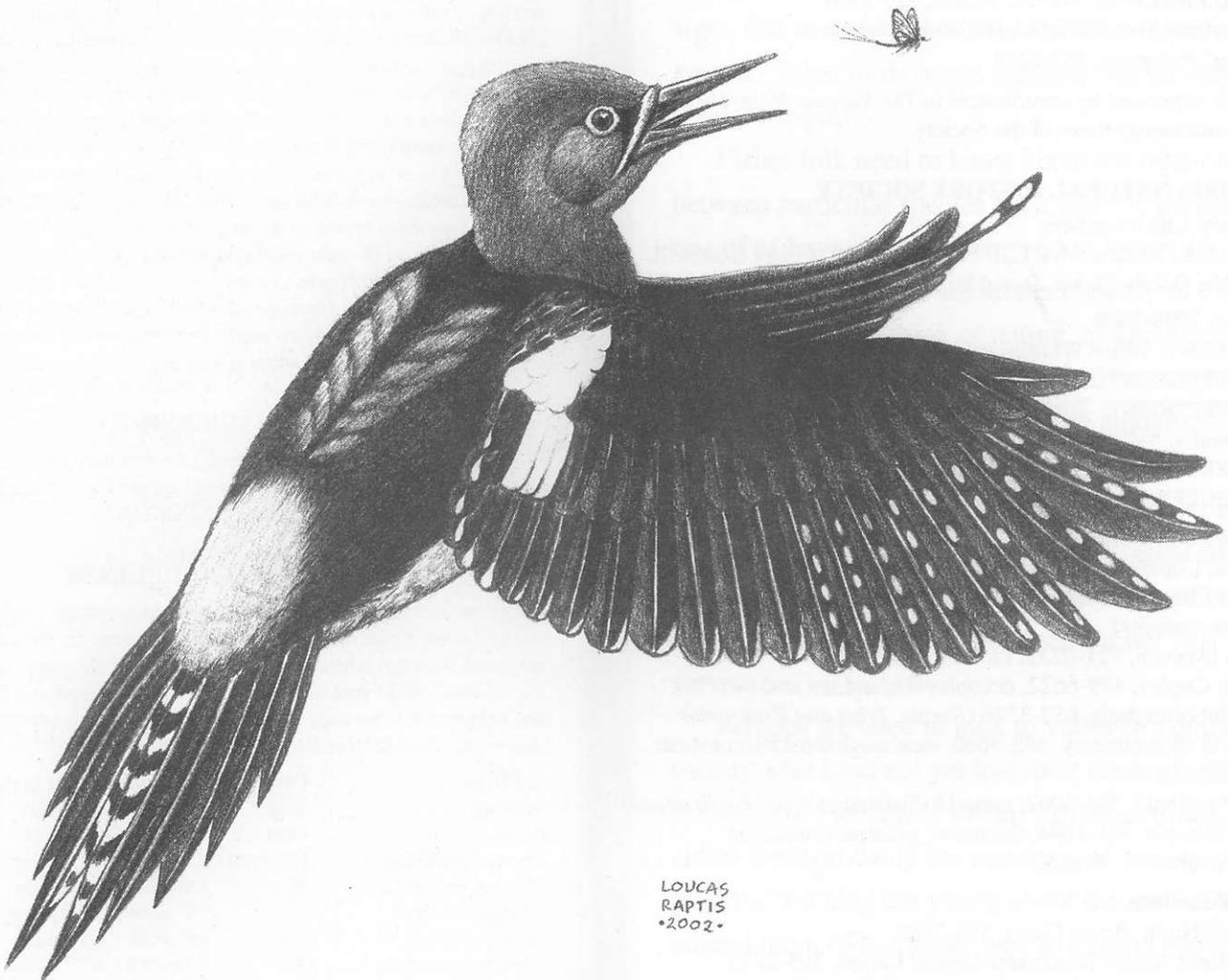




The Victoria NATURALIST

MAY
JUNE
2002
VOL 58.6

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



LOUCAS
RAPTIS
•2002•



Published six times a year by the
VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
 P.O. Box 5220, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6N4
 Contents © 2002 as credited.
 ISSN 0049-612X Printed in Canada
The Victoria Naturalist acknowledges the financial support of the
 Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program
 towards our mailing costs.
 Publication Mail Commercial Sales Agreement Number 1273108
 Publications Mail Registration No. 09841

Editor: Marilyn and Ross Archibald, 384-3063
Desktop Publishing: Frances Hunter, 479-1956
Distribution: Tom Gillespie, Phyllis Henderson
Printing: Fotoprint, 382-8218

Opinions expressed by contributors to *The Victoria Naturalist*
 are not necessarily those of the Society.

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Honorary Life Members

Miss E.K. Lemon, Mrs. L.E. Chambers, Mrs. Peggy Goodwill,
 Mr. Vic Goodwill, Mr. David Stirling

Officers: 1999-2000

PRESIDENT: Bruce Whittington, 477-8611, fieldnat@pacificcoast.net
VICE-PRESIDENT: Ann Nightingale, 652-6450, motmot@shaw.com
PAST-PRESIDENT: Tom Gillespie, 361-1694
 thomasw._gillespie@telus.net
SECRETARY: Maureen Funk, 477-6957, mfunk@islandnet.com
TREASURER: Gordon Hart, 721-1264, gordh19@telus.net

Directors and Committees

Claudia Copley, 479-6622, dccopley@island.net (*Membership*)
 Robert Chappell, 388-4696, rwchappell@shaw.ca (*F.B.C.N.*
Representative)
 Isobel Dawson, 721-0232, idawson@uvic.ca
 Darren Copley, 479-6622, dccopley@island.net and
 Rick Schortinghuis, 652-3326 (*Events, Trips and Programs*)
 Marie O'Shaughnessy, 598-9680, moshaugh@pacificcoast.net
 (*Publicity*)
 Ross Archibald, 384-3063, rossarch@islandnet.com (*Publications*)
 Tom Gillespie, 361-1694, thomasw._gillespie@telus.net
 (*Scholarships, Awards*)

Other Functions

Birder's Night: Bryan Gates, 598-7789
 Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary: Dannie Carsen, 595-2773

Annual Dues, Victoria Natural History Society

Includes *The Victoria Naturalist* and *B.C. Naturalist*

Regular	\$30.00	Golden Age	\$25.00
Family	\$35.00	Junior Subscriber	\$20.00

 (Any donation in excess of the above fees is income tax deductible)

Annual Subscription Rate, Victoria Naturalist \$20.00

RARE BIRD ALERT: 592-3381 **VNHS EVENTS TAPE:** 479-2054

SUBMISSIONS

Deadline for next issue: June 1, 2002

Send to: Marilyn and Ross Archibald, Editors
 208 Linden Avenue, Victoria, BC V8V 4E4
 Phone: 250-384-3063 (no calls after 9:00 p.m. please)
 Fax: call to arrange
 e-mail: rossarch@islandnet.com

Guidelines for Submissions

Members are encouraged to submit articles, field trip reports, birding
 and botany notes, and book reviews with photographs or illustrations if
 possible. Photographs of natural history are appreciated along with docu-
 mentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your sub-
 mission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title.
 We will accept and use copy in almost any legible form but we encour-
 age submission of typed, double-spaced copy or an IBM compatible word
 processing file on any size diskette, plus printed output. Having copy
 submitted on diskette saves a lot of time and work for the publications
 group and we really appreciate the help. If you have an obscure or very
 old word processing program, call the Editors, Marilyn and Ross Archibald,
 at 384-3063 (before 9:00 p.m.), or save the text in ASCII format. Blank
 diskettes may be obtained from the editor and we will return any of your
 own diskettes submitted. Photos and slides submitted will be returned if
 a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material.

VNHS MEMBERSHIP

For membership information and renewal, please contact Claudia Copley,
 479-6622, or write to Membership Committee c/o The Victoria Natural
 History Society, Box 5220, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4.

ADVERTISING GUIDELINES

We do our best to ensure your ad is produced accurately. Should we
 make an error, please contact us and a correction can be printed in the
 next issue. A charge is levied for typesetting. Minor alterations to exist-
 ing ads cost \$10.00. Add \$15 per photo for PMT. Advertising fees are
 due and payable when copy is submitted. Please submit a cheque pay-
 able to The Victoria Naturalist.

Ad Size	Price	Dimensions (in inches)
Back page	\$120	7.5" width x 8" height
Full page, inside	\$100	7.5 width x 9.5" height
1/2 page, horizontal	\$80	7.5" width x 4.75" height
1/2 page, vertical	\$80	3.5" width x 9.5" height
1/3 page horizontal	\$50	7.5" width x 3.25" height
1/3 page, vertical	\$50	3.5" width x 6.5" height
1/4 page, horizontal	\$40	7.5" width x 2.25" height
1/4 page, vertical	\$40	3.5" width x 4.75" height
1/8 page, horizontal	\$25	3.5" width x 2.25" height

Rates as of February, 1994. May be subject to change.

Submit advertising to:

The Victoria Naturalist, P.O. Box 5220,
 Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8R 6N4
 or phone Marilyn or Ross Archibald at 250-384-3063

Thank you for your patronage.

Contents

Observing Mayflies and the World around Them <i>By Loucas Raptis</i>	4
Not Just Flowers <i>By Yorke Edwards</i>	6
Exhausted but Worth Every Minute <i>By Tina Kelly</i>	7
Mary Hill, Jewel in the Crown <i>By Harvey Williams</i>	8
5th Annual Valentine's Day Couples Count <i>By Dannie Carsen</i>	10
Thumbs Up, Tititiri! <i>By Les & Jean Waye</i>	11
Boundary Bay Trip Report <i>By Jessica Murray and Jeremy Gatten</i>	11
Birding at Rithet's Bog <i>By Marie O'Shaughnessy</i>	13
Bird's Nest Sculptures <i>By Geoff Bate</i>	14
Welcome to New Members	15
Publicity Committee Report, 2002 <i>By Marie O'Shaughnessy</i>	15
President's Report	16
Program Committee Report	16
VNHS Board Welcomes Newest Member	16
HAT Tricks	27
Letters	15
Calendar of Events	18
Bulletin Board	19

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Red Breasted Sap Sucker by Loucas Raptis

Sometimes we need to see things from a different
 perspective. In our society of specialization, we tend
 to see only those things about which we know the
 most. But, how much are we missing when we do not
 change our focus?

Someone who wants to catch fish using artificial
 flies needs to know about more than just fish. What
 sort of food does a particular species eat? What time
 of day do they eat? What are some of the above water
 signs that an appropriate time for catching a fish have
 arrived? What birds might indicate fish feeding was
 about to begin?

Fisher folk need to know about the relationships
 between particular species for a specific purpose. The
 rest of us have just as much need to know; for if we
 do not understand the interconnection of all living
 things, we tend to think of nature, or knowledge of
 nature, as a collection of products to be bought and
 sold for economic gain, or our pure enjoyment.
 It is clear that our present "leaders" have little under-
 standing of the interconnectedness of all people and
 all living things. It seems that all the formal edu-
 cation we have developed has failed to instil in us the
 ecological understanding we need for our very
 survival.

Perhaps we need to look to younger members of
 society who have not yet lost their sense of wonder to
 the sense of "what is it worth?" In other times, our
 elders were probably the members of society respon-
 sible for teaching the young about the natural world
 around them. What better way to expand our own
 understanding of the natural world than to pause with
 no purpose but to observe nature with a child, absorb-
 ing the child's sense of wonder at the fascinating
 world he or she discovers.

Marilyn and Ross

Observing Mayflies and the World around Them

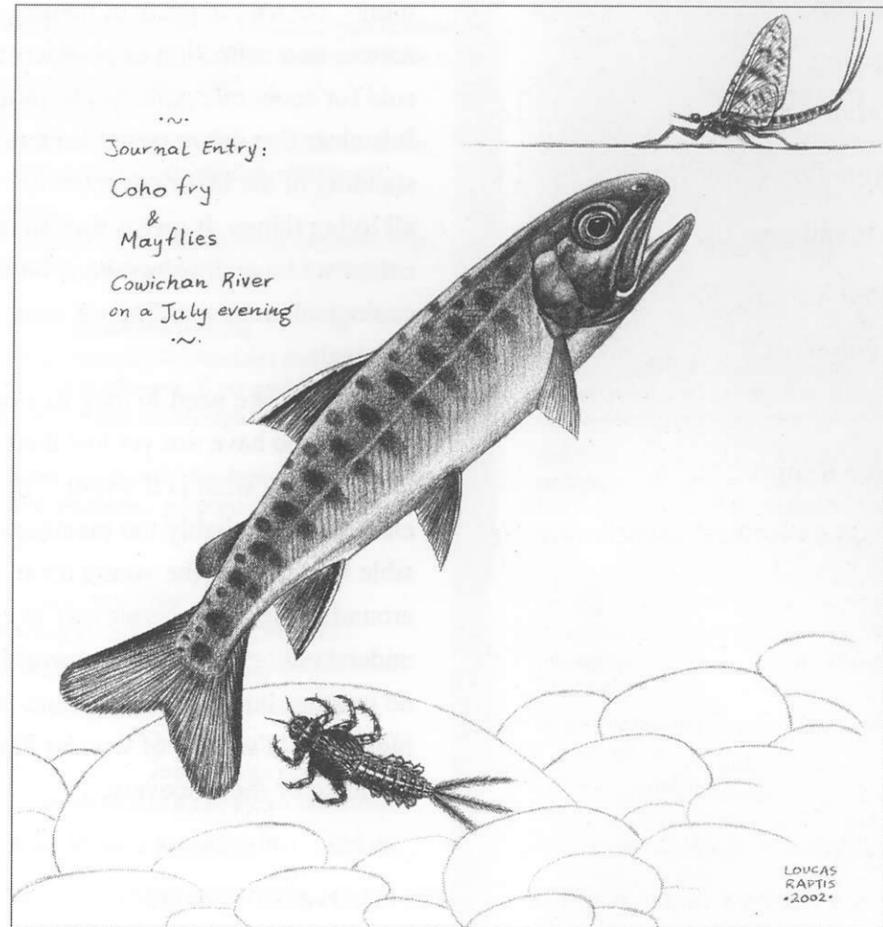
By Loucas Raptis

On a summer evening, after the day's work is done, and I have been home for supper, I like to go to the river. After an hour's drive and a half hour hike, I still arrive at the river early. The river is the Cowichan, and "early" during the summer is eight o'clock at night. Of course, one can hardly call it night yet. Complete darkness does not claim the landscape until eleven and hardly a creature stirs until nine or even ten. The sun still holds behind the treetops, shining through the foliage warm and bright, and the shade is as welcome now as it would have been at midday. The air is dense and heavy, wanting the coolness of the evening breeze, and the insects are understandably too hesitant to make their move in its stifling haze.

What usually brings me to the river is my interest in trout. But in May, June, July and August, a trout's life is closely connected to the life of the mayfly, and on a summer evening one can clearly observe how the life of the mayfly sets the stage for the life of the whole river.

On one such summer evening, I walked at the edge of a gravel bar, sat on a white, twisted piece of driftwood, and waited. The river came rushing down from a long and turbulent run of shallow rapids, curving sharply away from its straight course and funneling its flow violently towards the far bank, exposing the gravel bar I was lying on and crushing down into the deep, fast pool in front of me. About thirty yards downstream, the tailout of the pool filled the stream bed from bank to bank again, with shallow broken water along the near bank, and fast, deep, dark water running under an awning of overhanging branches, along the far side.

From where I sat, I could see and sense the first stirrings of the evening. All along the shallows, the caddisfly larvae were leisurely dragging their sandy homes on top of the algae-laden rocks en route to their evening grazing. Over them, the little coho fry were also getting agitated; anxiously vying for position with tireless scuffles and playfully flicking water with their restless, preparatory jumps. In the distance, I could make



out the frozen silhouette of a great blue heron, and across from me, a kingfisher was tensely poised for a dive.

The stage was set, and finally the nightly play begun — timely, abrupt and synchronized, like a harmonious awakening.

The sun descended to a point on the horizon from which it threw a blanket of golden, blinding light all along the bank behind me. I sat just within the shadow of the tall trees jutting up from across the river, and as though from the dark seats of an open theater, I could observe the play unfold on an illuminated stage.

The quiet was disrupted by a chirpy commotion from above. The first cloud of mayflies poured out into the open air from the forest canopy and before long had a small group of red-breasted sapsuckers in a frenzy. The birds flew out of the trees, two and three of them at once, their heads accented a brilliant red by the glow of the receding sun, and hovered briefly high above the river, snatching as many insects as they could and then hurriedly gliding back into the forest.

At this time of the day, the mayflies emerge from the surrounding vegetation and gather in reproductive swarms. They all hatch out of the water, to be sure, but usually that happens at midday or early in the morning. A winged adult mayfly will emerge out of its nymphal husk and meet the air and dry land first as a subimago, requiring one more final molting before it is completely ready, as imago or spinner, to mate in mid air. This final molting takes place in the forest, and it is from there that the mayflies were now coming to meet and mate.

It is an unusual final step to sexual reproduction for an insect that spends almost its whole life growing and molting underwater. In fact, mayflies are the only insects that molt as fully winged terrestrial adults. Being primitive in evolutionary origin, they also keep their tails and are unable to fold their wings flat over their bodies. The name of their insect order, Ephemeroptera, hints at their brief or ephemeral winged stage.

When they hatch or when they form their mating swarms, the mayflies usually do it in such great numbers that it is impossible to miss them. The nymphs, of course, being on every other creature's menu, make sure they stay hidden. One must be an extremely astute observer to notice the nymphs of the minnow-like mayflies in particular. With small streamlined bodies, they are excellent and fast swimmers and may even chase down and capture other aquatic insects. It is easier to turn over a rock in the river and readily spot two other types of mayfly nymphs. In fast water, one will usually find clinging mayfly nymphs with short and compressed bodies, and in slower-moving water crawling mayflies are more common. Even in the silt of lakes and rivers, there are burrowing mayflies with stout legs for digging. All mayfly nymphs have a row of flapping gills on either side of their abdomen and two to three tails. They mostly feed on detritus and algae, but some will opportunistically kill other invertebrates and insects. And, of course, everyone else feeds on mayflies.

The swarm of spinners had now descended near me dangling above the surface of the water. After mating, the

females may retreat to the vegetation briefly but eventually come out over the river to drop their eggs or dip them in the water. Soon after, they die exhausted, floating haplessly downstream with their wings spread flat on the surface.

For the coho fry, this brings about all kinds of trouble. The insects, dangling and floating over them, become such a powerful temptation that the little fish soon grow dangerously bold and careless in the excitement of a feeding frenzy. The coho fry usually keep close to the bottom, almost invisible against the confusing backdrop of rocks, weeds and driftwood. They often dart towards the surface to intercept small floating objects — more often than not inedible and useless flotsam — and then quickly slide back down to the bottom before their posts are claimed by larger fry, or, even worse, before they themselves get eaten. But now the food is real and plentiful and well within their reach, and if they want to get to it, they must hover right under the surface of the water, away from any cover, and focus and aim for their target, completely oblivious to impending danger. I could see them, up and down the river, shooting their bodies upwards like tiny silver arrows, at times several of them glimmering in the air at once. But most of their jumps will end up unrewarded, and one too many jumps may easily cost a life. I had already watched the great blue heron strike about a half dozen times, each time coming up with a silver creature wriggling in his beak. And the kingfisher had a few good dives of his own, but he was now gone, in the aftermath of a noisy territorial altercation.

Undoubtedly, the coho fry have an easier time feeding during a mayfly hatch. The mayflies emerge in one of three ways. The nymphs may drift or actively rise to the surface, where the subimago breaks through the nymphal cuticle and flies away to the safety of the forest. In some species, the subimago emerges underwater and reaches the surface buoyed with air trapped in its crinkled wings. In either case, the coho fry need not move far from their posts to capture the insects rising to the surface. Some mayfly nymphs, however, crawl to the banks of a lake or river and hatch on top of dry rocks and vegetation, avoiding the attack or water-dwelling predators.

As I was watching the bobbing of a dipper downstream, a big trout suddenly made his appearance. He exploded on a gathering of feeding coho fry with the raw brutality afforded by his enormous size and appetite. To be sure, he startled me, but he had stopped impressing me the night before, when he sent me home unhinged well past midnight, mocking me all night long with his shameless rises and showy impudence. At his size, he had grown scornful of the little mayflies dropping on the water like confetti from the sky. When he was younger, he had relished them with the same abandon as the coho fry did now. And, to be sure, he would still rise to sip the odd spinner fluttering to its last wing beat here and there. But his sight was now set on flesh, and my artificial flies left this brute completely unimpressed. Ironically, it was still the arrival of the mayflies that brought him out of his lair to feed, as it was the daily and nightly arrival of the mayflies that stirred the whole life of the river.

Not Just Flowers

By Yorke Edwards

In Spring many years ago, I was on a large area of burnt forest land west of Campbell River. I was looking for deer, to see if a very snowy winter had adversely affected them. I found them gaunt but numerous, lean but lively.

It was the Dwarf Dogwood's white "flowers" that first attracted my attention. I like both Pacific or Western flowering dogwood (the tree form) and Bunchberry or Dwarf dogwood as both have similar green leaves and white "flowers" (which are actually flower-like leaves). The dogwood family's green leaves in fall turn to a dark reddish colour and the berries are bright red. The leaves and berries on the trees are similar to those on the dwarf variety.

Dogwoods grow naturally around the world; across most of the United States, and from Britain eastward to the Pacific. The tree form only grows in the southwestern corner of our province but are easily transplanted.

On looking closer at the patch of flowers that had caught my attention, I was surprised to see that a fawn's white spots were part of my Dogwood attraction.



Fawn in dogwood. Photo: Yorke Edwards

Slowly I moved closer. The fawn remained very still with not a blink of its eyes. I could not even detect the rise and fall of its sides as it breathed. It was as still as the Dogwoods.

The females of all deer families hide their newborn young at first, and then begin moving about with them when the fawns are strong enough to run. The fawn was a Mule Deer, the small species of deer that lives on our coast and islands. As still as it was when I found it, it would be travelling about with its mother in a week or two.

Mothers can be protective, some more than others. In Ontario a female White-tailed Deer with twins once made me climb onto the bonnet of an old Jeep; and a British Columbian moose mother once placed me in need of a much larger truck's bonnet. She abandoned her charge and turned, luckily, when she was about thirty feet away.

So if you are out in the woods this spring and you come upon a beautiful patch of Dwarf dogwood that beckons you to come closer, walk carefully and keep an eye out for an ever-protective mother deer.

Exhausted but Worth Every Minute

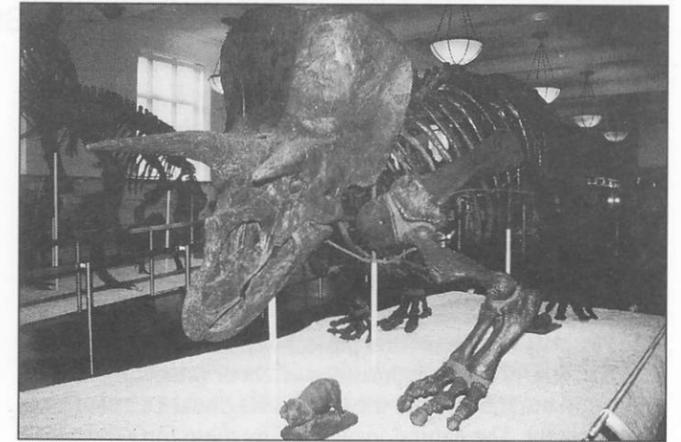
By Tina Kelly

After becoming lightheaded and fatigued, brought on by dehydration, starvation, and lugging around a daypack, I decided to quit. A competitor in the Eco-Challenge you ask? No, I had spent the last seven and one half-hours at The American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Taking up four square blocks, the museum consists of 42 exhibit halls and 32 million specimens and artifacts. So aside from the Haida canoe, gracing one of the entrances, I decided to skip the Hall housing Northwest Coast Indian artifacts and start with the things I couldn't see at home. That brought me down to 41 exhibit halls and 31,998,102 artifacts.

Where to start? Bottom floor up or top floor down? The exhibits I wanted to see the most? Or save them for last? My first mistake, choosing the latter and starting with the Halls I least wanted to see. Translation, wasted too much time in the Halls of Minerals and Gems.

On the first floor, a 94-ft blue whale replica hangs from the ceiling in the Hall of Ocean Life; a dark hall with models of wonderfully wacky fish found around the world. The Hall of Biodiversity is graced with a walk through rainforest, complete with birdcalls, and an eye-opening display on rainforest destruction. A large wall called The Spectrum of Life displays 1500 specimens from twenty-eight evolutionary groups including bacteria, plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals. The Akeley Hall of African Mammals taught me about several species I had never heard of including, the gemsbok and the okapi; the former, a black, white and grey antelope, the latter, the only other species in the Family Giraffidae. The room containing North American Mammals opened my eyes to the cacomistle, or the ring-tailed cat, and the pig-like peccary.

If Evolution class had had a field trip to the Hall of



Triceratops. Photo: Tina Kelly

Saurischian Dinosaurs, the Hall of Ornithischian Dinosaurs or the Hall of Vertebrate Origins, I would have paid more attention. The 50 ft Barosaurus in the main entrance is just a teaser for the amazing fossil exhibits on the fourth floor. Unlike fossil casts displayed in most museums, 85% of the fossils here are the real thing. *Tyrannosaurus rex*, *Apatosaurus*, *Albertosaurus*, *Edmontosaurus* (a Hadrosaur), *Stegosaurus*, *Triceratops*, you name it, part or all of its skeleton is on display. It is the largest collection in the world with more than 120 specimens.

Human Biology and Evolution, Mollusks of the World, Hall of Oceanic Birds, Birds of the World, Primates, Reptiles and Amphibians and North American Forests were some of the other Halls visited.

Close to passing out, with a "non-naturalist" friend waiting, I gave in and left, knowing that one day I would return and make the rounds again to those exhibits I loved and those I missed.

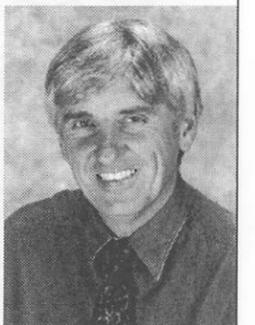
Next time, I'll be prepared, with a couple of sandwiches and a thermos of coffee.

CAMOSUN TRAVEL
3111 Cedar Hill Rd
info@ctravel.ca
595-5455



TALK ABOUT AN ACTIVE REAL ESTATE MARKET. DEMAND FOR HOMES IN GOOD NEIGHBOURHOODS FAR EXCEEDS SUPPLY - NOT UNLIKE THE BEST NESTING SITES IN MY BACKYARD!

JIM FARRELL
DFH REAL ESTATE LTD.
477-7291
email:
jamesbfarrell@shaw.ca



Mary Hill — Jewel in the Crown

By Harvey Williams, Green Spaces Project Steering Committee

A chain of coast artillery forts along the southern coast of Vancouver Island between Esquimalt and Sooke once protected Canada from enemy invasion through the Straits of Juan de Fuca. The technology of modern warfare has rendered these forts obsolete and the land upon which they stood surplus to the needs of the Department of National Defense (DND).

Not only did these forts protect Canada from foreign invaders, they had the unintended effect of protecting large areas of natural habitat in the Capital Regional District from development. The natural legacy left by these forts includes the lands along both sides of Ocean Boulevard, some of which, like Fort Rodd Hill, a National Historic Site, and the adjacent properties known as Lot #5, Journey's End, and the Cavendish Property (see map) are now under Parks Canada protection. In addition, the grounds of the former Royal Roads Military College are under the stewardship of Royal Roads University (RRU). While RRU will require some of that land for future expansion, most of it is likely to remain natural habitat.

The jewel in the crown of old coastal fortifications along the Straits of Juan de Fuca is the 184 hectare military reserve known as Mary Hill battery. Mary Hill, a 115 metre high promontory at the base of William Head peninsula, com-

mands the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca. William Head Institution is located on William Head, which separates Parry Bay from Pedder Bay. The coastal guns have been removed from Mary Hill, but the fortifications and observation bunker still remain along with a water reservoir and a large pipe intended for emergency flooding of an ammunition depot on nearby Rocky Point.

With permission from the DND, VNHS-Green Spaces volunteers under the leadership of Norm Mogensen recently completed a detailed ecological inventory of the Mary Hill property. Norm and his volunteers discovered a trove of ecological, archaeological, aesthetic, and historical treasures ranging from sensitive ecosystems to aboriginal burial sites.

Only a small area north of the Galloping Goose Trail above Pearson College has been logged, except for some fence posts and small diameter timber for military purposes. As a result, most of the forest consists of old growth conifers interspersed with oak woodlands and various other ecosystems. The forest floor in the patches of second growth conifers is remarkably clean and park-like, lacking the chaotic appearance of most natural forest floors and woodlands appear to be losing out in competition with second growth conifers. Something in the past that is no longer present must have prevented normal ecological succession.

Historical research suggests that coniferous forest formerly existed on the south slope, but was burned off thousands of years ago, perhaps by aboriginals. Repeated burnings thereafter may have maintained as open woodland and grasslands. When the Spanish naval officer, Manuel Quimper, dropped anchor in Pedder Bay in 1790, he found a thriving aboriginal community protected by a wooden palisade. The southern slope of Mary Hill was dominated by scattered open groves of Garry oak. Aboriginals had used fire to prevent conifer regeneration and foster the growth of camas bulbs and Garry oak for acorns both of which were a food source. With European settlement after 1850, the burning was halted, but grazing of sheep continued to inhibit forest regeneration until 1930. Since then, Himalayan blackberries and Scotch broom have invaded some of the non-forested areas.

The Green Spaces volunteers found a total of 45 archaeological sites including burial cairns, culturally modified trees and what appear to be fortified aboriginal lookout posts. The outer bark of some of the oldest Douglas fir trees has been partly removed for some unknown purpose, leaving a large, flat, smooth surface on the trunk.

The most significant finding was that the Mary Hill military reserve contains 81 hectares of true old growth "coastal arid zone" Douglas fir forest ecosystem of which only 1100 hectares remains anywhere in the world. Mary Hill is also significant for its ecological diversity, which includes riparian ecosystems, wetlands, Garry oak and arbutus woodlands, terrestrial-herbaceous forest openings and coastal

bluffs. A large patch of poison oak, which while unpleasant to encounter, is a rare plant species in this region.

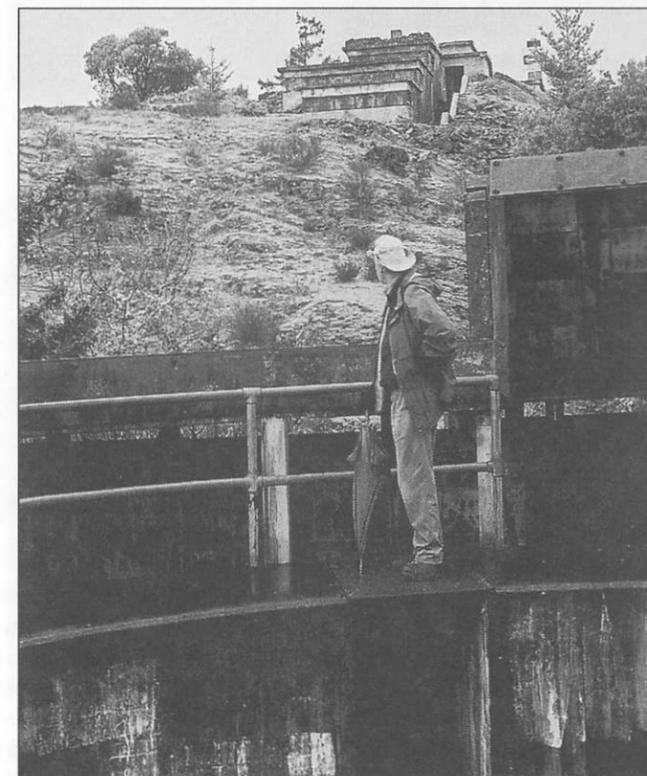
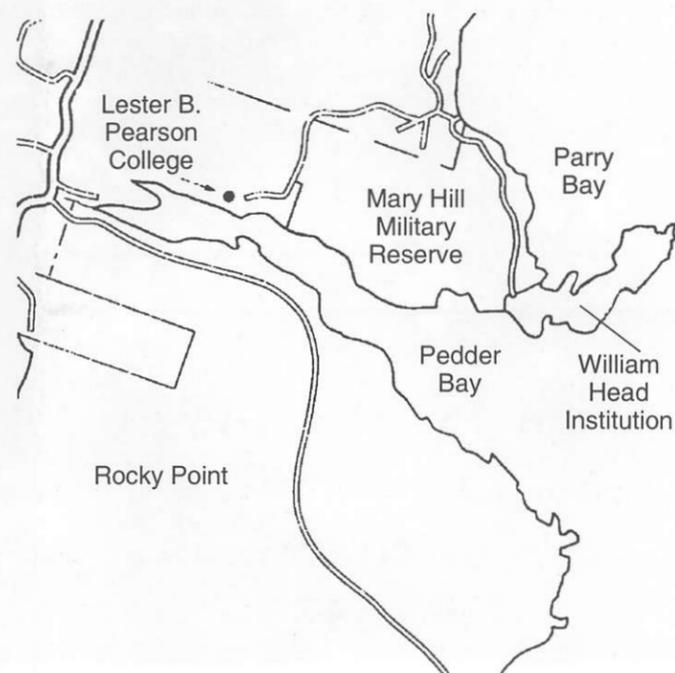
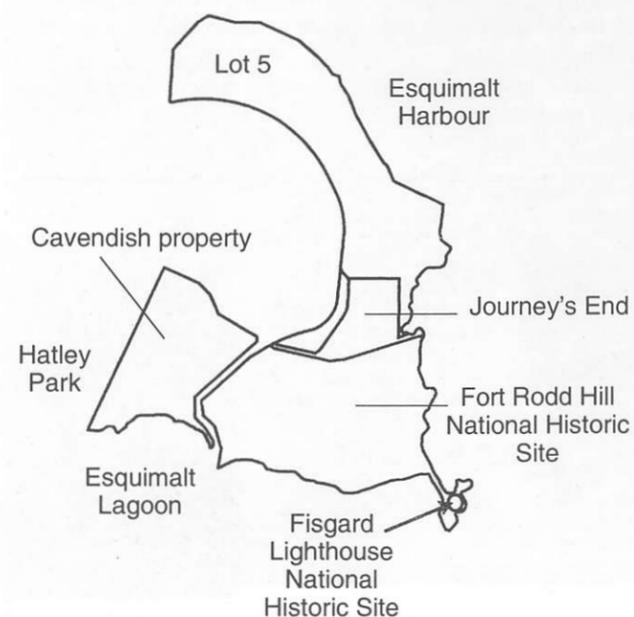
Not only is Mary Hill of ecological and cultural significance, it is of aesthetic value as well. The view from the abandoned gun emplacements on Mary Hill's summit rivals that from Mount Douglas. On a clear day, the Olympic Mountains in Washington State dominate the southern horizon. In the foreground, ships from all parts of the world ply the blue waters of the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Rocky outcrops and picturesque ravines are delightful obstacles to overcome on a climb to the summit of Mary Hill.

At some future time, Mary Hill may become a publicly owned nature reserve. Before that can happen, however, a good bit of clean-up is necessary. Unexploded, but possibly live ordinance, and rusting barbed wire barriers left over from past military exercises, old corrugated iron shacks and covered pits near an abandoned wooden bridge are hazards to visitors.

While DND has no present plans to dispose of Mary Hill, it is surplus to the department's needs. When the property is disposed of, right of first refusal will go to various levels of government and First Nations. In the view of people who participated in the inventory of Mary Hill, present generations could do no greater favour to future generations than to ensure the continued protection of this crown jewel of Vancouver Island's southern coast.

The Green Spaces Project, chaired by Tony Embleton, conducts ecological inventories of remnant and sensitive ecosystems in the CRD and promotes their preservation.

Parks Canada property



Norm Morgensen on gun emplacement atop Mary Hill.

Yellow Point Lodge



R.R. 3, Ladysmith, B.C. V0R 2E0
(250) 245-7422

Fifth Annual Valentine's Day Couples Count

February 10, 2002

By Dannie Carsen

The Valentine's Day Couples Count was plenty romantic this year for the 9 couples that took part! We had keeners who were out early spotting birds at 6:00 a.m. and were in the fast lane until 12:00 noon. Despite one couple who "kissed at every stop" and a second couple with a non-participant who "was hungry all the time", a good time was had by all!

We set a new record with the high couple total (90) but total birds seen by all 18 participants (111) were fewer than last year's total (118). Obviously, common birds are the key to winning these contests! Notable birds seen were a Least Sandpiper at Tsehum Harbour, a Hutton's Vireo at Newton Heights, a Yellow-rumped Warbler at Blenkinsop Lake, a Turkey Vulture at Esquimalt Lagoon, and an Eared Grebe from Mount Douglas Park.

Two of the new form of "couples" participated, and there was some highly entertaining bird courtship behavior from these two friendly non-breeding pairs at the post count gathering.

Like last year, both members of the team had to see all the birds and use only the romantic duet of the human voice to call them in. The rule requiring "one birder plus companion" was retained to encourage new "couples" to take part. Two of the new form of "couples" participated, and there was some highly entertaining bird courtship behavior from these two friendly non-breeding pairs at the post count gathering. Rick Schortinghuis and Colleen O'Brien did some amazingly recognizable Western Grebe dancing. However, Bill Dancer and Ros Eldridge were also brilliant in the talon-to-talon diving of two Bald Eagles.

David Allinson and Marcy McKay won 1st prize of romantic dinner for two at Café Brio, donated by Greg Hayes, with a species count of 90, which is a new record for the Valentine's Day Couples Count!

Alan Macleod and Janice Brown won 2nd prize of romantic lunch for two at the Bird of Paradise Pub, donated



Second prize couple — Alan Macleod and Janice Brown at Viaduct Flats. Photo: Dannie Carsen.

by Andy and Marilyn Buhler, with 86, far above previous count wins!

Colleen O'Brien and Rick Schortinghuis won 3rd prize of romantic brunch at the Canoe Cove Coffee Shop, donated by Jean Hughes, with a count of 78!

The Hill House Chocolates, donated by Warren Drinnan and Lisa Forster-Coull, went as the prize for best bird to Jerry and Gladys Anderson, the retiring champions, for spotting the Least Sandpiper.

Warren Drinnan and Lisa Forster-Coull won the spot prize of the Western Bird Watcher, donated by Jerry and Gladys Anderson.

I would like to thank the donors for their fine prizes for the 2002 Valentine's Day Couples Bird Count! The \$100 collected from this event was donated to the VNHS Parks and Conservation Committee for their Green Spaces project.

Whoever won the prize for the best bird that got away, a small pair of binoculars, please bring the prize back to the event next year....there will always be a few birds that get away!

Thumbs Up, Tiritiri!

By Les and Jean Waye

We recently spent a wonderful day of birding on the island of Tiritiri Matangi in New Zealand. This island is a great example of restoration of original landscape and bird populations. Tiritiri Matangi is one of New Zealand's island sanctuaries that are helping to ensure the survival of many rare and endangered plant and animal species. Island sanctuaries such as Tiritiri are easier to keep free of predators than mainland areas.

Tiritiri was originally covered with forest. However, centuries of Maori occupation followed by European farming had turned most of the 220-hectare island into rolling grassland with only a few pockets of forest remaining. The island was farmed until the 1970s.

The replanting program began on Tiritiri in 1984 and its success is due to the involvement of thousands of volunteers and supporters. The planting program was completed in 1994 with over 250,000 trees being planted. Ongoing volunteer participation in nursery work, construction of boardwalks for trails, tree planting and education is an essential part of the project.

Birdlife that had managed to survive on the island included the tui, fantail, silvereye, grey warbler, bellbird, and spotless crane. Others that have been re-introduced to the island are the saddleback, takahe, parakeet, North Island robin, kokako, whitehead, little spotted kiwi, brown teal, fernbird and stitchbird.

Our own experience on the island is summarized as follows. We boarded a Fuller's ferry at Gulf Harbour (\$20 NZ



return or about \$14 Canadian... what a bargain for a super birding experience!). The passengers were given an informational talk about the island. Before starting off on the tracks (trails), we split up into groups each led by a volunteer guide. At several points on our guided walk through the forest, we stopped to take in the sights and sounds of the birds in the trees. It was a truly amazing experience for us! We ended up at a lighthouse at about 1 p.m. and had the lunch which we brought. Then we made our own way on whichever track we chose. We ended up back at the dock before the return trip and relaxed at a nearby beach. Some people took a dip in the ocean while waiting.

We had positive sightings of the following birds on the island: pukeko; takahe; New Zealand kingfisher; fantail; North Island robin; tui; bellbird; stitchbird; saddleback; brown quail; and green-backed parakeet. We had brief glimpses of other bird species and had no luck upon looking in the blue penguin boxes (better to see them at dusk).

Tiritiri certainly serves as a wonderful example of what can be done with volunteer power and government support. Well done, Tiritiri!

Boundary Bay Trip Report

By Jessica Murray and Jeremy Gatten

The day began at 6:00 a.m. near the entrance to Beaver Lake, and if the weather was any indication of how the trip was going to turn out, we were in for a long, wet haul. The rain poured down as our group of seven headed off for Boundary Bay. The ferry ride over did not provide us with a great number of species; however, Pacific Loons and Harbour Seals were plentiful. After unloading from the ferry, we first stopped at the Tsawassen Jetty hoping to see a Willet that has wintered there for the past few years. It just so happened that our blue-legged friend was the first bird we spotted, as it was busy probing the shore for food. In nearby

fir trees, we watched a pair of Red-tailed Hawks gathering branches to construct their nest. After scoping over the sea ducks, we decided to move on to our main destination, the Reifel Bird Sanctuary.

On the way there, one couldn't help but notice the abundance of Great Blue Herons and Northern Harriers — those white-rumped dihedrals of the sky. Upon arriving at Reifel, we were instantly greeted by hundreds of Mallards and Coots, as they surrounded us in hopes of finding some food. We were also greeted by John Ireland, the sanctuary's naturalist.

His first mission was to provide us with a look of the

very secretive Northern Waterthrush, two of which have overwintered there this past year. With a little coaxing from a pre-recorded song, one of the waterthrushes responded with its characteristic metallic "chink" call. John said we would most likely only catch a fleeting glimpse of the waterthrush's silhouette as it flew overhead, which indeed is all we managed to see after he corralled it our way. Birds can be so predictable sometimes.

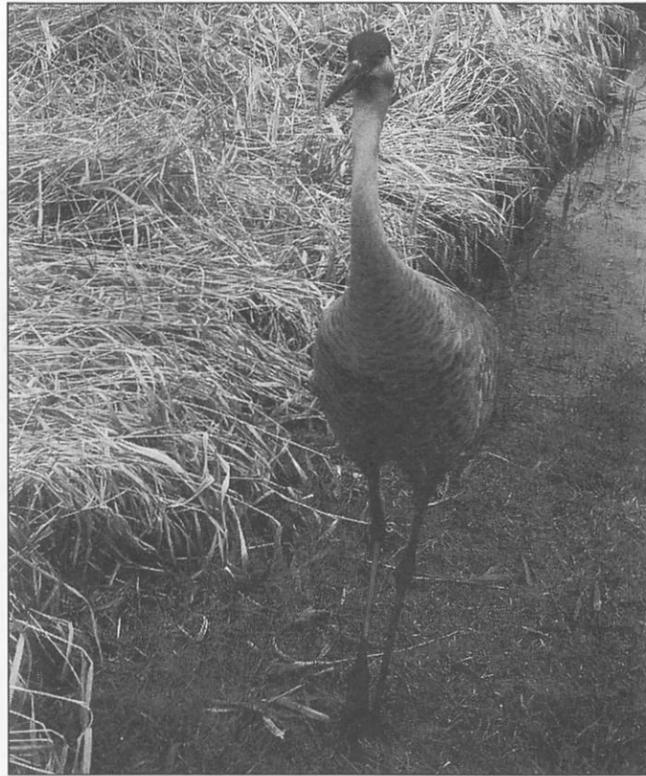
We continued on with one of the sanctuary's specialties: Black-crowned Night Herons. They were definitely living up to their name as night-herons, as they were sleeping the day away with their heads tucked under their wings. Since one of the goals of our trip was to see as many owl species as possible, the next bird on our agenda was Great Horned Owls. The sanctuary hosts a nesting pair, plainly visible from the trail. We watched the male Great-horned getting some much needed shut-eye, while the female kept a close eye on us as she insulated her eggs.

Up ahead, the trees were alive with the familiar sound of "yank, yank, yank!" Red-breasted Nuthatches were doing their best impressions of Acorn Woodpeckers, by hiding sunflower seeds under the rough bark of Douglas Fir trees to save for another time.

Further along the trail, we reached a clearing and heard the grinding cackle of Sandhill Cranes as they flew overhead. Our guide, Mr. Ireland, knew these cranes well; he took out a bag of seed from his pocket and gave it a loud shake. Hearing this well-known sound, Papa, Mama, and Junior Sandhill quickly made a U-turn and came in for a landing. The cranes familiarity with humans allowed us to get within feet of them as they feasted upon seeds, and we could actually tell that the feathers had a light coat of rusty mud on them. We learned that cranes apply mud to their feathers as a way of camouflaging themselves. The iron in the mud stains their feathers a rusty colour that some people confuse as breeding plumage. This coloration helps them to blend into their environment in grassy fields... or so they think.

We noticed that Papa Sandhill had a visible limp and he was obviously sour about the whole situation. One member of our group made the mistake of joking about his bum leg, which the crane responded to with a swift snap of the beak that narrowly missed someone's leg. For the record, it is not known what Lyndis Davis *actually* said, but it must have been the straw that broke the crane's back so to speak. The crane certainly left a lasting impression on Lyndis, in the form of a piercing peck mark to her calf.

At the request of the group, John led us to a wet, grassy area that he hoped would provide us with a brief look at an American Bittern. He was expecting to walk into the field, flush out the Bittern, and once again, only catch a fleeting glimpse. Well, just as birds can sometimes be predictable, they can also step out of character and provide the unexpected. This was the case with the American Bittern, as it slowly crept into the open from between a patch of tall grass. We all got excellent looks at this extremely shy bird before it slowly disappeared behind another patch of dead grass. During winter, the majority of the Bittern's diet consists of mice, voles, and worms which all share these grassy areas as a home.



Sandhill Crane at Reifel. Photo: Lyndis Davis

Before we broke for lunch, one more request was directed towards our trusty guide. It was another owl we desired, and another owl we got. While we took a short rest and ate our lunches, John went to check if a Barred Owl was roosting in its usual spot. Fortunately for us, it was. Unfortunately for us, we had to trudge deep into a muddy, forested area to see it. Like a true gentleman, John laid his aluminum ladder (no joke!) over the areas that were too flooded for us to walk through. It was well worth the mucky adventure because we got so close to the owl that binoculars were not necessary. After all was said and done at Reifel, we expressed our gratitude and thanks to John Ireland. Not only was this man a top-notch naturalist who provided us with all the birds we wanted to see; he was also more than willing to share his knowledge.

Our next stop was the Richmond Dike where we hoped to add on to our growing list of owls with a Long-eared Owl that had been residing there in some dense shrubs. Word on the dike had it that the owl was nowhere to be seen that day, so instead Mother Nature compensated for this loss with a couple hundred Snow Geese. Fair trade? We think not, but nonetheless, we were grateful.

Because Rick Schortinghuis is deeply rooted in the farming community, he provided us access to a prime Barn Owl barn. As expected, we found two glassy eyes of deepest black peering down at us from the rafters. Now as if three owl species weren't already enough, we paid a visit to the O.W.L. Rehab Society to see some more. Although they were no longer truly wild, where else can you go locally to see Great Grey, Northern Hawk, and Tawny Owls? We thought

this was a fine end to our owl extravaganza, but Rick had one more trick up his sleeve. To put the icing on our "owl cake", our last stop was the dike at the end of 72nd Street, where we saw not one, but four Short-eared Owls. We watched in awe as they passed over the field with their moth-like flight, scanning for potential prey. As we all piled back in the cars to head out towards Tsawassen, you

Birding at Rithet's Bog, March 30, 2002

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

As the dawn of a new day brightened the skies of Easter Saturday, it became apparent that once again the weather forecast was somewhat misleading and that it was indeed not going to rain on my parade. This revelation renewed my enthusiasm to lead, which had been somewhat dampened, on hearing the weather forecast the night before.

With the sun above and my raingear along for the ride, I headed out to join seventeen other birders at 8 a.m. The designated spot at the bog was active not only with birds but birders too as I joined the group. Michael Dyson, one of our participants, sporting a scope and camera was encouraged to take a Kodak moment of us all, which he did admirably.

After the usual introductions, we set off as a relatively large group to observe and record all the sights and sounds of birds that we encountered on our way around the Bog. Rick Shortinghuis, carrying the Society's scope, added moral support and expertise as alternate leader.

Violet-green Swallows were one of our first sightings. To my mind they always herald the coming of warmer days and their enthusiastic chatter on the wing delights my senses.

As we continued, we hoped, as we had done last year, to observe a possible Northern Shrike or even a Cooper's Hawk enjoying a tasty meal. This was not to happen this Easter morning.

However, not far along the trail we encountered a rather industrious Marsh Wren. We decided his well camouflaged work-of-art would entice any passing female wren as we stopped to admire his handiwork. The occasional Marsh Wren chatter punctuated the air as other wrens went about their spring activities within the marsh like area of the roadside ditch.

The other side of the pathway gave way to what was once a flooded field where several species of duck in the past could be seen dabbling for food. Now much of the water had gone. The remaining small pond has been taken over and choked by abundant willow that appears to thrive in these conditions. Red-winged Blackbirds enjoy this habitat and their flashy posturing by the males kept us amused. Several nests could be seen at eye level in the leafless branches. A few Mallards were observed disappearing between the tangled and ample covering.

Song Sparrows were everywhere and the usual species were soon identified as we continued around the Bog. A Cooper's Hawk flashed its white spring bloomers overhead. Another accipiter, a Sharp-shinned Hawk was observed

couldn't help but think this was the perfect end to our day of birding. Rick did an excellent job in scouting for this trip; there is no doubt about that. The total count for the trip was 78 species, which goes to show that you don't always have to sacrifice quality for quantity. Next time you see this trip coming up, remember this article when making your decision on whether to go or not. You won't regret it!



Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

coasting over the wooded grove. Anna's Hummingbirds delighted us with their spring antics of diving in aerial displays. On several occasions we heard the sharp popping sound that the male emits during these manoeuvres. We observed at least six of this species of hummingbird on various leafless perches. However, there was no sign of even one returning Rufous Hummingbird. As the morning warmed and the thermals began to rise so did the raptors. A light phased Red-tailed Hawk soared above us just as two Turkey Vultures appeared over the tall firs.

Once over the bridge, our group turned right to linger in a much more forested part of the Bog. It is here that the Cooper's Hawks usually nest. Before long, we realised that the forest was alive with different sounds and species. Four Downy Woodpeckers, the males resplendent with their bright red feathers in their caps, entertained us with their posturing on nearby branches. I had never observed these behaviours before so kept my binocular trained on their noisy antics. I only saw one female so can only assume that the males were vying for her attention. Such is the rite of spring in the world of birds.

Brown Creepers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, both Kinglets and Robins were added to our list. Where were the Warblers this spring? Not one was observed this day. Perhaps the inclement weather of March had stalled the migration of the early warblers. The deafening, shrill buzz of a chainsaw from a nearby residence drove us

out of the forest and back into the sunshine that was now disappearing periodically behind the darkening clouds. Rain was after all forecast.

On our morning of leisurely birding, we had tallied thirty-six species. We missed the Varied Thrush and Steller's Jay that should have been around. A typical walk around the Bog also would have produced a Bald Eagle and a song note from a Common Yellowthroat.

The weather of late must be somewhat responsible for the lack of migrant birds. Past observations in this area have yielded as many as fifty species. We will look forward to reaching that number of species again next March. In the meantime, happy birding for finally spring is here.



Marsh Wren. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

Bird's Nest Sculptures

By Geoff Bate

Members and their guests, in attendance at Birder's Night on February 27, 2002, enjoyed David Allinson's excellent presentation about bird banding at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory. They were also treated to the opportunity to view Vikki Ferguson's hand painted porcelain bird's nests.

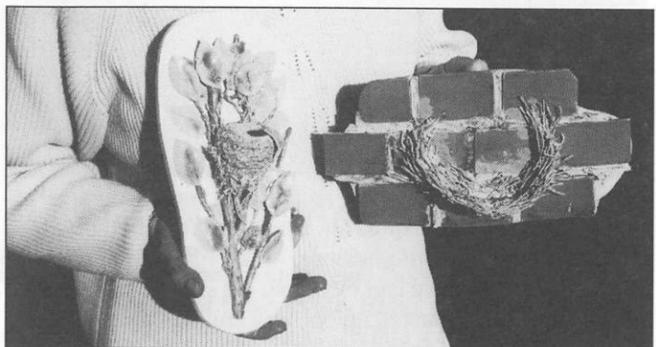
As Vikki grew up on a cattle ranch in the South Okanagan Valley she has a special closeness to BC wildlife, both flora and fauna. When not working for the BC Provincial Government, BC Parks Branch, Vikki spent most of her adult life painting, both in oils and watercolours. As well as being an excellent landscape artist, her subjects include animals, birds and flowers.

After she retired, Vikki planned on becoming a full time wildlife artist. However she took several courses at the Vancouver Academy of Art in sculpting and mould making, all the while modelling bird's nests. She then spent a year working under the tutelage of potter Jeanne Sarich of Cloud flower Clayworks, where she became proficient in glazes. Her next challenge was to reproduce both the translucency and delicateness associated with porcelain or bone china and identify the true colors and structure of bird's eggs and their nests.

In her studio, each piece is hand sculpted and fired in a kiln, no less than three, but often four times. "Each piece is extremely fragile until after the second firing. And even then, during the glazing process, dragging a brush over a twig can cause it to break". It is only after the third firing that the required sturdiness is achieved.

Vikki was honoured by being selected feature artist at the Van Dusen Gardens Art Show in Vancouver in December, 2001. In May, she has been invited to be the guest artist at the Meadowlark Festival in Penticton. As well, her work will be on display at the Tumbleweed Gallery in Penticton.

The miniature bird's nests Vikki had on display for VNHS members included Killdeer, Indigo Bunting, Chimney Swift,



Rufous Hummingbird, Goldfinch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Western Bluebird, California Quail, Western Grebe, Baltimore Oriole and a Northern Pygmy Owl.

If any one is interested in viewing Vikki's work please contact her at 604-279-0055, or by e-mail at vferguson@hotmail.com. By appointment, you may visit her gallery at 9215 Granville Avenue, Richmond, B.C. She has agreed to discount her prices for VNHS members and has offered a percentage of her sales to members to be donated to the Victoria Natural History Society.

Mud Swallow Gallery & Studio
Hand Painted
Porcelain Birds Nests

To view: call 604-279-0055
Vikki Ferguson, 9215 Granville Avenue
Richmond, BC V6Y 1P9

Welcome to New Members

Paul Darimont
Barkley Terrace
birding

Eloise and John (junior Mark) Defayette
Begbie Street
birding

Jenny Feick
Uganda Avenue
ecology terrestrial/aquatic/marine
natural history, botany, protected areas

James L. Ibbs
Kingcome Crescent
forest-trees, birds and marine life

Ann and Andy Keir
Whiffin Spit
geology, birding and hiking

Edith E. Quayle
Belmont Avenue

Gwen Stewart
birding

Casey Tweddell
Lyllall Street

Marg and Ray Williams
Jenkins Avenue
birds, paleontology, phenology

Kjerstiye Ziola
Ontario Street
hiking, field trips, evolutionary zoology

Lorraine Mainwaring and Janice Edwards
Byron Street

Heidi Krajewsky
Victoria

Lyn Merryfeather
Russell Street
birds and everything

Rosemary Bryan
Student Residence, University of Victoria
hiking, backpacking, painting, reading, nature and the outdoors

Gail Schacter
Moss Street
birds

Publicity Committee Report, 2002

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

The September 2001/May 2002 season was a relatively quiet one for the Publicity Team. Over the past three years almost \$1,000 has been raised annually for conservation projects through efforts of the team. We are presently working on an initiative to create interpretative signage at Esquimalt Lagoon. This project is on target; however it will probably take another year for completion, as there are a few "boggy areas" to overcome.

Several reasons have contributed to the 'quiet times' for the publicity team over the last year. The untimely death of Bev Glover last fall was a great loss within the team and for the Society, creating a gap we need to fill. Bev was our special co-ordinator for VNHS presentations at the various venues we were invited to. Her expertise and generous sharing of her time gave much to all who knew Bev. We miss her a great deal. At this time we are hoping to find a member of the Society who would like to take on this vital and rewarding role. If this idea appeals to any of you, I would love to hear from you. Please call 598-9680.

B.C. now finds itself in challenging times. If there is one constant we all know it must be change. It happens on a weekly basis, especially here in British Columbia. People's lives change with the passage of time. Three years ago the Publicity team was six members strong. Now, there is only one player on the team. The work that six of us were able to accomplish cannot be continued by one. The challenging and

changing role of health care in this Province, of which I am a member, has created enormous pressure on the reduced numbers of medical and nursing staff left to provide services. Representing the VNHS in all the special ways we did as a productive team becomes an even greater challenge for just one. Despite all this, I have managed to represent the Society at the request of women's groups and church groups where membership in our great organization was explored. We welcome those new members who have joined and look forward to your participation in the various areas that interest you.

At the present time the Directors are working on producing a new brochure that will reflect all the aspects of the Society. It is anticipated that this brochure will be available by the fall. The excellent work of the Program Committee this year in providing two birding courses to both members and the wider public has realised a considerable contribution to our chosen conservation project. We wish to thank all of you who have supported this initiative.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all our wonderful volunteers who have contributed their time and energy during the past season. We value our members and welcome their participation. All of us should think about the benefits that would accrue to VNHS if each member brought a friend, along with their coffee cup, to any of our regular meetings. This is a goal worth striving for by each member. Publicity is your role as members as well.

President's Report

By Bruce Whittington

An Island Welcome!

What a pleasure it is to welcome those of you who are attending the Federation of BC Naturalists' Annual General Meeting. There are many ways to get to this little corner of the province, but that doesn't mean it is easy, and we are delighted you have made the effort to join us here. As a member of FBCN for over twenty years, I know I will be seeing some familiar faces in the next few days, and I look forward also to making new friends.

It is a rare opportunity for us to share with fellow naturalists this place we call home. With camas meadows a sea of cobalt, and Douglas-firs that predate the Spanish explorations, it is a place of unusual diversity and beauty. We have planned a wide range of speakers and field trips to make you more familiar with some of the natural wonders of southern Vancouver Island.

It is also a time to talk about mutual concerns, and we have to face the fact that there has never been so compelling a need to do so. Whether we are concerned about our local issues, or the broader provincial challenges, we will speak more loudly with our united voice.

It is this united voice that the FBCN gives us. In a province so large, with a population so scattered, the Federation has done a remarkable job; one which has earned the respect of the members and the community beyond our membership. It brings us all together.

Which brings me back to the reason we are all here: We are all naturalists, and eager to discover more about our natural world. Look deep into a tide pool, marvel at the exultant song of the Sky Lark, or run your hands along the impossible bark of an Arbutus tree.

Welcome to "our backyard." We hope you'll enjoy your stay!

Program Committee Report to the Membership

The Program Committee organized over 50 field trips in 2001. Some of the new trips were Cape Flattery to see Tufted Puffins; Nanoose Hill to see wildflowers; and Muir Creek to look for fossils. With Natural History Night, we covered many interesting and diverse topics: from conservation issues in Mauritius to life forms on Vancouver Island 60 million years ago. We would like to thank all the leaders and guest speakers who volunteered their time for us.

The birding courses being offered through the society are going very well; last year more than \$2,000 was raised. All the money goes to important conservation projects. Please let us know if you have suggestions for other courses the society could offer, or if you would like to become a trip leader or do a presentation.

VNHS Board Welcomes its Newest Member

Your directors are pleased to welcome Isobel Dawson, who was elected as the newest member of the Board at the Annual General Meeting in March. Isobel replaces Sheila Mosher, who is stepping down. Sheila will continue her involvement with the VNHS Young Naturalists Club.

Isobel is Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at UVic, and brings with her valuable experience in non-profit organizations. She is no stranger to VNHS, having served as Secretary for several years in the 1980's.

A hearty thank you to Sheila for her many contributions, and a warm welcome to Isobel.

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary
presents the fifth annual
Sunset Barbecue
A Fabulous Dinner in a Great Outdoor Setting
Featuring cedar plank-barbecued wild Pacific Salmon and
Arctic Char, local wines and beer, and a silent and live auction.

Wednesday, June 5, 2002
at the Swan Lake Nature House
3873 Swan Lake Road

Tickets - \$50

Price includes a charitable receipt for approx. \$35

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary
3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria, B.C.
For more information: 479-0211



HAT Tricks

By Bruce Whittington

Bob Dylan must have known something about conservation work, because the times they are a-changin' down at the HAT office.

HAT is reluctantly winding down its active involvement in the Tod Creek watershed after three years of community stewardship work. We couldn't be happier about it though, because stepping in to carry on is the *Friends of Tod Creek Watershed*, a fledgling grassroots group that already has some impressive successes to its credit. HAT will continue to provide support in a variety of ways, including a FOTCW project to double the accessible fish spawning habitat in lower Tod Creek.

With the announcement of funding approval for our Good Neighbours project, HAT will be establishing new partnerships this year. Along with VNHS and many other agencies, HAT will be a part of the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative. Our Good Neighbours project will work with property owners around the Lagoon to provide information on how they can minimize their environmental impact on the Lagoon, a federal migratory bird sanctuary.

HAT will also be conducting landowner contact work with the Friends of Mount Douglas Park, around that park, and around Oak Haven Municipal Park in Central Saanich.

HAT director Marilyn Lambert is just finalizing plans for the "HAT's Off!" trip to southern Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Letters

To the Victoria Natural History Society

Re: Victoria Natural History Society Bursary
I am writing to express my gratitude for the funds you generously donated. Given the intensity of the Enviro Tech program [at Camosun College] as well as my physical location and the subsequent commute, it is most difficult for me to maintain a job while fulfilling my desire to maintain A's in my classes. For these reasons these funds are greatly appreciated as they assist me in fulfilling my academic goals. Again I thank you for your generous contribution.

Michelle Kehler, Sooke, BC

To the Victoria Natural History Society,

I am the recipient of the Samuel Simco Bursary and I would like to thank you very much for this financial reward.

We will be leaving with a full tour of keen birders, later this month, when the bird song and wildflower bloom are at their peak.

Naturalists at BC's provincial parks found themselves without government funding this year, and HAT is working with one contractor, Arenaria Research and Interpretation, to find ways that we can work together to ensure these essential programs can continue. Donations from the public (including VNHS members) have started to come in already, and if you would like to support the great work that is being done, a donation to Goldstream programs, through HAT, is tax deductible. For more information, call the Goldstream Visitor Centre at 478-9414, or the HAT office at 995-2428.

With the current level of fiscal uncertainty for non-profit organizations in British Columbia, we are pleased that we can continue to do the stewardship work we are doing. We are not alone in this, and several people from HAT spent a weekend recently learning, sharing, and teaching at the BC Land Trust Alliance "Seminar Series" held at Lake Cowichan. And although the times are changing, the message was loud and clear: the commitment to conservation is alive and well in the land trust movement. For more information about the Land Trust Alliance, see www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca, or give us a call at the HAT office.

I am currently writing up my Masters of Science thesis in the Department of Geography. My thesis is entitled "Approaches to Monitoring in Thailand's Marine National Parks" which focuses on coral reef fish ecology. My research has involved extensive periods in the field working with government, NGOs and local tourism operators. The main objectives were to both establish appropriate environmental monitoring protocols, as well as help create a greater understanding and appreciation of the unique coral reef ecosystem.

Although my Masters research has been in Southeast Asia, I am involved with Parks Canada here at home, and I hope that my skills can contribute to marine park management in our own country.

Thank you again for this bursary.
Sincerely,

Michelle Theberge

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., Murray and Anne Fraser 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.

MAY

Saturday, May 4

Spring Bird Count

The Spring Bird Count runs midnight to noon and the post-count gathering will be at Swan Lake. Phone **Rick Schortinghuis** for more information or to get involved (652-3326).

Sunday, May 5

Birding Royal Roads and Esquimalt Lagoon

Join **Ann Nightingale** for a birding walk around Esquimalt Lagoon. Possibilities include Caspian Tern, and Ruddy Turnstones. You should see a good variety of spring migrants. Meet at the bridge on Esquimalt Lagoon at 7:30 a.m. Call Ann at 652-6450 for more information. No pets please.

May 9, 10, 11, 12

Federation of BC Naturalists Annual General Meeting

The Victoria Natural History Society is the host this year: Let's make this meeting really shine! There will be **guest speakers galore** and **fabulous field trips**. Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to show off our region. Registration information is available on the VNHS website. If you would like to volunteer please call Ann at 652-6450.

Friday, May 17

Birding Mount Newton

Join **Sheila Mosher** for a birding walk on Mount Newton's south slope. We should see Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Western Tanager as well as many other migrant and resident birds. Mount Newton is also one of the few remaining places you can see Mourning Dove near Victoria. Meet at the corner of Haldon road and Newton Heights at 7:00 a.m. Phone Sheila at 652-3502 if you have any questions. No pets please.

Saturday, May 18 and Sunday, May 19

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guide! **Jeff Gaskin** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 381-7248

Saturday, May 18

Birding Blenkinsop Lake

Join **Kevin Slagboom** and **Rick Schortinghuis** in birding the Blenkinsop Bridge and Lochside Trail. Meet at the south end of the bridge at the end of Lochside Drive at 7:00 a.m. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

Sunday, May 19

Birding the Boardwalk at Langford Lake

Meet **Gordon Hart** for a birding walk on the trail at the north end of Langford Lake. You will also be birding the power lines behind the lake. This walk will take you to Hull's Wetland. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on Goldstream Avenue and the highway across from the entrance to the boardwalk. Call Gordon at 721-1264 for more information. No pets please.

Saturday, May 25

A Natural History Cycling Tour of the Galloping Goose Trail (Sooke Potholes to Leechtown)

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** on a cycling tour into the Sooke Hills. We will enjoy the flowers, birds and scenery along the way. Meet at the Galloping Goose parking lot 2.3 km up Sooke River Road at 8:00 a.m. Bring a cool drink and a lunch. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

Sunday, May 26

Birding Elk Lake

Come for a wonderful stroll with **Tom Gillespie** (361-1694) through exceptional nesting habitat on the shore of a favourite recreational lake. Watch for breeding warblers, vireos, and waterfowl. Meet at 7:00 am at the parking lot on Jennings Lane on the west side of the Pat Bay Highway (just south of the rowing boathouse). No pets please.

Friday, May 31

Birding the Colquitz River Trail

Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a 3-hour birding jaunt between Marigold Avenue and Wilkinson Road and on to Quick's Bottom. Snacks are a good idea. Meet at Marigold Park at 7:00 a.m. Call Rick at 652-3326 for more information. No pets please.

JUNE

Saturday, June 1

Birding at Witty's Lagoon

One of Victoria's birding hotspots! It's a peak weekend for migrant songbirds and the Lagoon may produce a nice mix of waterfowl. Meet at the main parking lot on Metchosin Road at 7:00 a.m. Leader to be announced. No pets please.

Sunday, June 2

Birding in Francis King Park

Join the **Gattens (Barry and Jeremy)** on a walk through Francis King Park and the Power Line trails. We will be stopping to look at the flowering shrubs, butterflies and birds along the way. Bring a

lunch and meet at the nature house at 7:00 a.m. Call Barry at 652-4357 for more information. No pets please.

Saturday, June 8

Birding the Cowichan River

Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 7:00 a.m. and expect to be gone for most of the day. In that case you'll also need a lunch! Phone **Ann Nightingale** for more information: 652-6450.

BULLETIN BOARD

VNHS Volunteering

Thanks go out to all the VNHS members who have been helping out with the upcoming Federation of British Columbia Naturalist Annual General Meeting. An event of this magnitude doesn't happen without the considerable efforts of a lot of people.

Other projects in need of assistance this spring are the Young Naturalists' Club and the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative.

The Young Naturalists Club is looking for some helpers for field trips. Leaders for local events are always appreciated, but other trips just need an individual to be there on behalf of the YNC. There are also opportunities for people to become involved in the organization and administration of the YNC, and someone with access to email is needed for communications. If you can help out, please contact **Sheila Mosher** at 652-3502.

The Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative is beginning its public outreach in the next couple of months. In particular, ELSI is looking for:

- people who would be willing to staff displays at events such as Earthweek, Oceans Day, and other similar occasions. Volunteers will be given all the information and contacts that they will need to represent the Initiative.
- long term volunteers to conduct ongoing monitoring of water and sediment quality.
- volunteers to conduct surveys of visitors to the lagoon and nearby residents.

Saturday, June 15 and Sunday, June 16

Victoria Butterfly Count

We are always looking for keen-eyed volunteers so get out your field guide! **Jeff Gaskin** is the count coordinator; give him a call at 381-7248

• people to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Shorekeepers to identify and survey intertidal species. Training will be provided. The time commitment varies, but some of these are only a couple of times a year. Details will be posted on the VNHS website. If you are willing to participate, please contact **Ann Nightingale** at 652-6450 or by email at matmot@shaw.ca.

The Federation of BC Naturalists' Annual General Meeting

From May 9 to 12, naturalists from all over the province will be gathering at the University of Victoria for the 2002 Annual General Meeting. Late registrations for the AGM and other events may still be possible.

Late registration for the AGM is \$40 per day or \$70 for field trips and workshops on May 10, 11 and 12th.

If there are still spaces on the bus, VNHS members can register for the Walbran field trip on May 9th (\$50). Preference will be given to AGM registrants.

VNHS members are welcome to the banquet to be held on Saturday, May 11. Tickets must be purchased by May 8. The cost is \$30, but AGM registrants will only have to pay \$22.

If you have not yet registered, please visit the VNHS website (www.vicnhs.bc.ca) for details and registration, or contact **Maureen Funk** (477-6957 or by email at mfunk@islandnet.com) to register.

CAMAS DAY

A Celebration of the Garry Oak Habitat

Saturday May 4, 2002

Beacon Hill Park (meet at the flagpole)

Guided Walks (length 1 hour)

9:00 am only — Birding Walk led by Tom Gillespie, Victoria Natural History Society

11:00 am and 1:00 pm — Archaeology Walk led by Dr. Grant Keddie, Royal BC Museum

11:00 am and 1:00 pm — Wild Flower Walks led by Dr. Chris Brayshaw, Royal BC Museum and Dr Adolf Ceska, Conservation Data Centre

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

For more information call: 592-6659



The Victoria NATURALIST

P.O. Box 5220, Stn. B.,
Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4

Expires: Dec-02

Philip and Marilyn Lambert
1868 Penshurst Road
VICTORIA BC V8N 2P3



VNHS field trippers on top of the world (on top of Mt. Wells anyway). *Photo: Bruce Whittington*