



The Victoria NATURALIST

MARCH
APRIL
1999
VOL 55.5

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



LOUCAS
RAPTIS
• 1999 •

Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
Contents © 1999 as credited.
ISSN 0049—612X Printed in Canada
Publication Mail Commercial Sales Agreement Number 1273108

Editor: Glen Moores, 655-3772
Desktop Publishing: Frances Hunter, Beacon Hill
Communications Group, 479-1956
Distribution: Lyndis Davis, Tom Gillespie
Printing: Fotoprint, 382-8218

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Annual Subscription Rate, Victoria Naturalist \$17.00

RARE BIRD ALERT: 592-3381

VNHS EVENTS TAPE: 479-2054

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Deadline for next issue: March 19, 1999

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Back cover photo of Pink Trillium: Bill McMillan

OUR COVER

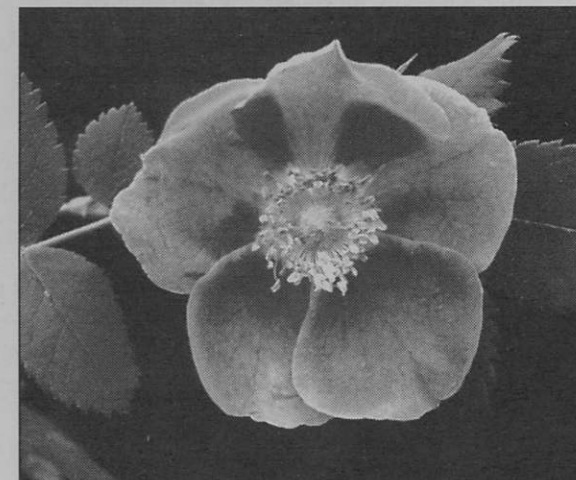
Loucas Raptis has contributed his great skill and
art in producing the line drawing for our cover
consistent with the theme of Marbled Murrelets
nesting.

Highlights

To provide you with the full statistics of the
Christmas Bird Count and the Butterfly Count
for 1998 we have increased the size of this issue
so that we can continue to provide the articles
that you have become used to.

We are pleased to introduce Anna Young as
a contributor of the feature article on Marbled
Murrelets. Anna will be speaking at Birders'
Night in March.

Please note that the announcement for fee
increase in the January/ February issue stated in
error that the Annual General Meeting would be
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Mysterious Murrelets

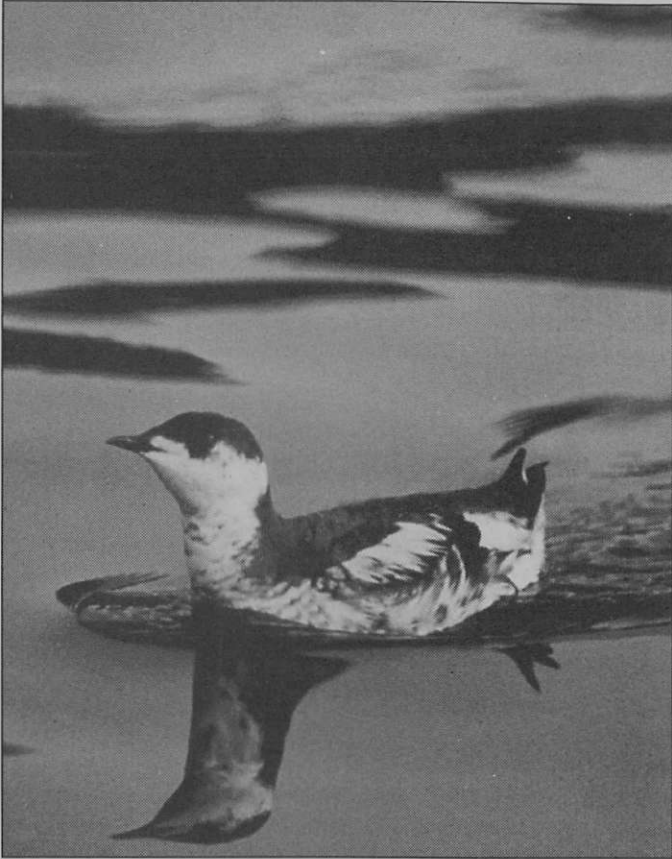
By Anna Young

Marbled Murrelets: magical, mysterious birds! This is the story of a pilot project that ran during the summer of 1998 in the Douglas-fir forests of the Victoria area, searching for evidence that Marbled Murrelets were nesting there.

Less than 25 cm long, murrelets are relatives of birds like the Common Murre and Ancient Murrelet, and are often seen on the seas surrounding Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula. Their winter feathers of black above and white beneath, with a touch of white on the scapulars where the wings join the body, make the relationship obvious. It's just as well, for their summer plumage is very different; a mottled brown above and dull white mottled with brown below. This camouflage aims to keep the bird hidden while on the nest and is a great mimic of the mossy mats found on the branches of old-growth trees where murrelets nest. As a recent arrival from the UK, where seabirds do things properly and nest on rocky cliffs in colonies, I was sceptical when first introduced to marbled murrelets and inclined to suspect a practical joke. Seabirds nesting in old-growth trees up to 70 km inland? Hmm!

Big trees are not the first place a seabird would think of to set up home; and how murrelets got settled in such an unlikely place remains a mystery. They may have evolved the practice to take advantage of the giant prehistoric red-wood forests which cloaked the Pacific coast of North America in the mid-Miocene period. Today marbled murrelets are found from SE Alaska south to mid-California, wherever there is suitable forest on land for nesting. Marbled murrelets are present in reasonable numbers (an estimated 40 - 50,000) in the coastal waters of B.C., but there is evidence of sharp declines so they are listed as threatened in Canada. Reasonable numbers today are no guarantee of similar future numbers. As with other seabirds, they are long-lived, so many may be old birds that hatched some years ago when more old-growth forest was present on the coast. We could well see a sudden dramatic decline in their numbers as the effects of old-growth forest loss in recent years start to show.

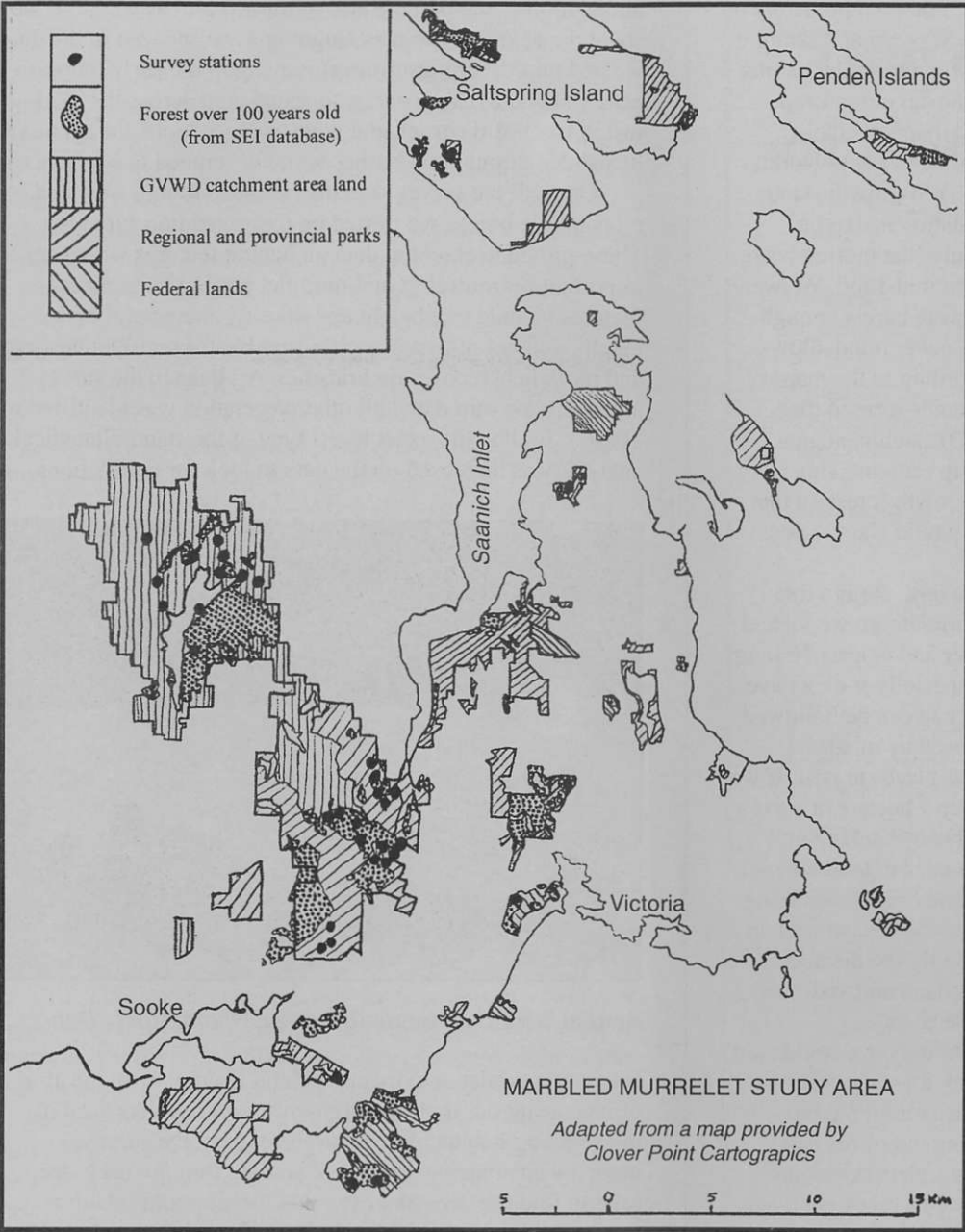
Murrelets are found in waters close to shore, where they feed on small schooling fish. Here they are relatively easy to see and study. However, during the breeding season they are incredibly secretive when using nesting sites and are very difficult to find, let alone study. The mottled feathers provide excellent camouflage when the adult bird is on the nest, and the adults are careful to visit the nest only at dawn and dusk. Although murrelets are usually vocal birds and counting calls is an important part of research, they keep very quiet when near their nests. All this strange behaviour has one aim; to stop the single egg or chick from being eaten. Crows,



A young marbled murrelet at sea. Photo: Gus van Vleet

ravens, Steller's Jays and other predators are the largest cause of nest failure for murrelets; even at the best of times their success rate is only about 30%. This means that over a ten year period, an average murrelet will rear only three chicks successfully, while the other seven attempts fail. Compared to other woodland nesters, this is a high failure rate.

Seeing murrelets offshore during the summer, and especially carrying fish, is a good indication that they are breeding inland. Dr Alan Burger, murrelet expert at the University of Victoria, has run studies on marbled murrelets since the early 1990s on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Familiar with boats, airplanes, radar and land-based surveys to find and count the birds, he had often seen murrelets in the waters around Sooke, Victoria and the Saanich Peninsula. His suspicions were roused, and in spring 1998 he began a pilot study of old-growth forest in the Victoria area, checking for evidence of breeding murrelets. Funding was provided by the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and Forest Renewal B.C.



The study area was the coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone, one of many different zones which define the main vegetation type in a given area. The coastal Douglas-fir zone is very different from forest zones where murrelets have been studied on the Island's west coast; much less rain and a very different mix of trees. The Gulf Islands, Saanich Peninsula and a slice of coast up to Courtenay all lie within the zone, but practical considerations kept the study area south of Shawnigan Lake, though the Peninsula and Salt Spring Island were covered. The goals of the projects were: to map the extent of apparently suitable habitat left; to find out how much and which old-growth forest contained nesting murrelets; to compare habitat features of forest stands with and without murrelets; to compare habitat features of forest stands used by murrelets in this study with stands used by murrelets in other forest zones elsewhere, and

scanning the sky for the murrelets themselves. Researchers often feel the rarer and more threatened a bird is, the more difficult it is to survey. Marbled murrelets are no exception. They are most active around dawn and dusk, so a standard survey runs for about two hours around sunrise or sunset. The surveyor lies down to allow a good view of the sky and records observations on a tape recorder as writing would mean looking away from the sky temporarily. Each time a murrelet is heard or seen, it counts as a detection, the standard unit used in murrelet surveys. The number of birds and/or calls seen and heard at one time, behaviour and flight path are also recorded. Certain types of detections are counted as occupied detections, and indicate that the murrelets are likely to be nesting nearby. These include birds flying in circles, birds flying below the tops of the trees in a stand, and calls coming from one place (sug-

last but not least, to locate nest trees. Three brave spirits were quickly hired for the team, not put off by Alan's questions on bear experience and back-country camping at the interviews. Katy Holm was one, a third year biology student at UVic, while Anna and Stephen Young had just moved to Victoria from the UK, so recently they spent their first week on the job unloading furniture and endless boxes from the shipping container. The first week was spent hurriedly buying equipment and digging out maps of potential old-growth in the area (well, Katy was hurrying: Anna and Steve were trying to find the floor in their apartment). Training from Alan in official murrelet survey techniques was followed by a visit to the Carmanah valley (prime murrelet habitat) on the south-west coast of the Island where a long-running study was in full swing. The Carmanah team provided practical survey training, but at first Anna, Steve and Katy were convinced they had gone deaf. Next to an experienced surveyor who was pointing in the direction of the murrelet calls, they could hear nothing over the dawn chorus din of wrens and robins. Nothing new there, said the Carmanah team, and sure enough, with practise you could pick out the thread of gull-like keer calls. With more practise, we could even count the number of calls while simultaneously

gesting the murrelet is sitting in a tree). Potential predators of murrelets are also recorded in the same way. Sounds straight-forward enough, but some surveys in prime murrelet habitat can record 200 - 300 detections. Imagine having to keep track of all those long enough to record them on tape!

After the training sessions, it was time to get to work. Forty survey stations had to be found in old-growth stands where murrelets might nest, and each station had to be surveyed at sunrise twice before mid-July (the murrelets are at their most active between mid-May to mid-July). We were now into the first week in June; there were barely enough mornings left to survey all the stations, never mind allowances for bad weather or time off. According to the maps of old-growth forest we had, the largest stands were in the Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD) catchment area. Permits in order, we headed out to set up stations. This involved visiting areas marked as old-growth forest on the maps and deciding whether a murrelet would want to nest there.

Difficult as it is to imagine life as a bird, certain tree features are associated with nesting murrelets, so we looked for these. Branches over 18 cm diameter and at least 10 m up a big tree are used as nest platforms, especially if they have thick moss/lichen mats in which a nest cup can be hollowed out. Tree deformities, such as those caused by mistletoe infestation or by age, are also popular as places to nest. If we found suitable trees in a stand larger than a hectare, a survey station was set up for the stand. Much bushwhacking and deep thought was needed here; stations need a good view of the stand of trees and it often took a while to find a clearing. All the study area was relatively close to the sea, so we had no worries about murrelets being able to fly the distance (remember, they can nest up to 70 km inland and visit the nest several times a day with fish for the chick).

Once we had found a few survey stations, we could start, combining dawn surveys with the search for more stations. The first morning was exciting; this wasn't training, but doing it for real! Steve had steam coming out of his ears when collected, he had actually seen murrelets skimming silently over the tree tops as they followed a creek back out to sea. We celebrated by falling asleep in our tents when we got back to camp, feeling like proper murrelet surveyors at last. After visiting the prime murrelet habitat in the Carmanah and comparing the trees there and in our study area, we were dubious about finding any trees big and mossy enough to appeal to a murrelet, but there they were, flying right over our heads. Success at last!

After this we got settled into a routine, visiting potential stands in the rest of the GVWD catchment area, then visiting Saltspring Island for a few days to check the forest there. We also visited all the stands we could on the Saanich peninsula, these mostly small remnants in parks. Forests on private property and at the DND Rocky Point site were also visited (with permission, of course!). Wildlife provided some highlights, especially the black-tail deer fawns just beginning to venture out with their mothers. One was so comfortably hidden in a pothole on a little used track that he didn't deign to move as we drove down the road; fortunately we had

aimed to miss the pothole and so missed him as well, but we spent the next few minutes laughing as he sneezed in the dust we had raised. A return from surveying in the early morning nearly netted a black bear, who scampered across the road just in front of the truck and gave us nasty looks for ages as he padded through the bushes while we craned to see him.

Once all the survey stations had been found, we could relax a little before we started on the vegetation surveys. These provided essential data on habitat features which are important for murrelets and murrelet nesting trees. These features include tree height and density, diameter at breast height, number of tree branches suitable for murrelet nesting, and moss/lichen cover on branches. All trees in the survey area were measured and all other vegetation was identified to assist in finding the exact forest type of the stand. Statistical analysis was then used on the data to look for correlations



Hard at work on a morning survey. Photo: Voker Bahn.

between murrelet activity and habitat features with the aim of increasing our understanding of what murrelets need in their nesting habitat. As one would expect, the surveys involved an amazing amount of wading through neck-deep salal to find the trees and even now needles and salal bits turn up in the strangest places! Enough said about plants, I think (there speaks a zoologist!).

As the survey season went by, we were pleased and surprised at the results. Having anticipated a summer of bird-free surveys, murrelet calls or sightings were recorded in over half the surveys, plus occupied detections, which indicate likely nesting nearby. The centre for all this activity was the GVWD catchment area, which holds the largest and least fragmented areas of old-growth forest in our study area. Within the catchment area itself, there were hotspots of activity along certain creeks, some within the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. Steve (again!) nearly burned a tape recorder out one morning, talking non-stop to describe the noisy antics of the murrelets at one site. Alan was amazed, and so impressed he unguardedly suggested a press release after the end of the nesting season. Before he could change his mind we took him up on it and got a very good response, with lots of public interest in these elusive birds.

Of course, having done all this survey work, the big question is: are they nesting? In the GVWD, they almost certainly are. The only way to confirm nesting is to actually find a nest, recognisable for several years afterwards. But how do you find a nest in a tree which may be 60 m tall? Bring on the tree-climbers! In this case, Kevin Jordan and Stephanie Hughes of Arbonaut Access in Victoria, both with years of experience climbing trees to look for murrelet nests. Supervised by 13 month old Nuala, they spent three days climbing in a forest stand which had lots of murrelet activity during surveys. Looking for murrelet nests in a forest of big trees is a lot like looking for a needle in a haystack; we kept our fingers crossed but did not find any. However, Kevin reported that all the trees climbed were suitable for murrelets with plenty of big branches and lots of moss, so perhaps with more time and funding we will be lucky next season.

The other important result from this project was the very high number of potential predators found. Nearly 97% of surveys recorded crows, ravens, Steller's jays, owls, hawks, or squirrels, a level much higher than that in similar studies on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The forest around Victoria is broken up and fragmented by years of human impact; logging, farming, urbanisation, recreation and so on. The most common predators (corvids and squirrels) tend to increase around humans, which is one reason for the high numbers. In addition, the mature forests in our study area are in much smaller patches than on the west coast. Predators are known to concentrate round the edges of forest stands and there is much more edge in a small patch than a large patch, so this means even more predators. It is likely that the high predator levels have a serious effect on the success of murrelets nesting in the study area.

The pilot project in 1998 was the first year of a two-year study; it takes at least two years to gain an accurate picture of murrelet activity. In 1999 we plan to survey new areas of the east coast as far up as Nanaimo. If any members (or their friends) know of any stands of large old-growth trees reasonably close to the coast between Shawnigan Lake and Nanaimo, please contact Anna or Stephen Young at (250) 383-2070 (telephone or fax), or e-mail syoung@pacificcoast.net. In addition, we need volunteers to assist with the surveys (though not the difficult lying down bits). Please contact us if you are good on your birdsong and can spare some early mornings between mid-May and mid-July.

The pressure on murrelets and old-growth in the Victoria area from human activity is already enormous. If we want to keep marbled murrelets nesting in our 'patch', we need to preserve the few remaining stands of suitable old-growth forests left. The completion of our initial pilot project and expansion of the study area in 1999 will give us a better understanding of the needs and nesting habitats of marbled murrelets around Victoria. Using this information we can better manage our activities and old-growth forests for murrelets in the future.

ANNA YOUNG, a recent immigrant from the UK, brings her experience in nature conservation to the marbled murrelet project.

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The Perilous Life of a Chironomid

By Loucas Raptis

Unlike other varieties of Japanese cherry trees, which can be seen blooming around the city of Victoria as early as February, the Kwanzan cherry trees rarely develop their rosy buds before the first week of April.

All winter long, beaten by rain and blown by wind, they stand pitifully lifeless and contorted. Here and there, an abandoned crow's nest may be the only sign that life once stirred among their naked branches. But even these exposed nests are quickly dismantled twig by twig by early pairing birds, and reassembled nearby, hidden away in foliage already lush and safe.

To reawaken, the Kwanzan cherry trees need the extended sunshine of late March; and only then, almost miraculously overnight, within the first week of April, their branches weigh heavy with clusters of berry-like buds, each cluster crowned by a tuft of copper-coloured leaflets. It takes a fortnight for all the flowers to break out of their buds and disentangle their frilly petals, and when they do, each tree appears again like a colossal bouquet of flowers.

After a mild winter, one may see a few swallows make their first appearance over the Southern parts of Vancouver Island as early as the earliest blooming cherry trees; but it is only when the Kwanzan cherry trees are in full bloom that one knows exactly where to find the swallows by the hundreds.

They fly low over the still waters of local lakes, swooping down, gliding and fluttering against the wind, anxiously searching for the spring hatches of chironomids. They find them in little bays and open water and fly so frantically and so close together that one wonders how they manage to avoid colliding in mid-air.

Every spring, the blooming Kwanzan trees take me to the swallows, and the swallows guide me to the chironomids.

I take my float tube to Elk Lake and unobtrusively position myself under the flying swallows. Sure enough, the water all around me is littered with thousands of empty, ghostly cases of recently emerged chironomids. On a calm day, when there is hardly a ripple on the lake, you can see even the tiniest of these insects hatching in profusion. You see them poking upwards, as though squeezing gently through tight imaginary holes on the surface of the water, still curled up inside their folded wings. As they slide their abdomens free of the discarded pupal shucks, they stretch their legs and wings in one flowing, synchronised motion, and take off in casual, unhurried flight like tiny helicopters buzzing in the distance.

Easily mistaken for their noxious relatives the mosquitoes, but without biting mouth parts, these are the reproductive winged adults. After a precarious existence as larvae on

the bottom of the lake, and a heroic ascent as pupae through the hazards of the depths, they are finally free to break their bondage to the water-only to be cut off, of course, by the squadrons of swooping swallows. Violet-green and tree and barn swallows are all there waiting for them-and swallows rarely miss their mark.

It may sound like a cruel joke of nature, but a chironomid's entire existence is geared towards becoming food for all the creatures that surround it. And if there are chironomids that manage to escape death in the digestive juices of a hungry predator, they appear to do so simply to maintain a steady food supply for one more year in the life of their marauders. Surprisingly, there are tremendous numbers of chironomids that beat the odds and survive to complete their life cycle. The females find the males in dense, suspended swarms and join in the agitation. The males, with their sound-sensitive plumose antennae, single out the females by detecting the frequency of their vibrating wings, and mating takes place on the go, quickly and efficiently. After the male has made his contribution and the female has dropped the eggs into the water, they have no further reason to exist.

What comes out of each egg is the first instar of the larval stage, a stage of straight, uncomplicated growth. Usually, it takes four instars, separated by simple moltings, before the larva is fully grown. After a brief planktonic spell, the larvae of most species of chironomids settle on the bottom and burrow into a tunnel, sometimes — particularly over the winter months — fairly deep into the muck. There they find little oxygen, but they can easily obtain what is available by means of haemoglobin-like molecules which give them a translucent bright red colour. These are the commonly known "bloodworms," widely sold as a popular aquarium fish food. The larvae feed on detritus, or rotting stuff, on diatoms and green algae, and occasionally on tiny invertebrates and other smaller larvae. In fact, with very few exceptions, this is the only stage during which a chironomid will feed to store up the energy it will need for procreation.

Despite a predominately sedentary lifestyle, the larvae are known to abandon their tubes and migrate seasonally in fairly large numbers, either because they outgrow their tunnels or exhaust their oxygen or food supply; or simply because they try to find more suitable areas to pupate. In local lakes some of the most pronounced migrations of the larvae take place for a month or so just before the main hatches start. After a winter of inactivity and stupor, their exodus could not be more propitious for the reawakened appetites of every carnivorous invertebrate and fish species in the lake. During this time, if one happens to catch a trout, one does not need to kill it to know what it has been feeding on. The fish will usually disgorge the contents of its stomach right at the net, and many of the bloodworms will be expelled still alive and wriggling.

When the chironomid larvae are fully grown, they shut themselves into their burrows, and there, over a period of a few days, they are transformed into completely different-looking insects. They become pupae: nearly developed winged adults, hunched over inside a dry suit, the pupal shuck. With an air bubble trapped around their thorax, the pupae start their arduous and precarious journey towards the surface of the water. Surely the species does not survive because of pupal

agility and speed, but rather from sheer numbers, spread out over a large area of the lake.

The pupae usually rise through fairly deep water, and in addition to every other fish, their main nemesis, the trout, are there waiting for them all the way from the bottom to the surface of the lake. Right above and through the sparse weeds, the largest trout cruise anxiously, solitary in their disposition, fierce and opportunistic, displacing soft competitors, and racing to snap up any moving pupa within sight. Not particularly numerous, with wide patches of the bottom in their claim, and with the best pickings all to themselves, they allow many pupae to elude their predatory network and rise safely straight into the second layer of murderous turmoil. The smaller trout, at twelve to thirteen inches, are waiting for them in midwater. At this size, hatchery trout continue schooling, a habit which ironically becomes a lucky break for some of the rising pupae. When the trout are busy exterminating the pupae of one neighbourhood, the pupae of an adjacent area manage to sneak by. Of course, there is no conscious urgency in the rise of a pupa; by wriggling and stopping, and wriggling and stopping, it just keeps rising, unless it gets eaten. And some of them will be swallowed right at the surface, a split second before they hatch, after a moment's hesitation against the wrong puff of wind, gobbled up in a violent swirl by some clone of a little excited trout hosed into the lake perhaps only the day before.

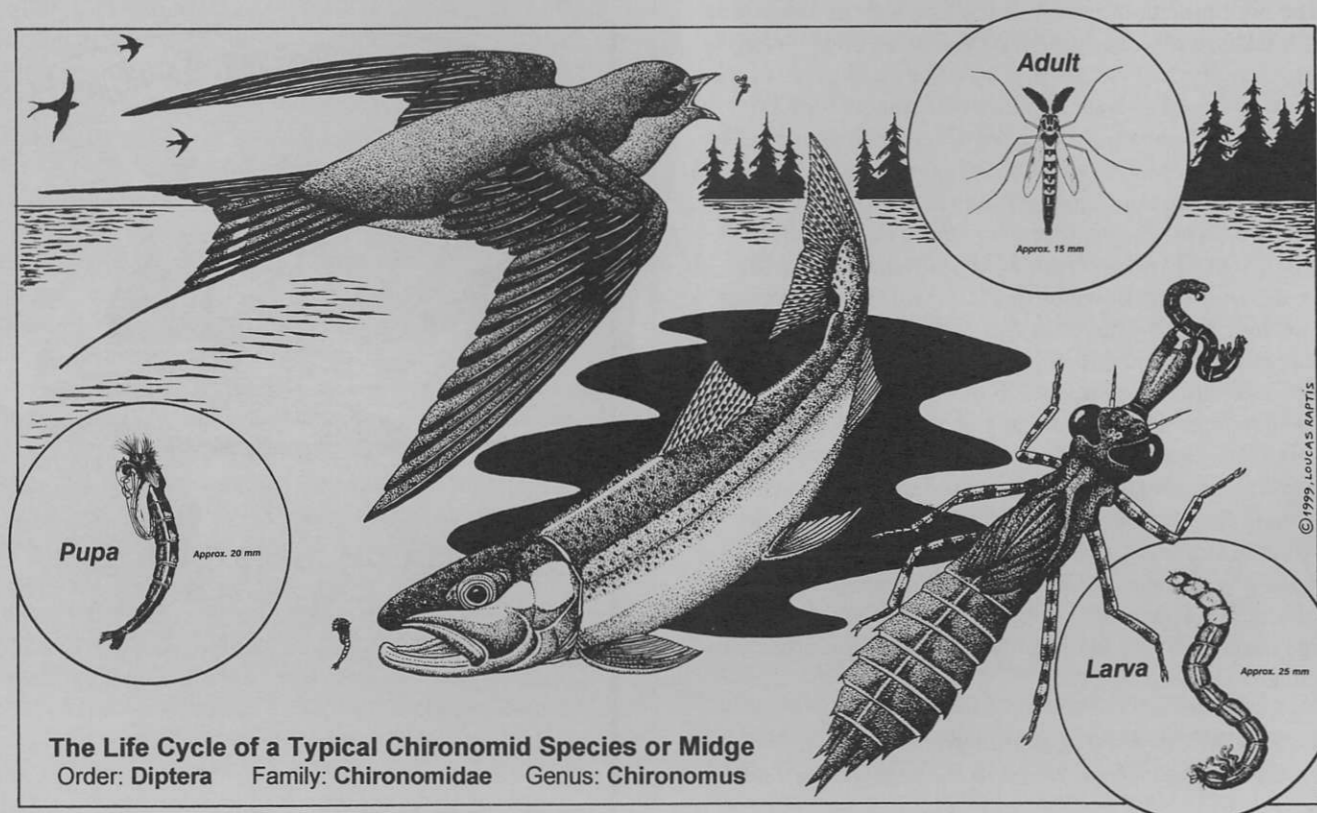
Of course breaking the surface film and hatching does not always mean freedom for the delicate and frail winged adults. Some can be seen dishevelled, bouncing hopelessly up and down on the surface of the lake, each time lifting themselves no higher than a few futile inches. Others, as though irrevocably affixed to the surface film, buzz frantically at high speed, cutting erratic, fatal trajectories clearly visible from far away. Others spin endlessly around a trapped or crinkled wing, and others still just sit there, fully hatched and dry, but completely at a loss as to the actual purpose of their wings. In every instance, one can barely count to ten before the hapless insect disappears under the misty explosion of a trout's rise or the dipping splash of a swooping swallow.

Eventually, the hatches will peter out as gradually as they first appeared. By the time the winds of spring have dispersed the empty pupal cases, the first instars of the larvae will already be drifting among the planktonic creatures of the lake. Over the summer, they will settle inside their bottom, muddy tubes and will molt and grow steadily, through fall and winter, into large, enticing bloodworms. The following spring, the blooming Kwanzan trees will signal again their transformation into pupae and winged adults, and with the laying of the eggs, one more perilous and ultimately fatal life cycle will have been successfully completed.

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LOUCAS RAPTIS is a freelance illustrator and amateur naturalist with a special interest in aquatic environments.



The Life Cycle of a Typical Chironomid Species or Midge
Order: Diptera Family: Chironomidae Genus: Chironomus



Hat Tricks

A Report on the VNHS Habitat Acquisition Trust Foundation

It is with sadness that HAT announces the registering of the first covenant project on which we were involved. Chip Meredith passed away on January 26th in the same week that a conservation covenant was registered on his property in Mill Bay. Chip's property is a great example of where an individual realized the natural values of their property and acted upon those desires by placing a covenant. The covenant will protect those values for future generations.

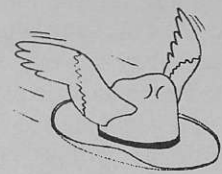
The Land Stewardship Office is progressing along on several fronts with the help on numerous volunteers. The volunteers are assisting with staffing of the office as well as work on several informational packages. If you have any land stewardship questions or wish to help out don't hesitate to contact the office at 995-2428, email at hat@islandnet.com <<mailto:hat@islandnet.com>> or view our web site at <http://www.hat.bc.ca> <<http://www.hat.bc.ca/>>.

We have been investigating several properties within the Sea-to-Sea Greenbelt for our next major acquisition project. One of the more ambitious (multi-million) proposed projects may be on hold, as it is unlikely that the CRD will be able to contribute significantly in the near future to major parks acquisition. A proposed CRD Parks acquisition fund was

rejected given the recently announced reduced provincial transfer payments to the municipalities. Nevertheless, we expect to initiate a new acquisition project in the near future.

On the fund raising front, Marilyn Lambert indicates that she has had a great interest in a spring trip to Point Pelee trip lead by David Stirling. Details about the trip are being finalized. On New Years Eve, HAT benefited from a sold out dance with Marimba Muzuva organized by Andrew MacDonald and Jan Garnett. Bruce Whittington embarked on a new job of "holding the door" against the crowd of people without tickets. Other volunteers including Bob Chappell, Andrew and Gail Harcombe, the Sandborns, and Inga Nykwist manned the bar and food service. It was great fun for those present and brought HAT to the attention of a different crowd.

And finally thank you to those VNHS members who have also become HAT members and to those who have contributed to our permanent fund administered by the Victoria Foundation. As an organization HAT looks forward to the energy created from having a membership and we hope that such energy will benefit the good work of both HAT and the VNHS.



HAT'S OFF AGAIN!

POINT PELEE — May 11 - 20, 1999

Point Pelee is one of North America's most remarkable bird migration areas. At the western edge of Lake Erie, the "Point" is the first landfall for birds on their spring migration north and mid-May is the most exciting time to be there.

We will also search the hardwood forests for spring wildflowers, bird the shores and marshes along the lake, visit Rondeau Provincial Park and the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Join David Stirling to explore this most interesting part of our own country and witness the spectacle of Spring migration at Point Pelee National Park.

Cost: \$1395.00 CDN(!) per person from Toronto.

For more information, please call Marilyn at 477-5922

All proceeds from this tour will be donated to the Victoria Natural History Society's Habitat Acquisition Trust

Back by Popular Demand!

Natural Greece

Off the beaten track, with expert Greek naturalists,
Stam Zogaris and Vasso Vlami.

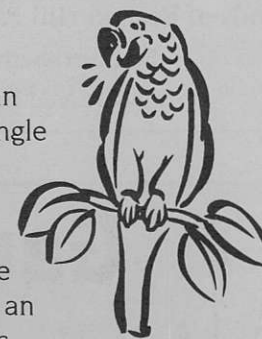
Plus an optional extension:
Evia and Skyros Islands

TOUR FEATURES:

International Airfare • All Transportation • Accomodation in traditional
Hotels and Lodges • Taxes and Services Charges

Highlights include:

Crete ... walk the White Mountains: haunt of Lammergeier, Cretan wild goat endemic peonies, and wild tulips! Explore a unique jungle of Theophraste's Palms, subtropical beaches, mountain villages, and exquisite Venetian harbours and castles. **Messolonghi** ... lagoons teeming with birds and fringed with oak-clothed hills, plus the ruins of a classical Greek city, its theater hewn out of the rocky hillside! Greece's largest wetland at **Amvrakikos Gulf** with an amazing diversity of birds: Dalmatian pelicans, rufous bush-chats, marsh sandpipers...and perhaps striped dolphins! **Pindos Mountains**, meet the semi-nomadic shepherds, who share an alpine nirvana with brown bears and fields of wildflowers! **Meteora** stunning rock pinnacles sacred to Byzantine monasteries, a refuge for Egyptian vultures, black storks, tortoises...plus wild rock garden of irises, orchids, and more!



Space limited to 20 participants

For itinerary and tour details call Eva Zogaris: 251-7477

For reservations call Sophia at Omega:

738-7161 or 1-800-663-2669

 **MEGA TRAVEL**



Camas Day A Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat



DATE: Sunday, April 18, 1999

TIME: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: Beacon Hill Park (activities and displays at the flagpole)

GUIDED WALKS

9:00 a.m. only. Birding Walk in Beacon Hill Park (length: 1 hour). Join Jeff Gaskin and Tom Gillespie from the Victoria Natural History Society and learn to recognize some of the birds who call the park "home".

11:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. Wildflower Walks (length: 1 hour). Noted botanists T. C. Brayshaw (Curator Emeritus, Royal B.C. Museum) and Brenda Costanzo (Herbarium, University of Victoria).

11:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. Native History of Beacon Hill Park (length: 1 hour). Grant Keddie (Archaeologist, Royal B.C. Museum) will lead a fascinating walk of archaeological sites in the park.

Also present will be Chris Wilson, a First Nations youth, who will contribute his ethnobotany knowledge during the walks.

DISPLAYS AT THE FLAGPOLE WILL INCLUDE:

- How Camas was prepared and cooked. Drawings prepared by SENCOFEN language instructors of Lau'Welnew Tribal School of the Saanich Nation
- Victoria Natural History Society
- Friends of Beacon Hill Park

FOR INFORMATION: call Joyce Harrison (592-4232) or H. Oldershaw (592-6659)

Sponsored by the Victoria Natural History Society and Friends of Beacon Hill Park

Early Christmas Bird Counts in Victoria and Other B.C. Sites

By David Stirling and Cam Finlay

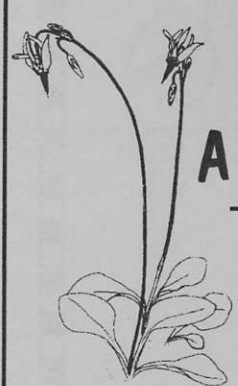
As part of the enthusiastic participation in our Victoria Christmas Bird Counts the past two years where we came third in the world for number of participants, Finlay decided to search out all records he could find on the earliest counts.

Knowing the first ever World count was in 1900 when 25 communities across North America participated with a total of 27 individuals involved (Canada had two counts, Toronto and Scotch Lake, York County, New Brunswick), he began a search of the magazines where such numbers are reported. They included *Bird Lore* (precursor of the American Audubon Magazine), the *Canadian Field-Naturalist* and the *Victoria Naturalist*. By 1905 there were four Canadian communities involved in the counts with B.C.'s first, held at Okanagan Landing and recorded by Allan Brooks, artist who

supplied the illustrations of *Birds of Canada* and an authority on B.C. birds. The next year, 1906, Edmonton held its first count. Also that year Brooks again did the count for Okanagan Landing plus Vernon. Okanagan Landing was done again in 1909, 1910, 1911, 1913 and again in 1921. Vancouver's first count was held in 1911 and not again for several years.

We had hoped that the naturalists of Victoria would have been into birding in the early 1900s but not so. We had to wait until 1924 when the first count here was done by J. A. Munro. He found 50 species with 1850 individual birds. That year there were also counts at Lake Cowichan and Comox Valley.

The next recorded count for Victoria was in 1944 when seven members of our Naturalist Society found 37 species.



Gardening for Wildlife A Native Plant Gardening Sale and Demonstration

Saturday and Sunday, April 17 and 18
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



Sale: Native Plants (over 90 species)

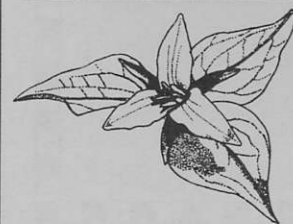
Native Plant Seeds
Books
Bird Feeders
Nesting Boxes
Gardening Supplies

Door Prizes Displays

Admission:
\$3/day, \$5/weekend pass
Friends Members Free

Presentations, including:

Briony Penn on Christmas Hill
Water Gardening for Wildlife
Attracting Hummingbirds
Native Plant Propagation
Issues of Collecting from the Wild
Native Plant Garden Tours



Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary
3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria, B.C. V8X 3W1

For more information: 479-0211

website: www.swanlake.bc.ca



Limited Space

MARCH BREAK SCIENCE CAMP for Kids Aged 8-12

- a mixture of Science, Sports & Games
- healthy & delicious lunches & snacks
- loads of fun field trips
- licenced Out-of-School care facility
- fun, energetic & enthusiastic leaders

Swan Lake Area
891 Pendene Place (off Saanich Rd.)

Also Offering: Nature Birthday Parties (5-15 yr. Olds)
After School Science Activities (8-12 yr. Olds)
School Field Trips (K-Gr.12)

To register your child call Erica at 812-9937

Birds and Wine 1999

South Okanagan & Douglas Lake

May 29 -
June 5, 1999

\$1,000
Double
Occupancy

Join our trip to the sagebrush and antelope-brush landscape of "Canada's Pocket Desert". Visit scenic Douglas Lake country for birding near upland lakes. We travel by van to visit river riparian,

grassland, and ponderosa pine woodlands to listen for the distinctive calls and songs of Okanagan specialties. See Sage

Thrasher Bobolink, Lazuli Bunting, Least and Gray Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Long-billed Curlew. Afternoon winery tours, tastings, and a gourmet winery lunch included.

Dannie Carsen, 250-727-0155



Quesco Tours
801 Lily Avenue
Victoria, B.C. V8X 3R7

That same December two hummingbirds were noted here. Were they the first Anna’s to be seen in the Victoria area? By this date of 1944 there were several counts being held in B. C. including Okanagan Landing, Summerland, New Westminster, Crescent Beach and Courtenay-Comox.

Since then we have had counts every year for Victoria. After Finlay had photocopied all of our pre-1960 counts, he turned to Stirling to translate the various old usages of bird names into terms used today. After going over the many species listed for Victoria from the 1924 counts until 1960, Stirling makes the following comments.

To quote Ernest A. Choate, 1973, *The Dictionary of American Bird Names*, “the sheer number of common names of North American birds is overwhelming.” Many local names were used well into the 1950s. In fact, the first real attempt to standardize bird names didn’t come about until 1957, when the *American Ornithologists Union Checklist* appeared with only one common name for each species. Before this, common names for the local subspecies was the rule, such as Harris’ woodpecker for the hairy one and Gairdner’s woodpecker for the downy one. Other local names with prefixes such as Northwestern, California and Rusty should pose no problems for the present day birder. Then there was the use of the hyphen such as “Old-Squaw and sometimes two words, “Old Squaw”. For some reason there was a time when the possessive was dropped — Steller Jay and Lewis Woodpecker. Perhaps the possessive form of

EARLY BIRD NAMES

By David Stirling and Cam Finlay

The list below uses R. Wayne Campbell, 1997 from *British Columbia Birds, A Check List*. Compared to *Christmas Check List* of former time.

Former Names	New Names
Arctic Loon	Pacific loon
Holboell’s Grebe	Red-necked grebe
Baird’s Cormorant	Pelagic cormorant
Violet-green Cormorant	Pelagic cormorant
Northwestern Coast Heron	Great blue heron
Black Brant	Brant
Baldpate	American wigeon
Western Harlequin Duck	Harlequin duck
Mandarin	Mandarin duck
American Scoter	Black scoter
American Goldeneye	Common goldeneye
American Merganser	Common merganser
Marsh Hawk	Northern harrier

Lewis was too difficult.

For several years the *Victoria Naturalist* printed Christmas Count results like this: Gull, Short-billed; Sandpiper, r-back; woodpecker, Pil.; — presumably to save paper. The confusion caused by the use of local common names is, perhaps, only a memory but there will always be name changes. Recently we have seen a few. The towhee that became the Rufous-sided is once again “spotted” and the Pacific Loon that was Arctic is again back to Pacific.

Reading the old bird counts was an interesting project for Stirling. The first European starlings were reported on the Crescent Beach count in 1956, “three flocks flying south”. Lewis’s woodpeckers were reported regularly (this species nested from Victoria north to Comox in the 1940’s and 1950’s) A. R. Davidson, 1957, reported 1,680 Shovelers — 1,529 on Elk-Beaver Lakes and “the same number of coots”. Rufous hummingbirds, reported a few times in Victoria, were more likely Anna’s. Mandarin duck escapees, breeding in Beacon Hill Park, were listed on the count and on old checklists. The subscription to *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* was \$1.50 per year (now it is \$23!) and Christmas Count participants were charged fifty cents each (now \$5)! Finally, it gave Stirling a feeling of nostalgia to see names of the “old timer birders”, many of whom are now, perhaps, chalking up lists of all those extinct species in the “Great Bird Bazaar”.

Former Names	New Names
Goshawk	Northern goshawk
American Rough-legged Hawk	Rough-legged hawk
Sparrow Hawk	American kestrel
Pigeon Hawk	Merlin
Duck Hawk	Peregrine falcon
European Partridge	Gray partridge
Chinese Pheasant	Ring-necked pheasant
Willow Grouse	Ruffed grouse
Hudsonian Curlew	Whimbrel
Purple Sandpiper (VNHS 1944)	Rock sandpiper (most likely)
Aleutian Sandpiper	Rock sandpiper
Red-backed sandpiper	Dunlin

Former Names	New Names
Common Snipe	Wilson’s snipe
Short-billed Gull	Mew gull
California Murre	Common murre
Gairdner’ Woodpecker	Downy woodpecker
Harris’s Woodpecker	Hairy woodpecker
North-western Shrike	Northern shrike
Anthony’s Vireo	Hutton’s vireo
American magpie	Black-billed magpie
Oregon Jay	Gray jay
European Skylark	Sky lark
Common Bushtit	Bush tit
Oregon Chickadee	Chestnut-backed chickadee
Seattle Wren	Bewick’s wren
Western Winter Wren	Winter wren

1998 Christmas Bird Count

Introduction by David Pearce

On December 19, 190 participants took part in the 1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count. Unfortunately we picked the worst weather day of the year with the high of 0 degrees and a steady 80 km/hour wind making it feel extremely cold, especially on the coast. Even so, one of the whale watching boats ventured out but had to return after a few hours when hypothermia began to set in. As a result fewer birds were found by people in the field totalling only 78,595 but this year featured a major campaign to enlist feeder watchers and they added an additional 15,140 birds to the total. The two phone lines at Swan Lake were kept busy for three days as a total of 334 feeder watchers reported their results. The overall species count was fairly good being 142, once again the highest in Canada.

The most exciting event was to add two more species to our CBC list as a Yellow Warbler was found at Swan Lake and a Northern Mockingbird was found at Tower Hill. We have now found 214 species since computerized count figures were first kept in 1957. We recorded 16 record highs for the following species (previous highs are in parenthesis): Greater White-fronted Goose - 39 (28); Hooded Merganser - 564 (546); Western Gull - 18 (12); Rhinoceros Auklet - 39

Former Names	New Names
Long-billed Marsh Wren	Marsh wren
Tule Wren	Marsh wren
Western Golden-crowned Kinglet	Golden-crowned kinglet
Pacific Thrush	Varied thrush
Western Robin	American robin
Alpine Pipit	American pipit
Audubon’s Warbler	Yellow-rumped warbler
Oregon Towhee	Spotted towhee
Rufous-sided Towhee	Spotted towhee
Rusty Song Sparrow	Song sparrow
Puget Sound Sparrow	White-crowned sparrow
Oregon Junco	Dark-eyed junco
California Purple Finch	Purple finch
Northern Pine Siskin	Pine siskin
English Sparrow	House sparrow

(37); Barred Owl - 8 (6); Anna’s Hummingbird - 177 (88); Bushtit - 1,989 (1,578); Golden-crowned Kinglet - 3,394 (3,337); Hermit Thrush - 48 (35); Spotted Towhee - 949 (786); Fox Sparrow - 212 (126); Spotted Towhee - 786 (718); Fox Sparrow - 695 (439); White-throated Sparrow - 13 (9); White-crowned Sparrow - 211 (193); Dark-eyed Junco - 6,356 (5,930); House Finch - 1,973 (1,773) and House Sparrow - 2,882 (2,736). Many of these records were due to the additional birds seen by feeder watchers. There were no record lows.

Other highlights were a Snow Goose at Martindale, a Turkey Vulture in the Highlands, a Northern Goshawk at Triangle Mountain, a Rough-legged Hawk on Mt. Douglas, a Red Phalarope and Cassin’s Auklet off Tower Point, a Violet-green Swallow over Elk Lake, a Harris’ Sparrow at Martindale and 9 Pine Grosbeaks on Jocelyn Hill.

During count week a Mourning Dove was seen in Brentwood, a Tundra Swan at Martindale, a Brown Pelican off Clover Point, a Western Sandpiper off Dallas Road and a Northern Pygmy Owl on Millstream Road.

A compilation of the 1998 count data is presented on the following pages.

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

1. BUTCHART GARDENS/NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

2. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

3. GOLDSTREAM

4. THETIS LAKE/HASTINGS FLATS
5. LANGFORD LAKE

6. ALBERT HEAD - TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN

7. ESQUIMALT LAGOON - MILL HILL

8. ESQUIMALT HABOUR
9. PORTAGE INLET - THE GORGE

10. VICTORIA HARBOUR

11. BEACON HILL

12. OAK BAY

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Red-throated Loon							2	1			1	
Pacific Loon	1					21	4	3		6	8	
Common Loon						6	4	7		2		2
Pied-billed Grebe		5		1	12		3			1	1	
Horned Grebe	1					2	11	1		1	7	4
Red-necked Grebe					1	3	3			10	8	5
Eared Grebe												
Western Grebe						4	82	40		2	1	
Double-crested Cormorant	1	5	11	6	22	24	52	69	45	68	16	4
Brandt's Cormorant						3	1	8		12	180	5
Pelagic Cormorant						2	6	10		18	17	6
Great Blue Heron	3	2	3		1	7	5	48	3		2	
Trumpeter Swan	109			15	2				3			
Mute Swan			2			2	9	7				
Greater White-fronted Goose	8							7				
Snow Goose												
Canada Goose	903		5	167	50	192	272	85	439			
Wood Duck	1								6			
Green-winged Teal	79	9	35	79		21	77		22			
Mallard	278	76	38	14	48	166	244	102	368	132	668	21
Northern Pintail	80			23		18	74	1	52			
Northern Shoveler	5				38		2	1			2	
Gadwall							2		4			
Eurasian Wigeon	3		1			2			1		1	
American Wigeon	342	8	58	32	3	1,132	169	302	139	52	153	15
Canvasback									6			
Ring-necked Duck	61	23		4	50	7	35					
Greater Scaup									40			
Lesser Scaup					1				103			
Harlequin Duck						5		16		16	19	32
Oldsquaw							1			3	12	
Black Scoter						2						
Surf Scoter			31			14	37			5	52	8
White-winged Scoter						10	1					
Common Goldeneye	2		30	8		11	27	442	1	21	10	2
Barrow's Goldeneye	4		73			4						
Bufflehead	34	5	79	6	22	39	175	128	183	49	27	63
Hooded Merganser	2	8	11	22	4	7	22	100	27	46	2	22
Common Merganser	14	1	15	15	22	6				11	17	7
Red-breasted Merganser						12	95	69		77	48	9
Ruddy Duck												
Turkey Vulture		1										
Bald Eagle	22	18	143	4	9	9	7	12	3	6	3	5

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY

14. 10 MILE POINT

15. GORDON HEAD - MOUNT DOUGLAS

16. SWAN LAKE - CEDAR HILL

17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS
18. ELK LAKE - CORDOVA BAY

19. PROSPECT LAKE - QUICKS BOTTOM

20. MARTINDALE - BEAR HILL

21 - 23. OAK BAY ISLANDS

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
	2				2		3		11	
	5	2			2		12		64	
1	2						4		28	
			5	7	22	9	1		67	
2	7	9			11		23		79	
	6						2		38	
					1				1	
	1						2		132	
1		2	8	1	151	43	4	330	863	
	1				1		4		215	
1	12	2			2		9	10	95	
3	4	2	3	1	3	2	6		98	
		6		11		17			163	
									20	
				5			19		39	All time high (previous high 28 in 1997)
							1		1	
	10	70	109	162	411	512	550		3,937	
		6	8						21	
			6	10		47	21		406	
335	50	226	335	491	520	107	183		4,402	
				18	1	8	5		280	
			1		24	25	1		99	
					9	49			64	
			1			1	4		14	
176	3	20	459	84	597	44	476		4,264	
			1		41	2			50	
		2	10	20	280	64	13		569	
					36		8		84	
			3		3				110	
6	4	4					8	2	112	
	10	2			3		32	2	65	
							7		9	
	7	28			39		69	7	297	
	7	2			6		6		32	
5	4	13	10		9		44		639	
						1			82	
35	12	10	29		51	22	113		1,082	
14	16		11	12	210	21	7		564	All time high (previous high 546 in 1992)
10				3	556	25	19		721	
	6	12			18		33	4	383	
			3		3	8			14	
									1	
2	6	14	3	4	8	13	21		312	

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

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11. BEACON HILL

12. OAK BAY

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Northern Harrier						1		1				
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	2	1	1							1	1
Cooper's Hawk		1		1		1			5		5	1
Northern Goshawk						1						
Red-tailed Hawk	12	4	3	5	3	2	5	2	4		1	1
Rough-legged Hawk												
Golden Eagle		1	1									
American Kestrel								1				
Merlin	1		1	2	1		1					
Peregrine Falcon	1	1		1				1				
Ring-necked Pheasant				6								
California Quail	24		2	38	1	38	15		1			29
Virginia Rail												
American Coot	204			29	27	5	22	1	7			11
Black-bellied Plover											2	
Killdeer	82	2	2	6		4	3	3		2	2	5
Black Oystercatcher								2		2	6	12
Spotted Sandpiper						1						
Black Turnstone						5	10	13		7	20	14
Surfbird						9	1				10	
Sanderling							1				12	
Dunlin	9						14					5
Common Snipe	2						1					
Red Phalarope						1						
Mew Gull	3		18			4,300	727	241	1	401	1,630	108
California Gull						3	1					
Herring Gull	1		4							30	7	
Thayer's Gull	3		2		3	75	1		6	8	13	82
Western Gull	1		2			1	2				6	
Glaucous-winged Gull	617	89	2,112	106	136	2,500	103	354	392	298	924	123
Glaucous Gull			1									
Common Murre						28	1	35		1	170	2
Pigeon Guillemot						6					8	4
Marbled Murrelet						2		4		1	1	
Ancient Murrelet						600	13	15			140	5
Cassin's Auklet						1						
Rhinoceros Auklet						2		1		7	1	2
Rock Dove	13			10	11	9	94	57	154	114	105	
Band-tailed Pigeon		11					3	15				
Western Screech-Owl	2											
Great Horned Owl				1		2		1				
Barred Owl	1	1				1					1	
Anna's Hummingbird				1	2	8			1		4	22

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY

14. 10 MILE POINT

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21 - 23. OAK BAY ISLANDS

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
		1	1				2		6	
1		4	1	1	1				15	
3	4	4	3	4	4	2	1		39	
1	2	3	1	1	4	8	7		69	
		1							1	
								1	2	
1	1						2		10	
						1	2		7	
				1					7	
	18	27		15		24	41		273	
1				1					2	
3		1	100	26	542	11	113		1,102	
							17		19	
	6		1	28	1	24	111		282	
1	3	1							27	
	1								2	
	13	4							86	
									20	
							1		14	
							4		32	
			2	1	1		10		17	
									1	
2	12	13	4	3	110		97	2,600	10,270	
1					1		1		7	
		1	4						47	
				45			17		255	
					5	1			18	All time high (previous high 12 in 1989)
92	66	140	247	58	242	158	205	95	9,057	
									1	
							6	900	1,143	
1					1				20	
							2	50	60	
1								234	1,008	
									1	
								26	39	All time high (previous high 37 in 1977)
		15	53	22	2	35	46		740	
		15				5			49	
									2	
					1	2			7	
	1		1			2			8	All time high (previous high 6 in 1993)
34	34	27	13	19	12				177	All time high (previous high 88 in 1997)

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

1. BUTCHART GARDENS/NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

2. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

3. GOLDSTREAM

4. THETIS LAKE/HASTINGS FLATS
5. LANGFORD LAKE

6. ALBERT HEAD - TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN

7. ESQUIMALT LAGOON - MILL HILL

8. ESQUIMALT HABOUR
9. PORTAGE INLET - THE GORGE

10. VICTORIA HARBOUR

11. BEACON HILL

12. OAK BAY

SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Belted Kingfisher	1		1	1		2	2	8		4		
Red-breasted Sapsucker	1	2	1		1		1	1				
Downy Woodpecker	2	9	4	3	12	2	3	1	6	2	4	3
Hairy Woodpecker	1	1	3	3		4						
Northern Flicker	22	26	2	18	12	25	14	10	17	9	12	4
Pileated Woodpecker		3			1	1	1	1				
Eurasian Skylark												
Violet-green Swallow												
Steller's Jay	17	63	13	46	43	55	23	6	17			
Northwestern Crow	569	37	238	61	93	39	79	106	222	167	46	31
Common Raven	115	80	7	24	15	8	6	6			4	
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	167	144	59	90	99	59	73	28	68	39	73	77
Bushtit	4	61		59	20	6	21	18	188	93	107	153
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4	17	4	11	20	16	6	2	15	7	12	14
Brown Creeper		11	6	5	2	87	2	4	1		1	4
Bewick's Wren	3	7		5	8	1	2	1		3		5
Winter Wren	26	88	36	44	14	18	9	8	10	4	16	5
Marsh Wren					2							
American Dipper			4									
Golden-crowned Kinglet	330	854	207	428	124	320	70	20	52	7	68	4
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	18	39	4	14	12	10	8	3	4	1	3	3
Townsend's Solitaire		2										
Hermit Thrush	3	11	9	3	3	1			2	1	1	
American Robin	244	1,425	30	1,970	86	102	92	22	112	51	61	100
Varied Thrush	37	100	15	32	19	65	6	13	4		6	1
Northern Mockingbird						1						
American Pipit	20											
Cedar Waxwing	7	27				6						
Northern Shrike	1						1					
European Starling	497	181	167	390	444	453	220	192	292	167	313	82
Hutton's Vireo				1								
Orange-crowned Warbler												
Yellow Warbler												
Yellow-rumped Warbler												2
Townsend's Warbler											2	
Spotted Towhee	40	47	10	28	53	36	31	12	28	24	12	68
Savannah Sparrow						3	1					
Fox Sparrow	29	18	7	31	28	60	48	7	45	9	14	39
Song Sparrow	109	25	6	22	37	23	29	9	37	48	23	42
Lincoln's Sparrow						3			1			
White-throated Sparrow						1			5	1		3
Golden-crowned Sparrow	34	12	16	28	14	27	28	13	36	10	77	42
White-crowned Sparrow	1				1	8	8		5	2	5	10

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY

14. 10 MILE POINT

15. GORDON HEAD - MOUNT DOUGLAS

16. SWAN LAKE - CEDAR HILL

17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS
18. ELK LAKE - CORDOVA BAY

19. PROSPECT LAKE - QUICKS BOTTOM

20. MARTINDALE - BEAR HILL

21 - 23. OAK BAY ISLANDS

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
4	1				5	2	1		32	
					1	1			9	
9	7	10	12	11	14	13	13		140	
2					1	2	2		19	
9	18	14	18	13	16	28	29		316	
	1				1	3	2		14	
							107		107	
					1				1	
4	44	26	8	10	21	41	26		463	
152	100	990	267	324	2,456	155	438		6,570	
5	5	7		7	14	29	30		362	
213	110	187	92	104	170	101	72		2,025	
369	235	158	154	157	110		76		1,989	All time high (previous high 1,578 in 1993)
17	19	21	30	13	22	29	3		282	
7	3	4	1	1	3	9	12		163	
3	10	3	6	3	3	7	7		77	
15	12	16	4	1	18	33	33		410	
						6	1		9	
									4	
89	33	102	6	5	67	459	149		3,394	All time high (previous high 3,337 in 1992)
7	3	3	9	3	3	14	41		202	
									2	
2	1		2		1	3	5		48	All time high (previous high 35 in 1996)
102	211	112	49	47	127	172	387		5,502	
9	20	18	3	2	14	16	28		408	
									1	New Species
							14		34	
					3		26		69	
						1	1		4	
415	130	259	630	256	367	212	1,270		6,937	
							2		3	
	1						1		2	
			1						1	New Species
							6		8	
									2	
53	86	70	51	41	66	109	84		949	All time high (previous high 786 in 1997)
							10		14	
21	87	36	27	40	31	68	50		695	All time high (previous high 439 in 1997)
17	41	50	45	30	35	75	116		819	
				1		3	12		20	
	1	1			1				13	All time high (previous high 9 in 1994)
26	46	33	56	61	21	22	218		820	
3		14	11	11	12		120		211	All time high (previous high 193 in 1994)

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

1. BUTCHART GARDENS/NORTHERN HIGHLANDS	5. LANGFORD LAKE				9. PORTAGE INLET - THE GORGE							
2. CENTRAL HIGHLANDS	6. ALBERT HEAD - TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN				10. VICTORIA HARBOUR							
3. GOLDSTREAM	7. ESQUIMALT LAGOON - MILL HILL				11. BEACON HILL							
4. THETIS LAKE/HASTINGS FLATS	8. ESQUIMALT HARBOUR				12. OAK BAY							
SPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Harris' Sparrow												
Dark-eyed Junco	519	328	67	290	298	365	257	91	382	155	41	206
Red-winged Blackbird	43	1		7	9	2	22					5
Western Meadowlark												2
Brewer's Blackbird	501			18	50		35					
Brown-headed Cowbird												
Pine Grosbeak		9										
Purple Finch	9	5	14	66	9	34	3	8	29	4		5
House Finch	76	8	6	19	18	15	58	28	150	39	59	83
Pine Siskin	223	140	198	31	209	131	165	14	86	69	35	20
American Goldfinch				1						7		2
Evening Grosbeak												
House Sparrow	32	1	1	71	93	49	53	59	439	429	133	222
TOTAL BIRDS	6,635	4,055	3,819	4,423	2,318	11,375	3,817	2,897	4,269	2,761	5,452	1,874
TOTAL SPECIES	72	54	55	59	55	90	80	67	54	57	70	62

Valentine's Day Couples Count

By Dannie Carsen

We had a great turnout for this year's count, especially by the birds! Between 6 a.m. and 12 noon, 104 species were seen by all participants. The weather was very cool in the morning, especially down in Goldstream Nature House. The sun had appeared and it was warmer by the time Susan and I reached Viaduct, and the ducks were courting. At Martindale, several Western Meadowlarks were singing their spring song from the trees of the L-reservoir. The day flew quickly by as we skimmed the Wood Ducks, Lesser Scaups, Brewer's Blackbirds, and Green-winged Teal from King's Pond. When we arrived at the post-count gathering, we had only seen 68 birds, down from our 73 of last year.

At Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary, we met at 12:00 to tally the results. Many thanks to David Pearce, our judge, who produced a Valentine's Bird List and checked and collated the total count for the day.

The assembled couples told the tall tales of the count. One of the best stories was by Mike Klazek and Susan Colonval who told of a house they were thinking of buying which had a resident Anna's Hummingbird. Each time they

came by, the Anna's greeted them. They are sure this must be a good birder's house! Cathy Reader and Warren Lee sat by their bird feeder for the first hour of a cold morning and picked up tons of good birds!

Some of the best routes were those of Laurie Savard and Paul Levesque who amassed a respectable total of 65 while staying mostly in Victoria and Saanich! Gerry and Gladys Anderson had a very successful route which included starting in North Saanich and doing the airport, Martindale and Island View and ending up at Cattle Point.

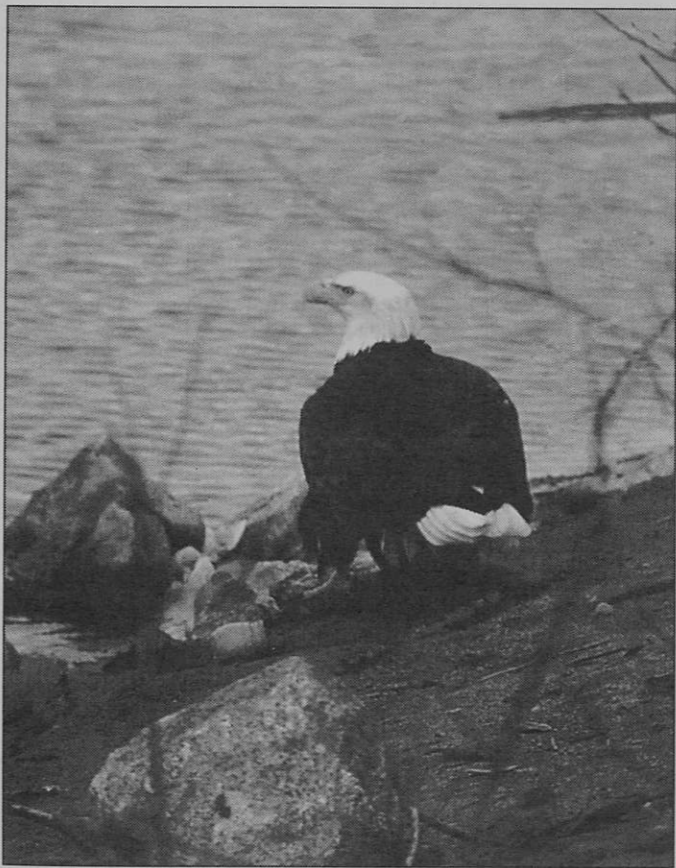
Gerry and Gladys Anderson were the big winners who won the top prize of a romantic dinner for two at Pagliacci's for an impressive 78 species! A special thank you to Howie Siegel who donated the gift certificate for dinner. The second prize of a heart-shaped wine and food basket (camembert, chocolates, artichokes, nectarines and a bottle of Santa Rita Sauvignon Blanc) was won by Gordon and Anne-Marie Hart with a total of 74 species. The third prize of Thurson's *The Nature of Shorebirds*, kindly donated by Bruce Whittington at the Field-Naturalist, was won by Dannie and Susan Carsen with 68 species.

Highlight species included a singing Hutton's Vireo and a Least Sandpiper in North Saanich seen by the Anderson's and an American Tree Sparrow seen by Mike Klazek and Susan Colonval. (Sorry Mike and Susan, further study of the Tree Sparrow suggests it was a masquerading young White-crowned Sparrow. We await the photographs.)

The count was a lot of fun for all concerned and we all look forward to Valentine's day of the new millennium.

1998 Victoria Christmas Bird Count

13. UNIVERSITY - CADBORO BAY					18. ELK LAKE - CORDOVA BAY					
14. 10 MILE POINT					19. PROSPECT LAKE - QUICKS BOTTOM					
15. GORDON HEAD - MOUNT DOUGLAS					20. MARTINDALE - BEAR HILL					
16. SWAN LAKE - CEDAR HILL					21 - 23. OAK BAY ISLANDS					
17. BLENKINSOP - PANAMA FLATS										
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	TOTAL	COMMENTS
<hr/>										
							1		1	
291	393	427	307	223	356	408	952		6,356	All time high (previous high 5,930 in 1993)
6	3	23	24	11	13	32	403		604	
				1			19		22	
	13	65	31				37		750	
				1			14		15	
									9	
2	5	14	12	8	3	6	21		257	
<hr/>										
153	253	250	217	102	144	71	224		1,973	All time high (previous high 1,773 in 1997)
82	93	167	64	48	104	203	106		2,188	
		42							52	
			1				2		3	
209	108	220	362	203	66	16	116		2,882	All time high (previous high 2,736 in 1997)
<hr/>										
3,029	2,429	4,031	3,936	2,793	8,237	3,642	7,683	4,260	93,735	
56	65	64	61	59	78	65	99	12	142	




Bald Eagle at Squamish. Photo: Jonathan Grant

Letters

Sometimes we get so excited about seeing certain birds that we forget about the ethics of birdwatching. To remind all of us, I would like to quote from *Collins Birds of Europe*:

"The closer you are to a bird, the greater your responsibility not to disturb it.... He or she (responsible birdwatcher) should not interfere in any way with any bird's routine for rearing its young, i.e. should not flush it off its nest, or prevent it from feeding its young. If you see a bird hanging around, whether with food in its bill or showing vocal signs of distress, it has young nearby and you should move on at once, even if you have just started a picnic. Nor should you disturb birds once they have gone to roost. In very cold weather, it is especially important not to flush flocks resting either on the ground or on the water, for this makes them use up energy which they will find hard to replace"

K. Calvert



Tuesday, March 9

**VNHS Annual General Meeting
and Natural History Presentation**

Dr. David Duffus presents a slide-illustrated talk: *Flukes and Follicles: Issues Facing Whale Populations on the B.C. Coast.*

1998 Butterfly Counts

By Jeff Gaskin

Victoria's butterfly counts were conducted seven times last year. The areas that were covered stretched from Brentwood Bay in the north to Witty's Lagoon in the south and from Goldstream Park in the west to Oak Bay in the east. The number of participants remained similar to last year with about 80 partaking.

A total of 31 species were located last year. This was down from the year before by only one but unlike last year when two were questionable this year only one was questionable. A Greenish Blue seen on the June count was never confirmed.

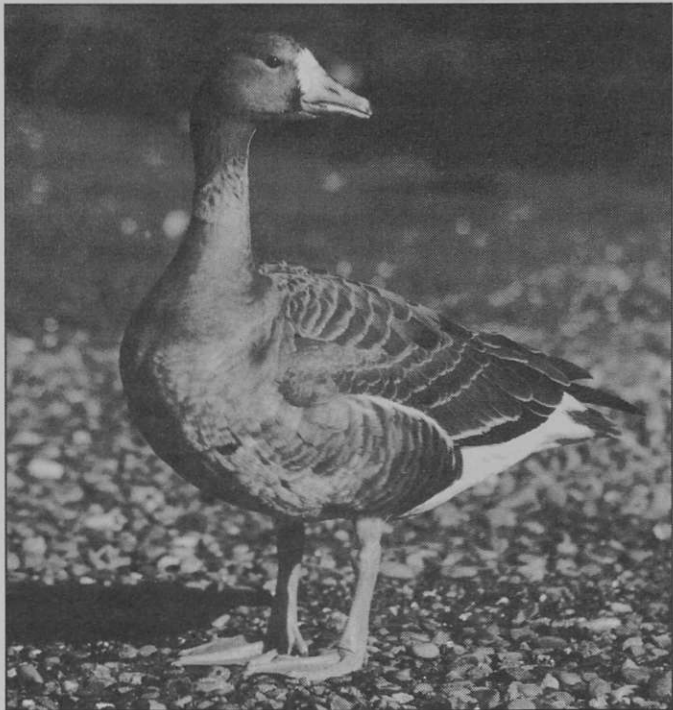
Among the highlights was one Alfalfa Butterfly or Orange Sulphur seen at Ft. Rodd Hill Pk; 3 American Painted Ladies, one Two-banded Checkered Skipper and 3 Green Commas seen in the Highlands on Durrance Rd; and 2 Western Pine Elfins one near Glen Lk; and the other on Mill Hill. Two Silvery Blues, the only ones counted were seen in June near Goldstream Park. Unfortunately one species of butterfly, the Rosner's Hairstreak was missed altogether as its normal range near Goldstream Park and Sooke Lake Road was never covered in May. More Painted Ladies but fewer West Coast Ladies were noted this year and a normally abundant species the Lorquin's Admiral was not nearly as numerous in July as it had been the three previous years. In last year's article I mentioned that the number of Mylitta Crescents were in a downward trend but during the months of July, August, and September the number

of them went straight up. In fact September's count of 196 broke the old record of 129 set in 1995. This is a species which every year starts out slowly but it peaks in number during the last summer.

Many may wonder why all these surveys take place each year. Conservationists are of the opinion that the health of butterfly populations is a measure of how close man has come to the end. We have been persuaded to believe that perfectly manicured lawns and gardens without a weed in sight are the norm and so the use of herbicides and pesticides has escalated to the detriment of butterflies. This is why it is so important to keep track of butterflies.

This year we are again looking for counters. Additional observers are needed almost everywhere. Even if you are unfamiliar with the identification of some of our common species of butterfly, you can help. The Swan Lake Nature Center sells a terrific leaflet of all butterflies of this area. This leaflet is very handy and it should provide much needed help for the novice counter. Areas needing help include: Swan Lake, Christmas Hill, Langford and Glen Lakes, any part of the Galloping Goose trail, the Highlands, Bear Hill, the entire Martindale Valley, Cordova Bay, Thetis Lake Park and Triangle Mountain,

If you would like to help out, even if it's just your own property, you can contact me at 384-1573.



Birds in our Area

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Greater white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*)
January 31, 1999, Esquimalt Lagoon.

These migrating geese are seen in small numbers around the Victoria area. Usually found in the fall and spring but occasionally through the winter months as they feed in wetlands, grassy fields and grainfields. Often observed in the company of Canada geese at Martindale Flats, as well as Esquimalt Lagoon with Graylag geese. The Greater white-fronted goose is a medium sized grey/brown goose with orange legs and feet. The conspicuous white band around the base of the orange/pink bill of the adult gives this goose its name. Irregular black markings are seen on the belly of the mature goose but not found on immatures. During migrating flights these geese are very vocal and fly in a loose V formation. They breed in Alaska and western arctic Canada, with the Pacific Flyway component breed-ing in the Yukon River Delta. Their fall migration route takes them 3,000 km across the Gulf of Alaska to their wintering grounds at the mouth of the Columbia River.

1998 Victoria Butterfly Count Data

Species	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept (1)	Sept (2)	Total
Alfalfa Butterfly							1	1
American Painted Lady			1		1		1	3
Angelwing species						2		2
Anise Swallowtail	17	146	46	58	53	5	4	329
Blues Species				1				1
Brown Elfin	19	14	1					34
Cabbage White	222	740	486	653	713	745	222	3,781
European Skipper			37	1,277	1,368			2,682
Gray Hairstreak	5	10	2	11	9	4		41
Green Comma	1	2			1			4
Greenish Blue			1					1
Hydaspe Fritillary	1		1		3			5
Lady species							2	2
Lorquin's Admiral		1	298	394	144	7	1	845
Milbert's Tortoise Shell		3	3	5	1	1	2	15
Moss' Elfin	2	1						3
Mourning Cloak	22	28	5	2	2	1	2	62
Mylitta Crescentspot	1	28	5	32	30	196	5	297
Painted Lady			20	26	27	59	28	160
Pale Swallowtail		13	104	20	6			143
Pine White			14	627	788	32	5	1,466
Propertius Duskywing	7	24						31
Purplish Copper		5	40	29	308	192	18	592
Red Admiral			4	7	3	3	10	27
Sara's Orange Tip	124	43	4					171
Satyr Comma	62	76	21	14	5	1		179
Silvery Blue			2					2
Skipper species				1	15			16
Spring Azure	172	465	27					664
Sulphur species			4					4
Swallowtail species				1				1
Two-banded Checkered Skipper		1						1
Vancouver Island Ringlet		6	22	3	48	8	1	88
West Coast Lady	1		1	1		4	1	8
Western Pine Elfin	1	1						2
Western Tiger Swallowtail		47	509	294	52	1		903
Woodland Skipper				35	3,382	366	1	3,784
	657	1,654	1,658	3,491	6,959	1,627	304	16,350

Feathered Friends

By Marge Crowther

My husband, Guy, took this picture of a saw-whet owl some time ago, around 5:00 p.m. We don't own a fancy camera—its has just a zoom lens—and we take few pictures at any time.

Guy heard a lot of crows making a big fuss. He walked down to the rear of our property where there is a grove of trees and saw this owl, then came rushing back to the house to get camera and have me accompany him to see the owl.

We approached by degrees, as the owl sat at eye level on a small branch, with his body against the tree trunk. The head was turned sideways to us, and the one visible eye was closed. We crept closer and closer, and I held the tall, dead grasses and small tree branches away as Guy held out the camera at arm's length until it was about three feet from the branch.

At that point, the owl turned its head and opened wide both eyes, as Guy snapped the picture.

We backed away carefully, and the owl didn't fly away. I think we disturbed his daytime snooze!



Saw-whet owl. Photo: Guy Crowther

British Columbia Nest Record Scheme

Join the growing number of volunteer researchers and contribute valuable information on the breeding biology of birds through British Columbia by sending in nest cards to the BCNRS. This system was established in 1955 by graduate students at the University of British Columbia. Today it is operated by the WBT Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia and jointly supported by the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, industry, and provincial and federal governments. The BCNRS is the longest-running cooperative program in the province and it is the largest and most active nest record program in the country. 1998 was our best year ever! Over 500 participants submitted nearly 7,000 cards representing over 240 species. And nearly 25% of the province was covered with southeastern Vancouver Island, the Creston and Okanagan valleys, Cariboo-Chilcotin region,

Peace River area, and Queen Charlotte Islands best represented. Again, we are encouraging naturalists and citizens to record information on nests and broods they find during their travels around the province in 1999.

Prior experience is not required. All participants will receive a copy of the 1999 annual BCNRS report. A "How To" Nest Record Scheme Manual and a copy of the 43rd Annual Report (1998) are still available to new participants.

If you want to contribute to this important project please request cards from:

British Columbia Nest Records Scheme
P.O. Box 6218, Station C
Victoria, B.C.
V8P 5L5

Chester Peter (Ches) Lyons (1915-1998)

Naturalist, photographer, author, Audubon wildlife film lecturer, world traveler, raconteur

By David Stirling

"See that rocky hill sticking up above the cactus. Let's see what's on the other side. Perhaps there is a good place to camp." That was Ches, always seeking that elusive scene beyond the next hill or around the next bend. Ches was an indefatigable traveler. I think he was happiest when, with his Chinook camper van, he was exploring the back-country trails of Oregon and the dusty tracks of Mexico. Always in search of new vistas, wild flowers, wildlife and local characters. He loved the Earth and all its manifestations. He felt perfectly secure while camped overnight on a sandy pad beneath the saguaros in Arizona or in a glade under the pines in the Sierra Madre, with only the wild music of coyotes and the lonely calls of Whip-poor-wills for company. Although Ches frequently travelled alone, he always welcomed like-minded companions to share his adventures. Many B.C. naturalists have fond memories of travels with Ches.

Ches was a compulsive observer and a tireless note-taker. His early travels in British Columbia resulted in his landmark publication, *Trees, Shrubs, and Flowers to Know in British Columbia*, a popular introductory guide to the flora of the province. His Milestones series (*The Mighty Fraser*, *Ogopogo Land* and *Vancouver Island*) became the traveler's guide to the history, geology and natural history throughout southern B.C.

When Ches was four years old the Lyons family moved from Saskatchewan to Penticton. Perhaps a boyhood spent roaming the sagebrush flats and pine forests of the beautiful Okanagan hills helped to foster his abiding interest in the outdoors. After graduating from UBC with a degree in forest engineering, he went to work for the B.C. Forest Service. A few years later he transferred to the newly created Parks Branch. These were the Homeric years in the growing provincial parks system. Ches was involved in the establishment of Tweedsmuir and Manning parks and later had a key role in the restoration of Barkerville, the Cariboo gold rush town and now a major tourist attraction.

After twenty years with Parks, Ches left to become a freelance photographer and lecturer on the National Audubon Society's Wildlife Films circuit. In summer he traveled with his 16mm movie camera from B.C. to Mexico and from the UK to the South Pacific recording his adventures on film for his winter presentations to audiences across Canada and the United States. The coming of the TV nature shows marked the demise of the Audubon Wildlife movies. Ches now began a series of CBC Television shows promoting British Columbia's parks.

His next venture was organizing and leading his own

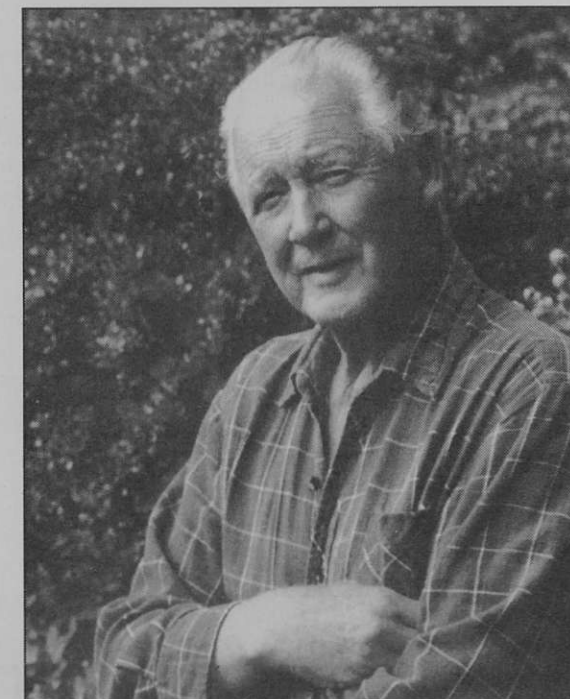


Photo: Bill Merilees

nature tours to Mexico. Later he teamed up with a Vancouver based company, GoldenEye World Travel, specializing in nature tours and "off the beaten track travel." Ches became one of the top travel managers in charge of tour groups to all corners of the world. At this time he was invited to join the prestigious Explorers Club and the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists honoured him with their "Outstanding Service Award."

Recently, Ches, with Bill Merilees, had been engaged in the massive task of revising *Trees, Shrubs and Flowers*, which was finally released in 1995. Ches had four other popular botany books in preparation at the time of his death.

Ches died while on holiday in Hawaii on December 20, 1998. His death came as a shock to his many friends. It seemed as though he would forever be travelling and promoting interest in natural history—and in a sense, through his publications, he will. He will be missed.

REMEMBERING CHES LYONS

You are invited to attend a spring gathering on
Sunday, April 11, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
at the **Freeman King Nature House**
(visitor centre) in **Goldstream Provincial Park**.

From the VNHS Mailbox

By Bruce Whittington

Bird Studies Canada invites applications from young birders who are interested in pursuing an education in biology, to attend the **Young Ornithologists Workshop** at the Long Point Bird Observatory. Birders must be between the ages of 13 and 18 to qualify for the subsidized one week August workshop.

The **B.C. Environmental Network (BCEN)** holds its 1999 Annual General Meeting and 20th Anniversary Celebration from April 9-11, at Camp Howdy in Port Moody. The theme of the workshops is "Broadening the Agenda"; passing the message of a sustainable lifestyle to a larger audience.

The **Marine Ecology Station in Cowichan Bay** has just issued its list of courses and programs for the summer of 1999. Check the website at <http://mareco.org>, or call 250-748-4522.

The **Friends of Jasper National Park** offer a varied program of natural history courses of about three days' duration. Leaders such as Ben Gadd and Jim Butler will be

familiar to naturalists. There is even a course with wheel-chair accessible field trips. The **North Cascades Institute** in Washington state continues to send us several copies of its tempting calendar of programs. You could build an interesting vacation around some of these.

We have received a sample issue of *Wildflower* magazine. It's a Canadian publication in its 14th year; if you'd like a look let us know.

For details on any of these items, contact Bruce Whittington.

Volunteer Notes:

Marie O'Shaughnessy, VNHS Publicity Chair, would like to thank her dedicated group of volunteers: Anna Young, Rick Schortinghuis, Kevin Slagboom, and Bev Glover.



Notice of Fee Increase

Notice is hereby given to all VNHS members that the Board of Directors proposes a motion at the AGM on March 9 to increase subscription rates in line with inflation and the increased cost of providing membership services. New rates will be as follows:

Family \$30	increase to \$35
Regular \$25	increase to \$30
Senior \$24	increase to \$25
Junior subscriber \$12	change to Student subscriber \$20

The change in category of the last membership rate reflects the current and potential levels of membership within the Society. Interest in the Society is very strong within the student body at UVic and a special membership category will attract more student members.

Note: Reduced rate subscribers do not receive FBCN membership with their VNHS membership

Welcome to New Members

NOVEMBER

Tom and Ann Widdowson
of West Saanich Road
are interested in plants, field trips and travel

Iain Higgins and family
of Garnet Road

Cliff McAuley
of Hansen Avenue

Rod King
of Great Pacific Adventures

Roland Decosse
of Beach Drive
likes birding

DECEMBER

Anthony Neil Hamilton
of Wickow Street
likes bears

John McKinnon
of McNeil Avenue
enjoys birding

Jennifer and Bernard Emms
of Second Street

Merrilee Hoen
of Buckingham Place
lists biodiversity, ecological conservation and restoration and native plants in the garden as interests

Anne Gardner
of Harbour Road
is interested in birding and natural history

Adam Taylor
of Collinson Street
is interested in everything really but birding and marine specifically

Gerhardt Lepp
of Cedar Ridge Drive

Gerrit and Elber Gerritsen
of Bow Road
are interested in nature in general and birds in particular

Carolyn and Michael Hoebel
of Galiano Island

JANUARY

Anne and David Bartley
of Naomi Place
enjoy bird watching and information on birds etc.

Steven Hodder
of Richardson Street
likes birding

Susan Martin
of Poplar Avenue
is interested in birding, writing and photography

Sarah Richardson
lists ethnobotany, biology...everything! as interests

Moralea Milne
of William Head Road
is interested in birds and native plants — new to both

Michael and Doreen Dyson
of McKenzie Avenue

Valerie Kent
of Garnet Road
enjoys outings, lectures and is interested in conservation

Sandra Lindsay
of Loenholm Road

Chris Daimont
of Barkley Terrace
is interested in all things living

Frank and Mary Jane Elkins
of Hornby Island
enjoy birds and sea life

Gerry and Maureen Glaum
of Bethany Place
are mostly interested in birds

Donna Ogden
of Michigan Street
lists birding, botany, conservation, streams and habitat restoration as interests

Michael and Tricia Smith
of Montrose Avenue

Pauline Landry and Brian Finn
of York Place
enjoy exploring new areas

Nicole Allarie
of Linden Avenue
is interested in marine life and herbs

Tom Austin and family
of Taurus Road
are interested in birdwatching and hiking

Virginia Youens
of Seacroft Place
likes the outdoors, gardening, travel and cooking

Catherine Fryer
Victoria, BC

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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 calender listings. Telephone the VNHS Events Tape at 479-2054 for further information and updates.

NOTICE: We would like to encourage everyone to attend those meetings which are of interest to them but especially the **Natural History Presentations**. The volunteers and speakers at these meetings work hard to provide an entertaining and informative evening and we should all show our appreciation by coming to as many as possible.

MARCH EVENTS

Tuesday, March 2
VNHS Directors Meeting
7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

Saturday, March 6
Native Plant Symposium
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Elliott Building Lecture Wing, UVic
This annual event is sponsored by the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group. Scheduled are presentations on native plant gardening, restoration, and more. Tickets at The Field-Naturalist, Dig This, Swan Lake, and the UVic SUB. Always a great event.

Tuesday, March 9
VNHS Annual General Meeting and Natural History Presentation
All members are encouraged to attend the 1999 Annual General Meeting. Topics to be discussed will include a motion to increase membership dues, including a brief overview of the financial situation, election of new directors and the President's Annual report
Our guest speaker at the AGM will be **Dr. David Duffus**, a professor in the Geography Department at the University of Victoria who specializes in marine areas. He will present a slide-illustrated talk titled: *Flukes and Follies: Issues Facing Whale Populations on the B.C. Coast*. Humans have once again become intimately interested in the comings and goings of cetaceans. Several issues are looming for whales of the B.C. coast and three of them will be brought to light in this presentation. First on the agenda is the rapidly growing whale-watching industry and how it affects whales, and people. Second is the prospect of aboriginal whaling; what do we see when we strip away the rhetoric and posturing? Third, and perhaps more important, how do large scale ecological changes in ocean temperature and productivity patterns impact cetaceans; in other words, what we do not know may hurt us. These three areas cover a wide range of scientific and social

issues that illuminate the interconnected nature of coastal cetaceans and their people. Room 159, Begbie Building, University of Victoria, 7:30 p.m. meeting, 8:00 p.m. presentation.

Sunday, March 14
Birding at Witty's Lagoon
Roy Prior leads this late-winter walk in one of the CRD's most diverse nature parks. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Helmcken Park'n' Ride for carpooling, or at the park entrance on Metchosin Road at 8:45. Roy is game to bird through lunch so bring one with you.

Tuesday, March 16
Botany Night:
Stan Buxcey: Wildflowers of western Australia
Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 20
Birding at Rithet's Bog
Celebrate the first day of spring by joining Birders' Night coordinator **Bryan Gates** in a search for early migrants. There should be swallows around, and perhaps the first Rufous Hummingbirds, returning to spar with the resident Anna's Hummers. Meet at 8:00 a.m. Parking is easy along Dalewood, just off Chatterton Way, in the northwest corner of the bog.

Wednesday, March 24
Birders' Night
Mystery Murrelets with Anna Young
This slide-illustrated talk will describe recent findings from local studies of the secretive Marbled Murrelet. 7:30 PM, Begbie 159, UVIC. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend, a novice birder, your binocular and a coffee cup

Saturday, March 27
Birding Island View Beach
Join **Darren Copley** and other VNHS naturalists for this morning of natural history. We'll meet at the Island View Beach parking lot and discover a little bit about this jewel of a regional park and then teach you the basics of being a good naturalist. Members should bring out their non-member friends so they can see what we do in our spare time. Highlights should include dozens of species of waterfowl as well as good chances of seeing birds of prey, possibly even a Short-Eared Owl. Marine mammals may be visible as well as some of our early returning songbirds. If all else fails we'll spend more time looking at the plants and other less mobile life that have made their homes in this unique sandy habitat. Meet at the Island View Parking lot at 9:00 am, bring decent footwear, binoculars if you have them, and a non-member friend. This trip will be open to the public as well.

Monday, March 29
Marine Night
Pincushions, Pens, and Perch
Phil Lambert, Curator of Invertebrates, Royal BC Museum, will present an illustrated talk about underwater life from Race Rocks to Saanich Inlet. Glimpse the variety of form, colour and behaviour that make the area around Victoria a mecca for scuba divers. 7:30 pm at Swan Lake Nature Centre.

APRIL EVENTS

Tuesday, April 6
VNHS Directors Meeting
7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

Saturday, April 3
Birds of the Waterfront
Ron Bate knows the waterfront like the back of his hand, and here is an opportunity to look for those birds on the move this spring. Meet at the base of the Ogden Point Breakwater at 8:30 a.m. Birders will likely carpool to other waterfront hotspots. For information call Ron at 386-1264.

April 9, 10, and 11
Brant Festival
Once again, people will gather in the Parksville-Qualicum area to celebrate the return of the migrating Brant geese. There is something for everyone, with exhibitions of wildlife art, photography, and carving, public programs and wildlife viewing, and the Big Day Birding event. It's a great excuse for a weekend away, at off-season rates, too. Check out the web site: www.island.net/~bfest/ or call 250-752-9171.

Tuesday, April 13
Natural History Presentation
Snags in the City
7:30 p.m., Room 159, Begbie Building, UVic
It makes sense that it takes longer to produce a dead tree than it does to produce a live one, and these dead and dying trees are essential components in a healthy ecosystem. Known also as wildlife trees, they add immeasurably to the biodiversity of a habitat. **Andrew MacDonald's** lively illustrated talk introduces the species which use wildlife trees, and deals with ways to assess these trees, and incorporate them safely into our gardens, parks, and other public spaces.

April 17 and 18
Swan Lake Native Plant Sale
This annual event also features workshops and displays. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. both days. There is more information on page 12.

Saturday, April 17
Spring Wildflowers at Cowichan Lake
Marilyn Lambert leads this trip in search of pink fawn lilies and wild ginger, as well as good displays of more common species. There is a limit of twelve participants; call Marilyn at 477-5922 for details.

Sunday, April 18
Hike Jocelyn Hill for the Birds and Wildflowers
This hike is just for those of you who can't decide which you like better, the birds or the trees (wildflowers doesn't rhyme with bees). Join botanist extraordinaire **Carrina Maslovat** and avid birder **Rick Schortinghuis** for a hike you won't forget. Meet at the Lone Tree Hill Parking lot at 8:00 a.m. and bring a lunch, light rain gear, and decent footwear. For more information you can call Carrina (592-2733) or Rick (391-1776).

Tuesday, April 20
Botany Night
Saanich Peninsula 140 years ago
With **Robert Thompson** and **Bob Maxwell**. Analysis of vegetation from an old Hudson Bay map of Saanich. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

April 23-25
Annual General Meeting of the Native Plant Society of British Columbia in Vancouver
For more details telephone **Adolf Ceska**, Phone: 250-356-7855 (work), 250-477-1211 (home. Fax: 250-387-2733 (work)

Sunday, April 25
Birding in Beautiful Downtown Deep Cove
The quiet lanes of Deep Cove are bordered by tangled hedgerows and mature gardens, and over the years many unusual birds have been seen here. For the last year or two, one or two Blue Jays have been regular, and perhaps even a hybrid. **Barbara Begg** knows the area well, and will also include a beach stop to add even more variety to the species list. Turn left off West Saanich Road on Downey Road, then left at Madrona Drive. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the beach access at the corner of Madrona and Norris Rd. For information call Barb at 656-5296.

Monday, April 26
Marine Night
Shorekeepers: Assessing the Health of our Coastline
The Marine Group of the VNHS was originally formed with the idea of surveying the shorelines around Victoria to gather baseline information about animals and plants living there. **Linda Nichol** will speak to us about Shorekeepers, a program designed to guide volunteers through the steps in gathering such information. We will discuss the possibility of testing the method on a field trip in May or June. 7:30 pm Swan Lake Nature Centre.

Wednesday, April 28
Birders' Night
Ptarmigans and Tpolar Bears — Early Winter in Churchill, with **Bryan Gates**
Our regular host will become the speaker and present a slide-illustrated talk on the birds and bears around Manitoba's Hudson Bay port town. 7:30 PM, Begbie 159, UVIC. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend, a novice birder, your binocular and a coffee cup.

April 29 - May 2
British Columbia botanists will meet with Washington State botanists in a joint meeting (BOTANY BC + BotWA) on Salt Spring Island Details are being finalized telephone **Adolf Ceska**, Phone: 250-356-7855 (work), 477-1211 (home) Fax: 387-2733 (w).

EXPIRE: Dec-99

Philip & Marilyn Lambert
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