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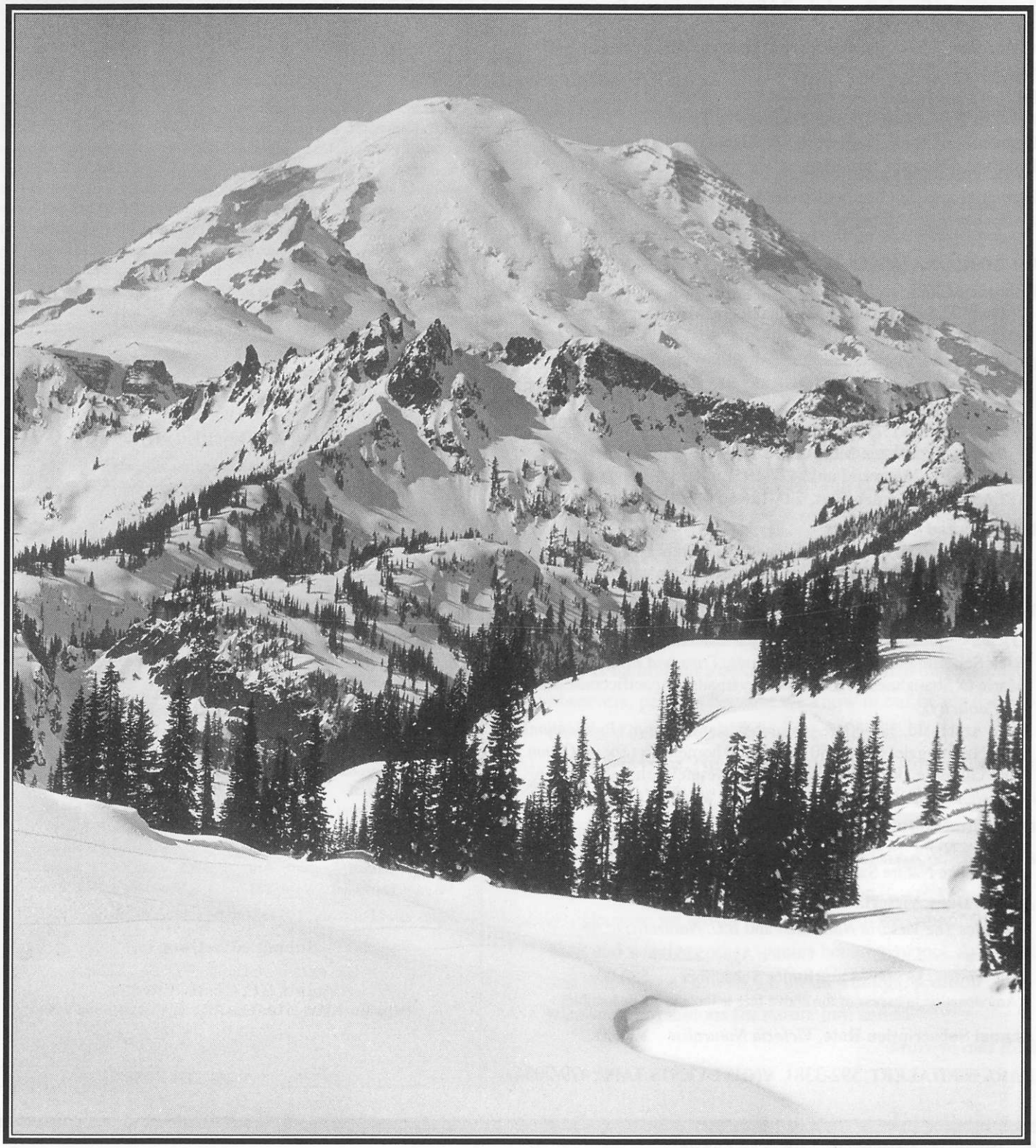

The Victoria NATURALIST

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Phone: 250-384-3063 (no calls after 9:00 p.m. please)
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COVER PHOTO
Mount Rainier in winter from Chinook Pass by Ruth Kirk

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

There are times, as naturalists, that we can only sit and watch, as happened this past autumn when Ross witnessed the drama of life above, and in, Victoria Harbour.

With much fluttering and flapping, a hawk, too distant to clearly identify, was attempting to fly with what appeared to be a small duck in its clutches. Eventually, the hawk recognized the folly of trying to fly with such large prey and let the duck drop to the water. A draw this time; the hawk still hungry and the duck alive, even if injured.

To the Bald Eagle pair who roost in West Bay, here was a "sitting duck." Both eagles were soon gliding down to where the duck was sitting. First one, then the other, swooped down on the duck. Each time, the duck dove, evading the eagle's talons. Swoop, dive, swoop, dive — the drama continued for several minutes.

Finally, one of the eagles began hovering over the submerged duck, waiting. Then the eagle dropped to the water, its wings spread across the surface. At first it appeared that the eagle had misjudged and possibly needed rescuing, like the tired Turkey Vulture scooped from the water by a whale watching guide in 1999.

Soon, however, the eagle rose from the water; the duck securely clenched in its talons. It winged its way back to Work Point to enjoy its meal. Ross' heart soared for the success of the eagle, simultaneously diving into the abyss of sadness over the demise of the valiant diver.

As naturalists we do become more than dispassionate observers, perhaps because we know in our hearts that all creatures in this world are interconnected.

In this issue, Nigel Mathews tells the story of trying to rescue a Bald Eagle trapped in a tree. Anne Murray writes, as president of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, about the budgetary woes of the Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks.

Because we are all interconnected, we cannot sit back and watch as other species become extinct. As lovers and observers of nature, we are in a unique position to translate our passions for nature into action.

Marilyn and Ross

Nature's Sleeping Giants

By Yorke Edwards

From our house, on a clear day, we can see three volcanoes while looking east from McMicking Point into the distant Cascade Mountains. All three are nature's huge time bombs that could explode after many millenniums, or they could blow up today.

Their destructive power was shown by the volcano, Mount Saint Helens, on May 18 in 1980 when it exploded, killing plants and animals across 225 square miles. That Sunday morning I was on a rowboat off Thetis Island, near Chemainus. I was bewildered by a very loud "bang". It was the sound of Mount Saint Helens exploding 200 miles away. In other words, the sound came from 35 miles north of Oregon.

From McMicking Point, all three volcanoes visible are in the United States. As we look east, north to south they are: Mount Baker (10,778 feet above sea level, about 30 miles inland from Bellingham); Glacier Peak (10,541 feet high, 50 miles inland from Everett); and Mount Rainier (14,410 feet high, 30 miles south east from Tacoma). All show their cold white tops throughout the year.

The State of Washington has five volcanoes in its Cascade Mountains. Two of them, Mount Saint Helens and Mount Adams, are farther south and out of our sight. They are about 35 miles apart and both are about 30 miles north of the Columbia River separating Washington from Oregon.

The tallest of the three that we see is Mount Rainier, towering about two and a quarter miles above sea level. We see only part of it from our shore because its distant white top rises from behind the first upward slope of the Olympic Mountains. We can see it only on the clearest days, and then it seldom shows much detail. Usually hidden behind "heavy air", it is best seen at dawn if looking through 70 miles of clean air.

Mt. Rainier. *Photo*: Ruth Kirk

Mount Baker rises up two miles, and has decorated Victoria's Oak Bay's eastward views for many years. On a clear day, it is massive, towering above its surrounding hills and mountains. In 1893 the Mount Baker Hotel was built at Oak Bay's beach, and it became a well used resort for both Victoria's residents and tourists from what was then the rather distant city. Fire destroyed the hotel in 1902, but the view has impressed visitors through 98 years.

Baker's last eruption was about in 1842, a minor one that blew out only steam and ash. Its last violent eruption, adding to its cone, was about 15,000 years ago. Now it often blows out small amounts of steam.

From our house, Glacier Peak is very different from the other two volcanoes. It appears to be too low to be important, but its white top through the summer proves its height. Its peak is only about 240 feet lower than Baker's. The low appearance is simply due to distance, for it is 50 miles away. Each of the other two, Rainier and Baker, are about 30 miles from our windows.

What makes volcanoes? Lava makes them. Lava is molten rock that flows upward under pressure in the volcano's internal tunnel called the vent. At the top, the lava then spills out onto the volcano and its surroundings where it then cools into solid rock. It builds the volcano wider and higher. The source of lava is 30 or more miles below Planet Earth's cool outer surface.

Many volcanoes are "dead" or sleeping giants that are seldom active while, in the extreme, others elsewhere blow out lava or hot rock frequently. Volcanoes rise upward and outward by adding layers of lava, but explosions from the vent may lower them. Mount Saint Helens' explosion, for instance, lowered its height on one side by 1300 feet.

All five volcanoes in Washington's Cascade Mountains seemed to be sleeping giants, but when Mount Saint Helens awoke with an unbelievably devastating explosion, it was a reminder that nature can be extremely violent. If you have not seen the result of Mount Saint Helens' destruction, you are missing a rare show of how small and weak we people are. Its damaged miles are healing, but the destruction still shows. You can drive to see it and there are exhibits to help you understand what you see.

YORKE EDWARDS *has chased birds for sixty years but is now enjoying tackling new subjects because there is "lots more in nature than our feathered fellows."*

Birding in Saskatchewan

By Danny Weston

As we lunched at the Black Bass in Cowichan Bay during the 1999 Duncan Bird Count, Hank Van der Pol regaled us with stories of bright Saskatchewan skies, alive with geese and ducks, woodlots full of unusual sparrows, Sandhill Cranes everywhere, and the very best of chances of sighting the beautiful, endangered Whooping Crane! It was irresistible, and after several planning sessions, five of us left on October 1st for a Saskatchewan journey that we will never forget.

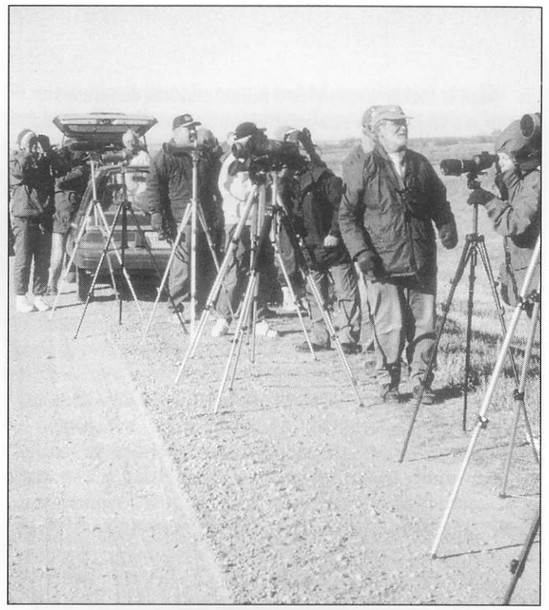
A late afternoon arrival at Saskatoon left us a few hours for birding on the University grounds by the South Saskatchewan River. A single White Pelican was quickly 'ticked". Black-Capped Chickadees and Blue Jays in the woods and squadrons of Ring-Billed Gulls on the river reminded us how far we were from home. As hunting Merlins dashed overhead and large roosts of Common Grackles settled down for the night, we returned to our motel, well pleased with our first taste of prairie birding.

We started early next morning, in freezing weather, for the Quill Lakes area. We would spend the next two nights in Wodema, "goose capital of the world". The suburbs of Saskatoon soon gave way to the flat, farming country that we were to get to know so well.

Western Meadowlarks were common, Northern Harriers quartered the fields, and ghostly-pale Red-Tailed Hawks soared above them. Sandhill Cranes appeared in the fields. Small groups at first, but we soon saw flocks of hundreds massing, parading, and dancing. For two bright frosty days, we drove, hiked and tromped through a countryside, full of birds. Huge skeins of geese circled and drifted above us — mostly Snow Geese but White-Fronted, Canada and the beautiful diminutive Ross' were there too. We found coveys of Sharp-Tailed Grouse by the roadside; by the water's edges Common Snipe, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Bairds, and other, sandpipers. A large squadron of American Avocets preened and fed in the shallows, and as we sought shelter in the trees from the biting wind we found the mixed flocks of White-Throated, American Tree, and Harris' Sparrows that we had talked about in Duncan.

We shared our motel in Wodema with burly, friendly goose hunters from the United States; hunters and birders drawn together by the awesome spectacle of wheeling flocks of thousands of geese. Conservation of these great flyways is of vital importance to both birding and hunting fraternities and we were impressed by our visit to the Ducks Unlimited headquarters in Wodema, with its maps of thousands of acres of prime habitat that had been bought or leased, and a welcome emphasis on education and conservation programs.

The following day continued bright and icy cold. Hank, you hadn't mentioned the weather! Our objective was Last



Viewing Whooping Cranes with the Saskatoon N.H.S.
Photo: Sheila Mosher

Mountain (Lake) Park to visit the bird-banding station and to find some of the water birds that had eluded us at Quill Lakes. A hard day's birding accomplished this and even added some surprising species: Yellow-Rumped and Palm Warblers in fair numbers, Peregrine Falcon, and a lovely Hermit Thrush. Our intention had been to overnight in Watrous, but we took the long drive back to Saskatoon because hunters had taken all available accommodation. It is difficult to ignore the positive economic impact of the sport in an area where the traditional farms are facing dismal futures. Hopefully the day isn't too far distant when we'll also see "Welcome Birders" signs on the motels!

The next three days were all cold, with a low of -10°C. On Thursday, we set out on the trail of a "hot tip"; a Whooping Crane in the Pike Lake area. We spent the entire morning examining and re-examining every flock of Sandhill Cranes in the vicinity. We hiked into areas not visible from the road, crept along gullies. The sighting of a beautiful Mountain Bluebird raised our flagging spirits. Then, as we drove gently down a dusty back road five voices yelled in unison. It was unmistakable — our Whooping Crane, beautiful, rare, and shiny white, and only a hundred feet from us. A memorable moment.

Friday saw us leaving a little later for our destination, Lookout, to see the spectacle of thousands of Sandhill Cranes coming to roost on the sandbars. Some woodland birding en route added Cape May Warblers and at Lookout, on the river, we found California Gull and Common Merganser.

In the early evening we positioned ourselves six miles down river and waited expectantly, the air still, the skies empty. Thirty minutes passed. We fidgeted and wondered about the reliability of our directions. Even Hank grew restless. Then as darkness began to fall, the first small flocks came in from the fields, circling before dropping carelessly to their roosts. Suddenly they were everywhere, thousands and soon tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes settling in for the night; their clamorous rasping reaching deafening proportions. A unique birding experience for us all!

On Saturday we joined the Saskatoon Natural History Society on their annual Whooping Crane count. They apologized for the cold, then accompanied us on a great day's birding. At Raddison Lake Golden Eagles and a Rough-Legged Hawk were good sightings, quickly followed by two flocks of Mountain Bluebirds. Then, a rare and lovely sight — a family group of Whooping Cranes with the awkward, orange juvenile in stark contrast to its graceful white parents. After lunch we continued on to an alkaline slough near Leask where a pair of Whoopers had been reliably reported. As we approached a flock of large white birds came into view. Swans? Unlikely. Incredulously we counted them. Twelve magnificent adult Whooping Cranes, one of the largest flocks reported for many years and an important proportion of the wild population of approximately 150.

Sunday morning saw us ready for home. An afternoon flight left us time for one last birding session. Two White-Breasted Nuthatches were added to the trip-list, and we then retired to the Berry Barn where, over pancakes and Saskatoon-berry pie, we agreed that the trip had been a great success, surpassing all expectations.

A report like this can touch the highlights and, hopefully, give an impression of some amazing birding moments. But, that is only part of the story. To be exposed to the rural culture of Saskatchewan, to feel the small-town solidarity, to see Hutterite settlements, one-room schoolhouses, towering grain elevators and isolated Orthodox Churches for the first time was an enriching experience. In our search for birds, we found wonderful animals — porcupine, beaver, badger, fox and gopher, and we witnessed some gripping encounters between deer and coyote. All of it in the best of company. It was a wonderful trip. Thank you Hank, for suggesting it!

Group Members

Hank Van der Pol, *Trip leader*

Jim Fliczuk, *Driver and navigator*

Patti Parish and Sheila Mosher, *Accommodation and transport organizers*

Danny Weston, *Accounts and report writer*

Two Days in Arizona

By Rob Gowan

This November, I spent 10 days in my small pickup travelling around California, Arizona and Nevada. Two days spent in southern Arizona showed me that while the weather may not always be dependable, the birding is.

Day 1 started with the distinctive calls of Great Tailed Grackles outside my Yuma motel room. Their call is one that I have come to associate with vacations in the desert southwest. I have visited this part of the world many times but something about the desert keeps calling me back.

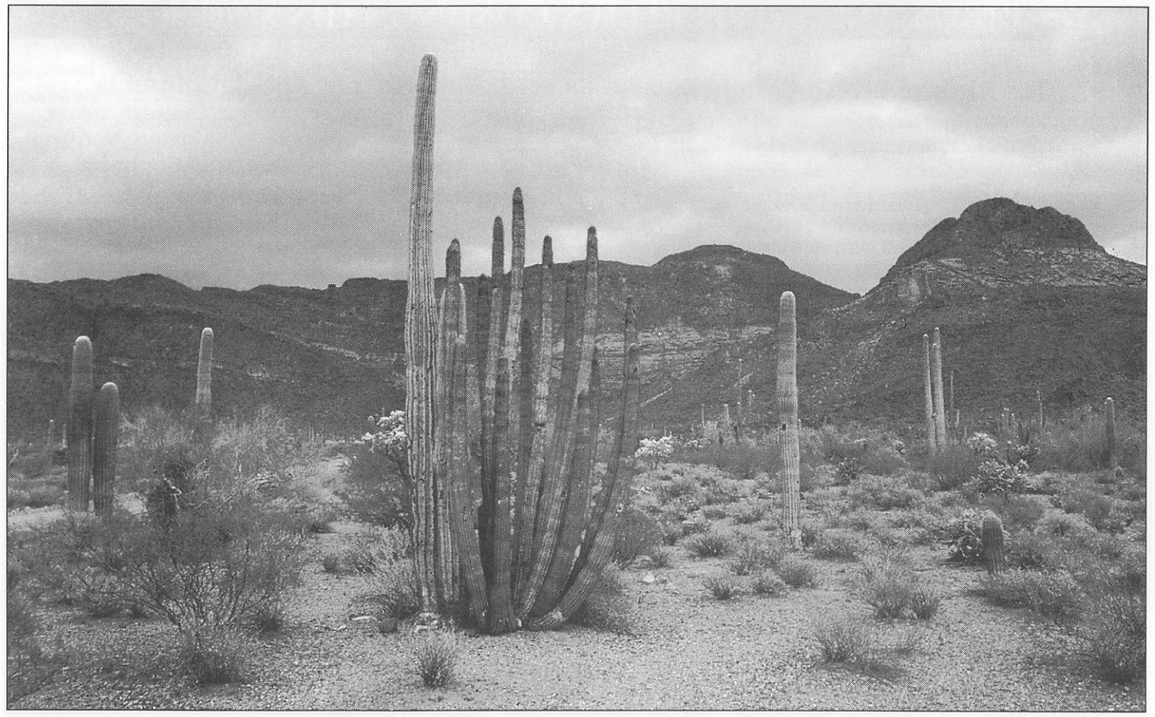
The weather was sunny and warm when I started east on Interstate 8, but in less than an hour, the sky had clouded over and I passed through two very intense showers before turning south onto Highway 85 toward Mexico. Near Ajo, a small former mining community now popular with snowbirds, I saw flashing lights and soon discovered the US Border Patrol were apprehending about 10 people who appeared to have entered the country illegally.

A woman from Ontario spending the winter in Ajo later told me more than 30 people had died from exposure that summer trying to hike the roughly 25 miles of desert between the Mexican border and I-8. It is not uncommon for the summer sun to bake this area at over 120F and water is extremely scarce.

My goal for the day was Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. This Monument preserves over 330,000 acres of Sonoran desert and is home to many bird species including Gila Woodpecker, Roadrunner, Cactus Wren and Gambel's Quail. Although the park is largely wilderness, two dirt loop roads provide access to a number of different desert habitats. I chose the 21-mile Ajo Mountain Drive. Near mile 8, I spotted two birds among the Organ Pipe Cacti. I hopped out of the truck to get a better look and felt a few drops of rain.

By the time I had identified the birds as a Canyon Towhee and a Ladder-backed Woodpecker, the rain and wind had intensified to the point where water was flowing off my Gore-Tex jacket.

Rainfall here averages only 10 inches a year but on this day, it felt more like Tofino than the Arizona desert. The road became increasingly mucky and in places it disappeared completely beneath large puddles and small streams. The water certainly added to the feeling of adventure driving.



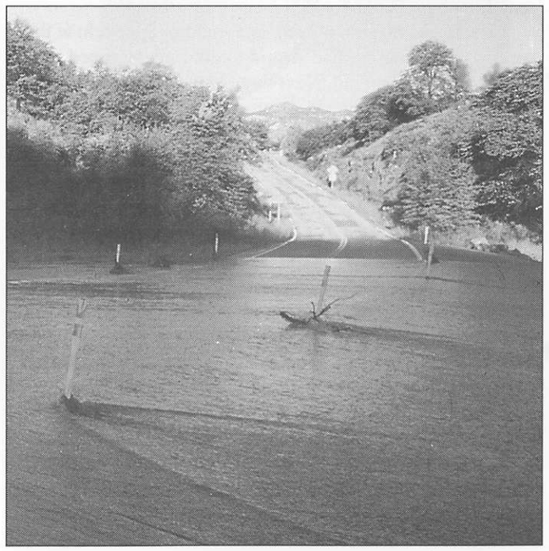
Once back on the pavement I started toward Tucson, where I had planned to join an Audubon Society birding field trip I had learned about on the Internet. While I was still in the park, a car coming the other way flashed its headlights at me and when I reached a dip in the road just ahead I discovered why. In a place that had been completely dry only a few hours earlier there was now a stream of muddy brown water, perhaps 8 inches deep and 25 feet wide, flowing swiftly across the road. Making my way through the water I began to wonder if I'd make it to Tucson tonight or if I'd be trapped somewhere along the road by flash flooding.

Soon after leaving the park, darkness fell and the rain continued. I sloshed through at least 30 more dips filled to varying degrees with floodwater. At each one, I had to come to a stop, assess the water level, and determine whether it was safe to continue. Then, as I approached the community of Sells, flashing lights once again caught my attention and I came to a stop behind a line of 6 or 7 cars.

A very damp looking police officer came to my window to say the flooding ahead was too deep for cars but I was welcome to "give it a try" in my truck. Fortunately, another small truck ahead of me was making an attempt, so I pulled out of the line to watch it go. It made it to the other side, so into the water I plunged. The water was at least 40 feet wide and 1.5 to 2 feet deep. I could hear it splashing against my door as I passed through.

Fortunately, that was the last water crossing. By the time I reached the outskirts of Tucson, stars were peaking through the clouds. Although the radio was warning about flooded areas in town, I spent the night in a campground adjacent to Saguaro National Park. Under the canopy on the back of my truck, I have a futon that makes for a comfortable place to sleep without the joys of dealing with a tent on a cold and rainy night.

Photos: Rob Gowan

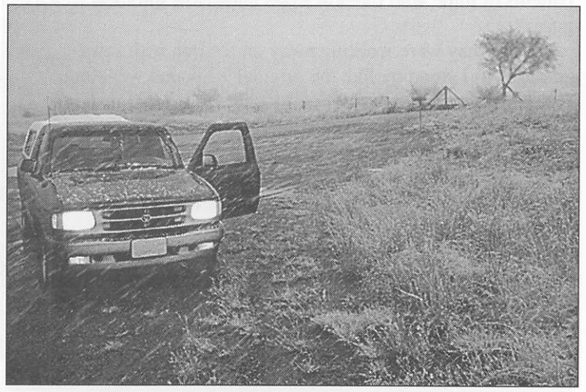


The next morning, I awoke at 5 am, scraped the frost off the windscreen and headed into town to meet my fellow birders. I arrived at the meeting place at the same time as the trip leader who informed me that the trip had been cancelled because of the weather. It appears that these Arizona birders are not as tough as their northern cousins. I remembered back to my first VNHS field trip. It was a very cold and windy January visit to the frozen Martindale Flats.

The day's field trip was to have been a visit to Patagonia Lake State Park. This is a wonderful place for birding. A local bird leader has recorded 224 species in the park including such local specialties as the Neotropic Cormorant. As I made the 2-hour drive from Tucson to the park, I remembered back to my first visit here earlier this year. It had been a beautiful day, the park campground was full of people and we had been lucky enough to spot an Elegant Trogon. Today was a different story. The park was nearly empty, the river and lake were flooded, and while walking the lakeside trail I was pelted by hail. This did not however stop me from finding some interesting birds including a Tricoloured Heron, Grey Flycatcher, and Green-trailed Towhee — all of which were "lifers" for me. Just after leaving the park, I had a quick look at a Montezuma Quail waiting beside the road. That brought my total species for the day to 48. Not bad for a day when the weather caused most people to stay at home.

Heading north from the park I was trying to decide where to spend the night. My plan had been to visit the Chiricahua Mountains where I might see a Mexican Chickadee and a Yellow-eyed Junco. As I was considering this plan, it started to snow. It snowed on me for a good hour and it became clear that heading for the mountains would not be a good idea.

I decided instead that it was time for some warmer weather so I tuned in the US election night coverage and made the 4.5 hour drive to the California border. My visit to Arizona was certainly not one I would soon forget although my hope is that next time the weather will be a bit more desert-like.



The Eagle is Me

By Nigel Mathews

He looked just like any other eagle except that he was hanging upside down in a hemlock tree

This is the story of Lakov the Bald Eagle. There are many Bald Eagles around Tahsis, where I am the only doctor. Although the salmon run has been poor, approximately 100 eagles patrol the Tahsis River which flows 20 km from Rugged Mountain to the sea.

After work, I often hike up the river along an ancient Native trade route. Maquinna used to send traders up the river, over the final ridge to Woss Lake where canoes were kept. The traders would paddle the length of the lake and down the Nimpkish River to the sea. Crossing the narrows, they would arrive to great fanfare in Alert Bay, returning a few weeks later.

With the short days upon us, thoughts of hiking to Woss Lake should not be entertained for long. I walk alone along the riverbank until it is pitch dark, then return using my headlight. I have seen numerous bears and heard cougars.

A thick low cloud seemed to be getting thicker and lower as I headed out into drenching cold rain. Soon it was almost dark. I was trying to remind myself that I was supposed to be in training for a trip to the Mountains of the Moon in Uganda later this year when I saw the Eagle. He looked just like any other eagle except that he was hanging upside down in a hemlock tree. I hurried to a point below the bird, which was very much alive and angry. It appeared that he had crash-landed and overbalanced, catching his foot in the spindly end branches of the Hemlock. Through binoculars, I saw that the bones of his leg were completely shattered. The foot remained attached by skin ligaments and tendons only.

The tree was about 50 feet tall, 2 feet thick at the base, and leaning out over the river. The bird hung suspended over a shingle beach alongside which the river ran swift and deep.

There was only one thing to do as climbing the tree was impossible. I ran as fast as I could to the car and raced to town. Not long afterwards I returned with some burly logger-patients of mine who thought I was nuts. How did they guess?

Soon they were working away on the tree with saws and axes as I stood by like the original 90-pound weakling. Freezing rain started to fall and I wondered if I had made the right decision. I had decided to sacrifice the life of the tree for that of the eagle. There can be no doubt that the bird would have died if we had left it. Soaked by the relentless rain, it would have been an easy target for crows and ravens in the morning.

After what seemed to be an age, the loggers yelled for all to stand back and the tree came crashing down into the river. We fought our way through the riverside undergrowth down to the shingle beach. I had a blanket in which to wrap the bird and I tried to recall which end of an eagle is the business end, the beak or talons. As it happened, it did not matter, as the bird was absent.

More important was the fact that there was no foot there either. Somehow, the updraft generated by the falling tree had "untwiddled" the foot, liberating the eagle. I felt I could not rule out the possibility that the bird had ended up in the river and been swept downstream. Thus, I had no alternative but to plunge into the river and spend a bone-chilling hour searching both banks for 200 metres downstream.

There was no sign of him. We could only conclude that we had done what we had set out to do: free a trapped eagle and return it to the wild. Next day was Saturday, so I arrived at the riverbank and began scanning every eagle. Eventually I found him standing tentatively on a lower branch of a tree apparently still getting used to life being a balancing act. After two hours, he prepared to leave and as he launched himself into flight, the single leg dangling down was clearly visible. The lack of a left leg was horribly obvious. In circumstances like this, be it snares or traps, raptors are known to chew their own legs off.

I watched him glide down to a muddy beach and crash-land beside a large very dead salmon. If you happen to be a bald eagle like Lakov leg, or Lakov for short, where better to keep yourself alive by eating salmon than beautiful British Columbia

NIGEL MATHEWS *is a physician, not a veterinarian, living and serving in Tahsis, B.C.*

Ian McTaggart-Cowan

"Few of us could suddenly conceive of a new creature 'with the neck of a giraffe and the digestive tract of a spruce bud worm' busily converting the extensive spruce foliage of the northern forests into protein consumable by man. In a whimsical aside to his presentation of [his] Albright Lecture, Ian McTaggart Cowan conjured up just such a vision. The potentialities of his mind, like those of the reservoir of DNA to which he was referring, seem endless."

This is how Ian McTaggart-Cowan was described in the biography prepared as a background to his 1968 Horace M. Albright Conservation Lecture at the University of California at Berkeley.

Seven years later Dr. McTaggart Cowan was interviewed on ABC's "The Science Show" on the occasion of his presidential address to the 13th Pacific Science Congress. Showing a dedicated conservationist's clarity he commented: "When serious priority decisions arise, the governments of these nations, and I refer to all our nations, still regard development as a top priority and intrinsically by definition, good. The unaltered bio-system is still seen largely as a challenge to develop. I see the piecemeal destruction of wetlands going on everywhere; estuaries used as garbage dumps in the most enlightened countries in the world. I see the conversion of native forests into vast areas of exotic monoculture, the search for new energy sources using unnecessarily destructive techniques; the gradual erosion of marginal land by inappropriate agriculture, the destruction of fragile lands by so-called recreational use of motorcycles and other all-terrain vehicles."

Ian McTaggart-Cowan, born in Edinburgh, Scotland, is a career biologist and educator with special concentration on the systematics, biology, and conservation of birds and mammals. He graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1932 and earned a Ph.D. degree from the University of California (Berkeley) in 1935. He is also a wildlife biologist of major attainments, a man wholly at home in the wilderness, and an individual who can impart his own enthusiasm for his field to widely varying audiences. He has received numerous honorary degrees and awards from institutions throughout North America.

Dr. McTaggart-Cowan has devoted a lifetime to studying, teaching and conserving the natural resources of British Columbia. His involvement extended far beyond the UBC campus, right around the world. Naturalists around British Columbia frequently called upon his knowledge and enthusiasm to inspire members; many of those who listened would pursue careers in biology and involve themselves in environmental conservation.

He was the biologist at the Provincial Museum in Victoria from 1935 to 1940, when he joined the faculty of the University of British Columbia. During his 35 years at UBC, he established an enviable reputation, travelling widely in his studies and publishing an impressive body of work. He was also involved in the production of 110 television documentaries and 12 teaching films.

> "The greatest stimulus to man arises in a richly diversified environment, both culturally and biologically. As we look toward the end of the 20th century ... we see the diversity threatened by dominant societies pursuing goals that, while they have produced a rich material culture, are already eroding the sources of their original stimulus."— Ian McTaggart-Cowan

He served 7 years on the National Research Council of Canada, where he was the first chairman of the Advisory Committee on Wildlife Research. He also chaired such bodies as the Environment Council of Canada, the Advisory Committee of Whales and Whaling, the Habitat Enhancement Fund of the Province of British Columbia, the Board of Governors of the Arctic Institute of North America, The Wildlife Society, and the Pacific Science Association. He acted as vice-chair of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and as a member of the Select Committee on National Parks for the United States Secretary of the Interior. He also served as a director of the Nature Trust of British Columbia and of the National Audubon Society.

Now retired, Ian McTaggart-Cowan continues to serve on committees, boards, and organizations dedicated to ensuring the environmental integrity of British Columbia's natural resources. An internationally recognized conservationist, Dr. McTaggart-Cowan has given distinguished service to the people of British Columbia and their natural resources.

We leave the last word (again, from his 1975 appearance on the ABC Science Show) to Dr. McTaggart-Cowan:"These are the insults on our biosphere of affluent societies. The greatest stimulus to man arises in a richly diversified environment, both culturally and biologically. As we look toward the end of the 20th century from the vantage point of 1975, we see the diversity threatened by dominant societies pursuing goals that, while they have produced a rich material culture, are already eroding the sources of their original stimulus. The Conservation Movement is well started, but it is unevenly distributed about the Pacific, and there is a long way to go if we are to come to the year 2000 with a rich and varied biota intact for the enjoyment and enrichment of human life with many options open to those who will succeed us in the 21st century."

Dr. McTaggart-Cowan will be the featured speaker at the 2001 Victoria Natural History Society Banquet, February 13, 2001.

Bibliography

www.enr.berkeley.edu/forestry/cowan.html#cowan
www.protocol.gov.bc.ca/obc/1991bios.htm#Ian MacTaggart-Cowan
www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ss/stories/s167009.htm

Annual VNHS Banquet

Tuesday, February 13, 2001

Princess Mary Restaurant
358 Harbour Rd

6:00 Happy Hour 7:00 Dinner

The guest speaker will be Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan.

Price: $26

($25 of the price is the per person charge at the Princess Mary restaurant. The additional one dollar is to cover other banquet expenses.)

Tickets will be available at VNHS meetings, or can be reserved by phone or email. If you need a ride to the dinner, or can provide a ride to others, please contact **Ann Nightingale** at **652-6450** or by email at **motmot@home.com**

HELP MELP Campaign

Submission to Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Following are excerpts from a submission by Anne Murray of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists regarding the HELP MELP campaign:

HELP MELP Campaign: Our History

The Federation of BC Naturalists is the provincial organization for 50 naturalist clubs in communities all around the province. It is acting as the central coordinator for the HELP MELP (Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks) campaign. This campaign began with a resolution passed at our 1999 Annual General Meeting and quickly brought together an ever-increasing number of naturalist, conservation, environmental and labour organizations. The 86 groups currently involved in this campaign believe strongly that the government has a major role to play as guardians of the natural environment, and should fund the responsible agencies accordingly. Our message is that wildlife, habitat, parks, fisheries, clean air and clean water are vitally important to British Columbians and that a budget consistent with this importance should be a priority.

The key focus of our campaign has been to have the staff and budgets of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks restored to the levels they were at prior to the cuts of the mid 1990s. We have ascertained with Ministry staff that our figures are an accurate analysis of the situation and feel confident that our suggested budget improvements could be readily accomplished.

Staff and Budget Cuts

Between the mid 1990s and 2000, programs to protect the environment and ecosystems saw their staff and resources slashed. In the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks as a whole, 475 positions were cut, and about $50 million in budget was lost, with a cumulative effect of $174 million lost. These staff and budget cuts have resulted in severe impacts on all the affected programs, including a curtailment of field work, enforcement, inventory and research.

British Columbia is the most biodiverse province in the country and there is still much valuable information we need to know about its ecosystems and wildlife populations. Environmental laws have to be enforced, and water, air and habitats monitored. Provincial parks are used by millions of British Columbians and visitors to our province every year. How have the staff and budget cuts affected our environment? Here are a few specific examples:

1. Inventory and research has been reduced. Staff are competing with non-government organizations for funds from such sources as the Habitat Conservation Fund.
2. Several hundred Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Plans need to be completed.
3. Forestry issues, such as the designation and monitoring of Wildlife Habitat Areas, Old Growth Areas and Ungulate Winter Ranges takes staff and budget resources.
4. Crown lands are being sold, leased or licensed for extra revenue, even though many of them are valuable ecological assets that would be better protected remaining under MELP stewardship.
5. Facilities in Provincial Parks are in disrepair, resulting in safety concerns and a shoddy message to park visitors.

Parks

The situation in BC Parks is particularly acute. Conservationists and naturalists are delighted with the increase in Protected Areas in the province, and the achievement of the 12% target this year.

However, the budgets to back up the formation of these Protected Areas is currently lacking.

Some effects of this lack of budget include:

1. Parks management plans have not been completed for the majority of the parks. Some do not even have clearly established boundaries.
2. The more accessible Parks are sustaining public damage through lack of maintenance and planning.
3. Public safety is in question in several parks since the loss of back-country rangers.
4. Nature interpretation, which could greatly enhance visitor experiences, is an infrequent occurrence.
5. The appeal to tourists is being marred by poorly maintained facilities and lack of interpretation.

Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks Budget

In 1996 the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks budget was $236.2 million. The 2000/2001 operational budget for the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks was $188.5 million. On November 14 2000, Premier Ujjal Dosanjh announced a welcome mid-course correction, putting an additional $4.9 million into operational funds. This brings the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks new operational budget ($193.4 million) to 0.88% of the overall provincial budget (approximately $22 billion).

The HELP MELP Campaign strongly recommends that funding for the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, should be, at an absolute minimum, restored to mid-1990s levels and that in addition the Parks Legacy Panel recommendations should be established in the budget. Ideally, we would recommend a much greater priority for environmental protection overall. We do not believe that the current MELP budget, of less than 1% of the provincial total, can achieve adequate stewardship for British Columbia's wildlife, habitats, fisheries, provincial parks, air and water.

The Costs of Under Budgeting

We appreciate that government is attempting to control expenditures. However, a healthy environment is fundamental to healthy people. The continuance of our social and economic systems depend on the health of the planet.

The cost of not investing in environmental protection is extraordinarily high. Who can put an accurate price on the destruction of salmon stocks, the cost of polluted rivers and lakes, the disappearance of endangered species? Government policies and the lack of monitoring and enforcement of regulations play a large part in environmental disasters like these. Giving the environment a high government priority, backed by sufficient financial resources, should help prevent future expensive disasters.

Conclusion

We recommend that adequate core government funding is assigned to all programs which protect biodiversity, ecological integrity, the long-term health of the environment and the wise management of our natural resources.

We have not attempted to determine budgets consistent with environmental sustainability for air and water programs, forestry and sustainable agriculture. What we have analysed and are strongly recommending here is specific to the four programs we have studied, namely the Wildlife, Habitat, Fisheries and Parks programs, in the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. Resources must be restored to the mid-1990s levels for these four programs and funds must be allocated to implement the Parks Legacy Panel Report. Our recommendation is for an increase in budget of $75 million over five years. This amounts to $15 million a year, each year.

Thank you for your attention.

Anne Murray
President, Federation of B.C. Naturalists
on behalf of the HELP MELP Campaign

[*Ed. Note: If you would like to read the entire submission, contact the Editors for a copy.*]

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the *Naturalist* will be the March-April issue. Do you have a spring time article, story, or poem for us? We would love to hear from you. We are willing to work with people who feel that they do not have the writing skills to be published. The ideas and stories are what are important.

Give us a call at: 250-384-3063, or e-mail at: rossarch@islandnet.com.

Report on the Activities of Swan Lake and Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Submitted respectfully to the board of the Victoria Natural History Society by Dannie Carsen, Swan Lake Representative.

I continue to enjoy serving on the board of Swan Lake during 2000, a year of great change in the organization. As always, the generous contribution provided by the VNHS is greatly appreciated and successfully used in many innovative ways.

Christmas Hill Land Acquisition

The Land Conservancy has just purchased 4 large lots from the Rogers family for the Nature Sanctuary. This purchase has a total area of 0.68 hectares (1.7 acres) when added to the Rogers property amounts to a total of 2.5 hectares (6.2 acres) of new Sanctuary land. The biggest benefit is the inclusion of most of the large Garry oaks and Douglas firs on the north side of the hill. The Sanctuary will be moving the north boundary chain link fence northwards to the new property boundary to control access to this sensitive habitat. Access to the new Sanctuary lands will be provided in the next 2-3 years with a small loop trail off the outer loop trail that is currently under construction. The challenges with this property will be habitat restoration of a severely grazed area to a Garry Oak community while avoiding a massive weed problem.

Christmas Hill Trail

Work continues on the construction of the outer loop trail, under funding provided by a BC2000 grant. The trail will branch off the upper loop trail on the east side, circle the hill on the north side, and climb up the west side to rejoin the upper loop trail. This project adds 445 metres onto the existing 580 metre upper loop trail. All trail construction uses native rock material to build Stone steps. Future trail projects under consideration include a branch from the west side of the outer loop trail to the Saanich parkland to the west, and the small loop trail through the Rogers property referred to above.

Teaching Shelter

Come by the Nature House to have a look at the new teaching shelter which is 90% complete. We should be finishing up the benches and flashing any day now. The Sanctuary raised close to $20,000 for materials, and most of the construction labour was donated by the Victoria Home Builders Association. The official opening ceremony is planned for the spring.

Native Plant Garden Irrigation System

The Victoria Water District awarded a grant of $10,000 to install a demonstration low-demand irrigation project in the Native Plant Garden. The system is now in place, with 9 watering zones demonstrating various methods of delivering water in an efficient manner. A B.C. E-Team grant provided labour to produce a series of educational signs describing the various water systems and their advantages. The signs will be installed by the end of this year. This system will be featured during our Native Plant Sale workshops and activities.

Nature Sanctuary Board Structure

The Society has restructured its board to improve community involvement at the board level. The revised Society bylaws allow for: institutional membership to be maintained by 6 organizations (Province of B.C., CRD, UVic, School District 61, V.N.H.S., and Saanich Municipality), (each of which appoint a representative to the Board of Directors, and individual members, who elect from among the membership, a minimum of 7 directors to serve on the Board.

This brings the challenge of finding and recruiting a general membership, and finding among that membership persons willing to commit to serving on the Board.

Fundraising and Events

The Native Plant Sale held April 15 -16, 2000 was the most successful ever! Over $20,000 was raised with a profit of $8,300. Almost 700 people were in attendance. Commendations to staff and volunteers for this event.

The annual Sunset Barbecue held June 14, 2000 raised over $4400 and was enjoyed by staff, board members and supporters alike.

Swan Lake also invited previous directors, mayors and council, supporters, and staff to a 25th anniversary Reception evening on June 1, 2000. I never realized that so many VNHS members past and present had been involved with Swan Lake! Many familiar faces (such as Bruce Whittington) were celebrated in photographs during their time at Swan Lake.

This year was Swan Lake's 25th Anniversary Celebration "Cake at the Lake" on Sunday, June 18th which was well attended by all and sundry.

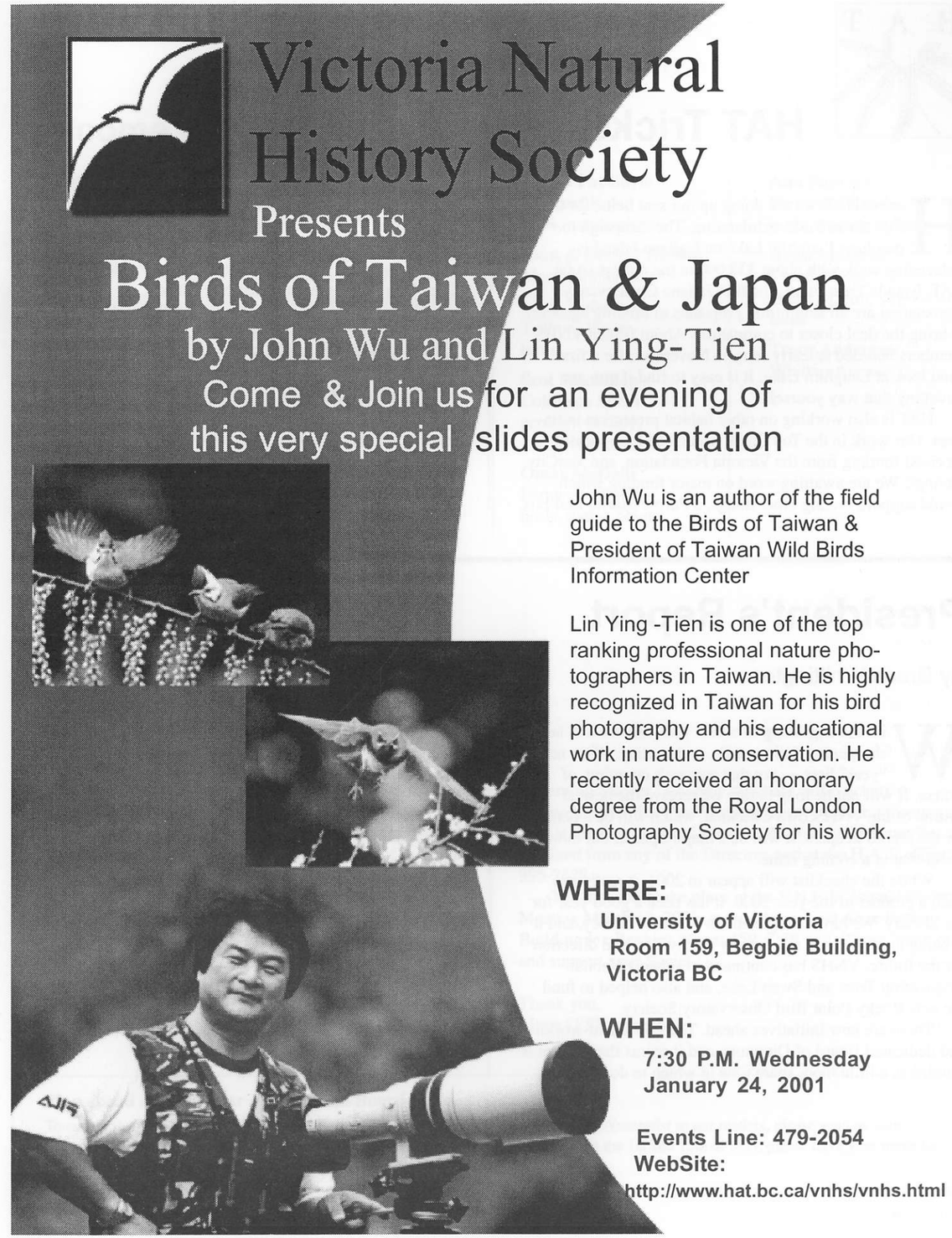
Other Activities

A signage project is underway with a B.C. E-team grant. Watch for new signs at an information kiosk near the Galloping Goose to appear in the upcoming year.

Saanich has provided a new caretaker house at 831 Ralph due to the increasing maintenance of the old house at 821 Ralph. Originally, the old house was going to be rented just long enough to provide funds for demolition. However, the recent tenants have done such a good job of "maintaining" the old house it may continue to be rented for some time.

A very successful summer program was run during 2000 with over 2,900 participants during July and August.

The Blenkinsop Creek Project has continued in a small way for another year with much volunteer labour. Have a look from the trestle bridge the next time you walk along the Galloping Goose. We'll all be interested to observe any change in bird species resulting from the habitat amelioration.



HAT Tricks

Here at HAT, we are doing up our seat belts, for the ride ahead looks exhilarating. The campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake on Galiano Island is proceeding well, with about $35,000 in the coffers so far. HAT, Islands Trust Fund, and the Galiano Conservancy Association are all submitting proposals to funding agencies, to bring the deal closer to completion. About fifteen VNHS members boarded an early ferry in November, for a first hand look at Laughlin Lake. It is easy to find if you are travelling that way yourself.

HAT is also working on other habitat protection initiatives. Our work in the Tod Creek watershed has recently received funding from the Victoria Foundation, and VanCity Savings. We are awaiting word on major funding which would support, among other things, a Purple Martin nest box project in the watershed. We hope we can draw on the expertise of VNHS members for the project. The Victoria Foundation has also funded a series of presentations to seniors groups in the CRD, called "From Cockles to Cacti: The Nature of Southern Vancouver Island".

We are excited about a new project that will help improve the efficiency and cooperation among the more than eighty conservation groups in the region. InVOLve BC has agreed to our request for $10,400 for our project called "Connecting for Conservation in the CRD".

HAT thanks the many VNHS members who have made donations. We are also delighted at the growth in our membership. It is a busy time, and a rewarding time. If you would like to more about what we are doing, or receive our newsletters, give us a call at 995-2428.

President's Report

By Bruce Whittington

With the beginning of a new year, birders will be sharpening their pencils, and starting off on new "year" lists — not that anyone's counting, of course. It will not be long before we receive the newest edition of the VNHS Bird Checklist, which will be a boon for the record keepers. It will be a major update, but more about that in a coming issue.

While the checklist will appear in 2001, it really has been a product of the year 2000. It has been a good year for the Society. We have completed our Member Survey, and it is being used to shape the Society's activities, and direction for the future. VNHS has continued to support Habitat Acquisition Trust and Swan Lake, and also helped to fund the new Rocky Point Bird Observatory Society.

There are new initiatives ahead. There is a hard-working and dedicated Board of Directors, and it seems that all that is missing is a little more spare time in which to do things. There are plans for a program for young naturalists, and the Society is starting a series of birding courses, as a service to members, and to raise funds for the Society's activities.

The familiar activities are still there, too, but rejuvenated with some new ideas. We can look forward to new field trips, and ever more informative presentations. The annual banquet this year will feature the remarkable Ian McTaggart-Cowan, with some seven decades of B.C. natural history under his belt! The magazine you are reading continues to improve, and we hope to expand its reach on the VNHS web site.

If 2000 was a good year, 2001 looks to be even better. Whether you are starting a new list, turning a new leaf in your field notebook, or sketching the year's first satinflower, sharpen your pencils!

Welcome to New Members

OCTOBER

Mrs. Cora Shaw
Royal Oak Avenue
travel, gardening, birding, walking, social, admin

Jim Farrell
Mayfair Drive

Mitch Fumalle
Maplegrove Place

Jeanette Funke Furber
Arbutus Road
environmental issues, conservation, land, forests, water, wildlife, conservation projects

Heather Holmes
Tofino
birding

Martha Jane McCaffrey
Governors Pt. Rd.
birds, marine, everything

Barb McLintock
Michigan Street

NOVEMBER

Rob Barnes
Harmonys Place
birds

Hans Boerger
Dunsmuir Road
birds

Neil & Pat Boyle
Crescent Road
birds, native plants

John & Dianne Durkin
Montcalm Avenue

M. A. Lafortune
Trillium Place
birds

Scot Mackillop
Collinson Street
ecology, botany, conservation

Omar McDadi
Fernwood Road
birds, native plants

Ann Stewart
Fernwood Road
birds, marine, ecology

Anna Marie & Frank Wille
Wesley Court
birds

Tracy Anderson
Whittier Avenue

Publicity Report

By Marie O'Shaughnessy.

Fundraising for Conservation Projects

The Directors of The Victoria Natural History Society vote annually to support a specific conservation project. This year we hope to donate $1,000 to help fund the development, that is presently underway, of new interpretive signs for Esquimalt Lagoon.

Without the continued support and commitment from our membership, and valuable volunteers, these decisions would not come to fruition. As you all know we had two successful fund raisers with Binocular Raffles during the past two years.

This year we have made a change. Our prize for the raffle is a beautifully framed print of a Great Blue Heron by D. Jeminie Howes. You may purchase raffle tickets at the monthly Birder's and Natural History evening meetings held at the University of Victoria. As well, tickets may be obtained from any of the Directors and at the H.A.T. office: 995-2428.

The draw will take place at the V.N.H.S. Annual General Meeting March 13, 2001, at the Murray and Anne Fraser Building (ex Begbie), Room 159, 7:30 p.m. Please come out and support your Society.

Thank you,
Marie O'Shaughnessy.

Plan ahead for Calendar and Bulletin Board Items

To ensure that your event does not suffer if there are unforeseen delays in getting the *Naturalist* to our readers, please send us your Calendar and Bulletin Board items early. For example, if you have an event between the 1st and 15th of May, please have your items to us before the February 1 deadline for the March-April issue.

Letters

I would like to thank you and the Victoria Natural History Society for The Alice M. Hay Scholarship, which I recently received this year.

I was pleased to learn that the scholarship was from the Victoria Natural History Society because I am an active member and a contributor to *The Victoria Naturalist*. I sincerely believe that through my research on Garry oak ecosystems and the Indigenous landscape management (e.g. burning) of these landscapes I am uncovering some valuable knowledge about how these local ecosystems function and the integral role in which the Lekwungen and other Straits Salish peoples played within their environment. I consider my outreach and educational work within the local communities to be a significant part of my Ph.D. research at UVic.

Thank you again for this award.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Beckwith
Department of Biology &
School of Environmental Studies
University of Victoria

Re: The Samuel Simco Bursary

Thank you very much for choosing me as a recipient for the Samuel Simco Bursary. Your financial assistance is a wonderful help to me in meeting the financial demands of my education.

As the summer dwindles to overcast skies, I am once again bustling around at the beginning of a new semester. I always get so excited and optimistic during these times because I love the thought of having new classes and meeting new people. I still believe teachers and classmates are what make school so interesting and are essential for a learning environment.

This spring I took up rowing through a private club in Victoria. I joined as a member of the blind community, and along with three other visually impaired young women, we were taught the basic skills behind maneuvering the oars and moving the rowing boat through the water. After being introduced to the sport, I became instantly addicted and have began rowing on a regular basis through the club. This fall, as well as rowing with the other three women, I plan to begin rowing with the regular program. Although this is highly enjoyable, the added activity to my already busy schedule cuts into the time where I can work part time to help subsidizing my education. With your support, I am able to depend less on my part time work and continue to be active in my new athletic passion.

As well as rowing, I also volunteer at the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and work on the crisis line assisting those affected by sexual assault in their decision-making processes. Periodically opportunities arise where we are encouraged to take part in continuing our training through attending seminars and taking workshops. These activities, although very stimulating, cut into the time that I am able to work. With your added support, the financial pressure is minimized and I am able to take part in the events.

Your generous help serves as a constant reminder that people believe in me and are cheering me on through my endeavors. I don't think I would be able to maintain such confidence and lead such a full and active life if I didn't have this assistance.

Thank you, once again, for your generous help. I am truly grateful for what you have given me and I hope that you will find me a worthy candidate for your assistance in the future.

Sincerely,

Emily Ellingsen

2001

International Year of Volunteers

A great big thank you goes out to all our wonderful volunteers.

The Directors wish to recognize each and every one of you who give tirelessly of your time. Volunteering provides valuable opportunities for learning, friendship, and a sense of community.

We need your continued support so "come on board" and be part of THE ACTION.

Receiving e-mail Updates

Beginning in the New Year we would like to begin an e-mail list to improve member service. If you would like to receive updates and notices that don't make it into *The Naturalist*, please send an e-mail to: rossarch@islandnet.com

How do you fill the hole?

Many people miss the Field Naturalist since it closed. VNHS member Muriel Carlson is working with the Editors on an article about how people are filling the hole — finding replacements for "our favourite store". Where do you find your books, binoculars, and naturalist accessories. Forward your coping strategies to the Editors by phone at: 250-384-3063, or by e-mail at: rossarch@islandnet.com.

New Natural History Courses

Here's a chance to support the society while learning a bit more about natural history. These programs will be taught by experienced VNHS trip leaders who have volunteered their time. The proceeds will support VNHS conservation and education activities. Please note the lower prices for members (yet another reason to join!). We are interested in offering other courses but require more leaders to come forward. Please call Darren Copley at 479-6622 if you have any suggestions.

Beginning Birding

An easy introduction to the pursuit of birding for those with little or no previous experience. The emphasis will be on bird identification in the field. We'll start with an illustrated lecture on March 8, 2001 and 6 Saturday morning field trips from March 10th to Feb. 9th. Cost for the seven sessions will be $65.00 for non-members and $45 for members.

Beyond Beginning Birding

Take the next step beyond the basics of identification. Our group of local VNHS experts places an emphasis on birding by ear and the identifying field marks of those difficult groups and species. This course includes 8 very diverse field sessions around Victoria led by 8 different leaders. Sessions run on Thursday or Sunday mornings beginning on April 5th. The cost is $95.00 for non-members and $65.00 for members. Each session is limited to fifteen.

If you have any questions, or would like to register, call Darren Copley at 479-6622. More detailed brochures will be available in the new year.

Victoria Natural History Society

Calling all VNHS Videographers

We have initiated a program to videotape all significant VNHS presentations. This has come at the request of members who could not attend events. I am looking for people willing to share their talents, videotaping Members Night & Birders Night speakers.

Please contact me, Bob Chappell, at 388-4696 or rwchappell@home.com, for further details.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

REGULAR MEETINGS are generally held on the following days. **Board of Directors**: the first Tuesday of each month (directors' meetings are held at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary); **Natural History Presentations** (formally known as the General Members Meeting): the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Begbie 159, University of Victoria; **Botany Night**: the third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Parks and Conservation Committee Meeting**: the third Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre; **Birders' Night**: the fourth Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., Begbie 159, University of Victoria. **Marine Night**: the last Monday, 7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Centre. 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 estuary is also a great viewing area for the occasional Golden Eagle. The Nature House is open daily all winter from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (except Christmas day). On exhibit is the **Royal B.C. Museum's Birds of Prey exhibit** and great eagle viewing through spotting scopes and video cameras. Call 478-9414 for information on special programs and guest speakers happening most weekends!

JANUARY

Monday, January 1, 2001
First Birding Trip of the New Year
Get the New Year off to a good start! Great excuse to start a new bird list. Join **Kevin Slagboom** for a birding walk in the Layritz, Broadcast Hill, Viaduct Flats area. Wear good hiking boots and bring a lunch. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Layritz Park. Call Kevin at 658-0940 for more information.

Saturday, January 6
Peregrine Falcons
Join **Bev Glover** for a look at the programs she was involved with for raising and releasing endangered Peregrine Falcons. This great slide show starts at 1:00 p.m. at the Goldstream Park Nature House.

Sunday, January 7
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 9
VNHS Natural History Presentation
The Un-Natural History of Mauritius: Paradise Lost?
After visiting the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, Mark Twain remarked, "You gather the idea that Mauritius was made first and then heaven, and that heaven was copied after Mauritius". A fantastic writer and humourist, Mark Twain was no ecologist. By the time he visited the island many of its unique species, such as the infamous Dodo, were long extinct and many more still cling to a precarious existence on the edge of extinction. But there is hope; on-going efforts to recover and re-introduce some of these critically endangered plant and animal species have met with some success. To find out more, we'll see you at 7:30 p.m. Room 159, Murray and Anne Fraser (ex Begbie) Building, UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

Sunday, January 14
Birding on Scafe Hill in Thetis Lake Park
Alan MacLeod knows this area well and will lead us on a search for forest birds. A vagrant Pine Grosbeak is even possible. This is a strenuous hike so please wear good hiking boots and bring a lunch. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:00 a.m. Call Alan at 382-3854 for more information.

Tuesday, January 16
Botany Night
7:30 p.m., Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary
Details unavailable at press time.

Sunday, January 21
Hoots and Screeches
Laura Darling from the Ministry of Environment shares her considerable knowledge of the owls of BC. This great slide show starts at 1:00 p.m. at the Goldstream Park Nature House.

Wednesday, January 24
Birders Night
Murray and Anne Fraser Building (ex Begbie) 159, UVIC
It is an honour to present **Lin Ying-Tien**, one of Taiwan's finest nature photographers, and **John Wu**, author of the "Birds of Taiwan" and President of Taiwan's Wild Birds Information Centre. They will team up to present an exceptional slide documentary entitled "The Birds of Taiwan and Japan". Lin Ying-Tien recently received an honorary degree from the Royal London Photography Society for his work. This is your opportunity to appreciate great nature photography while learning a few techniques to improve your own photographs. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend or two, a novice birder or photographer, and you binocular. A donation may be collected in order to defray travel costs for these special guests.

Saturday, January 27
A workshop on chemical free, low maintenance gardening will be held at Oaklands Community Centre (#1 - 2827 Belmont Ave.) from 10:00 a.m.- noon. Also based in the Community Centre: local gardeners interested in setting up a seed exchange to trade excess vegetable, flower and other seeds, please call 370-9109 or 592-9340.

Sunday, January 28
Birding the Victoria Waterfront
Join **Ron Bates** in search of waterfowl and shorebirds. Meet at the Ogden Point Breakwater on Dallas Rd. at 9:00 a.m. The walk will continue from there on to Cattle Point with several stops along the way. Call Ron at 386-1264 for more information.

Monday, January 29
Marine Night
7:30 Monday, Swan Lake Nature Centre.
Pam Thuringer of Archipelago Marine Research will speak to us about a recent project she has been involved in. "A gem in our own backyard; interesting biophysical features of Portage Inlet and the Gorge Waterway" It should be interesting to hear about the state of this well used waterway. Everyone welcome.

FEBRUARY

Oaklands Greenspace Project
Are you interested in joining a planning/working party planting trees, bulbs, seedlings etc. at Holly Green Park in the Oaklands neighbourhood (Belmont and Hamilton Streets)? Grant-supported, the Oaklands Greenspace Project hopes to start planting in February 2001. If you live in the area, or are interested in neighbourhood "naturescaping" on public land, please call for more information: 595-5600 or 592-9340.

Friday, February 2
Birding Macaulay Point and Saxe Point
Join **Bob Chappell** in birding the Esquimalt waterfront. There should be a variety of seabirds and Passerines. Meet at the boat ramp at Macaulay Point at 8:00 a.m. Call Bob at 388-4696 for more information.

Sunday, February 11
Third 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 see or hear all the birds to add to a total species count between 6:00 a.m. and 12 noon. No mechanical devices may be used to call birds. You may only use the romantic duet of the human voice and double pishing! After the count is over, meet at Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary by 12:30 p.m. to tally the results. At Swan Lake, independent judges will determine the winner! The grand prize for the highest count will be a dinner for two at Pagliacci's. The second and third prizes will also be appropriately romantic. Jerry and Gladys Anderson have also offered a romantic brunch for two at the Canoe Cove Marina as a special prize for the highest species count by first-time participants! Please register at January Birder's Night to get your official contest list or drop by the Swan Lake Nature House. For further information, call Dannie at 595-2773. The cost for this Valentine's Day event will be $10 per couple. Any funds raised will be contributed to the Parks and Conservation Committee to be used for the Greenways Project.

Tuesday, February 13
VNHS Annual Banquet
Princess Mary Restaurant, 358 Harbour Rd.
6:00 Happy Hour. 7:00 Dinner .The guest speaker will be Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan. Price: $26 ($25 of the price is the per person charge at the Princess Mary restaurant. The additional one dollar is to cover other banquet expenses.) Tickets will be available at VNHS meetings, or can be reserved by phone or email. If you need a ride to the dinner, or can provide a ride to others, please contact **Ann Nightingale** at 652-6450 or by email at motmot@home.com

Sunday, February 18
Boundary Bay and Raptors
Join **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 at 642-3596.

Tuesday, February 20
Botany Night
Details unavailable at press time.

Sunday, February 25
Lets Try Something Different
Join **Barbara Begg** (656-5296) to check out Tsehum Harbour and Nymph Point Park in North Saanich. There should be a variety of seabirds and Passerines. Take Highway 17 north towards Swartz Bay. Take the second turnoff for MacDonald Park Road. Drive south and turn left on Marina Way. Drive to the end and meet at the cul-de-sac at 9:00 a.m.

Monday, February 26
Marine Night
7:30, Swan Lake Nature Centre.
At press time a speaker had not been confirmed. Please check the events tape for more information closer to the date.

Wednesday, February 28
Birders Night
Murray and Anne Fraser Building (ex Begbie) 159, UVIC.
Dannie Carsen of Victoria will present a slide-illustrated talk entitled "The Peace River — Its Birds and Natural Diversity". Join us to enjoy a tour through the prairies of British Columbia, on the other side of the Rock Mountains where eastern bird species meet western species. Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend, a novice birder and your binocular.

The Victoria NATURALIST

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