY. Male hum-

mers show up in early March, in advance of the females, and establish their nesting and feeding territories at that time. If your feeder is up then, when natural nectar sources are scarce, and if you are meticulous about keeping it filled, hummers are almost guaranteed. In fact, the first year we did this, we had to get a second feeder, because there were three pairs of hummers squabbling over the one feeder.

But you must keep it filled. Even a lapse of a few hours can be enough to send a hummer to another feeder. Hummingbirds absolutely must take in a huge number of calories each day to keep them and their young from starving at night. They cannot afford to waste energy flying to an empty feeder. The other thing which is crucial is to keep your feeder meticulously clean. The sugar syrup is a wonderful home for moulds and bacteria and these produce toxins which can quickly kill hummingbirds. I boil the syrup for several minutes to kill any mould spores and store it in a scrupulously clean jar in the fridge. Scrub the feeder with a brush and hot soapy water between each filling and rinse it very well before filling again. I clean and fill the feeders at night, to try to ensure they are always full during feeding hours.

Hummingbirds will be most active at the feeder at sunrise and in the hour or so before dusk, as they try to pack in as many calories as possible before dark. In their hunger, they will become very bold, continuing to feed in your presence, unless you come dangerously close. And if you do, be prepared to have a very angry hummer hovering and scolding and making determined swipes at the back of your head. Be

It's Raining in the Desert!

Winter rains in the desert permit the subsequent explosion of spring blossoms — shrubs, cacti & annuals. Nectar & seeds are plentiful, so, butterflies, birds and small mammals prosper. Desert plant authorities are expecting a banner flowering season. If you've been wishing to see the desert in bloom, this is the year to do so! Cynthia and Michael have two trips scheduled at prime flowering time:

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prepared as well to have finches and sparrows belly up to the syrup bar, too. It is most entertaining to watch rather chunky finches find some way to perch on a slippery swaying hanging feeder.

I hope many of you are convinced to keep your feeders full and active through the spring and summer. As soon as your feeder is added to the "grapevine", you will be amply rewarded.

COCKBURN'S BIRD CAKE

- 6 cups water
- 2/3 cup suet
- 1/3 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups cold water
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1/2 cup flour

Bring 6 cups of water, sugar and suet and peanut butter to a boil in a large saucepan. In a separate bowl, mix cornmeal, flour and 2 cups cold water to a paste; add to suet mixture, stirring constantly. Bring back to boil, and stir until thick. Pour into large flat pan, let cool, and cut into squares. Refrigerate or freeze.

SIMPLE HUMMER SYRUP

- 4 cups water
 - 1 cup sugar
- These proportions give a 20% solution.

Place water and sugar in a large saucepan, bring to full rolling boil. Turn down heat, cover, and boil for 3 - 4 minutes. Uncover, let cool; transfer to a clean glass jar and lid which have been rinsed in boiling water; refrigerate. The longer boiling time, and rinsing the storage jar and lid with boiling water, will help to prevent growth of mould spores. Check stored syrup and the feeder for any signs of mould. If mould is found, discard syrup, thoroughly scrub, with hot soapy water, all parts of the feeder (especially those tiny little feeding holes which are almost impossible to get into with anything except a hummingbird beak!) and, after rinsing, scald the feeder parts with boiling water before filling with fresh syrup. I place this emphasis on preventing mould because last summer we had recurring mould growth problems which did not end until I followed the above procedures.

DO NOT USE HONEY in a hummingbird feeder, as honey can cause a fungal growth in hummingbirds. Red food colouring is not needed, especially if your feeder is red itself, as most are. Some people like to use food colouring early in the season to attract hummers and then leave it out once they are feeding regularly. Early in the year, when the weather is cold, or if, as sometimes happens on the coast, a hummer settles in for the winter, the sugar syrup can be increased to 25% (1 cup sugar, to 3 cups water) which will provide more calories per trip. And if you are winter-feeding, you MUST keep your feeder full, and you must change it often during the day so it is not frozen, although the higher sugar content will be of some help in keeping it liquid.

Grace Cockburn is a regular contributor to the *Victoria Naturalist*, when not catering to the birds of the Saanich Peninsula.

Update On Island View Beach Regional Park

By Joel Ussery

If you visited Island View Beach over the Christmas holidays you may have wondered what was going on. Just south of the regional park, heavy equipment was clearing the road allowance and truckloads of rock fill were being hauled into the site. Any kind of development near a protected area is cause for alarm; however, this activity signalled a long awaited expansion of the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Island View Beach Regional Park.

As the only major sand beach on the east coast of the Saanich Peninsula, Island View Beach is a regionally significant recreation destination (CRD Parks, 1989). The park is also a birding "hotspot" and protects some unique vegetation communities and rare plant species. Both Central Saanich and CRD Parks have made securing public ownership of additional properties a priority. The new park addition and the two beach-front parcels to the south were identified for purchase in the Island View Regional Park Management Plan. Although the nature conservation value of the new park land and the beach-front properties is low, these areas should act as a buffer for the original park area by concentrating recreational use.

Negotiations for the purchase of land to the south of the park boundary have been underway for two decades. Purchasing the new addition to the park was accomplished by buying a much larger parcel and selling the agricultural land west of the ridge above Island View Beach to a local farmer. As a condition of subdivision, Central Saanich required CRD Parks to expand the parking facilities (see Map¹). To stabilize the parking area, a large amount of rock fill was needed.

While the heavy equipment was on site, the service vehicle access road was re-routed away from the beach and behind a screening cover of shrubs and trees. CRD Parks also cleared fill from a badly damaged marshy area on the new park property. Ideally, this is the first step to an eventual restoration of the marsh.

Park expansion is accompanied by a number of initiatives which implement the requirements of the park's "nature appreciation" designation (CRD Parks, 1989). Management of this park type is to: make nature interpretation an emphasis; limit the types of recreational activities in the park; and, maintain the park in as pristine condition as possible (CRD Parks, 1987). Recent initiatives at Island View Beach Regional Park include: developing a park interpretive plan; removing most of an equestrian cross-country course; and, beginning a major program to remove Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) from the park. Interpretive signage and a self-guided nature trail are planned for later this year. The Scotch Broom removal program is in its first stages. Hopefully, other invasive exotic species, such as thistles (*Cirsium* spp.), will also be targeted for removal.

Island View Beach Regional Park has been declared a

priority in the CRD Parks system (CRD Parks, 1989). These new developments go a long way to improve management of the park and realize its nature interpretation potential. However, these initiatives require long term commitment. There are rumours of development on surrounding lands and VNHS members should continue monitoring events at Island View Beach.

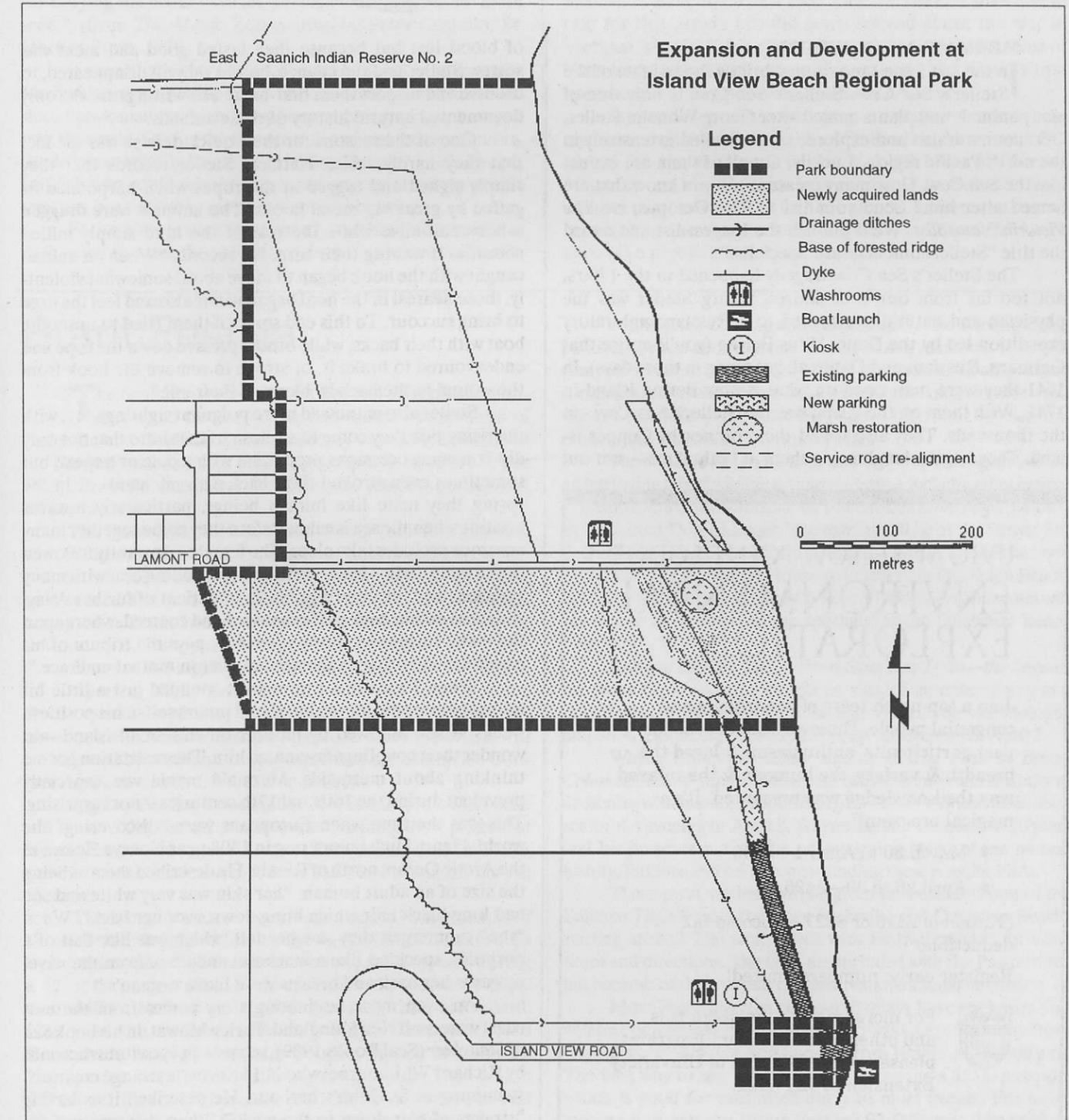
¹The map used in this article was created from a base map (Map 3) in the Island View Beach Regional Park

Management Plan.

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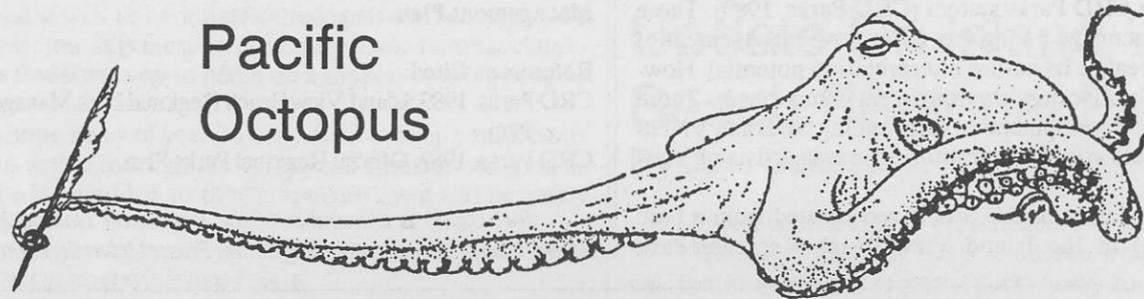
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- CRD Parks. 1987. Official Regional Parks Plan.

Joel Ussery is a member of the Vancouver Natural History Society who is currently attending Simon Fraser University in Burnaby.



Expansion and Development at Island View Beach Regional Park.

Pacific Octopus



MERMAID MEANDERINGS

In the last issue I mentioned briefly the sad fate of the Steller's Sea Cow. Steller's Sea Cow is only one of many animals and plants named after Georg Wilhelm Steller, German naturalist and explorer who travelled extensively in the north Pacific region. Luckily, not all of them are extinct like the Sea Cow. How many creatures do you know that are named after him? Send your list to The Octopus, c/o *The Victoria Naturalist*. We'll publish the longest list and award the title "Stellernomenclature Specialist".

The Steller's Sea Cow tragedy happened in the 1700's, not too far from our B.C. shores. Georg Steller was the physician and naturalist attached to a Russian exploratory expedition led by the Dane, Vitus Bering (you'll notice that Germans, Russians and Danes all got along in those days). In 1741 they were marooned on what is now Bering Island in 1741. With them on the island was the Steller's Sea Cow - in the thousands. They also found them on nearby Copper Island. They began slaughtering them at both places—not out

of blood lust but because they tasted good and meat was scarce. Steller had the chance, before they all disappeared, to observe and inspect them first-hand. His writings are the only documented natural history of these animals.

One of the reasons for their quick demise was the fact that they hardly resisted attack. Steller records that they simply sighed and tugged at the ropes when harpooned or gaffed by great big metal hooks. The animals were dragged ashore half-alive while the rest of the herd simply milled about, as if waiting their turn. He records "When an animal caught with the hook began to move about somewhat violently, those nearest in the herd began to stir also and feel the urge to bring succour. To this end some of them tried to upset the boat with their backs, while others pressed down the rope and endeavoured to brake it, or strove to remove the hook from the wound in the back by blows of their tail."

Steller also witnessed more poignant sightings, "...with the rising tide they come in so close to the shore that not only did I on many occasions prod them with a pole or a spear, but sometimes even stroked their back with my hand... In the spring they mate like human beings, particularly towards evening when the sea is calm. Before they come together many amorous preludes take place. The female, constantly followed by the male, swims leisurely to and fro eluding him with many gyrations and meanderings, until, impatient of further delay, she turns on her back as if exhausted and coerced, whereupon the male, rushing violently upon her, pays the tribute of his passion, and both give themselves over in mutual embrace."

When I read this I thought it sounded just a little bit anthropomorphic for me but then I put myself in his position: weeks at sea followed by months on this small island—no wonder their couplings fascinated him. The realization got me thinking about mermaids. Mermaid mania was especially prevalent during the 16th and 17th centuries—not surprising. This was the time when Europeans were "discovering" the world. Henry Hudson saw one in 1608 near Novaya Zemlya in the Arctic Ocean, north of Russia. He described them as being the size of an adult human, "her skin was very white and she had long black hair which hung down over her back". When "she" submerged they saw her tail, which was like that of a porpoise, speckled like a mackerel and, "... from the navel upwards her back and breasts were like a woman's."

An even more fascinating story comes from the east coast waters off Newfoundland. Farley Mowat, in his book *Sea of Slaughter* (Seal Books 1989), records an eyewitness account by Richard Whitbourne, who in 1610 saw "a strange creature" swimming in St. John's harbour. He described it as having "strakes of hair down to the neck." When this creature approached a boat manned by some of Whitbourne's men, they

panicked and one of them "strooke it a full blow on the head." Whitbourne wrote, "Whether it were a Mermaide or no, I know not... I leave it for others to judge." Another North American report was first published in 1672 in New England, which read as follows, "One Mr. Mittin related of a Triton or Mermaid which he saw in Cascobay... encountered with a Triton, who laying his hands upon the side of the Canow, had one of them chopt of with a Hatchet by Mr. Mitten, which was in all respects like the hand of a man, the Triton presently sunk, dying the water with his purple blood, and was no more seen." (from *The Magic Zoo* written by Peter Costello, St. Martins Press, 1979)

It wasn't only the white folk who believed in merpeople. Mermaids, or mermaid/mermen-like creatures, have been around since Babylonian times and they keep cropping up in cultures all over the world. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Micmac tribe believed in "Halfway People" - half-human, half-fish who could raise storms when angered. Halfway people sang too, but their song meant a storm was brewing.

Farley Mowat concludes that "... although mermaids as such never existed, the sea mammals that gave rise to the idea

assuredly did." I also started noticing how accounts of mermaids matched known distributions of Sirenians (Steller Sea Cow, dugongs and manatees). So perhaps it was a dugong that Van Riebeeck, The Dutch East India Governor, saw in the East Indies. Did Columbus really see a manatee in Central America? Was Henry Hudson's sighting a beluga? Did Mr. Mitten really cut off a seal's hand? We'll never know and the legend lives on. What do you think?

Closer to home there was, I was led to believe, an account of a mermaid in a 1967 *Victoria Times*. I searched in vain for this article but did learn instead about the war in Vietnam, several fishing boat groundings off the west coast of Vancouver Island throughout the year and the World's first open heart surgery performed in South Africa.

Someone who does believe in strange sea creatures is cryptozoologist Ed Bousfield, of Dallas Rd., Victoria. "The search for the monster" in the Vol. 19 issue of *Monday Magazine* makes fascinating reading. I couldn't help wondering, however, if the baby "Cadborosaurus" reported in the story weren't, in fact, Bay Pipefish? More about the pipefish next time.

Brant Festival

The countdown to the Brant Festival 93 is officially underway as the two Vancouver Island communities of Parksville and Qualicum Beach get ready to welcome visitors to the Festival's third annual celebration, April 2 - 4. HRH Prince Philip, Brant Festival patron for the second year, has already sent his best wishes.

The three days of outdoor and indoor festivities coincide with the annual arrival of the Brant on local shores. Activities range from the chance to view thousands of these sea-geese, as they feed and rest on local staging grounds, to the opportunity to see Brant and other waterfowl captured on canvas or in wood by B.C.'s top wildlife artists and carvers.

Some of the highlights of the Brant Festival 93 include:

Opening Night: held on the evening of April 1 at the Qualicum College Inn. Announcements by visiting dignitaries, a silent auction and a chance to meet the artists will be followed by wine and cheese and other refreshments. Contact the Festival office to reserve tickets.

Big Day Birding Competition: Novice and pro birders alike will flock to this second annual event, featuring draw prizes that include Bausch and Lomb Elite 8x42 field glasses, valued at \$1500, and bird books and recordings from The Field Naturalist store in Victoria.

The fun gets underway at 5 a.m., April 3 when teams of three to five birders will scour the Parksville-Qualicum area trying to see who can identify the most species of birds during a 12-hour period. The *Birds of British Columbia* authors' team will be back to see if they can break their old record. Last year the authors, including Wayne Campbell, Neil Dawe, Mike McNall and John Cooper, topped the list with 106 species before disqualifying themselves. This year a \$15.00 per birder registration fee includes a Brant Festival 93 Passport and a post Big-Day wrap-up party with soup and sandwiches, keeper trophies and a silent auction.

Wildlife Art, Carving and Photography: The Carving Competition attracts carvers from around North America. They will compete in seven divisions including the popular floating decoy competition. Full-sized waterfowl, raptors and songbirds will leave viewers wondering "How did they attach the feathers?" See this event at the Parksville Community Hall.

The Wildlife Art Exhibition and Sale will once again feature an intriguing mix of wildlife art and sculpture, including the original of Festival 93's Commemorative Print entitled *Brant Flight*, painted by B.C. artist Don Li-Leger. The exhibit will be at the Sunset Inn in Qualicum Beach. Another art exhibit, *A Tribute to the Brant*, will be held at the Old School House Art Gallery in Qualicum Beach. And new to the Festival is the *Children's Wildlife Art Show* that will put young local talent in the spotlight at the Qualicum Beach Community Hall.

Natural History Talks: *From Siberia to Delta—the Saga of the Snow Geese*. Audiences can be sure of an entertaining and informative presentation by Canadian Wildlife Service biologist and Snow Goose expert, Sean Boyd, on the evening of April 2.

Wayne Campbell, senior author of *The Birds of British Columbia*, is returning to the Brant Festival to entertain and inform audiences with his talk entitled *Big Eyes—Owls in British Columbia*, set for the evening of April 3. Wayne has studied owls for 20 years and his presentation will be an intriguing blend of the natural history, folklore and science surrounding these popular birds.

These presentations will be given in the auditorium of the Ballenas High School (between Parksville and Qualicum Beach) starting around 7:00 p.m. Check with Festival officials for exact times and directions. The talks are included with the Passport fee but because of their popularity, reservations should be made.

Most Festival activities and displays have set hours and will be open Friday from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.; Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The best way to see the Festival is by buying a \$5.00 passport which is good for unlimited entry to most events. For more information call the Brant Festival 93 Office at 248-4117 or write Box 327, Parksville, B.C., V9P 2G5.

UVIC AT YELLOW POINT LODGE ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLORATION

Join a top-notch team of naturalists and congenial people. Discover the reasons for past participants' enthusiasm: "I loved the breadth & variety, the humour & the relaxed way the knowledge was presented. It's a magical program!"

◆ March 30 to April 1—\$250

◆ April 26 to 30—\$495.40

(Tuition of \$115 or \$227 is income tax deductible)

Register early; numbers limited!



For more information about this and other natural history programs, please call the Division of University Extension at 721-8481.

CALENDAR

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days. **General Members Meeting:** the second Tuesday of each month. **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday of each month. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month. Locations are given in the calendar listings.

MARCH EVENTS

Tuesday, March 2.

Board of Directors' Meeting. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria (UVIC).

Tuesday, March 9.

Annual General Meeting. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in Begbie 159, University of Victoria. **Dr. Richard Ring** and **Neville Winchester** present a talk on "Recent Findings in the Canopy of the Carmanah Valley." In May, 1991, Neville outlined a ground-breaking project that had nothing to do with the ground - studying life in the tree tops. A lot has happened in the two years since his first visit with our club members. They will update us on the project and its many discoveries.

Saturday, March 13.

Gowland Range Early Spring Hike. Join **Beverly Glover** (721-1476) in search of early wildflowers and spring migrants along with scenic views of Saanich Inlet. Bring hiking boots, binoculars and perhaps a picnic lunch. Meet at the Helmcken Park 'n' Ride of the TransCanada Highway at 9:00 a.m.

Saturday, March 13.

Spring Hawk Watch at East Sooke, Mount Newton area and Jocelyn Hill. Once again the VNHS and the Western Institute of Global Studies (WIGS) are co-sponsoring a program in which volunteers are needed to monitor raptor migration through the region. A total of 15 species of raptors have been recorded on our spring and fall counts, including the Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk and Rough-legged Hawk. your help is requested to better understand the dynamics of this recently discovered spectacle. Contact **David Allinson** (478-0457) or **Mike Shepard** (388-4227) if you can help on hawk watches between March and May at various sites in Victoria.

Tuesday, March 16.

Botany Night. 7:30 p.m. at the Swan Lake Nature Centre. Contact the Victoria Natural History Society's Events Tape (479-2054) for details.

Wednesday, March 24.

Birder's Night. 7:30 p.m. in Begbie 159, University of Victoria. **Stamatis Zogaris** of Vancouver will present a slide-illustrated talk on "Important Natural Areas in Greece." Stamatis is an active member of the Hellenic Ornithological Society and has over a decade's experience in research and nature conservation in Greece. Bring a friend, coffee mug and your binoculars for a close-up look at the screen.

APRIL EVENTS

Friday, April 2 to Sunday April 4.

Brant Festival 93. Three days of activities including wildlife art, carving and photography exhibits, natural history talks and hikes. The *Big Day Birding Competition* is scheduled for Saturday, April 3. See article in this issue.

Tuesday, April 6.

Board of Directors' Meeting. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Clifford Carl Reading Room, Cunningham Building, University of Victoria (UVIC).

Sunday, April 11.

Spring Migration at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. Join **David Allinson** (477-0457) for a leisurely stroll around the lakes in search of new arrivals such as Cinnamon Teal, Rufous Hummingbird, Solitary Vireo and Townsend's Warbler. Meet at the main south parking lot at 8:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 13.

VNHS General Meeting. **Richard Hebda** of the Royal British Columbia Museum will present a talk on "Unlocking the Past: Discoveries from the Bottom of Heal Lake." Most people are aware of the controversy surrounding the draining of Heal Lake. However, members of the museum and the University of Victoria were permitted to go in and study the lake and their findings are now of global significance. Learn how Heal Lake may help us understand how climate will change our ecosystems.

Sunday, April 18

CAMAS DAY at Beacon Hill Park. Enjoy the spring wildflowers and other activities from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. All events start at the Beacon Hill flagpole. Activities include birding, wildflower, butterfly and archaeology walks and displays. Sponsored by the VNHS, Friends of Beacon Hill Park and the Royal B.C. Museum. For further information contact **Connie Hawley** at 385-2535 or **Helen Oldershaw** at 592-6659.

Tuesday, April 20.

Botany Night. 7:30 p.m. at the Swan Lake Nature Centre. Contact the Victoria Natural History Society's Events Tape (479-2054) for details.

Sunday, April 25.

Birding on Jocelyn Hill, Mike and Barb McGrenere (658-8624) will lead this half-day hike to one of Victoria's most scenic and unspoiled areas. MacGillivray's Warblers nest here and may have just arrived on spring migration. Bring hiking boots and a picnic lunch. Meet at the Helmcken Park 'n' Ride off the TransCanada Highway at 8:30 a.m.

Wednesday, April 28.

Birder's Night. 7:30 p.m. in Begbie 159, University of Victoria. **Wayne Campbell** will speak to us about the progress of the next edition of the *Birds of British Columbia*. Bring a friend, coffee mug and your binoculars for a close-up look at the screen.

EARLY MAY EVENTS

Saturday, May 8.

Third Annual Spring Bird Count. Last year we found 155 species and in 1991 we had a total of 159. Help us break the record. The existing Christmas Bird Count areas will be used with the same leaders and participants. Official count period is midnight to noon but you will likely start at dawn. If you would like to participate, contact **David Pearce** (477-2664). The post-count gathering will be at Goldstream Park picnic shelter at 12:30 p.m. Bring a picnic lunch.

FOR SALE

Ocean to Alpine—A British Columbia Nature Guide. his new book by Joy and Cam Finley is available from **Lyndis Davis** (477-9952). Also Available for sale: National Geographic's *Field Guide to Birds*; the *Naturalist Guide to the Victoria Region*; the Victoria Area Bird Checklist; and, the new Victoria Natural History Society's Window Decals.

Back Issues of the Victoria Naturalist

Copies of back issues and indices of the Victoria Naturalist are available from **Tom Gillespie** (361-1694).

BULLETIN BOARD

Volunteers Needed!

The Martindale Bird Survey continues. Please volunteer for Saturday Mornings 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Contact **Eric Walters** or **Darren Copley**. For information, see past Bulletin Boards.

Seawatch.

The Seawatch Program has finished its first phase and the data will now be analyzed. The Victoria Natural History Society (VNHS) and Western Institute of Global Studies (WIGS) wish to thank all those who helped with the survey. However, cormorants will still continue to be counted at Clover Point. For more information and to volunteer your help, contact **Mike Shepard** at 388-4227.

Bird Banding Project Update.

The VNHS and WIGS began a banding project for winter birds. They wish to thank those who donated their time and properties. A few members expressed a strong desire to help with the banding. Please phone **Mike Shepard** (388-4227) as he is organizing the first of a series of training sessions. There is a limit for this class.

VNHS Nature Trust Fund Update.

At press time a total of \$1370.00 has been forwarded to the Nature Trust on behalf of individual VNHS donors. The official tax receipts are being issued by the Nature Trust. Any further checks should be made payable to "VNHS: Nature Trust Fund" and mailed to the Victoria Natural History Society, P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4, or dropped off at The Field Naturalist Shop at 1241 Broad Street.

Forum on Maintaining Biodiversity in Urban Areas.

This forum is being organized by our **Parks and Conservation Committee** with the **Federation of B.C. Naturalists'** help. VNHS will host the event on a Friday in April. The date and

location were not finalized at press time so check the Events Tape (479-2054) for details.

Slide Photographers.

The Greater Victoria Colour Film Study Group club meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Meetings incorporate slide viewing, speakers, educational programs, field trips and member participation. Meet at 7:30 p.m., Room 105, at the Central Junior Secondary School, 1280 Fort Street. For further information contact **Wayne Maloff** at 385-1640.

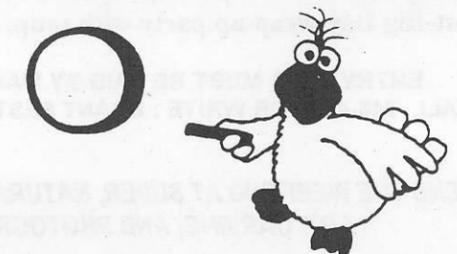
Garry Oak Meadow Search

Our white lilies and other spring windflowers of Garry oak meadows will be showing by late February and in early March. Do you have a special spot to enjoy, photograph or sketch? The Garry Oak Meadow Society has begun an inventory of special flowering locations. Let them know of your favourite - it doesn't need to be publicly owned. Contact **Joyce Lee** at 386-3785. They are also looking for slides and photographs on common birds and flowers that are associated with the Garry Oak Meadow ecosystem for their displays and presentations. You can also help them to preserve our rarest Canadian habitat by joining the Society or through donations at any branch of Pacific Coast Savings Credit Union.

Natural Treasures of Greece.

Greece is a very diverse mediterranean country, located at a biological crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa. Despite its renowned cultural history, little is heard of the natural history of this country. Yet Greece sustains some of Europe's most significant natural treasures including Mount Olympus, the Hills of Evros, the Lakes of Thrace and the Northern Sporades Islands. **Stamatis Zogaris** and his wife will guide a 17-day tour (May 3-19, 1993) to the above-mentioned treasures and other important habitats in Northern Greece. For further information write Stamatis at 2732 Wall Street, Vancouver, B.C., V5K 1A8 or call 255-4121.

Seeing spots?



Do you have an orange dot in this circle? If so, you have not paid your dues prior to the January 1, 1993 deadline, and you have already received two free copies of the Naturalist. To ensure that you receive the next issue of the magazine and continue your membership in the Society, please forward your dues immediately to Box 5220, Stn. B., Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4.

**DON'T GET LEFT OFF THE LIST!
COUNT YOURSELF IN FOR BRANT FESTIVAL 93'S
BIG DAY BIRDING COMPETITION**

**Saturday, April 3, 1993 5 A.M. – 3 P.M.
Parksville-Qualicum Beach area, Vancouver Island**

This popular event will appeal to all
birders — pro and novice alike.

The objective: registered teams of 3 to 5 birders
will scour the Parksville-Qualicum area attempting
to see or hear more birds than any other team — all
the while having a great time.

Meet and compete with the *Birds of B.C.*
authors and other celebrities. Big Day winners will
have their names inscribed on the Brant Festival Big
Day trophy and take home keeper trophies.

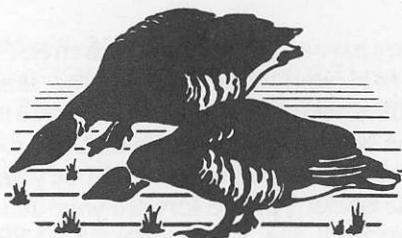
Participants will also be eligible for draw prizes
such as field glasses supplied by Bausch and
Lomb, Canada, a selection of bird books and
recordings sponsored by Victoria's Field
Naturalist, and bird feeders from Buckerfields.



Registration is only \$15 per person, which includes a Brant Festival 93 Passport and a post-Big Day wrap up party with soup, sandwiches, a silent auction and lots of other fun.

**ENTRY FEES MUST BE PAID BY MARCH 26. SPACE IS LIMITED SO REGISTER NOW.
CALL 248-4117 OR WRITE : BRANT FESTIVAL BIG DAY, BOX 327, PARKSVILLE, B.C. V9P 2G5**

**SPEND THE WEEKEND AT SUPER, NATURAL BRANT FESTIVAL 93 (APRIL 2-4) AND SEE WILDLIFE
ART, CARVING, AND PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWS AND MANY OTHER EVENTS.**



Parksville-Qualicum Beach is 150
kilometers north of Victoria. For details on
special accommodation packages contact
the Brant Festival Office at 248-4117.