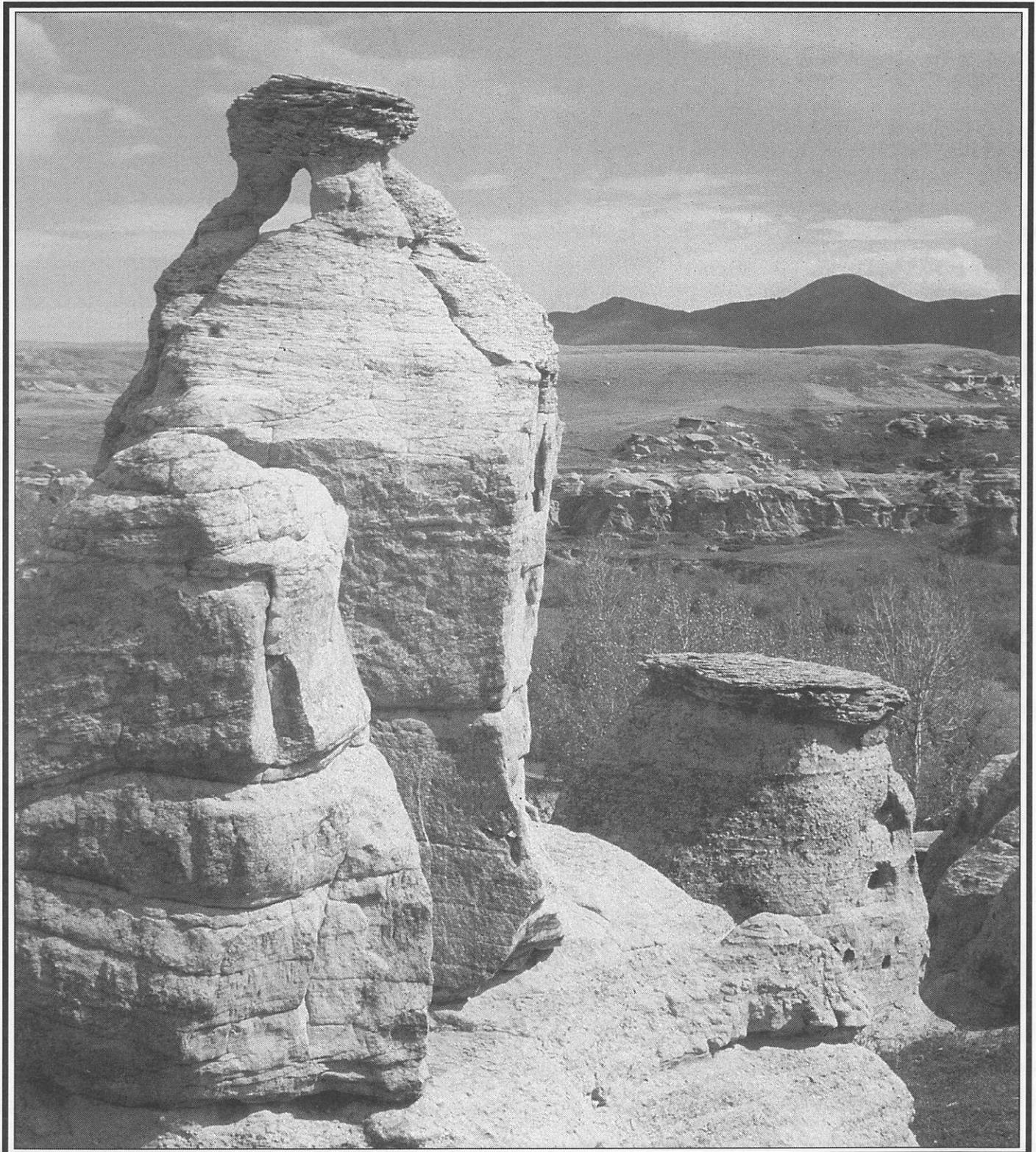




# The Victoria NATURALIST

SEPTEMBER  
OCTOBER  
2002  
VOL 59.2

VICTORIA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY





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*  
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Hoodoo formation at Writing on Stone Provincial Park by Ross Archibald	

The vacation is over!

Fall is traditionally a time in our society when we "go back to school" after taking time off during the summer months. We once again take up our involvement with groups and organizations that we put on hold during the vacation period.

Over the past decades we have also put on hold our involvement in ensuring that our water is safe to drink, our air safe to breathe, and that there is habitat for the many other creatures that we as naturalists hold dear. We thought we had delegated the stewardship of the critical attributes of our environment to our governments.

It has become increasingly clear; however, that our elected representatives in British Columbia have little interest in protecting anything but the financial bottom line. Environmental economists tell us that neo-classical economics does not truly evaluate the costs of destruction of the biosphere, of which we humans are a part. But it is clear that our politicians are not hearing the message.

An older friend telephoned us, as we were thinking about what we should write in this space. She wanted to let us know that she was saving the latest issue of *National Geographic* for us because of an article that pointed out what we humans have been doing to our biosphere in the name of progress. She was well and truly disturbed, not so much for herself, but for future generations.

We can no longer sit by expecting someone else will take care of our stewardship role. It is our responsibility to see that our "home" is taken care of; and our furred, feathered, and finned friends are secure in a sustainable biosphere. It is our responsibility as naturalists to become involved in educating our fellow humans about the importance to the human race of a healthy biosphere, both locally and globally.

Politicians are naturally led by numbers. As we all become more involved, our politicians will be forced to take notice. If we, as citizens, take the lead by becoming involved in helping the land heal and restoring a healthy relationship with our biosphere, our "leaders" will be forced to follow.

*Marilyn and Ross*

# Dragonflies and Damselflies of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands — a Checklist

By Leah R. Ramsay and David F. Fraser

Dragonfly identification for the naturalist has gotten a lot easier in the past few years with the arrival of several new field guides. *Dragonflies through Binoculars* by Sid Dunkle (Dunkle 2000) appeared two summers ago and its colour plates illustrate the dragonflies of North America. Dennis Paulson's full colour booklet entitled *Dragonflies of Washington* (Paulson 1999) depicts many of the damselflies and dragonflies that occur on Vancouver Island. Lastly, Rob Canning's full colour book on the damselflies and dragonflies of British Columbia and the Yukon (Cannings 2002 — reviewed elsewhere in this issue of the *Victoria Naturalist*) covers all the odonates found (so far...) in the province.

Besides all the challenges of learning a new group of organisms, there is the added joy of the common names of odonates. With the possible exception of some of the neo-tropical hummingbirds, we know no other group of organisms with such evocative common names. Take, for example, names like Sinuous Snaketail, Zigzag Darners and Blue Dashers! And once you have encountered the island species, River Jewelwings, Grey Sanddragons, Flame Skimmers and Lake Emeralds are all within a day's drive of the ferry terminal!

In order to learn the odonates found around home, we compiled a list for Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands a few summers ago. With increased interest in these species we

thought it might be useful to update the list and present it here in the *Victoria Naturalist*.

In addition, some specimens of the Desert Whitetail (*Libellula subornata*) have been labelled as being collected on Vancouver Island. Cannings (1983) points out that this species is usually found in alkali ponds in dry areas, extending as far north as the interior of Oregon. It is not included in Paulson (1999) and there are no records from Washington State (R.A. Cannings) — despite the range map presented in Dunkle (2000). We have followed Cannings (1983) and deleted the Desert Whitetail from the Vancouver Island list. Should specimens be found, both the Royal British Columbia Museum and the B.C. Conservation Data Centre should be notified.

Serious "dragonflies" may want to locate two technical guides to North American odonates; Westfall and May (1996) and Needham et al. (2000). Searching second hand bookstores may result in finding Cannings and Stuart's (1977) *The Dragonflies of British Columbia* — unfortunately out of print (and the subject of much worry in our house when our only copy disappears or heads out for field work). Webcruisers (these are people, not some type of odonate) will find an amazing number of useful sites. Start with any search engine or look at the list at the back of Cannings (2002).

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Rob Cannings for reviewing and updating the checklist and answering all things dragonfly. Claudia Copley encouraged us to get around to submitting the checklist to the *Victoria Naturalist*.

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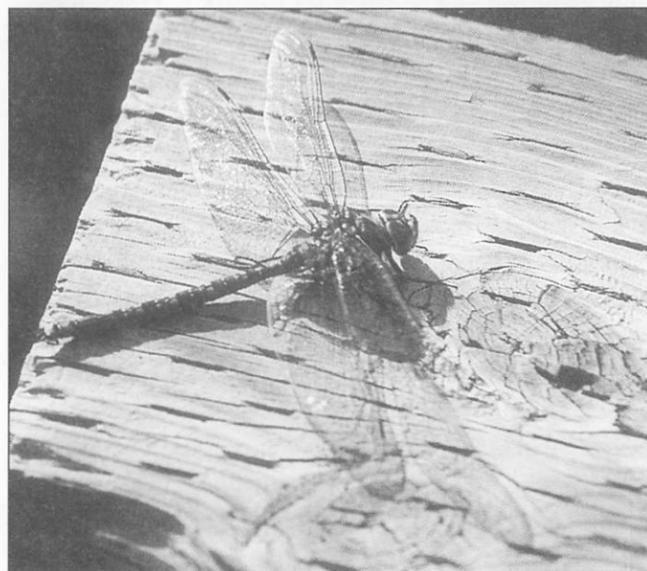


Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

## The Odonates of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, British Columbia

### DAMSELFLIES

#### Spreadwings (Family Lestidae)

Spotted Spreadwing	<i>Lestes congener</i>
Common Spreadwing	<i>Lestes disjunctus</i>
Emerald Spreadwing	<i>Lestes dryas</i>
Lyre-tipped Spreadwing	<i>Lestes unguiculatus</i>
Sweetflag Spreadwing	<i>Lestes forcipatus</i>

#### Pond Damsels (Family Coenagrionidae)

Western Red Damsel	<i>Amphiagrion abbreviatum</i>
Boreal Bluet	<i>Enallagma boreale</i>
Tule Bluet	<i>Enallagma carunculatum</i>
Northern Bluet	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>
Pacific Forktail	<i>Ischnura cervula</i>
Swift Forktail	<i>Ischnura erratica</i>
Western Forktail	<i>Ischnura perparva</i>
Sedge Sprite	<i>Nehalennia irene</i>

### DRAGONFLIES

#### Darners (Family Aeshnidae)

California Darner	<i>Aeshna californica</i>
Canada Darner	<i>Aeshna canadensis</i>
Lake Darner	<i>Aeshna eremita</i>
Variable Darner	<i>Aeshna interrupta</i>
Sedge Darner	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>
Blue-eyed Darner	<i>Aeshna multicolor</i>
Paddle-tailed Darner	<i>Aeshna palmata</i>
Zigzag Darner	<i>Aeshna sitchensis</i>
Muskeg Darner	<i>Aeshna subarctica</i>
Black-tipped Darner	<i>Aeshna tuberculifera</i>
Shadow Darner	<i>Aeshna umbrosa</i>
Common Green Darner	<i>Anax junius</i>

#### Clubtails (Family Gomphidae)

Sinuous Snaketail	<i>Ophiogomphus occidentis</i>
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#### Spiketails (Family Cordulegastridae)

Pacific Spiketail	<i>Cordulegaster dorsalis</i>
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#### Emeralds (Family Corduliidae)

American Emerald	<i>Cordulia shurtleffi</i>
Beaverpond Baskettail	<i>Epitheca canis</i>
Spiny Baskettail	<i>Epitheca spinigera</i>
Ocellated Emerald	<i>Somatochlora minor</i>
Mountain Emerald	<i>Somatochlora semicircularis</i>
Ringed Emerald	<i>Somatochlora albocincta</i>
Brush-tipped Emerald	<i>Somatochlora walshii</i>

#### Skimmers (Family Libellulidae)

Western Pondhawk	<i>Erythemis collocata</i>
Crimson-ringed Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia glacialis</i>
Hudsonian Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia hudsonica</i>
Dot-tailed Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia intacta</i>
Variable Whiteface	<i>Leucorrhinia proxima</i>
Eight-spotted Skimmer	<i>Libellula forensis</i>
Chalk-fronted Skimmer	<i>Libellula julia</i>
Common Whitetail	<i>Libellula lydia</i>
Four-spotted Skimmer	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>
Blue Dasher	<i>Pachydiplax longipennis</i>
Spot-winged Glider	<i>Pantala hymenaea</i>
Variegated Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum corruptum</i>
Saffron-bordered Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum costiferum</i>
Black Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>
Cardinal Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum illotum</i>
Red-veined Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum madidum</i>
White-faced Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum obtrusum</i>
Band-winged Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum occidentale</i>
Striped Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum pallipes</i>
Yellow-legged Meadowhawk	<i>Sympetrum vicinum</i>
Black Saddlebags	<i>Tramea lacerata</i>

# “Darn the Damsels Anyway”

Book Review by Claudia Copley

I suppose that when most people think of me, they make the association “wife of Darren”. And Darren does have an inordinate fondness for birds with which he is often associated. So, by proxy, must I.

While I do enjoy birding, my greatest fascination has always been with insects. My interest and admiration of this group of organisms is primarily based on two things: their infinite diversity and their accessibility. You could see a new species of insect every day of your life and never even come close to meeting them all. Lister: take note!

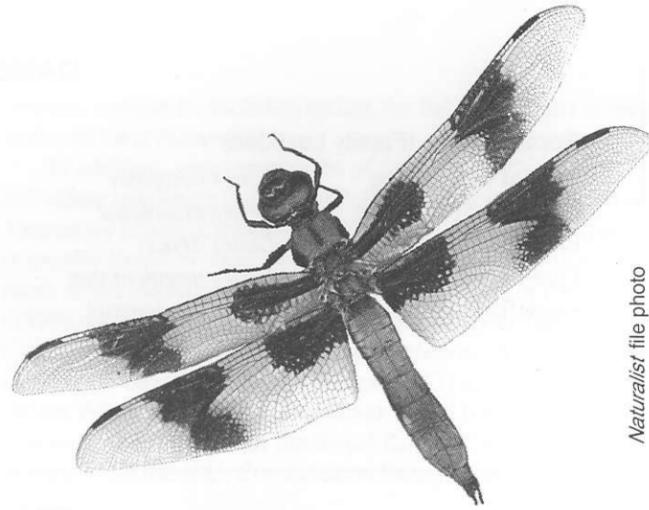
The insects that attract even the least-interested person's attention are generally those that are large and colourful; a perfect description of many dragonflies. In the heat of summer, when you are wandering around with your binocular, desperate for even a Towhee to pop out, you will unavoidably encounter dragonflies.

For birders this may serve as the next best thing to keep you amused until fall migration. So instead of putting your binocular away for the summer, supplement it with the new book by Rob Cannings: “*Introducing the Dragonflies of British Columbia and the Yukon*”.

This book is designed as a field guide rather than a key. Instead of having to plough your way through dichotomous keys (there is only one simple one to the family level), up-close colour photographs, combined with physical descriptions and some line drawings, will help you to decide which species you are looking at. This technique of identifying a dragonfly is much the same as you might use to identify a bird you were not familiar with, with a couple of exceptions. There are far fewer dragonfly species in BC than birds (88 compared to more than 400), but there are some (very much like the *Empidonax* complex) that differ very subtly.

Rob's book is the perfect “starter kit” for your interesting new hobby. Once you get further engrossed in dragonflies, you may consider acquiring a net and a hand lens to go with it. Some of the groups, particularly the Darners, do not sit still long enough to identify them without getting very “up close and personal”. An “in-the-hand” dragonfly is an amazing experience and many of the finer details can only be resolved this way.

Another piece of advice: do not start with the damsel-



Naturalist file photo

flies! One of the many jokes Mother Nature plays on us is the fact that damselflies are easy to capture and very difficult to identify.

If you are now sitting there wondering about what the differences are between dragonflies and damselflies, this book will also answer that question. It also contains basic natural history, habitat descriptions, flight periods, and range descriptions.

Darren and I convinced a pair of “newbie” friends to try out the book and they were successful by first using the colour photos and then narrowing the specimens down further using the description. It takes some practice and some of you may always be uncertain about your identifications without further resources. Our friends did find that they would have liked a ruler measure marked off on the inside of the back cover (like the Peterson bird guide has), and photos of both sexes. But for the price of two fancy coffees (\$9.95), you'll have a way to spend your afternoons from May to as late as November. So grab your bino, and a net. There is still three months left!

*Rob's book is available at the Goldstream Visitor Centre, where HAT members get a 10% discount!*

# Rites of Spring

By Heidi and Ken Sohm

“Look for an orange coloured breast”, said the expert. “Easy,” we thought as we set up scopes on the foreshore on an incoming tide. We were in fact, looking for Red Knots amongst perhaps 150 Dowitchers and Black-bellied Plovers. It should be easy, but comparing birds in the field with pictures in the bird book is difficult. When we started studying the group through the telescope, in the warm light of the late afternoon sun, they *all* looked to have orange-hued breasts.

Looking for particular birds amongst a feeding flock of shorebirds adds to the problems. You cannot use the clues you might when looking at perching birds — ‘follow the left limb up to the second large branch on the right... for example. With shorebirds it is more in the nature of ‘go in about 30 birds from the left — moving towards us — right next to those three Black-bellied Plovers right now....’

We did find the Knots after a few minutes searching, however. In fact there were four in that particular group of shorebirds, in addition to a Pectoral Sandpiper, a bit unusual in that habitat. We were to see more Knots later, in groups of up to about six birds.

We were on a three-day birding trip to Tofino in the spring of 2002.

A new (March 2002) West Coast Area checklist gives a total species' count of 330 birds, with 96 breeding. A 1978 publication, *Birds of Pacific Rim National Park* (see bibliography) lists 247 species. The two checklist areas are not identical. They both cover a large area, from Jordan River to Triangle Island in the case of the 2002 checklist. Pelagic birding would be necessary to maximize the birding potential of this region.

Some of the terrain in the checklist area is rather inaccessible to ordinary mortals: for example, toting spotting scopes along the West Coast Trail and managing to maintain enthusiasm for bird watching would raise birding to a new level!

In any event, the area has considerable appeal for birders. The dates of our visit were May 6-9. The Shorebird festival had just happened, the weekend of May 4th and 5th, with the usual activities, birding walks, talks and slide shows.

In our first visits to the area, we looked for birds on the legendary beaches. There are certainly shorebirds to be found

on those long golden sandy beaches, and occasionally larger birds such as Godwits and Whimbrel stop by. In fact, the smaller numbers to be found on the beaches perhaps makes it easier to sort out the various species. The sandpipers and company, the ‘peep’, are remarkable tolerant of human proximity.

On this trip, Long Beach and Chesterman's Beach always held a few Sandpipers, Dunlin, lots of Sanderlings and the ever present Semi-palmated Plovers. The latter are always a delight to watch. Compared to the constant, frenzied feeding of the sandpipers, the Semi-palmated Plovers are more contemplative. They study for a few seconds, do a soft shuffle, stab and bring up a worm before skittering on a few feet. We were advised to keep an eye open for Snowy Plover, a casual spring visitor here. None obliged.

Though the beaches are glorious, the most exciting birding activity is on the tidal mud flats of the inlet. Here are the spectacular aerial demonstrations as thousands of shorebirds take off with a muted thunder of wings. Almost every available mud flat has its contingent of shorebirds. These gradually dwindle in number as the tide comes in and the birds accumulate on the remaining mud.

So timing is everything. It has to be the right ‘calendar window’ and also the right

time of day. A tide table is crucial. The shorebirds are of course ever present, assuming they *are* in fact there, but if you want a close encounter, watch on an incoming tide.

Where to go on the inlet? One of the best locations is down the road to the fish hatchery, adjacent to the Dolphin motel. Here you can position yourself at various places along the pebbly/muddy shore and watch and wait. Even before the tide comes in, there is always something to be seen.

On this visit, apart from huge numbers of Dowitchers, Black-bellied Plovers and sandpipers, there was always a large group of perhaps up to 800 Brant Geese out on the water by some of the small islands. Seeing such large numbers of birds, even at a distance, is quite awe-inspiring. While there are other locations on the inlet, it is best to talk to a local birder to find out which spots are currently accessible.

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Heidi had a Marbled Godwit land briefly right in front of her, but Ken had to wait for his on the Victoria golf course one morning before the sprinklers came on and the golfers emerged.

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The shorebirds we saw on this trip were mostly the same species that were witnessed around Victoria this spring. The difference is in the large numbers. Once we counted close to a hundred Whimbrels before we stopped and guesstimated the rest — perhaps 120. Among the Whimbrels there are usually Godwits, although they were few on this visit. Heidi had a Marbled Godwit land briefly right in front of her, but Ken had to wait for his on the Victoria golf course one morning before the sprinklers came on and the golfers emerged.

Two resident experts, Adrian Dorst and George Bradd, estimated between 50 and 60 thousand birds of an evening. Besides the impressive numbers of birds to be found on the inlet, there is the factor of proximity. It becomes easier to differentiate the sandpipers and pick out the Red Knots, among the hundreds of Dowitchers and Black-bellied Plovers. It is always worth searching for rarities.

One evening from the fish hatchery we witnessed two Bald Eagles corral a hapless duck that found itself in the wrong place at the wrong time. One eagle swooped, forcing the duck to dive, while the other one waited, poised to renew the attack as soon as the duck surfaced. Finally, the exhausted duck was taken, but the eagle couldn't get off the water. We watched as, after several tries, the predator proceeded to shore using the avian equivalent of the butterfly stroke. It swam possibly 150 metres to the shallows. Here, after a short pause, it was finally able to lift off with prey intact and fly up into a large tree. We found afterwards that this is not an uncommon way for the eagle to land its catch. Often, on the inlet here black bears can be spotted, foraging along the far beach. Probably the best situation, for both the animal and the human observer!

For the Pacific Golden Plover, classed as rare, one of the better locations is the airport. We went there after our first sights of the Knots, along with one of the resident birders. Unfortunately we did not locate any Golden Plovers on this particular trip. A group of Greater White-fronted geese flew over while we were there, however. And on a subsequent search, we had a distant glimpse of an unidentified owl.

To bird at locations like the airport, it is best to talk to someone there and establish that it is in fact OK to roam around. It is not a busy airport. On this trip, the grounds-

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keeper of the adjacent golf course assured us that it was all right. He said it was also acceptable to look for birds on the golf course. The fairways are good for certain shorebirds.

An early visit on the last morning produced a small flock of Greater White-fronted Geese and 3 Pectoral Sandpipers.

This area, the golf course and along the road to Grice Bay (which we believe is called McLean Point Road) is also reliable at this time of the year for such birds as Varied Thrush and other early passerines habitual in this type of mixed forest. As well, as we drove along the road, we watched carefully for Ruffed Grouse, as on other visits we have seen them here. We did see one feeding along the grassy margin nearly every time we drove that road on this visit.

At the end of the road, Grice Bay is certainly worth a visit. The bay does fill in quickly and is not the best location to see shorebirds up close. Whimbrel usually feed here in large numbers, though somewhat distantly. Groups of varied duck species, Mergansers, Geese, can also be seen from here. Here, as at most locations in the area, the resident Ospreys can usually be seen.

To sum up, Tofino is a great place to be in May. The weather on this occasion was superb, though cold in the mornings, and the beaches are always great to stride out on. There are no great hordes of people. Unfortunately birders were conspicuous by their absence. It would have been nice to be able to exchange notes and find out what had been seen and where.

On leaving to come back to Victoria, we decided to make a quick stop down by the hatchery for our last fill of the great spectacle. Near the beach lives a gentleman with whom we had briefly chatted before. Over the years, watching people troop obsessively down to the beach in their bush clothes and/or Tilley hats, carrying scopes over their shoulders, he had wondered what all the fuss was about. Eventually he succumbed to the birders' malaise and now sports a pretty fancy Manfrotto telescope/tripod outfit, keeps records, and in fact is a "Regular Birder." He certainly doesn't have far to go!

As we were leaving, we said we were on our way back to Victoria that morning. All he replied was: "Oh, you poor people..."

## Bibliography

David Hatler, R. Wayne Campbell, Adrian Dorst. *Birds of Pacific Rim National Park*. Occasional Papers of the B.C. Provincial Museum. 1978. This book profiles each bird in the checklist, describing its status and where within the checklist area it is most likely to be found. There are good regional maps, with transects showing the associated counts. The Park's so-called 'Rain Forest Trail', for example, came up with 16 species back in the '70's. The Victoria library system has some copies of this book, with at least one reference copy.

R. A. Butler, in an article by in one 2001 issue of *Discovery* (the biannual journal of the Vancouver Natural History Society) provided a survey of the Tofino shorebirds.

# Summer Birding

By John Defayette

How did you spend your summer holidays? Do you remember the essay that we had to write on returning to school in the fall? Living in Victoria usually means that we have summer visitors, and after the last group left and before the next group of visitors arrived, we decided that we needed a rest and wanted to do a bit of traveling. A recent issue of the *Naturalist* had something that looked interesting: "Birding Mandarte and Sidney Islands". The only problem was getting up at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday July 21st. We did it! We even arrived before leader Bruce Whittington! Actually, most of our 19-member group had boarded the ferry before him.

The trip around Mandarte Island was fascinating. We saw Cormorants Double Crested and Pelagic. We could see the females sitting on their nests while some with young would have one parent off fishing to feed the little ones. Through our binoculars, we noted the nests made of sticks and seaweed — one member of the group described it as a large nest of shredded wheat. The black Cormorant bodies were in stark contrast to the grayish white cliffs of the island.

The ferry Captain stayed off shore so as to not to disturb the nesting birds, but later in the day, we noticed other boats very close to the island. It is clear that education is needed to preserve the island site. Thankfully it is not easy to go ashore.

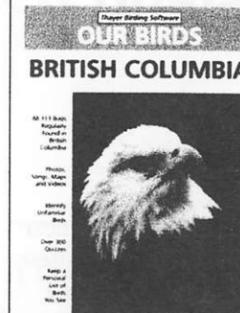
As the ferry needed to keep to a schedule, we headed for Sidney Island and rounded the Spit. What a sight — motor vessels and sailing yachts galore; all moored close to the ferry dock. After a brief orientation by Bruce, we set off first to explore the sunny spit, but four of us decided to venture into the shady forest, thanks to Bruce's encouragement.

It was not long before we reached a clearing where overnight campers greeted us.

"Look over there" they pointed.

We sighted an Osprey nest! Then we saw an eagle being chased by the Osprey parents as it dove for the nesting meal. There was a large flock of Great Blue Herons wading in the shallow water, and of course, Gulls that scattered into the air whenever the Eagle took to the sky. We also noted Pigeon Guillemots, which were a treat to view. A loud rattling call announced the presence of a Belted Kingfisher, which we saw diving for its lunch. We headed back into the forest to escape the heat, and spotted a Turkey Vulture circling high in the heavens. It missed the lovely song that an Orange Crowned Warbler sang for us. At lunchtime, we spotted White Crowned Sparrows aplenty, and Northern Rough Winged Swallows swooping down and around eating their fill.

We became concerned about the number of people that we saw camping. How were all of us going to get off the island? There is only one ferry, and it only carries 40 persons. We decided that it would be wise to head down to the dock. How right we were! Some of our group had to wait for the next sailing. Hopefully, they had time to see the Fallow deer and the wee garter snake on Sidney Island.



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# Cormorants' Island

By Yorke Edwards

**B**allingall Island, located in Trincomali Channel near the southwest end of Galiano Island, is our smallest Provincial Park and also the most amazing. It is a large rock with small amounts of soil where long ago, several large trees began growing on the island. Undecided about the direction in which their trunks and limbs should grow, their wooden tangles were perhaps shaped to some extent by the area's strong winter winds. Now, they have been dead for many years.

The dead trees are probably Western Junipers, a smallish tree that often lives alone because it is able to thrive where other tree species cannot. All species of Junipers have small scale-like leaves. Their blue berries can be either male or female. The sweet outer tissue of the berries attracts hungry birds, which then scatter the seeds. Juniper trees and shrubs can live to be very old. One juniper in Britain has lived more than 1,000 years. The soft wood of junipers resists decay.



Cormorants nesting on Ballingall Island. Photo: Clifford Carl (B.C. Museum Photo)

Through many years Double-crested Cormorants have built nests on the trees on Ballingall Island. This is a bit unusual because most "Double-crests" nest on remote rocky islands having few trees, or none at all. Usually the nests are on the ground, often numbering in the dozens; each nest yards distant from others. The nests in the dead trees were probably made many years ago, and are kept serviceable with annual repairs. The trees' bent branches have easily carried the nests from year to year. Annually the cormorants have added sticks to the nests, somehow keeping them strong enough to hold the weight of adults plus their growing young.

Seeing those birds on the wildly wooden arms in late spring and early summer is, as said by Maggie Paquet in her recent book *The B.C. Parks Explorer* (Whitecap), "an amazing sight."

# Partying Wild in the Garden

By Maureen Funk

**W**hat do you get when you combine plant lovers, nature lovers, energy savers, and general all-around earth lovers, who don't mind a little dirt and sweat, and want the world to be inspired by their message? You get the Wild Garden Party Project; a demonstration garden built over five long, hot days for the 2002 Victoria Flower and Garden Show.

Following a native plant demonstration garden at the 2000 Flower and Garden Show, the mad vision for this project began with a few individuals. Some would have you believe that myself or other certain individuals suggested that next time we did a show garden we should do an entire "Sustainable Living" yard, but I prefer to plead a vague memory than to admit to that notion.

The latest vision was really spearheaded by Susan Bastin (Native Plant Society of BC, and Native Plant Study Group). Her initial design was the inspiration for our mammoth undertaking this year. She gathered around her a loose committee of representatives from: the Native Plant Society of BC, the Native Plant Study Group, Habitat Acquisition Trust, Naturescape, Swan Lake, City Green, Lifecycles, the Compost Education Centre, CRD Water, and the South Island Organic Producer's Association. I won't bore you with the details of the meetings except to say that the planning and momentum began there. And without careful budgeting and support through fundraising and donations (such as that from the Victoria Natural History Society), and without great volunteer support, this project would not have happened.

The ambitious plan, to fill 100' x 30' space, was to showcase: gardening for wildlife, the use of drought tolerant plants, avoidance of pesticides, growing your own food, collection of rainwater, micro-irrigation, composting and even recycling of building materials. The garden featured a 'natural' woodland and seasonally dry creek bed, a compost area, a greenhouse filled with native plant bonsai, organically grown vegetables (grown in raised beds made of Altwood, a recycled plastic product), a patio of re-used bricks, and a conceptual wood house made of Altwood and otherwise recycled materials. More subtle messages of bicycling, buying organic food, and shade grown coffee were also included.

The garden design was divided into manageable pieces and responsibility was handed over to a few individuals. The collection of materials and building of the house were begun months and weeks previous to the main work beginning. The modular house was moved to the site on Sunday morning, where it was re-assembled, while volunteers began unloading feather rock, mulch, sand, river rock, and the first of four 5-ton truckloads of plant material.

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It took five days of 10 to 15 hours each and many, many dedicated volunteers to complete the display.

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Once the house was level and complete, work continued on levelling the patio area and raised vegetable beds. At the same time, plants were still being unloaded and tagged (so they could be returned to their rightful owners). It took five days of 10 to 15 hours each and many, many dedicated volunteers to complete the display (and display tent).

Judging of the display gardens began at noon on the Thursday prior to the main show opening. Despite our own self-imposed deadline of 10 am, we completed just in time to vacate for the judging. During the show, the display garden and tent were staffed by volunteers to answer questions, offer suggestions, and hand out copies of our 4 page, full

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colour brochure that detailed information about the project.

Although tired, exhausted, sunburned, sore, and filthy dirty (some more than others), I feel I am safe in saying all those involved feel privileged to have been part of such a wonderful, fulfilling project. I believe we did get our

message out and the experience of bringing these many groups together is just the icing on the cake. Rumour has it the next project may be a garden tour, but you didn't hear it from me. Remember my selective memory.

## Bald Eagle Live Web-cam...OAKBAYCAM.com

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Earlier this Spring, as winter released her icy grip upon Lotus Land, Gwen Greenwood, co-ordinator for the Bald Eagle Nest Tree Project, asked me if I would keep an eye on a nesting pair of Bald Eagles. Oak Bay Tourism had sponsored and funded the eagle camera that was mounted on the top of the Oak Bay Fire Station training tower. It was this creative idea that allowed me on so many occasions to peer into the private world of this Bald Eagle pair.

Realizing how busy I was with work, I assured her that I wouldn't have much time to monitor despite the fact that this nest site was close to my home. How little did I realize then that these majestic birds would capture my attention for the entire nesting season!

I have over the years been fascinated by these magnificent, regal birds of prey, and have felt a natural kinship with them. At the top of the food chain they are undisputedly adept at killing, scavenging, pirating and masters of their realm — the sky. When watching them take to the skies, I am in awe as they soar and glide. They harness 'thermals' to provide lift for their seven foot wing span. When they reach their chosen altitude, their performance is one of grace and beauty that leaves me enthralled no matter what time of year or what conditions prevail.

Infrequent visits by me to the nest sight in early spring certainly indicated that a resident pair of Bald Eagles were interested in starting a family. The month of March reassured me that my hunches were correct and by April an adult



Adult Eagle at Oak Bay Nest site with two young Eaglets, July 2002. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

female, the larger of the two, was sitting on eggs.

Eagles, on average, lay two and sometimes three eggs. This year was no exception and by May 9th a positive report of two eagle chicks was confirmed at this nest site by the installation of a nest-cam.

When inclement weather stalled my visits, I was able to watch the story unfold as I sat at my computer. At other times, weather permitting, you would find me peering through binocular or hunched awkwardly over my camera trying to capture the fascinating activity that went on in the canopy above. Interested and curious folk would arrive at my usual station who also were hoping for a glimpse into the world of birds high atop a 150 ft. Cedar tree.

Three years ago I had noticed that an Eagle pair had built a nest in this same tree. Choice of trees for Eagles is very important as their nests have to be high enough to allow for viewing of their territory and strong enough to hold an ever increasing weight that accumulates over the years. They usually add more branches to the existing nest year after year.

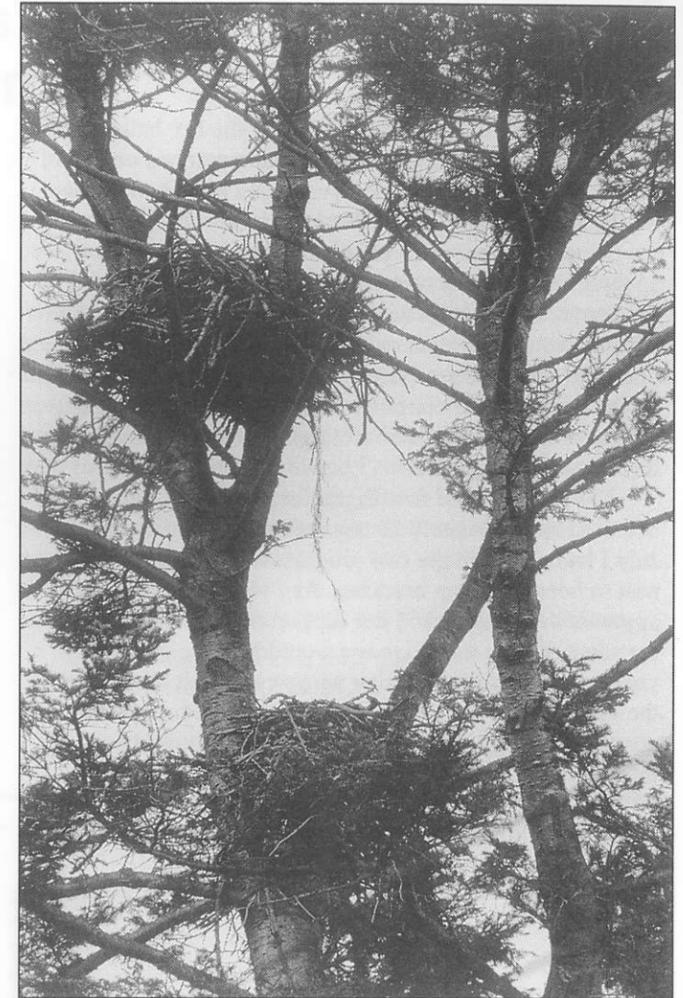
Three years ago one eaglet successfully fledged from the lower nest in this chosen tree. Last year this eagle pair took a "time out" from raising young. Instead they built a new nest at a higher point within the cedar tree. For reasons unknown, the lower nest was abandoned. Their decision was a positive step, for this year two young hatchlings fledged. In May 2002, I first caught site of the hatchlings the weekend that Victoria hosted the Annual General Meeting for the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists.

I had just completed leading a waterfront bird field trip and asked the participants if they would like to see an active Eagle's nest. Upon our arrival, and to the delight of us all, two little grey, 'fluff-balls' peered over the edge of the nest and waved a stubby little wing shoot as if to say "Hi" as we positioned our binoculars.

From that moment on I became hooked, and dedicated many moments at the nest site just gazing up or viewing from my computer chair as I 'clicked' onto the web site. This activity afforded me many hours of pure enjoyment as I watched a parent bird arrive on screen with fresh kill.

Their food source was usually some unfortunate Glaucous-winged gull caught in flight. Earlier in April I had photographed what looked to be the tail of a cooper's Hawk in the nest as one adult sat incubating. Although fish is the preferred diet of Bald Eagles, they do take other birds including gulls and ducks as well as small mammals and carrion. The availability of gulls, their primary food source at this location, is evident by the many carcasses in and around the nest and at the base of the tree. I have even seen a pair of Bald Eagles hunt as a team although they usually hunt alone.

Over the warm days of July I was able to observe the two developing eaglets on a daily basis. They have grown to the size of their parents now and have replaced their grey down with glossy brown feathers. July 18th was a memorable day for me as I stood looking skyward. I was privileged to witness the older of the two hatchlings take its first flight above the nest tree. "Awesome" is my choice of word to describe the sensation that filled me as I watched.



Double nests, Oak Bay nest site, Monterey Avenue, March 2002. Lower nest built 3 years ago. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

Three years ago I had noticed that an Eagle pair had built a nest in this same tree. Choice of trees for Eagles is very important as their nests have to be high enough to allow for viewing of their territory and strong enough to hold an ever increasing weight that accumulates over the years.

This experience was thrilling not only for me but I am sure for the bird as well as it circled above me. The joy I felt can only be shared and understood by other birders and 'Nature lovers'.

As I watched the eaglet circle over the fire hall and land successfully beside its concerned sibling perched on one of their favourite branches, I felt privileged to be part of this momentous occasion. There was much bill rubbing between the two eaglets that were interesting to witness. This apparent closeness between the two eaglets was unusual, for the drama in the nest is not for the faint hearted. Fratricide usually occurs where an older hatchling kills the younger one. The availability of food and the length of time between laying of the eggs dictates whether this happens. We can only assume that these two siblings were hatched within a day or two of each other.

The milestone of first flight, for the two young eagles occurred approximately 75 days after hatching. Earlier in July I had observed the two progress from exercising in the nest to hopping along branches. As I watched it became apparent that the nest did not support two birds exercising at the same time so the older one would beat the cowering younger one with its massive wings causing it to retreat to the very edge of the nest. This activity caused me some concern although the watchful parent bird showed no interest in intervening.

I recall July 9th as a new bench mark for this energetic twosome for they were exercising their wings as though

## Mortality, as high as 50% or greater is not uncommon during the first year of life for a juvenile eagle.

they were on a trampoline in the nest. By July 12th, one was heading out of the nest and hopping along an ample branch. Within two days the younger eaglet had joined its sibling and it too had become a "brancher". There they stayed a good part of the day, surveying their new world as the adult birds continued to bring food to them.

Many hours would pass before an adult showed up at the nest site so at times the young would hop back into the nest to sleep or sift through the debris of feathers and other undigestible substances from a previous meal.

The Eagle family is now away from the nest a great deal during the day. At times I have seen the young return alone and together. During the week of July 22nd, the young appeared to be back at the nest tree by dusk. Their high pitch call for food as they spot an adult eagle returning is quite resounding.

As the month of August approaches, this family of Eagles will be seen less frequently together for their departure draws nigh. The nest now appears empty the last few evenings when I have visited. July 29th was the last day I saw the eaglets in the nest at daybreak. During the next two weeks the family of eagles will migrate.

It would be pleasant to think that the adults are teaching their young to fish and hunt out off the waters of Oak Bay for I have seen this little family sitting on Mary Todd Island at the marina. The young have the instinct to hunt but do not have the skills so much of the time they must observe their parents.

Mortality, as high as 50% or greater is not uncommon during the first year of life for a juvenile eagle. Research suggests that the young migrate even before the parent birds leave their breeding territory. How they find their way to important food gathering areas is unknown. Eventually both juveniles and adults arrive at coastal estuaries and rivers and gorge themselves on salmon returning to spawn. These gathering spots for eagles after a spring and summer of raising young must be like a much-needed holiday.

I have watched this pair of adult Bald Eagles with renewed interest this year. Although saddened by their departure, I can look forward to the return of the adults once again at the end of September. As the last days of summer blend into that lovely colourful season we call fall, I know for sure they will be back once again to renew their bond and proclaim their territory as Mother Nature looks on.

## Hastings/Courtland Flats Bird Viewing Improvements

In 1995 a proposal was made to the Victoria Natural History Society by a group called SWANS, (Strawberry Vale Wetlands and Agricultural lands Nature Stewardship society) regarding the potential to become involved in providing stewardship to this popular birding area. Volunteers were requested to lend a hand and David Pearce stepped forward to offer his support. David always felt a special interest in this area, as it was part of his Christmas Bird Count territory. Soon David became a member of SWANS, and several SWANS members joined the VNHS.

Our first major accomplishment was the creation of Strawberry Knoll Park. It is a wonderful little pocket park at the north end of Holland Road, overlooking the valley and wetlands below, and crowned with rocky outcroppings, knarled Garry Oaks, and a wonderful array of wildflowers. A plan was created for the development of walking trails, wetlands restoration, and bird viewing stations.

At this time the municipality of Saanich took on the development of an integrated watershed management plan for the Durrel Creek watershed that defines this area. Many local stakeholders were identified and a long and exhaustive consultative process was undertaken to meet the needs of landowners, farmers, residents, and wildlife. SWANS and VNHS representatives were pleased to see that the plan called for improved drainage for agricultural uses, but with a water level control device that ensured over-wintering waterfowl would continue to have the habitat required for their survival. Also included in the watershed management plan were improvements to trails, increased parking, and bird viewing areas and platforms for the birding public who so enjoy this area.

The new culvert and drainage system was put in place last summer, and Saanich is now ready to undertake the next stage of area enhancements. They hope to work in partnership with the VNHS, and other community groups to build a bird-viewing platform at the north end of Holland Road. Those of us who have worked on this project would like to honour David Pearce's commitment to protecting wildlife values in this area by naming the platform after him. It was David who first proposed the bird-viewing platform, and suggested

that the VNHS could be responsible for its design and construction.

This is a very exciting time for those of us who value wildlife, and are committed to educating others about the need to protect it. We have waited a long time for the dreams and visions that started us on this path to finally become a reality. To make this happen we need VNHS members who have some experience in design and construction to volunteer their expertise so that the David Pearce Bird Viewing Platform can start to take shape. A plan is required with detailed specifications so that a budget can be set and site preparation can take place.

If you are able to help with this project please contact:

**Lenny Ross**, 727-0918, lross@pacificcoast.net or  
**Louise Beinhauer**, 727-2127, lbeinhau@islandnet.com

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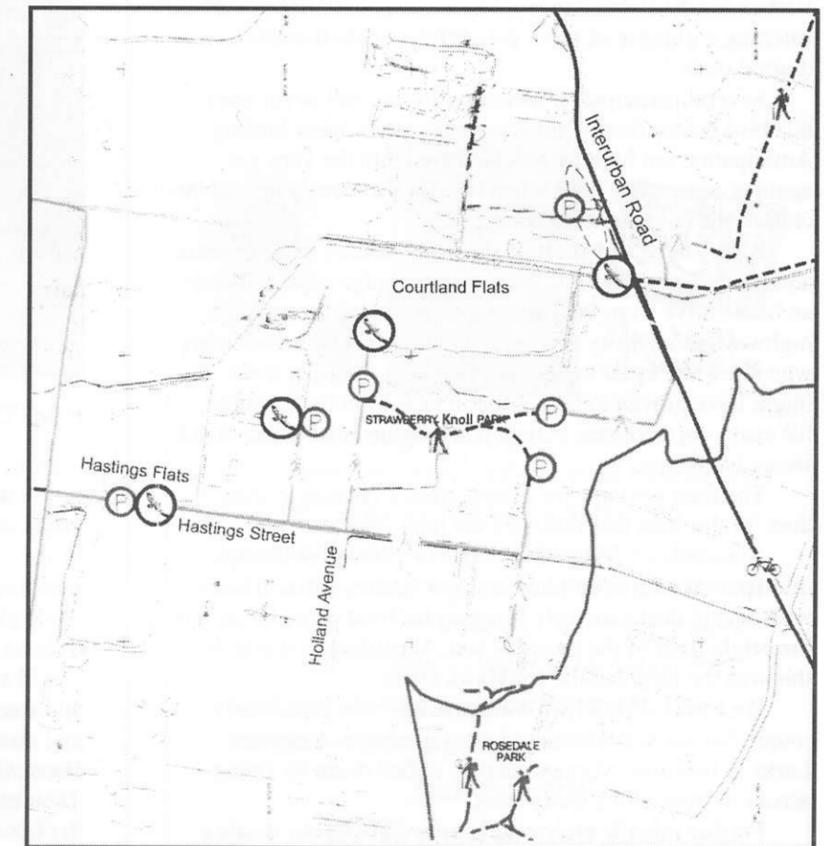
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# Northern Hawk Owl

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

To travel with like-minded people, whose love of birds and nature directs them to new and exciting adventures, is always a thrill. Include in that recipe, an opportunity to add yet another new bird to one's life list, it would be impossible to stay at home even when home is Victoria. After all, British Columbia is a marvelous place to live and to explore.

The British Columbia Field Ornithologists met this year at Williams Lake for their Annual Conference in June. This was my chance again to see a little more of our picturesque province and to escape the stress of work. I planned a week's holiday well in advance and was set to travel June 7th.

Upon arrival I was pleasantly surprised by the size of Williams Lake and of the surrounding beauty of the Chilcotin/Caribou countryside.

During the conference a rumor was circulated that a family of Northern Hawk Owls were nesting not too far from Williams Lake. With Hank Vanderpol and Bryan Gates as leaders for the Extension trip I knew we would not fail at catching a glimpse of these delightful, people friendly, diurnal owls.

Several participants, including Bryan, had never seen this bird before despite the number of years spent birding. Anticipation ran high as we clambered into the vans yet again at some early hour when the sun was hardly up and the chill of the cold night still lingered.

Bleary eyed and short of sleep, we nestled into our seats and headed out to the BC Prairie atop a ridge approximately an hours drive from Williams Lake. As we turned off the highway onto a dusty dirt road, we were met by a researcher who knew the exact location of the owls. Spotting them might have proven to be a difficult task without our guide, for every cove of tree looked just like the other in this wind swept landscape.

The road wound over lumpy ground creating clouds of dust for the vans that followed the lead vehicle.

Assorted coniferous/deciduous trees stood in clumps interspersed with open plain and low bushes. Several lakes with diving ducks actively foraging for food could be seen in the bright light of the morning sun. According to research this was the ideal habitat for Hawk Owls.

We traveled slowly, for the roadway was particularly rough, but we did catch some great glimpses of Horned Larks in breeding plumage as they defied death by flying across in front of the dusty vans.

Further into the prairie we finally came to our destination: a small wooded area of birch. As we stepped out of our warm vans into the cool of the morning we were advised by our leaders to keep our voices to a minimum.



Hawk Owlet. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

It wasn't long before an observant member of our large group called excitedly that an owl was sitting boldly out on a limb of a distant tree. It flew just as several scopes were positioned for viewing. Its flight was just as described in the books; low over the open spaces between small stands of trees as it hunts for food.

This was an owl that behaved, and in all appearances and size looked more like a hawk than an owl. The long tail and short pointed wings gave it an appearance of an accipiter. Hawk Owls have even been seen to hover as Kestrels do. Their chatter and shrieking calls made between members of the family are certainly more hawkish.

It wasn't long before we saw two adults flying around. Their yellow eyes, bill and dark brown horizontal barring from neck to undertail confirmed the species. As we watched

one of the adults disappeared into the woods before us.

We stealthily edged forward out of the sun and into the relative shade of the woods and there to the amazement of all we found little fledgling owlets. Only one caught our eye at first, as it basked in the sun atop of a short, old rotting snag. Here was the nest site.

Large cavities in trees are also a choice spot for nesting Hawk Owls. A clutch can be as few as 3 or as many as 9 eggs, however, availability of food dictates the survival of the hatchlings.

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The young at the top of the snag received the food gift and attempted to gulp the mouse down, however, it wasn't long before the adult regained possession of the mouse after a tug-of-war and flew with it to one of the other fledglings above me.

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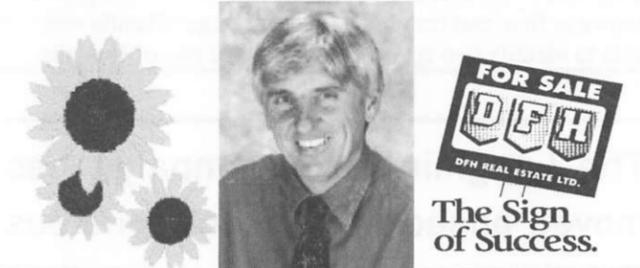
Before long another curious little face emerged from behind a projection in the same snag. This was awesome! My camera was working overtime. Right over our heads flew an adult. Hissing and begging calls were heard from the branches above.

Within seconds two more little owlets were discovered for they had blended so well with their surroundings that they had been missed initially. It was hard to contain our excitement!

For those of us that had never seen Northern Hawk Owls it was an experience not to be forgotten. We all watched patiently for more action from the adults. My faithful camera finally let me down when I discovered I had run out of film just as an adult arrived with what looked like more than a mouthful for any young owl. The young at the top of the snag received the food gift and attempted to gulp the mouse down, however, it wasn't long before the adult regained possession of the mouse after a tug-of-war and flew with it to one of the other fledglings above me. This activity was just what I had wanted to capture on film, but I had forgotten to place more film in my pocket before leaving the van.

These owls generally feed on mice, voles, and insects. When food sources are scarce in the winter months they follow grouse and ptarmigan; however, Hawk Owls generally do not migrate. They are an owl of Coniferous and Boreal forests and can be found as far away as Norway, Russia, Alaska, and across Canada. Occasionally they drift south to the northern part of the U.S.A or Europe.

As our group made ready to leave the owl family so that our disturbance was minimal, I thought to myself how privileged we all were to have witnessed such interactions in the wilderness. This was the highlight of the extension trip for me, even though many of us saw a Long-billed Curlew with two young, a Townsend's Solitaire on a nest, Prairie Falcons high upon a nest within a craggy peak. Observing the of capture and banding Northern Flickers for an hour did not even move me as much as the encounter with the Northern Hawk Owl family.



*Anna's hummingbirds, a good selection of wasps and one or two red-breasted nuthatches have been the only regular visitors to my backyard feeders these past few weeks, but with fall approaching, our feathered friends will once again be on the move – making for more interesting "birding". On the other hand, the torrid pace of the local housing market continues with no sign of abatement.*

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## HAT Tricks

### Blue-Listed Species Found at Laughlin Lake

I joined HAT's Program Coordinator, Claudia Copley, for an all-too-rare day in the field recently, surveying wildlife at Laughlin Lake on Galiano Island. The lake is the largest lake on an island which has less than 1% of its area in wetlands. HAT has been working with Islands Trust Fund and the Galiano Conservancy Association to purchase the 27 acre property.

A pair of Bald Eagles was vigilant as our canoe explored the further reaches of the lake. Juvenile Hooded Mergansers flew in and put down behind the cover of some reeds, a sign of nesting on the lake. Song Sparrows and Rufous Hummingbirds were feeding young, and a flock of Cedar Waxwings was hawking damselflies over the still water. Great Blue Herons were feeding on the edges too, oblivious to their recent "celebrity" status — the coastal subspecies is now Blue-Listed.

The sunny summer day was just the thing for dragonflies. Thousands of damselflies were emerging, pale brown at first, and becoming bluer with age. Claudia was able to identify two species of bluets, and two of forktails.

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The Laughlin Lake campaign has moved ahead with recent generous donations, and we now need less than \$70,000 to complete the purchase. Please give us a call at the HAT office if you would like to make a donation.

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Some of the damselflies had become food for larger dragonflies, which clattered along the lake margins and over mats of vegetation. Stunning Blue-eyed Darners were common, and Cardinal Meadowhawks put even their namesake to shame with their brilliance. Good numbers of Green Darners was a nice surprise, because while the species is not uncommon, it is distributed quite locally on the coast.

HAT office phone number — 995-2428

By Bruce Whittington

Less common species were the Blue Dasher and Western Pondhawk, which are both on the province's Blue List of threatened species.

We also identified several amphibians and reptiles, including thousands of tiny juvenile Pacific Tree-frogs. Also present were good numbers of the tadpoles and adults of the Red-legged Frog, which is blue-listed in B.C. As yet, there is no evidence that introduced Bullfrogs have discovered Laughlin Lake, so it is an important refuge for native species.

It was a rewarding day if only for the pleasure of learning new things. But we were also able to add scientific data to support our belief that Laughlin Lake is a healthy aquatic ecosystem, and worthy of our efforts to protect it.

The Laughlin Lake campaign has moved ahead with recent generous donations, and we now need less than \$70,000 to complete the purchase. Please give us a call at the HAT office if you would like to make a donation.

In other HAT business, our HATs Off! Tour to the prairie grasslands this spring was a great success. The weather presented many challenges, with an early spring buffeted by pernicious winds. Still, we saw many species of birds, and added a lot of species to a lot of life lists. We also were impressed by some of the cultural highlights — from the windmill museum at Etzikom to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump (where we were scrutinized by a Prairie Falcon.). One of the trip highlights was a personalized tour of the McIntyre Ranch, the largest in Alberta, where patriarch Ralph Thrall Jr. showed us their efforts to manage native prairie grasslands. HAT thanks all the participants for their support, and a big thank you to Marilyn Lambert, tour organizer par excellence, and Naturalist Editor Ross Archibald, who was our second driver and guide.

HAT is working closely with Arenaria Research and Interpretation to maintain the parks programming which was jeopardized in March when the province eliminated all program funding. We have already received many donations, and welcome all contributions. As a registered charity, HAT can issue income tax receipts for donations. We will also be looking at ways we can involve interested volunteers in programs and nature house activities. Please call Claudia at the HAT office if you would like more information.

## HATs Off! Tour to the Prairie Grasslands, Spring 2002



Left: Risking life and limb for a botanical treat. Centre: Prairie Crocus (*Aenome patens*). Right: Our hosts at the McIntyre Ranch. Photos: Sharon Godkin

## President's Report

By Bruce Whittington

In the past few months I have had the rare pleasure of exploring several different parts of Canada, and all the more interesting because of the opportunity to reflect on just how remarkable this country is.

From the badlands of Alberta to the rushing rapids of Ontario's rivers, and from Cape Breton's spruce bogs to the prickly pear cacti on our own Oak Bay Islands, I was captivated. Not far from Sydney, seabirds nested on Bird Island, and not far from Sidney, Mandarte Island has seabird nests too — and there is only one species common to both.

The Cypress Hills reach their highest point in the flatness of Saskatchewan, yet this point is the highest in Canada, east of the Rockies. It is even higher than the Banff town site. The rain that falls here may drain east to Hudson Bay, or south to the Gulf of Mexico.

The vastness and diversity of Canada is at once a wonder, and a daunting challenge. We face the dilemma of

being blessed with an awesome natural heritage, but we must steward this heritage using the resources of a population about the same as that of California.

More and more the community is taking responsibility for our natural heritage. What is more, there is an increasing trend in governments to abandon their former roles as stewards, and hope that community conservation organizations will be there to take on the additional responsibility.

We certainly face our challenges in British Columbia, and so it was refreshing and encouraging for me to find kindred spirits from across Canada at the Canadian Nature Federation Annual General Meeting and conference in Ottawa in June.

There were field trips and banquets and displays and awards, but there was work too. The theme for the workshops was "capacity building". In the non-profit sector, it is a term that refers to increasing the ability of an organ-

ization to accomplish its goals. The CNF has recognized that more than ever before, its member organizations are being called on to play more active roles in conservation, and it is working hard to help provide some of the necessary tools and skills.

I attended two of these sessions that were particularly pertinent for VNHS. The first was a panel presentation on different ways to incorporate young naturalists' programs, and it quickly became clear that no approach would work the same in all places. In Kingston, for example, Ann Robertson has been leading the junior program for thirty years! That sort of commitment and flexibility is outstanding, but obviously can't be counted on. But the momentum is gaining with the early work in the VNHS Young Naturalists Club, and I will share what I have learned with those involved.

VNHS is also fortunate to have many dedicated volunteers working on natural history inventories with the Green Spaces Project, but the GSP faces challenges too. I participated in an excellent workshop on "Citizen Science".

Many of us have taken part in Christmas Bird Counts — that is citizen science. But how do we make the most of it? How (and where) do we store our data? How do we exchange data with other organizations and agencies? All of these questions are being addressed, with strong leadership from the federal government, and I was very encouraged about the future of the contributions that amateur naturalists so willingly make.

As the Dash-8 descended over the Gulf Islands, I found myself taking a deep breath. We have work to do, here in our own home place. But other naturalists are doing their part, too, in Cape Breton, and the Cypress Hills and beyond. We are all weaving threads into a giant tapestry, and if I may wax patriotic, it is called Canada. We sometimes think of our own little problems and issues, but we are a part of a much bigger movement, too. We can not solve the bigger problems facing this grand country, but we can do our share, right here, knowing that it will all help Canadians to appreciate and protect a remarkable natural legacy.

## We Get Around

In June we received the following e-mail message:

"From: Vitor Piacentini [ramphocelus@hotmail.com]  
Sent: June 15, 2002 8:18 AM  
To: rossarch@islandnet.com  
Subject: article

Dear Ross Archibald:

My name is Vitor and I study Biology in Brazil. I'm working on my "graduation paper" and I'd like to know how I can acquire this reference: Stacey, P.J., and R.W. Baird. 1989. Interactions between seabirds and marine mammals. The Victoria Naturalist 45(7):9-10. Do you think it is possible to send it to me in Brazil? How would it cost? And how could I pay for it? Thank you very much for any information.

Regards,

Vitor Piacentini"

Intrigued, we looked into the archive of old issues we store in our living room and found the issue that contained the article Vitor was looking for.

We managed to scan the article, inserted the image into a Microsoft Word file and attached it to an e-mail message. We were of course, prepared to send a copy by mail if the attachment did not work for Vitor since we did not know what software he might have access to in Brazil.

We were most interested in hearing how and where he found reference to the article. We thought it could make an

interesting story. We were also interested in hearing about his studies.

Our e-mail attachment idea worked, as Vitor told us in his reply:

Thank you very much for sending me the article. I've printed it and it was in a good quality.

I got this reference from a friend who found it in the internet, but the article was not available for downloading. I think he found it in Mr. Baird's web page.

As I may have told you, I'm 22 years old and I study Biology in Brazil and my final research (needed to graduate) is about the fishing interaction between the estuarine dolphin (*Sotalia guianensis*, formerly known as *S. fluviatilis*) and seabirds in a bay close to my city (Florianópolis, Santa Catarina state, in southern Brazil). I also work with land birds (which I like the most). Well, after my friend sent me the reference, I searched in the Internet for anything similar to a "Victoria Naturalist official web site". I found the Victoria Natural History Society Web Site and there was your email for contacts concerning publications.

Thank you once again for the help. If you need anything from Brazil, get in touch.

Best from

Vitor Piacentini

## Welcome to New Members

**Ted Ardley**  
Normandy Road  
*birds*

**Andrew and Catherine Carson**  
Canterbury Road

**Ann Denman**  
Aboyne Avenue, Sidney

**Sharman Martin and Robert Laidler**  
Belmont Avenue  
*Zoology, oceanography*

**Agnes H. Phillips**  
Heywood Avenue  
*Birds*

**Andrew Wender**  
Howroyd Avenue  
*Birds, botany*

## 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.

### SEPTEMBER

#### Saturday, September 7

##### *Birding the Victoria Shoreline for shorebirds*

Marie O'Shaughnessy (598-9680) leads this search for migrant shorebirds. Meet at Cattle Point at 8:00 a.m.

#### Sunday September 8

##### *Birding Viaduct Flats*

There should be a good variety of shorebirds, waterfowl and other migrants. Meet at Viaduct Ave. at Interurban Rd. at 8:00 a.m.

#### September 13 to 22

##### *Goldstream Park Benefit Show: Paintings and Sculptures by the "Group of Eight And Friends"*

Thirty percent of the proceeds from this show will be donated to the running of the visitor centre and the autumn school program. Thousands of students come to the park in November to watch the annual return of chum and coho salmon to their spawning grounds. The Group of Eight are all close friends united by a love of the natural history of the west coast. Most of the group were trained as professional biologists but have also maintained a passion for painting. The Goldstream Park show will be the Group's seventh show since forming in 1984.

Hours: Weekdays, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Friday, Saturday, Sunday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Group of Eight are: Peggy Frank, Donald Gunn, Linda Haylock, Mark Hobson, Gretchen Markle, Peggy Sowden, Anne Stewart, and Alison Watt. Their friend this show: Craig Benson.

#### Saturday, September 14

#### Sunday, September 15

##### *Butterfly Count.*

#### Sunday September 15th

##### *Galiano Island Excursion with Bruce Whittington and Claudia Copley*

Habitat Acquisition Trust is working to purchase Laughlin Lake on Galiano, and we'll make a visit there to explore this little jewel of a wetland — the largest on the island. If the dragonflies are out, we'll capture and identify some of those, and try to add to the bird list. Botanists are welcome to help us with plant communities. Time and weather permitting we may visit another island location. Birding from the ferry. Bring lunch. There will be a washroom stop. Walk on to the 9:30 a.m. ferry for Sturdies Bay, and we'll return on the 4:45 p.m. sailing (arrives at 6:10). The fare is \$6.00 return; we will arrange transportation on Galiano. Please register for this trip by calling the HAT office at 995-2428

#### Sunday September 15

##### *Vancouver Shorebirding*

Vancouver gets a greater variety and also a greater number of shorebirds than Victoria. We will check out Iona and Boundary Bay. Meet at the entrance to Beaver Lake Park on Elk Lake Drive at 6:00 a.m. to carpool. We will return on the 5:00 p.m. ferry. Bring a lunch. Call Rick Schortinghuis at 652-3326 for more information.

#### Tuesday, September 17

##### *Botany Night*

Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

##### *Sharon Godkin: Colockum Pass: botanical paradise in Central Washington.*

Colockum Pass was a busy place in the gold rush, located just the half way between San Francisco and gold field in Cariboo. Now it is almost forgotten and unknown, except of a small group of Victoria

botanists and alpine gardeners, who regularly visit this area almost every spring. Fields of *Lewisia rediviva*, *Penstemon gairdneri*, *Allium douglasii* and *Isoetes minima* attract and mesmerize all botanically inclined people. **Sharon Godkin** is an excellent photographer who will show us what she saw on Colocukum Pass in 2001, perhaps the best year ever for display of spring flowers.

#### Thursday September 19

##### *Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup*

This annual event is taking place over one week at various locations in our region, but on Thursday evening those of you who regularly go birding at Esquimalt Lagoon can join others to make this spot even better! The Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative (ELSI) is sponsoring this event and the VNHS is a member group of this broad coalition of organizations concerned about the lagoon. The cleanup begins at 5:30 p.m. and, since darkness sets in before 8, ends at 7:30 p.m. The more people that participate could shorten that time significantly! We'll see you there! (bags and gloves are provided)

#### Wednesday, September 25

##### *Birders Night*

7:30 p.m., Fraser 159, UVic..

Always popular is our Members Night, when each of you has the opportunity to show a few slides or give a brief talk on any aspect of birds or birding...either here in BC or in other parts of the world. To arrange a presentation, please call Bryan Gates at 598-7789 or leave a message on the Rare Bird Alert at 250-592-3381. Everyone is welcome; bring a friend, a novice birder and your coffee cup.

#### Sunday, September 29

##### *BC River's Day Celebration!*

Meet at the Goldstream Park Visitor Centre. This fun-filled family event will begin at 4 p.m. with a guided nature walk along the river followed by a hot dog and marshmallow roast and a campfire sing-along featuring songs about rivers (and water!). All donations greatly appreciated.

#### Sunday, September 29

##### *Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho*

**David Allinson** (478-0493) will lead this trip on the M.V. Coho on a sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. The crossing takes 1-1/2 hours and this is the best opportunity to see bird species (Shearwaters, Fulmars, Phalaropes) usually found further out to sea. We will be birding from the bow of the boat so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 sailing of the M.V. Coho (allow plenty of time for parking). Ferry cost is \$16.00 (US) return (~\$24.00 Can), you should have two pieces of ID, at least one with a photo, for customs and immigration. We'll return on the 12:45 p.m. sailing.

#### Tuesday, September 10

##### *VNHS Green Spaces Project Activities*

Since 1997, the VNHS's Green Spaces Project has been identifying and mapping Greater Victoria's undeveloped land remnants and inventorying their natural values. Members of the GSP will provide information on their work and techniques, as well as their future plans. We'll see you at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, the Fraser Building, UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

#### Saturday, September 28

##### *Hawk Watch: East Sooke Park*

Hundreds of Turkey Vultures are joined by a dozen other species of birds of prey in their annual southward migration. Meet Dannie Carsen (595-2773) at the Aylard Farm parking lot in East Sooke Regional Park, off Becher Bay Rd. at 10:00 a.m., or car pool at Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:30 a.m. Bring a lunch.

### OCTOBER

#### Saturday, October 5

##### *"Water: Waste Not, Want Not"*

That is the theme for the 10th annual Inter-American Water Day. At Goldstream Park, we are promoting this theme by having guest speakers, including Dr. Drip, a wacky scientist who knows a lot about water and water conservation. CRD Water will also be promoting their "waterwise" activities. Join in the fun, beginning at 10 a.m.. All donations greatly appreciated.

#### Saturday, October 5

##### *Birding at Whiffen Spit, Sooke*

In recent years Lapland Longspurs, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and a Ruff have stopped at this migrant trap in Sooke. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the foot of Whiffen Spit Rd..

#### Sunday, October 6

##### *Migrants on Jocelyn Hill*

**Rick Schortinghuis** (652-3326) shares his knowledge of the Gowland Range on this walk in search of migrating songbirds and raptors. Wear sturdy footwear and bring a lunch. Be prepared for a 4 to 5 hour hike. Meet at the Lone Tree Hill Parking lot on Millstream Rd. at 8:30 a.m.

#### Tuesday, October 8

##### *Wandering Wolverines*

Wolverines are one of the North American wilderness icons. Fabled for their ferocity and destructive nature they are actually one of the least understood carnivores. In order to better our understanding of wolverine biology, provincial government biologist **Eric Lofroth** initiated the Northern Wolverine Project in 1995. This research program has worked in cooperation with projects in Alaska, southern BC, NWT and Idaho to further our knowledge of the species life history. Eric will discuss the research that he has conducted and how its findings fit with our understanding of wolverine ecology elsewhere in its range. See you at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, the Fraser Building, UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

#### Saturday October 19

##### *Birding the Nanaimo Area*

Join Guy Monty in checking out the birding hotspots in the Nanaimo area. Meet at Helmcken Rd Park and Ride at 7:00 A.M. to carpool, or meet at parking lot at Cassidy Airport at 8:30AM. Bring a lunch.

#### Saturday, October 19

##### *Musical HATs!*

*Metchosin Community Hall: 4401 William Head Road.*

Habitat Acquisition Trust is again hosting its annual fundraising event called Musical HATs — where people involved in the

environment and conservation fields bring out their hidden talents and take to the stage. Two nights of fun and music, with lots of good food and drink available, and a great list of raffle prizes. All proceeds go to support HAT's conservation work, including its campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake, the largest lake on Galiano Island. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased in advance at the HAT office: 316-620 View Street (995-2428). Doors open at 6:30 and the music starts at 7:30 p.m. Email: hatmail@hat.bc.ca

#### Sunday, October 20

##### *Pelagic Birding on the M.V. Coho*

Leader still to be determined (volunteers?) for this trip on the M.V. Coho on a sailing across the Strait of Juan de Fuca and back. The crossing takes 1-1/2 hours and this is the best opportunity to see bird species (Shearwaters, Fulmars, Phalaropes) usually found further out to sea. We will be birding from the bow of the boat so dress warmly. Bring a lunch and meet at the Black Ball Ferry terminal in the Inner Harbour at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 sailing of the M.V. Coho (allow plenty of time for parking). Ferry cost is \$16.00 (US) return (~\$24.00 Can), you should have two pieces of ID, at least one with a photo, for Customs. We'll return on the 1:45 p.m. sailing.

#### Tuesday, October 22

##### *Botany Night*

Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

##### *Thor Heinrich: Meadowfoam, Mayhem and Merced: ecopolitics in California vernal pools.*

Thor participated in the spring field course on California vernal pools given by the University of California in Berkeley. Native flora of California vernal pools has about 30 per cent of endemic plant species. Some plants, such as genus *Orcuttia* are really startling, although particularly this genus is appreciated only by the specialists. The genus meadowfoam is a typical genus of vernal pool that underwent interesting speciation that resulted in about 6 common and another 6 uncommon, rare species, including our Macoun's meadowfoam. All over California, vernal pools are under pressure and wrong interpretations of the wetland protection act lead to their destruction. A sad example of this was a new campus of the University of California in Merced that was planned in the area of precious vernal pools. Close to home, do you remember that vernal pool where the UVIC University Centre was built? Yes, that one with skylarks?

#### Sunday, October 27

##### *Birding the Pumpkin Patch*

Late migrants, winter arrivals and raptors should make for some great birding with Brent Diakow (656-3190). Meet at the farm market at the corner of the Pat Bay Highway and Island View Rd at 8:30 a.m. Gumboots are highly recommended!

#### Wednesday, October 30

##### *Birders Night*

7:30 p.m., Fraser 159, UVic.

##### *Digital technology is flying faster than a falcon!*

Jack McLeod of Sooke will present a computer illustrated talk on photographing birds and wildlife with the use of a digital camera and a spotting scope. Imagine close up pictures of long distance birds. Every one is welcome; bring a friend, a novice birder and your coffee cup.

### NOVEMBER

#### Saturday, November 9

##### *Musical HATs!*

*Prospect Lake Community Hall, 5358 Sparton Road*

Habitat Acquisition Trust is again hosting its annual fundraising event called Musical HATs — where people involved in the environment and conservation fields bring out their hidden talents and take to the stage. Two nights of fun and music, with lots of good food and drink available, and a great list of raffle prizes. All proceeds go to support HAT's conservation work, including its campaign to purchase Laughlin Lake, the largest lake on Galiano Island. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased in advance at the HAT office: 316-620 View Street (995-2428). Doors open at 6:30 and the music starts at 7:30 p.m. Email: hatmail@hat.bc.ca

## BULLETIN BOARD

### Volunteers are now being recruited for a number of positions at Swan Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Put your knowledge of natural history to good use as a volunteer interpreter with the school programs. If you enjoy working with the public there are a few office receptionist positions available, or if you like working outdoors join the team of volunteers building a new trail on Christmas Hill. All positions require only 2 to 3 hours once a week. For more details contact Joan at 479-0211.

### Victoria Young Naturalists Club Fall Field Trips 2002

NOTE: Please register for all trips to help give us some idea of group sizes for handouts, etc.

#### HAWKWATCH

Join expert birder David Allinson on a walk to Beachy Head to watch the annual hawk and vulture migration over Southern Vancouver Island. Dress for the weather, wear good walking/hiking shoes and bring a lunch, hot drink if it's a cool day and binoculars or a spotting scope. Meet at the Aylard Farm parking lot at East Sooke Regional Park

**September 21, Saturday, 10:30 am - 2:00 pm.**

Call Susanna at 598 8722 for more information and to register

#### DUCKS UNLIMITED

The Victoria YNC is going an outing to Kings Pond at the Cedar Hill Golf Course! We'll spend the morning on duck identification (and any other critters that come along!). Bring birdseed to feed the ducks if you wish, but please — NO BREAD. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars or a spotting scope if you have them. Meet at the North end of the golf course at Kings Pond.

**October 20, Sunday 10:30 - 12:00**

Call Susanna at 598-8722 for more information and to register.



# The Victoria NATURALIST

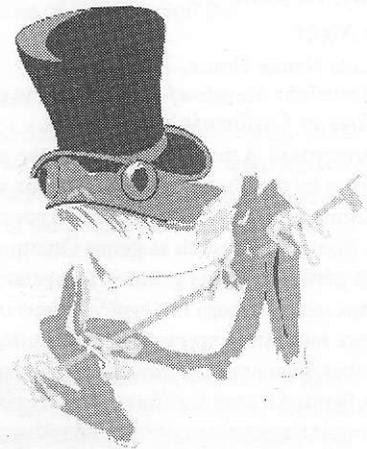
P.O. Box 5220, Stn. B.,  
Victoria, B.C., V8R 6N4

Renewal: Dec-02

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

## Musical HATs Is Back! (Now at 2 venues!)

- ♪ Amazingly talented conservationists
- ♪ Lots of terrific raffle prizes
- ♪ Scrumptious goodies and drinks
- ♪ A happy feeling in your heart



Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>: Metchosin Community Hall (4401 William Head Rd)  
Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>: Prospect Lake Community Hall (5358 Sparton Rd)  
Doors open at 6:30 and the music begins at 7:30 pm