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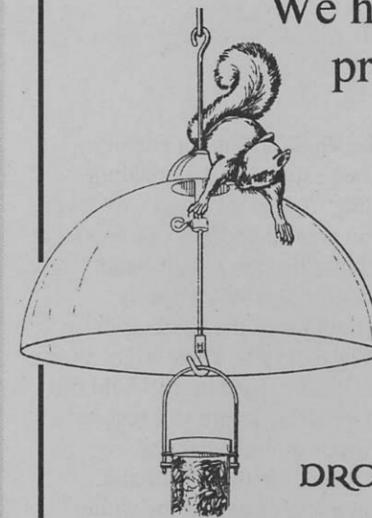
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COVER PHOTO

Cooper's Hawk by Andrew C. Stewart

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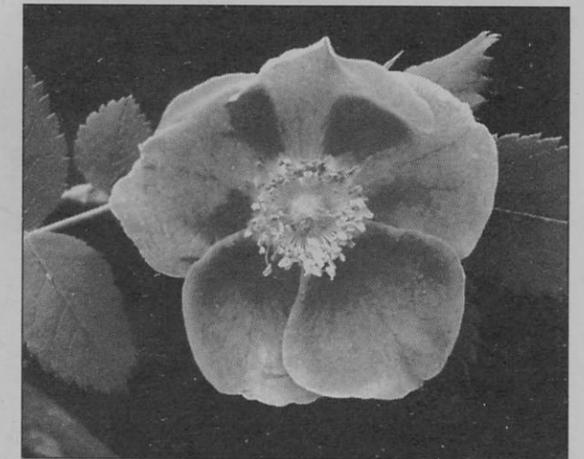
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A Tale of Two Hawks

By Andrew C. Stewart

As many members of the Victoria Natural History Society know, I have been studying the breeding ecology of urban-nesting Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*) in the Greater Victoria area since 1994. An important component of this research has been to colour-band these birds of prey at their nest sites. In 1997, I briefly reported on some preliminary findings of the banding in *The Victoria Naturalist* (see Stewart 1997). Three years later, many of the patterns evident in these early data still hold true today. For example, male Cooper's Hawks are still regularly observed in the study area on a year-round basis and frequently near bird feeding stations. On the other hand, females are seldom observed in this area during the winter period and only rarely near feeders. Females also disperse much greater distances from their natal nests than do males. However, my early speculation that this urban population is non-migratory has been somewhat tempered by two band returns from central Washington and western Nevada. These latter records now indicate that at least a few individuals migrate south in winter.

Over 400 Cooper's Hawks have been colour-banded since I began using these anodized aluminum bands in 1996. Thanks to a high level of public interest, I have received over 250 sighting reports of these marked hawks. Using this information, it is now possible to gain some insight into the life history of this interesting raptor. In this article I feature the re-sighting data for two of these hawks.

Black 0 over C

On 26 June 1996, I banded 5 nestling Cooper's Hawks at a nest site near Mountjoy Avenue ① (see map) in Oak Bay. The youngest member of this brood appeared to be sick with some sort of respiratory problem and I gave him little chance of surviving. However, black "0 over C" was clearly a survivor and successfully fledged along with his 4 nest-mates. I last saw him in the vicinity of the nest on 15 July, but he probably remained in the area, being fed by his parents, until early August.

He was not seen again until 3 May 1997, when Bob

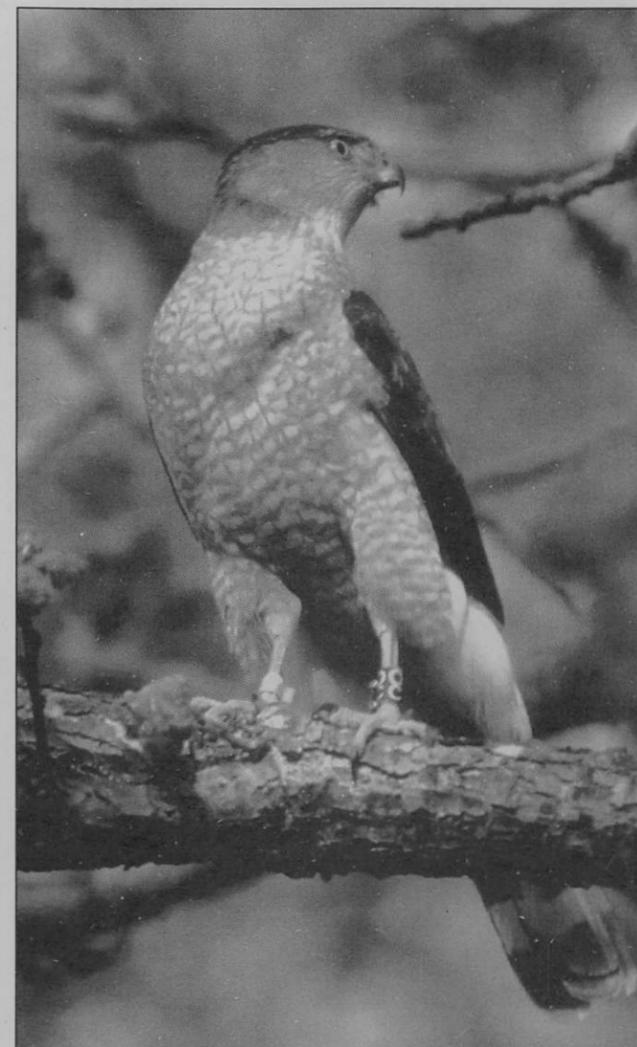


Fig. 1. In 1998, black "0 over C" nested as a 2 year old adult in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria. Photo: 26 April 1998, Andrew C. Stewart.

Chappell observed him catch a small bird in a shrub thicket near the Princess Mary Restaurant ② in Victoria. This and later sightings would suggest he had established his territory in this downtown region of Victoria.

The next sighting came later that year on 27 August when office colleague Laura Darling reported that "0 over C" was sitting outside her office window at 780 Blanshard Street ③. When I went to have a look, there he was sitting in a tree eating a freshly caught House Sparrow. Although healthy looking, he had a decidedly unkempt appearance because he was halfway through a moult from juvenile into adult plumage. The following spring on 30 March 1998, Mark Nyhof discovered him busily constructing a nest with an unbanded adult female in Beacon Hill Park ④. Nest building continued well into next month and on 26 April I managed to get a photograph of him near his nest (Fig. 1). On 21 May, Bill Mackie climbed the nest for me and counted a clutch of 5 eggs. We returned later on 23 June and banded 4

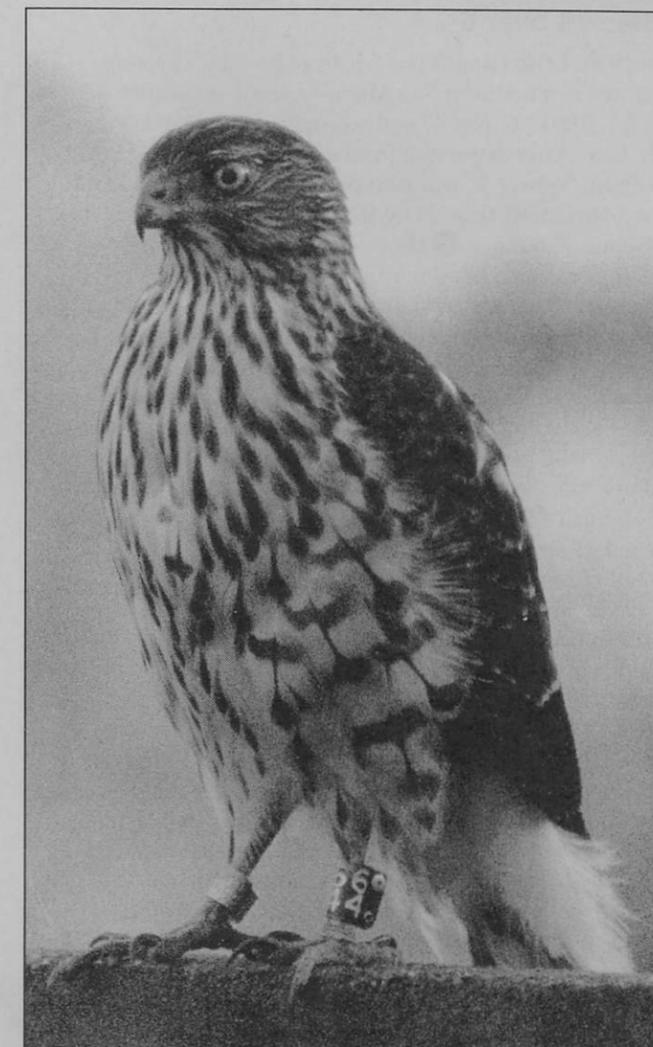
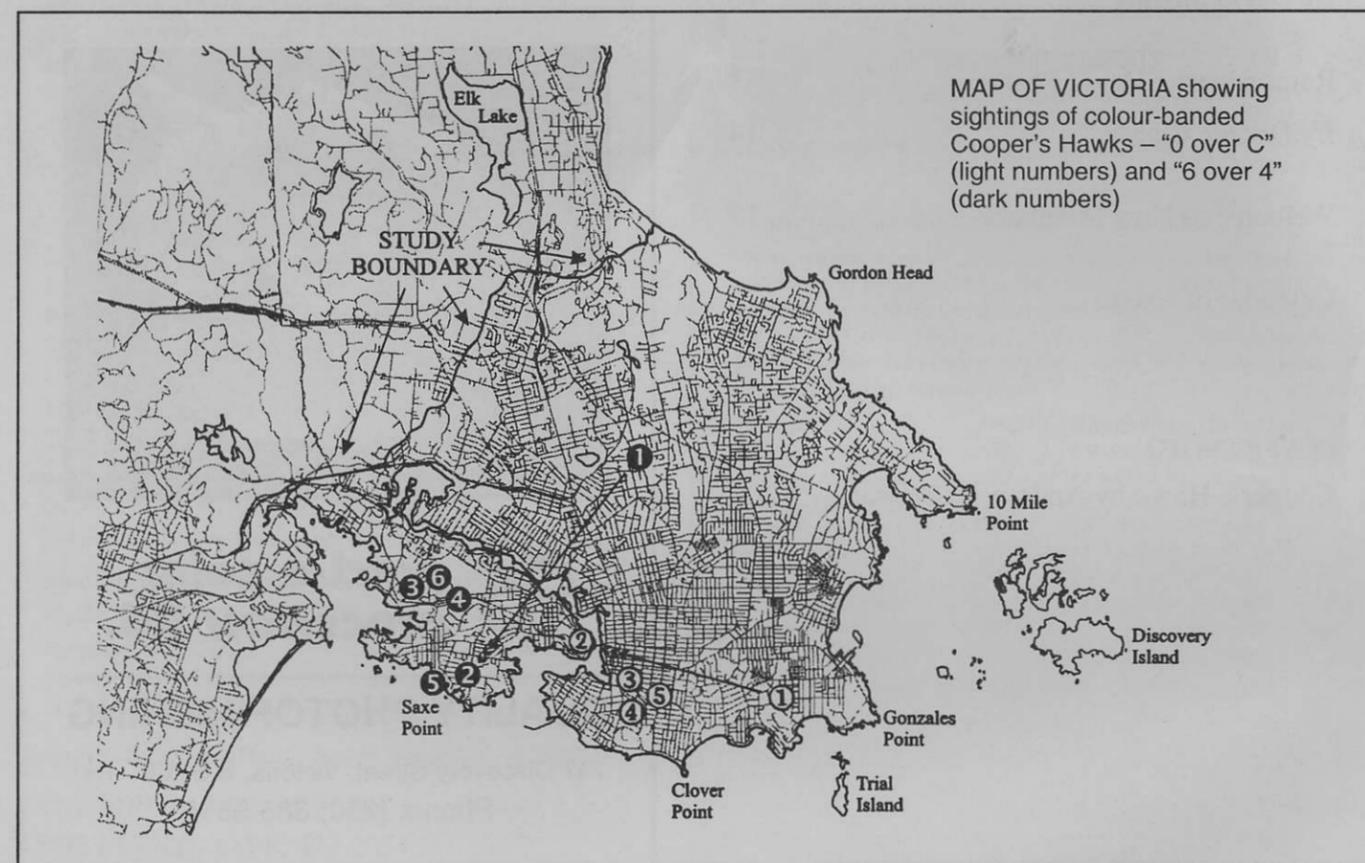


Fig. 2. Black "6 over 4", shown here in juvenile plumage, was observed at Bewdley Ave, Esquimalt from late 1996 through early 1997. Photo: 7 Nov. 1996, Bob Chappell.

nestlings. The nest site selected by "0 over C" was located only 3 km away from his natal nest in Oak Bay.

The following spring "0 over C" returned to the Beacon Hill nest site ④ and I observed him several times between 14 March and 11 April 1999. On the last date he was beginning a new nest with an unbanded adult female, probably the same mate as in 1998 – but unfortunately tragedy was to strike. On 17 April I received a call from Kipp Parker that "0 over C" was at the Wild Arc rehabilitation centre. He had been found with a broken wing near the intersection of Cook Street and Fairfield Road ⑤. The cause of his injuries were unknown but it seems likely he was struck by a vehicle while flying across the road, possibly while pursuing prey. Unfortunately for "0 over C", his injuries were very severe and he had to be euthanized. As for his mate, she recruited a replacement mate within a matter of days and successfully nested in the park.



Black 4 over 6

In 1996, I also banded another large brood of 5 young located in a nest near San Marino Avenue in Saanich ① (see map). Black "6 over 4" and nest-mates were banded on 21 June. After dispersing from this site sometime in early August, "6 over 4" was next observed and photographed on 7 November (Fig. 2) by Bob Chappell at 1153 Bewdley Avenue, Esquimalt ② (Bob identified this hawk here on 5 more occasions, last reporting him on 29 January 1997). Thus it appeared that "6 over 4" had begun to occupy a territory located about 6 km southwest of his natal nest.

He was not seen again until the following autumn when he was observed on 14 November 1997 by Bud Henning at 850 Parklands Drive, Esquimalt ③. When Bud saw him, "6 over 4" had transformed into his full adult plumage. Shortly afterwards, he was observed nearby at 1135 Colville Road, Esquimalt ④ by Lois Seddon. Lois saw him in her yard on 3 and 31 December.

I observed him next the following spring on 10 May 1998 at Saxe Point Park, Esquimalt ⑤. (Here he was involved in early morning courtship calling, clearly indicating his intent to nest in this park. Although he had no mate when I saw him, Mark Nyhof had earlier observed an adult male, most likely "6 over 4", courting and nest building with an immature female at this location on 1 April. Unfortunately this female did not stay with him and in 1998 there was to be no Cooper's Hawk nest in Saxe Point Park. Bud Henning saw him again at Parklands Drive ③ (on 1 December).

On 31 March 1999, I once again encountered "6 over 4", but this time on Department of National Defence (DND) lands near the Gorge Vale golf course ⑥. (Here I found him courting an unbanded adult female and this time she would remain to nest. The new nest site chosen by "6 over 4" was located about 2 km north of Saxe Point Park and about 4.7 km southwest of his natal nest. I continued to monitor the DND site and on 25 June, with the assistance of Dr. Bob Rosenfield visiting from the University of Wisconsin, we caught "6 over 4" (Fig. 3) and his mate. They were both captured unharmed in a mist net using a live Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) as the lure. Our purpose for capturing this breeding pair was to collect weight and measurement data, as well as to colour-band the female – she is now known to me as red "4 over H". On 29 June, Bill Mackie and I returned to the nest and banded the solitary male nestling – black "7 over Y".

Since the 1999 nesting season, Bud Henning has seen "6 over 4" on 2 more occasions (7 September and 26 October) back at his Parklands Drive yard ③. Unlike "0 over C", the story of "6 over 4" continues and should he survive another winter, he will likely return his DND nest site. I can hardly wait until this spring to find out if he made it!

Acknowledgements

I thank Mark Nyhof, Bob Chappell, Bud Henning, Lois Seddon, Laura Darling, and the many other Victoria

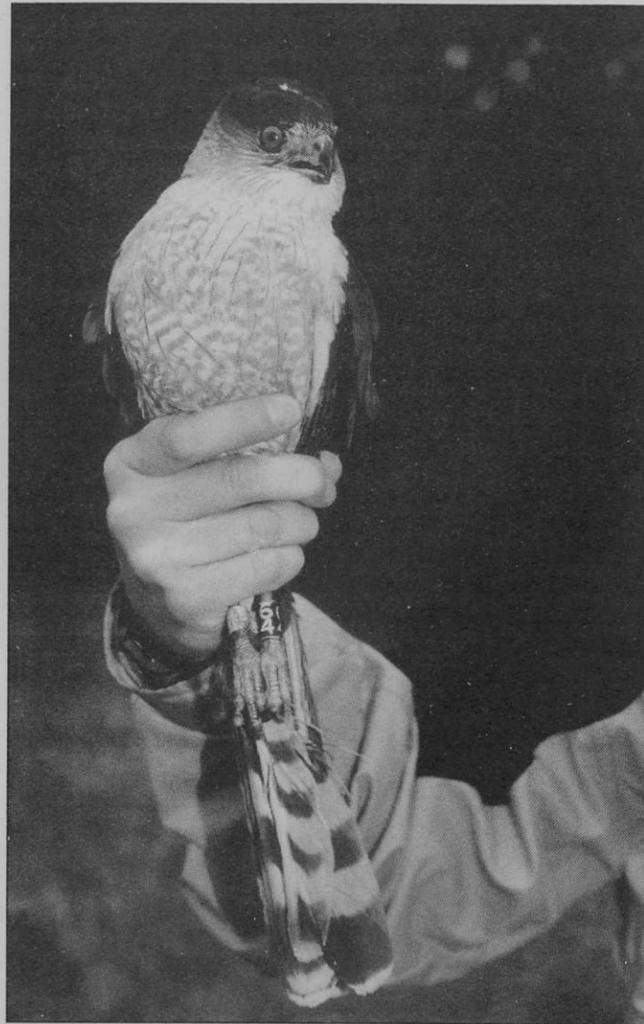


Fig. 3. Black "6 over 4" as a 3 year old adult. He and his mate were captured by the author at their DND nest site in Esquimalt. Note the characteristic black cap and white terminal tail band. Photo: 25 June 1999, Andrew C. Stewart.

naturalists who reported their hawk observations to me over the past four years. I am especially indebted to the late William (Bill) Scott Mackie who tragically passed away this October. Without Bill's exceptional climbing skills these past 5 years, nothing I have reported here would have been possible. Financial support for this study was provided by the British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Public Conservation Assistance Fund, Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia, and the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund of Bird Studies Canada.

Literature Cited

Stewart, A. C. 1997. Colour-band sighting report – urban Cooper's Hawk study. *Victoria Naturalist* 53.5:7-9.

Sky Lark Habitat at the Victoria International Airport

By Barbara Begg

To compensate for the loss of a field previously well utilized by Sky Larks, the Victoria Airport Authority, (VAA), in conjunction with the Victoria Natural History Society, (VNHS), is rehabilitating the west pasture, south of Willingdon Road, hopefully to attract Sky Larks to that location again.

The field sacrificed for vehicles is southwest of the terminal. Sky Larks likely nested at the site, used it heavily for foraging, and the birds were easily viewed there by visiting birders. Before the proposed expansion of a parking lot westward from the existing rental car lot, the VAA sought input from an environmental consultant. Upon inspecting the field, the consultant noted that it appeared to be "just an empty field", but fortunately checked further. His phone call to Bruce Whittington at The Field Naturalist initiated the involvement of the VNHS. The author was contacted and gathered together data collected over the years on Sky Lark numbers, distribution, habitat preferences, and their unknowing contribution to the economy in the form of hundreds of visiting birders, and presented it to the consultant. He in turn recommended mitigation for the loss of the field. Terry Stewart, of the VAA, was very receptive to the idea and experienced with the concept, having been involved in environmental restoration and the creation of habitat outside the Vancouver International Airport when a new runway was built there. An ad hoc committee of VNHS members was formed to offer suggestions on habitat management and to supply information for signs to be placed around the edges of "the Sky Lark field". Members are Jerry Anderson, (also on the airport environmental advisory committee), Barbara Begg, David Stirling, Bryan Gates, and Hank VanderPol.

In the last few years the character of the field being rehabilitated has been altered a number of times. When it was cut once a year for hay, but not heavily managed, it was suitable for Sky Larks. Then farming practices changed and the field was cut for silage two or three times a season, irrigated regularly, and weedy growth was discouraged, all detrimental to Sky Lark ecology. Next the field was fenced and a small herd of dairy cows was introduced. The land became weedy, likely contained more insect life, and was rougher – the Sky Larks returned in force, to nest in season and forage year-round. The next phase discouraged use by Sky Larks. After a couple of years with the field uncut, and the dairy herd not large enough to keep the growth short, the pasture became too thatched and soddy – the Sky Larks deserted. (A larger number of cows would increase the odds of nests being trampled.)

To create more favourable conditions for Sky Larks grass will be cut once or twice a year. Some longer grass should be



Photo: Barbara Begg

left around the periphery and under the Garry Oak trees for Savannah Sparrows which also nest there. It is hoped to attain a mix of grasses and weeds, which should be allowed to go to seed, a few open, gravelly areas for the provision of grit, and a healthy population of insects. Better drainage of the area would be helpful also, as Sky Larks, being upland birds, studiously avoid water, even in its frozen state. (One winter I watched Sky Larks and American Pipits foraging together near a small, frozen puddle. The pipits regularly walked across the ice, but the Sky Larks always went around.) By eliminating standing water in the field, the occurrence of flocks of puddle ducks should be lessened. A mix of airplanes and large birds or flocks of birds is not a good combination.

Use of the land by local farmers will likely continue, but with more management by the VAA for Sky Larks and to discourage waterfowl. The population of Sky Larks on the Saanich Peninsula is roughly 150 birds, and though it is an introduced species, in such reduced numbers it has no discernible adverse affect on native species or crops. Problem birds for airplanes are mostly gulls, waterfowl and flocks of smaller birds such as starlings and shorebirds, not Sky Larks.

This small corner of southern Vancouver Island is the only reliable location in North America to see Sky Larks, and to enjoy their lovely song.

Some recent articles on Sky Larks: *The Victoria Naturalist*, March/April 1989, September/October, 1990, and July/August 1995.

Victoria's Very Own Bird Observatory

By David Allinson

Bird observatories provide opportunities to advance and encourage a wider understanding, appreciation and conservation of wild birds and their habitats.

The Rocky Point Bird Observatory (RPBO) was established in 1994 by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and local volunteers. The site is located on the grounds of the Rocky Point Ammunition Dump of the Department of National Defense (DND) in Metchosin. Activities consist largely of bird banding and census methods to track the movements of migratory land birds on southern Vancouver Island. However, observations of species from all bird families are recorded. The unique topography here at the southern tip of Vancouver Island serves as a migratory stopover and staging area for many species.

Bird banding consists of fine, nylon "mist" nets arranged in habitat where birds migrate. The birds are carefully extracted and processed at a small field station. A small, numbered US Fish and Wildlife/CWS aluminum band is placed on the right leg. The bird's age, sex, fat, measurements, and weight are also recorded before it is released.

A typical day at RPBO consists of three main parts: 1) ten standardized nets open daily one-half hour before sunrise for six hours of banding; 2) a 70-minute census route is undertaken which provides a "snapshot" or overview of what species are in the area; and 3) general observations throughout the day together yield what are called the 'Daily Estimated Totals' of individuals and species. Later in the day, a seawatch and hawkwatch are conducted to monitor seabird and raptor migration. This year, we banded about 2,300 birds from July to October, with an average of about 28 birds caught per day. However, on some "fallout" days, as many as 75 to 100 birds may be caught.

Over the last two banding seasons, we have been blessed to have Dan Derbyshire from Ontario as our full-time, head bander. Dan has extensive banding experience in Ontario, principally at Thunder Cape and Long Point Bird Observatories.

Access is restricted to the bird banders and volunteers for this project. Rocky Point is a *working* area of the DND which uses it as a storage and disposal site of explosives and charges, as well as a training facility for the military. Birders keen to visit this area after hearing about all the good birds that show up should be reminded that our access is a *privilege*, and not a right. Our volunteers have spent their spare time contributing to the research, and have thus paid the "price of admission". We also have to respect the military's regular activities, and on some days even banding is shut down when blasting takes place. The Department of National Defense recognizes its stewardship role for all of

their sites, and encourages serious scientific study of the flora and fauna in the mixed forest located here. Indeed, Rocky Point would not be the special place that it is without the DND's presence, restricting its development or overuse.

The ever-growing bird checklist for Rocky Point now stands at an impressive 253 species. Among these, we have banded (or mist-netted) 85 species. I know that 300 species at Rocky Point is not an unreasonable goal for us over the next 15-20 years! RPBO alone has added four new species to the Victoria-area bird checklist. Impressive returns for secretive species such as Lincoln's Sparrow, and western specialities such as Townsend's Warbler, and Hammond's and Pacific-slope Flycatchers are important indicators for bird migration research. The now locally extirpated western bluebird once bred here. Rocky Point is also particularly renowned for its remarkable concentrations of migrating hawks, eagles, and falcons along with thousands of turkey vultures every September and October.

The notable rarities recorded this year were a Tennessee Warbler, Dusky Flycatcher, and a Calliope Hummingbird in May, an immature female American Redstart was banded on August 5 (long overdue for confirmation on Victoria's checklist), a Clay-colored Sparrow stayed for two days in early September, a Franklin's Gull visited on September 5, Victoria's second Gray Catbird was heard calling from the marsh on the evening of September 20, a Dickcissel was heard and seen in flight in late September, and single White-tailed Kites were enjoyed on August 18 and September 18 (perhaps representing two different birds). After a wind storm, September 25 proved to be a banner seabird day with an Arctic Tern, a Long-tailed Jaeger, 2 Black-legged Kittiwake, and 2 Sabine's Gull thrilling observers. Broad-winged Hawks put on quite a show with as many as 22 individuals recorded between August 31 and October 9 (when a flock of seven were recorded). Among the other rarities observed here over the last few years are: Mourning Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Little Gull, Brown Pelican, Forster's Tern, Pomarine Jaeger, Yellow-billed Loon, Tufted Puffin, Bobolink, Nashville Warbler, Upland Sandpiper, Swamp Sparrow, Say's Phoebe, Clark's Nutcracker, Black-and-white Warbler, Swainson's Hawk, Lazuli Bunting, Rock Wren, White-winged Crossbill, and Long-eared Owl. Harbour seals and both sea-lions are regularly seen (and heard!) from shore, but orcas and harbour porpoise have been seen as well. River otter, mink, racoon, and Columbia black-tailed mule deer are seen daily, and there are also sightings of cougar and black bear. Finally, a magnificent grove of Garry oak trees adds to the location's natural allure.

In October 1999, a local board of directors formed a

separate society to assume management of the banding and census activities at the site as well as securing funding for Rocky Point Bird Observatory's future. The VNHS board unanimously agreed to serve as an "umbrella" organization to help with grant applications requiring non-profit status and to offer tax receipts for donations until RPBO gets on its own feet. Anyone volunteering at RPBO will quickly recognize the importance and significance of maintaining a bird observatory on southern Vancouver Island. Hands-on work at a banding station provides an excellent educational experience for both novice and experienced bird-enthusiasts. Our banding season runs primarily from July to October, but other activities such as a seawatch and site census continue throughout the year.

To find out more about the Rocky Point Bird Observatory, contact David Allinson via e-mail at goshawk@pacificcoast.net or phone (250) 478-0493 (evenings). Soon an Internet site will be available via the www.visionfoundation.org web site.

DAVID ALLINSON is an avid, active birder, and is a past-president of the Victoria Natural History Society. He leads dozens of field trips and conducts public programs on birds for a variety of organizations every year. His particular birding passions are neotropical passerines (migratory songbirds), and both the nocturnal and diurnal birds-of-prey (owls and hawks). He is the current president of the Rocky Point Bird Observatory.

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Bali, Aye? Birding and Other Adventures in Indonesia

By David Stirling

Vancouver Bali return including fourteen days accommodation with breakfasts for \$1,395 Cdn and up? Too good to be true? You can't stay home for that price. So I went for it. I would arrange natural history excursions on the spot. Armed with bird field guide and a "where to find it" book I arrived at my hotel in Denpasar on the island of Bali. While trips farther afield were being arranged I would check out the beach and surf the local birding hot spots. Getting to the beach involved running the gauntlet of aggressive watch salesmen and persistent massage ladies. The beach was mostly bare skin, young Aussies and others working on ephemeral tans that would develop into liver spots and cancer in their social security years.

Hire a cab and away to the sewage lagoons? "No problem." I was dropped off at the Sheraton Laguna Hotel! Well, sewage lagoons are not on the "must see" list of most tourists. I started walking. Heat and humidity like a ditch diggers arm pit in July. A van housing two policemen stopped, being kind to an elderly foreign tourist enduring a fast fry in the Equatorial sun, "Sewage lagoon? Wrong way. Laguna that way." I turned around, waited until the authori-

ties were out of sight, then headed in the other direction towards the Club Med which was supposed to be close to my wanted destination. After more kind but useless information and several offers of motor cycle rides, I saw a white shell road leading to a glimmer of water (was I hallucinating?) and white birds in the trees. By now the day was even hotter. I was thoroughly cooked, really well done, but a sewage lagoon never looked so good. Birds galore. Javan Pond Herons in natty breeding dress, snake-necked Purple Herons, three kinds of kingfisher, Large and Intermediate Egrets, Sunda Teal and tiny White headed Munias the size of Ping-Pong balls. The sky was peppered with barn Swallows. Exquisite Blue-tailed Bee-eaters festooned the tops of dead trees. Large lizards – water dragons – criss-crossed the ponds. It was worth the pain and frustration.

Next day, looking for the fish farms, it was the same thing all over again, except for an added experience: While I was walking along a narrow jungle path, hopelessly lost and on the verge of heat stroke, I was nearly run down by a stout lady on a motor cycle who offered me a lift and a massage. I never found the fish farms.



Birding Java, Lord Plushbottom style, with a/c van, driver and English speaking guide.

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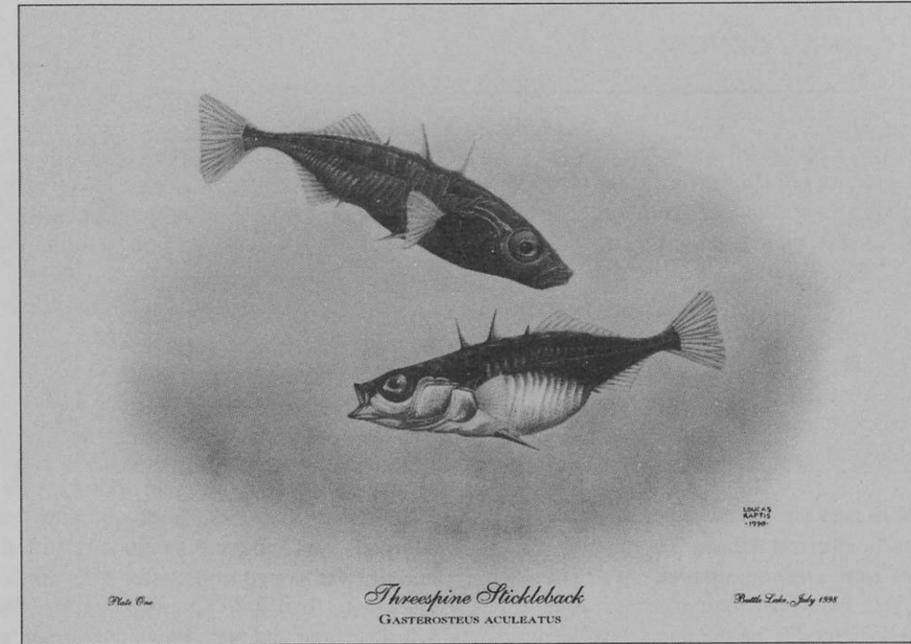


Plate One: Threespine Stickleback

At two to three inches in length when fully grown, the lake-dwelling threespine stickleback is the smallest freshwater fish species on Vancouver Island. Despite its formidable spines and several protective plates along the sides of its body, it is a favourite prey item for predatory fish such as the cutthroat trout and Dolly Varden, as well as fish-eating birds such as the great blue heron, merganser, and kingfisher. The stickleback itself feeds on algae and planktonic organisms, small crustaceans, copepods, and aquatic insect larvae.

Throughout the spring and summer, the mature males abandon their schooling behaviour and establish breeding territories along the shallows of the lakes. They build a tunnel-shaped nest from plant matter and debris, and gradually change their usual olive-brown colouration into a spectacular apparel: their backs turn blue-green, their eyes bright blue, and their throats a glowing crimson. Their colours become a warning to other rival males and a sign of attraction to potential breeding females.

The swollen abdomen of a pregnant female sends the male stickleback into a frantic zigzag dance with which he entices his partner into his nest. There she will release her eggs with the male following through to fertilize them. With her swollen belly now gone, the female stickleback is no longer attractive to the male who chases her away from the nest. He may repeat his courtship with several females, but ultimately he is the one to undertake sole responsibility for protecting both the eggs and the newly hatched fry.

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www.islandnet.com/~benrap/TheFreshwaterFishesofVancouverIsland.htm

In the morning light those stately palms looked like languid ladies in dust sweeping evening dresses and huge bouffant coiffures adorned with doves.

Back at the hotel my travel agent had organized a three day trip to the island of Komodo, home of the infamous but threatened Komodo Dragon. This trip involved an hour's flight to the island of Sambowa, a two hour journey over the mountains and a seven hour ocean voyage to dragon land. Two boats started out. Each boat had a crew of five. Below deck there were four double-decker iron bunks with nasty looking mattresses for eight passengers. Only three passengers on my boat – a retired Austrian army officer, his wife and yours truly. The other boat had been chartered by a group of divers with diving guides, extra air compressors and food for a week.

All was going well until we came round a headland into the real Indian Ocean. On the horizon the sea was rising like the Himalayas. The waves were crashing up rock encrusted islands, frightfully close, that we were moving toward. Boat #2 headed out to sea which seemed to be the most sensible and safe course under the circumstances. We watched it as it disappeared in the troughs and reappeared again riding high on the crests. Our captain who seemed to be a suicidal maniac, made straight for a barely visible gap between two islands. A tremendous surge caught us. We were going up. Below was the ocean bottom. We were surfing down at a 60 degree angle. The captain was a lunatic. Crew and passengers lying on deck, hanging on with everything, exclaiming or, perhaps, praying in two religions. The incoming wave, instead of crashing down on us, buoyed us up. Now we were looking down on the palms. Surfing forward we shot through the gap into relatively calm waters beyond. We milled around waiting for the other boat until darkness fell but of boat # 2 there were no signs.

We dropped anchor at "dragon bay" and after a fried egg dinner retired below to a stifling, airless night. Next morning, after a fried egg breakfast, we went ashore where we were greeted by the house dragon, a lethargic, sullen hulk. Then a trek on one of the many jungle trails where we encountered a *big*, truly wild dragon taking a few rays before sallying forth for breakfast. The landscape was pleasant, green and park-like with thickets of monsoon vegetation. A remarkable feature of dry hillsides was open groves of tall palms, clothed from ground to spreading green crowns in down curving gray fans. Groups of endemic Yellow-crested

Cockatoos fossicked in the tops. In the morning light those stately palms looked like languid ladies in dust sweeping evening dresses and huge bouffant coiffures adorned with doves. Butterflies everywhere, scintillating and sparkling in the sun. On the shore, a statuesque Reef Heron, overhead, a red and white Brahminy Kite, in the fig trees, a cacophony of Helmeted Friar-Birds and Wallacean Drongos. As Kipling said about Aden, "The heat would make your very eyebrows crawl." The cawing of Large-billed Crows and the ceaseless, repetitive "efootoo" calls of unseen doves added to the feeling of sultry heat.

Returning to Bali in late afternoon we saw two castaways in life vests squatting on the rocky shore near the infamous gap. We got them aboard, suffering from bruises, sunburn and dehydration, after some difficult maneuvering. They were British divers from boat #2. They informed us that their boat had been bowled over and sunk within seconds by a mighty wave. The engineer was picked up by a passing fish boat and transferred to our craft. As mine were the only binoculars on board I had the job of scanning the sea and shores for drifters and castaways. We saw the cook clinging to a large chunk of wood. He was hoisted on board in rough shape after twenty hours adrift.

Later, a freshening wind brought an exciting mixed flock of sea-birds. Most numerous were Bridled, Great-crested, and Roseate Terns. Lines of Wedge-tailed and Streaked Shearwaters skimmed the waves. A few Red-footed and Brown Boobies, a Bulwer's Petrel and a Christmas Frigatebird added to the spectacle. Red-necked Phalaropes pirouetted under the bow and a White-bellied Sea-Eagle flew over. A distant volcano belched smoke rings.

We continued to Sambowa where we delivered the casualties to the local hospital. Next day, back in Bali, while enjoying a cold beer and reading the English language newspaper, I discovered the reason for the those frightening high seas. In the Timor Sea just south of Komodo, a tropical cyclone with winds of up to two hundred and fifty km per hour and rated as the storm of the decade, was lashing the north-west coast of Australia. Some of us had survived the great swells generated by the storm, others were not so lucky: two Indonesian diving guides and three of the boat's crew were still missing.



Eyes on the sky. Keeping vigil for hawks and falcons. East Sooke Park, October 1999. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy



ANNUAL VNHS BANQUET



Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Princess Mary Restaurant
358 Harbour Road



Happy hour begins at 6:00 p.m. and the dinner starts at 7:00 p.m.

Special guest **Dr. Peter Ross**, from the Institute of Ocean Sciences at Patricia Bay, will be our speaker on the health of our local populations of Killer Whales and Harbour Seals.

Tickets are \$24.00 and must be purchased ahead of time.

Tickets can be purchased at the VNHS Natural History Presentations or at Birders' Night

Contact Stephen Baker at 721-0446 for further details.

Remembering David Pearce

By Dannie Carsen

David Pearce passed away on November 30, 1999. He was only 52. We all knew that David had a bout with melanoma only a year ago. None of us could believe he would leave us, and so quickly. His courage and enjoyment of birds and people never failed him.

David's phenomenal memory and sharp eyes have added greatly to the VNHS since he joined in 1985. David led countless VNHS fieldtrips but I think his favorite were the hawk watches of fall at East Sooke Park, spring trips to Victoria waterfront and the eternal quest for bluebirds and solitaires at Jocelyn Hill. All of us remember seeing David with his binoculars up, restlessly searching for that rarity. We can also remember his voice calling out "eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve western meadowlarks" as he carefully counted them in flight.

Many of us whom David introduced to birding worked with him at ministries and agencies who were developing software systems. I first met David when I worked for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs where David was supporting the GMACS accounting system he had developed. David would go so fast in his explanations. His hands would flash on the keyboard and the screen would appear, and the next one. He would say, in his soft confident voice, "this menu and this choice and make sure you key this here". When I went back to try what David had advised, sure enough it worked! As David and I became friends, he invited me out for the Christmas Bird Count.

David was an energetic and keen observer in the Thetis Lake/Hastings Flats Christmas Count area for almost 15 years. For several years, I joined David in the search for new species and quest for wondrous ways to "do" Thetis Lake and Hastings Flats. David and Bev Glover and I along with many others tried everything to improve the bird numbers! I remember the high Thetis hike, the low Thetis hike, and the trip up the back roads to lakes to find a winter rarity. The most fun was identifying the great rafts of waterfowl at Hastings Flats. "200 Canada Geese" would ring out. We would walk down the little road to the edge of the flats and there I saw my first Virginia Rail, red legs shining in the long grass.

David studied honours maths at Brunel University in England. As well as counting birds, David applied his computer programming skills and considerable energy to coordinating the Christmas Bird Count for the last eight years. He served on the VNHS board and as director in charge of Field Trips and Events between March, 1996 and March, 1997. David then served for a year as Vice-President until the pressures of work forced him to step back.

David wrote a simple software program that produced Christmas Bird Count checklists and participant lists for all

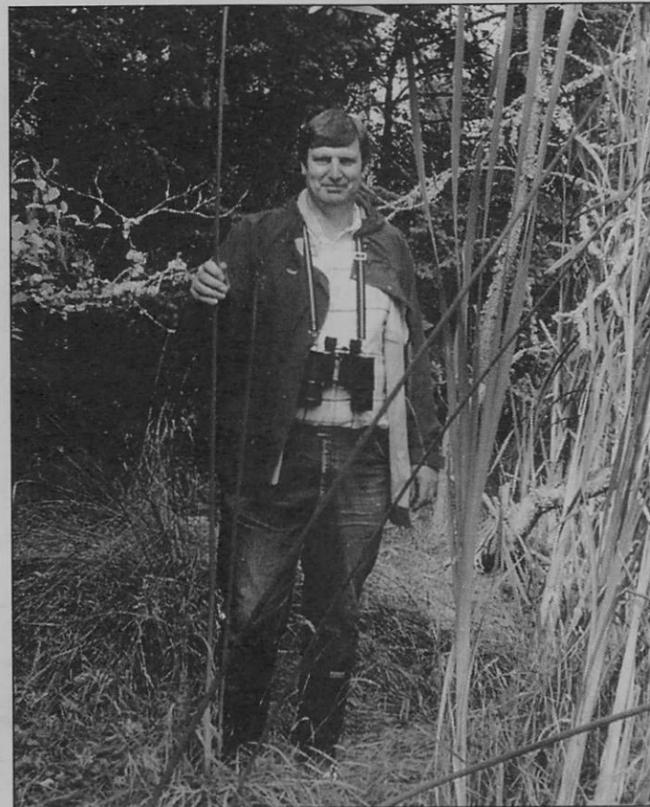


Photo: Bev Glover

David in the tall marsh grass at Rocky Point.

the count areas. His program also produced a report of the count results once they are entered. I offered to help David with the CBC this year, and I have inherited this program. This year, as I enter the CBC data into his program, I'm sure I'll hear David's voice in my mind saying "piece of cake"!

David liked to go on the bird census at Rocky Point. Last fall, David and I decided to get a census in before I left for wine festival holidays. It was one of those glorious clear fall days, except David was a little slower than usual on the census circuit. We saw fewer birds than usual, a Northern Harrier and a Sharp-shinned Hawk were some of the few raptors.

For once, David and I sat in chairs looking out through the channels once we had finished the census. We watched the kettles of Turkey Vultures shimmering over the far hills and looked in vain for a Broad-winged Hawk. Just as we were thinking of leaving, a dark shape soared 30 feet over our heads and made for the trees. "Red-tail?" I asked? "Wrong shape" David replied. "Must be a Goshawk!" We watched the bird carefully for a few more minutes and

examined the long striped tail and broad chest. It was my first Goshawk, a bird that had eluded me for years.

One day when Susan and I were out at Martindale looking for the Red-throated Pipit, David showed up. David and Bryan and Hank and Derek all stood side by side looking at the pipit and chuckling about the bet Bryan had just won with Derrick over the next non-checklist bird to show up in Victoria (an American Redstart). I thought of the many times we would go out for a rare bird, only to find David was already there. He had a magical ability to appear, quickly see and describe the bird, and drive away.

David passed away on the last Tuesday in November. I stared out the window of my office that day, knowing it was his last, and watched for a peregrine which had been hanging around the cathedral spire. David loved to watch hawks. He inspired everyone to come out to Sooke and Port Renfrew one cool spring day to watch for the spring hawk migration. Linking up with Olympic Peninsula hawk-watchers, we waited for the great rafts of hawks to come ashore. I spotted a peregrine flying swiftly through the trees down by an entrance to the Juan de Fuca trail. I think we counted 7 species of hawk, maybe 12 individuals! The raptor kettles did not appear, but great fun was had by all!

We all enjoyed hearing about David's amazing birding trips to places such as Belize, San Blas, Texas, and Point

Pelee. David would recount with relish all the specialties among the 200 species sightings he almost always returned with. I remember travelling with David on the Okanagan Birds'n'Wine trip in 1998. We had three days of rain on our trip to the "pocket desert". David muttered a few comments like "thought it never rained around here" while some of us purchased rubber boots! The trip was redeemed on the railway right-of-way near Vaseaux Lake on the 6th day. We walked along in spring splendor, birds singing from every hedgerow. A golden eagle soared very close over our heads and showed off his golden neck. David was a little ahead, as usual. David was always easy to spot, being 6' 5", and I looked for him at the big field at the base of MacIntyre Bluff. He was nowhere in sight. I saw him finally, lying on his back on the ground. He was just staring up at the sky. It wasn't often you saw David in repose, and I'd like to remember him in that way too.

We all mourn in different ways. My way is to honour David with trying to improve participation in the CBC and pass on David's enthusiasm for the count to others. I'll think of him when I visit a spot like Viaduct or Martindale which we often enjoyed together. David's great enthusiasm for his gardening, software solutions, but most of all, birds was a pleasure to those around him. He was so excited to be out there in the field just looking for birds.



Bev Glover, David Pearce, Dannie Carsen, and Bryan Gates at Hamilton Marsh, Brant Festival, 1994.

ANCIENT FOREST CONFERENCE VANCOUVER ISLAND

JANUARY 22, 2000 - UVIC (STUDENT UNION BUILDING)

The Ancient Forest Conference - Vancouver Island (AFC - VI) will be held on Saturday, January 22, 2000 at the University of Victoria. It will be a gathering of environmental groups, scientists, and interested citizens to promote the protection of Vancouver Island's ancient forest heritage. The AFC-VI will address critical issues and empower participants to join/initiate their own strategic campaigns. The regional focus will aid networking in the Island's ancient forest movement.

Sliding scale: \$5 - \$10 (lunch will be provided!)

To pre-register contact: ancientforest@angelfire.com
(250) 380-1293

The Ancient Forest Conference - Vancouver Island is a project of the BC Environment Network and the Natural Heritage Alliance.

Below is a complete list of topics:

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Overview of Vancouver Island ecosystems - threats and status
Dr. Andy Mackinnon (MoF, author of *Plants of Coastal British Columbia*)

A conservation biology vision of protected areas for the Island
Ken Wu (Western Canada Wilderness Committee)

Tenure reform and community-based alternatives to industrial forestry. Cheri Burda (Suzuki Foundation)

Tenure reform, Delgamuux, and First Nations land claims/sovereignty. David Boyd (environmental lawyer)

Mary Vickers (Heiltsuk First Nations)

Lessons for the ancient forest movement - Clayoquot case study
Valerie Langer (Friends of Clayoquot Sound)

WORKSHOPS

Ecoforestry versus variable retention harvesting
Ray Travers (Ecoforestry Institute)

Establishing community-based eco-forestry
Dennis Morgan (Bamfield Community Forest)

Economic globalization and BC forests (WTO/Global Free Logging Agreement, NAFTA/Weyerhaeuser) Joe Scott (Northwest Ecosystem Alliance) Will Horter (Forest Futures)

Consumer markets campaigns to protect ancient forests
Gavin Edwards (Greenpeace Canada)

Dealing with anti-enviro-violence and SLAPP civil law suits
Jeremy Petch (Forest Action Network - Vancouver Island)
Andrew Gage (lawyer)

Sacred ecology: Faith groups, spirituality, and ancient forest protection

A Campaign Highlights panel will give updates on: Clayoquot Sound, Walbran Valley, Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt, Beaufort Range, Denman Island, Cortes Island, Nahmint Valley, Klaskish/East Valleys

The Nature of Island Artists Thanks You!

*Hope To See You All again
In Another Two Years ?!*

To all the volunteers from the Victoria Natural History Society: thank you very much for participating in "The Nature of Island Artists" art show. We received many compliments on the quality of the show. At the end of the three weeks more than 16,000 people went through the doors of the Goldstream Park Visitor Centre and over 2,000 through the Freshwater Eco-Centre in Duncan. This includes over 1,000 students visiting with their classes for one of the three programs offered. Thanks for being a huge part of this success and we look forward to doing this all again in the year 2001 (Sept./Oct.). We would appreciate any comments that might better the quality of the show (478-9414).

The show was also a great success in fund-raising, with over \$8,300 going to the two causes. To date the Brooks Point acquisition project only requires \$140,000 more (the starting price was \$775,000) and the Habitat Acquisition Trust is sure it will be successful! The Free Eagle Extravaganza school programs at Goldstream have filled already!

Extra thanks are in order for people who went above and beyond the "call": **Carolyn MacDonald** for soliciting donations for, and organizing the entire wine and cheese; **Marilyn Lambert** for tirelessly phoning and scheduling in all of the volunteers; and finally the "hang gang": **Maureen Funk, Aaron Maxwell, Brad Lloyd, Carol Berryman, Rhonda Korol, Eric Lofroth, Susanna Solecki, Adam Taylor, Gladys Craig, Leah Ramsay and David Fraser. Rick and Ingrid Carswell** provided (through Dr.Strangebrew) all the wine for the opening night. Food donations came from **Thrifty Foods** and **Save-On Foods**, and flowers came from the gardens of **Robert and Jean Copley** as well as **Sherri Granger**.

Yours sincerely, Darren & Claudia Copley

The following is the list of people from the society who helped staff the show, protect the artwork, and sell raffle tickets. We could not have done it without your participation and we really appreciate your support! Our apologies if there is anyone who's name we miss or even misspelled!

Alan Greatbatch
Andrew Harcombe
Andy Buhler

Ann Gibson
Anna Young

Welcome to New Members

SEPTEMBER

Frank Mitchell and family
of Witty Beach Road

Mr. C.D.B. Prior
of Cloverdale Avenue
is interested in birding and nature
in general

Paul Fast
of Beaumont Avenue

The Friends of John Dean Park

Julie Lawson
of East Sooke Road
lists birds, wildflowers, ethnobotany and
marine as interests

OCTOBER

Joan Alexander
of Chester Avenue
has marine related interests

Donna Duffy
of Ascot Drive
is interested in birds mostly

NOVEMBER

Thorston Henrich
of St. Ann Street
lists a variety of interests including
botany, herpetology, geology,
ornithology, paleontology

Gordon Simpson
of Tavanne Road
is interested in birdwatching and
photography

Nancy and Peter Vivian
of Tryon Place
like birding

Mary Andrews
of Wellington Avenue

Warren and Norah Franklin
of Allbay Road
are interested in conservation projects

Karen Hurley
of Lauder Road
lists sustainability/watershed issues
as interests

John Henigman
of Forrester Street
is interested in birds, biology and
forestry ecosystems

F. Kristjan Butler
of Tyndall Road
is interested in eco-adventure tourism,
hiking, fishing and of course birding!

Sally Whitney
of Davida Avenue
likes birding



Distinguished Service Award

The Victoria Natural History Society Board of Directors established the Distinguished Service Award in 1988. This prestigious award is granted to a member who has contributed in some outstanding way to the aims and objectives of the Society. Awards are made at the annual banquet in February. All members of the Society can nominate any other member who in their opinion merits this honour.

Nominations should be forwarded by January 15, 2000 to Tom Gillespie, Awards Committee Chairperson at Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4

All nominations must be in writing and should be signed by at least two members of the Society. A brief biographical sketch and a description of the contributions and achievements of the nominee, along with his or her address and telephone number, should be included. The Awards Committee reviews the nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which grants the awards.

For more information, contact Tom Gillespie at 361-1694

The Victoria Naturalist Needs an Editor

If you have an interest in the activities of the Victoria Natural History Society; have a computer and e-mail, and would enjoy working with knowledgeable authors and helping to create a lively and informative publication... then this job could be yours! For more information, phone Glen Moores at 655-3772, or e-mail him at glen@gmoores.com

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

JANUARY THROUGH FEBRUARY

The Eagles Have Landed (over 250!)

Visit the Nature House on the estuary at Goldstream Provincial Park during this year's Eagle Extravaganza. There are excellent viewing opportunities as hundreds of Bald Eagles feed on spawned-out salmon carcasses. The Nature House is open daily all winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (closed Christmas day). There are birds of prey exhibits and great eagle viewing through spotting scopes and video cameras. Call 478-9414 for information on special programs and guest speakers happening every weekend!

JANUARY

Saturday, January 1

First Birding Trip of the New Millennium

Get the century off to a good start! Great excuse to start a new bird list. Join **Kevin Slagboom** for a birding walk in the Layritz, Glendale, Quicks Bottom, Viaduct Flats area. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Layritz Park.

Sunday, January 9

Bald Eagles and BC Hydro; How We Can Help.

Join **John Maher** of BC Hydro at the Goldstream Park Visitor Centre for this informative slide and prop talk about what BC Hydro and YOU can do to ensure the survival of Bald Eagles in BC. Meet at the Nature House at 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 9

Birding the Martindale Valley

Join **David Stirling** (477-0625) at this excellent winter birding area. Regular sightings of Sky Lark, American Pipit, Lincoln Sparrow, Northern Shrike, and Peregrine falcon occur here. The fields are muddy so wear your Wellies! Meet at the Farmer's Market on the corner of the Pat. Bay Hwy. and Island View Road at 9:00 a.m.

Tuesday, January 11

VNHS Natural History Presentation – T.B.A.

Check the events tape (479-2054) as the date approaches to find out the topic. Otherwise we'll see you at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, Begbie Building, UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

Sunday, January 16

Turkey Vultures Eat Dead Stuff!

Join **Walt Punnet**, amateur naturalist and Turkey Vulture guy, for this great slide-show featuring rare footage of Turkey Vultures and their young. Meet at the Goldstream Park Nature House at 1:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 18

Botany Night

Adolf & Oluna Ceska and **Hans Roemer:** *Plants and Vegetation of the Siskiyou Mountains (Oregon/California Border)*. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 26

Birders' Night

7:30 p.m., Begbie 159, UVic. Members' night – bring your slides. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend and your binocular.

Sunday, January 30

Birding the Victoria Waterfront

Bev Glover (721-1476) will be searching for waterfowl and shorebirds and you're welcome to go along! Meet at the Ogden Point Breakwater on Dallas Rd. at 8:30 a.m. The walk will continue from there on to Cattle Point.

Monday, January 31

Marine Night

Whales in British Columbia swim through an environment used by humans for many purposes, from fishing to whale-watching. What do we know about the effects of these activities and what can we do about it? **Chris Malcolm**, PhD candidate at the University of Victoria Whale Research Lab, will discuss these issues along with some of his own research, in a talk entitled *A Quandary about Whales: The Relationship of Whales and Humans in British Columbia*. 7:30 p.m. Swan Lake Nature Centre. Everyone welcome.

FEBRUARY

Sunday, February 6

Hoots and Screeches

Laura Darling from the Ministry of Environment shares her considerable knowledge of the owls of BC. This great slideshow starts at 1:00 p.m. at the Goldstream Park Nature House.

Tuesday, February 8

VNHS Annual Banquet

Treat yourself to a sumptuous buffet courtesy of the Princess Mary Restaurant, food for your brain courtesy of our special guest, and music to relax to by a trio of experts! Special guest **Dr. Peter Ross** (featured in *Beautiful B.C.* magazine Fall, 1999) from the Institute of Ocean Sciences at Patricia Bay will bring us up to speed on current research regarding the health of our local populations of Killer Whales and Harbour Seals. His results show that the Georgia Strait is far from pristine and the variety of toxins which

build up in these animals include many that are human-created. Levels of these toxins are similar to those found in the St. Lawrence Belugas! What does this mean for the wildlife? Come find out!

Happy hour at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$24 and must be purchased in advance, at Natural History Presentations, Birder's Nights, or call Stephen Baker at 721-0446. The winning ticket in the Swarovski binocular raffle will be drawn at the banquet.

Saturday, February 12

Boundary Bay and Raptors

Join **Andrew MacDonald** and **Rick Schortinghuis** for a trip to Boundary Bay and the Tsawassen Jetty. If time and weather permit, we may also visit the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. We can expect to see large flocks of waterfowl and shorebirds; as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. Car-pooling will reduce costs to approximately \$35 per person. Meet at Elk Lake Drive at the entrance to Beaver Lake Park at 6:00 a.m. To register, call Rick: 642-3596.

Sunday, February 13

Second Annual Valentine's Day Couples Count

Join **Dannie and Susan Carsen** for another couples bird romp around Victoria. In the checklist area, both partners need to identify all species, by sight or sound, recorded between 6:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon. No mechanical devices or voice calling for birds, please. After the count is over, meet at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary at 12:30 p.m. to tally the results. The grand prize for the highest count will be a dinner for two kindly donated by Pagliacci's. Second prize will be a wine and fruit basket, and third prize is a book donated by The Field-Naturalist. Please register at January Birders' Night to get your official contest list, or drop by The Field-Naturalist. For further information, call Dannie at 595-2773. The cost for this event is \$10 per couple, and any funds raised will be contributed to the Parks and Conservation Committee to be used for the Greenways Project.

Tuesday, February 15

Botany Night

Members' Night, bring your own slides to show to the others. Swan Lake Nature House 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 19

Owls – Wild and Wonderful

Jarrold Hobbs, Wildlife Photographer, shows us some of his wonderful slides of the owls of BC. If you admire the beauty and grace of these awesome birds of prey, then this show is for you! This program starts at 1:00 p.m. at the Goldstream Park Nature House.

Sunday, February 20

Birding Jocelyn Hill

Join **Alan McLeod** (382-3854) for some birding in the Highlands. Possible winter rarities include: Pine Grosbeak, Townsend's Solitaire and Golden Eagle. Pack a lunch, and be otherwise prepared for a 4-5 hour hike. Meet at the Lone Tree Hill Park parking lot at 9:00 a.m.

Wednesday, February 23

Birders' Night

7:30 p.m., Begbie 159, UVic. Join **Barbara Murphy** of Australia, Travel Specialist in Natural Holidays, for a slide illustrated talk entitled "Australia - Travel to Natural Places". Enjoy her selection of birds and other wildlife in out-of-the-way places in this unique look at 'down underland'. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend, your binocular and a coffee cup.

Sunday, February 27

Birding Cole's Bay Regional Park

Join **Barbara Begg** (656-5296) to check out this small park. Barb will be looking for birds in the hedgerows, woodlands, and waterfront. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot off Inverness Avenue (off the south access of Ardmore Drive).

Monday, February 28

Marine Night

At press time a speaker had not been arranged, but rest assured an expert will be found to expand your knowledge of the ocean around us. Please check the VNHS events tape at 479-2054 closer to the month of February. Or come to the Swan Lake Nature Centre at 7:30 pm and be surprised!

BULLETIN BOARD

Native Plant Society of British Columbia

E-mail discussion list for the Native Plant Society of BC. The NPSBC-L discussion list is a forum that was established for the members of the Native Plant Society of British Columbia to discuss topics related to the native plants and botany of British Columbia. This includes botanical research, plant ecology,

ethnobotany, native plant propagation, gardening with native plants, and events sponsored by the Native Plant Society of BC or similar organisations. To subscribe to the list, send a mail message containing "subscribe NPSBC-L" (no quotes) to: majordomo@victoria.tc.ca



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NATURALIST**

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Victoria Natural History Society
P.O. Box 5220, Stn B Victoria B.C. V8R 6N4
British Columbia Gaming Commission (BCGC) Lic.#99-924314

Draw at the V.N.H.S. Annual Banquet Feb. 8, 2000
Winner will be contacted by V.N.H.S.



Tickets from V.N.H.S. Directors, Regular Meetings and the Field Naturalist