The Victoria NATURALIST

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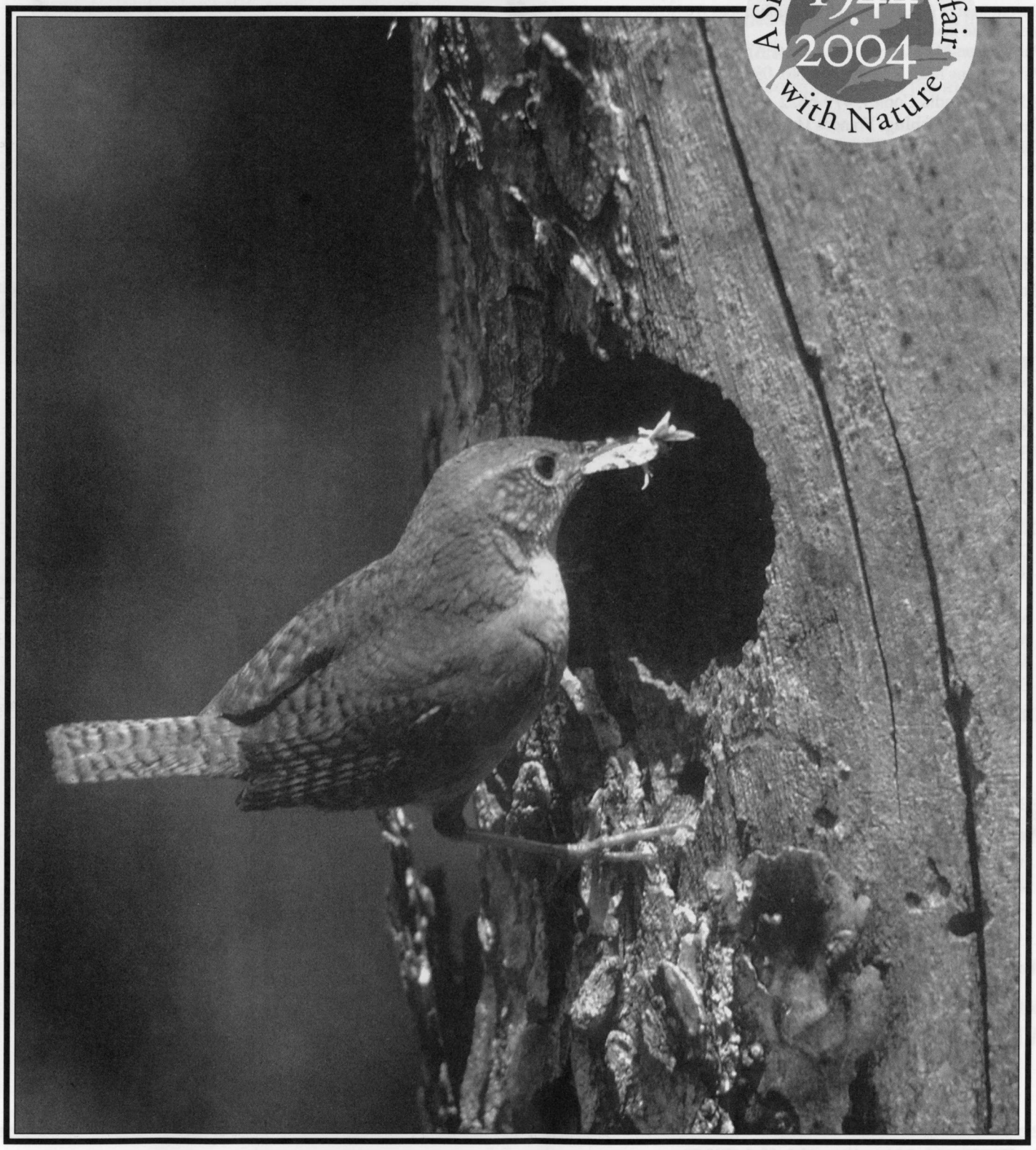
A Sixty Year Love Affair with Nature
1944 2004



The Victoria NATURALIST

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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 documentation of location, species names and a date. Please label your submission with your name, address, and phone number and provide a title. We request submission of typed, double-spaced copy in an IBM compatible word processing file on diskette, or by e-mail. Having copy submitted digitally 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 Editor, Claudia Copley, at 479-6622, or save the text in ASCII format.Photos and slides, and diskettes submitted will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with the material. Because many digital image files do not reproduce well in our print format due to low resolution, we would prefer not to receive digital images at this time.

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COVER PHOTO:
House Wren by Philip Critchlow

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Is it: "You've come a long way baby" or "The more things change the more they stay the same"? Which cliché adequately describes 2004 compared to 1944? Sixty years is a long time, long enough to see dramatic changes in attitude on such issues as gender equality. In 1944, women's names were not included in the list of participants in the Christmas bird count; they were referred to as the "companions" of the male participants!

So, feeling smug about attitudinal changes, I thumbed through old issues of the newsletter, only to see how some very important changes have not yet taken place. In 1948, articles appeared in our newsletter encouraging people to propagate and garden with native plants. The use of native plants is still being encouraged today, but finding many of them in nurseries is challenging because they are still considered a specialized market, almost 60 years later! Combine water restrictions with the concomitant loss of habitat in our region, and incorporating native plants in a home landscape seems obvious. I have no doubt that changes in our way of thinking will occur, but I often wonder why it has to take so long.

I am looking forward to the coming year in anticipation of change. The Society, as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations, will be doing things that showcase our history, from field trips to events. In each edition of the newsletter, Bruce Whittington will summarize an earlier decade, and an article will be reprinted from that time period.

While we are celebrating how far we have come, I hope we will all be considering the changes that still need to be made.

Welcome to 2004!

Claudia

Presidents' Messages

2004

At this time of year many of us pause to reflect on the past and make resolutions for the upcoming year. Organizations are no different — especially the Victoria Natural History Society — and especially this year. 2004 marks the 60th anniversary of the Society, and over the next twelve months, you will be hearing about, and I hope, participating in a number of events that will link us to our past and help VNHS build for the future. Sixty years is a long time in the scheme of volunteer organizations. It demonstrates the dedication of VNHS members to natural history and conservation. We'll be looking back at accomplishments which have been made over our six decades and looking forward to a number of new initiatives, including increasing VNHS's profile in the community. We'll also be taking time on a few occasions throughout the year to gather VNHS members together to celebrate. I hope you'll join us in these celebrations, starting with the annual banquet on February 10. Dr. Andrew Bryant will be speaking on the Vancouver Island Marmot and, with good food and great company, it promises to be an exciting way to formally launch our 60th.

Ann Nightingale, President

1944

It is with the heartiest pleasure I address the members of the new Natural History Society in the first copy of the Magazine. May it be the precursor of a long line.

The need of an association of all who are interested in the study and enjoyment of nature has been felt by many of late years, and I have often been asked by new-comers for the whereabouts of our Natural History Society and heard them express surprise that none existed. But the need has not been confined to them. Most of us seek the companionship of common interest and helpful intercourse and are pleased to find it in an organization whose members find release from the pressure of a mechanical world in the observation and study of our natural and aboriginal environment. And indeed in these days of private and public pressure there is a genuine and thoroughly defensible relief in the observation of wild life in its various forms.

I am sure I speak for all our members when I say we look forward to many happy and profitable hours both out-doors and in-doors in our particular group or groups and in the larger forum of the Society. Our success depends on the enthusiasm of each flowing into the common stream. We have about us a beautiful countryside and a varied shoreline to delight the hearts of naturalists. We hope to learn to know these better ourselves and to share our learning with many others.

Robert Connell, President

A Little History — the Fledgling 40s

By Bruce Whittington

The magazines stand out right away, the printing technology a little behind the times, and the staples on the spine rusty from long storage. Inside the covers of the early issues of *The Victoria Naturalist*, the story repeats itself, in the unfamiliar telephone numbers of the Society's directors of the time — "Belmont 90M", and "E 8556". These were the early years of the Victoria Natural History Society, the 1940s.

It's fascinating to return to those years, thumbing through the pages of the *Naturalist*, and as part of our 60th Anniversary celebration, we're going to highlight some of the activities of the Society, decade by decade, in each issue in 2004.

Although the Natural History Society of British Columbia was founded in Victoria in 1890, it slipped into oblivion about 1904. Forty years passed before interested naturalists in Victoria established the Victoria Natural History Society. The first meeting was held on March 14th, 1944. The first president was Archdeacon Robert Connell. The first issue of *The Victoria Naturalist* appeared the following month. Issues were produced by Monks' Multigraph Letter Service of Fort Street, and mailing of each copy cost one cent!

Even as a fledgling organization, the Society's activities in these first years were remarkably diverse. There were regular field trips offered by several groups in the Society — Botany, Marine Biology, Zoology, Geology, and Ornithology — this last group proportionally much less active than it is today. Many of the field trip locations are thankfully still familiar to us: Rithet's Bog, Uplands Park, Lost Lake (Blenkinsop Lake), Goldstream, and more. Many outings were hosted at the homes of individual members.

The Society encouraged young naturalists from the beginning, and the Junior Members were active in the field and in the magazine. By 1946, they were caring for a display case and an aquarium in the entrance to the Provincial Museum.

The February, 1945 issue reported on the Society's first Christmas Bird Count, held December 26, 1944. The conditions were less than perfect. "Still, overcast, snow on ground, lakes frozen." Seven observers participated in that count, and set the Victoria record books rolling with 37 species.

The *Naturalist* published many articles that were quite technical, many of which would provide good basic information for naturalists that is still not widely available today. Evident also in these pages is an acceptance that nature is to be "managed". There are numerous references about horticultural practices, the value of the fur seal harvest, and destruction of "vermin" such as coyotes and owls. A.O. Meugens, a founding member who was a prominent egg-collector, offered instructions to members in a hobby now illegal. More unsettling are articles that praise the newly discovered pesticides like DDT.

Conservation concerns were being raised at the time, however. There was a call in the *Naturalist* in 1946 to have Swan Lake set aside as a bird sanctuary — a goal that was not accomplished until the 1970s. Letters to the magazine in 1947 argued that the Bald Eagle should be protected. Nest boxes were being erected for Purple Martins in Victoria's harbour.

In reading these old numbers of the *Naturalist*, some of the most notable differences to be found are in some of the bird records. In at least two issues from the 1940s, Lewis' Woodpeckers were still reported as regularly occurring on southern Vancouver Island. Sky Larks were reported nesting in several locations within two miles of Victoria City Hall. Members also documented the first nests of the Common Bushtit on Vancouver Island.

Other things do not change. The Society has always enjoyed broad support from the resources in the community. The provincial museum was a clearing house for Society activities, and Dr. Clifford Carl was one of the Society's early presidents, and a frequent contributor to the *Naturalist*. Charlie Guiguet also wrote many articles, and gave many lectures. Jeffree Cunningham was the convenor for Marine Programs — he was a professor of Biology at Victoria College. The Cunningham Building at University of Victoria is named in his honour, and for some years in the 1980s, the VNHS Board met in the Clifford Carl Reading Room in that building. Many meetings were held in the Provincial Museum, and sometimes at Craigdarroch Castle, then home to Victoria College.

Speakers included names familiar to us still. C.P. ("Chess") Lyons, spoke in 1944 about the development of a provincial parks network — he would write a plant guide popular with BC naturalists for over 50 years. The popular Audubon Films series brought such well-known naturalists as Roger Tory Peterson and Alexander Sprunt to the city.

Although the Society was founded in the shadow of a global war, there is surprisingly little mention of this in the magazine, except for a reference to gasoline rationing which limited the plant photography of one guest lecturer. It does not seem to have hindered the activities of a fledgling naturalist club, and as the decade drew to a close, VNHS was an active and vibrant part of the community.

Some 1940s and 1950s Victoria Naturalists

By Cam Finlay

A friend of mine, Ruth Clay, was cleaning out boxes after moving into a new home, and came upon photos of her father-in-law, J.O. Clay, and other naturalists taken in July of 1957. He was the patriarch of Victoria's birding community in the 1940s and most of the 1950s. Since he and others in the photo were keen participants in the Christmas Bird counts from when it began again in 1944[1] (after a lapse of 20 years), I thought it fitting to tell you a bit about these five keeners. I give full credit to the following people who helped me fill in the blanks: Ruth Clay, David Stirling, Wayne Campbell, Leah Halsall, and Bryan Gates.

In the photo from the left to right are:

Mrs. G. J. Jackson

She is the one with the white hat in the photo. All I could find out about her was that she participated in the Christmas counts in 1956, 1957 and 1958.

J. O. Clay

He is the tall man wearing a white shirt in the picture. Every one called him J. O. Clay. Born and raised in England, he became a keen birder before he was a teenager. As a young man he came to Canada when he was 24 year old and worked his way across the country on his way to B.C., which he had been told had a climate similar to England. He ended up in the Slocan Valley, enjoying the natural history there, especially trees and birds. Shortly thereafter he bought an orchard and remained in the valley growing five varieties of apples, (specializing in Macintosh) from 1907 until 1929, when he then relocated to Victoria. At the latter city he purchased the last farm in Oak Bay, located on the east side of Gonzales Hill off Beach Drive. Here he erected a large greenhouse and began growing vegetables and a half acre of raspberries. The latter he sold exclusively to the Empress Hotel. I was told that J.O. was exceptionally good at tree pruning and grafting. Here he remained until his death in 1959.

J.O. was much committed to natural history and once told Ruth that he loved trees and children, in that order! Early on he began leading interested people to explore wild areas in the region from Weir's Beach in Metchosen to Duncan. The group often walked the water front from Clover Point to Ogden Point. In their travels, J.O. insisted that the participants must always request permission before entering private property. Since there were few cars around at that time they had to find someone to drive them to the out-of-the-way places, but somehow transportation was always found. These hikes/field trips soon became weekly and included A.R. (Davey) Davidson. The weekly outings ended up being on Tuesdays and hence the birth of the Tuesday Group of the Victoria Natural History Society. On the death of J.O. Clay, Davey became the leader and continued in this role for many years. When my wife Joy and I began coming to Victoria to visit my parents in the 1960s, Davey was still leading the Tuesday Group.

J.O. organized the Ornithologist Group for the VNHS in 1946 and wrote several articles for the VNHS magazine including a paper on the arrival of the European Starling, and one on Willets. Also with Davey, he wrote the 1954 Naturalist report on the Summer Field Meeting of the Ornithologist Group.

J.O. was one of the originals who reactivated the Christmas Bird Count in 1944, twenty years after the first count was carried out by J. A. Munro in 1924. J.O. continued his commitment to these counts, often being a compiler and counter, right up to and including 1958, the first year David Stirling was mentioned as participating. J.O. died the following summer.

Mrs Gladys Soulsby

She is the middle person in the photo and wears a round hat. She was always very interested in birds and was introduced to the birding fraternity by J.O. Clay. The first record of her participation in the Christmas Bird Count was in 1955 and for most of the following years until at least 1960. In the spring/summer she led walks around Beacon Hill Park because of her interest in wild flowers. As an active member of VNHS, Mrs. Soulsby took up the challenge to unite the various natural history clubs across the province into an umbrella group for naturalists to speak with one voice. Unfortunately her idea was ahead of its time. The Federation of B.C. Naturalists union occurred some years later.

Her participation in the Christmas Bird Count was first noted in 1955, but I suspect she was involved before that, since only males were listed in the early Victoria count records. In these reports usually J.O. Clay and others were noted as being accompanied by several people (no names mentioned). She was listed as a participant until at least 1960.

Grace Bell

The lady with no hat in the photo was well known for her recordings of bird songs. She spent many hours in the field and was one of the first people to undertake this task. David Stirling, as a young man relatively new to Victoria, well remembers accompanying her on several recording excursions. He told me that she used a parabolic reflector microphone as large as a kitchen table and a monstrously large recorder! On one such field trip, an ornithologist from Cornell University accompanied them. This man was just starting to gather material to build up the now famous Cornell library of bird recordings. Mrs. Bell regularly presented bird song programs on the local radio stations using her library of these recording. David believes they were finally given to the University of Victoria. Every spring Mrs. Bell found great delight walking through high grasses around the area, looking for bird nests. The first mention of her on a Christmas Bird Count was in 1953, continuing as a regular until 1959.

A. R. Davidson

Usually called "Davey", after J.O. Clay died, he became the patriarch of the birding community and continued to lead the Tuesday Group mentioned previously. I was told that whenever a strange bird was reported to him, Davey would say "Oh they don't occur here" and that would be it, no further questions asked!

He and Alan Pointer spent a great deal of time organizing the first annual bird report, which was a summary of old bird notations for the Greater Victoria region using record cards (no computers back then!). Davey was in charge of the VNHS library as well, which he stored in his basement.

Davey was first mentioned in the records of the Christmas Bird Count in 1948 when he covered Shoal Bay. His participation continued every year at least until 1960, when sources end.

[1] Two hummingbirds were first noted that December (1944), and were probably the first over-wintering Anna's Hummingbird to be seen in B.C.

Of Dust and Memories

As we enter the seventh decade of our love affair with nature, it's natural to reflect and reminisce. It may even prompt us to dig out an old photo album or dusty scrapbook, or look over old field notes.

It's called history, and we all have a little of it stashed away, in boxes or on shelves, tucked into field guides, or perhaps just stored in our memories. The VNHS board thinks that history is important, and we would like to start collecting it.

We are asking members to do two things. First, bring us anything you have about the Society that you can part with, and we will begin a sort of archive. If there are things you can't be without, consider lending them to us and we will copy them. If you have photographs of VNHS members involved in VNHS activities, we'd love to have them — especially if you can identify the people in the pictures. Do you have any personal sketches? Newspaper clippings? Tall tales? Let us know. Be sure to give us as much information as you can with the things you bring forward, and to identify yourself as the source, so we can follow up if need be.

The second thing you can do is consider helping with this project. We'd like to know who the longest-standing members are, what romances blossomed on VNHS field trips. You can help by identifying people in photographs we receive, and in organizing the material in our archive. You can be as active as you like. Bruce Whittington will act as a facilitator to get the archive project under way, but there are opportunities for members to be as involved as they wish.

It's our history — and you're a part of it.

The Ethics of Plant Rescue

By Moralea Milne

The Victoria Native Plant Study Group (NPSG) has been in the forefront of the plant rescue movement. By negotiating with developers we save native plants, even some quite rare ones, from sure eradication under the blades and tracks of land clearing machinery. Since you must be a member of our organization to participate and, as more people hear about the rather new concept of salvaging native plants from sites that are earmarked for immediate development, they join our group and we benefit from increased membership and the attendant annual fees. Sometimes these rescued plants are used in our gardens, or sometimes they are donated to restoration projects throughout the Victoria area. Sometimes the seeds and cuttings are used to propagate more plants in nurseries and further the native plant gardening movement. These all seem to be activities that we can, and should, support.

But I wonder….

Spring 2002 and 2003 saw a huge plant rescue operation at what came to be known as the Langvista sites in Langford. In the spring of 2002 I found myself an eager participant in plant rescue activities. I was delighted to be able to save native plants from certain obliteration and provide my own property and a native plant garden I was attempting to create on my local municipal grounds with often expensive and hard to find native plant material. We all carefully followed the rules laid out by the developers and stayed well out of covenanted areas, glad to know some of the site's natural beauty and plant community was protected. I did give a moment's pause to wonder where the many birds displaying territorial behaviour would be nesting this year. However there was a beautiful intact site across the road they could move to and I ignored the obvious, which was; that site would already have its full complement of birds asserting their territories. Overall, I felt good about myself and my efforts.

In early 2003, a friend and I had the contract to remove broom from the covenanted areas on this now developed site. Through this work, we learned that the area across the road (the back side of Mill Hill Capital Regional District Park) was also about to be developed. I consulted with the developers and found they were amenable to further plant rescue operations at this new site. NPSG membership grew as word of the wealth of plant material at this site filtered through the native plant enthusiast community.

This site was so amazing: everyone commented on the abundance and diversity of plant material. There were a few blue-listed Nuttall's Quillwort (*Isoetes nuttallii*), literally thousands of Slimleaf Onion (*Allium amplectans*), only recently declassified as a blue-listed species, both species indicative of an uncommon vernal (wet) Garry Oak meadow.

Chocolate Lily *(Fritillaria affinis)*. Photo: Marie O'Shaughnessy

Some of the other plants collected included:
Menzies' Larkspur (*Delphinium menziesii*),
Satinflower (*Olsynium douglasii*),
Hooker's and Nodding Onion (*Allium accuminatum* and *A. cernuum*),
Orchid species (*Piperia* spp.),
Hooded Ladies' Tresses (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*),
Fairy-slipper (*Calypso bulbosa*),
White Fawn Lily (*Erythronium oregonum*),
Great and Common Camas (*Camassia leichtlinii* and *C. quamash*),
Western Buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*),
Harvest Brodiaea (*Brodiaea coronaria*),
White Triteleia (*Triteleia hyacinthina*),
Chocolate Lily (*Fritillaria affinis*),
Western and Tufted Saxifrage (*Saxifrage occidentalis* and *S. caespitosa*),
Small-flowered Fringecup (*Lithophragma parviflorum*),
Woolly Eriophyllum (*Eriophyllum lanatum*),
Two-coloured Lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*),
Yerba Buena (*Clinopodium douglasii*),
Tiger Lily (*Lilium columbianum*),
Broad-leaved and Pretty Shootingstar (*Dodecatheon hendersonii* and *D. pulchellum*),
Tomcat Clover (*Trifolium willdenowii*),
Monkey-flower species (*Mimulus* spp.),
Small-Flowered Blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*),
Sea Blush (*Plectritis congesta*),
Puget Sound Gumweed (*Grindelia integrifolia*),
Indian's-Dream Pod Fern (*Aspidotis densa*),
Goldenback Fern (*Pentagramma triangularis*),
Fragile Fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*)
Sword and Narrow-Leaved Fern (*Polystichum munitum* and *P. imbricans*), various native grasses, such as *Danthonia, Elymus, Festuca, Bromus,* and *Stipa* species, and many unidentified mosses, lichens and fungi.

There were large numbers of virtually all these plants, and some sharp-eyed members even salvaged White-top Aster (*Aster curtus*), and Cup Clover (*Trifolium cyathiferum*), two red-listed species (imperiled) in B.C. and the aster recognized by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as threatened on a national level.

All these species begs the question: what did we miss? What other rare jewels were not apparent to our non-expert eyes? Mill Hill Park has recently been inventoried by Hans Roemer and he has found many more species and occurrences of rare plants than was previously thought to exist there. It is logical to consider the same would be true at this adjacent site.

This year brought a shift in my perceptions and I didn't feel quite so lucky to be involved in the "good works" of plant rescue, rather I felt increasingly sickened by the destruction and plunder of this hugely productive, rich, rare plant association. When someone declared they felt like "a kid in a candy store", I really started to wonder at the appropriateness of what we were doing. This was no candy store that could be restocked with old favourites. It took many thousands of years to produce the assemblage of plants and animals at this site. Nothing we attempt in our lifetimes could ever replace the astonishing environment that was lost.

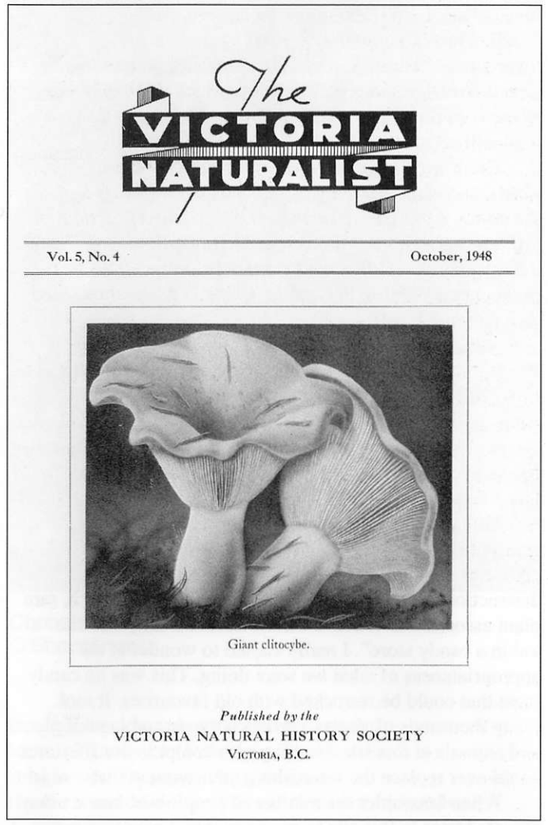
When I consider the number of people who made many repeated trips to this site to rescue plants, I wonder what could have been accomplished had that same time and energy been directed towards saving the site? I have heard the developers were willing to sell the site to CRD Parks. What if we had worked with the District of Langford, CRD Parks, Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team, non-governmental organizations, the provincial and the federal governments? Could we have preserved this immensely rich and biologically diverse community for future generations? Garry oak ecosystems are considered one of the three most endangered ecosystems in Canada, only a tiny fraction remains, and through our ignorance and inactivity we let a piece of the best of the last remnants be destroyed. Perhaps if we had not been so focused on "rescuing" individual plants we could have rescued an entire ecosystem. What good are the plants that we saved really? They have become mere gardening material rather than part of a dynamic ecosystem, is that a worthwhile trade?

Since this spring I have not participated in further "plant rescue" opportunities. I feel ambivalent about the value and appropriateness of this activity. Should we focus our limited resources on plant rescue? Or would the enthusiastic members of the plant rescue corps harness the power of their combined energies to the preservation of endangered ecosystems? Does the immediate gratification of "owning" rescued plants outweigh the long and sometimes arduous struggle to protect and preserve our natural heritage? Does the diplomacy involved in securing plant rescue options on a site preclude the ability to fight for the preservation of the site? Is there even an organization that is working to prioritize the acquisition of the last relics of our Garry oak ecosystems? Perhaps if I could be sure that we had explored all possible avenues to protect and preserve every remaining significant Garry oak and associated ecosystem site, then "plant rescue" operations would be worthwhile endeavours. At the moment I find myself sitting on the fence of indecision, staring at the crossroads of choice and I ask myself this question: if there is only a limited time left, what would I want to leave as my legacy?

Editor's note: This article is reprinted from Volume 5, Number 4 of the Victoria Natural History Society's newsletter (October 1948), as part of our 60th anniversary celebrations. One article from each of the last six decades will appear in each of the six issues of our newsletter we produce in 2004. Enjoy!

A Measure of the Fungi

By George A. Hardy, Provincial Museum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Giant clitocybe.

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The fungi in general have one phase in common; they all possess a system of creeping threads, called mycelium, which permeates the substratum of vegetable matter, dead or living, in search of food. Under the microscope the mycelium of the different species appears very much alike. It is in the final and reproductive stages that their real characters come out. The sole purpose of this last stage is the distribution of spores in order to ensure the continuance of the race.

Over 100,000 species of fungi have been described and now ones are constantly being added to the list, but the mere enumeration of species, impressive as it is, gives no conception of the individual abundance of any one kind. One species alone can dominate a whole country, as was vividly demonstrated in Ireland in 1845, when the potato blight, *Phytophorus infestans*, destroyed the crop, resulting in a completely new way of life for the people. *(Editor's note: P. infestans is no longer considered a member of the Fungi Kingdom).* It is this same blight which has recently assumed serious proportions in British Columbia. Many other forms of fungi popularly known as moulds, mildews, smuts and rusts have made it necessary for governments to spend large sums of money in an effort to check their ravages among our fields and gardens.

A very noticeable obnoxious fungus in these days of fine lawns is the fairy-ring mushroom, *Marasmius oreades*, whose presence is indicated only after much damage has been done by the hidden mycelium. *(Editor's note: according to Arora (1986), the living mycelium of this fungus actually stimulates lawn growth and the dead mycelium inhibits it.)* In this case we can have a belated revenge by eating the little mushrooms that show up in rings and curves during moist weather.

The fungus tribe has the doubtful honour of possessing a species containing one of the most deadly poisons known to man. It goes by the appropriate name of the Destroying Angel, *Amanita phalloides*. The only deadly poisonous mushroom at present known to occur in the Victoria district is the Fly Agaric, *Amanita muscaria*, a close relative of the former; it is quite common. *(Editor's note: the Destroying Angel (or Death Cap) has colonized the Victoria area since this article was written, probably arriving in soil from horticultural plant stock)* On the other side of the picture the fungi have many good points that counteract the facts so far presented.

In the first place it is impossible to correctly evaluate the good work they unobtrusively perform in breaking down dead vegetable matter into the friable humus so necessary for the development of the plant life as we know it today. An examination of the forest floor will give some idea of the extent to which the fungal mycelia have penetrated; leaves, twigs, bits of wood and old logs are seen to be packed and impregnated with the white searching threads. This is the first stage in the reduction of solid vegetable matter into humus. A later stage is to be observed in the "punk" wood of stumps and logs; that dry, brownish, powdery substance which precedes the final admixture with the soil itself. Cubical rot, that bane of lumbermen, is entirely the work of the fungal mycelia.

Fungi are unable to manufacture their food direct from the raw elements, as do the green-leaved plants, but depend upon the ready made food of the latter, which the fungi utilize by a process of breaking the plants down into the simpler elements from which they were made, extracting what is needed and discarding the refuse which becomes incorporated with the soil as humus.

The mushrooms among the so-called higher fungi, contain species that afford one of the most delectable viands in the realm of gastronomy. One species alone, the Meadow mushroom, *Agaricus campestris*, is responsible for an industry running into millions of dollars annually, but this is only one of very many kinds that await the picking to provide equally tasty morsels. It needs only a little basic knowledge in order to weed out the undesirable sorts.

The "staff of life", our daily bread would be a sorry article indeed if it were not for a member of the fungus family, for it is the leavening ability of the yeast which gives to bread that tasty tang of which we never seem to tire.

Still other fungi have given to the world invaluable aide to medical science. Penicillin, whose virtues have been extensively extolled, is the product of one of the green bread-moulds of the genus *Penicillium*; several others have and are being discovered that have beneficial uses. Among the latest is *Aureomycin* which is claimed to have far reaching possibilities in the sphere of medication. Our common Puffballs, that make such dainty stews or frys in their young stages, have when ripe and "powdery", been used by woodsmen in an emergency to staunch the flow of blood in cases of accident.

The relationship between the mycelium of fungi and the roots of trees and herbs has long been recognized, though only comparatively recently understood. Certain *Boleti* or Clod fungi and *Cortinarii* or Curtain fungi are specifically associated with coniferous trees. The Orchid grower is well aware of a similar fungal partnership in the propagation of his choice blooms.

The Indian Pipe, *Monotropa uniflora*, that ghostly plant of our springtime woods, depends in a large measure on the fungi in order to perform its life function. The horticulturist can take lessons from the fungi and, by providing mycelium impregnated soil, can be assured of a more certain success in fir tree plantings.

Those who enjoy the contemplation of nature as a restful recreation will find the varied hues and bizarre shapes of the mushrooms and other fungi a constant source of delight, for in this part of the world they are often at the height of their beauty in the fall and winter months and in some measure compensate for the lack of the flowers of spring and summer. Then it is that the often brilliant caps of the mushrooms stand out in bold relief against the somber shades of their woodland haunts or enliven the grassy borders with their evanescent forms and colours. No wonder that in days gone by ignorance of their true significance lent wings to the imagination, peopling the forest glades with fairies, gnomes and elves whose activities were often related to the mushrooms and toadstools of their domain. At that period of unknown causes of disease and plague that often swept through the country, the lowly fungus was despised and blamed for all manner of misfortunes concerning the health and well-being of the country folk.

Not only do the fungi afford food for mankind, but whole groups of insects, flies, beetles, etc. find their life work bound up with them; a mushroom is shelter and larder combined and when the mushroom's work is done its frayed and worn substance is still of use to some form of life, while ultimately its final dissolution adds vitality in the form of nitrogen and other elements to the very humus it helped to form.

A mushroom is shelter and larder combined and when the mushroom's work is done its frayed and worn substance is still of use to some form of life.

While most fungi feed on vegetable matter, they in turn are often preyed upon by others of their kind. A good example in the Victoria district is the *Hypomyces* that creeps like an orange-coloured shroud over one of the Milky mushrooms, *Lactarius piperatus*, completely obliterating the gills and distorting its shape so that it forms quite a conspicuous object on the forest floor.

The subject of the picture on the cover *(Editor's note: of the 1948 newsletter)* is the Giant Clitocybe, *Clitocybe gigantea*, a fairly common species in our woodlands whose presence is often indicated by a vast upheaval of a patch of the ground immediately above its wide spread cap.

Note: Detailed illustrated accounts of many of our local species of mushrooms, together with notes on the salient features that distinguish the poisonous from the harmless kinds, food value etc., will be found in handbook No. 4 obtainable at the provincial Museum at 25 cents.

Literature cited: Arora, David. 1986. *Mushrooms Demystified* (2nd edition). Ten Speed Press, Berkeley.

Exploring the Emerald Forest

By Nikki Wright

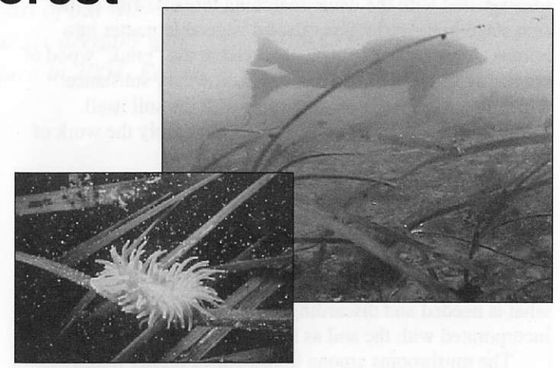

Photo: Jonathan Grant

Photo: Michael Harvey

Floating in a green world of majestic beauty, I slowly descend to ten metres below the surface of the waves. As I drift through the gentle water world, I watch, fascinated, as a school of juvenile surfperch swim lazily by. Noticing a spider crab clinging to the tapered green blades before me, I marvel at the delicacy of this emerald universe. Reaching the bottom, I see a moon snail plow its way through the mud in search of gaper clams. A sea lemon nudibranch (a "shell-less snail") is clinging onto the back of a Pacific oyster shell. A three metre long orange ribbon worm slowly weaves its way through the leaves in search of prey. A small Dungeness crab scoots out of harm's way as my fins disturb the muddy seafloor.

The day's expedition into this green other-worldly universe is merely a few metres from a friend's shoreline house along the Saanich Inlet. He has requested an underwater survey of possible eelgrass beds off shore from his home. I bring along a photographer friend, Michael, so we can collect evidence. What we find is beyond our expectations. A luscious meadow of eelgrass grows in a 10 by 20 square metre area just beyond the low tide line. We take pictures until the film runs out. We are delighted with the results.

Zostera marina, the native species of eelgrass in British Columbia, is related to a group of flowering land plants that may have migrated into the sea in relatively recent geologic times. Seaside property dwellers may find it twined amongst the flotsam and jetsam along the beach; its long slender blades attached to roots (or rhizomes). The roots resemble the rhizomes of a land plant. However, this plant is indeed from another realm, mysterious and dark to the non-diver. This native eelgrass grows under water from the zero tide line to about ten metres in depth. The version that arrived in B.C. from afar (*Zostera japonica*) prefers those places where the tide washes in and out.

Eelgrass beds are among the richest and most productive of all biotic communities. These graceful plants provide high density housing and good community policing for the local underwater marine residents. Those residents include 80% of commercial fish species at some point in their life cycle: Pacific herring, striped surfperch and juvenile Chum salmon. The long narrow leaves provide food for fish, shellfish, waterfowl (Brant, Great Blue Herons, Canada Geese, American Wigeons, Canvasbacks, American Coots and Scoters, to name a few) and myriad of other forms of underwater life grouped together into the invertebrates (crabs, nudibranchs, moonsnails).The leaves also provide a place for algae to grow, which in turn feed young salmon leaving freshwater streams and entering estuaries on their journey to the open sea. The web created by the interlacing leaves frustrates bigger fish and birds hunting for smaller and younger morsels because the predators have to slow down in the web of grass as they seek their meals.

Since eelgrass flourishes near the shoreline, the housekeeping habits of humans directly and strongly impact the health of these underwater meadows. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to help protect these areas:

- create buffer zones along the shore with native plants to reduce sediment from flowing into the eelgrass bed and smothering it;
- use care with fertilizers (they create other kinds of underwater gardens that can block the light for the eelgrass);
- avoid the use of pesticides because they kill non-target organisms
- build docks over areas unsuitable for eelgrass, since docks tend to shade out light for these plants;
- and anchor in areas free of eelgrass to reduce the risk of disturbing this underwater ecosystem

Community groups along the British Columbian coastline are eager to know what they can do to protect eelgrass meadows. Some are mapping beds threatened by shoreline activities such as shellfish farms and development, while others are interested in learning more about restoring areas that once were resplendent with lush eelgrass meadows. We support these constructive conservation efforts.

NIKKI WRIGHT *is the Executive Director of SeaChange Marine Conservation Society, a local organization whose mandate is to educate young people and the public about marine issues and do restorative work on marine habitats, such as eelgrass beds. They depend on volunteers of all ages including scuba divers, educators, students, retired folks, scientists and others to achieve their objectives. For further information, contact: SeaChange Marine Conservation Society at seachange@shaw.ca or visit their web site at: www.seachangelife.net*

Red-tailed Hawk at Race Rocks

By Mike W. Demarchi

On 9 October 2003, Virgil Hawkes and I were conducting a monitoring session as part of our research on the effects of disturbance on marine birds and mammals at Race Rocks Ecological Reserve, British Columbia. At 15:20, something scared hundreds of Thayer's Gulls from an area just north of the light tower on Great Race Rock. We figured it was likely a Bald Eagle or Peregrine Falcon, based on the gulls' behaviour. We then spotted an adult Red-tailed Hawk flying in from the northeast. It landed on a rock right in front of a large male California sealion**.** The hawk looked very tired and was breathing hard. Perhaps it had attempted to migrate across the Strait of Juan de Fuca, but had to turn back (all day the wind direction was unfavourable for such a crossing). We figured it would just rest up then head back to Vancouver Island.

At 15:38 we were observing it once again when suddenly the hawk collapsed and fell backwards into a crevice. A few seconds later a surge of water flushed the bird into view. It was facing breast-down in the water, lifeless. The surge then drew it back into the crevice and out of view. We were interested in retrieving the carcass for further inspection of its body condition (besides it being a beautiful specimen), but in keeping with the conditions of our research permit, and because doing so would have caused many sealions to charge off into the water, we refrained. We were just left to contemplate the strange event and consider ourselves fortunate to have witnessed one of nature's fascinating dramas.

The photo was taken from atop the lighthouse using a Nikon digital camera and a Spacemaster spotting scope.

The Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*)

By Marie O'Shaughnessy

Black Oystercatchers are visible year-round along the rocky coasts of British Columbia. In fall and winter their numbers increase, with family groups and large congregations roosting on the many rocks that surround the Oak Bay and Victoria waterfront. These somewhat gregarious shorebirds, which roost at high tide and feed at low tide, are conspicuous not only in appearance but also in call. Their shrill, piping whistles reverberate across the water. They can often be seen in pairs flying low over the shore as they search out new feeding areas. Breeding calls are particularly memorable as the monogamous pairs defend territories and greet each other with distinct head bowing behaviours. No other local shorebird vocalizes like the Oystercatcher. Once you have heard their call of 'queep queep quee deedeedeedeedeedededededddddrrr', and identified its source, you will never forget it.

Of the ten or eleven species of oystercatcher world wide (depending on which reference you read), the American Oystercatcher and Black Oystercatcher are the only two found along the Pacific coast of North America. The Black Oystercatcher is resident as far north as the Aleutian Islands and extends southward to the Islands off of central Baja California.

The American Oystercatcher is a southern California resident, but its distribution also includes both east and west coasts of the United States and South America. Like the Black Oystercatcher, the American Oystercatcher frequents rocky coastlines, gleaning the intertidal zone for marine invertebrates. However, its feeding niche allows for alternate foraging on sandy beaches and mud flats. There is some overlap between these two, as hybridization (interbreeding) has occurred in western Baja California, causing some variations in plumage. Oystercatchers spend their entire lives in or near intertidal habitats, which makes them highly vulnerable to oil spills, should they occur along the coast.

Observing the Black Oystercatcher can be difficult at times, despite its showy appearance. The relatively bulky, dark bird with a weight of 650 gm (1.4 lb) is approximately 17 inches in length with a wingspan of about 32 inches. Male and female look alike; however the female has a slightly longer bill and is bulkier in appearance. The blackish/brown plumage of this bird blends well with the dark colours of the rocks that it frequents. The long, chisel-tipped red bill, fleshy pink legs and yellow eye ringed with red/orange, give this otherwise drab, rather stocky bird its unique characteristics.

Juvenile Black Oystercatcher. *Photo:* David Pretty

The scientific name, *Haematopus* means pink/red foot; 'haema' denotes the colour of blood and 'pus' means foot.

The long, laterally flattened bill is designed specifically for its style of feeding. A lethal weapon, the bill is built to either hammer or stab prey. Bivalves, such as mussels and oysters, are part of the diet of Oystercatchers, but univalves, such as snails and limpets, are consumed more frequently. To pry open a clam or oyster can be a difficult task, even with the aid of a sharp knife, yet these birds get at the soft tissues of their prey with little more than a jab of a bill. Using a surprise attack, they plunge their bill into an unsuspecting open mollusk and sever the powerful adductor muscle before the bivalve has time to "slam-shut". On other occasions, these shorebirds will pry off a mussel or limpet from its secure rock-hold and hammer with rapid, short stabs until the shell splinters. Other sources of food include crabs and marine worms

Although our resident population is believed to be non-migratory, sizable groups can be observed roosting around Victoria. It is not known if populations farther north in BC or Alaska move south to join those that nest here. For whatever reason, November 2003 has seen increasing flocks of roosting Oystercatcher off Cattle Point…numbers as high as 52. A considerable number gather here in time for the Christmas Bird Count, possibly during migration from outer exposed coasts to more sheltered areas. Locally, in Juan de Fuca Strait, the rocky shores off Oak Bay and Race Rocks allow for good viewing opportunities of these interesting shorebirds. Approximately 20-40 Oystercatchers can be seen as they roost at high tide. Look either on Kitty Islets just off McNeil Bay, or at the rocky isles off Cattle Point. This grouping behaviour changes as the days lengthen and warmer temperatures arrive in the spring.

Once breeding season arrives, usually middle to late May, bonded pairs separate and generally nest in isolation on rocky coasts and outlying islands. They make use of rock depressions as suitable sites for nests. The young from last year's brood disperse and probably do not breed for another year. Occasionally adults choose sandy beaches above the high tide line for nest building, where short grass and driftwood can conceal the nest. Sidney Spit is a prime location for this example of nesting. Rock shards, small shell bits, pebbles, broken crab shells and beach debris are gathered to line the hollow that becomes the nest.

Noisy pre-copulation displays can be seen and heard, with much head bowing and running forward with each other. Breeding birds exhibit a glossy black head, neck and upper breast, while the rest of the body's plumage remains a dark brown. Either bird will initiate copulation. One brood a year is normal for this species. However, clutches lost to higher than normal tides are replaced. Two to three buff/olive eggs flecked with brown or black markings are laid. Both adults share incubation duties.

Precocial young (chicks that stand and can usually feed themselves soon after emerging from the egg) are hatched after 25-29 days. However, in the case of the Oystercatcher chicks, the parents feed their young for several weeks. The young are downy and mobile, but do not leave the nest. It is known that both adults continue to feed and tend their young well after they have learned to fly, which occurs about five weeks after hatching. Apparently the young do not follow their parents to observe techniques of feeding for 3-5 weeks, remaining at the nest site. After this period the parent birds then teach their young the specialized methods of opening bivalves, which apparently takes months to learn. Unlike other precocial chicks (i.e. Turnstones) that leave the nest one to two days after hatching, Black Oystercatcher chicks stick around and learn their lessons well.

Mature Black Oystercatcher. *Photo:* David Pretty

Immature Oystercatchers are easily identified by their overall dark brownish appearance. Buff scalloping on some of the brown feather edges can be seen, as can the brown rather than yellow eye. The bill has two distinct tones; light red at the base and dusky grey near the tip. The legs are also pale in comparison to those of the adult.

Indicators suggest that this delightful, noisy species is doing well in our region, despite the narrow and limited habitat that it frequents. Survival depends upon a reprieve from the now-common disturbance by kayakers (reaching the small islets so important for nesting), and a lack of marine catastrophes that could foul the rocky shorelines. Next time you are out for a walk along the waterfront be sure to scan the rocks carefully. The pink legs and red bill of the Black Oystercatcher are sure to catch your attention.

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"What I Did Last Summer" by H.Wren

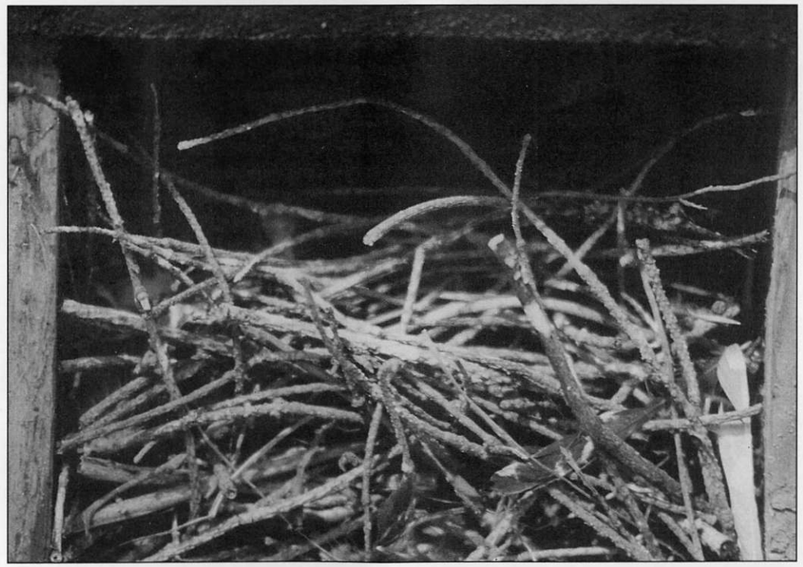
By Philip Critchlow

Let me introduce myself. I am a House Wren and I have to say that I am a fairly nondescript bird, feathered in various shades of greys and browns and without a prominent eyebrow stripe. I am known as a very aggressive bird, especially for one so small. I will nest in any suitable cavity: holes abandoned by woodpeckers or any artificial cavity such as a mail-box or birdhouse. I love to show off with my tail held erect. But enough about me and more of my summer!

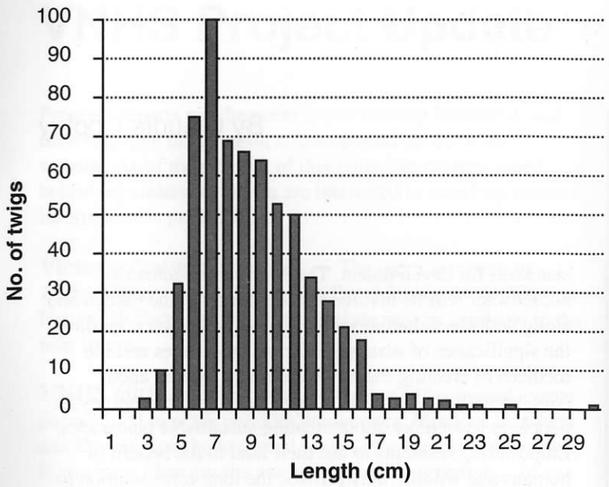
It began early. By late spring, I was winging north to arrive at a suitable breeding territory: a large house situated in an open area in a mixed Douglas fir/arbutus forest. I immediately announced my presence with continual chatter and a random burbling song, partly to advertise for a mate and partly to ward off any of my male competitors. For several years, I have discovered many nesting boxes placed on this house and on nearby tree trunks (probably intended for Violet-green Swallows). The boxes are also ideal for wrens, so I tentatively selected one (and eyed several others!). When my mate arrived she confirmed my choice, a tree-mounted box, and we quickly built a nest. She laid several whitish eggs, speckled with reddish brown. Incubation was complete after 13 days and the fledglings, after being fed a non-stop diet of insects and spiders, left the nest 14 days later. The rest of the family then dispersed while I continued my chatter and singing for several weeks.

During construction of the nest, I kept an inventory of the building materials. The contents included roughly 640 twigs, 77 feathers, 8 pieces of narrow synthetic strip, a diverse mix of grasses, and a coarse nylon thread almost a metre in length! There was a small amount of moss and a few dried caterpillar cocoons carried in attached to twigs. One twig protruded from the box entrance as well as 20 cm of the thread. The nest box had a 14 x14 cm base, with 12 cm high front. The hole was roughly circular with a 3 cm diameter.

A length distribution of the 640 twigs is shown in the accompanying graph. The length of bent twigs was estimated as if they were straightened out, the longest arm and stem was used for Y-shaped ones, and no time was wasted on very short twigs. The longest twig measured 29 cm (can you imagine the ingenuity and persistence required to get this completely through the entrance?!) while the bulkiest was a 10 cm twig with a diameter close to 5 mm. Most of the twigs were, as expected Douglas fir, the rest being arbutus (including a few dried florets and the backbone of an old leaf). One 18 cm fir twig still had needles attached.



House wren nest. *Photo*: Philip Critchlow



The lower half of the nest comprised the shortest twigs, mainly 4-6 cm in length, arranged in such a way as to produce a well-defined circular foundation for the actual nest which contained the feathers and a lot of grass. The longest sticks were loosely positioned to restrict access to the box. I also built an unused second 'nest' in another box, usurped from a swallow, which had over 420 twigs and which was, as I recollect, constructed in about 2 days. The feathers were mainly 4-7 cm in length, mostly straight and stiff, which would indicate wing or tail feathers. They were almost entirely black or white, collected from a neighbouring chicken enclosure, entailing a return trip of about 200 m. Two feathers, curved and very fluffy, were black near the root changing abruptly to a rusty red, perhaps from a robin's or towhee's breast. The synthetic strips were from a frayed sunflower seed sack. The thread was found some distance from the house property.

I hope the house residents enjoyed my presence and appreciated my industriousness; although they may sometimes they find my aggressiveness annoying. I have been accused, in addition to driving away other wrens, of frequently intimidating the Violet-green Swallows and other small cavity dwellers. At the end of the nesting season, they found eggs remaining in swallow, chickadee and creeper nests each punctured with a small hole. (The creeper nest was located behind a specially arranged bark shingle.) I am blamed for this egg destruction. It's true that I often try to fill swallow nests with twigs even though they are active, but egg destruction…?

Anyway, I plan to return to this spot next year.

HAT Tricks

By Claudia Copley

Most people have heard of Habitat for Humanity; and we even occasionally receive phone calls at the Habitat Acquisition Trust office from people thinking we **are** Habitat for Humanity, so it seems fitting that HAT has become part of a project that involves this well-known national organization. This partnership includes the Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre, City Green, Lifecycles Project Society, Naturescape BC, the Native Plant Study Group and the Native Plant Society of BC.

It all began when these local groups came together to design and create an award-winning demonstration garden called the **Wild Garden Party** project for the 2002 Victoria Flower and Garden Show at Royal Roads. This garden showcased what homeowners could do in their yards to further land stewardship, and was so well-received we won the People's Choice Award. This winning collaboration demonstrated that our combined efforts could achieve what no individual organization could do on its own.

To further the collective goal of the Wild Garden Party, which is to encourage responsible and environmentally sound land use, HAT and the rest of the local groups have two new projects in the works for 2004: one is to create a residential garden and landscape in the Greater Victoria area that benefits both humans and wildlife, the other is a tour of the "wild gardens" of Victoria on the first weekend in May.

The garden will be created at the Habitat for Humanity site in Sidney. This garden will incorporate sustainable landscaping principles, including:

- Native plantings to provide food and habitat for wildlife and promote ecosystem biodiversity
- Food production using chemical free methods
- Composting for waste reduction and on site garden use
- Water conservation features

As new communities are constructed and urban sprawl continues, native vegetation and wildlife habitat are displaced, with the resultant loss of endangered species. Additionally, most new homes are landscaped with exotic species and lawns, replacing the biodiversity that once existed and requiring high-energy inputs to maintain. Recognizing this, it is vital that we encourage residents to maintain and/or enhance wildlife features unique to our special region.

The lasting beauty and simplicity of maintaining a "wild garden" will act as an inspiration to neighbours and set new standards for development. The Habitat for Humanity homeowner will be involved in the design of the garden and, along with the volunteers, will receive education regarding the significance of sustainable home landscapes and the methods of creating them. We are really excited about continuing this collaboration, and creating opportunities for people to learn more about creating sustainable landscapes. Empowering residents to use their land to the benefit of humans and wildlife may provide the long-term solution to living sustainably within an urban environment.

If you are interested in learning more about either of these projects, or to get involved, please don't hesitate to call (995-2428), email (hatmail@hat.bc.ca), or drop in to the Habitat Acquisition Trust office (316-620 View).

VNHS Project Update

Progress reports will be made in the Victoria Naturalist, and time-sensitive information will be posted on the VNHS website. As of the printing of this issue, the projects listed below are underway. If you are interested in assisting, contact information is provided.

Victoria Naturalist Index — The index prepared by **Andy Buhler** has been posted in Excel format on the Victoria Natural History website. Print versions will be available in the near future.

VNHS 60th Anniversary — There will be several events during 2004 to mark our 60th anniversary. **Marilyn Lambert** and **Donna Ross** have agreed to chair the steering committee. If you have ideas for the anniversary, please contact anniversary@vicnhs.bc.ca, Donna Ross at 384-5327 or Marilyn Lambert at 477-5922.

Esquimalt Lagoon Signage — **Bruce Whittington** has prepared a grant application for VanCity Savings Credit Union. Proceeds from our current raffle will also be used to fund the second VNHS interpretive sign at the Lagoon.

Conservation License Plates — **Tina Kelly** (995-1878, manateett@hotmail.com) is investigating the conservation license plate programs in Florida and other jurisdictions to determine if this is a possibility for British Columbia.

Cat-Owner Education Plan — **Darren Copley** (479-6622, dccopley@island.net) will take the lead on a cat-owner education project. Darren and Claudia's happy cats are shining examples of how owners can be "trained" to enjoy their pets and eliminate predation of native species.

Barn Owl Nest Box Project — **Ed Pellizzon** (881-1476, edlps@telus.net) will be the contact person for an owl nest box program. If you are interested in helping out with any aspect of this project, please contact Ed.

Purple Martin Nest Box Project — **Darren Copley** (479-6622, dccopley@island.net) is looking for a crew to help build, install and repair Purple Martin nest boxes in the lower island area. The Purple Martin nest box program is a real success story, but many of the boxes are now getting old and are in need of repair and replacement. VNHS may also be working with students to increase awareness and build boxes in the schools. If you can help, please let Darren know.

Oak Habitat Monitoring — **John Henigman** (598-6326, henigman@pacificcoast.net) is the contact person for an Oak habitat inventory and mapping project. This group will work closely with other Garry Oak stewardship groups to monitor the health of the region's oak meadows. If you would like to assist, please contact John.

Field camps and tours — **John Defayette** (598-3442, ul345@victoria.tc.ca) is anxious to hear from members who are interested in multi-day field events. If you have an idea of a location or would like to be informed of trips as they are being planned, please contact John.

Thanks go out to all of the members of who are working on these projects!

Welcome to New Members

Janet Arnold
Derby Road
just getting started

Ron and Sandy Jenkins
Bennett Road
videotaping wildlife & still photography

Shari and Paul Wierenga
Clarke Road

Kate Lansley
Phoenix Street

Bruce Bendow
Powell Street
birds and marine life

Carole Mills
Quadra Street
birds, hiking

Carolyn Zarry
Michigan Street
nature trips and exploration

Doug and Bev Biffard
Garkil Road

Doug and Nancy Craig
Dallas Road
birds, hikes, and conservation

Ian and Joan Macdonald
Hampshire Road

Katherine Aitchison
Market Street

Dr. Peter Coy
Tiedemann Place

Phylis and Gerald Arron
Kimta Road
hiking, birds, marine

Hilary Burton
Willis Point Road
botany, conservation

Rosemary Bryan
Edgelow Street
anything biology-related, especially birding!

Judith Terry
Ferndale Road
birds

Elizabeth and Matthew Poppe
Rockland Avenue

LIFE'S UNENDING CIRCLE

The salmon tries to swim upstream,
but is barely able to hold its position
against the swift current.
A powerful urge has forced it from the ocean
to this spot in the river.
Its tail is worn and ragged
from making nests in the gravelly bed.
Its body is finally empty of eggs.
It knows only total exhaustion.
Slowly and then faster and faster
the water has its way.
The salmon is buffeted this way and that,
senses fade — at last —
blessed release— oblivion.

The eagle too has been driven to this spot.
It knows the force that brought it here—hunger.
From its lofty perch it has watched the death throes of the fish.
Now it sails majestically down.
Hooked talons grip the salmon— the noble head bends forward.
The great, cruel beak begins the feast.
The eagle's strength increases.
It is filled with the joy of life.

Robert Kensett

VNHS Awards
Call for Nominations

VNHS members contribute to the Society in many ways. Some write articles for the *Naturalist*, some lead field trips, others serve on the board or on other committees. There are some who go out of their way just to make sure other members can continue to be a part of Society activities, by visiting shut-ins, or driving others to Society functions.

The Society likes to honour those members who have given freely of their time in a variety of ways for the Society, over a long period of time. The VNHS Distinguished Service Award is given annually to members who have shown such dedication.

The Society may also bestow Honourary Life Membership on a member whose involvement with VNHS has been exceptionally long and dedicated.

The board welcomes nominations for either of these awards, which are presented at the Annual Banquet. Nominations should explain the reasons for the nomination, and should be endorsed by at least two members. Please consider nominating a member, and send your nomination to the Society's address, or give it to one of the directors.

VNHS Distinguished Service Award Recipients

1989	Lyndis Davis, David Stirling Katherine Sherman
1990	Anne Adamson, Charles Trotter Robb Mackenzie-Grieve
1991	Ed Coffin, Mark Nyhof
1992	David Fraser, Margaret Mackenzie-Grieve
1993	Giff Calvert, Harold Pollock
1994	Kaye Suttill
1995	Bryan Gates, Bruce Whittington
1996	Gordon Devey
1997	Michael Carson
1998	No recipients
1999	Tony Embleton, Dorothy Henderson
2000	Tom Gillespie, Marilyn Lambert, David Pearce
2001	David Allinson, Beverly Glover, Hank Vander Pol
2002	Norm Mogensen
2003	Bob Chappell

VNHS Honorary Life Members

David Stirling, Vic Goodwill, Peggy Goodwill, Mrs. L.E. Chambers

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**: the second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., in Murray and Anne Fraser 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. The VNHS Calendar also appears on the Internet at: http://www.vicNHS.bc.ca.

JANUARY

Thursday, January 1
Field Trip — Happy New Year! First Birding Trip of the New Year.
Get our 60th Anniversary Year off to a great start! A great excuse to start a new bird list! Join **Rick Schortinghuis** for a Birding Walk in the Layritz Park, Broadcast Hill, Viaduct Flats, and Quicks Bottom area. Wear good hiking boots and bring a lunch. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Layritz Park, which is off Wilkinson Road. Call Rick at 652-3326 if you need more information.

Saturday, January 10
Field Trip — Owling
Join **David Allinson** for an owling trip on the Saanich Penninsula. Meet at 7:30 p.m. opposite the entrance to Beaver Lake Park on Elk Lake Drive. This will be limited to 20 people, phone David in the evening at 391-1786 to register.

Tuesday, January 13
VNHS Natural History Presentation
"The Story of the Salmon Louse"
Corey Peet, a University of Victoria graduate student, will focus on the life history of the salmon louse as it relates to the ecology of juvenile salmon during their seaward migration in the spring. He will discuss what is known about the life cycle of salmon lice and how they interact with both adult and juvenile salmon. Sea lice have been in the news a great deal these past few years, and Corey will comment on the potential for salmon farms to alter the dynamics between louse and salmon by describing the history of lice outbreaks in regions of both Europe and BC, where salmon farming is present. We'll see you at 7:30 p.m., Room 159, Murray and Anne Fraser Building (formerly Begbie), UVic. Bring a coffee mug and a friend; non-members are welcome.

Saturday, January 17
Field Trip — Harling Point/Chinese Cemetery
Join your trip leaders, botany experts **Oluna and Adolf Ceska**, and recently retired University of Victoria Geography Professor **David Laia** for an exploration of this local treasure (about 2 hours). Dr. Laia has written articles on the history of our Chinese Cemetery, and received the Order of Canada for revitalization of the Victoria's Chinatown. Rare plants that live here include Macoun's meadowfoam (*Limnanthes macounii*), Howell's montia (*Montia howellii*), Bear's-foot sanicle (*Sanicula arctopoides*), and Bigelov's microseris (*Microseris bigelovii*). Meet at the end of Penzance Rd. Call Adolf Ceska 477-1211 or cell 216-1481 for more information. This trip is the first of a series of monthly botanical trips with Oluna, Adolf and their friends to search for rare plants of our area, all in celebration of our 60th anniversary.

Tuesday, January 20
Botany Night — "Plants In The Media"
Dr. Briony Penn, University of Victoria Geography professor and host of "Environmental", will show several segments from her Vancouver Island TV program and will discuss problems of presenting plants in TV shows. Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 24 and Sunday, January 25
Hummingbird Weekend
Visit the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary and view pictures and displays about Hummingbirds. There will be no survey this year, but we want to keep up the information and passion about these wonderful birds. Two events are planned. The Saturday program will be for families, and the Sunday event directed at adults. 12:00 to 4:00 daily.

- ***Press Conference With Anna, Saturday, Jan 24, 1- 3 pm***
Be a member of the "Press Conference" and interview Ms. Anna Hummingbird the smallest bird living in Victoria. Find out how these birds feed, survive the winter and fly better than a helicopter. Displays and crafts for ages 5 and up. Drop-in program, donations appreciated.

- ***Hummingbirds for Adults, Sunday, January 25, 2pm***
How do you attract and keep hummers in your garden? **Calvor Palmateer**, gardener and owner of For Wild Birds and Gardeners, will give a slide illustrated presentation about Victoria's smallest bird. He'll share his knowledge of hummingbird foraging on both native and non-native plants, and fascinating facts about hummingbird biology. Hummingbird display. Donations appreciated.

Sunday, January 25
Field Trip
Birding Scafe Hill
Join Alan Macleod and Jan Brown on a birding adventure to this lesser known part of Thetis Lake Park. We should get a good variety of resident and wintering birds. Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch. Call Alan at 382-3854 if you need more information.

Monday, January 26
Marine Night
"Where is the Ancient Mariner? Plotting the course for leatherback turtle research and conservation in the Pacific Northwest"
The Leatherback Turtle was first listed as Endangered in 1981 by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. The new Species at Risk Act has renewed the focus on these animals. Carla Sbrocchi, Turtle Conservation Group Coordinator at the Vancouver Aquarium, will describe what is known about these and other marine turtles in Canada's waters and the conservation programs designed to help them. Come out of your shell and join us: 7:30 p.m. at Swan Lake Nature Centre.

Wednesday, January 28
Birders' Night
"A Bird in a Tree is Worth Two Trips to Taiwan"
Simon Liao, President of the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan, and **Jo Ann MacKenzie** of White Rock will present a slide illustrated talk on the birds and birding in Taiwan, Republic of China. When you see these birds, you will want to join Simon on a future trip to his homeland. Everyone is welcome; bring a novice birder and your coffee cup. 7:30 p.m., Murray and Anne Fraser Building, UVic.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 7
Field Trip — Birding Pat Bay
Join **Barbara Begg** for a birding walk around Pat Bay. This can be a great spot to see all three scoter species, both goldeneye species plus many other seabirds. Meet at the small park on the water just north of the Coast Guard Jetty on West Saanich Road. Call Barbara at 656-5296 if you need more information.

Tuesday, February 10
VNHS Annual Banquet
"Missing Marmots"
Treat yourself to a sumptuous buffet courtesy of the University Club at the University of Victoria (formerly referred to as the Faculty Club) and food for your brain courtesy of our special guest **Dr. Andrew Bryant,** Chief Scientist on the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Team. Dr. Bryant, also known as "Mr. Marmot" is regularly interviewed regarding issues related to these critically endangered mammals. Come out and hear the latest news on our furry little friend. Happy hour at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are $35 and must be purchased in advance, at Natural History Presentations, Birder's Nights, or at Habitat Acquisition Trust's office (316-620 View) (995-2428). There are always lots of great door prizes available. We will see you there!

Saturday, February 14
Field Trip — Devonian Park
This trip is the second of a series of monthly botanical trips with to search for rare plants of our area, all in celebration of our 60th anniversary. This trip will take 3 to 4 hours, including the travel, and visit Macoun's meadowfoam, (*Limnanthes macounii*), and Tracy's mistmaiden (*Romanzoffia tracyi*). Meet at the Helmcken Park and Ride at 9:30 a.m. or in the Devonian Park parking lot at 10:00 a.m. Leaders: **Moralea Milne**, and **Oluna and Adolf Ceska**. Contact Adolf Ceska 477-1211 or cell 216-1481for more information.

Sunday, February 15
Field Trip — Natural History at China Beach and Jordan River
Join John Henigman for a natural history walk in Juan de Fuca Provincial Park starting at China Beach. We will also bird on the beach by the river at Jordan River. At China Beach we will walk down to China Beach, along it and back up at Second Beach for a 3 km loop. We will look for plants, birds and other animals and will have a checklist. John will provide background on the climate, geology, ecosystem function and aboriginal history. Meet at the Helmcken Road Park and Ride at 8:00 a.m. to carpool. Bring a snack and a warm coat. Call John at 250-598-6326 for more information.

Tuesday, February 17
Botany Night — "Journey to Baikal Lake"
Stephen Ruttan will show slides from Siberia and Lake Baikal. Brrrrr! Swan Lake Nature House, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 22
Field Trip — Boundary Bay and Raptors
Join Rick **Schortinghuis** and **Jeremy Gatten** for a trip to Boundary Bay. We can expect to see large flocks of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as visit some of the best wintering habitat for raptors in western Canada. Car-pooling will reduce costs to approximately $35-$40 per person. Meet at Elk Lake Drive at the entrance to Beaver Lake Park at 5:45 a.m., we will return on the 5:00 p.m. ferry, dress warm and bring a lunch. To register call Rick at 652-3326.

Monday, February 23
Marine Night
"The Clam Gardens of the Broughton Archipelago – a Case for Pre-contact, Large-scale Mariculture in Queen Charlotte Strait"
During aerial coastal habitat surveys of the Broughton Archipelago in 1995, **Dr. John Harper**, Coastal & Ocean Resources Inc. noticed some unusual coastal features that appeared to be of man-made origin. He will describe these structures and speculate on their use. Venture out of your domestic habitat and join us for this interesting talk: 7:30 p.m. at Swan Lake Nature Centre.

Wednesday, February 25
Birders' Night — "Night Eyes and Mist Nets"
Paul Levesque of Victoria will present a slide-illustrated talk about his program of monitoring and banding nocturnal owls at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory. His emphasis will be on the Northern Saw-Whet Owl. Prior to Paul's presentation, **Tasha Smith** will bring us up to date on the Coastal Waterbird and Beached Bird surveys, which she directs for Bird Studies Canada. A full evening of education and entertainment, and your chance to get involved in research. Everyone is welcome. Bring a novice birder and your coffee cup, 7:30 p.m. Murray and Ann Fraser 159, UVic.

Sunday, February 29
Field Trip — Birding Elk Lake
Join **David Kelly** for a leisurely 10 km stroll around the loop trail at Elk Lake/Beaver Lake Regional Park. This is a good location to find wintering passerines and waterfowl. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Brookleigh Road parking lot at the north end of Elk Lake, just off Hamsterly Road. No hills but it might be muddy in places, so choose footwear that can take the conditions as well as the distance. Call David at 658-8669 if you need more information.

BULLETIN BOARD

For Sale: Lansdowne Birds of the West Coast — Two volume set $45 and Lansdowne Birds of the Eastern Forest: Volume 1 $23. **All proceeds to the Victoria Natural History Society**. Call Ann at 652-6450 or email motmot@shaw.ca.

Volunteer Opportunities at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary: Nature interpreter with school children, trail builder, nature house receptionist, and bird walk guide are volunteer positions available at the sanctuary beginning in January. For more details contact Joan at 479-0211 or check out the web site at www.swanlake.bc.ca.

The **Marine Birds Course** is a series of slide and video illustrated talks that is ideal for birders and naturalists interested in learning more about marine birds and bird behaviour. Discover fascinating secrets about how marine birds live and feed. The emphasis will be on unique and interesting biological and behavioural information that will capture the imagination of both amateurs and professionals. The course is instructed by **James Clowater**, an ornithologist who specializes in the behavioural ecology of marine birds. Sessions begin on February 26, 2004, meeting Thursdays 7- 9 p.m. at Swan Lake Nature House. Cost is $75.00 for five 2 hr. sessions. Two shoreline fieldtrips are included. For details visit http:/webs.ii.ca/clowater/mbirds.htm. Call Swan Lake to pre-register (250) 479-0211

Birds on the Bay

Celebrate Boundary Bay
January - May 2004

Boundary Bay, Canada's top-rated Important Bird Area, is a major stop-over on the Pacific Flyway. Habitats support more than 320 species, some rare and endangered.

Join us on weekends from January through May!

Walks, talks, family activities, art and nature, night owling, dawn chorus and much more!

Birds on the Bay Opening
January 23-25 • Crescent Beach

For Event Details call 604-607-3700
check-out www.birdsonthebay.ca

A Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society Initiative with Partners

Natural History Courses

Here's a chance to support the society while learning a bit more about natural history. These programs will be taught by experienced VNHS trip leaders who have volunteered their time. The proceeds will support VNHS conservation and education activities. Please note the lower prices for members (yet another reason to join!). We are interested in offering other courses but require more leaders to come forward. Please call Rick Schortinghuis at 652-3326 if you have any suggestions.

Beginning Birding

An easy introduction to the pursuit of birding for those with little or no previous experience. The emphasis will be on bird identification in the field. We will start with an illustrated lecture on Thursday Feb. 22, 2004 and 6 Saturday morning field trips: Feb 24, Mar. 6,13,20,27, and April 10. The cost will be $75 for non-members and $45 for members.

Beyond Beginning Birding

Take the next step beyond the basics of identification. Our group of local VNHS experts places an emphasis on birding by ear and the identifying field marks of those difficult groups and species. This course includes 8 very diverse field sessions around Victoria led by 8 different leaders. Sessions run on Thursday or Sunday mornings beginning on April 15th, 2004. The cost is $95.00 for non-members and $65.00 for members. Each session is limited to fifteen.

If you have any questions, or would like to register, call Rick at 652-3326.

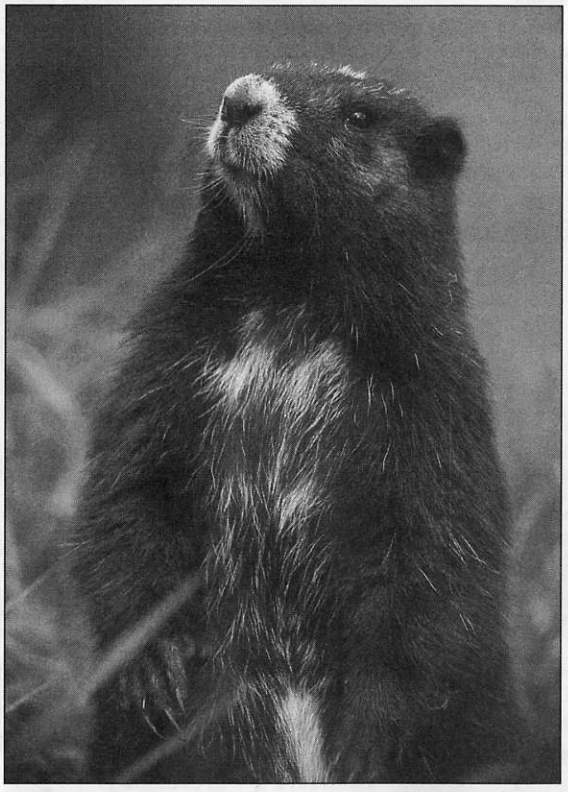
Victoria Natural History Society

The Victoria NATURALIST

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

Renewal by: Dec-03 FEES ARE DUE

Claudia and Darren Copley
675 Beaver Lake Road
VICTORIA BC V8Z 5N9



Missing Marmots

Treat yourself to a sumptuous buffet at the University Club (formerly the Faculty Club), and food for your brain courtesy of special guest **Dr. Andrew Bryant**, Canada's foremost researcher on the endangered Vancouver Island marmot.

Our island has the unhappy bragging rights to being the home of one of the most endangered mammals on the planet. Come to a slide-illustrated presentation about this critically endangered animal by the world expert. Hear the latest on the captive breeding program, and find out about success stories from Europe that can give us hope for the future of our rare marmot.

V.N.H.S.

Tuesday, February 10, 2004

Happy hour at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m.
University of Victoria
Tickets are $35. Available at Habitat Acquisition Trust's office: 316-620 View Street, phone 995-2428

V.N.H.S.