

# The Oystercatcher

The Salt Spring Island Trail and Nature Club has, among its own membership, a wealth of natural history expertise. THE OYSIERCATCHER has no need to go further afield.

We welcome articles, letters, book reviews (whether handwritten, typewritten or double-spaced is of no importance). Leave at the Village Cobbler box, or mail to Andrew Gibson, RR3, Ganges.

THE SALT SPRING TRAIL AND NATURE CLUB - GANGES B.C. V0S-1E0 (537-4347)

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jan. 1989

After wishing all members and their families the best of New Years, the Executive would like to ask members to obey the rules of the club as set out in our constitution booklet. Those who do not have a copy can get one from the members of the executive. Also, we would like to remind all members to wear a name tag, and those with medical problems, i.e. allergies to insect bites, to wear a medic alert bracelet.

Remember that our hikes on private land do not give you the right to return there on your own unless you get the owner's permission.

Follow these Hints for Walkers and Hikers (from the Outdoor Club of Victoria):

1. Have adequate food, clothing and equipment for the worst conditions you might encounter.
2. Let someone know when you leave the group, even for a "bush stop".
3. Check to be sure the person behind you is in sight; if not, wait, while calling to those ahead so that the group doesn't get separated.
4. When driving in a convoy keep the car behind you in sight.
5. If you are a rider, share expenses: \$1 for a ride and return on the Island, 20 cents per mile (12 cents per km.) plus ferry fare divided by the number of people in the car.
6. Carry your own first aid materials.

TRAIL & NATURE REPORT: Two delegates from our club attended the Fall General Meeting of the Federation of B.C. Naturalists, which was held at the Inn by the Water, Cowichan Bay, on Oct. 8. The Cowichan Valley Naturalists hosted the meeting and did a superb job.

Their President, Mary Hooper, welcomed delegates and turned the meeting over to Joe Lotzgar, President of the FBON. Dr. Lotzgar in his opening remarks said he hoped the Federation would get a higher profile in the coming years, as it takes a stand on various issues such as Waste Management, Electricity Generation and Forestry. He used most of his report as a rebuttal of a letter criticising his concerns on Waste Management, and pointed out that B.C. was the first province to have a litter law, and that the new S.P.E.C. proposals would set this aside for a much weaker act that does not control litter in the countryside.

Following the President's report and the committee reports the Clubs reported. As there are 38 member clubs most did so briefly, but among the most interesting were Comox Strathcona, which won an award for their in-depth study of the Trent River - they had brought photographic displays and charts of life on the river which showed what a dedicated group of naturalists can accomplish; the Nanaimo Field Naturalists, who had worked hard to produce a Perpetual Nature Calendar illustrated by area artists; the Cowichan Valley Club is participating in an exciting new concept, an Ecomuseum, a living museum encompassing the valley with its historical and natural treasures - the club is concerned with the protection of the environment from the influx of tourists expected to be attracted by the Museum.

The theme of this meeting was Forestry, and a policy paper was presented by Dr. Phil Haddock. Discussion followed, and the paper will be revised in view of the comments made.

The day ended with a banquet, following which the guest speaker, Mr. Don McMullen, a forestry officer with Fletcher Challenge, presented industry's view of the forests. He was hard put to defend this in the question and answer session which ended a very interesting day.

I hope that some of our members will attend the Federation AGM in May at U. Vic. to find stimulation, meet old and new friends, and help the environment.

JEAN KING



That was the way it was announced in the paper, and having missed two scheduled outings, and it being early in the season, so that our hiking or walking legs were not in too good shape, it sounded a perfect way to spend a September day.

Perhaps it might even be rather boring; after all, Cusheon Lake isn't very big, and hadn't we canoed around the largest lake on the Island several times? But it would be nice to go with company, we thought, so at the appropriate time, with canoe on top of the car and paddles and life-jackets inside we met the rest of the group at the public access to the lake, ready for whatever might turn up.

We didn't have to wait long. Before most of us had our canoes in the water, two of the most experienced paddlers were already in and away. But wait - what they were in was the lake! Yes, their canoe had capsized, depositing lunch, bags, keys and occupants into the drink. Fortunately, they weren't far from shore, and the water was warm, so after dragging their canoe to the landing, climbing out, wringing themselves out, and finding that their car door had been left unlocked, and another set of keys was inside, they cheerfully drove away, promising to join us when they had changed into something dry.

So far so good. But that was nerve wracking. If that happened to experts, what was in store for us?

Three other canoes were launched, one with our intrepid leader and his wife, one with three passengers, and ours with two. The journey started out without incident as we paddled steadily towards one end of the lake. The wind was behind us, and our leader pointed out some beautiful white and pink water lilies planted by an occupant of the shore line, which made a lovely sight mixed with the natural yellow ones growing there.

The wind increased slightly as we turned the corner, but things were still going smoothly. The banks slipped by, the sun began to shine, and we put up a large blue heron which flew ahead of us. A halt was called, while two of the occupants of the canoe of three changed places in order to ease an aching back, or behind, or maybe both.

We drifted into a pretty corner of the lake, and out again, and I began to realize that it was larger than it appeared to be at first glance. It was when we started along another coastline heading for the other end of the lake that I realized its full potential. This is where it got tough. The wind seemed to increase ten-fold, and we really had to work hard to move. The canoe of three turned back, leaving our leader and ourselves to battle it to the end, encouraged by a patch of perfectly smooth water in the lee of the bank at the far end of the lake. Finally we reached it, and rested for a while to catch our breath.

The return journey was a breeze - literally. All we did was sit in the canoe and let the wind blow us back, using the paddle as a sail, and musing on the fact that someone should invent a paddle which converted to a sail for just such an occasion.

Our two now dry experts had joined us by this time, so four canoes pulled up at a very welcome and pleasant lakeside cottage to eat our sandwiches and enjoy the sun. I knew I would have some sore ribs to cope with the next day, but we had successfully battled the wind on Cusheon Lake and it was a great feeling of achievement. We thank our fearless leader for the opportunity.

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AN ODE TO CUSHEON LAKE -

Contributed by ANONYMOUS

There were once two ladies canoeing,  
 Their lifetime of dreams were pursuing.  
 One reached for her key,  
 The other her knee  
 And whoops! what happened next was their undoing.

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ED. NOTE (on the same subject)

Having been present at the above mishap, I can report that while the two stars wouldn't likely care to stage an encore, we onlookers were more alarmed than they were, and were consumed with admiration for their unflappability. After all, the water was far from warm, it was quite deep where the canoe flipped, and they had the task of diving repeatedly to try to get their keys. But they were perfectly calm and good-humoured throughout.

Clearly, it would take quite a bit to make that pair lose their cool.



hooli-fer meeting  
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SALT SPRING TRAIL AND NATURE CLUB by Marc Holmes

It was in Joanne and Arthur Millner's home on Old Scott Road that a good crowd of would-be hikers and nature enthusiasts turned out on Jan. 15, 1973, for the founding meeting of what was to become the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club.

Mary Sylvander had hiked and climbed for many years in various parts of the world. Ruby Alton, born at the foot of Hope Hills, knew the south end of the island well. It was here that much of the undeveloped land was located: Cape Keppel, Mount Tuam, Hope Hills, Mount Bruce and the large Ruckle farm where visitors have always been welcomed.

The late Doris Anderson, a former British Army Nursing Sister, was an enthusiastic walker and Club promoter in the Beaver Point area. Lassie Dodds, a North Islander, was pleased to reveal many trails to Loes Holland, who was kept busy scouting them out.

At the inaugural meeting, the Club's name was chosen to reflect the interests of both hikers and of those interested in observing nature in its various forms. Ruby Alton was elected President; Mary Sylvander, Vice President; Gerry Holland, Secretary; Earl Dunlap, Treasurer; Loes Holland, Trails; Tom Marcus, Maps; Beth Hill, Archeology; Mick Jones, Birding; I.C. Shank, Botany; Mary Sylvander, major hikes; and Vera Perillo, minor hikes.

Active members that come to mind who can no longer turn out include Ted Brown (our annual reciter now replaced by Jack Airson), Jack and Vi Webb (who for many years entertained us in their home at the Christmas season), Anna-Marie Dahlke (who planned many natural history outings), the late Kay and Don Kirtland, Jack Ready, Doris Anderson and Alice Maybee. One kindly property owner even "hid" hot mulled wine in a hollow tree on our hiking route, during the Christmas season.

Jean Holmes and Mary Sylvander spent many hours identifying trails on maps and then locating the owners of the properties involved. This was followed by correspondence seeking necessary permission for the club to hike over the chosen area.

The club was destined to succeed from the first. Hard-working executives planned the many necessary actions carefully, and still do. Numerous volunteers arranged and led walks, improved trails, wrote briefs, drew up a constitution, registered the club under the Societies Act with the Provincial Government, made complicated but necessary arrangements for trips, and helped in numerous other ways. Even good hiking land was deeded to the public by a member. To name a few persons would be unfair to the many who could not be mentioned.

Off-Island trips included Forbidden Plateau, Hurricane Ridge, Manning Park, East Sooke Park, Cowichan Valley, Seattle, Orcas Island, Mayne Island, Russel Island, Pender Island, Gabriola Island, Galiano Island, Hornby Island, Thetis Island, Quadra Island, Wallace Island, Prevost Island, Costa Rica, and various points of interest in Greater Victoria.

Experts, too numerous to remember, led expeditions or gave slide shows devoted to their favourite subject. Names which come to mind are: Tom Wright, Geology; Sabina Leader-Mense and Betty McKinnon, Marine Biology; Beth Hill, Archeology; Mick Jones, Allan Best, Allen Brooks, Marg Pearce, Gertrude Smith - Ornithology; Wayne Campbell from the Provincial Museum - Ornithology; Tom Bergerud and Heather Butler - Caribou; Dr. Bristol Foster - Ecological Reserves and Ornithology; I.C. Shank and the late Dr. Ralph Bird - Botany.

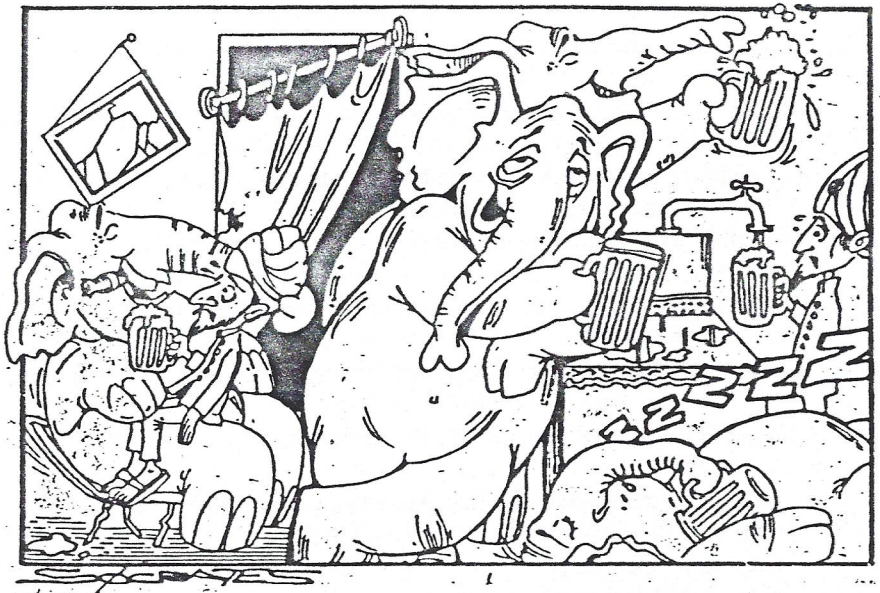
Enthusiasm of members was always high and I don't remember that it was ever necessary to have membership drives. Annual meetings were always well-attended, and turned into happy social and dining occasions. Many close friendships have been formed over the years. All club members love nature and the outdoors - this is the common bond.

Our association has been a loyal supporter of the Federation of British Columbia Naturalists.



GUWAHATI, India, (UPI): A herd of drunken elephants destroyed 70 houses in the northeastern part of the state of Assam, and the authorities say that they don't know what to do.

Officials say that about a dozen hungry elephants arrived Sunday night in a village near the forest reserve of Hollongapur, forcing many of the inhabitants to flee to the security of nearby tea plantations. The elephants damaged 70 houses and cleaned out the food stores. Then, finding some barrels of lao pani (rice



beer), they drank them and fell asleep. They left Monday morning, but came back at night looking for more beer. The officials say that armed guards were posted, and when the marauders came back they were frightened off with torches and loud noises. Nevertheless, P.K. Roy, the head of the wildlife department, said that he was unsure about what to do if the pachyderms, protected by law, came back.

(with acknowledgement to LA NACION, Buenos Aires.)

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BOOKS FOR NATURE LOVERS

Andrew Gibson

Let me begin with two truisms. One - the best textbooks are those which combine knowledge with writing skill. Two - the downside of our present cornucopia of books is the premature shelving of some of the best. There is no better example of both than "The Flower and the Bee", by John H. Lovell, published for the first (and, for all I know, the last) time in 1918 by Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York. The more illuminating title of this wonderful book is "Plant Life and Pollination".

You and I hear the drone of the bees in our summertime gardens, and remark how, oblivious to even we all-powerful humans, they forage among the flowers. Perhaps, in the evening, we note that moths flutter among some perfuming blooms. And we may even have noticed that, when other trees are still asleep at winter's end, "By the flowing river the alder catkins swing/And the sweet song sparrow cries 'Spring! it is spring'". But these are only three of the many devices used by nature to keep our planet in flowering health. John Lovell tells us about all of them, in 15 chapters with the headings: Flowers and Humanity, the Discovery of the Secret of Flowers, Flowers Pollinated by the Wind, Bees as Builders of Flowers, Bumblebee Flowers, The Gathering of the Nectar, Bees Which Visit Only one Kind of Flower, Butterfly-Flowers, Nocturnal or Hawkmoth Flowers, Fly-Flowers, Beetles and Flowers, Pollen Flowers, Is Conspicuousness an Advantage to Flowers?, The Colours of Northamerican Flowers, and Bees and Fruit-Growing.

If you would like to borrow this book, just let-me know.

\*Reviews of books on T & N subjects would be welcomed.