



Oystercatcher

Newsletter of the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club
Spring 2013

The Variable Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*) is endemic to New Zealand (Maori name - *torea-pango*). Frontal plumage, ranges from pied through mottled to all black. Blacker birds are more common in the south. They have pink legs, an orange eye ring and red beaks but can be confused with South Island Pied Oystercatcher.

President's Point of View

John Heddle

Those of you who were not able to attend the AGM should know that at the end of the meeting, the assembled multitude stood and gave a tremendous round of applause to thank Kees and Nieke Visser for their invaluable service to the Club.

Kees not only served on the Board for nine years, three years as President, but also in the last year took the survival of the Club as a personal challenge and, against what seemed a forbidding lack of alternatives and volunteers, succeeded. At the general meeting that he called, the Board discovered very strong support for BC Nature (which was not fully appreciated before) and, of course, for the continuation and survival of the Club. This was successful because new volunteers took on the essential duties of the officers, directors, and coordinators, together with the continuing commitment of several from last year. However, much of this was no accident. Many of you will know that Kees canvassed you and your friends personally, over several months, to persuade people to volunteer. The meeting he organized helped to galvanize some. Largely because of his efforts, the Club is continuing this year and, I hope, for many years to come.

One of the volunteers was, surprise, surprise,

Nieke Visser for another stint as BC Nature Director. Like Kees and other members of the current board, she was unable to stand by and see the Club fail. In addition to her previous roles on the Board, which include being Secretary, she has organized two enormously successful, popular, and over-subscribed BC Nature Camps on Salt Spring (with considerable help from Richard Shead, Zeke Blazecka, Jack Gunn, David Denning, and several others). Together, these two camps have raised more than a year's dues for the Club and an equivalent amount for BC Nature. We owe her and Kees a tremendous vote of thanks for both the camp and its profits. It was very satisfying to see the membership rise to their feet at the AGM to express our gratitude.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Richard Shead, who served as Recording Secretary without a vote, for acting as recording secretary and for providing sage advice on numerous occasions.

The new Board of Directors is still operating under the previous constitution, which does not become effective until the BC Registry approves the changes. We met and agreed to try to maintain the several activities that the Club has had in the last few years, but with fewer meetings of the Board. One of the things we agreed to, as I had recommended as

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For information on the Board of Directors and weekly outings, please see our website: www.saltspringtnc.ca



Feb 5 was a marginal day for being out and about but our club members took no notice. Hikers (top) and walkers both came out in force.

Treasurer in my last report, is that activities of the Club should be largely self-financing. Expect no subsidy for the Christmas lunch and any trips in the coming year, a change that you will probably not notice, while the resources of the Club are devoted more fully to our charitable projects.

Finally, I want to welcome the new members of the Board, Marcelle Roy, Joan White, Frauke Prestawyk (not for the first time), Mary Waugh, and Andrea Rankin, and to thank them and the returning members (Herb Otto, Jacqueline Thomas, Nieke Vissier, and Barry Spence) for agreeing to serve. Thanks also to Linda Quiring and for her recent term on the Board. Sue Lehmann continues to serve the Club well by maintaining the website so promptly and so well.

Healthy Trails, Healthy People **Lorraine Brewster, PARC**

As the clocks spring ahead, the urge to shake off the winter blues from our hiking boots and head out on a few trails becomes a priority!

Spring hiking is a great way to get outside and see some of your favorite trails on the island. One of my favourites is the "Trio of Trials" including Bryant Hill, Peter Arnell Park and the Connector Trail. It provides a variety of hiking options with different routes on Peter Arnell, a more difficult hike at Bryant Hill, and the connector which provides some steep challenging sections.

Peter Arnell is approximately a 30 minute easy hike with moderate sections. The trail is an invigorating hike through forest and moss covered rocks with

ocean views towards Galiano and Active Pass. A memorial cairn is located across Steward Road just past the park sign.

Bryant Hill is a 2.2 km or 1.4 miles long loop that meanders through mature forest and has a number of wonderful viewpoints. To access the park, proceed to the end of the gravel road that goes off to the right at the end of Sarah Way.

The trail is not suitable for small children or strollers, and you will need to have sturdy shoes or boots. The trail circles the park and takes approximately one hour. As you proceed 250 meters up the trail you will pass the connector trail over to Peter Arnell Park. To continue to hike Bryant Hill, keep going straight and the first kilometer is an old gently sloping logging road. As the trail turns to the left (south) you will cross a small seasonal stream and quickly start to proceed up a steep part of the trail. The trail continues up and down hills until you cross a small bridge which brings you back to the starting point.

To connect these two fabulous trails, approximately 250 meters up Bryant Hill Park trail you will see the connector trail down to Peter Arnell Park. The Connector is a strenuous hike and does have steep sections.

Walking Part of the Jurassic Coast

Charles Kahn

The Jurassic Coast in Devon and Dorset is part of the South West Coast Path, one of Britain's national walking paths. My friend and I started our four-day exploration of this fascinating coastline at Lulworth Cove, a pretty little once-fishing village east of Weymouth in Dorset.



Beach, buildings, and coastal path to observation point and beyond at Lulworth Cove. Charles Kahn photo.

The plan was to walk east to Kimmeridge and then return by bus. Unfortunately, the trail through the army range was closed as the soldiers were actively shooting. Nevertheless, we walked about 6 km east up to a ridge, then followed it for awhile, and then down to a beach where we had lunch while the tide went out.



Map of Devon Coast. The two maps provided by Charles are difficult to read. However I have provided a link to an interactive map that is maintained by the South West Coast Path Association at <http://www.southwestcoastpath.com/>.



Striated cliffs. Typical cliffs of the white-striated rocks along the Jurassic Coast. Charles Kahn photo.



Durdle Door



After we'd had a light snack on the beach, we walked along it around the cove to the western continuation of the path on the other side of the village. We continued up the hill and on toward the limestone arches known as Stair Hole and Durdle Door. Friday seemed to be the day for school field trips, as we were surrounded by students from different countries speaking different languages, including Arabic and German. Everyone seemed to be walking the Jurassic Coast that day.

From the high points above the ocean we had great views of the cliffs, the rock formations, and the town of Lulworth Cove, whose buildings line the road that ascends from the beach we'd crossed.

From Lulworth Cove, we drove to our B & B in Lyme Regis, arriving around 16:00. We checked in and then left to explore this very beautiful town.

The town museum is dedicated to fossils and there are fossil shops everywhere in Lyme Regis. The town's heroine is Mary Anning (1799–1847), whose findings of fossils and Jurassic skeletons give her a claim to being the first geologist. The town's charm lies in its seaside location, the River Lyme channeling through like a canal, the many old, but well-maintained buildings, and the beautiful views of the surrounding cliffs.



Chalk cliffs near Lyme Regis. This view from The Cobb (the harbour) looks toward Charmouth to the east. The white cliffs date from the Cretaceous period and are typical of the Jurassic Coast. Charles Kahn photo.

On Day 2 we drove to Exmouth, crossed the Exe River to Seaton, and then walked west 10.4 km to Beer and Branscombe. At the outset we had to make

a detour around the path that was crumbling into the abyss. After that, much of the walk was along the chalk cliff edge descending to the shingle beach as we approached Branscombe. Brans-

combe was a charming little village with 400-year-old thatched houses, but little in the way of amenities. We did find the village hall where we caught the bus back to Lyme Regis.

Back at Lyme Regis, found the car, and drove



Marine Parade, Lyme Regis. Charles Kahn photo.



Bridge Street, Lyme Regis. Charles Kahn photo.

to nearby Charmouth to look for fossils on this big beach. The grey clay of the cliffs is wet, soft, and crumbly so fossil hunters have to be careful as the cliffs periodically collapse and have claimed lives in the past, as recently as a couple of weeks before I walked these shores.

On the next day, some friends took us on a walk from Charmouth to Bridport. The walk followed the cliffs above the ocean reaching a high point of 191 m at Golden Cap. When we returned to Lyme Regis, we walked to the Cobb and along the beach where we joined many others searching for fossils. This beach is quite a treasure trove. As we walked back to town, we were rewarded by a lovely sunset that lit up the hills on which we'd walked.



Fossilized ammonites on Lyme Regis beach. Mary Anning found and sold these to tourists. Charles Kahn photoa.

On our last day, we drove to Chesil Beach, a 29 km-long barrier beach separated from the shore by a lagoon. The shingle beach stretches west from the Isle of Portland and protects the city of Weymouth and its harbour.

Calendar of Events

March 22, 2013

Reclaiming Nature on Salt Spring Island

SSI Conservancy Event: Dave Polster will give a talk at the Lion's Hall, 7 pm (suggested donation - \$5)J

March 23, 2013

Guided Walk on Alvin Indridson Nature Preserve

TSSI Conservancy Event: A guided walk on Alvin Indridson Nature Reserve will be guided by Dave Polster. He will lead a walk for a limited number of pre-registered people to demonstrate the recovery work on the reserve. Please call Deborah Miller at 250-537-4797 to register(\$10).**February 23, 2012**

All in all, this very short—four day—walk provided great variety and beauty. Anyone who's walked any part of the South West Coast Path will vouch for its beauty. But for a short walk, the Jurassic Coast section is definitely a winner.

Editor's Note: When Ken asked if I would like the following article for the newsletter, I went through a bit of a mental dilemma, trying to decide if it was suitable. It doesn't relate to hiking and has a very different perspective to nature study. Ultimately, I decided that it is an interesting story and demonstrates how we relate to our natural world. As such, I think it is an exciting contribution to our newsletter. We both agreed that the picture of the dissected anaconda did not need to be reproduced.

If someone feels that this kind of article is not appropriate, send me a note. I would be interested in your opinions. If, on the other hand, the article inspires you to tell one of your own stories, send that along.

ALLIGATORS IN PASSING

Ken Strike

My first job on graduation took me to British Guiana, now Guyana. Although located in South America British Guiana was more closely affiliated with the islands of the Caribbean. I was employed by one of the sugar companies.

The Dutch quickly and efficiently reclaimed the marshes bordering the principal rivers when they first colonized Guyana. They empoldered the land and cultivated it as it was fertile and relatively easy to work. Several crops were tried but sugar cane proved the most profitable. The usual system of dams, dykes, canals, kokers, and sluice gates were quickly organised and from then on, the whole workforce of the estate dwelt below sea level. Life was regulated by the ebb and flow of the tide. Sluices were closed when the tide was rising to prevent the salt seawater from entering the cultivation and then opened when it turned to allow the accumulation of nutrient rich fresh water that came from the hinterland to escape before flooding the villages.

The trenches that carried the water also served as waterways for transporting harvested cane from the fields to the factory and relocating equipment for cultivation and further land reclamation. As the canals passed through the villages and settlements they served as communal showers, swimming holes, laundries and washing machines. Indeed, in many ways,

Web Spots

My email regularly receives jokes, letters from Nigerian millionaires, feel good stories about aging, right wing hate mail, and pictures of cute animals. However, among these are interesting nature tidbits that come my way or that I discover in my web surfing. I thought it would be a good idea to start a column to highlight some of these. Just pass along your interesting discoveries to my email address.

From both Brian Radford and Patricia Flannagan

Chasing Ice - Official Video

Captures largest glacier calving ever filmed. On May 28, 2008, Adam LeWinter and Director Jeff Orlowski filmed a historic breakup at the Ilulissat Glacier in Western Greenland. The calving event lasted for 75 minutes and the glacier retreated a full mile across a calving face three miles wide. The height of the ice is about 3,000 feet, 300-400 feet above water and the rest below water.

<http://www.youtube.com/embed/hC3VTgIPoGU?rel=0>

From my son, Bran, the zookeeper

World's largest natural sound archive goes digital

The Macaulay Library is the world's largest and oldest scientific archive of biodiversity audio and video recordings. Our mission is to collect and preserve recordings of each species' behaviour and natural history, to facilitate the ability of others to collect and preserve such recordings, and to actively promote the use of these recordings for diverse purposes spanning scientific research, education, conservation, and the arts.

<http://macaulaylibrary.org/about>

From trying to identify a bug in my garden

BugGuide

Identification, images, and information for insects, spiders and their kin for the United States and Canada.

<http://bugguide.net/node/view/15740>

the life of the village was tied to the trench. The rice and bones washed off the plates became food for the fish and other small water creatures that were the base of the food chain. Alligators came at the top and were always present, as well as water anacondas.

During the day, the trenches were full of children swimming and generally playing under the watchful eyes of their mothers while they carried out their duties of washing clothes and utensils. However, in the evening as you walked on the dirt road or dam should you shine your flashlight on the trench there

would be dozens of pairs of red lights, like rear lights, showing above the water. These were the eyes of the resident alligators claiming the trench for their activities. We never heard of any child being attacked by an alligator during our ten-year stay in the country, but then everyone knew better than swim in the trench at night. There were occasions when Workmen's Compensation claims were made by the women weeders who cleared the choked smaller trenches with machetes prior to the cane in that area being harvested. These accidents occurred when they surprised a sleeping 'gator as they worked their way along the waterway. I soon learnt not to verify the wound as it usually happened as they backed into the surprised beast.

The water anacondas, or "kumoodis" to give them their local name, and the alligators were rivals for the available food and also for nesting areas and they were therefore rivals on two counts. Occasionally a fight would break out which could last for days. The kumoodi usually was the victor as once the alligator was well and truly "wrapped up" in its coils it was merely a matter of waiting for the last twitch. Once it had swallowed its prey, the snake became almost unconscious as it coiled up like a stack of tires to digest its meal.

The local zoo paid by the linear foot for these snakes, so finding one in the bush was indeed "a find". The accepted way of capturing and conveying such a creature was to quietly bundle it into a sack and carry it back. One time, two field workers happened upon a kumoodi in such a state but either through having no sack or no room in their canoe they decided to tow it behind them as they paddled back. The snake took exception to this and attempted to disgorge its meal. Unfortunately, the noose around its neck prevented this and it choked to death. While the meat may well have found itself on the family menu the men had no objection to cutting it open to reveal the contents of the stomach. The snake was 16 feet 8 inches long and the alligator inside was approximately 8 feet and already partly digested.

On another occasion we were hosting a representative of the British Council who was touring the villages and Community Centres. In response to his request to see sugar cane close up Gwyn and I plus Spot, our dog, took him into the cultivation in the Land Rover. This was in the afternoon. Unfortunately, our vehicle packed in before we were home and we had to walk the remaining distance. Being only three

degrees North of the equator, darkness fell rapidly and we still had some distance to travel. We were on a main dam with a trench on either side. Our guest enquired about the grunting sound coming from the trenches and we had to tell him that they were coming from the alligators but that there was nothing to fear (unless of course if we startled one while he was crossing the dam – but we didn't add that). We were more concerned about the rustling in the cane that was accompanying us on our way. Our brave dog also had concerns as he determinedly took up a position between Gwyn and myself and stayed there for the remainder of the trek. We often wondered what tales our guest told his colleagues back in London of his field trip.

I saw the fury of a disturbed alligator once, when some Field Workshop employees found a mother on her nest nearby. They thought it great sport to throw rocks and clumps of mud then watch her emerge and thresh the water into a frenzy of white foam with her tail and by raising her head to bring it down with a smack on the water. A truly remarkable sight but one I was glad to behold from a very safe distance.

Fortunately, we never had to face an alligator eyeball to eyeball and frankly were happy that this was the case.

A word about trails

Herb Otto, Trail Coordinator



Earlier this winter we had a storm that left most of the island relatively untouched. Mount Maxwell, near the summit, did not fare as well. A large number of very large trees were uprooted and snapped off, affecting some of the trails. On February 17, a small group of volunteers gathered near a portion of the Gary Trail to do some clearing, cutting of trees and re-routing of the trail to a better location. Charles Kahn, Audrey Denton, Laura Klein, Dietrich Bertz and Willy Schultz (from the Park Trail Advisory Group) and I spent a successful 3 hours repairing the trail.

Interpretive Signage for Mouat Park Research Project

On a separate project, Stevie-Rae Robinson is a University of Victoria student who has been working on a joint research effort with the Trail and Nature Club, PARC and U Vic to look into how interpretive signage may be applied to Mouat Park. You may notice posters for Focus Group meetings to provide community input into this project. There will also be a Focus Group meeting for Club Members after the Executive meeting on March 21st at around 11:30 am in the boardroom of the CRD office behind the CIBC for anyone wishing to provide input.

Having attended one of these sessions at the PARC meeting of the Trail Advisory Group, I found the input to be quite informative and surprising. The discussion brought out the diverse nature of



interests represented by folks on the Island. It is hoped that the research will eventually be used to be able to provide interpretive signage in Mouat Park and other locations.

On Tuesday Oct.23, 2012, the walkers and I (Anke) enjoyed an unexpectedly warm , sunny Fall morningstroll through Saanich' s Glendale Gardens. We then admired the newly installed sculptures in Sidney with the perfect blustery, brrr. chilly seaside walk after our pub lunch!

Anke Smeele



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