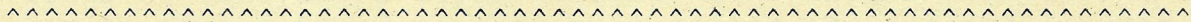


# The Oystercatcher

THE SALT SPRING TRAIL AND NATURE CLUB - GANGES B.C. VOS-1EO

MAY 1991

Editors--Patti May-Lawson 537-4292  
Murray Shoolbraid



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

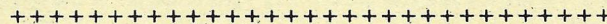
Many thanks to anyone involved with the publishing of this issue of the Oystercatcher. The editorial team are trying to set a structure for the newsletter. With time we hope each issue will address these topics:

- Environmental matters
- Natural history
- B.C. Federation directors column
- biographical or interview
- executive meeting tidbits
- field trip or individuals' outings
- letters to editor, drawings, photos.

I encourage you to submit articles, descriptions of club outings, short notes on natural history sightings, fun trips you think other members might enjoy, or phone us with your ideas for articles or meeting topics.

Do come to the semi-annual meeting and picnic at Ruckle Park on June 25th -- there will be a gathering at Beaver Point Hall if the weather is inclement. Remember to bring your bowl and spoon for strawberries and ice cream!

- Fiona Flook



### Changes on Channel Ridge by Athena George

Blue-eyed Mary, sea blush, shooting stars. The names evoke the scents and colours of the Channel Ridge wild flower meadows. I visited the Ridge five times this spring, and each time new flowers greeted me. In early April, parades of purple shooting stars trailed under the arbutus and Douglas fir. In mid-May, the shooting stars were replaced by the

darker purple of common camas and Menzie's larkspur. With every visit, the open mossy slopes were daubed with more bright yellow monkey flowers.

My explorations, however, have been tinged with sadness. It seems almost certain that these wild flower meadows, which bloom along the spine of northern Salt Spring, will soon be covered in asphalt and houses.

On one of my walks, I invited friends from Vancouver. We wandered across the Ridge and discovered a grove of calypso orchids (known to me as pink slipper orchids). I counted eighty blooms in the grove--more than any of us had ever seen in one place before. We crouched down and breathed in the spicy, almost cinnamon-like scent of the delicate pink and purple orchids.

Orchids depend on a complex fungi, found only in their natural habitat, to assist in germination and growth of young seedlings. The calypso orchid is nearly impossible to transplant. The thin thread-like fibres, which hold the bulb into the forest soil, break under even the most careful fingers. Calypso needs the shade of the high forest trees, the perfect temperature, soil conditions, and shelter to grow. To see this flower, one must go to the forest or the meadow's edge.

Another orchid we found on Channel Ridge was the spotted coral-root, which looks as strange as its name sounds. A single orange stem shoots up from the moss. We had to peer closely to see the tiny purple-spotted blooms. Coral-roots don't need sunlight, but instead, feed on rotting organic material in the soil.

We also spied a lone chocolate lily (sometimes called rice-root or mission bell) with the sun shining through the brown-green bell-shaped flower. In the past, native Indians foraged for the bulbs of the chocolate lily and the camas.

Are these wild flowers rare or common? I've certainly never seen such a profusion of these species in these particular combinations before. After researching their "status" I am only more confused. Sources disagree. Calypso is featured as an "endangered" B.C. wild flower on a poster put out by the Alpine Garden Club of B.C., The Federation of B.C. Naturalists, and the Vancouver Natural History Society. Yet another source, Orchids of B.C., calls calypso "one of the most common orchids in B.C.", with an added note that it is being rapidly exterminated in places frequented by humans. I found two of the wild flowers of Channel Ridge listed in the 1985 Rare Vascular Plants of B.C.: common camas, and common spring gold. They were described as having restricted distribution, but large population. Essentially, the flowers growing on the Ridge are common locally, but the Gulf Islands and Southeastern Vancouver Island are the only place they are found in Canada. More significantly, the habitat for these flowers, open slopes of arbutus, Douglas fir and Garry oaks, provides ideal housing sites--this in itself puts them in

danger. I may not even have detected the rarest plants on the Ridge. Most books I read, urgently called for more research into B.C. plants, with the fear that we may only discover what is endangered when it is too late.

Perhaps the most striking thing I learned was that B.C.'s endangered species legislation excludes plants. Existing legislation ignores the fact that several of this province's plants are known to be endangered, and exist nowhere else in the world. Not only does B.C. law omit plants, but worse still, it does not require the protection of the habitat of endangered species. If the habitat of a species is deemed threatened, the B.C. cabinet may decide to create an Ecological Reserve. They are not obliged to do so. There are two such Ecological Reserves on Salt Spring: one on the southeast slope of Mount Tuam, with some pure stands of arbutus, and the other on Mount Maxwell, a protected stand of Garry oak. Neither of these reserves is described to contain the same species of flowers I found on Channel Ridge.

Only a few centimetres of moss and soil resting on top of solid bedrock, the fragile Channel Ridge meadows face immediate dangers. Tons of dirt have been dumped. Along with this obvious destruction, another more insidious threat has begun. Last year, I noticed the ditches had been sprayed with grass and flower seeds. I argued with a friend about this practice of "greening up" the ditches. She called me a "purist" because I didn't agree with introducing new species into the area. The spring issue of The Victoria Naturalist gives an example of the havoc a single introduced plant has caused in North America. Purple loosestrife has choked out native vegetation in wetlands and marshes; it grows too densely for birds to nest in, and provides little food. Of the flowers I noticed introduced into the ditches, only the large-leaved lupine was listed in Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest. The others are eastern species which have been selected for their ability to adapt and thrive in new conditions. These species will soon take over the habitat where our native flowers now grow.

As species vanish from the earth, biologists are calling for preservation of the variety of life in an area, the "biological diversity". Channel Ridge must be seen not simply in terms of the individual species of flowers, but as an area rich in diversity with its patchwork of mosses, lichens (the Gulf Islands are rich in lichens at the northern edge of their range, including some of the province's rarest species), its insects (less than half of the possible insect species in B.C. have ever been discovered), and animals which live both below and above the ground. One afternoon on the Ridge, I watched two thumbnail-size tree frogs foray through a "jungle" of shooting stars, while eagles circled overhead, searching for meadow mice.

We must understand that the life on Channel Ridge is particular and unique to this part of the province (the



First of a series on honorary T & N C members.

HIT THAT TRAIL--

with Mary Sylvander; Senior Member (almost) of the Trail and Nature Club.

--by Marc Holmes.

I first met Mary Sylvander in 1963 on the slopes of Mount Tuam, introduced by the late Doris Anderson, a former British World War Two nurse and also a keen hiker. Descending a steep scree slope was nothing to Mary, but I haven't forgotten it. She had been climbing mountains in various parts of the world much of her life and believed in setting a brisk pace. Sometimes on outings we would find her pack sack full of rocks, because she was training for another expedition.

She was born Mary Hamm in 1897 at Bath, Ontario, near Kingston. This makes her a few months younger than our most senior Trail and Nature member, Bess Stafford. Mary taught school in Ontario for a while and then obtained a degree from Queen's University, circa 1920 B.J.L. [before John Lloyd].

Next came Social Service work, and a period of residence in Japan with much hiking in that country and in China. Later, Mary moved to New York city, where she met her husband-to-be, Hjalmar Sylvander--on a hiking trip, of course! They had dinner together that evening and soon there was a noon marriage at City Hall, after which the bride and groom went back to work. Hiking, dancing and opera were at the forefront of their lives and years later, they frequently revisited New York to attend the opera. Here on Salt Spring, not even a hike was allowed to interfere with the Saturday afternoon Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcast.

Mary's climbing record extends from Mount Fujiyama in the early twenties to Nepal in 1980. In between came mountaineering trips around Darjeeling, Kashmir, Shillong, South India, the Canadian Rockies, Norway, Switzerland, Africa, U.S.A., Germany, Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia and Australia. The list of mountains goes on and on.

A New York friend, Edith Stewart, invited Mary to visit her parents on Salt Spring Island, and this led to the purchase of property on Dogwood Lane. In 1961, on retirement, Hjalmar and Mary built a home there with their own hands and filled it with the treasures from their travels around the world. Mary, who has been a widow for some years, now resides at Brinkworthy Place.

Mary was rock climbing before many women joined in this sport and attributes a happy life to keeping up with the times. She says she saw everything from the horse and buggy era to space travel and as an early liberated lady, always advanced with current trends. Hiking has certainly kept her healthy and trim.

Mary Sylvander was very active in the founding of our

Trail and Nature Club, and was its second President. She imbued the club with an enthusiasm for the outdoors that will endure.

[Further sketches will feature Ted Brown, Gerry Holland, and Bess Stafford.]

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EVENING MEETINGS

There were three evening meetings, all successful, the first of which (on Crown Lands) being reported on in our previous issue.

SECOND EVENING MEETING: BIODIVERSITY AND BICYCLES

[reported by Ken Strike]

The second in the series of evening meetings organised by the Club took place on Thursday 14 March at the United Church.

Don Flook introduced the guest speaker, Alyson Nicholson, a researcher with the Ministry of Forests, who addressed the meeting on the topic of "Bio-diversity and Bicycles". The presentation was illustrated with slides and took the form of a bicycle tour of the South Vancouver Island area. Alyson used the analogy of a bicycle being an integrated system of inter-related parts, with the inter-related processes of Nature's ecosystem, reminding us that one could lose a spoke from the wheel and not really notice, yet gradually as spokes were lost the wheel buckled. So in the same way we could not afford to dismiss the destruction or disappearance of a species, however minor, as we do not know the eventual result.

We were informed that of the 409 breeding bird species in Canada, B.C. had the highest percentage--70%; and of the 151 land mammals it was the same, 74%. B.C. has the greatest diversity of all provinces, and must be conscious of this. The province was divided into 14 ecological zones, and the diversity was affected by terrain, air masses, wind, fire, insects and other natural factors. The warm damp Pacific air masses and the cold Polar masses were particular features affecting B.C. South Vancouver Island was in the Coastal Douglas Fir zone.

After a question period Ann Barber thanked the speaker and presented her with a flowering plant, and two books on local fauna and logging. Once again refreshments were served under the capable hand of Bev.

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Third meeting:

**THE BIRDS ARE BACK, THE BIRDS ARE BACK**  
by Glen Moores

Yes, the birds are coming back to the Island, but will you recognise them as you hike or amble around your garden. If you cannot answer readily in the affirmative, then you should have been at the third evening meeting of the Club. Glen Moores and Glen Smith gave a brief basic introduction to birding for interested members.

The evening started with a review of current literature for the beginner as well as the more serious-minded, followed by some tips on the purchase of binoculars for everyday use. Glen Smith then sketched his way through basic identification of main bird groupings, which helps narrow the field when chasing that elusive bunch of feathers in flight on your walk. In conclusion, Glen Moores illustrated his guided tour of typical habitats for different species with some excellent slides of both B.C. and Ontario. As so often happens in nature, the sting came in the tail when Glen played tapes of common bird calls and asked for identification from the group. What we lacked in knowledge we made up for in enthusiasm in suggesting authors of the various ornithological monologues.

Members interested in birding are asked to contact Glen and to watch out for the special event trips planned to cater for this special interest.

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Bev Frankcombe wishes to thank everyone for contributing the refreshments for the evening meetings.

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**EXECUTIVE MEETING TIDBITS, 18 APRIL 1991**  
[by Ken Strike]

**Re: Presentations for Non-Club Speakers**

15 copies of Joan Lott's picture of the Phantom Orchid were purchased for future use.

**Re: Correspondence**

Letter to Ministry of Crown Lands regarding the upgrading of Mountain Road through the Ecological Reserve.

Letter to Ministry of Parks expressing concern that Ecological Reserves were not included in the planning process of Parks '90.

Letter to be written to the Minister of the Environment expressing concern over the need for an Act to protect endangered species.

**Re: Bamfield Trip**

Planning going ahead for the trip in September. Phone Bev Frankcombe 537-4942, or see Cobbler's Box for schedule.

**Re: APC and Golf Courses**

The delegate to the Advisory Planning Commission was advised to vote against the proposed Bylaw unless certain matters of concern to the Club were addressed.

## ITEMS CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING OF 16 MAY

**Re: Correspondence**

A reply has been received from the Minister of Lands and Parks advising that Mountain Road will remain a public road with no change in status. The permit for upgrading was temporary.

Letter to the Islands Trust recommending that broad community input be sought before the Development Plan for Channel Ridge be re-negotiated, and offering a representative from the Club.

Letter from the Amateur Radio Club in response to our request for advice regarding a form of ready communication in case of emergency on outings.

Fiona advised that Pat Byrnes was the Club nominee to the Islands Trust/Channel Ridge negotiations.

**Re: FBCN AGM**

Ailsa reported on the AGM and arising out of that it was agreed to find a member to liaise with the Education Committee of the Federation with special emphasis on "Project Wild". It was further agreed to mount a display at the Fall General Meeting in Courtenay 4-6 October dealing with the Crown Lands, including the Martin Williams project.

**Re: Crown Lands**

CRD Director Jules Atkins attended briefly to advise that the CRD application to acquire three parcels on Salt Spring had been rejected. She further advised that this was considered an initial setback only. The Club had written in support of the CRD application.

**Re: Membership List**

It was agreed to make copies available to members on request but with a charge of \$1 to cover photocopying and expenses.

**Re: Executive Meetings**

It was agreed that members were permitted to attend these meetings and place items on the agenda by advising the President in advance.



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 Report on the 1991 Annual General meeting of the  
 Federation of B.C. Naturalists Prince George, May 9-12).

Ailsa Pearce, Director

Jean King and I attended this meeting as your representatives. The Prince George Naturalists were our hosts and made us very welcome. They went to great efforts to cater to all of us from early morning birding complete with coffee and home-made muffins served at 6 a.m., and owling from 10 p.m. to midnight, to two very interesting tours of Northwood Forest Nursery and Northwood Pulp Mill.

a) Education and Recreation Report.

- 1) Three round tables were sponsored (the Victoria Shoreline was one of these).
- 2) Curriculum 2000, the new plan for the formal school system, has presented a challenge to naturalists because in the new curriculum "environmental education" seems to have been lost. Naturalists are going to attempt to press government for Ecology education.
- 3) Wildlife Viewing - As a result of the concern of this committee a Provincial Wildlife Viewing Committee and the Wildlife Watch Program was created.
- 4) The Committee has encouraged and supported Discovery Centres (Nature Centres) and will continue federal and provincial governments to help with funding.
- 5) A Nature Grasslands poster has been produced for the Fragile Environment series.

**Recommendation:** Every club appoint an Education Committee member.

b) Conservation Committee Report.

It is impossible to keep up with the many issues facing this province. With many of them it is crisis management--responding to those problems of a provincial nature that need attention and where the FBCN should be involved. Some of the activities during the past year are:

- 1) Fraser River Estuary Management Program.
- 2) Save Georgia Straits.
- 3) Conservation Day -- Jan. 26.
- 4) Pacific Coast Joint Venture--involved with conservation of wetlands.
- 5) Rails to Trails Strategy.

Other concerns that were mentioned:

- purple loosestrife is invading the wetlands
- ORC is concerned about access on Crown Lands.

**Recommendation:** Every club appoint a Conservation Committee member.

Executive Committee Reports

## a) President

- 1) Fee increase - phased in over 3 years.
- 2) Project Coordinator - Nora Layard.
- 3) FBCN formally established - already well over \$100,000 in funds.
- 4) Fall General Meeting - time for club activities, displays.
- 5) Meetings with Ministers of Environment and Parks as well as Chief Forester. Our organisation is well received.
- 6) Natural history journal - Cordillera.

## b) Project Coordinator - Nora Layard

- 1) Workshops - South Okanagan round table results published

Old Growth Forests Workshop  
Conservation Day - Jan. 1991  
Shoreline Habitat

- 2) Land for Nature Project  
Aim is to assist clubs wishing to participate to do inventories of local important habitat

## 3) Consultation

Parks Plan 90  
Round Table on Environment & Economy  
Green Plan .

- 4) Events and Conferences  
Dunsmuir II - Towards a Land Use Strategy for B.C.  
Endangered Species Conference Sept. 27-28  
Habitat Enhancement Conference - prepare proposal
- 5) Fund-raising activities
- 6) Networking with other organisations.

## c. Treasurer

Excess revenue over expenses Dec. 31/90: \$8,789.

Resolutions

As well as the 26 published resolutions and sent to the clubs before the meeting, there were another 5 or 6 that were proposed and discussed. See Ailsa Pearce for copies.

Next year's Executive, and the executive reports, are to be Naturalists Magazine.

1991 Fall General Meeting October 4-6, Courtenay [let's get a group together!]

1992 A.G.M. Loon Lake, Maple Ridge.

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Just a note to let people know there is a canoe club called Island Paddlers which meets every 4th Tuesday in Salt Spring Elementary School (Wayne Taylor's classroom). We have had lots of fun events: the trip to Fulford Harbour and around Russell Island was pleasant, even though we were rained on. We saw river otters, oystercatchers, turkey vultures, harlequin ducks, and also many bald eagles. The next trip, May 25th & 26th, we went to the Marine Park, Portland Island (overnight), with visits to surrounding islands. A delightful group of people had a fine adventure canoeing around the islands, hiking, and generally having a good time. Thanks to Wally Priedolins, our President. If interested in joining, call him at 537-4631.

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| Spring has sprung, the grass is riz, and so forth, |  
| calling us forth to mow lawns and even just lie |  
| about among the plants and insects. But we have |  
| persevered and produced this newsletter to acquaint |  
| you with all the ongoings of the club and related |  
| activities. Hope you find something here to |  
| interest you! --Eds. |  
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