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Oystercatcher

Newsletter of the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club

Summer, 2011

The Blackish Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ater*) is found mainly in Argentina, Chile, the Falkland Islands and Peru. With its blackish plumage with wings and back being rather dark brown, it blends into the rocks upon which it feeds, and it does not draw attention to its presence.



Bald eagle. Photo by Nieke Visser

President's Point of View

Kees Visser

Summer started late this year, and finally in late May things finally started to warm up. Amazingly, we still managed to do most of our activities over the first 4 months of the year.

This contribution will be a bit of a lament. I am very perturbed by the fact that our club is running

out of members who are willing to contribute as leaders, as event organizers, and as Board members. Over the last 10 years or so we have always had a healthy membership of around 225 members, but only about 10% of these, around 20 people were willing to accept leadership roles. For the ramblers, walkers and hikers we are now counting on only about 5 or 6 people for each category willing to lead activities. We are very grateful that we can count on these people, but they

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This newsletter is published by the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club, PO Box 203, Ganges PO, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2V9. Editor: Gary Adams (gafrad@shaw.ca)
For information on the Board of Directors and weekly outings, please see our website: www.saltspringtnc.ca

are getting burn-out. It would be useful if some other members, and not necessarily younger ones, could take up the slack. I know that most "faithful" leaders are quite willing to co-lead so you can learn the necessary skills. Even if you are fairly new to the island, you can do this, and by doing you learn to know the trails and also other members.

Only a few years ago we had at least 10 or 12 members who were leading only one or two events per year, whilst the more regular leader did the rest. This worked quite well, but at present some of the regulars lead once a month and that is too much. If your coordinator requests leaders, please help out.

On another and perhaps more serious front, our Board for next year needs some new members. Due to work commitments our Vice-President will not become our President, and will leave the Board in January 2012.

As a result we will need a new President, as well as a new Vice-President for 2012-2013 (a 2-year term). Since the immediate Past President will not be a Board member, but only an advisor, this leaves the Board with a major gap.

In addition, some of our coordinators might also leave their position after a two year stint., although I really hope they will stay on for another term. Obviously for the President's position some knowledge of the club and its role on Salt Spring Island would be very beneficial, but for the Vice-President's position any (new) member would be fine. It is an excellent position for newer residents to get to know the Community as well as the club and its membership.

If you will be contacted for any of these Board positions, please consider them; you will find it very rewarding and you learn to know very quickly many people on the island. You may also contact Zeke Blazecka, our Past-President, or myself, if you are interested in these positions. The commitments are not that demanding. There will be seven board meetings/year plus the annual General Meeting. The job requirements are about 4 to 8 hours per month depending on the position.

Last time, I mentioned already, that we also need event organizers for Spring and/or Fall trips. Many members approach me with great ideas for future trips such as Gray Wells Provincial Park, Strathcona Park, East Sooke Park, Sunshine Coast areas, Mt Olympia etc, but people are needed to organize these.

We can not always rely on the 4 or 5 people who have organized these events many times in the past. The Executive has put some guidelines in place to help you out. In addition, organizers will be assisted financially.

These events prove always very popular and are usually fully booked in one or two week's time. After our very successful trip to Tofino we are now looking for a Fall trip 2011 and Spring trip 2012 organizers.

On a more sunny side, we are a healthy club with a large stable membership (223 at present) and healthy finances. Our weekly activities are well attended, and thanks to our leaders, Board, Website and Oystercatcher coordinators, the club is running smoothly.

We have been helping out with the purchase of the Conservancy lands in Hope Hills, with the native long House, with trail maintenance, with PARKS, with cleaning Ruckle Park with BC Parks, and last but not least our liaison with BC Nature is very good.

I like to keep it that way!

GENERAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

After the strawberry festival on June 21, there will be a short General Meeting:

A motion to change a part of the bylaws, which deals with the role of Past President.

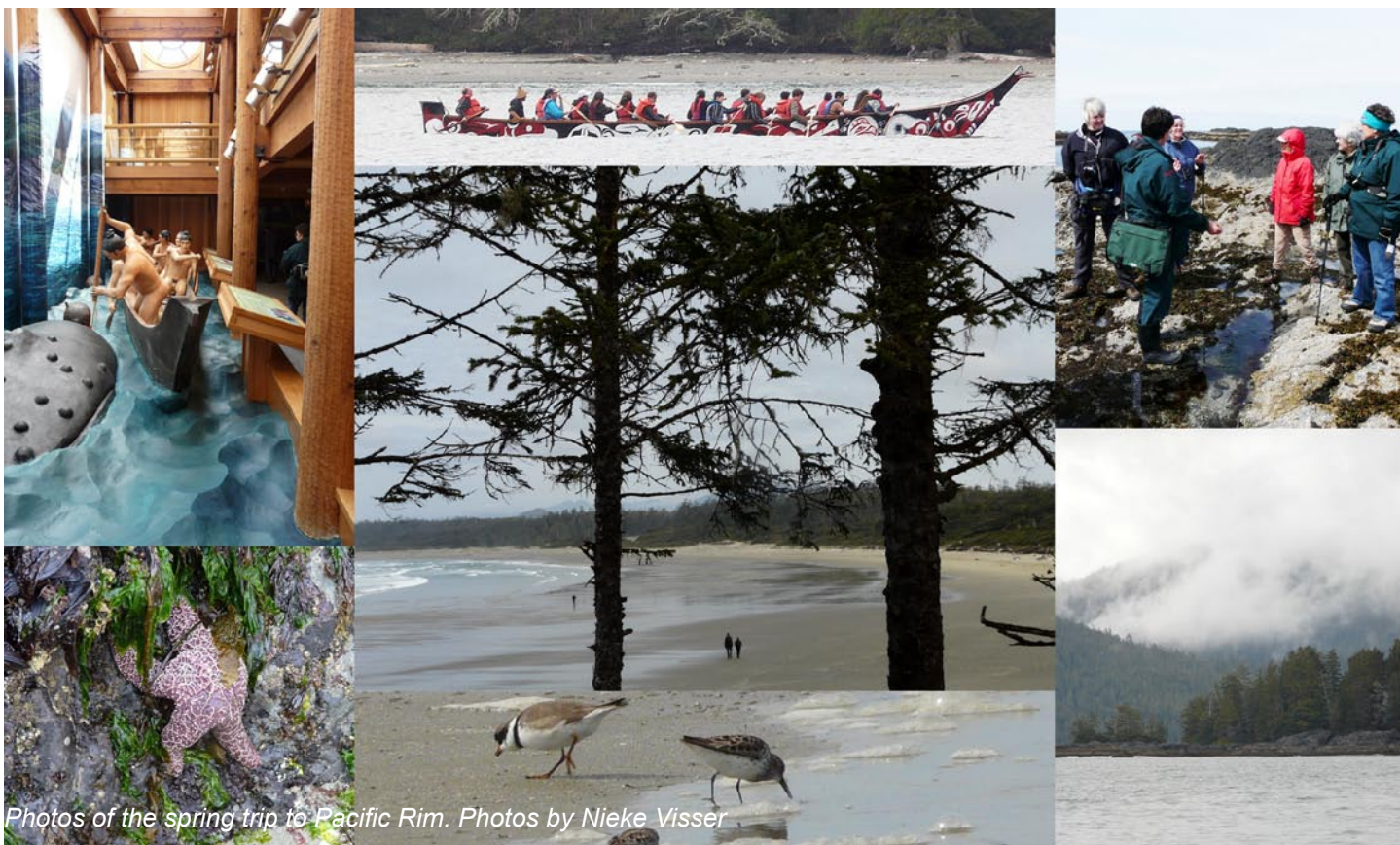
In the years prior to 2006 the immediate Past President acted informally as an advisor to the Directors of the Club, but was not a Director or otherwise a member of the Executive Committee. A bylaw amendment in 2006 added the immediate Past President to the list of Directors.

As a result the term for Vice-President/President/Past President became 6 years, which is considered as a too large of a commitment for most members.

The proposed amendment would return the position of Past President to its pre-2006 status, that of an advisor to the Directors, and would bring the Vice-President/President term back to 4 years. In this advisory role, the Past-President would be welcome to attend and speak at all meetings of the Executive Committee. As he would not be a Director, the Past-President would not be required to attend, and would not have a vote on motions at these meetings.

Spring Trip to Tofino *Nieke Visser*

Twenty-nine members settled in the Tofino Botanical Garden Ecolodge and Botanical House on May



Photos of the spring trip to Pacific Rim. Photos by Nieke Visser

3 with the knowledge that the weather could be kind of wet. But there was hope for the opposite.

Originally, the Lodge was built to accommodate students and adults attending marine biology workshops or scientific get-togethers. All the rooms were equipped with bunks beds with shared washrooms. In 2005, they opened and the SSTNC was considering a summer trip there. However, there was little enthusiasm and the idea went out the window. It will stay unknown what the reason was for the lack of participation, but a wild guess goes to the fact that the accommodation was a tad too much geared towards school children.

When I looked at a trip to the west coast of Vancouver Island, it struck me that both in Tofino and Ucluelet there were few resorts accommodating to larger groups and the ones that did were outrageously expensive. I had another look at the Botanical Garden Lodge and found to my surprise that the Lodge had changed its bedroom furniture to twin and queen beds and even a bigger surprise was the reasonable rates of the rooms that included breakfast. The Botanical House provided additional accommodation for seven more people. The Lodge also offered the service of a caterer (and a good one too) who would provide lunches and dinner. The Lodge had a large common

room where we would gather and have our meals adding to sense of togetherness. And one evening the owner, a marine biologist, was willing to treat us on a presentation on sea otters. Bingo!

Hiking in that part of the world would be mainly level and along the coast. I explored the possibility of ocean excursions such as whale and bear watching. But trails on Flores Island (the wild side trail) as well as Meares Island (the big tree trail) had undergone some sprucing up lately. The Wild Side Trail is one of the most spectacular coastal hikes and usually tackled as a backpacking trip because of its remoteness. But Kees and I managed to find a guy with a flat bottom boat who was willing to drop off eleven hikers on Cow Bay who then hiked the 10 km back to Ahousaht where the same guy picked them up again. For Meares Island the effort was not as onerous: plenty of water taxis will take you there and pick you up again. The hike is about 3 km long through old growth forest and really a must when you are in Tofino.

For those with less inclination to hike wild trails, I had arranged a park interpreter to take us out on Wickanninish Beach. At first, you may think there is little to see on a sandy beach. Carl Siebert, however, proved the opposite. We spent a very interesting two hours with Carl on both the sandy part and the rocky



Our Meares Island adventurers. Photo by Cedar Spirit guide.

part of the beach and came away with some additional knowledge about beach life.

There was a choice of whale watching while on the way to the hot springs on the most north-western tip of Clayoquot Sound, or move into the Sound and go bear watching. At low tide bears move to the beach to gorge themselves on what the ocean has left

behind: eelgrass and sedges, crabs and other ocean dwellers.

We were lucky with the weather. It rained when we drove to Tofino and it rained on the way back, but the two days in between were perfect. All in all, it was a wonderful experience and a very successful trip.

I like to thank Kees for organizing and leading the Flores Island hike, and Andrea Rankin to take on 6 walkers to Meares Island on the first day and explore Long Beach the other day.

Broom Pull Report

Herb Otto, Trail Coordinator

On Tuesday May 10, 2011, 26 members of the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club descended on Beaver Point in Ruckle Park armed with assorted tools to attack the Broom menace. Past years' offensives have had a beneficial result which left us to deal with few large infestations and mostly smaller plants. By lunchtime, broom supply was running thin, the chocolate Easter eggs supply had run out, and with thirst and appetite satiated, the hunt was called. It was an opportunity for members of the Hikers, Walkers and Ramblers to participate together on a rare sunny and mild day.

Since the results here have been quite successful, this area will be left alone for a while and another venue will be tackled next year. Consensus seems to be that Burgoyne Bay is in need of major Broom



Ruckle Park prairie dog colony feasting on broom. Photo by Herb Otto.

clearing. Unlike Beaver Point, there will be a more robust crop of Broom, yielding perhaps a more satisfying immediate result to the work. We have something to look forward to.

Many thanks to the volunteers for your efforts.

Medicinal Plants on Salt Spring

Teresa Hitch, Nature Coordinator

To add to your summer enjoyment, Gary invited me to share my Blue Ribbon list of medicinal plants with you. This list represents only a small sampling of plants with medicinal properties commonly found on Salt Spring though many are not indigenous. This checklist is for general information is not authoritative. Always check with your doctor before using these plants medicinally.

Curled/narrow/sour Dock (*Rumex crispus* L.): root has been long used for treating liver and gallbladder diseases. A soothing poultice may be used to treat many types of wounds and skin problems, including burns, bruises, cuts, sores, ulcers, stings (nettles).

Western Dock (*Rumex aquaticus*): root has been used to treat liver and gallbladder, constipation, skin diseases, hemorrhoids, intestinal inflammations. Seeds, for digestive problems, hemorrhoids. It is a blood purifier. The Bella Coola used Western dock leaves in a sweat bath to treat rheumatism.

Queen Anne's Lace/Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*): Seeds have been used as a "morning-after" contraceptive for hundreds of years.

Sheep Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella* L): spring tonic. Leaves, stems, and root are astringent and are drunk for stomach bleeding and excessive menstruation. Western Inuit drank a decoction for diarrhea.

Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*): astringent (good for inflammations of the stomach and intestines, especially when diarrhea is present), antispasmodic (whooping cough, asthma, hiccoughs). Poultice of the root can be used on skin inflammations, boils, swelling, ulcers, and babies' rashes.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*): all parts have been used for hundreds of years to treat liver and gallbladder disorders, poor digestion, upper respiratory infections and arthritis. The milk may be used to remove warts and liver spots. Young spring leaves and roots contain mannitol, useful for treating hypertension. Tea has been given to children to reduce fever. Roots and leaves are gentle diuretics, and are high in potassium, to compensate for the loss of fluid. Root

has been used as a blood purifier. Flowers have been used to treat night blindness.

Stinging Nettles (*Urtica dioica*): used as a tea to treat allergies, arthritis, asthma, urinary tract disorders, diabetes, bronchitis, bursitis, cough, digestive disorders, kidney stones, PMS, prostate enlargement,

Calendar of Events

June 21, 2011

Strawberry Festival

Meet at noon in the lower picnic area of Ruckle Park to enjoy strawberries and ice cream. Remember to bring a dish and spoon! There will be a short General Meeting following, which includes a motion to change part of the bylaws dealing with the role of Past President. January 27, 2011

TBA

Nature Outings

Several summer trips are planned. As the Club pauses for the summer, please watch the SSTNC email list, or phone Teresa 538-0978 for more information. Trips include Tugwell Creek Bee Farm and Meadery, Sooke Potholes, Sidney Spit and The Summer Sky (astronomy), and an invitation to the June 17 opening of "Fate of the Forest" at the Whatcom Museum of Art, Bellingham.

Tuesday, September 6, 2011

Blackberry Festival

The 2011-2012 hiking season begins with the Blackberry Festival in Ruckle Park.

Thursday, September 29, 2011

Alternatives to Open Net Fish Farming

Anita Narwani, PhD

United Church, lower floor at 7:30 PM. Dr Narwani looks at open net-pen salmon farms that can threaten wild salmon populations due to the high density of sea lice that farmed fish can carry and to the waste from salmon production directly into the environment. She will discuss the potential to create a 'closed loop' fish grow-out facility with a goal to recycle fish waste in order to support high plankton productivity. This plankton production can then be used to feed fish, effectively closing the loop thereby reducing the risk that salmon farms pose to the environment.

Tuesday, December 13, 2011

Christmas Lunch

sciatica, tendonitis, and male sterility. It stimulates metabolism. Roots applied externally may treat baldness and promote hair growth. The tea is a gentle blood cleansing food.



Oregon grape: photo by Meggar@Wikipedia.en

Oregon Grape/Mahonia/Mountain Grape (*Berberis nervosa*): roots, gathered in fall and dried, have been used for blood cleansing, a mild laxative, antiseptic properties, liver tonic, PMS, blood purifier, sore throat, and mouth ulcers. Dried leaves serve as a disinfectant, anti-microbial, itch relief, skin abrasions, acne, and psoriasis.

Plantain (*Plantago major*): has antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and mucilaginous properties when used externally. Internal use as a blood cleanser, anti-inflammatory, upper respiratory tract infections, Crohn's disease, and inflammation of the intestine. Seeds have been used to lower blood sugar, soothe digestive upsets, and stimulate intestinal peristaltic movement. Leaves may be used to clean and heal wounds, soothe skin irritations (including nettle stings), and mosquito repellent.

Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*): internally taken as an intestinal astringent, tonic, sedative, decreases menstrual flow, gargled for toothache. Flowers are gently laxative. Considered invasive in this area.

Ocean Spray (*holodiscus*, spp; rose family): leaves or dried seeds were boiled to make medicinal

teas to treat influenza. Bark tea was used as a tonic for athletes and convalescents treat internal bleeding, stomach upset, flu's and colds. Leaves were used as a poultice to soothe feet.

English Hawthorne (*Crataegus* spp, rose family): flowers and fruits are useful in heart tonics, extracts as treatments for high blood pressure, for arteriosclerosis. It has been used to treat kidney disease and nervous conditions. Tea from inner bark was used for treating dysentery. Caution: When collecting, be very careful to not get scratched in the eye by the thorns. Such scratches have lead to blindness. Use only under the guidance of a doctor, for heart conditions. Children and pregnant/nursing women should avoid using hawthorns.

Self-Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*, L.): also called creeping Charlie, heal-all, and woundwort. The name is somewhat of a misnomer, as it is limited in its healing properties. Collect just before full bloom. Astringent, antispasmodic, diuretic (Chippewa Indian usage), tonic (Thompson Indian usage), heart-strengthener (Bella Coola Indian usage), fevers, and de-wormer.

Thistles (*Cynareae*): reduce fevers, kill intestinal worms, antidepressant qualities, increase milk supply of nursing mothers, contraceptive, may increase the odds of a male child, as a wash for pimples, leprosy, etc. Milk thistle is a liver cleanser.

Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*): buckwheat family. (This is a potentially invasive and undesirable plant, which is often ignored, thus one of my choices for this list, giving opportunity to tell more about it.) Common knotweed was used to control bleeding. Teas were used topically to treat hemorrhoids, and internally, to treat diarrhea. Has been used as a substitute for quinine, and has a long history of treating cancer.

Mountain Ash (*Sorbus* spp; rose family): berries are rich in vitamin C. Native peoples boiled the peeled branches to make a tea to treat back pain, internal bleeding, chest colds, and headaches. Steam from boiled branches has been used for head colds and headaches. Some First Nations rubbed the berries into their scalps to control dandruff and head lice.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*): leaves are used in making digitalis. Externally, fresh leaves may be used for treating wounds, ulcers, and inflammations. Use only under the supervision of a physician.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*): tonic that reduces colds and fevers.

Editor's note. There is a very complete and detailed herbal encyclopedia from the early 1900's online. A Modern Herbal by Mrs. M. Grieve is available at:

<http://botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/comindx.html>

Recent Trail Work at Bryant Hill and other parks

Kees Ruurs, Manager, PARC

Our PARC trail crew just completed the reconstruction of both the Bryant Hill Park trail and the connecting trail between Bryant Hill and Peter Arnell Park.

Bryant Hill signage will go up soon, but why wait? To get to Bryant Hill Park (formally known as 80 Acres Park or Stewart Road Park) you go up Stewart Road, turn off on Jasper, then follow it onto Jennifer and Sarah Way. A trail sign at the end of the pavement at the top of Sarah Way directs you onto a gravel road to the right. After a few hundred metres, there is a parking lot with the trail starting behind the yellow gate next to that lot.

The Bryant Hill Park trail is 2,200 meters or about 1.4 miles long and it is not suitable for small children or strollers. You'll need sturdy shoes or boots. About 250 meters up the trail you'll pass the connector trail down to Peter Arnell Park. However, keep going straight. The first kilometer is an old gently sloping logging road. When the trail turns to the left, (south) you'll cross a little stream and quickly gain back the elevation lost during the first kilometer (in other words it is steep!). From there, the trail wanders through a mature forest up and down hills until you cross another little bridge. This puts you back where you started.

The Arnell connector trail was developed years ago by volunteers but recently became quite overgrown. Our trail crew has also tackled that section and as of May you can again hike from the western part of Peter Arnell Park up to Bryant Hill Park. This is a backcountry trail requires some hiking experience.

Last but not least, the trails in Peter Arnell Park have been upgraded and signs have been installed to prevent people from getting lost. It is important to note that a trail system to the north of Peter Arnell Park is not maintained by PARC and we have installed signs to warn people about that.

During the month of May, our trail-crew upgraded the trail between the end of Quarry Drive and Baker

Road. New steps were installed and the trail from Quarry Road was realigned because it crossed over some private property. Give that new trail a try some day. The entrance to that trail is near the very end of Baker Road, off to the right. It is steep and requires some climbing.

I hope to meet you on one of the many SSI trails this summer.

Old Forests

Are you interested in protecting old growth forests in B.C.? Check out the Ancient Forest Alliance (AFA) identified as "a new British Columbian organization working to protect the endangered old-growth forests of BC and to ensure sustainable forestry jobs in the province. It was founded in January of 2010 by former Western Canada Wilderness Committee activists Ken Wu, TJ Watt, and others, and by Vancouver old-growth activist Michelle Connolly." They can be found at

<http://ancientforestalliance.org/>

Thanks to Marcelle for this information.

Shrimps! Lobsters! Oysters!

Linda Quiring

Shrimps

The seafood fungi have always fascinated me! I first met the Shrimp, or Woodland Russula, *Russula xerampelina*, on Channel Ridge. Every local hunter should have my favorite 'shrooming' book, "The NEW Savory Wild Mushroom" by McKenny

& Stuntz. They describe the Shrimp as 'sweet and nutty as a fresh hazelnut when young.'

It may, however, be confused with some of the other 200 russulas; you can identify it by chewing on a

small piece. If it bites the tongue and tastes extremely peppery, don't eat it! I once picked a couple, took them home and ate them...they were delicious as a fresh hazelnut! Later, I picked some in the same spot. Although they looked extremely alike, these failed the



taste test. I later learned even the experts, those with a degree in Mycology, cannot always tell the difference.



Lobsters

Lobsters were not always plentiful on Salt-spring. I don't remember seeing them years ago, but now the woods are full of them. The Lobster, or *Hypomyces lactifluorum* is actually not a mushroom, but a parasitic mold that usually grows on a Short-stemmed *Russula*, or *Russula brevipes*.

They scared me at first, and I never ate one until I saw them for sale at Thrifty's...and couldn't believe the price! I once found, out in the Musgrave, a patch of 100's. When I did fry some up, I wasn't inspired. With some really delicious things in the woods, I have become increasingly discriminating, although some of my friends will eat anything that won't make them sick or dead (you know who you are).

The Oyster or *Pleurotus ostreatus* is Bill's all-time favorite. He says that thinly sliced, and fried up in butter, there is simply nothing like it! It is pretty tasty, but I have to admit my all-time favorite is the Chanterelle, with it's meaty, fruity flavor.



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Oysters

"Ho!" someone shouted. Maybe it was me. Deep in the woods, in a dark swampy bog, stood several alders. Some dead, some still struggling along, but all were in a serious state of decline. On a few of them, rising up the dead wood like sparkling white Martha Stewart dinner plates, were dozens of pristine white Oysters, glowing in the dense fog. "YUMMY!" The *Pleurotus* may appear in spring, late summer or early fall. It may be white or tan, but always growing on dead alder or maples. This cool, wet, backward spring led me to expect a bounty of hundreds but I haven't found ANY!!

Later on, in fall, we pick the Late Oyster, or *Panellus serotinus*. It's kind of dull brown or green, and isn't as tasty as the others...but sometimes will fruit right up to Christmas.

I was excited last year when a new book came out especially for our area: "Mushrooms of the Pacific Northwest" by Trudell & Ammirati. I rushed to get it, only to find they described another nice Oyster, the Angel Wings, or *Pleurocybella porrigens*, as "less desirable" than the others. Apparently, it was responsible "for the deaths of several elderly Japanese" so maybe I'll give that one up! Oh No! This was my favorite Oyster....



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