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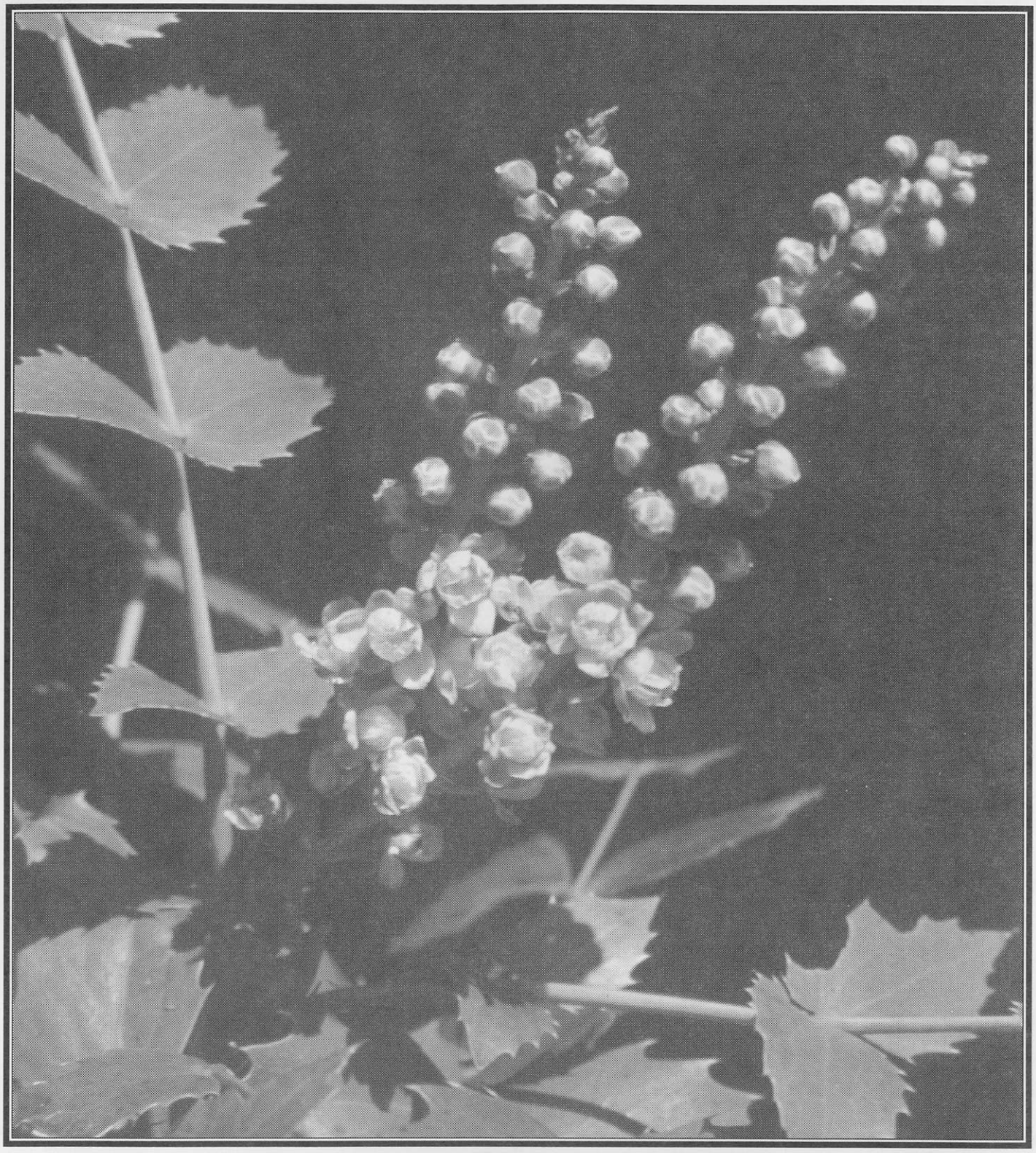

The Victoria NATURALIST

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Back cover photo of Indian plum: William Merilees

OUR COVER

As part of our theme of native plants and our environment, on the front cover is a photo by Bill Merilees of Oregon grape, (*Mahonia aquifolium*) which is found throughout southern Vancouver Island in drier open areas. Oregon Grape is used in native plant gardens and also in traditional garden plantings.

Gardening for Butterflies

By Carrina Maslovat

I had always watched butterflies as a child, laying on my back in an open field watching the bright sun filter around their flitting forms. Somehow, I had forgotten to pay attention to them in my garden except to malevolently stalk cabbage moths and curse the caterpillar holes in my vegetable leaves. When I first began gardening with native plants, I became aware of butterflies again when a tiger swallowtail frequently visited and drank nectar from my native larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*). The arrival of the swallowtail drew me to want to understand these beautiful insects and to continue to attract them into my garden. I soon discovered that creating a home for butterflies can be a challenging task for the backyard garden but it is a pursuit that is well worth the effort.

One of the reasons the swallowtail graced me with its presence was because I garden organically. Because they are so delicate, butterflies are especially susceptible to chemicals and are easily damaged. The most important step in attracting butterflies to a garden is to use as few pesticides as possible.

I soon realized that in order to be serious about attracting butterflies, it was important for me to understand their life cycle. Butterflies go through four life stages, starting life as an egg with a tough shell, which hatches into a caterpillar or larval stage. This is when the feeding frenzy takes place since the caterpillar must eat enough for its own growth and in some species, for the needs of the adult butterfly which may not eat at all. After 3-6 weeks the caterpillar forms a chrysalis or pupal stage which later hatches into a butterfly. Most butterflies live for 1-2 weeks although some species such as the mourning cloak live for ten months and overwinter. Butterflies then repeat the cycle by laying eggs on or near a plant that will provide suitable food for the larvae. In order to encourage butterflies to make their home in the garden, it is important to provide food for both the caterpillar and the butterfly stages.

Butterflies have evolved in association with plants that grow in the same location, so planting native species increases the chance of attracting local butterflies. Many native plants have nectar to encourage pollinators to visit them. Nectar is an aqueous solution of sugar and is an excellent high energy food source (as any sweet tooth knows!). As the butterflies drink the nectar, their bodies brush against pollen and transfer it to other flowers; an exchange which benefits both plant and insect. The nectar is often stored in floral spurs or tubes to protect it from other hungry insects that would not be as efficient at pollination. In order to reach the nectar, butterflies have a long proboscis or tongue that is rolled up underneath their heads when not in use and is extended into the flower when they feed. The proboscis acts like a drinking straw as they suck up the sweet

Photos: Carrina Maslovat

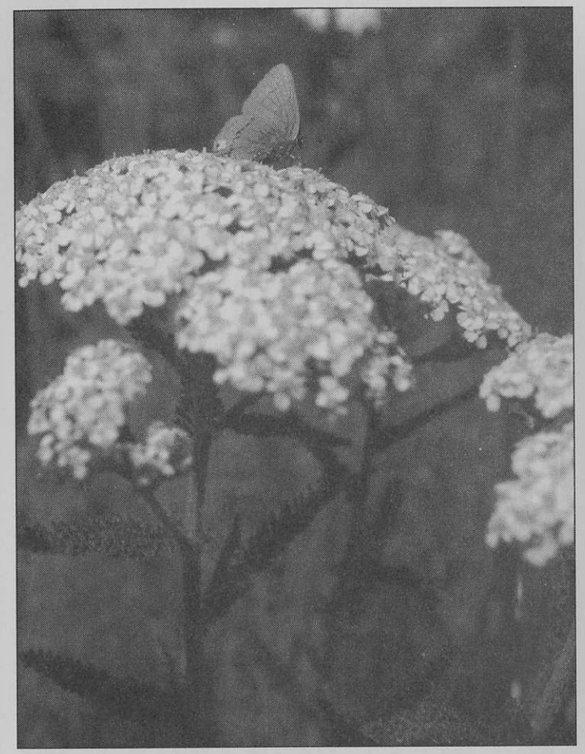
Swallowtail butterfly on Menzies' larkspur.

juices. Some butterflies are highly specialized using only one plant as a nectar source whereas others are more cosmopolitan.

Scent is important for attracting butterflies to a nectar source. Butterflies seem to prefer heavy scents to delicate ones. They have a keen sense of smell, using sensitive chemical receptors on not only their tongues and antennas but also on their feet.

Butterflies also use sight as a guide for food sources. Their vision is keen throughout the spectrum and they can see ultraviolet patterns on flowers that are invisible to human eyes.

Combining these factors, it becomes easier to identify flowers that butterflies like to visit. It is a fair assumption that a flower with a strong scent and nectar source in a tube or spur that is a bright color was designed for attracting butterflies. There are many native plants that fit this description. Red columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*) with its bright yellow tubes is a favourite for many species of butterflies as are



Brown elfin butterfly on yarrow.

Anise swallowtail caterpillar on cow parsnip.

fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) and Lomatium species. Some species such as the brown elfin also seem to be attracted to plants in the aster family such as yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) even though they have no need to use their proboscis.

Native plants are especially important as a food source for caterpillars. Shrubs such as oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), hardhack (*Spirea douglasii*) and willows (*Salix sp.*) are all preferred by different species of butterflies. Anise swallowtail larvae have a special fondness for plants in the carrot family such as fennel or dill. I found my new cow parsnips (*Heracleum lanatum*) covered in them last year although I have no idea how they found them in four inch pots. Although encouraging caterpillars in my garden was not on the top of my list of gardening activities, it helps me to remember that the feasting caterpillars chewing holes in my plants' leaves may be the next generation of butterflies.

Butterflies prefer to feed in a warm spot protected from wind so I have tried to place my nectar plants on sheltered slopes that face the sun. I found that grouping attractors together concentrates the nectar source as well as giving a good block of colour. Standing water or manure can also attract butterflies who may use the evaporated pools as sources of sodium.

All of these ideas can only help to lure the elusive butterflies to our gardens and bring their transient beauty into our lives. A central part of their beauty is that they can not be held.

Naturescape and the Wild Bird Trust have put together a wonderful brochure *Garden Butterflies of the Georgia Basin* (available at the Field Naturalist) which gives great information about butterfly food sources as well as identification.

CARRINA MASLOVAT *is a partner in Woodland Native Plant Nursery, Metchosin, 478-6084.*

Victoria or Nanaimo — Spring Has Come

By William Merilees

The phenomenon of El Nino is being blamed for all manner of things these days, from extremes in weather and the horrific damage inflicted to the sudden appearance of unusual birds and animals. In British Columbia at present we have just experienced a very mild winter, sea water temperature along the outer west coast of Vancouver Island is well above normal and the first blooming of spring flowers is well advanced. Some will say their appearance is well ahead of last year.

In the January-February 1988 issue of *The Victoria Naturalist* a listing of first noted flowering dates, compiled by M. C. Melburn for 1954, was published. This list is chronological and having been compiled from a number of locations in Greater Victoria, the dates listed should be considered as approximations.

Over the past fifteen plus year the author has been keeping phenological notes of first flowering of many native species in the Nanaimo area, and in particular the area around our residence in Departure Bay. Here a variety of habitats from damp stream sides with cascades of wild ginger to dry south facing rock bluffs with harvest brodiaea have been regularly monitored annually.

While it may be hard to draw hard and fast conclusions from the limited data available, for the curious naturalist it is fun to compare Miss Melburn's data to that recorded in Nanaimo. At this point in time, conclusions are speculative. A lot more work by many observers will be required to establish the validity of the following observations.

Among the earliest of our readily observable spring flowering shrubs is the Indian plum. By February 16th this year in Esquimalt, it was well into its early blooming period. In 1954 the flowering date was noted as February 24th. This spring, here in Nanaimo, its first flowers were noted on February 24th. From these very limited observations it appears that flowering in Victoria was at least eight days ahead of Nanaimo and that at Victoria, 1998 was similarly about eight days ahead of 1954.

To those people who travel north along the Island Highway about mid May, the progression in the road side flowering of ox-eye daisy can easily be seen. As a ripple effect, the flowering spreads along this roadway to eventually reach Port Hardy.

Chickweed Monkey-flower (*Mimulus Alsinoides).*

Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis).*

Photos: William Merilees

In Wisconsin, where a state wide flowering phenology program has been underway for many years. Using the common lilac, the progression in flowering has been used to map the migration of spring across the state. This information has also been used to aid the agriculture industry by providing a method to predict such things as crop yields for corn and wheat, orchard blooming dates and pest control applications.

British Columbia does not have a similar program but a flowering phenology program has been in operation in Alberta since 1987.

Back to the original comparison between Victoria and Nanaimo. Three sets of dates for six species of flowering plants have been selected for comparison; Miss Melburn's data for 1954 and data from Nanaimo for 1997 and 1998. **Note**: the Nanaimo dates, unlike those for Victoria, were recorded in the identical location each year.

Species	Victoria 1954	Nanaimo 1997	Nanaimo 1998
Spring-gold	March 14	March 31	March 22
Large-flowered blue-eyed Mary	March 14	March 13	< March 6*
White Fawn Lily	March 21	April 6	March 23
Chickweed Monkey-flower	March 21	March 13	< March 6*
Dull Oregon Grape	April 7	April 6	March 1
Salmonberry	April 11	April 3	March 25

* < means somewhat before this date. The observer was caught unawares by the early flowering!

The very rudimentary conclusion from this data is that for Nanaimo, the flowering of these species in 1998 is well ahead of 1997; somewhere between nine and twenty one days.

Comparing Victoria to Nanaimo is not simple. We do know that the winter of 1997-1998 has been unusually mild but the writer does not know the weather conditions for 1954 when Miss Melburn recorder her observations. It has always been the contention that the flowers in Victoria appear earlier than anywhere else in British Columbia. This might be true but the above information appears to contradict this assumption.

Here is the challenge, botany members of the Victoria Natural History Society, write down your observations of first blooming next spring. Then let's compare the results. If Victoria is indeed the epicentre of first spring flowering colour, let this be proven. Bragging rights need to be won rather than claimed!

Though posthumously, I would like to thank Miss Melburn for her good work and in setting a fine example. I would also like to challenge present day Victoria botanists to following on with her work, to add to the data bank of flowering phenology that has the potential to benefit many.

WILLIAM MERILEES *(250-758-1801) is a naturalist, writer, and a tour leader in Nanaimo, B.C.*

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Nature Walk, Uplands Park

By Joy and Cam Finlay

Having experienced the blue wave of camas blooming in Uplands Park in late April, we returned in late May to see what comes next. How could there be anything more exhilarating than the show of camas, western buttercup, and some chocolate lilies in the Garry Oak meadows, and the rare water plantain buttercup on the edge of a vernal pool? We soon found we had definitely underestimated the abundance this park has! It's every bit as exciting in May, and maybe June too.

We entered on the trail from Beach Drive, near the one-way entrance to Cattle Point and small parking lot. The ground all around the green top garbage stand was densely covered with a new crop of winged seeds from young elm trees. They are just one of some 116 exotic plant species identified in the park. Another obvious invader is the broom, so beautiful in billows of long lasting yellow bloom all around. We try not to think of the consequence when so many flowers turn to seed; instead we look at the three section seed heads of the camas developing in this first little field. The grasses are tall in bloom, and we try to count how many kinds, shapes and colours there are. Young spittle bugs have made their protective blob of foam in the leaf axis of many plants.

A creamy-yellow was pervasive over this field as Indian consumption plant features it's many umbrellas of tiny flowers above the greyish green background of its oblong leaflets. The name derives from its use for treating tuberculosis. Apparently it tastes like celery and was used as a food. Someday we will be lucky to find the caterpillar of the anise swallowtail butterfly that feeds on these plants. As if on cue, a beautiful yellow and black adult perches with wings spread to warm up in the early morning sun.

There is a definite hint of a squarish shape to this field, as if it had been a yard at one time. There are dense clusters of white blossoms on a black hawthorn bush amidst the thicket edge by the far side. It is one of 163 native plants identified by T. C. Brayshaw in his studies of 1990 and '91 for Oak Bay, in this park. There are many more hawthorns in bloom now. Naturalized European common hawthorn has deeply lobed leaves and red fruit. The flowers are spread out like frosting all along the branches, not so much in clumps as the native hawthorn.

We kept to the widest and most trodden trail veering to the right of the central rock and meadow, through the big oak parkland of deep soils. Towhees called their "drink drink tweeze." A Bewick's wren perched atop a dead branch and belted out its high buzz-warble song. Some feathers by the trail, probably robin, were perfectly intact. The predator had not been a cat, for the shafts were not chewed — was it a Cooper's hawk that plucked a robin for lunch?

Before rounding left and west to circle back around the central meadow, we passed a fire hydrant and walked to the fire access path from Southdown, just off Landsdowne Rd. in the 2800 block. Underfoot were white fluffy seeds of the cottonwoods. From somewhere in the dense canopy, a Cooper's hawk called. The understorey in this rich moist spot was full with red osier dogwood in flower, black twin-berry honeysuckle with two shinning black berries in each frilly cup, Indian plum and drooping clusters of ripening fruit, bright orange honeysuckle tube flowers inviting hummingbirds and swallowtail butterflies to sip their nectar, snowberry and ocean spray ready for flowering soon, and trembling aspen too.

Although it takes about an hour to circle the park, we opted to take time to explore a small trail that led away from the central meadow through thickets (roses, lilac, and cascara too) to "Guide Meadow". The results of stewardship and broom removal over the past four years, are spectacular. As in the central meadow, here are tiny Garry Oak trees with character, surrounded with plants flowering wild and colourful now while their competition has been removed.

The browning so typical of dry summer has begun on the rocks with shallow soil. A class of photographers was capturing on film the many facets of the changing scene in this park. Intently focusing on a lupine, one photographer was distracted when we discovered a bee-fly sitting, like a miniature hummingbird, on one of the very rare buttercup plants in a now dried up mud puddle. There are 56 species (according to T. C. Brayshaw in his study for Oak Bay in 1991) of rare plants in this park of varied habitats, making it a very significant refuge for rarities.

Uplands Park is a miracle for it is still here, a 75 acre oasis of meadows and woodlands amidst fine houses and beautiful gardens. If the grand old Garry Oaks could tell they would have many a story in their lifetime of 200-300 years about comings and goings of the people, the plants and the animals, both native and new comers. In the mid 1800's this land was part of the Hudson's Bay Uplands Farm. In 1890 the B. C. Cattle Company leased the land and cattle were brought in on barges, to swim or wade ashore on the point, hence Cattle Point. The park survived several schemes for subdivision or development and, apparently, through non-payment of taxes, it reverted to the Municipality of Oak Bay in 1925. It was deeded as park reserve in 1946, with a Parks and Recreation Commission policy that all areas be left as much as possible in their natural state.

Now dogs walk the paths, their owners responsibly holding the leashes so ground nesting birds are not disturbed. Artists come to sit and paint, naturalists come to count butterflies and look at birds. We will go back soon to see what is coming next in the wildlands and easy walking of Uplands Park.

Getting to the Root of Wildflowers

By Brenda R. Beckwith and Linda Beare

> Flowering plants evolved along with our mammal ancestors; we grew up together during the last few hundred million years and the roots of the attraction we feel for fragrant blossoms and bouquets lie deep within us.
>
> Stan Rowe, *Home Place – Essays on Ecology*, p.87

Emerging spring wildflowers signal the end of winter and extend an invitation to explore the beauties of nature and its lush rebirth. Vibrant colours of unfolding blossoms are the attraction for some, and for others the remembrance of particular flowers symbolises a re-acquaintance of past friendships. Those who garden appreciate plants in their entirety and have an understanding of plant processes both above and below the soil.

The Central Coast Salish had a profound understanding of the ecological functions of plants in this area. They were expert land managers as well as knowledgeable ecologists who understood changes in seasonality, growth patterns and fluctuations in plant populations. They recognised the need to implement landscape management techniques in order to maintain, promote and perpetuate the growth, vigour and productivity of camas. Camas, a member of the lily family, was much more than a symbol of spring. When cooked it was a sweet, staple "root" crop that supported their livelihood and culture. Their relationship with camas was symbiotic; a partnership in which each sustained the other. Management included selective harvesting, tilling, weeding and controlled fire. It is this last approach that probably had the most dramatic impact on the ecosystem. Fire, a force we've been taught to fear and view as destructive, was an invaluable Aboriginal conservation tool.

Thousands of years of active management by First Nations people produced the "Garden of Eden" James Douglas referred to in his descriptions on first seeing the area in 1843. How glorious it must have been but how sadly ironic that the habitation of "Eden" by Europeans and the casting out of the creators from the "Garden" has resulted in its near destruction. In less than 100 years the suppression of indigenous ecological knowledge and management (including the use of fire), combined with uncontrolled development, industry and agriculture have reduced these culturally and botanically rich camas habitats to fragile levels. The exquisite flowers we see this spring contain only memories of the densely carpeted landscape that greeted early European settlers and represent isolated blue pools that were once part of a vast and productive azure sea.

Any attempts at contemporary conservation or restoration of these localities to a pre-contact state must recognise that the 'natural' ecosystems discovered in 1843 were indigenous-evolved or anthropogenic. At Government House it is recognised that removal of invasive species such as broom, ivy, blackberry and daphne has not completely met the management goals for the 10 hectare Garry Oak Woodlands (GOW). Research into First Nation's management systems points to the necessity of reintroducing traditional techniques including controlled landscape burning.

A meticulously planned prescribed burn project, involving professional fire ecologists from BC Ministry of Forests, is currently proposed for an experimental plot in the GOW. It is hoped the experiment will clearly demonstrate that camas habitats are anthropogenic and that traditional camas management maintained a highly productive food crop as well as an abundance of aesthetically pleasing flowers. The cultural value of camas does not reside in the blossom alone but began thousands of years ago within its "roots."

Brenda R. Beckwith, PhD Student, University of Victoria and Linda Beare, are members of The Friends of Government Gardens Society GOW Management Committee. For more information about the GOW, contact Linda at 658-8993.

Big Bullies in Our Ponds — Bullfrogs in the Greater Victoria Area

By Purnima G. Price

As many of you may recall, in the July/August 1997 issue of *The Victoria Naturalist,* I posted a notice requesting sighting of bullfrogs and green frogs in the membership area. The response has been encouraging and I sincerely thank all those who responded. It has given me a great start in my research, which I will continue over the next few years. Here is a short summary of last year's efforts.

Both bullfrogs and green frogs have been introduced to Victoria from eastern North America, and are thought to have negative effects on the native Pacific tree frog and red-legged frog. I was unable to confirm the presence of green frogs in the areas that I surveyed last year, although reliable sources have noted their presence both in the Gordon Head area and in Quick's Bottom in previous years.

How extensive is the bullfrog invasion? After visiting each private and public lake in the Greater Victoria area at least once during last summer, and searching the shoreline and shallows for bullfrog adults and tadpoles, I found that bullfrogs have spread much further than previously suspected (*see map*).

An earlier study done by the Saanich Parks division found bullfrog tadpoles through out the Colquitz system, but surprisingly, I was unable to confirm presence of bullfrog adults in either Swan or Blenkinsop Lake. Bullfrogs have been reported from Elk and Beaver Lakes since the 1950's and they and the surrounding ponds continue to host a sizable population. I was told of bullfrog tadpoles being found in Todd and Hagan Creek but unfortunately, I was not able to survey the many creeks and agricultural ponds of Central and North Saanich intensively, due to lack of time. I did, however, confirm presence of bullfrog adults in ponds as far north as Keating Cross Road.

I found a large population of juvenile bullfrogs (probably a year old) around Whitehead Park, Prospect Lake. The presence of tadpoles indicates that there must be at least a few breeding adults here. Residents around the lake had noticed bullfrogs as far back as five years but indicated that the frogs have been most noticeable in the past two years. Lake Kilarney and Lake Maltby, which are connected to Prospect Lake via streams have also been colonized by bullfrogs in the past two years. Bullfrogs are found as far south as the fork between Munns Road and Prospect Lake Road, and in ponds in the Hydro cut north of Francis/King Park and in Rollo Place.

Thetis Lake had many large bullfrogs, and they are probably breeding here. I was able to confirm their presence in McKenzie Lake, and in Pike Lake. There were many bullfrogs in shallow ponds around Pike Lake but I heard only one calling from the lake itself.

The lakes in Highlands seem to be currently free of these frogs. However, Fizzle and Fork Lake are connected by streams to Pike Lake, and are vulnerable to colonization in the near future. Durrance Lake which is connected to Todd Creek may also be susceptible to colonization.

The lakes of the Western Communities, Florence, Glen and Langford Lakes are also free of these frogs. It is important, however, to emphasize that this was a preliminary survey and given the methods used, only large populations would have been detected. I intend to continue to study the population dynamics of bullfrogs and its impact on the native aquatic community over the next three years.

I will be happy to hear from members about bullfrog and green frog sightings. I am especially interested in picking up any road killed bullfrogs that may be found. I can be contacted at

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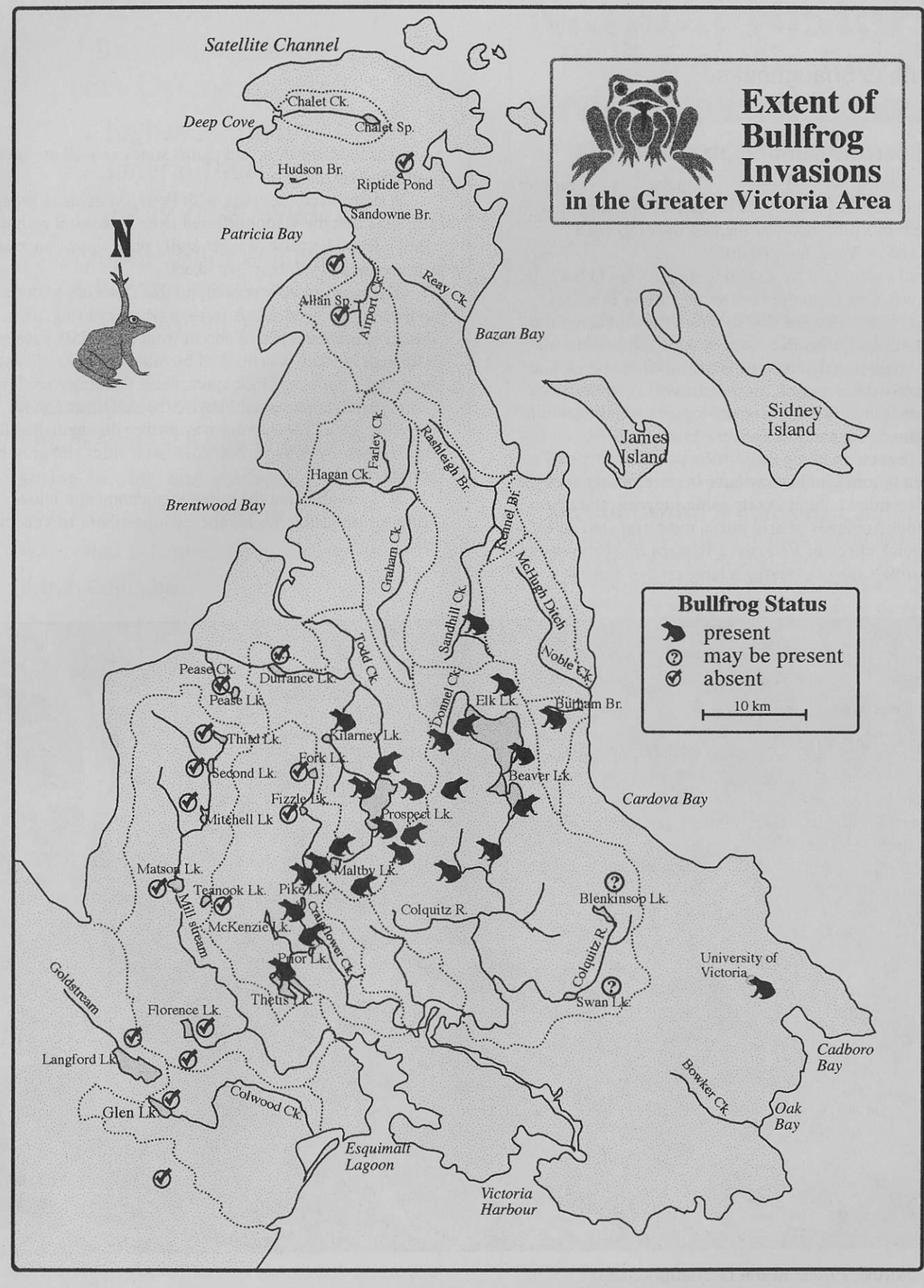
Again, I want to thank you all for the information and for your time, and patience as I poked around your ponds. I have thoroughly enjoyed the many friendships that have developed over the last summer. I look forward to seeing you again this summer.



Another Rare Bird in Victoria

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Sage Sparrow (Amphispiza belli)

Great excitement was generated within the Victoria birding community in mid February by the arrival of a sage sparrow. The little bird's presence was the first ever recorded in Victoria and on Vancouver Island.

Initially identified by a visiting birder from Ottawa, the sparrow was seen from the 16th to the 19th of February. Fortunate observers were able to watch the bird along the bluff side of the Dallas Road sea walk. It appeared to frequent the area directly south of Harrison's boat pond. The sage sparrow did not seem to be distressed by enthusiastic birders, dogs and their owners and joggers who lingered to catch a glimpse of the wayward traveller.

The vegetation along the cliff face, with its dry and weathered broom stands, may have been reminiscent of the sparrow's natural habitat. As its name suggests, the bird is usually found in areas of arid brush, chaparral, and desert sage. A quick check of *Peterson's Western Birds* shown the sage sparrow's range covering a large area of eleven western, southwestern, and plains states as well as parts of northern Mexico.

A sharp-eyed observer, with Peterson in hand, would also note that the visitor differed from its coastal counterpart (Bell's form) because of a generally paler appearance and correspondingly lighter "whiskers'.

The sage sparrow seen along the Victoria's waterfront sported a gray head, black lores, a white eye ring, and further white areas above and in front of its dark eyes. Although its neck was marked by black "whiskers", and its breast by a defining black sport, these features were less prominent than one would have expected on a mature, breeding adult. The vagrant was further distinguished from resident sparrows by its buffy-streaked sides and gray-brown patterned back.

It is possible that the climatic phenomenon known as El Nino is responsible for another unique visitor to Vancouver Island.

Sage Sparrow. *Photo*: Marie O'Shaughnessy

1998 Spring Bird Count

By David Pearce

For the second time we will be holding our spring bird count in June in an attempt to obtain a survey of breeding birds. The count day will be on **Saturday, June 6**, from dawn until noon with a post-count gathering at Swan Lake Nature Centre from 12:00 - 2:00 pm (bring a lunch). The format will be the same as for the other spring and Christmas counts using the Victoria Christmas Bird Count Circle areas. The only slight difference will be that we want to record birds seen in each sub-area so that we can narrow down the actual breeding locations. Also some of the areas will stray a little outside the circle, like Island View Beach Park and the whole of Witty's Lagoon.

The official count time is midnight to noon, but you will likely start at dawn. The same leaders and participants from previous spring and Christmas counts will be contacted. If you are not on these lists and would like to participate, contact **David Pearce** (658-0295).

The areas and sub-areas will be as follows:

1. BUTCHART'S GARDENS - NORTHERN HIGHLANDS
   - Central Saanich
   - Northern Highlands
2. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS
   - Francis King Park
   - Gowlland Range
3. GOLDSTREAM - FINLAYSON ARM
   - Goldstream Park
   - Mt. Finlayson
4. THETIS LAKE - HASTINGS FLATS
   - Hastings/Courtlands Flats
   - Thetis Lake
5. LANGFORD LAKE
   - Florence Lake
   - Langford Lake
6. ALBERT HEAD - TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN
   - Albert Head
   - Triangle Mountain
   - Witty's Lagoon
7. ESQUIMALT LAGOON - MILL HILL
   - Colwood Creek
   - Esquimalt Lagoon
   - Mill Hill
8. ESQUIMALT HARBOUR
   - Esquimalt Harbour
9. PORTAGE INLET - THE GORGE
   - Portage Inlet
   - The Gorge
10. VICTORIA HARBOUR
    - Victoria Harbour
11. BEACON HILL PARK
    - Beacon Hill Park
    - Clover Point/Ross Bay
    - Victoria City
12. OAK BAY
    - Anderson Hill - Oak Bay South
    - Uplands Park - Oak Bay North
13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY
    - Cadboro Bay
    - Mt. Tolmie
    - University of Victoria
14. TEN MILE POINT - ARBUTUS ROAD
    - Arbutus Road
    - Ten Mile Point
15. GORDON HEAD - MT. DOUGLAS
    - Gordon Head
    - Mt. Douglas
16. SWAN LAKE - CEDAR HILL
    - Cedar Hill
    - Swan Lake
17. BLENKINSOP LAKE - PANAMA FLATS
    - Blenkinsop Lake
    - Panama Flats
18. ELK LAKE - CORDOVA BAY
    - Cordova Bay
    - Elk Lake
19. PROSPECT LAKE - QUICK'S BOTTOM
    - Observatory Hill
    - Prospect Lake
    - Quick's Bottom
    - Viaduct Flats
20. MARTINDALE - BEAR HILL
    - Bear Hill
    - Island View Beach
    - Martindale Flats
21. OAK BAY ISLANDS
    - Oak Bay Islands

Seventeen Hours With a Hawk

By Lyndis Davis

The afternoon of February 4th began normally with five friends coming for lunch and bridge. Just after 2 p.m. I noticed an immature Cooper's hawk on the fence. I drew the attention of the others to it and went to get my binoculars. I was able to read the leg band which confirmed that he was 2P, the hawk who often visits my bird feeders. Andy Stewart told me that he was born in 1997 in a nest at Swan Lake, when I originally saw him, read the black band, and reported him to Andy.

About an hour later our game was disturbed by a thud at the sliding glass door. There was a mature Cooper's hawk on the fence watching the door. He flew off when we went to investigate what he had been chasing. An immature hawk lay on the patio. He was breathing very fast, so was alive, and did not have a band on his leg so was not the Cooper's hawk we had seen earlier.

I went to get gloves and a box and some rags. I picked up the bird, which seemed to have stopped breathing, and his head flopped down. I was afraid he had a broken neck and had died. We put the hawk in the box, closed it and put it in the garage. When our game was finished we went to check the hawk. Immediately the lid was moved there was a scrabbling inside the box — the hawk was still alive.

After seeking advice from Bruce Whittington I phoned Kip Parker at the Wild Animal Rehabilitation Center in Metchosin. He said that the bird should be examined before being released so I said that I would bring the bird out to him. It was 5.30 when I got there but Kip had stayed, so he took the box into one of their examining rooms, and took the bird out. An immature male Sharp-shinned hawk — about Robin sized with a long tail, very thin legs, and long talons — I was overawed. Kip looked in the bird's eyes with a flashlight, spread his wings, and made him flap them. All appeared well, so the hawk was put into a bigger box with a perch, sealed in and returned to the car. I was given instructions as to what to do for the night as the bird had to be released in the area which he had come from and in daylight.

I had him in the garage for the night and about 8 a.m. I decided it was light enough for the release. I took the box to the patio door and placed it on a small table and opened the flaps — nothing happened. I looked into the box and the bird was crouched in a back corner. I decided to leave the bird alone to see if he would leave on his own as I was reluctant to handle him and put him under further stress. A while later I went to the door and when I opened it the hawk flew out, but did not go too far — just into the closest tree. A photo op! I went out with my camera and got five quite good pictures before the bird flew away with the noise of my camera rolling back the film.

Photo: Lyndis Davis

Helping the Land Heal

By Brian Egan

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending a colloquium on Bowker Creek, organized by the Restoration of Natural Systems Program of the University of Victoria. The meeting was designed to bring together people interested in restoring Bowker Creek to some semblance of its past health. In many ways, Bowker Creek is a typical urban stream — while there are short stretches that harken back to its previous beauty, by and large the stream has been channeled, ditched, buried, and polluted to a form that more closely resembles a drainage canal rather than a natural stream. During the colloquium, a larger-than-expected audience listened carefully as speakers from UVic, the Friends of Bowker Creek, Oak Bay High School, and various government agencies addressed the necessary but difficult task of restoring an urban stream.

The growing interest in restoring Bowker Creek reflects a broader phenomenon in British Columbia. All across the province, hundreds of small community groups and thousands of individuals are engaged in similar initiatives to restore local ecosystems — be it an urban stream, a wetland, a patch of forest, a remnant grassland, or a vacant lot. And on a larger scale, through Forest Renewal BC's Watershed Restoration Program, the provincial government is investing significant resources in the restoration of landscapes which have been scarred by past logging practices.

Despite this increasing interest and the significant sums of public money now being invested in restoration, broad public understanding of ecological restoration remains at a surprisingly low level in British Columbia. As restoration efforts increase not only will there be a need for more trained "restorationists" to carry out the restoration work but also for greater public involvement and participation in the restoration decision-making process. In addition, since restoration is such a new field, there will be greater need for those who are practicing restoration to share information and experiences.

Thanks to generous funding from Forest Renewal BC's Research Program, a conference will be held in Victoria this fall to address some of these needs. Organized by the BC Environmental Network Educational Foundation and supported by the Restoration of Natural Systems Program of the University of Victoria, the overall objective of the "Helping the Land Heal" conference is to bring together people from a broad spectrum of interests and perspectives to share information on past and current restoration efforts as well as to discuss the future role of ecological restoration in the sustainable management of the province's natural resources. The conference will take place Thursday, November 5 to Saturday, November 7, 1998 at the Victoria Conference Centre with field trips being planned for Sunday November 8th.

At a very basic level, there is need for public discussion about the meaning and goals of restoration. Restoration means different things to different people. To conservation-oriented people it may mean restoring damaged ecosystems to some pre-existing and pristine (i.e., wilderness) condition. To others it may simply mean restoring some sense of ecological balance or health to damaged systems. To still others restoration may mean enhancing the economic (e.g., timber) values of a highly managed ecosystem. Clearly, understanding the meaning and purpose of restoration is key to any restoration effort.

Like any resource management activity, restoration has social, political and economic implications. Does the current surging interest in restoration represent a significant shift in the way we are thinking about natural systems? Will the 21st Century be one where we focus on stewardship and restoration of ecosystems rather their exploitation? Or is the current interest driven more by basic economic and political aims — to "patch things up" so we can continue on as before. At another level, one can ask what potential restoration poses for employment and the transition to a more sustainable economy, issues of particular importance to the province's many forest-dependent communities.

While these broad philosophical, social and political questions are key, for those working directly on restoration there is a long list of basic technical questions that need to be addressed. How can restoration plans be developed? What sources of funding are available to support restoration efforts? What techniques are useful in restoring riparian systems? How can natural disturbances, such as fire, be re-introduced without causing major problems? This project and the conference will provide an opportunity for practitioners to compare notes and learn from each other about these and other practical issues.

Helping the Land Heal Conference
Victoria, November 5-7, 1998

For more information: Brian Egan, Project Coordinator, PO Box 50043, 15-1594 Fairfield Rd., Victoria, B.C., V8S 1G0
Tel: (250) 598-9056 Fax: (250) 598-9076 E-mail: restore@islandnet.com

President's Report

By Tom Gillespie

The Victoria Natural History Society has carried on for the past year without too many changes. In this last year **Tony Embleton** and many volunteers began an inventory and mapping project for all the ecologically sensitive areas within the Capital Region district.

We congratulate **The Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation** in their success in acquiring Ayum Creek for conservation. We are aware of the many hard hours of volunteer work that has made this endeavour a success.

I wish to thank all of our directors for all the work they have done in the last year to keep the Society functioning. We thank the retiring directors for their great efforts over many years to make the VNHS a great Society to belong to. We note that Tony has been on the Board since 1990 while **Bev Glover** and **Audrey Copping** have been on since 1991. Many thanks to **David Pearce** for the last two years on the Board. David will continue to coordinate the Spring and Christmas Bird Counts and thanks to **Dannie Carsen** for being there when we needed him the second time around. He had already served his time on the board back in 1989 and 1990. Thank also to **Arlene Yaworsky** for handling the membership duties over the last year. She has shown us a few improved methods to ensure that the details of members are recorded in better ways. I would also like to thank **Mary-Anne Montgomery** for the great help she has been for Arlene on the membership committee.

I especially wish to thank **Warren Drinnan** who was the editor of our *Naturalist* for the last eight years. He consistently brought out excellent editions every time. And now I wish to thank **Glen Moores** who has volunteered to carry on the editorship of this publication. The newest issue just out shows that it is in capable hands.

As many of you are aware the Board has been having much discussion about our connection to the Federation of BC Naturalists. We have presented them with a motion for their AGM in May to rescind the affiliation fee increase that resulted from their AGM last year. As well, the Vancouver Natural History Society will have several motions on the floor at the FBCN AGM to try and bring about a proxy voting system so that all affiliated members may have a more direct voice in the workings of the FBCN.

Because of changes at Canada Post we will now be required to mail out our *Victoria Naturalist* as commercial rate instead of rate code 3. This will increase our mailing costs considerably and dealing with this issue will be one of the first items for the new Board to deal with.

I have felt honoured to serve as your president for the last year.

Report of the VNHS Greenways Project

Within the next few days we will be sending out about 11 teams made up of approximately 55 volunteers. About half the volunteers are VNHS members and the others are Camosun College and a few UVic students. We are concentrating the inventory of the flora and fauna of undeveloped lands to those that are most under the threat of development, such as those in the Western Communities of Colwood, View Royal, and the Highlands. We are asking that recommendations as to rehabilitation and restoration of sites be included with the inventory reports.

We have been asked by the Capital Regional District to conduct a similar inventory that will include the wildflowers and breeding birds along designated sections of the Galloping Goose Trail. As this trail is on level terrain some of you might be willing to take part and do a section or more. We hope that all volunteers will be able to visit their assigned site at least four times during the year in order to pick up the seasonal values as they occur. If you are interested in helping please leave you name and phone number with me before you leave tonight.

We have hired a professional biologist by the name of Marilyn Fuchs to assist the volunteers and to do independent inventory work as well as compile the final report.

The management team is made up of Tom Burgess, Cam Finlay, Norm Mogensen, Bernard Morrison, and myself.

At this time I wish to thank our Society for it's financial and moral support of this project. Financial support has also been thankfully received from the Provincial Capital Commission and the Real Estate Foundation of B.C.

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Embleton
Chair, VNHS Greenways Inventory Project

Victoria Natural History Society
Statement of Revenue and Expenses for the year ended December 31,1997

			1997		1996
General Account					
Income	Membership Dues & Subscriptions	$	13,709	$	14,001
	Donations		403		398
	Interest		191		584
	Publications(net of costs)		770		448
	Advertising		1,790		2,202
	Government grant		-		-
	Other income*		459		56
	Total Income	$	17,322	$	17,688
Expenses	the "Naturalist"				
	production and mailing	$	8,123	$	7,941
	Meetings costs		250		650
	Postage & Office Supplies		668		775
	Affiliation fees		5,750		5,855
	Telephone-bird alert & events tape		1,121		1,081
	Miscellaneous		2,347		1,841
	Total Expenses	$	18,259	$	18,143
Excess of income over expenses			-$937		-$455
Funds on hand at beginning of year		$	12,482	$	12,937
Funds on hand at end of year		$	11,545	$	12,482

			1997		1996
Conservation Fund					
Income	Interest		$14,274		$7,729
Expenses	Donation to Swan Lake Nature Center		$4,000		$4,000
	Other donations		900		200
	Committee		465		578
	Total expenses		$5,365		$4,778
Excess of income over expenses			$8,910		$2,951
Funds on hand at beginning of the year			$147,175		$144,224
Funds on hand at end of year			$156,085		$147,175

Scholarship Fund					
Income	Goldstream Fund	$	-	$	2,590
	Interest		5,352		4,626
	Total		5,352		7,216
Expenses	Scholarships & Bursaries		1,750		2,850
	Committee		15		
	Total expenses	$	1,765	$	2,850
Excess of income over expenses		$	3,586	$	4,366
Funds on hand at beginning of the year		$	55,783	$	51,417
Funds on hand at end of year		$	59,369	$	55,783

Note: 1996 restated to include $2590 from Art Show transferred from General Fund

Goldstream Art Show Fund		
Balance, beginning of year		$0
Revenue	VNHS Art Show-1997	$15,408
Expenses		$9,957
Net Profit		$5,451
Donated to H.A.T.		$2,719
Donated to Eagle Extravaganza		$2,719
Balance, end of year		$12

Victoria Natural History Society
Statement of Financial Position as at December 31, 1997

Assets	General Fund	Conservation Fund	Scholarship Fund	Total 1997	Total 1996
Cash	$ 5,434			$ 5,434	$ 12,430
Short-term investments	1,619	9,206	-	10,825	-
(market value= $10,830)					
Accounts receivable	1,473			1,473	1,479
GST refundable	427			427	397
Inventory of publications	6,272			6,272	6,689
Term deposits		2,721	3,279	6,000	14,396
Investments-long-term		124,158	56,090	180,248	137,000
Investments-funds		20,000		20,000	54,002
(market value= $23,130)					
Total	$ 15,225	$ 156,085	$ 59,369	$ 230,679	$ 226,393
Liabilities					
Accounts Payable:					
Art Show Fund	$ 12			$ 12	$ -
H.A.T. Fund	-			-	7,455
Prepaid memberships & subscriptions	3,667			3,667	2,598
Scholarships unpaid				-	900
Fund Balances	$ 11,545	$ 156,085	$ 59,369	$ 226,999	$ 215,440
Totals	$ 15,225	$ 156,085	$ 59,369	$ 230,679	$ 226,393

Approved on behalf of the Board of Directors

It is the policy of the Society that:

i)The General Account shall be self-sustaining

ii)The Conservation and Scholarship Funds be maintained as separate funds

iii)Accounting shall be performed on an accrual basis

iv)Insofar as it is appropriate, the first charge on income shall be to provide for the protection of the capital of the Conservation and Scholarship Funds from erosion of value due to inflation during the year.

Report to the Members

I have reviewed the Balance Sheet of the Victoria Natural History Society as at December 32, 1997, and the Statements of Income and Expenses for the year ended on that date. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Directors of the Society. My responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements.

My examination included a general review of the accounting procedures and such tests of accounting records and other supporting evidence as I considered necessary in the circumstances.

In my opinion these statements present faily, in all material respects, the financial position of the Society as at December 31, 1997, and the results of its operations for the year.

Victoria March 7, 1997 Bruce Whittington

Approved on part of the Board of Directors

Tom Gilipsie President

Gordon Hart Director/Treasurer

Barred Owl in the Garden

By Bob Houston

I was attracted to the garden one afternoon by the racket produced by a group of crows. Upon investigating, I found they were bothering a barred owl, which was sitting in an oak tree on the south side of my Oak Bay garden.

The owl moved around in the trees after the crows left and seemed to be interested in the gray squirrels. I didn't actually see the owl go for the squirrels and eventually it flew away. It did return for several afternoons but I never saw it catch anything.

Is the environment changing to reduce the gray squirrel populations?

Barred owl. *Photo*: Bob Houston

HAT Tricks

A Report on the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation

By Jeff Stone

On April 6th Ayum Creek was officially bought, covenanted to ensure its natural values, and handed over the Capital Regional District for use as a natural areas park. However, the property will not be designated a park until a management plan is written and approved. HAT and SPAC will provide input to this process whose time schedule may take several years.

For our fund raising efforts HAT and the Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek have been fortunate to share two awards. On March 14, we received an environmental award from the Provincial Capital Commission and a similar award from Tourism Victoria on March 26th. Such awards represent not only the work of SPAC and HAT but the desires, support, and effort of many organizations, businesses, government, and individuals. Again thank you to everyone who took the time and energy to become involved even in a small way.

HAT encourages you to be support the many conservation initiatives occurring in the Capital Regional District as well as those outside of our backyard. By working together and supporting the good work of other conservation organizations we can accomplish a lot more.

There still is a lot of work to be done and if you want to find out how you can help please contact us at **995-2428**.

Catching, Measuring and Banding Rufous Hummingbirds in 1997

By Cam Finlay

The first Rufous hummingbird arrived at our feeder at 1:52 PM yesterday, March 15, 1998. He was back again first thing this morning. I wonder if he is one of the 359 we caught last spring (142 at our place, 167 at Goldstream Park Nature House and 50 on Galiano Island). I must get my traps ready to again go after these fascinating birds.

Such excitement it was when he arrived so I thought I'd share with you some of the information we gathered in our first year of studying this bird.

The highlight was the recovery of a bird that had been banded as an adult female at the Rosewall Creek Hatchery, North of Qualicum Beach on June 19, 1991. We trapped her at Goldstream on March 24, 1997. That makes her, at 7+ years, the second oldest female ever caught. As far as I can determine, the oldest rufous ever trapped is about 2 months older.

Near the start of the banding we caught a female with an egg showing in her abdomen at our acreage home. A week later we retrapped her at Goldstream also carrying an egg.

The first day that we began banding, April 4, we were catching females with eggs. The white egg shell could be seen through the translucent skin of the stomach! The last female seen with an egg was on April 24 at Goldstream. Five of the females carrying eggs first thing in the morning had laid them when we retrapped the bird later the same morning. We also noted several females with distended abdomens which we conjectured that they were carrying an egg for which the shell had not yet developed.

We noted very few ectoparisites on the throat feathers when we began trapping but by mid May these small passengers on the birds were quite common.

From the number of retrapped birds, it appeared that our acreage was the site of a relatively stable breeding group of Rufous. Whereas at Goldstream it appeared that there was a much smaller breeding population with many of the birds migrating through, both in the spring and in early June, their fall.

To undertake this project I was assisted by a very keen group of helpers. My special thanks to those who gave up several mornings to ensure we had all the measurements and weights of each bird. They are in alphabetical order: Audrey Danard, Betty Kennedy who allowed us to use her site on Galiano, Katie Holm, Else Holzken, Roberta Hower, Jean McDonald, Frank Moretti, Joan Ruxton, Toni Sinclair and Virginia Storey. My special thanks to you all.

CAM FINLAY *(479-9833) is an active member of the Victoria Naturalists Club and interested in bird studies.*

Welcome to New Members

FEBRUARY

Kevin Broan and Louise Tebbitt
of Zinnia Road
are interested in native plant gardening, forestry, land ecosystems and birds

Thia Bunker
of Musgrave Street
enjoys marine biology and native plants

Kevin and Beth Goh
of Eagle Rock Terrace
are interested in birding and gardening

Frans Jonker
of 4139 Bremerton Street
includes birds and wildlife photography as his interests

Robert Kerr and Maria Van Der Meij
of Gorge Road E
are interested in sea mammals and birds

G. Dean Lacey
of Richmond Avenue
has terrestrial ecosystem mapping as an interest

Shelagh and John Levey
of Stevens Road

Pat Montgomery and George Jex
of McMorran Way
are interested in native plants, birds and hiking

Greg Pierce
of Hillside Avenue
is interested in birding, hiking and entomology

Ross Priddle
of Central Avenue
is interested in mosses and liverworts

Maggie Salmond
of Parry Street
likes nature photography, birding and botany

Kevin Storey
of Cobble Hill
loves birds

Ben van Drimmelen
of Linkleas Avenue
is a "barrister for bear"

MARCH

Holly Douglas
of Warren Place
has interests in biology and entomology

Peggy Kilshaw
of Douglas Street

Hannah Main
of Tudor Avenue
is interested in birds

Richard Poutney
of Leighton Road

Yvonne Rorison
of Beach Drive
enjoys wildflowers and birds

Jim Salt
of Nelson Street
is interested in mammals, birds, ecology, plants, intertidal life, photography and micro-environments

Deborah Tubman
of Prospect Lake Road
lists habitat restoration, conservation and wildlilfe/bird viewing as interests

ATTENTION ALL NEST FINDERS

The 1998 nesting season is upon us! Already, in late March, Great Horned Owls were on eggs, Anna's Hummingbirds had fledged young, Mountain Bluebirds were inspecting nest boxes, and magpies were conspicuous by their absence.

The B.C. Nest Record Scheme, now in its 43rd year, is the longest running co-operative effort between naturalists, students, and biologists to gather information on the breeding biology of birds in the province. If you would like to participate in this important activity, and record information on nests, eggs, and young found in B.C., please contact the address below for nest cards and an instruction manual.

B.C. RECORDS SCHEME
P.O. Box 6218, Station C, Victoria, B.C. V8P 5L5
Tel/Fax 250-477-0465

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REMINDER: most of the regular meetings of the VNHS are not held during the summer months. The Natural History Presentations are now finished but will continue again in September. **REGULAR MEETINGS** are generally held on the following days. **Board of Directors:** the first Tuesday of each month; **Natural History Presentations** (formally known as the General Members Meeting): the second Tuesday of each month; **Botany Night:** the third Tuesday of each month **Parks and Conservation Committee Meeting:** the third Wednesday of each month; **Birders' Night:** the fourth Wednesday of each month; **Marine Night**: the last Monday of each month. Locations are given in the calendar listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

MAY EVENTS

Saturday, May 2
Broadcast Hill and Viaduct Flats Stroll
Bring your hiking boots and join **Kevin Slagboom** for an informal morning stroll up Broadcast Hill and down to Viaduct Flats. We'll keep our eyes open for flycatchers, warblers, raptors and ducks as we move through the variety of habitats in the area. Meet at the Layritz Park parking lot at 8:00 a.m. Phone Kevin at 658-0940 for details.

Saturday May 9
Note: Observatory Hill Trip listed in the last *Naturalist* calendar has been moved to May 30.

Saturday May 9
Birding at Witty's Lagoon
Join **Gordon Hart** and **Jim Fliczuk** for a spring saunter through the great birding habitat of Witty's Lagoon. You'll see and hear warblers, vireos, flycatchers and much more. Meet at the parking lot off Metchosin Road at 7:30 a.m. Call Gordon for details at 721-1264.

Sunday, May 10
Spring Migrants on the Powerline Trail
Join **Roy Prior** for a trip down the powerline trail for a wonderful opportunity to hear warblers, vireos, and flycatchers during the highest traffic of the spring migration. Meet at the Francis/King Nature House at 6:00 a.m. Bring your lunch and something to drink. Phone Roy at 385-7171 for details.

Saturday, May 23
Mount Newton
Join **Sheila Mosher** and **Cheryl Mackie** for a walk on the south-east slope of Mt. Newton. We should see Black-throated Gray Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, possibly Western Tanagers, as well as vireos and sparrows. Mt. Newton is also one place you can see Mourning Doves. Meet in front of the old Saanich Fair Grounds on East Saanich Road (opposite the Moose Hall) at 7:30 a.m. Please phone Sheila at 652-3502 for details.

Monday, May 25, 1998
Marine Night
This is the final meeting of the Marine Group until the fall. Rather than have a single speaker we are planning a **Marine Potpourri** for which members are asked to bring a selection of slides to show. We have several volunteers lined up but we would like any members to bring slides, photos or specimens of marine animals or plants, vertebrates or invertebrates, that you have taken or collected. Tell us what you know about them or get help from the audience in identifying them. We can also discuss possible summer field trips or other activities that we might plan for the future. See you at Swan Lake Nature Centre. 7:30 p.m. **Phil Lambert.**

Saturday, May 30
Observatory Hill
Join **Hank VanderPol** on his annual Birding By Ear trip, this time up Observatory Hill. Most of the breeding species should be back, and singing on territory. This is a gentle climb on pavement up to the Observatory and we'll be birding on the way through a mix of habitat zones. Warblers, vireos, flycatchers, finches, wrens and other species will be present. On the top, we might see various raptors soaring in the breeze. The focus will be on identifying species by song or call. Meet Hank at 6:00 a.m. at the bottom of Observatory Hill. Bring something to eat and to drink as the weather may be warm. Call Hank at 658-3482 for more details.

Sunday, May 31
Elk/Beaver Lake Hike
Join **Tom Gillespie** for a wonderful stroll through exceptional nesting habitat on the shore of a favorite recreational lake. Watch for breeding warblers, ospreys, and waterfowl. Meet at the parking lot at Jennings Lane on the west side of the Pat Bay Highway at 7:00 a.m. Call Tom at 361-1694 for details.

JUNE EVENTS

Saturday, June 6
Spring Bird Count
Please see the article on page 14 or contact **David Pearce** at 658-0295 for details.

Saturday, June 20
Francis King Park
Join **David Allinson** at 7:00 a.m. for a great morning of birding around Francis/King Regional Park to search for breeding song-birds. Meet at Munn Road, just past the caretaker's cabin. Don't forget your lunch and water. Phone David at 478-0493 for details.

Back Issues of the Victoria Naturalist
Copies of back issues and indexes of *The Victoria Naturalist* are available from **Tom Gillespie** at 361-1694.

The Victoria NATURALIST

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