

The Oystercatcher

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

OCTOBER 1991

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Murray Shoolbraid

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are all sorry to lose the opportunity to help the community to acquire new parkland on the south slope of Mt. Erskine. Many club members were involved in this project and I thank them for their efforts and making their money available. In particular, Glen Moores, for the hours he spent on the financial management of the funds. What happened? What went wrong? Simply a matter of communication and timing. A year ago the Trust Fund Board, a new offshoot of the Islands Trust, was just formulating its policies, and at the same time was breaking new ground in trying to accept this parkland for the community. The Trust Fund Board, as part of its mandate, can hold land in the name of the Crown. The vendor required certain rights and restrictions to be registered with the transfer of the land's title. The Board made every effort to accommodate these requirements in the plans submitted to the Lands Titles Office, but the registrar found them unacceptable. These problems were being addressed when the vendor withdrew his offer. On a more positive vein - we are searching for other possibilities.

The Victoria Natural History Society has requested assistance in monitoring the presence of purple loosestrife on Salt Spring. Athena George has agreed to be our education and contact person. More about this later. Please watch out for this plant which is trying to gain a foothold on the island.

Glen Moores has agreed to help coordinate the weekend activities. The first programme, a birding walk, was greatly appreciated. Once again, thanks, Glen.

The "Summary of Public Comments", a compilation of comments about the planning document "Provincial Parks and Wilderness for the 90's", is now available. B.C. Parks and B.C. Forest Service will plan future programmes "in light of public responses and agency interests."

- Fiona Flook

Short report on our trip to South Africa

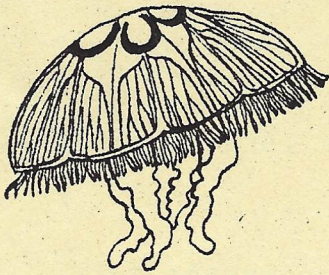
by O and I. Lachmund

We left Salt Spring on the 7.1.1991. Since we had lots of snow it was not easy to reach the airport in Vancouver. Our trip was scheduled: Vancouver--Frankfurt--Johannesburg--Pretoria--Scottburgh/Natal--Cape Town--Windhoek--Frankfurt and back to Vancouver.

We had not seen our relatives in Africa for many years, so we placed our trip around their homes, enjoying and studying their lifestyle and the change of the new political situation. We had not been in South Africa before, but Namibia we know well since we lived there for many years (1950-59). Pretoria, the capital of South Africa, is very much like Victoria, with beautiful public buildings, monuments, lovely parks, etc. By bus we made 600 km to Durban. The countryside was quite interesting; endless sugar cane fields, corn fields, and pine forest land cultivated by hand. Homesteads of the natives were scattered everywhere. The bus was comfortable and stopped every four hours like our Greyhound in Canada. We arrived in Durban in the evening. It is a big city and an important harbour, with all kinds of industry. Our sister picked us up at the terminal and drove us to her home in Scottburgh, 50 km south of Durban, right at the coast. January and February is the hot and wet season, with high humidity, but it is lovely for swimming in the Indian Ocean. The water temperature was about 28 C. Daily we had our early bird swim, and one in the afternoon. The sea is rough, but you find tidal pools which are shark secure and great for swimming. Scottburgh is a small town in a beautiful setting. Nature is growing as in a greenhouse--a paradise for a gardener.

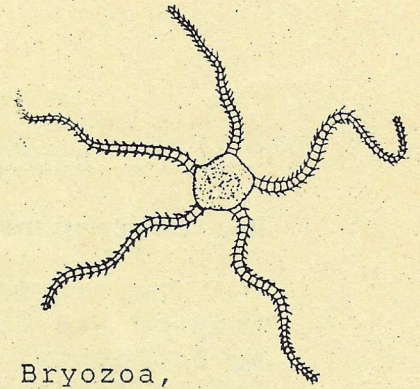
From Durban we took a bus to Cape Town; two days of driving, one night in a hotel at Port Elizabeth. The distance from Durban to Cape Town is approximately 2000 km. We passed different climate zones and varying countryside, such as very stony poor soil to rich grazing country. We passed through Transkei (a province self-governed by blacks). The villages were heavily populated, not very clean, and buildings and shops were in poor shape. With temperatures of over 35 C, getting out of our air-conditioned bus was like a shock. When we hit the famous Garden Route the next day we were really thrilled. There are many nature parks and mountains, and the coastline is rugged and picturesque. An old steam train travels through tunnels and forests, along cliffs and over rivers, with views of the spectacular lake area. The beauties of Africa are concentrated into a stretch of magnificent scenery in its natural heritage.

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BAMFIELD MARINE STATION TRIP

by Galen Loven



Do you know anything about Porifera, Hydrozoa, Bryozoa, Phytoplankton or Green, Brown and Red Seaweeds? Twenty-six members of the Trail and Nature Club certainly learned many things about these and many other marine organisms on their recent four-day visit to the Bamfield Marine Station.

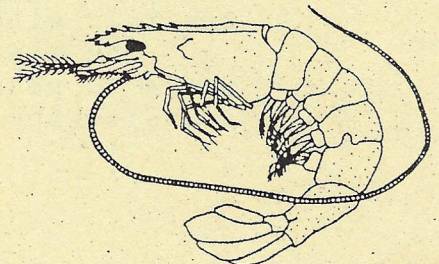
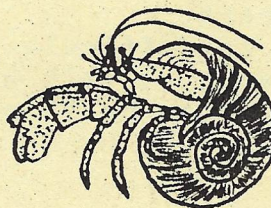
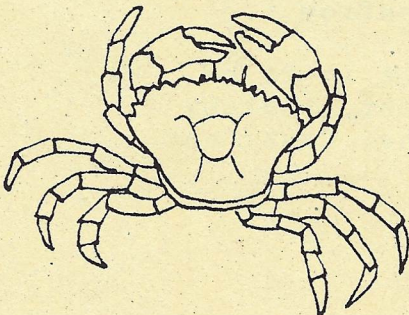
The group was kept busy morning afternoon and evenings with intriguing activities. The enthusiastic instructors had boundless energy and a wonderful knowledge of their marine environment.

We did invertebrate, seaweed and plankton labs; went on several trips on the M.V. *Atta* and the skiff to explore and examine fish and invertebrates caught in a trawl and dredge. We hiked along the Bamfield Inlet, the West Coast Trail and Brady's Beach always marvelling at the beauty of our surroundings and the knowledge we were absorbing. The observance of the ocean's bioluminescence one dark night in the station's skiff was indeed an illuminating experience!

We were accommodated comfortably in the station's dormitories and fed heartily in their cafeteria. Impromptu "Happy Hours" usually developed before we went to dinner. The station's resident black bear made one evening meal quite exciting by coming right into the kitchen--apparently attracted by the roast beef! The bear also made his presence known around our dorms.

An added interest to our already busy schedule was a very young Harbour Porpoise. It had been found wounded on a beach and brought to the station by one of the instructors. It needed 24-hour attention, so volunteers took one-hour turns keeping it company in its seawater tank. Two of our members volunteered at rather ungodly hours to keep the baby comforted. On our second-last day at Bamfield it was air-lifted to Tacoma.

We returned to civilization on the afternoon of Friday the 13th. Several of our members' cars had trouble; including flat tires and a punctured oil pan. Despite these unfortunate incidents, the overwhelming opinion is that the trip was indeed a worthwhile and wonderful experience.



EXECUTIVE MEETING TIDBITS: 19 September 1991

Re: Correspondence.

Letter from Ministry of Lands and Parks in response to that of the Club (see *Oystercatcher* May '91) indicating that an Ecological Reserve Plan is under preparation and will follow a process similar to that of Parks Plan '90.

Letter from ADM Fisheries in response to the Club (*Oystercatcher* May '91) advising that new legislation is being considered for Endangered Species, to include fish and terrestrial vertebrates.

Letter from Islands Trust Fund to Glen Moores copied to the Club regarding disposition of funds collected for purchase of Martin Williams property.

Re: Constitution - All necessary documentation sent to Registrar of Societies.

Re: Christmas Lunch - Date set for December 10th. Place: Golf Club. Price: \$10.50.

Re: Purple Loosestrife - Co-ordinator for monitoring the progress of this weed is Athena George.

Re: Trails - Fiona Flook and Max Soder to meet with Professional Environmental Recreational Consultants, who were retained by Parks and Recreation to obtain informed opinions from the community.

Re: Annual Meeting - Format to be changed to have a short report by the President, a little discussion from the floor, the potluck supper, and a guest speaker. In order to deal with other business, a Business Meeting will be held later in January. Agenda items are invited from members.

Re: Leadership Training - Elda Soder and Ann Barber to coordinate a programme.

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THE WEST COAST TRAIL
by David and Margaret Spencer

We only needed one week of fine weather this summer, and were lucky enough to get it just when we wanted it -- for our tramp along the West Coast Trail from Port Renfrew to Bamfield with five others.

The trail can be as difficult as you want it to be. We spoke to people who began to walk at Owen Point, thereby avoiding the "boulders from hell" near Thrasher Cove, and

later he joined the National Trust Company.

When he applied for Canadian citizenship, he changed his family name Voorhoeve officially to Holland, as he encountered difficulties with the pronunciation of his surname.

He signed up when war broke out, and he served with a bomb disposal unit formed under SHAEF in England; subsequently he went through France, Belgium and Holland, where he met me.

Three years later he married me in Quebec City with a lovely honeymoon on the way to our new home in Richmond Hill (Ontario), where our Joy was born a year later.

After his retirement we moved to Salt Spring Island in October 1971. Soon after our arrival we became members of the Canadian Arts Council, and at a party given by Windsor Utley at his "castle" in February 1972 we met Mary and Hjalmar Sylvander as well as Ruby Alton, who were both delighted that prospective hikers had hit these shores.

Mary took us on a typical "Mary" hike (straight up) to Reginald Hill on Feb. 22, 1972, and she introduced us to Doris Anderson and Lassie Dodds.

Mary's solution to her dislike of the No Trespassing signs on Maxwell Mountain was to form a club with a proper constitution to try to get access to private properties.

Mary, Lassie, Gerry and I (the "Four Musketeers") scouted out and developed new trails, discussing how the executive should be formed.

To start this club, the first meeting took place on the 12th September, 1972, at the home of the Millners on Old Scott Road. Ruby and I were asked to write a rough draft for a constitution, and on January 15th, 1973, the club was founded, and the name Trail and Nature Club was submitted by Marc Holmes.

We set Tuesday as our hiking day in spite of protests of the Golf Ladies. Gerry was nominated as first Treasurer. He used a box with recipe cards as record holder of members. Meanwhile, Texada Company and MacBlo had been approached to give our newly founded club access to their property. Subsequently MacBlo sent a forester with a four-wheel drive truck to show Ruby and Gerry its holdings on May 7, 1973.

Meanwhile the four of us hiked and marked trails with blue ribbons, causing many friendly disputes re "wall-to-wall ribbons" (Mary and Lassie) versus cairns and arrows (me). Gerry was always neutral -- more intent on looking for rocks for his fireplace. He became very interested in the geology of Salt Spring and took a course in Victoria to learn more about rocks.

With the owner's permission we carried some of these rocks home, where Gerry had started to build his own fireplace. The owners were intrigued by the idea, and some of them delivered these heavy quartz pieces which now face our fireplace.

Gerry came hiking with us when he could abandon his daily batch of cement for the blocks that formed the

foundation of the fireplace, and eight months after we moved in we had our first cosy fire. Mary and Hjalmar donated one of the cornerstones. Lassie, Art Halfknight, and other members were forever carrying rocks for Gerry!

When we tried to find yet another way up Tuam besides the "money" trail and the bypass of Holling's mine, it was Gerry who found the key coming via Mephistopheles. This trail was named after the devil because it led us astray many times.

This trail became Gerry's trail. As hiking and gardening, including landscaping, were Gerry's first hobbies, he soon became interested in wine-making, baking of bread, pies and cookies, and he became famous for his heavenly desserts. Friends sent him cookbooks for Christmas as previously they had sent rocks for his fireplace.

In 1990 Gerry was made an honorary member of the Trail and Nature Club.

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NEWS RELEASE:

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH COUNTS BIRDS KILLED IN WINDOW COLLISION

Project FeederWatch, launched in 1987, a joint venture of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Long Point Bird Observatory, is a long-term survey of the numbers and kinds of birds at backyard feeders in North America. Over 7,000 volunteers participated in 1990-91.

During the winter of 1989-90 FeederWatchers recorded the number of birds killed in window collisions at their homes. Nine percent of all FeederWatchers reported finding one or more window-killed birds, with an average of 2.0 deaths per home reporting kills.

Homes where window kills occurred typically had above-average numbers of bird feeders (and therefore large numbers of birds visiting). Window kill sites were usually located in rural areas close to woods and open water, and the yards had plenty of vegetation.

FeederWatchers documented 66 different species of birds killed in window strikes. Most were common feeder visitors: Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, and Dark-Eyed Junco together accounted for almost 44 percent of all window-killed birds.

The most frequently killed species died approximately in proportion to their abundance at feeders. A few species, however, seem to be unusually unlucky, Purple Finches, for example.

Most window strikes probably happen because a bird just isn't paying attention. But in 16 percent of the window strikes reported, observers saw a panic-stricken bird escaping from a raptor. In an additional 1.5 percent of window kills, the victims had been chased by other birds or startled by loud noises or passing cars.

The exact number of birds killed in window strikes each year is difficult to determine. Predators and scavengers

quickly remove stunned or dead birds; in this study, for example, some FeederWatchers saw hawks grab birds as they bounced off the window. But extrapolating from the 1989-90 study period, scientists estimate that 0.55 birds per FeederWatch home per year are killed in window collisions.

How does that compare to other window kill studies? Dr. Daniel Klem at Southern Illinois University believes that one to ten birds are killed annually for every building in the country, for a total of 95 to 950 million victims. Our data suggest Klem's lower estimate may be the more realistic one.

Recently, Klem published the results of the first rigorous study of window strike-prevention devices: the hawk silhouettes, wind-socks, one-way films, and screens that are sold by many bird feeding supply outlets. Under Klem's experimental conditions, these commonly used deterrents did not reduce window strikes. The most effective window guard turned out to be a closely spaced grid of adhesive strips.

Few people, however, want to obscure their windows to this extent. FeederWatch participants who have had problems with window strikes recommend a less intrusive contraption: black plastic garden-protection netting mounted on frames installed about a foot away from the window. At one FeederWatch home where as many as seven collisions a day had occurred, bird mortality went down to a total of only nine over the entire winter after the netting was installed.

Project FeederWatch always welcomes new participants, and gets under way in November. To register for the 1991-92 season, send \$12 to: Project FeederWatch, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159, Sapsucker Woods Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850, USA.

The Trail and Nature Club lost a good friend and enthusiastic outdoorsman when Jack Foster died on Sunday, October 6 at Lady Minto Hospital.

Always an active participant in our hikes, walks and special events, he took on the job of programme co-ordinator in 1983 for 2 years.

Jack introduced our club to the delights of Camp Squamish and the Whistler area as he had traversed many of those mountain paths before retiring to Salt Spring and knew them all well.

As our representative on the A.P.C. he liaised with the Recreation Department, working hard to develop new trails in the old M&B lands and opening up waterfront accesses for public use.

I have a memory of Jack cascading down a steep slope near the waterfront as we were putting in a particularly difficult portion of a trail. While I watched in horror as he neared the rocks below, he casually hooked a leg around a sturdy tree and stopped his rapid descent. "Weren't you at least a little perturbed?" I asked him. "Oh no, I knew something would slow me down" was his reply.

It is hard to believe that he will not rally once more.

Jack will be missed. Happy trails, old buddy.
Our sincere condolences go out to Ilse and their family.

Betty Kirk

Goodbye, Jack. I shall miss you and our lively political and usually humorous conversations while hiking along the trail.

- Ed.

[In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Jack Foster Fund, c/o SS Trail & Nature Club, Box 998, Ganges.]

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AN EVENING OF CANOEING

Some thirty members enjoyed an evening canoe trip round the northern tip of Vancouver Island on the occasion of the first Fall Evening Meeting of the Club.

Wally Priedolins was our guide as he recalled with slides and wry wit his and Heather's trip, not forgetting their seafaring dog.

The encounter with the bear, and Heather's chance meeting with the wolf, were brought to life both on the screen and by the raconteur.

Few of us would be so confident as to cast our provisions on the waters at the commencement of such an undertaking, trusting to wind and tide to return them at the end of the first day's paddling, but such it appeared were the practices of our guide. Also we realised that by the end of the trip the dog could swim as readily when secured by Heather as when unhindered by his safety rope. Does the same hold for Wally? We hope to find out when he takes us on our next armchair adventure into the wilds.

TRIP TO THE WALBRAN

Ann Barber

How and where to begin to describe the trip twenty-one members of the Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club took to the Walbran Valley on October 8th? There is so much involved and so much at stake. We were accompanied by two members of the Carmanah Forestry Society, who acted as our guides and drivers. Anne, who became involved when her daughter worked on the trails as a volunteer with the CFS, and young Colin, are both volunteers who did a wonderful job, not only in getting us there and back in vans which bounced and squeaked their way along bumpy, dusty logging roads with bits falling off periodically, but in educating us as to what is going on there.

While some events fade from the mind as soon as they are over, others become more powerful in retrospect as one mulls over the experience. Regardless of one's feelings about the politics involved, it is doubtful if anyone could forget the ghastly sight of one area in particular where all around is devastation. It looks like the aftermath of an atomic bomb, and is called Hiroshima by the environmentalists. No one could argue that the result of clearcutting is not ugly. But it is much more serious than just ugly.

Some foresters argue that the forests will return after clearcutting if replanting takes place. It is most interesting to see the results of tree planting in the valley. Yes, there is growth, both natural (fire-weed, alder foxgloves and baby trees, etc.) along with the plantings, and it all looks very healthy, but it will be hundreds of years before the environment returns to anything resembling the forest we walked through later that day. The birds and other wildlife that had to find other homes have long gone. Will the steelhead be able to return to the streams?

By now everyone has heard of the marbled murrelet. This nondescript little bird, shaped like a hockey puck, according to Anne, the driver, nests near the tops of the old sitka spruce in the mounds of moss found only in old forests. It is due to the fact that someone found a nest belonging to one of these dumpy little birds high up in a tree that the camp we visited is still there -- that part of the forest is now protected because of that nest. When questioned as to what he did other than drive people such as us into the Walbran, Colin told us he climbed trees looking for birds' nests.

It was here, very close to an active area of clearcut logging in an idyllic spot hidden in the trees beside a delightful stream with sparkling clear water that we met our first protestor. Most of them had left the area having decided not to actively protest in the valley during the election campaign because their fight is more with the government than with the loggers. Sean, who came from England specifically to protest against clearcutting our forests and a friend are living in two tents beside a tarpaulin-covered area where the food is kept and they eat and gather together. In the summer, and when we were there, with the sun pouring through the trees, it is a perfect camping spot. But it is already getting cold and damp. The thought of a winter there makes one shiver. Dressed in a black sombrero-like hat, knotted scarf at his throat, a vest, jacket and baggy trousers, with wonderful bracelets from Tibet and Morocco, Sean had the air of a dandy--though these were probably the clothes he arrived in four months ago, and have seen quite a few better days. Introduced as the "architect of the Walbran", he wove cedar boughs in an intricate Celtic fashion to provide shelter. These have all disappeared along with the trees. But he was

obviously happy and where he wanted to be, doing what he wanted to do, and intending to spend the winter there.

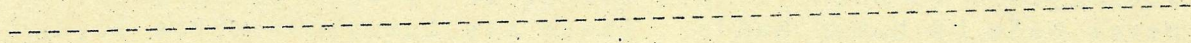
After lunch by the stream beside the camp we walked for an hour or so along the excellent trail built by members of the Carmanah Forestry Society. A great deal of hard work went into these trails -- huge logs had to be cut and wire nailed on ones crossing streams to prevent slipping. Some day the trail may go to the coast. The forest is magic -- reminiscent of old children's books and movies like "Snow White" where all the trees become monsters and witches with long spindly arms stretching out towards you dripping with moss. The giant sitka spruce have wonderful exposed trunks which grow tangled up together and form bizarre shapes like condominiums and wonderful areas for children to hide. The smell is delicious -- lovely damp rich soil -- rotting before your eyes. To walk in this forest is to walk on carpets never made by human hands. There are luxurious nurse logs, delicate white oyster mushrooms growing out of the old logs, enormous fungi on the even more enormous trees. One could imagine the spring would bring even greater delights as the foliage of trilliums and violets were abundant. When one got deeper into the woods and stopped chattering, the silence was profound. Then a wren could be heard and a varied thrush.

After the deep spiritual peace to be experienced in the forest, the intrusion of chain saws and clanging machinery heard when we returned to the camp area had a new meaning. It is so close. One could not leave unmoved. During the ride home the clearcut sections looked much worse than on the way in.

A family with several young school age children was spotted by the road. While Colin stopped to chat with his friend, the woman came and introduced herself. Looking remarkable clean, healthy and happy, they have been there since July when they came for five days, and have never left, though they will probably not stay for the winter.

There has been much said and seen on TV about the confrontations in the valley this summer. While we were there the loggers were working peacefully with their huge machines -- for fifteen hours a day -- to finish in a hurry? There was one small incident which may serve to illustrate the terrible tension under which all in the valley live. Just before our destination a security gate complete with guard had been set up. The first bus stopped and drove on after smiles from the driver and the guard. However the other driver did not think it necessary to stop and the guard came after him in his truck, very angry and hostile, saying all he required was that all vehicles stop. The driver apologized and they shook hands -- one small incident, but the expression on the face of the guard said a lot.

We were told by our drivers that only a quarter of the protestors are from B.C. They find that hard to understand. Many come from Europe -- particularly Sweden, Germany, Holland and Great Britain, where they have seen evidence in their own countries and others of the results of the removal of all the old growth forests. They feel compelled to stop us from making the same mistake. They are aware as many of us are not that it is a global matter, not just a local one, and whether we like it or not, we are all involved. There are no new frontiers to explore any more; it has all been done. The last frontier may be our old forests. As Colin said, it is vital to remember that the issue is not the confrontation between the loggers and environmentalists, but the preservation of the old growth forest to be a living museum.



Kinglet in the tree,
busy as can be,
perkily regarding
me in the sunshine--

Who am I to say
that your private day
is any less important
than mine?

You find things to do,
and I think it's true
there's little around here
to make you pine;

cheeky happy bird,
it must seem absurd
to see a creature still
when it's so fine.

Let me leave my book,
let me only look
and love you as you drink
the air like wine.

M.S.



OKANAGAN FALLS TRIP
Learning to Slow Down and Look

We arrived at our destination in time for supper. Our meals were specially catered for us by Bill and his friend, who greeted us and made us feel very welcome. A meeting room was provided for our use. This was used for getting together and for preparing our lunches for the coming day's activities. The view from our accommodation was over a lake and over a small park bordering it.

Our first day's activity was to Vaseux Lake. This introduced us to the variety of bird life, vegetation, reptiles and other interesting phenomena unique to this part of Canada.

I was impressed by the extent and enthusiasm apparent.

for the preservation of this area as a place where unique species can be observed by the interested public, and where the public is made aware of what is happening around them in nature.

We all took a walk into a marshy area around the lake. The vegetation was different to that found on Salt Spring. Poison ivy was everywhere, and a strange shrub called antelope brush was most prominent. If I walked quietly and was observant, I was able to see birds fluttering amongst the vegetation. I was getting used to looking through my binoculars and I finally found the right adjustment for seeing things. Joy, oh joy! A beautiful Cedar Waxwing filled my lenses. How beautiful and soft-looking this bird was. Mmmmmmmmm, I was beginning to enjoy this bird-watching. It was a bit slower than what I was used to; after all, I could have walked this area in about ten minutes, but I certainly wouldn't have seen as much.

I was getting itchy to stretch my legs and to look around this interesting area, instead of having my eyes continually pressed against my binoculars, or asking the person in front of me what they were looking at and then trying to find it. Lots of people had their bird books along with them.

At last a small group of us, "the generalists" we were called, set off up a road where views down the valley towards Oliver could be had and where we could see bighorn sheep silhouetted on the crest of the surrounding hills. This was the life! What was the smell that was so prominent, especially when you touched the silver leaf of the low-growing shrub? It was the smell of sagebrush. There was another low-growing shrub called rabbit bush, and the beautiful yellow pine (commonly called ponderosa pine) and prickly pear cactus. This brought back images of "Bonanza" and the Hollywood cowboy movies viewed often in my childhood. They even had rattlesnakes here, and I would have loved to have seen one (from a distance).

We walked until we felt we had had some exercise, and then it was time to join our other group for lunch.

After lunch it was decided that we would drive to the end of the road and enjoy walking in a ponderosa pine forest. This was cooling, and different to the vegetation at the lower level, but we would have liked to have been able to look out at a view, which, because we were so high up, would have been splendid.

That night we ate well and slept well.

The second day we were to view the burrowing owl's to see if we could see some of the unique birds of the dykes south of Oliver in "Haynes Lease Ecological Reserve". We also planned to go up to a higher area to Blue Lake where we would see a different environment.

It was fascinating for me to be able to see the different vegetations as we drove from the marshy areas of the dykes to the more forested areas on our way up to Blue Lake. At the lake, we were presented with a wonderful

variety of wild flowers. Our guides were a treasure-house of knowledge, and contributed to our enjoyment of the area. I saw my first alpine rose (bitter root), and had the pleasure of discovering again and appreciating the fragile beauty of some familiar flowers.

On our return down the mountain, we passed other small lakes which gave us the opportunity to observe different bird life, including several types of ducks. At one small lake, we were able to see small turtles sunning themselves on a log. It was interesting watching them slip off into the water when we were approached too closely.

It was on the trip to Blue Lake that I discovered that the ponderosa pine tree had a wonderful smell of vanilla. Our guests had us hug one of these trees and to tell them what we discovered about it. After this, our group was often seen hugging trees, trying to ensure that they were unobserved.

This was a wonderful day. We finished it off by visiting some local wineries and enjoying another wonderful meal.

Our third day was to be the trip up Mt. Kobau, and being a lover of alpine areas this was what I was looking forward to. The weather had been perfect, but now it decided to show us its misty side. This added to the atmosphere, and when we reached the summit everything looked so green. The forested hills were replaced by open meadows with low shrubs and pockets of trees. We followed a mountain trail which led us past an alpine lake, quite different from the lakes we saw the day before. Small, perfectly formed and brightly coloured alpine flowers showed themselves against the lush green grass and grey rock of the surrounding area. Few birds were to be seen.

Some of our party managed to get strung out a little and we spent some time waiting for us all to come together again. This was a chance to reflect on our wonderful three days and the many differences in the areas we had visited. Thanks go to Fiona for arranging this experience for us. Luckily the weather improved and by the time we again the lower level of the mountain, we were in sunshine again.

The trip was not just an exploration of a new area, but it was a super way of getting to know people in our group and finding and sharing a love of nature together. My binoculars are ever at hand now in case I see a bird that I want to identify. I must also remember to bring a bird and flower book with me on my hikes in the future.

Bev Francombe

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Compiled from contributions and put together from pieces supplied by aficionados of the wild (and the tame). Thanks to all contributors. MS & PML.
